FATHERHOOD, ADOLESCENCE AND GENDER IN CHINESE FAMILIES

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Fatherhood, Adolescence and Gender in Chinese Families

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1

Mapping the Chinese Contexts: Cultural Influences and Social Changes

In recent years, there has been a growing—and sometimes urgent—desire to understand contemporary Chinese society. This has been especially true in the West, where China's rapid march towards superpower status is sometimes viewed as a threat to world order. However, in spite of the considerable body of research focused on understanding Chinese society as a whole, there is remarkably little about the Chinese people on an individual and family level, even though changes at this level will undoubtedly have an enormous impact on the country's transition.

Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there has been a continuing process of change that has affected Chinese life in various ways. The pragmatic social and economic reforms, including the Open Door Policy and the State-owned Enterprise Reform introduced by Chinese government since the 1970s, have resulted in huge economic success and transformed China. China is now the second-largest economy in the world and is the world's manufacturing center. China now makes almost half the world's goods. It produces about 80 % of the world's air-conditioners, 70 % of its mobile phones, and 60 % of its shoes (The Economist, 2015).

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These economic reforms have not only led to remarkable economic improvement and growing GDP, but also to changes in expectations and attitudes towards the roles of men and women in Chinese society. For example, since the implementation of economic reforms that began in 1978, both men and women have been encouraged to take part in the labor market. As a result, most mothers work full time and no longer stay at home as housewives. The expectation of women sharing financial responsibilities with men encourages men to play a more active role in the family, since domestic duties need to be shared when both adults are working outside the home.

Another important piece of government legislation that has tremendous impact in people's lives is the One Child Policy, which was introduced in 1970s to control the size of the population. Since 1980, most families have been permitted to have just one child. In traditional Chinese families, the relationship between fathers and sons is paramount since sons are expected to carry the family name and to continue the family line. Daughters, on the other hand, are regarded as eventually belonging to their husbands' families after marriage. Thus, traditionally Chinese families have made little investment in daughters. However, with the introduction of the One Child Policy, parents may devote more care to their only child, regardless of its gender. In addition to receiving more care and attention from parents, many only children have also been able to enjoy the material wealth generated as a consequence of China's socioeconomic transformation in the last few decades. They were also brought up with strong Western cultural influences. For example, these children are much more fashion conscious, and McDonald's, chips, and pizza are as familiar as rice and noodles. In contrast, their parents have mostly experienced the Cultural Revolution and its subsequent mobilization to the countryside, called Shang Sha Xia Xiang. The fact that China's economic growth since 1978 has been so rapid also increases the generational gap between young people and their parents. Young people may feel that the experiences of their parents are out of date and irrelevant, rather than worthy of respect.

The study of father–daughter relationships invites us to think about Chinese people's attitudes, family practice, emotions, and aspirations, which constitute a crucial complement to our understanding of the remaking of Chinese society and Chinese lives. This book focuses on how the widespread social and economic reforms interact with traditional attitudes rooted in Confucianism to provide new contexts for parent–child relationships. We hope that this book will contribute to our understanding of Chinese society by shedding light on how parents and young people are negotiating their relationships.

1.1 Influences of Confucianism on Father–Child Relationships

Confucianism, which can be traced back over two thousand years, plays a fundamental role in Chinese family life. Confucian values also define the normative beliefs and family practices for both males and females in the society and the family. According to Confucianism, there are clear hierarchies between elder and younger, male and female, and ruler and ruled. The classic Confucian Analects is mostly concerned about kings, ministers, fathers, and sons while women are hardly mentioned. The very few times women are mentioned, however, reflects Confucianism's negative view about women. For example, *"Wei junzi yu xiaoren wei nanyang ye, jin zhi ze bu xun, yuan zhi ze yuan*" (Only women and flunkies are hard to live in peace with. They will be conceited if one gets close, or grumbling if one estranges them). In the family, the father is the undisputed head of the family, while the mother is seen as inferior to her husband. The old Chinese sayings such as *"Nan zhu wai, nv zhu nei"* (men take care of things outside the family, whereas women take care of things inside the family), *"yi jia zhi zhu"* (the master of the family) and *"chu jia cong fu"* (a married woman should obey her husband) clearly delineate the relative status of men and women in the family (Shek, 2006). In Chinese patriarchal culture, women often had little say and had to obey their fathers' wishes. Moreover, women were the ones who took care of the family, but they did not have the opportunity to be educated or inherit any property.

According to Confucianism, there are also clear distinctions between each family member: fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters, in terms of their responsibilities. A father's duty is to bring up his son until one day the son takes over his power and responsibility. As for mothers, their main duty is to 'be married to a good provider for herself, to bear children for his family and hope these children will be successful' (Cheung, 1996, p. 46). Therefore, the social structure of the family mainly revolves around the father–son relationship (Lynn, 1974), since sons are expected to continue the family line. Daughters, who will get married and belong to other families eventually, are less important.

Inside the family, parents are superior to their children. Therefore, they have the power to *guan (管)* their children, which means control or governance (Xu et al., 2005). For the children, it is crucial to fulfill their filial piety, which is often portrayed as most important value, or the root of all virtue. *The Classic of Filial Piety* (孝经), one of the classic books of Confucian ideology, implies that in order to deliver filial piety children should show affection and respect to their parents (Saari, 1990). Confucius said filial piety began with the fact that everything a child was came from its parents, therefore the child must show them the deepest respect. In this sense, children owe their very existence to their parents and therefore they are obligated to unconditionally fulfill duties to them. Another form of filial piety is to bring honor to the family name and glory to their parents. Today, success in academic life is one of the most important filial duties, as education is so heavily stressed in Chinese culture (Salili, Zhou, & Hoosain, 2003). These traditional values help enhance the role of education in the family and in society as a whole.

Parents are also regarded as the first teachers of the child. The father's role is primarily characterized as a stern disciplinarian and educator (Ho, 1987). The maxim *"Zi bu jiao, fu zhi guo"* (it is the father's fault if the child is not taught properly) emphasizes the duty of fathers towards their children. Therefore, it is the father's responsibility to educate his children, especially his sons. Although the traditional father's role as educator may have been weakened by the introduction of compulsory schooling by the state, the cultural emphasis on education as the route to success means that fathers may still see themselves as being responsible for their children's education but maybe in a different way in modern society. A quantitative study of 660 students from two secondary schools in a middle-sized city in northern China showed that it was their fathers, rather than mothers, who were most involved in making decisions relating to education, such as whether to go to a university, which subjects to study, and curfew time (Xia et al., 2004).

Confucianism also has a strong influence on people's perceptions of themselves and their relationships to others in the society. The concept of the self is normally defined in relation to others, and it is defined in the hierarchy of relationships. Moreover, the individual self only exists in relationship to and on behalf of social groups, such as family, community, and nation (Fei, 1992). In this sense, the group or collective interests are more important than the individual interests. In general, this encourages people to sacrifice their own interests for the success of the group or collective interests so that harmony and order can be maintained (Weber, 2002). As a result, "one can end up with no self at all" (Lau & Yeung, 1996, p. 361). A powerful symbol of this concept of deferential order is embedded in the grammar of the Chinese language. For example, given names are placed after family names; the larger geographical areas come first in addresses (e.g., county, city, district, street, number); and dates are written year, month, day. The Confucian idea of the self has again been adopted by the famous scholar Liang Qichao. In the 1910s, he argued that the individual has a dual-self: the small self, centered on personal interests and the great self, based on the interests of group, community, and even the nation. This has been widely accepted by many Chinese, including the communists after 1949, and it is an important concept in daily life even now (Chang, 1971).

It was not until the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911 that the Confucian roots of Chinese society, which had been maintained by China's rulers for more than two millennia, were broken (Whyte, 2003). In addition, the influx of foreign influences also challenged traditional values. Later on, the establishment of the People's Republic of China emphasized its people's loyalty to Mao before their own families. Parental power was further undermined during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1876) when young Red Guards were encouraged to rebel against authority figures including teachers and parents (Kleinman et al., 2011). During the movement called 'Shang Sha Xia Xiang', millions of urban young people left their city homes in order to be reeducated in the countryside, and millions of intellectuals and bureaucrats were sent to the countryside to engage in agricultural labor, starting from 1968. The movement separated family members, disrupted family lives, and affected family values.

1.2 Social Changes and Political Movements in the People's Republic of China (PRC) Era: A Brief History

The long traditions of Confucianism and family life have undergone dramatic changes since the establishment of the P.R.C. The following section presents a brief history of political and social events which have had an impact on family life, especially the relationship between fathers and daughters (see Table 1.1).

1958–1961: the Great Leap Forward and 'Three Bitter Years'

In 1958, the Chinese government launched the Great Leap Forward (大跃进), aiming to hasten the pace of economic and technical development

Table 1.1 A brief Chinese history after P.R.C era

1949	The establishment of the People's Republic of China
1958	The Great Leap Forward initiated
1959–1961	The 'Three bitter years' of natural disasters
1966–1976	The Cultural Revolution and the national university entrance examinations stopped for those 10 years 1968: *The People's Daily* delivers Chairman Mao's instruction to encourage young people to go to the countryside and "Up to the Mountain, Down to the Village"; this movement peaks
1977	National examinations for entry to universities restarted
1978	The Open Door policy initiated by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China The beginning of reforms to government-owned companies
1980	The One Child Policy introduced formally in an open letter from the government
1980	The end of the Up to the Mountain, Down to the Village movement
1986	Introduction of nine year free compulsory education
1997	State-Owned Enterprise Reform

(Fairband, 2008). However, the people's communes, which provided free food for everyone, did not function as well as expected. The communes falsely reported achievements to the government that had actually been impossible to accomplish. In addition, the focus on industrial development kept many people away from the fields, and they were absent during the harvest season. In the following year, floods and a drought caused crop failure and led to starvation. The whole country experienced a period called Three Bitter Years, filled with natural and man-made disasters, from 1959 to 1961. Both nature and mistaken political decisions were to blame.

1950s–1978: Up to the Mountain, Down to the Village and the Cultural Revolution

In the mid 1950s, many urban youths were sent, or volunteered to go, to the countryside. At the beginning, this was part of a large-scale national program called Up to the Mountains, Down to the Villages, which was designed to ease the unemployment and urban growth problems in the cities (Bernstein, 1977). Rather than starting or continuing school and getting a job in an office, urban youths were "re-educated" by farmers to become manual workers, peasants, and soldiers (ibid.).

The Cultural Revolution started in 1966. As a consequence, the national university entrance examination was cancelled by the government and school education was halted almost completely. School age children also became the Little Red Guards and were trained to help destroy the four "olds": old thoughts, old cultures, old customs, and old habits. The revolution against the four olds was intended to get rid of all the bourgeois ideology that remained in the new communist society. People believed that anything bourgeois would corrupt people's minds and cause capitalist society to return (People's Daily, 2000). It is clear that society did not stress the importance of education during the Cultural Revolution. Instead, it was advocated that "school time should be shortened and education needed to be revolutionized." Institutions of higher education were closed for four years until the autumn of 1970, and many members of the Red Guards never completed their education (Wang, 2008).

During the Cultural Revolution, when the whole society was in disorder and young people could neither go to university nor get jobs, going to the countryside again became the political solution. The peak time was from 1966 to 1968, during which all the school students in junior and senior high school in urban areas were sent to the countryside. During the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, around 18 million educated urban youths became known as the *Xiaxiang ZhiQing* (下乡知青) and were transferred to the countryside (Ye, 2008). In 1980, the central government decided not to send more youths to the countryside and more and more *Xiaxiang ZhiQing* gradually made their own way back to the cities and their hometowns (ibid.).

1978: Open Door Policy

At the end of 1978, Deng Xiaoping became the second generation of China's leadership (Fairband, 2008). Under Deng's direction, China started economic reform in 1978 and opened up the market to the foreign investment, a period called the Open Door Policy. These reforms accelerated the modernization process of China. Higher living standards and increases in the GDP per capita followed (Gregory, 2001).

1979: One Child Policy

Another radical reform under Deng Xiaoping's regime was the only child campaign launched in the 1970s to control population size. The government had campaigned locally and nationally for voluntary birth control. On 25 September 1980, the government wrote an open letter to formalize the One Child Policy. The policy was written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China in 1982. Although there was great diversity among different areas, especially in the countryside, the percentage of only children increased dramatically throughout the nation (Davis & Sensenbrenner, 2000). Between 1995 and 1997, according to the National Population and Family Planning Commission of China (2004), 90 % of all births were first children, and since 1998 this stabilized at around 94 %. For urban areas like Shanghai, the One Child Policy was implemented more effectively than in most other parts of the country. At its implementation in 1979, the first-child rate in Shanghai was 97.0 %. From 1980 to 1997, it was over 99.5 % (Shen, Yang, & Li, 1999). It should be noted that the official figure did not include families who had more than one child and did not report the births of the additional children. There are also a few exceptions in which parents are permitted to have more than one child, depending on the regulations in each region. In Shanghai for example, parents may have more than one child when: parents have a disabled child; both parents are only children themselves or the parents are from a minority ethnic group that has moved to Shanghai (Shanghai Population & Family Planning Commission, 2003). In November 2013, following the Third Plenum of the 18th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, China announced the decision to relax the one-child policy. Under the new policy, families can have two children if one parent is an only child (BBC News, 2013). As an active response to an aging population, the government now allows each couple to have two children (BBC News, 2015). In 2015, China officially ended its One Child Policy after 35 years.

1986: Implementation of Nine Year Compulsory Education

In 1986, the government decided to implement nine years of compulsory free education for every child. As a result, more women have had the chance to get an education, and this may have improved women's status in Chinese society. In 1990, 32 % of women over fifteen years old could not read or write, compared with 13.0 % of men. In 2000, 13.5 % of women over fifteen years old could not read or write, compared with 4.9 % of men (National Bureau of Statistics). However, 10.4 % of the national population over six years old (around a hundred million people) still did not have any formal education in 2006, and 72.7 % of those were women (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Clearly, women are gaining more and more opportunities in terms of education, but more effort is still needed to narrow the gap between men and women.

1997: State-Owned Enterprise Reform and Other Market Oriented Reforms

Before 1993, most urban adults were employed by large state-owned enterprises and enjoyed the 'iron rice bowl' of a job for life, relatively equal wages and comprehensive welfare provision (Yan, 2010). However, the third plenum of the Fourteenth Party Congress in 1993 decided to move from a centrally planned to a more market-based economy (Wu, 2008). As a consequence of this reform, state firms made hundreds of thousands of workers redundant. Between 1993 and 2002, more than 63 million jobs in state-owned enterprises were cut (Hurst, 2009). At the same time, many people saw this as an opportunity to *xia hai* (下海)—“jump to the sea”—and make money with their own business (ibid.). This caused income disparities to widen dramatically since it benefited individuals who worked hard and had good management skills.

Other market oriented reforms in the late 1990s, namely, the privatization of housing, the marketization of education, and the marketization of medical care have switched financial responsibilities from the state to individuals as people have been forced to engage in the market-based competition and have had to shoulder greater risks and responsibilities.

1.3 Men and Women in Chinese Society

Women’s status has been significantly improved due to party-state policies since 1949. National laws on women’s rights, such as *The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women*, *the Marriage Law*, and *the Law of Labour* have tried to lessen discrimination between men and women, both in the family and in society. Mao’s proclamation that “women hold up half the sky” has encouraged generations of women to be economically active. Same work, same pay (同工同酬) was established in Labour Law No 46 and encouraged women in the family to go out to work (Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, 1994). According to the World Bank, women’s labor participation rate remained stable at 64 % during the period of 2009 and 2012, which is higher than many western countries (The World Bank, 2014). There has also been an increase in the percentage of women in management jobs. In urban areas, the percentages of women in management jobs and professional occupations were respectively 2.9 % and 17.4 % in 1990. These numbers increased to 6.1 % and 22.8 % respectively in 2000 (The Second Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2001). In addition, Chinese women tend to work full time, with the Chinese Sixth

Population Census in 2010 showing that average weekly working hours are 46.4 for men and 43.6 for women (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011). This means a high proportion of dual wage earner families in China.

Despite the increases in women's participation in the labor market and a small increase in their representation in management and the professions there remain traditional pressures on women to be good housewives. Wives are reported to take responsibility for 85 % of the housework, including cooking, dish-washing, laundry and cleaning (The Second Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2001). While women in the cities spend an average 102 minutes on housework on a working day, men spend only 43 minutes (The Third Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2011). In another study, in-depth interviews with 39 married couples in Beijing explored husbands' and wives' perceptions of paid and domestic work. The traditional breadwinner role was still evident, as most Chinese husbands in the study tended to see breadwinning as their major responsibility; moreover, husbands and wives saw a man's failure in his career as being incapable, lacking ambition and relying on wives for financial support (Zuo & Bian, 2001, p. 1127). Moreover, most wives in the study did not expect their husbands to share housework equally with them. For the husbands, breadwinning is their responsibility and housework is something they need only do if they wish. This is consistent with the three national surveys of women's lives in China discussed earlier, which shows that many women and men still think the male role is primarily outside the house and the female role is inside the home (The Second Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2001; The Third Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2011).

A highly gendered attitude to childcare is also found in China, even though the majority of women in cities work full time and for as many hours as men. Despite the fact that childcare is relatively cheap and many families have the support of other family members, such as grandparents, childcare is still seen as the mother's rather than the father's responsibility. The study by Zuo and Bian (2001) discussed earlier also shows a gendered view of women's paid work, as both women and their husbands still expected wives to take care of the housework and childcare even when some women's career achievements were much higher than their husbands'. A recent ground-breaking study of fatherhood in China found that only 12.1 % of fathers with children aged 4–6, and 25.9 % with children aged 7–12, agreed that they took care of the children equally (Zhang & Xu, 2008).

The government policies and effort to fight against gender inequality has not focused enough on the gender arrangement of family and domestic life (Evans, 2007). Women are expected to succeed in the workplace and to manage home life. However, there is very limited support available. For example, women are entitled to very limited maternity leave and childcare if they are working. In most cases, maternity leave is only 90 days, usually including 15 days prenatal and 75 days postnatal (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 1988). Some women are entitled to longer maternity when they give birth at a later stage of their life or have a caesarean birth. According to Shanghai Population and Family Planning Commission (2003), women who give birth to their first child after the age of 24 are entitled to an additional thirty days, and their husbands are also entitled to three days paternal leave. The time that mothers and children can spend together at home after the birth of the child is very limited once the woman is in employment. As a result, parenting has become a major task for grandparents, largely due to young couples' overloaded working lives (Nyland, Zeng, Nyland, & Tran, 2009).

Overall, there is evidence of a change in attitudes towards women's status in modern society. However, there remains a great number of people still holding traditional values regarding male and female roles. Three waves of national surveys of women's lives reveal that values and attitudes have not caught up with the rapid social and economic changes in the last few decades (The Second Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2001). According to the survey from 1990 (Table 1.2), 49.4 % of women and 51.8 % of men *agree* or *agree very much* that "men's role is primarily outside the home and women's role is inside the home." The figures for female and male participation in the 2000 survey were slightly higher than those given in 1990, at 50.4 % for women and 53.9 % for men. The third wave from 2011 has even higher figures for this question, with 54.8 % female participants and 61.6 % male participants agreeing (The Third Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2011). Regional differences also exist. In Shanghai, the figure at both levels (*agree* and

Table 1.2 Women and men's agreement to the question: "Men's role is primarily outside the home and women's role is inside the home"

	1990 survey %	2000 survey %	2011 survey %
Women	49.4	50.4	54.8
Men	51.8	53.9	61.6

agree very much) was much lower at both time points, especially for men, although there was also an increase for both men and women in 2000 (The Second Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2001). In 1990, 34.6 % men *agree* or *agree very much,* and in 2000, 42.8 % men thought so (ibid.). According to the third wave, 83.5 % people believe that 'women are not necessarily less capable than men, in terms of ability' (The Third Wave Research Team of Chinese Women Status, 2011). However, discrimination against women workers still severely affects women's work prospects. For example, 20.6 % job vacancies are reported to prioritize men over women, by stating 'Male only or male worker preferred' in the job advertisement (ibid.). Moreover, 30.8 % of the participants in the survey think men have better promotion opportunities than women (ibid.).

1.4 Fatherhood, Adolescence, and Gender

The growing body of literature on fatherhood in the West from recent decades has resulted in diverse insights into the roles of fathers in the family (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998; Lamb, 1997; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Morman & Floyd, 2006; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Sullivan, 2003). There is also an increasing amount of research showing positive paternal involvement associated with a variety of child and young adult outcomes (Lamb, 2010). Many studies suggest that the paternal role has evolved from "the distant, provider, disciplinarian role of previous decades to the more engaged, involved, and emotionally expressive father of today" (Morman & Floyd, 2006, p. 117). Fathers are increasingly expected to share equal responsibility with mothers. Research in many industrialized countries shows that time devoted to childcare by both mothers and fathers is increasing and the gap between the two has narrowed, however, mothers most often remain the parent who is primarily responsible for childcare (Gauthier, Smeeding, & Furstenberg, 2004; Gershuny, 2000; O'Brien, 2005; Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). Moreover, many studies suggest that being a good provider is still an important aspect of fatherhood. It also remains an important aspect of male identity (Hochschild, 1997; Hochschild & Machung, 1990; Morgan, 1992). We can argue that the increase in paternal involvement is not yet equal to maternal involvement (Lewis & Welsh, 2005).

1.4.1 Chinese Fatherhood Studies

Fatherhood is a social construction that changes across time, contexts, and cultures (Brannen & Nilsen, 2006; Parke, 1996). Therefore, given the changing socio-economic and political circumstances of China, it is important to investigate Chinese fathers, particularly in dual-earner families, as women's participation in the labor market increases. In addition, the sheer size of the Chinese population and the importance of fathers' roles in their children's lives, warrant research attention.

Little is known about the roles of fathers in non-western cultures. Few systematic studies have been conducted on Chinese fathers and the determinants of their involvement with children. A few studies in China have found that Chinese fathers are more actively involved with children than before, particularly in leisure activities and in communication with children. For example, in 1998, a Chinese study including parents and children in secondary schools from 14 cities in mainland China found that although mothers were the parents children had the most contact with, fathers were actively involved as well. In terms of activities together and play time, there were no significant differences between mothers and fathers. Although 40 % of children talked with their mothers *very often,* and children tended to go to their mothers when they had concerns, still 30 % of children reported talking with their fathers *very often* (Feng, 2002). The same study found that the breadwinner role has remained central to men's identities and masculinity, although Chinese fathers are actively involved with children (ibis.). The study indicated that work is often seen as a way to obtain the economic means to maintain the family, as Chinese people have strong family identification.

A pioneer study exploring fathers under sixty-five years old in mainland China collected quantitative data from both fathers and mothers in

Shanghai (Zhang & Xu, 2008). The study found that fathers' time with children was mainly focused on playing together and helping with homework. Mothers were still the main parent who took care of children's daily lives (ibid.). The research also found that the higher the educational level of both parents, the more active the father was in the parenting role, even though the fathers with the highest educational level tended to work the longest hours (ibid.). This is consistent with another Chinese study exploring only-child working youth in twelve cities in China. The study found that the relationships between only-children and their fathers were not as close as their relationships with their mothers (Feng, 2010). Interestingly, another study collected data from 1040 eighth grade students in three schools in the city of Wuhan. It showed a positive correlation between fathers who had received a college or university education and increased mathematics achievement among their daughters, but not with their son's (Tsui & Rich, 2002). Moreover, there are even stronger correlations between fathers' education levels and girls' opportunities to go to university, compared with boys (ibid.).

Both in the West and in China, more and more fathers are expected to take an active role in the family, but, as many studies suggest, the concept of main breadwinner has remained extremely important and central to men's identities. The limited studies in the Chinese context suggest that with the influence of the traditional cultural emphasis on men's authority, the man's role as a breadwinner is still dominant in modern Chinese families. At the same time, the One Child Policy and the increasing participation of women in labor, fathers have been found to be emotionally closer to their children. The social changes of family structure and gender roles in the society as a whole are important factors in any investigation of how fatherhood has changed, and they are an important influence on the research questions I ask participants in my own study.

On the other hand, in spite of this strong evidence for the importance of emotional closeness in modern Western fatherhood, there is some debate about the extent to which it was lacking in earlier times. The American historian Gillis argues that early modern western fathers (seventeenth and eighteenth century), especially the Protestant ones, were highly involved in many aspects of their children's lives such as educating and disciplining their children (Gillis, 1997). The father–child bond was as intimate as the mother–child one (ibid.). McKee and O'Brien (1982) also reviewed the historical role of fathers (mainly in Britain) and argue that it was too simplistic to make general statements because of the diversity of fatherhood within any period of time. As Lamb noted, "fathers play a number of significant roles—companions, care providers, spouses, protectors, models, moral guides, teachers, and breadwinners—whose relative importance varies across historical epochs and subcultural groups" (Lamb, 2010, p. 3). These historical studies, together with the studies which show the continuing importance of the breadwinner role, have cautioned me against assuming that China's development has led to a general shift in Chinese people's perceptions of fatherhood and ways of looking at different aspects of fathers' roles. It was also sensible to look at fathers' own experiences of being fathered to see if there were any changes in fatherhood. Moreover, these categorizations of the changes in fatherhood seem to be insufficient because they mainly focus the amount of time family spend together and therefore fail to capture the meaning of making time for family (Gillis, 1996). Similarly most of the Chinese studies discussed above rely on quantitative data from questionnaires. This informed my own decision to use a mixed methodology, which collects more nuanced, qualitative data.

1.4.2 The Author's Study

Compared with the large volume of research in the west, the area of Chinese fatherhood study is under developed. The differences of cultural backgrounds and social values between Chinese society and western society lead to the question of how and to what extent research carried out in the west can be applicable to the Chinese context. Despite an increasing number of studies examining fathers' roles and involvement with their children, not many try to explore parent–child dyads independently or to distinguish the gender differences among the children. Research in this area applies different methods and draws from different sources. In order to get a better understanding of what fathers' roles and involvement are, it would be beneficial to include fathers' voices as well as other informants to avoid bias.

This study examines the perspective of girls from Shanghai on their relationships with their fathers. By studying two cohorts of girls aged 13/14 and aged 16/17, and their fathers, the study reveals the changes that occur as fathers and daughters progress through their life course. It seeks to understand how girls construct their feminine identities as teenage girls and how fathers understand their masculine identities outside the workplace. It further explores their family practices and how they negotiate parental authority and adolescent independence.

The study is aiming to explore fathers' own construction of their roles and their actual daily practice with their daughters in contemporary Chinese families. This study confines itself to fieldwork in Shanghai, one of the biggest cities in China. With a residential population of around 24 million and taking up 0.07 % of nation's land, Shanghai is a major contributor to China's financial income (Shanghai Municipal Statistics Bureau, 2014). It also contributes to the social development of the whole Chinese society, and thus has become one of China's most important cities (Yusuf & Wu, 2002). However, although Shanghai is at the forefront of development in China, with many distinguished features that other cities do not share, it still has a long history of traditional culture and social characteristics similar to other Chinese cities. It is hoped that by choosing such a modern city for the subject of research, the findings may indicate what lies ahead for other cities in the People's Republic.

Adolescent girls experience natural physical, mental, and emotional changes related to their transition to adulthood. They may experience an increased demand for autonomy, privacy, and greater investment in their friendships rather than in relationships with parents. Meanwhile, their relationships with fathers are influenced by the society in which they grow up. A cohort study will help explore the changes during girls' adolescence in the context of a rapidly changing society. This cross-sectional design has two cohorts of girls: the first aged thirteen to fourteen years old and the second aged sixteen to seventeen years old. By comparing the two groups the study could help show father–daughter relationships at two points in adolescent girls' life courses when the girls were experiencing change. The younger cohort was going through a stage of physiological maturation and were also preparing for the important exams they would take to get into senior high school in one year's time. The girls in the older cohort were about to take the most important exam of all, the national university entrance examination, which would have a major impact on their future lives. These are both times when children need a lot parental support. In addition, the focus on adolescence more generally was considered important for studying father–daughter relationships, as girls become conscious of body changes and may be more reluctant to communicate with their fathers. The changes brought about by these life course events were expected to lead to changes in the girls' relationships with their fathers.

In an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of father–daughter relationships in the context of a changing Chinese society, researchers studied both fathers' and daughters' perspectives. Because adolescent girls and their fathers are the focus of the research, schools are a typical setting to find samples of adolescents (Brannen, Heptinstall, & Bhopal, 2000) and to provide access to adolescents' fathers. A questionnaire survey administered to the daughters in schools was able to recruit fathers and daughters from the same families. Researchers also recruited a small number of fathers and daughters from the same families to study their perspectives in more depth.

In terms of data collection methods researchers combined both quantitative and qualitative data: focus groups, questionnaire surveys, and semi-structured interviews. The data collection included three phases: first, focus groups were used to get an overview of girls' understanding of the father–daughter relationship, and also as a pilot study to generate questions for the questionnaires and interviews. Second, the father/daughter questionnaire surveys were used as a way to recruit interviewees, as well as to gain quantitative measurements of fathers' and daughters' daily family practices. Third, the questionnaire survey was designed and coded for two cohorts, which made it possible to discern statistical differences between the younger and older groups. In most cases, the chi-square test was used to determine whether there is any significant association between the younger girls and older girls. It was also conducted to test the statistical differences between the girls (only-children and children with siblings) and their fathers. Finally, interviewees were recruited to explore their understanding of their own father–daughter relationships, with a focus on meanings, feelings, and thoughts. The researchers looked at three questions. How do girls construct their identity as teenagers? How do fathers understand their role as the parent of a teenage girl? And, how do fathers and daughters communicate and negotiate with one another?

A multi-method research design was employed; focus groups, a questionnaire survey and semi structured interviews. Four groups of girls from four different schools took part in school-based focus groups in order to examine how girls think about father–daughter relationships in general. Following this, a questionnaire survey was administered through seventeen schools with 773 girls and 598 of their fathers. The questionnaire survey examined different family practices and fathers' involvement in their daughters' personal lives. It covered three main themes: family background girls' social and school life and girls' family life. As for the fathers' questionnaire, it covered family background and family life. The questionnaire survey was conducted in different areas in Shanghai, and the students in senior high school were from different types of institutions: vocational schools, private schools, ordinary public schools, and key schools. A subsample of fathers and daughters separately (8 pairs and one daughter) was drawn from the questionnaire sample. In the interviews an interpretive perspective was employed to analyze the perspectives and meanings of the informants. The semi-structured interview covered a range of themes: being a father/daughter; having a daughter, not a son; having an only-child; time and activities with daughters/fathers; support and closeness to the daughters/fathers; fathers' aspirations for girls' education and career.

According to my questionnaire survey, of the 773 respondents, only 16.1 % of the girls had siblings. Girls whose household status indicated that their families came from outside Shanghai were more likely to have siblings compared to girls with Shanghai household status. Among 581 Shanghai girls, only 11.5 % had siblings, whereas of 94 girls with non-Shanghai status, 45.7 % had siblings ($n = 675$).

Among the 502 fathers who filled in their date of birth in the questionnaire survey, 69.1 % of them were born in the 1960s, the time in which China experienced revolutionary changes under Mao Ze Dong. During those ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the national university entrance examination was cancelled, and school education was halted almost completely. Instead of going to school, many young people were busy shouting slogans and reciting Mao's quotations (Wang, 2008).

However, the daughters' generation was brought up with strong western cultural influences. They are much more fashion conscious and driven by consumerism. They spend much of the time playing video games and most young people use the Internet as a means of communication, entertainment, and study. Overall, this is the generation that has been born into a time of dramatic economic growth and thus lives in a society with overwhelming material wealth, compared to former generations.

1.5 Overview of the Book

This book has eight chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the book as a whole. It also provides the historical, social, and cultural background of the research, and explains its Chinese context. Chapter 2 looks at how changes in family structure, especially the implementation of One Child Policy, lead to new ways of parenting for Chinese families. Chapter 3 explores the concepts and theoretical framework that are relevant to the research. Chapters 4–7 present the research findings from four focus groups with girls, a questionnaire survey of 773 girls and 598 of their fathers, and seventeen individual interviews with fathers and daughters. This gives an insight into both girls' and fathers' perspectives on their relationships and the way they are conducted. The final chapter summarizes and concludes the book with some suggestions for future directions.

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2

Only Child, Only Hope: Living in a Chinese Family

2.1 Changes in Family Structure and Family Size

The One Child Policy in China was originally instituted in 1979 to control the population. The Marriage Law in 1980 clearly stated that couples had a duty to implement the One Child Policy (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 1980). As Fong pointed out, "China, however, is the only society where the fertility transition was hastened by strictly enforced birth quotas. Rather than waiting for modernization to produce low fertility, the Chinese state has used low fertility as a means to accelerate modernization" (Fong, 2004, p. 3).

The structure of families has changed dramatically since the policy was implemented, and today the standard nuclear family is composed of one child, a father, and a mother. In a recent five cities study, the data revealed that the number of nuclear families with an only child increased rapidly after the One Child Policy and that it has been the main family structure in the cities (Ma, Shi, Li, Wang, & Tang, 2010). The proportion

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of nuclear families in 2008, 1993, and 1983 was 50.2 %, 54.3 %, and 24.2 % respectively (ibid.). However, it is still common for rural families to have two or more children, since the One Child Policy is more difficult to enforce in rural areas (Fong, 2004).

Household size is also found to have decreased gradually with changes in lifestyle and the implementation of the One Child Policy (Tang, 2005). Economic growth has also enabled more people to buy their own flats or houses once they get married, compared to the older generation. The number of generations living in one household is decreasing and two-generation families are the main family model. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2006, 2013), the average household sizes were 4.33 in 1953, 4.43 in 1964, 4.41 in 1982, 3.96 in 1990, 3.44 in 2002, 3.36 in 2004, and 3.02 in 2012. In Shanghai, the average household size is relatively smaller than the national average, at 3.8, 3.03, 2.7, and 2.7 in 1980, 1999, 2006, and 2012 respectively (Shanghai Municipal Statistics Bureau, 2014).

But beyond the rise of the standard nuclear family, the growing divorce rates in the last twenty years or so have resulted in more and more people living alone or as single parents (Xu & Ye, 2002). According to Xu and Ye's national study of the divorce rate between 1980 and 2000, Shanghai had the biggest increase of all, rising seven fold during that period from 0.29 % in 1980 to 2.02 in 2000 (ibid.). Nevertheless, most people remain married. According to the national data in 2012, 71.3 % of the whole population over 15 are in their first marriage (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2013).

Both Chinese academia and western media have reported the population imbalance between male and female populations in China (Ru, Lu, & Li, 2010; The Economist, 2010) and it has not changed much since the One Child Policy. The data from the National Bureau of Statistics on the gender proportions of each age category shows that there is a total population imbalance between boys and girls aged 0–4 years old. The data show that boys make up 54.2 %, 54.7 %, 55.3 %, and 55.2 % of births in the years 1995, 2006, 2007, and 2008 (National Bureau of Statistics, 1997; National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008, 2009). According to the National Statistical Yearbook, 2007 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008), men exceeded women from 1998 to 2006, comprising around 51.5 % of the population. Since 1980, the sex ratio at birth of boys to girls has started to rise dramatically in most regions of China (Li, 2007). In the 1990s, the phenomenon spread from coastal areas to the middle and west countryside. In 2000, the birth rate of boys and girls was beyond the ordinary level in most areas of the country (Lu, 2005). The factors causing this rise of sex birth rate are complex, and they vary in different periods and areas (Li, 2007). Some researchers argue that one reason for the discrepancy of men and women in the population nationally is the gender discrimination between girls and boys, which is rooted in traditional Chinese culture of preferences for sons. The low status of women in Chinese society is one reason that women prefer a son rather than a daughter (Li, 2007). Other factors, such as the One Child policy may also have increased the pressure to produce a son, as parents now have only one chance to continue the family line (The Economist, 2010). In addition, new technology and increasing income means that many people can find out the sex of their unborn child and abort a female fetus if they want to. The widespread use of B-type ultrasounds during pregnancy enables couples to choose to have abortion in the case of a female fetus and increases the gap between boys and girls (Li, 2007; Lu, 2005). However, the population trend in Shanghai is slightly different from the national picture since the proportion of men to women is quite equal. In Shanghai, men made up 49.6 % of the population in 1980. However, later the population of men and women were fairly even; around 50 % in 1990, 2000, and 2006 (Shanghai Municipal Statistics Bureau, 2008). We can conclude that the changes in gender roles in Chinese society have lagged behind other social changes such as the rapid economic changes of recent decades.

2.2 The Little Emperor and Empress

Being the only one in the family means that an only child is the center of family life and enjoys more concentrated attention, love, and support from their parents. Only children are often described as being more self-centered and over-protected by their parents. There is a stereotype that depicts the younger generation as being spoiled, selfish, and lazy (Feng, 2000). It seems that parent–child relationships in only child families are also closer. An investigation of parent–child relationships comparing only children with children with siblings found that parents with one child have a closer parent–child relationship and that they do more activities together compared to parents with more than one child (Feng, 2002).

However, only children also have a greater desire for companionship, as many feel lonely without siblings. Thus, peer relations play an even more important role in only children's lives. Only children were found to be quicker and better at making friends in a new environment (Feng, 2000). This highlights the only child's need to be with other children of the same age. Drawing on a study by Sun Yunxiao, there was a strong desire from only children to have intimate relationships with friends. The stronger the need to make friends with other people, the happier they were with others, the more cooperative with friends, and the more respectful to other people (Sun & Zhao, 2005). Although the younger generation children were brought up in an individualized and child-centered family environment, they have a strong need to be part of friendship groups with their peers.

Despite the unconditional parental love and support that only children get, they are also the "only hope" to fulfill their parents' wishes and expectations (Fong, 2004). For the parents' generation, it was not essential for every child to succeed, as parents could always fall back on other siblings' success for status and support. Furthermore, the responsibility of taking care of the parents in their old age could be shared among several siblings, thereby reducing the pressure on resources and time. Meanwhile, the expansion of mass education since 1999 means that, for the only child generation, competition for career success has intensified and graduates are no longer guaranteed elite jobs (BBC, 2014). Pressure from other parents who invest every possible resource in their only children also forces other parents to follow suit because no one wants to lose out in the race to secure positions in the best schools, universities, and careers for their only child.

Another consequence of the One Child policy is that it may create an environment in which nurture is focused on either a boy or a girl, with significant implications for gender equality. Parents' high expectations of their child's academic achievement are widespread amongst Chinese

Table 2.1 Female students' representation in education

	Females as % of total student enrolment				
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Higher education	23.4	30.0	33.7	35.4	41.0
Secondary education	39.6	40.2	41.9	44.8	46.2
Primary education	44.6	44.8	46.2	47.3	47.6

parents, and the fact of only having one child makes parents take an interest in his or her education regardless of gender (Tsui & Rich, 2002). City parents seem to think that having either a boy or a girl is fine, because the reason to have children is the pleasure of enjoying family life (Strier & Roer-Strier, 2010). Several studies have revealed that, especially in urban areas, the One Child policy has had the unintended consequence of narrowing the gender bias against girls that is deeply rooted in Confucianism and traditional Chinese society (Liu, 2006; Tsui & Rich, 2002; Veeck, Flurry, & Jiang, 2003). As presented in Table 2.1, the national data also show that gender differences have narrowed at all stages of education (National Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

2.3 The Spoiled Generation: The New Consumers

Being an only child means that an individual can enjoy a wealthier lifestyle than previous generations. Parents who were born during the difficult times, such as the Cultural Revolution, grew up when politics was the focal point of life, and very little entertainment and few consumer products were available. Moreover, what resources there were for children normally had to be divided between siblings. In contrast, the children of the One Child generation benefit not only from the increase in their parents' material wealth, but do not have to share it with any siblings either. Apart from having adopted a more child-centered distribution of family resources, parents from one child families also want their children to enjoy the wealth and material comforts that they never had the chance to enjoy in their childhood. The first generation of the One Child policy children were "golden" boys and girls as they enjoyed all the luxuries their parents could buy them, and they became the most important consumer group (The Economist, 2004). Teenagers born in the 1990s may not be able to buy luxury goods, as they are totally financially dependent on their parents, however the phenomenal success of McDonalds, KFC, and Pizza Hut shows how powerful a consumer group Chinese children are and how much these western companies have changed Chinese children's lifestyles (Watson, 2004). What's more, Elisabeth Croll's work on Chinese consumers suggests that children have been the largest and most conspicuous group of Chinese consumers during the past twenty years as a result of parental indulgence (2006). According to McKinsey, the young generation of Chinese consumers represent about $36 billion a year. The Chinese parents are very eager to spoil their children, spending $28.75 billion annually. Among these, $7.5 billion was spent directly from the yongsters themselves (Roberts, 2006).

As already noted, Chinese families have always had a strong interest in their children's education, including parents spending time to monitor and help children study after class, paying for after-school or private tuition, and providing good study environments. Moreover, investment in children's education is increasing. According to National Statistics Bureau, the average per person expenditure on education, recreation, and cultural services in cities steadily increased between 1996 and 2008, from 312.71 RMB in 1995 to 1358.26 RMB in 2008 (Renmingbi (RMB) is official currency of the People's Republic of China. 1RMB is around 0.15 dollar) (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). In Shanghai, educational spending by families, including books, private tuition, and other educational products, as a proportion of an average family's annual expenditure, is second only to food at 16.5 % (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2006). When asked how much they spent to support their primary school age children, many parents in Shanghai reported that they spent almost one parents' monthly wage, every month, in 1996 (Davis & Sensenbrenner, 2000). This again confirms parents' high aspirations and expectations for their children's education.

Parental expenditure on boys and girls may also be narrowed. Girls who are only children may be able to enjoy "unprecedented parental support because they do not have to compete with brothers for parental investment," according to Fong's observation while tutoring and survey results in junior high school in Dalian (Fong, 2002). Consistent with this, a survey conducted with 220 households with children attending three Yangzhou secondary schools showed that there were no significant differences between boys and girls when parents were asked how much they had spent on their child during the previous semester on a variety of expenses related to education (Veeck et al., 2003). A survey of 1040 high school students in Wuhan, a large city in central China, found that parents with daughters spent more on education than parents with boys (Tsui & Rich, 2002).

2.4 Parent–Child Relationships and Potential Conflicts

Changes in family structure also intersect with social, cultural, and technological changes to shape the new concept of family life in China and thus lead to new ways of parenting. The China Youth and Children Research Center reported that parent–child relationships had become comparatively more egalitarian, since around 36 % of children aged six to fourteen regarded their mothers and fathers not as authority figures but as friends, according to a survey consisting of 4339 children respondents conducted in 1999 (Sun, 2003). This was consistent with a Chinese youth development study in 2005, which found 51.2 % of primary and secondary school children regarded their mothers as friends and 46.7 % of them ($N = 5438$) regarded their fathers as friends (China Youth Development Project, 2006). These percentages have both increased by 14.7 % and 10.5 % respectively, compared with the data in 2000 (ibid.). A growing number of parents were not regarded as authority figures but as friends, and so presumably children had more say in the family.

Meanwhile, the implementation of the One Child policy in 1979 and the huge growth in women's participation in the workplace have shaped new roles for fathers by decreasing the distance between them and their children. As a growing number of parents were regarded not as authority figures but as friends, fathers may now be emotionally closer to their only children. In addition, the cultural belief of *yan fu ci mu* (strict father, kind mother) may no longer hold true for many Chinese parents. A longitudinal study of 429 Hong Kong secondary students aged 12–16 years found that mothers tended to assert more authority and control over adolescents' lives, compared with fathers (Shek, 1998).

The interactions between children and parents seem to be altering. Furthermore, the interactions between children and parents help to develop a new model of parent–child relationships. Perhaps this is unsurprising in the context of social transition in China, especially the influences of the One Child Policy. In Xiong's thesis, *Shehui Zhuanxing Yu Jiating Bianqian* (2000), he argued that children had influenced their parents in lots of ways, such as in their attitudes towards life, their values, and their knowledge of fashion and new technologies in modern society. In addition, most parents also take on the role of playmate or friend in the context of the one child families (ibid.). Not surprisingly, these influences were most welcomed and accepted by parents from urban rather than rural areas. In a sense, parents and their children are growing into the future together (Liying, 2003).

While the only children are enjoying a wealthier lifestyle, and better educational opportunities, the parents may find it difficult to catch up with their children. As Fong rightly put it, "Heavy parental investment enabled many singletons to attain First World living standards and educational opportunities. But singleton's ambitions often clashed with the limitations of their Third World parents and society. Children of China's one-child policy became First World people too quickly for their families and society to keep up" (Fong, 2004, p. 3). The conflicts between parents and only children may be even more intense during adolescence, a time of seeking autonomy and self-identity. The traditional Chinese concept of *guan* (管) as discussed in Chap. 1, which embraces a double meaning of taking care of and controling, governing, monitoring and interfering, is still widely practiced and believed by many Chinese parents. It highlights the importance of parental authority, parental control, and strictness (Chao, 1994; Wu, 1996). Moreover, respect for parents and interpersonal harmony are emphasized in Chinese families (Shek, 2001). A study comparing students and their mothers' views of "bad kids" from America, Japan, and China showed that Chinese respondents stressed the importance of maintaining order and harmony in family and society (Crystal & Stevenson, 1995). For parents, family harmony is achieved through children respecting and obeying family authority. The cultural emphasis on harmony and obedience may help to explain why Chinese parents retain their power regardless of increasing demands from their children as they progress through adolescence to grant them more autonomy. Observations of three cultural groups of parents, (1) Taiwanese, (2) first-generation Chinese immigrants to the USA, and (3) Americans of European origin, revealed that Chinese parents were more controlling than other groups as they expected more obedience and respect from their children (Jose, Huntsinger, Huntsinger, & Liaw, 2000). In addition, a content analysis of a Hong Kong study of parents' perceptions of the ideal child, based on interviews with 180 fathers and 240 mothers whose children were in secondary school, revealed that many parents expected their children to be obedient (Shek & Chan, 1999).

In addition, factors such as the gender of the child and the father's economic situation may also influence paternal control over their adolescent children. A more recent longitudinal study, which recruited 2559 secondary school students in Years 7, 8, and 9 in Hong Kong, found that parental control was stronger over sons than over daughters in all aspects, apart from the adolescent's whereabouts, specifically whether the parents knew the whereabouts of their children and whether they set any limits on the time to return home (Shek, 2008). The reason for this was that parents were more concerned about their daughters' chastity (ibid.) Another study, analyzing data from 3017 first year secondary school students in Hong Kong, found that there were no differences between adolescents with economic disadvantage and those without in terms of the mother's control, but only in relation to the father's (Shek, 2005). The fathers with economic difficulties were reported to have lower parental control because their ability to fulfill their responsibility to provide affected their confidence or ability to carry out child-rearing responsibilities (ibid.).

As a result of strong parental authority, Chinese adolescents were found to expect autonomy later than their western counterparts. An American longitudinal study, using questionnaires, examined around 1000 adolescents' beliefs, expectations and relationships with their parents, who were from a variety of cultural backgrounds in California, including Mexican, Chinese, Filipino, and European (Fuligni, 1998). Of these, 353 adolescents were followed up two years later. Chinese American adolescents' expectations of greater autonomy were found to occur substantially later in the life course compared with that of European American adolescents (ibid.). A Hong Kong study recruited 120 adolescents in years 7, 9, and 12, mainly from lower and lower-middle class backgrounds. The results suggested that despite Chinese adolescents' desire for more autonomy, especially among older adolescents, there was no increase in Chinese adolescent decision-making with age (Yau & Smetana, 1996).

Although Chinese parents impose stronger authority and grant less freedom this does not mean Chinese adolescents have no conflicts with their parents and do not seek autonomy. Indeed there are studies suggesting that Chinese adolescents' autonomy seeking is similar to that found in western countries. Yau and Smetana's study (1996) of Hong Kong adolescents (see above) found that they conflicted with their parents over everyday matters such as doing housework, making friends, and doing homework. Similar to many western studies, it also found that Hong Kong adolescents had fewer conflicts with their fathers than with their mothers (ibid.). This may be a result of children spending more time with their mothers than with their fathers, as has been found in the west (Saari, 1990; Wu, 1996).

Whether Chinese children have more conflicts with their parents during early adolescence, compared with middle and later adolescence, is less clear. A Chinese study of 188 adolescents in Shenzhen and Hong Kong showed that there were more conflicts among the adolescents around 11–14 years old than among those aged 18 (Yau, Tasopoulos-Chan, & Smetana, 2009). However, Xia's quantitative study of 660 students from two secondary schools in a middle-sized city in northern China gave different results. The study indicated that older adolescents had more conflicts with their parents than younger adolescents had with their parents (Xia et al., 2004).

Children's studies and romantic relationships seem to be the two areas that concern parents the most. As a result, parents imposed a great deal of restrictions and requirements on their children regarding friendships. A study of only children in China showed that many parents tended to like their children to make friends with high achieving students: 81.6 % of fathers said they wanted their children to make friends with good students; 64.9 % did not want their children to make friends with other children of the opposite sex, and 45.3 % wanted their children to reduce contact with friends for the sake of their studies (Sun & Zhao, 2005).

Fathers may find it easier to set restrictions on their daughters' friendships if they say it is for the sake of their studies. However, fathers still face a barrier to taking control of their daughters' romantic relationships because communicating with them on this matter is difficult. Although there has been no research in the Chinese context, an American study showed that much discussion about romantic relationships was instigated by the mother's desire to raise the matter (Raffaelli, Bogenschneider, & Flood, 1998). Possibly, fathers are not used to expressing their emotions about this topic and may find it too embarrassing to raise the issue. In addition, girls may not wish to talk about romantic relationships with their fathers either. A study of African American families with children aged 9–12 found that the children generally preferred to talk about romantic relationships with their same-gender parent (Wyckoff et al., 2008). Therefore, taking control of daughters' romantic relationships may be particularly difficult for fathers.

Furthermore, the widespread use of the Internet among young people in China also means that taking control of children's social lives in general has become more difficult. In China, the Internet has become an essential component of many young people's lives, especially for only children who do not have siblings to play with. However, Internet use among young people has caused huge concern for both parents and the government. According to the China Internet Network Information Center, 27.3 % of the national Internet population of 4.57 hundred million Internet users were aged 10–19 (2011). According to a national survey of 7519 youths across the country around 13 % of young Internet users were addicted (China Youth Association for Network Development, 2005) and in 2007, the government launched a national program to tackle addiction to Internet games. However, there have been few Chinese studies on how parents deal with their children's Internet use, something that they have little control over or experience with themselves. It is therefore important to explore how fathers and their daughters resolve their conflicts relating to the use of the Internet, since it has become such an important part of adolescents' lives.

It seems that Chinese parents try very hard to take control of their children's lives and conflicts are generally resolved by adolescents giving in to parents (Sun & Zhao, 2005). However, Chinese adolescents may choose other ways to get their own way, other than by directly negotiating with their parents. Compared to their western counterparts, Chinese adolescents have been found to be more likely to avoid disclosing information to their parents. In a quantitative study of 479 adolescents aged 14–18 in five American high schools, which included Chinese Americans, Mexican Americans, and European Americans, adolescents were found to prefer lying to parents, avoidance, or partial disclosure (Tasopoulos-Chan, Smetana, & Yau, 2009). The Chinese Americans were found to disclose less information to their parents compared with adolescents from other ethnic groups. This was consistent with the study by Yau et al. (2009), which suggests that Chinese American adolescents were reluctant to discuss issues because of parents' stronger expectations of obedience and the importance of harmony in families. This is probably due to the importance of family harmony stressed in traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, adolescents express their thoughts in an indirect and implicit way in order to preserve and protect family harmony.

In summary, cultural emphasis on parental authority and harmony in Chinese families has resulted in a slightly different developmental trajectory for ethnically Chinese adolescents compared to their European counterparts. The studies of American Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese adolescents seem to suggest that Chinese parents demand more control over their children's lives. However, Chinese adolescents are still found to have a desire for more freedom and therefore do have conflicts with their parents. It must be born in mind that most of the studies were conducted in Hong Kong or America and that there are relatively few studies about mainland Chinese families. In addition, much of the work so far has been quantitative, for example using psychological scales and tests to reflect adolescents' points of view. These do not explore the process of father–adolescent communication and how fathers and daughters feel about their conflicts. More importantly, there are very few studies focused on fathers' control over their children's lives, particular areas that Chinese parents are most concerned about. This led me to explore issues of making friends, romantic relationships, and Internet use and to see how fathers and daughters resolve their conflicts. In addition, since Chinese parents are most concerned with their children's academic studies, I also explore father's involvement in their daughters' studies.

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3

Orienting Frameworks and Concepts

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the concepts and the theoretical frameworks regarding the study of fathers, adolescent girls, and their family lives will be discussed. First, I will present the framework of time, which is relevant since the focus of the study includes two family generations—fathers and daughters. I draw on the notion of generation as it refers to historical time to situate the fathers and daughters in relation to the times in which both were growing up. The notion of the life course frames the research because the design covers two different age groups of girls and hence different transition points in their lives and relationships with their fathers. In addition, the orientation of individualism and collectivism provide a useful perspective in the Chinese context as a result of globalization and the significant social changes in recent decades. Furthermore, the concepts of identity and gender, care and fathering, and family negotiations represent the main "sensitizing concepts" (Blumer, 1969), which I have employed in approaching the analysis of the data in Chaps. 4, 5, 6, and 7.

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3.2 Framework of Time: Historical Time, Generational Time, and Life Course Time

Time is a central theme in people's lives. In daily life, time can be deployed in different ways and not necessarily in relation to chronological time (Brannen, 2002). The quantitative aspect of time, present time, is normally defined as the amount of time people spend on various types of activities (ibid.), such as the time fathers spend with children. There are also qualitative aspects of time, such as life course time and historical time (Adam, Hockey, Thompson, & Edwards, 2008; Gillis, 1996), which I will elaborate on in this chapter. Time can be used as both a conceptual category and a methodological strategy. In my study, father–daughter relationships are explored through generational time and, by choosing two age groups of girls in my sample, I am able to look at the life course dimension. Furthermore, these multiple aspects of time may coexist and interact with each other (Morgan, 1996). As time plays a crucial role in my study, I will elaborate on time from two perspectives: historical and generational time which relate to the differences between fathers' and daughters' generations; adolescence and life course time which focus on important phases young people are going through, which is inspired by the use of time framework by researchers such as Glen Elder (1985), Tamara Hareven (1982), and Julia Brannen (2002).

3.2.1 Historical Time and Generational Time

In the classic book *The Sociological Imagination*, C. Wright Mills (1959) calls for a way of looking at personal life by connecting social, personal, and historical dimensions of individual lives. As he concludes, "neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (Mills, 1959, p. 3).

The concept of historical time is closely associated with generational time since generations are formed as people live through their youth and experience the same historical and social events (McLeod & Thomson, 2009). Their shared experiences of historical time mean that they develop a common consciousness, which make them identifiable. This collective way of reacting to certain historical events is the most crucial process during the formation of particular generations. In addition, the formative years of growing up are particularly important in terms of forming common generational identities (Mannheim, 1952). However, the influences of these historical events have different impacts on individuals and are "the outcome of a complex and contingent relationship between timing, conditions and resources" (McLeod & Thomson, 2009, p. 111). Therefore, people's lives are not only determined by events but also people link themselves with the society they live in and make their lives by exercising agency.

Different family generations belong to different age groups and hence parents bring to their family lives different experiences of childhood from those of their children (Brannen, 2004). At the same time, there is a significant continuity among generations as family ties and obligations remain important regardless of rapid social change (Holland, Weeks, & Gillies, 2003). The generation of girls in my study were born in the 1990s, which was a very different period from the 1950s and 1960s, when their parents were born and when society experienced the Three Bitter Years and the Cultural Revolution (Chap. 1). These different time lenses are useful for understanding father and daughter relationships.

Of the 561 fathers who filled in their date of birth on the questionnaire survey, over two thirds (69.1 %) of them were born in the 1960s, the time that China experienced revolutionary changes under Mao Ze Dong. During those ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the national university entrance examination was cancelled and school education was almost completely halted. Instead of going to school, many young people spent their time shouting slogans and learning Mao's quotations (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

3.2.2 Adolescence and Life Course Time

It has been argued theoretically that adolescence has been stretched at both ends, extending downwards into childhood, and extending upwards into adulthood (Coleman, 1997; Williams, 2002). Puberty is occurring earlier and young people are sexually active earlier (Coleman, 2010).

In addition, young people are becoming consumers earlier in their life course, despite the fact that many are still financially dependent on their parents. In China, research shows that children have been the largest and most conspicuous group of Chinese consumers during the past twenty years as a result of parental indulgence (Croll, 2006). Therefore, the hallmarks for adulthood are not so clear anymore and there is a degree of ambiguity in using the term *adolescence*.

As Elder noted, "[T]he life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and events they experience over their lifetime" (Elder, 1999, p. 304). It is important to note that the concept of adolescence and the characteristics of adolescence are set in particular places and times. As Kehily suggested, "young people's lives vary widely throughout the world and categories that are often taken for granted in Western terms are not universal or biologically based, but are embedded in culture and mean very different things in different contexts" (2007, p. 45). Even in the similar western contexts, young people's experiences and expectations differ between and within countries, although overall most young people are undertaking longer periods in education and are entering employment later (Brannen, Lewis, Nilsen, & Smithson, 2002). In China, there is no clear definition of youth or adolescence (Huang, 2003). The term *Qing chun qi* (youth period) indicates the troublesome nature, while the term *Qing shao nian* (youngsters) is widely used, but police consider individuals between the ages of 13–25 to define youth criminal records (ibid.). In my study, I use *adolescent girls*, *young people* and *teenage girls* interchangeably to refer to girls in the study (the younger group are aged 13–14 and the older are aged 16–17), who are all in their teens.

Giddens uses the term *fateful moment* to indicate when "individuals are called on to take decisions that are particularly consequential for their ambitions, or more generally for their future lives" (1991, p. 112). For Giddens, a fateful moment empowers the individuals to choose their own path, and at the same time, gives individuals responsibility for the choices they make (ibid.). In Gidden's opinion, the fateful moment is associated with the development of self-identity and it is crucial that the individual can recognize an event's significance. Thomson et al. (2002) have employed this concept by identifying *critical moments* in young people's biographies and by exploring how they are implicated in processes of social inclusion and exclusion. Young people are experiencing changes and important transitions, and they may respond to these moments at an individual level, however, their life courses continue to be highly predictable and structured (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). For example, the girls in my study are facing important transitions in education that are set by China's education system. The younger girls will go to senior high school in one year's time and they need to take exams to get into the senior high schools they wish to attend. For the older ones, they are expected to take the national university entrance exam in one year's time (Chap. 1). Both groups of girls are going through critical transition periods, during which they are encountering new experiences and undergoing a number of other social transitions, such as starting new friendships or romantic relationships, together with the transition of moving into a new school. These transitions provide opportunities to examine the continuation or discontinuation of girls' behaviours and relationships with their parents. In addition, the life course perspective is brought to bear in the research design through a comparison of two age groups of girls. This comparative approach can help to understand changes at transitional periods.

Overall, the life course perspective will help in exploring Chinese adolescent girls' experiences of growing up, how they perceive themselves as teenage girls, and also, their relationships with significant others, especially their fathers.

3.3 Identity and Gender

According to social construction theory, people's identities are formed through an on-going process of social interactions. Similarly, gendered identity is not simply a category that people belong to but instead it is formed through active engagement with the social context and gender roles (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Therefore, gender identity is not fixed and it varies over time as people respond to changing gender norms and engage in everyday life.

The concept of constructed gendered identities is relevant to both daughters and fathers in a changing society. In China, as women increasingly participate in the labor market and their growing economic power contributes financially to the family, traditional notions of the male breadwinner and paternal masculinities may develop new meanings (discussed in previous chapters). In addition, being only children may have also changed girls' perceptions of being daughters and young women. In order to identify and disentangle values of fatherhood and girlhood in Chinese society, my study explores how fathers and daughters see their roles as fathers and daughters, and how they negotiate changing social norms and apply them in their family lives.

3.3.1 Masculinities, Fatherhood, and Care

Fatherhood is a term that associates with the 'rights, duties, responsibilities and statuses that are attached to fathers, as well as discursive terrain around good and bad fathers' (Hobson & Morgan, 2002, p. 11). How men understand their role as fathers and what it means to them are two of the key influences on their paternal practice in family lives (McBride et al., 2005; Salway, Chowbey, & Clarke, 2009).

Fatherhood is a social construction and it changes across time, contexts and cultures. As discussed in Chap. 2, fatherhood in traditional Chinese families emphasizes parental authority. However, in contemporary Shanghai, society stresses both traditional views of male strength through work and affectionate caring at home. Men in Shanghai have a reputation for being henpecked, a subject which has been much discussed in public and in the media. The column *Ah, Shanghaiman*, published in a popular Chinese newspaper from 1996 to 1998, in which the Taiwan-born novelist Ying Tai Long described her observations of Shanghaiman, provoked much debate (Long, 1998). The stereotypical Shanghaiman who is devoted to family life, was either strongly criticized by many for not being manly (Qin, 2004), or highly praised for caring for his wife and children so lovingly (Liu, 2003). The concept of being an involved and affectionate father, therefore, is not an unfamiliar notion to many fathers living in Shanghai. Therefore, there exist both private and public realms of masculinity (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2006). However, it also puts a strain on Shanghai fathers who are trying hard to live up to contemporary ‘involved’ paternal norms. In addition, as Chinese culture values men’s power, status and authority, the question is raised about the extent to which the fathers in my study feel they are shaping their own identities.

The obligation and responsibility dimensions of care are very important aspects of care. Many scholars argue that care is a deeply gendered concept and that there are gendered moral norms for motherhood and fatherhood (McDowell, Ray, Perrons, Fagan, & Ward, 2005; Tronto, 1994). In addition, labour and cost are involved in the process of care (Daly & Lewis, 1999; Hilary, 1983). In most Western countries, as discussed in Chap. 2, the traditional breadwinner role of fathers did not fade away with women’s increasing participation in the labour market. Although empirical studies show that fathers are willing to be and are more involved, women are still the ones mostly responsible for childrearing (Chap. 2). Fathers do ‘care about’ their children, but the ‘caring for’ which involves physical work is still left for the mothers to do. The practice of care is often socially negotiated in particular circumstances and what parents do in practice may not always be congruent with the moral values accepted and expected by particular social groups and society. For the mothers, the moral commitment for the children often leads them to choose what is best for their children when they make decisions about taking up paid employment (McDowell et al., 2005; Williams, 2004). Although fathers recognize their obligations, they do not see spending time with children as a useful indicator of their responsibility and commitment to their children but for their jobs, according to a qualitative study interviewing 25 professional fathers (Dermott, 2005).

3.3.2 Adolescent Identity and Gender

One important feature of adolescence is the development of identity (Erikson, 1968). Gidden’s concept of identity focuses on individual creativity and freedom and provides a useful perspective. He argues that “[S]elf identity is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood in terms of his or her biography” (1991, p. 53). However, the fact that adolescents are often perceived by the media and parents to be rebellious and seeking more independence means that these perceptions can be transferred to become part of young people's "own construction of self" (Weller, 2006, p. 104). As a result, adolescents may adopt the "displaying" way of fulfilling people's construction of the teenage stereotype, intensifying when circumstances change, including the development of new relationships during the transition to adulthood (Finch, 2007). This negative view of adolescents has been challenged by other scholars, especially in terms of their relationships with parents (Gillies, McCarthy, & Holland, 2001; Langford, Lewis, Solomon, & Warin, 2001; McFall & Garrington, 2011). They argue that the relationships between adolescents and parents are not as unstable and out of control as some suggest; instead most adolescents see their families positively as loving, caring, helpful, and trustworthy. Moreover, in one study both young people and parents reported that their relationships improved as they grew up (Gillies et al., 2001). Instead of looking at young people through a problematic lens, we can also see them experiencing a process of growing up (Williams, 2002).

Gender is one of the most important aspects of a young person's identity. While young people are experiencing many physical changes, they also embrace the social practice of gender (Connell, 2005). Feminist scholars also argue that gender is something people do or perform, rather than something they have (Cameron, 1989; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This approach emphasises the gender as an active process that is created through the interaction with society. Feminist and youth researchers also found that the material, cultural, and social resources available within particular family environments are still important in terms of adolescents' choices (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Thomson, Henderson, & Holland, 2003). For example, a study of girlhood and the transition to adulthood suggests that the girls, who were mostly from upper and middle class families, were able to make their own choices and pursue their educational and career ambitions (Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2002). In addition, it is often difficult to create a balance between being a caring daughter and an autonomous young person (Aapola et al., 2005).

Adolescent girls' appearance is also a key aspect of young people's identity. In western societies teenage girls tend to be more concerned about their body appearance, and at the same time, they are actively involved in activities such as shopping and make up (Olson, 2006). Adolescent dissatisfaction with body image is widely acknowledged in the west, for both boys and girls (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2007; Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006; Meland, Haugland, & Breidablik, 2007) and a recent study of Chinese adolescents found dissatisfaction was also prevalent among Chinese adolescents (Li, Hu, Ma, Wu, & Ma, 2005).

Romantic experiences start to occur during adolescence, and this becomes one of the profound social changes in the life course for girls (Furman, Low, & Ho, 2009; Jamieson, 1999). Parents may be more concerned for girls because of a heightened concern for safety (Way & Gillman, 2000). As girls are going through adolescence they start to become more interested in romantic relationships. It therefore raises tensions between their dreams of romantic relationships and their parents' control.

Cultural context also has a particular salience in relation to young people's construction of self. As O'Connor suggests, "Cultural influences on constructions of the self in late modernity do not occur in a vacuum. The shape they take is affected by the existing social and cultural context and the constructions of self that are current at that time" (O'Connor, 2006, p. 119). On a deeper level, young people in contemporary Chinese cities like Shanghai have moved to a modern lifestyle that is not very different from the lifestyle in western countries. Ideas from the west that arrive with globalization may affect the attitudes of young Chinese about themselves if they experience more open and wider aspects of gender identity. A good example of this is the rise of the star Yu Chun Li, who won the singing contest Super Girl in China. She became very popular in the media and with the public (especially in her own adolescent age group) because of, rather than despite, her masculine hair style and appearance, which challenged traditional female stereotypes (Jakes, 2005). However, some traditional Chinese values, such as the importance of family and authority, may not have faded away as Chinese society has developed.

3.4 Individualization and Collectivism

The theory of individualization is useful in explaining the changing patterns of life courses of young people as they go through transitions to adulthood. These transitions include the lengthening of adolescence and a blurred dividing line between childhood and adulthood (Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Giddens, 1991, 1994). These changes mean that young people's pathways are no longer seen as fixed due to changes in the labour market, education, and family relations (Beck, 1992). Some research suggests that young people's biographies are "increasingly reflexive in that young people can now choose between different lifestyles, sub-cultures and identities" (Valentine, 2003, p. 42). Beck further suggests that individuals in society are now free from normative constraints such as social class and gender, which are two of the greatest changes in modern society (ibid.).

Following the individualization orientation, new kinds of intimate relationships become more diverse, fluid and individualistic (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1992). The term *pure relationship* was introduced by Giddens to indicate changes in people's close relationships with others (Giddens, 1992). He argued that the pure relationship depends upon self-disclosure and can be seen as a process of active trust and opening oneself up to another (Giddens, 1999). In this sense, an intimate relationship is based on mutual knowledge and understanding. Gidden's pure relationship is said to apply to sexual relationships, parent–child relations, and friendships. As in other pure relationships, it seems that parent and child have equal rights and there is an open dialogue between them. In this sense, children's voices are expected to count, even though parents are entitled to have authority over children (Gillies, 2003).

However, there are many criticisms of the theory of individualization (Bagnoli & Ketokivi, 2009; Brannen & Nilsen, 2002, 2005; Plumridge & Thomson, 2003; Thomson et al., 2002). Brannen and Nilsen (2002) draw on empirical cross national evidence to show that young people have a range of orientations to the future which are strongly shaped by their social class origins and family resources, the point they have reached in the life course and the opportunity structures of the societies in which they live. The theoretical point they make is that a focus on how young people express agency tends to neglect the social context in which they make sense of their lives and their opportunities for action. In addition, many feminists argue that young people's identities are still strongly influenced by their family backgrounds, as noted before.

Furthermore, it is too early to tell whether the significant social changes brought by globalization are likely to produce a process of individualization in contemporary Chinese society, particularly given the fact that the concept of "self is different across cultural boundaries and that cultural experience conditions the self as much as it conditions values, ways of thinking and social relations" (Lam, 2007, p. 11). China's cultural heritage and its social and political ideologies should be regarded as important sources that shape people's view of themselves. The two dominant philosophies, Confucianism and Taoism, have substantial influence on the shaping of Chinese conception of self. According to Confucianism, the concept of self derives from his relations with others, especially his family and community. The *dawo* (big me) should be placed before *xiaowo* (small me). Individuals are urged to give up oneself for the benefit of a larger entity, such as family and society (Lau, 1996). Although Taoism emphasises that the self is part of the universe and the importance of letting go of oneself, both Confucianism and Taoism reach a common understanding that the individual self belongs to an organic whole (ibid.).

In the book, *iChina: The Rise of the Individual in Modern Chinese Society* many scholars argued that Chinese society has gradually shifted to a more individualized society in many aspects of people's lives such as young people's choices of work, love, and family (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010). It is true that people's lives after the Open Door policy have more freedom compared to the Maoist period and even prior to that. Yan (2010, p. 502) described individuals' lives under Maoist socialism as follows,

> … an individual's life course was clear and standard, and conditioned by the institutional constraints. The political labelling of being from either a good class or a bad class determined the individual's political career, the birth place prescribed the individual's status as an urban or rural resident, and the local leadership made decisions about to which work unit and type of work the individual would be assigned. In terms of everyday life, there were politically and ideologically charged standards about what to wear, whom to date, when to get married, how to raise children, and so forth.

Compared to that period, young people in big cities like Shanghai are now embracing a wider range of influences through magazines, television, and the Internet, which are all obvious manifestations of globalization (Watson, 2004). More importantly, young people have much stronger consumer power than previous generations, due to globalization and the rapid socio-economic development of China (Liying, 2003; McNeal & Yeh, 2003; Sun, 2003). However, the extent to which social and economic change can bring freedom for this young generation is yet a question to be explored. As Yan himself noted, individualization in China is a situation mixed with pre-modern, modern and late modern, which is "characterized by the management of the party-state and the absence of cultural democracy, the absence of a welfare state regime, and the absence of classic individualism and political liberalism" (Yan, 2010, p. 510).

In addition, many argue that the roots of collectivism which encouraged family obligations, group expectations, and authority figures are still strong and that this encourages interdependence and connectedness among people, especially in terms of parent–child relationships (Peterson, Cobas, Bush, Supple, & Wilson, 2005). Take education as an example, many young people nowadays have more choices and opportunities. However, at the same time, their obligations to fulfil their parents' expectations still push them into fierce competition to succeed. Another example is young people's self identity within a particular culture. The Chinese people's sense of self identity usually emphasizes the great self which focuses on the relatedness and interdependence of the self instead of the small self (Chap. 1); therefore identity extends to a broader community of kinship networks and families (Lam, M.S.W, & A.C.S.W, 1997). Similarly, the independence of Chinese adolescents is not separate from the harmony of the family and the importance of the significant others such as parents, which are seen as part of their self-identity (Yeh, Liu, Huang, & Yang, 2005).

In a complex and changing society like China, there is no clear divide between individualization and collectivism. Instead the two may often coexist with one another, as demonstrated in the popular semi-autobiographical novel *Shanghai Baby* (Wei, 2001) and a doctoral thesis on Shanghai youths' identity relating to television and culture (Weber, 1999). In terms of the increasing relevance of the western theory of individualization to a society like China, we may conclude that for such theory to have relevance it must be seen in the context of a strong collectivism that permeates many domains of the society.

3.5 Parental Control and Family Negotiation

According to Foucault, power is always a factor in human relationships and those who have power exercised over them also exercise power themselves (Foucault & Gordon, 1980). In parent–child relationship, parents always have the ultimate power, even while children are growing into adults (Allatt, 1996). The existing inequality of structural and psychological power between parents and children means it is unrealistic to expect parents and children to be equal and thus to be totally open with one another when communicating as discussed earlier (Jamieson, 1999).

Morgan's concept of family practice, which emphasises individuals "doing family" provides a useful lens to understand this changing family structure (Morgan, 1999). Instead of seeing family as a static form, family practice stresses the importance of practicing family activities. In terms of the exercise of power between parents and children, children often negotiate with their parents to get what they want. Since parents and children have different and sometimes opposing goals, there is an ongoing process in which each tries to get their way (Finch, 1989). This does not always result in full agreement between all parties but nevertheless it is through negotiation that young people may gain more independence from their parents. Similarly, parents negotiate with their children to gain control over their children's behaviour.

The process of negotiation can be either explicit or implicit (Finch & Mason, 1993). Explicit negotiation is open discussion, prompted by specific needs and conducted in a conscious way, whereas implicit negotiation takes place without direct verbal communication about the issue (ibid.). Empirical studies have shown that parents often work out new ways of communicating to exercise their control and monitor children's activities (Brannen, 1996). For example, parents' knowledge of their children's activities and whereabouts can be a way of maintaining control over their daily lives. In addition, by expressing concern, parents not only convey their affection to their children but demand reciprocity (Allatt, 1996). Expressions of worry can take many forms, such as "nagging, interfering, fussing, insisting on times to come in, helping with homework" (Allatt, 1996, p. 134). In return, children may try to reciprocate this care and concern by doing things that can ease their parents' minds, such as informing family members about their whereabouts. However, children's choices about whether, what, and how much to disclose are important factors in their side of the family negotiation process (Darling, Cumsille, & Loreto Martínez, 2007; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Adolescents can gain a certain degree of autonomy by concealing information from their parents (Brannen, 1996; Solomon, Warin, Lewis, & Langford, 2002).

To understand father–daughter relationships, it is useful to look at how much time they spend with each other, what fathers and daughters do in their daily lives, and how they interact with each other on a daily basis. Adolescent girls, who are seeking more autonomy, are trying to get their own way in the areas of making friends, using the Internet and romantic relationships. However, fathers may wish to retain authority and power over their daughters in these aspects. They may even wish to increase this control, due to concerns for their daughters' safety.

3.6 Summary

The study uses the framework of time: historical time, generational time, and life course time to explore father–daughter relationships in urban Chinese family. The concepts of adolescence and young people's identity relate mainly to life course time, as it is seen as a transitional stage in growing up. The chapter on being a teenage girl mostly draws on theories related to these concepts (Chap. 4). Conceptualizing fatherhood in contemporary Chinese family, I have argued, has to take account of historical time as well as life course time; the historical changes experienced by this generation of fathers have relevance for fathers' own life course and for their expectations as fathers for their daughters. These different perspectives of time are used to construct fathers' and daughters' perceptions of fatherhood as examined in Chap. 5. The framework of time is again used to inform the chapter on family practices in Chap. 6.

In addition, the concepts of individualism and collectivism suggest different forces that shape an individual's life choices. Both the Chinese and western concepts of individualization are useful as they give insights into how aspects of people's lives have changed in recent decades.

However, empirical research suggests the coexistence of individualism and collectivism in contemporary China. Together, collectivism and individualism provide useful theoretical tools to examine the degree to which fathers and daughters have developed their own biographies under the influence of globalization and the mass media. This is also explored in Chaps. 4 and 5.

In Chap. 4, the concepts of adolescence as a life course, adolescent identity, and gender are outlined to explore what girls perceive to be an adolescent girl and a female only child. I'll examine whether girls in my study see adolescents as rebellious teenagers; how the life course of adolescence affects their relationship with their parents; how they perceive issues of gender; and what their attitudes are towards romantic relationships.

The concepts of fatherhood and masculinities are outlined to examine fathers' and daughters' understandings of what fatherhood means. In addition, the ethics of care and fathering involves not only emotional feelings but more importantly, involves taking responsibility as the caregiver. Chapter 5 examines fathers' and daughters' constructions of fatherhood by looking at being a father of the 1990s generation and the perception of fathering from both fathers and daughters.

As I shall show in Chap. 5, as parents, fathers do care about their daughters. However, how much fathers actually take care of their daughters is another matter (see Chap. 6). The concepts of fathering and family practice are used to examine these issues and also how fathers and daughters interact with each other in everyday life. In addition, this investigation draws on a temporal perspective of time: present time, life course time, and generational time. The present time looks at the time fathers spend together with their daughters. Life course time explores adolescence and the differences experienced (or not) between the two age groups of girls. Generation time deals with the interactions between fathers and daughters with a particular focus on communication. In Chap. 7, the concept of negotiation is employed to explore three areas of girls' personal lives where there are potential conflicts with their fathers: going out and making friends; use of Internet at home, and romantic relationships. The concept of negotiation helps to investigate how fathers exercise their power over their daughters and whether explicit negotiation and implicit negotiation are used.

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4

Being a Modern Teenage Girl and Relationships with Parents

To understand the relationships between fathers and their teenage daughters, it is necessary to investigate how 1990s generation girls see themselves as being teenagers in modern China, and how they see themselves as daughters. The rapid and profound changes in Chinese society in recent decades have had a profound impact on young peoples' self identity and their generational relationships. On a deeper level, young people in contemporary Chinese cities like Shanghai have moved to a modern lifestyle which is not very different from that in western countries, where the ideas of individualism and materialism are highly valued. The society that the Chinese teenager lives in is embracing a wider range of influences through magazines, television, and the Internet, which are all obvious manifestations of globalization (Watson, 2004). Therefore, the emergence of globalization unavoidably influences the relationships between individuals and their social worlds, including children and their families. Anthony Giddens suggested that the same trends can be found everywhere, even though details are different from society to society (Giddens, 1999). However, some traditional Chinese values, such as the importance

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of family and authority, may not have faded away as Chinese society has developed.

In this chapter, girls' identities will be explored through the two lenses of gender and culture. Gender is one of the most important aspects of a young person's construction of their self-identity. While young people are experiencing many physical changes, they also embrace the social practice of gender (Connell, 2005). This is where gender explicitly enters into the discussion. Cultural context also has a particular salience in relation to young people's construction of self. As O'Connor suggests, "Cultural influences on constructions of the self in late modernity do not occur in a vacuum. The shape they take is affected by the existing social and cultural context and the constructions of self that are current at that time" (2006b, p. 119).

The social and cultural context of contemporary Chinese society is particularly interesting due to the intersection of a long tradition of male superiority and the implementation of the One Child policy. Gender-specific beliefs about men and women, which preach that women are subordinate, are deeply rooted in the Confucian philosophy that has been influential for over two thousand years (Chap. 3). These still influence Chinese people's lives through parents' strongly gender-stereotypical expectations of girls and boys (Liu, 2006). Liu's study reveals that parents still hold strong beliefs about girls being gentle, soft, and oriental, while boys are expected to be manly and achieve great success. Parents' gender-specific expectations have an impact on their children's individual identities. Cheung argues that the strength of gender stereotypes also increases with age since secondary school children have strong perceptions of typical male and female roles (Cheung, 1996). Despite the survival of traditional attitudes to gender roles, urban girls may experience the transformation of gendered practice and the changing perception of daughters as a result of the One Child Policy. The old saying, "married daughter, splashed water", which refers to the fact that a married woman becomes part of her husband's family, does not apply to urban families anymore, since daughters now stay in close contact with their families when they are married and continue their filial obligations. Instead, the new common saying is "A daughter is like a little quilted vest to warm her parents' hearts" (Shi, 2009).

This chapter touches on the theories of adolescence and individualization outlined in Chap. 2, focusing on adolescent girls' identities as teenage girls and daughters. Gidden's theory is focused on individual creativity and freedom, in terms of young people's identities and biographies. Thus, it raises the question of whether the young girls in contemporary China have the freedom to create their own individualized self. In addition, adolescence as an important life course stage is also situated in particular times and contexts. Confucianism's idea of self, which has a strong collective orientation, also provides some useful background (Chap. 3), which could lead me to investigate whether—and if so how much—late modernity and social change has formed the current adolescent generation's self identity in a Chinese society. Therefore, three questions will be explored:

1. How do girls see themselves as they are going through their adolescent years? And how do they see the changes as they are growing up?
2. How do girls build relationships with their mothers, fathers, and friends? And do these vary across the two cohorts?
3. Do girls think being a daughter is different from being a son?

The data in this chapter is drawn from girls' interviews, girls' questionnaire surveys, and girls' focus groups. Drawing on girls' own voices, it provides close observations of girls' own narratives of their roles and perceptions of being a teenage girl and a daughter at home, especially being their fathers' daughters.

4.1 The Only Child Generation: Are Only Children Any Different from Children with Siblings?

The singleton children of today's China enjoy a wealthier lifestyle than previous generations and are often described as being more self-centered and over-protected by their parents. There is a stereotype that the 1990s generation is spoiled, selfish, and lazy, which was also suggested by Feng Xiaotian's study, in which both parents and children reported that they thought only children were lazier than children with siblings (Feng, 2000). In addition, singletons were found to be less responsible and their practical skills were poorer (ibid.). Being the only child in the family probably means that they are the center of family life and thus more individualistic. However, only children also have a greater desire for companionship, as many feel lonely without siblings. Thus, peer relations play an even more important role in only children's lives. Only children were found to be quicker and better at making friends in a new environment (ibid.). This highlights the only child's need to be with other children of the same age. Drawing on a study by Sun Yunxiao, there was a strong desire from only children to have intimate relationships with friends. The stronger the need to make friends with other people, the happier they were with others, the more cooperative with friends, and the more respectful to other people (Sun & Zhao, 2005). Therefore, it seems that although the 1990s generation children were brought up in an individualized and child-centered family environment, they have a strong need to be part of friendship groups with their peers.

According to the questionnaire survey, 88.4 % of girls were only children (*N* = 766). Those whose parents came from outside Shanghai were more likely to have siblings compared to girls whose household registration was from Shanghai. Of the 580 Shanghainese girls, only 7.8 % had siblings, whilst of the 94 girls with non-Shanghai status, 37.2 % had siblings. Children who have siblings are more likely to live in rented accommodation than are only children, with 30.2 % of children having siblings living in rented homes, compared with only 11.2 % of only children. There were no significant differences between only children and children with siblings, in terms of: happiness with life in general; happiness at school; getting on well with girls and boys at school; and educational achievement they think they can achieve in the near future. However, more only children thought they needed to change to improve themselves, with 26.7 % of only children compared to 14.6 % of girls with siblings. Also, 89.5 % of only children plan to go to university compared with 79.8 % of children with siblings.

In the questionnaire, girls with siblings were more likely to do things with people other than their fathers and mothers. For example, they were more likely to go to school with other people, come back home with other people, and to talk about their studies with other people. Girls with siblings not only spent significantly more time with family members other than their mothers or fathers, they were also more likely to get on best with people in the family who were not their mother or father. Having siblings changed the dynamic within the family relationship. However, there were no differences between only children and children with siblings in terms of friendships outside the family, including talking about their studies with friends, talking about hobbies with friends, talking about music with friends, talking about emotional problems, and the receipt of help when they were upset.

Fathers with more children were also found to be more likely to help with their children's studies, with 31.0 % of girls with siblings reporting that they received "a lot of help" from their fathers, compared to 16 % of only children. Fathers with only children were also less involved in making decisions about whether or not their daughter should go to after-school classes. 11.9 % of only children reported that their fathers were the ones who decided whether they should go to an after school club, compared with 24.7 % of girls with siblings.

Among the eight only children interviewed, only one girl did not wish she had a sibling. She said she did not want to share the love of her parents. For the majority, who wished they had one or more siblings, the desire for companionship is evident in their narratives. Feeling lonely as the only child is the main reason for wishing to have a sibling. Girl Shen, who was the only interviewee who did have a sibling, also saw herself as one of the only child generation. She described her situation: "since many of us are only children, thus we could get on better with others. Because we have this kind of need, so we could get on well with others well." Being the children of dual-earner families also contributed to the fact that parents did not have much time with their children (Chap. 6). Therefore, the children were longing for someone they could spend time with.

Beyond that, they were also longing for love from siblings. Most only children get endless love and care from their parents. Why should they feel they needed more care? Maybe the care from people of a similar age is different from that of parents. Maybe it is also the companionship of people of a similar age that only children miss the most. As Girl Zhan explained: "Sometimes, I just wish I could get more care. And also have someone to play with. If we are at a similar age, we will have more things to talk about."

The desire for siblings also reflects the power relationships between the only children and their parents. For the girls whose parents were very controlling, having other children in the family could create a power balance between the parents and the children. At the same time, parents may feel safer letting the child do things they wished to do. Girl Nina imagined her life with siblings in this way, "I think it would be great. I wouldn't be that lonely. Sometimes I want to go out but my parents don't allow me. We don't have a computer at home, they are worried that I will get bad. Then I can only watch TV. If I were with other kids, then I could go out, and my parents would feel safe to let us out. So we could go out and buy clothes, and that would be great. And also we could live together. I would like this kind of life."

The desire to have more siblings may also contribute to the fact that girls hope their parents will not focus too much on their lives. As one girl revealed, the reason for her wish to have more siblings was that "[If I have siblings], then they won't focus on me all the time. I can have a little bit of relief." Having more siblings may give the girls more freedom and space since the parents' energy and time would be diluted by more children.

4.2 Changes Going Through Girls' Adolescence

In the following sections, accounts given by the girls themselves in the interviews and questionnaires demonstrate how the girls construct their own identities while they are going through adolescence. The following themes will be included: being confident and happy with lives, being rebellious, caring about their appearance, and finally, relationships with other young people, including their views of romantic relationships.

4.2.1 Being Confident and Happy with Life

Growing confidence is regarded as an important feature of being a teenager. Four of the nine girl interviewees mentioned that adolescents have their own thoughts. In addition, a feeling of superiority is evident. When Girl Li talked about teenagers nowadays, we can see that there was a sense of superiority in her narrative.

> *Because we are young people, we have the inherent nature of superiority. You know that you are at the time full of vigor and vitality. And you know that you are growing, you are becoming better. You will then be very confident.*
>
> *[Girl Li, aged 17 when interviewed, father had a Masters degree, worked as manager in a trading company]*

The girls' questionnaire survey also suggests that the girls were quite confident and happy with their lives. Most girls reported that they were happy with life in general (see Table 4.1). However, the differences between younger and older groups are statistically significant in terms of their agreement with being happy about life in general. Similarly, most girls were happy with their school life: with 4.6 % of the girls were not happy, 7.8 % of them were totally happy, 28.9 % were very happy, and 58.7 % were generally happy at school. There were also significant differences between the younger girls and the older girls, with more younger girls being happy with their school life.

4.2.2 Appearance

As Finch suggests, "one's actions have to be both conveyed to and understood by relevant others if those actions are to be effective as constituting 'family' practices" (2007, p. 66). Finch goes on to argue that the urge to display intensifies as particular circumstances change, including new relationships and transition to adulthood (ibid.). As adolescent girls'

Table 4.1 Comparison of the responses of the younger and older cohorts to the question of: I am happy with life in general

	Age group	Strongly disagree	Mostly disagree	Generally agree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree
Happy with life	Younger girls	2.6 %	8.6 %	37.5 %	28.3 %	23.0 %
	Older girls	4.2 %	11.3 %	46.3 %	28.8 %	9.4 %

bodies and concomitant social roles develop, adolescence can become a period of intense reflection upon body image. Adolescent girls' appearance is one of the key aspects of their construction of themselves. Young people's body image is socially formed through interactions with wider social-cultural factors, such as peer groups, media influences (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006), and parents (Flaake, 2005). It is reported that adolescents are generally dissatisfied with their current bodies (Ata, Ludden, & Lally, 2007; Meland, Haugland, & Breidablik, 2007). Teenagers' health related issues, such as being overweight due to their eating habits and preferences, are increasingly reported to be problematic, and it has become a public concern in the west (Meland et al., 2007). At the same time, both boys and girls wish they had a better and more attractive body. According to a Norwegian national survey there were gender differences in relation to young people's evaluations of their body images and their satisfaction with their bodily appearance (ibid.). The results showed that girls, especially those in the older age group, were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their body weight and appearance, compared with boys and girls from the younger group (ibis.).

However, Chinese children seem to be more positive about themselves than their western counterparts, despite the influence of the media. A study conducted in 12 Chinese cities investigated 3284 only children aged 10–15. It suggested that most were happy with their looks, body, and health: 34.7 % of children were totally happy with their appearance, and 42.1 % children were somewhat happy with their appearance (Sun & Zhao, 2005).

The general positivity of Chinese girls' body image was born out in the survey data in my study. 57.4 % of girls generally agreed, 14.0 % mostly agreed and 9.6 % strongly agreed that they were happy with their own appearance ($n = 763$). However, the differences between younger and older groups were statically significant, with older girls being less happy with their appearance (Table 4.2).

In the interview, a few girls discussed their feelings about their appearance while going through adolescence. As they grew up, they became more sensitive about their bodies. Some also associated caring about appearance with being rebellious. As Girl Liu commented: "Nowadays, according to my own observation, most of the girls in my class like

Table 4.2 Comparison of the responses of the younger and older cohorts to the question of: I am happy with my body

Happy with own body	Strongly disagree	Mostly disagree	Generally agree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree
Younger cohort	3.3 %	13.7 %	53.5 %	16.7 %	12.8 %
Older cohort	1.3 %	20.7 %	63.1 %	10.0 %	4.9 %

dressing up, and they care a lot about their appearance. But maybe because it is during adolescence, therefore, they are very rebellious." She went on to give other reasons why girls were more aware of their own appearance: "Maybe there are different reasons. Some people are following the celebrities, and some people are in love."

Being aware of their own appearance and trying to dress up was not only associated with rebellion or girls' fantasies of having a romantic relationship. Often, it was peer group competition that provoked the girls to show off their beauty or dress up. This sometimes caused mixed feelings for the girls. It is obvious from the extract below that the two girls speaking are resentful of their classmates who dress up to be glamorous and attract attention.

> *B: Sometimes I see Zhang[another girl in her class]*
> *A: It makes me want to vomit when I see her so ostentatious.*
> *B: Not only ostentatious, she just looks like bewitching evil.*
> *A: Yes, when we go out to do morning exercises, she has holes in her ears. Then she wears earrings. Our class teacher saw it and said to her, you are like a gangster, take them out. Then she took them out, but she put them back soon after, because because*
> *A: She is very rebellious now.*
> *[Girl Wang and her friend, younger group]*

It seems that deliberately trying to attract attention is also regarded as a form of rebellion. Being deliberately glamorous is against the traditional Chinese idea of beauty, which is supposed to be more natural beauty. The girls' words suggest that the 1990s generation of girls still advocate the old Chinese view of beauty. Trying too hard to show off one's beauty is not widely acceptable. This creates a dilemma for the teenage girls. On the one hand, they wish they could be pretty themselves. On the other, they are afraid of standing out. By positioning themselves in opposition to others who have a particular style, adolescent girls negotiate their own identity in terms of their style and appearance. Interestingly, in the interviews, none of the girls promoted the idea of dressing up and they seemed to prefer to comment on their peers' appearance instead of their own.

It is opinions about each other's appearance, rather than about their own, that seems to cause the most unhappiness. This can result in peer pressure to appear a certain way, and not every teenager feels comfortable keeping up and fitting in. Girl Cai showed mixed feelings about the peer pressure to keep up with other teenagers who loved dressing up, since she did not pay much attention on her own appearance. She would feel uncomfortable if she started to dress up like other teenage girls. More importantly, her parents did not like her to pay much attention to her own appearance. However, because her classmates called her "old lady," she felt heavy pressure from her peer group. Therefore, she faced a dilemma. On one side, her parents were trying hard to prevent her from dressing in a more youthful or attractive way. On the other, her peer group was marginalizing her because she did not fit in with them. She reported that she had had an argument with her parents when she wanted to go to the hairdresser to have a haircut like all other girls. Her parents would not allow her to make any changes because they were afraid that her attention to her appearance may be due to a fantasy of having a romantic relationship.

In summary, while the girls seem to be mostly happy with their own body images, validation and/or acceptance of their appearance by parents and peers is still a crucial issue. Unfortunately it seems that it is not always possible for these girls to please both parents and peers, and the pressure from either side can cause distress.

4.2.3 Romantic Fantasies, Cross-Gender Friendships, and Romantic Experiences

During adolescence, young people start to develop their ideas about romantic relationships, some start to have romantic fantasies, and more and more have romantic relationships (Cavanagh, 2007). Considerable evidence in the west has shown increasing romantic relationships as children progress through the development stages of adolescence (Collins, 2003), and about 60 % of young people report that, by the age of 16, they have had at least one romantic relationship (Carver, Joyner, & Udry, 2003).

Socio-cultural factors have been found to have an impact on the development of adolescents' involvement in romantic relationships. A comparative study of Canada and China suggests Chinese adolescents' later development as they displayed lower levels of romantic experience and had fewer close romantic relationships, compared with their Canadian counterparts (Li, Connolly, Jiang, Pepier, & Craig, 2010). Many Chinese adolescents may not be actively involved in romantic relationships, but may still have romantic fantasies or encounter problems related to the opposite sex. This is a new and challenging experience, as Girl Shen confessed: "Girls, anyway, anyway, confront more problems. When we were in the junior high school, we only had issues related with classmates, teachers, and families. Now, we have extra issues with boys. Yes, have more issues now."

In my study it seems it is not only socio-cultural factors, such as family influences, which have an impact on girls' involvement in romantic relationships but, more importantly, girls' own expectations. Among nine girl interviewees, only one openly talked about her relationship with her boyfriend. One other interviewee admitted that she had once had a boyfriend. The rest, both in the younger and older cohorts, thought they were too young to have romantic relationships. Surprisingly, none of the girls from the interview approved of love during adolescence. Even the girl who did have a boyfriend did not think it would last long. It seemed that the girls had quite a practical approach to romantic relationships and they clearly thought they knew when it was not suitable for a romantic relationship. Three girls [two in the older group, one in the younger group] strongly expressed their disapproval of having romantic relationships during adolescence. They did not think these were "true love" and thought it was too early to fall in love. Girl Shen commented: "I feel like I won't fall in love at least during secondary school. I have just set foot in society. We are not mature. I think it must be very painful to fall in love. I think maybe when we get to university. Year One or Year Two will be better." Girl Zhan also expressed her attitude towards romantic relationships. She thought that falling in love during one's adolescent years could not be serious: "I just feel that they [classmates who were dating] are not serious, Umm… The relationship is just a little bit deeper than good friends." She believed that romantic relationships during adolescence were deeper than friendship but not true love.

However, adolescents are curious about the opposite sex and sometimes they may be forced to confront issues related to romantic relationships or cross-gender issues, especially when their peer groups put pressure on them. Dunphy's theory provides an intriguing perspective on how this happens among adolescents (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000). Large, mixed-sex networks based on small groups of same-sex close friends provide teenagers with "access to romantic partners and a context in which preliminary patterns of dating can be initiated" (Connolly et al., 2000, p. 1395). Not all teenagers who are members of these mixed-sex peer groups necessarily wish to make use of the social network to find themselves romantic relationships as opposed to purely platonic ones. However, these members may find themselves surrounded by peers who are very excited about romantic relationships, quick to make assumptions about other's relationships and keen to discuss them. This inevitably puts some pressure on the teenagers who wish to avoid gossip but still want to have non-romantic friendships with the opposite sex. Girl Shen described her own experience: "In my opinion, I have a very ordinary relationship with boys. But some people who have big mouths will say other things, even though he and I know there is nothing happening. But I still feel annoyed. When nothing is happening and others are talking about you, you will always feel annoyed. It is like a scandal."

It is not only the teenagers themselves, but also the teachers who are sensitive about the issue of adolescent romance. Girl Chen revealed that some teachers deliberately rearranged the seating order in the classroom to prevent girls and boys from sitting close to one another, thus creating a sensitive atmosphere. Girl Chen did not approve. She used the word *horrible* to describe the situation.

Through the lens of their reflexivity, the girls saw being adolescent as mainly positive: they perceived themselves as creative and energetic and were generally happy with their lives and bodies. Moreover, caring about their appearance was a way to express their desire for individual identity and independence. Therefore, many girls associated their awareness of their appearance with rebelliousness. On the other hand, most girls did not approve of the idea of having romantic relationships during secondary school, although the few who did were not prevented by their parents' active disapproval. Overall, the development of adolescence seems to be complex and challenging for parents and their authority may be tested.

4.3 Intimate Relationships: Peers, Mothers, and Fathers

4.3.1 Relationships with Peers, Mothers, and Fathers

It is well recognized that peer relationships play an increasingly important role in adolescents' lives, because they provide young people with important transition contexts that let them develop their social skills (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). For the young generation who grew up without siblings, peer groups played an even more important role in their lives. Overall, most girls got on well with other girls and boys at school. There were 32.1 %, 33.4 %, and 30.0 % girls who reported that they generally agree, mostly agree, and strongly agree that they got on well with other girls ($n = 763$). In terms of relations with boys, fewer girls agreed strongly that they got on very well, with only 10.8 % girls thinking so. However, there were still 18.1 % who mostly agree and 54.3 % who generally agree that they got on well with boys ($n = 762$). However, the differences between younger and older groups are statistically significant, in terms of their relationships with girls at school (but not with the boys): the older girls tend to get on better with girls at school.

The girls also reported talking with their friends about many things. From the questionnaire responses (Table 4.3), it was clear that girls talked mostly with their friends about hobbies (86.0 %), fashion (92.4 %), and emotions (69.5 %). However, girls still reported talking a lot with their fathers and mothers about study and future jobs.

There was an age difference between younger and older girls in terms of talking about hobbies with both mothers and fathers. Older girls reported talking less about hobbies with their mothers and fathers, compared with

Table 4.3 Girls' responses to the multiple choice question: "Who do you talk with?"

Percentage	Study	Hobbies	Future jobs	Fashion/music	Emotions
Mother	73.7	57.7	64.9	38.7	38.4
Father	60.7	47.6	55.0	20.3	15.5
Friends	77.3	86.0	58.7	92.4	69.5

Table 4.4 Girls' responses to the questions: "Who do you ask for help when you are upset/need pocket money/need someone to take you out/have problems with classmates, doing sports/have emotional problems?"

Percentage	Upset	Pocket money	Take me out	Problems with classmates	Sports	Emotional problems
Mother	45.3	65.1	71.1	41.4	31.0	37.2
Father	23.3	67.8	51.2	22.3	40.9	16.0
Friends	70.3	3.1	33.7	77.4	61.4	62.7

the younger cohort. Furthermore, older girls reported that they talked more about music and emotional problems with their friends, compared with younger girls.

In terms of asking for help, girls chose different people to get help from when it was needed, depending on the issue involved (Table 4.4). It seems that girls tended to ask both fathers and mothers for pocket money and to ask mothers to take them out. Generally, they turned to their friends when they were upset (70.3 %), had problems with their classmates (77.4 %), and had emotional problems (62.7 %). The girls also asked their friends to help them to do sports related activities (61.4 %) more than parents.

Compared with younger girls, older girls were less likely to ask for help from their fathers when they felt upset, had emotional problems, wanted to be taken out, and needed to do some exercises. However, there are smaller differences among the younger and older cohorts, in terms of seeking help from their mothers, with only two exceptions: compared with the younger girls, the older girls asked less help from their mothers when they needed to do some exercises, and they asked their mothers less often for pocket money. Similar to mothers, girls' relationships with their friends across two age groups were also more stable. There was only one cohort difference concerning girls seeking help from their friends. The older girls reported that they asked for more help from their friends when they had emotional problems, compared with the younger girls.

According to the girls' questionnaire survey, girls preferred to talk about many things, such as hobbies, fashions, and emotional problems, with their friends. This preference increased with age, with the older girls seeming to talk more and seek more help from their peers compared to the younger girls. However, mothers and fathers still played important roles in their lives and they communicated with each other about studies, hobbies, and future jobs. Also, girls from both cohorts reported that they sought a lot of help from mothers and friends. However, the older girls seemed to seek less help from their fathers in many aspects of their personal lives, compared with the younger cohort.

4.3.2 Being a Daughter, Not a Son

> *I heard from my mum, when I was born, how my dad reacted first was 'ah!' and then 'ha ha.' He gave a few hollow laughs and then said 'not bad, not bad.' It seems to me that he wanted a boy at the beginning, but now, he probably feels it doesn't matter anymore. After all, it's all his kids.*
>
> *[Girl Liu, younger group, father had a university degree and owned his own company]*

Girl Liu described vividly how her father reacted to the moment that she was born. Similarly, Girl Nina explained: "At that time, my grandfather was planning to throw me away, but my mum likes girls. My mum said if the first baby was a boy, then the second time she would want a girl. In the end, the first one was a girl. But she did not throw me away and she did not have another one." (The reason Girl Nina's family were able to think about having two children is that her mother is from a minority ethnic group. In China, minorities are legally allowed to have two children).

In the interviews, the girls were also asked to imagine what they thought would be different if they had been born as a boy. Seven out of nine girls said that being a daughter was different from being a son; only two girls said there was no difference. Girl Cai described the difference between a boy and girl this way: “Boys should be naughty, and I have quite a good temper, so I can control myself better.” This is in line with the research by Liu Fengshu (Liu, 2006), who found that boys were expected to accomplish great things, such as achieving high scores at school, while girls were expected to be gentle and soft, in other words, to be ladylike and feminine. This kind of gendered orientation does not only exist in Chinese society; Irish women were also found to stress traditional gender characteristics, such as being subordinate to men (O’Connor, 2006b).

However, two girls challenged the traditional image of girls. Because Girl Wang spent lots of time playing with boys, she felt she was more like a boy than a girl. Being a boy meant being naughty and active. Girl Chen had a very gender-neutral name, and said lots of people thought she was a boy when they saw her name. However, she wanted to keep her name because she did not like ones which were too girly. In her mind, being a girl was very troublesome and she did not always like the cute things that other girls liked. She reasoned that because of her name, she was more like a boy. From her narrative, we can see that the traditional cute and gentle girl was not what she wished to become.

Surprisingly, the girls took contradictory positions when asked whether they thought they would be better off as girls or boys. Two girls thought they were taken better care of simply because they were female. They had the impression that their fathers were very fond of them and took good care of them, while fathers were stricter with sons and beat them more often. As Girl Li said, “If I were a boy, he would not try to please me like now.” Meanwhile Girl Mei, who got into lots of trouble at school and wanted to quit, confessed that “If I were a boy, he must beat me very hard.” In contrast, one girl (Girl Nina) felt the opposite. She knew that her father would have preferred a boy and thought that he was stricter with her because she was a girl. Being brought up in the countryside, her father had very traditional values regarding boys and girls. As he was expecting an obedient daughter, he was demanding something from her that she could not always provide.

4.3.3 Good Daughters and Bad Daughters

Xiao (孝) is a word that means being respectful and obedient to parents, and it is one of the most important concepts of what it means to be a good child. This traditional filial piety is still crucial in modern family life, especially for daughters. Similar to Fong's study (Fong, 2007), some parents in my study still hold to the idea that daughters should be obedient, and they pass this idea on to their children. One girl wrote in her comments at the end of the questionnaire: "It is a common saying that a daughter is her parents' warmest cotton-padded jacket. I wish that I could grow up quickly and be able to fulfill my filial piety to my mum." In the interviews, both girls and fathers reflected on the importance of *xiao*. Girl Nina said that, "the first thing is to be *xiao*, and I think *xiao* is the same thing as listening to parents' words." She went further, "If I don't listen to him, who should I listen to? Plus, he must have his reasons, and must be doing it for my own sake."

The question of "what is a good daughter and what is a bad daughter?" was asked directly in four focus groups in the schools, eliciting a variety of interpretations about what it means to be a good daughter. Many looked at the question from their parents' perspective, saying things such as do not make parents worry, do not make trouble for parents, do not interfere with parents' things, do not rebel, respect parents, fulfill parents' wishes, and obey parents. Girls had clear ideas of what "not to do." In every focus group participants talked about "being understanding of and caring towards parents." Some talked about showing respect to their parents. The clear articulation of what makes a good daughter supports the prevailing power of traditional Chinese moral principles in girls' minds, although whether or not the girls' actions met their parent's expectations of a good daughter is a question that wasn't asked in the focus groups.

In the focus group, five girls also mentioned how personality and character contributed to being a good daughter, including "doing own things properly," 'being good at studying' and having a "good personality." One girl in the older group also perceived that having her own ideas, not merely following everything her parents said, was a feature of being a good daughter. As she said, "Listen to parents, but not obey everything. You need to have your own opinions. If the parents make mistakes, you should point out as well." Clearly, acting on girls' own iniative and not just doing what they were told was promoted by this girl and this was contradictory to what other girls thought a good girl should be.

When talking about being a bad daughter in the four focus groups, girls put forward a range of interpretations. Communication related issues, such as fighting with parents, not talking with them, lying, and not listening were mentioned, as were Being rebellious, selfish, worrying or being uncaring, not studying hard, and playing all the time. A girl who fell in love or got pregnant was also described as being a bad daughter. This was consistent with Crystal and Stevenson's study (1995), which compared students and their mothers' view of bad kids from America, Japan, and China: Chinese respondents stressed the importance of maintaining order and harmony in family and society.

Most girls expressed strong and clear ideas of what it meant to be a good and a bad daughter. Their perception was mainly centered on family-related or society-related values. *Xiao*, which is rooted in the Chinese tradition of filial piety, was still regarded as one of the most important features of being a good daughter. The girls interpreted *xiao* as meaning being obedient and listening to parents, and many thought they achieved that.

4.4 Summary

The overriding aim of this chapter has been to explore girls' own constructions of themselves as an adolescent girl, a daughter, and a fathers' daughter, in the context of a rapidly changing society where the majority of young people are only children.

Girls whose parents came from outside Shanghai were more likely to have siblings compared to girls whose household registration was in Shanghai. Unsurprisingly, children with siblings spent significantly more time with other people (their sisters or brothers) in the family. In many ways, there were not many differences between the only children and the ones with siblings in terms of happiness, with life in general, and their relationships with friends. However, the only children did have higher academic aspirations than the girls with siblings. They also wished to improve more to change themselves. Fathers with more children were also more likely to get involved in their children's studies.

The data from my study suggests that friends play an important role in teenage girls' lives, sharing interests and activities and providing support. The fact that most of the girls were only children and that both their parents were working full-time may explain why they felt lonely and wished they could have siblings. As a consequence, they tended to seek more intimate relationships with peers of a similar age. Being the only children and only focus in the family may also cause tension, since parents may wish to keep a closer eye on their only child and because there are no other siblings to distract them. While teenagers desire peer companionship and prefer to spend more time with their friends at school, parents' roles in girls' lives and whether their relationships have changed over time are important questions and will be addressed in later chapters.

Connell suggests that the human body is at once both the object and agent of social practice (2002). Therefore, the girls' adolescent bodies are actively involved in the shaping of their identity. Most of the adolescent girls in my study reported that as they were going through adolescence they were paying more attention to their own appearance as well as the appearances of their peers. However, being too glamorously dressed was regarded as being rebellious and most girls in the interview still advocated the kind of natural beauty which is embedded in Chinese culture. Choices about appearance were also closely associated with girls' dependence on their parents. Although children have been reported to play a crucial part in the Chinese consumer market, the money they spend still comes from their parents. This leads to the question of how adolescent girls negotiate with their parents when they need more freedom. It also raises the question of how much parent–child relationships have changed if adolescents are becoming more rebellious and parents still wish to retain their power.

While many girls would like to be more fashionably (if not glamorously) dressed, in terms of romantic relationships most tend to be in accord with their parents that it is not suitable to have any more than friendships with boys while they are in secondary school. The pressure from their parents and cultural ideas may have played important roles in this. Adolescence as a life course stage brings many advantages but also many challenges for both adolescents and parents.

In a society where masculinity stresses hierarchy, women's relationships with men are one important feature of their identity (O'Connor, 2006b; Skeggs, 2004). With regard to girls' understanding of their role as their fathers' daughters, it seems that many still think it is different to that of a son. The traditional preference for sons may not be as predominant as before but some girls believed that their fathers would have more shared interests with a son. However, being daddy's little girl also meant that fathers treated them in a more gentle way and for this reason, some girls thought they were better off being female. Both views reinforce the traditionally prescribed gender roles for teenage girls. This supports Connell's (2005, p. 13) argument, "[O]ne of the most important circumstances of young people's lives is the gender order they live in." This is also consistent with O'Conner's study in Irish society, which found "the persistence of stereotypical ways of 'doing boy/girl'" (O'Connor, 2006a, p. 273).

Giddens (1991, p. 64), defined globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa." For adolescent Chinese girls, some aspects of their adolescent identity are similar to those of teenagers in western countries, such as the need to be fashionable. However, there are also areas where the construction of self is underpinned by cultural constructions. A good example of this is that many adolescent girls in my research still thought good girls should be obedient and feminine. Despite the highly globalized and rapidly changing nature of Shanghai society, girls' descriptions of what makes a good or a bad girl also stress the traditional Chinese idea of children who listen to and obey parents. Despite the fact that this generation of young people covets the same brands as their counterparts in the west, they still promote the idea that good girls are the ones that conform to their parents' expectations. This raises the question about the extent to which the ingress of global culture has changed Chinese society. It may be true that teenage girls in urban China dress in a more fashionable way, or are more open about romantic relationships compared with previous generations. However, some also confessed that they were under peer pressure to care about their appearance, and most thought that having romantic relationships during secondary school was too soon. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the new generation has totally abolished all traditional attitudes, nor that they are a modern generation who have emerged from globalization or completely opened themselves up to the west.

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5

Father's Role in the Contemporary Chinese Family

5.1 Introduction

How men understand their role as fathers and what it means to them are two of the key influences on their paternal practice in Chinese family life (McBride et al., 2005; Salway, Chowbey, & Clarke, 2009). Moreover, the parents' need to understand their role is clearly stated in Coleman's paper, which reviewed the research on parenting teenagers (Coleman, 1997). Coleman argued that one may expect what a parent of a two year old should do but that it is impossible for the parent of a teenager to know how and to what degree he/she could take charge of his/her child's life. The parents' role is no longer so clearly stated and thus causes much confusion for parents of teenagers.

In this chapter, I am going to explore both fathers' and girls' perspectives on paternal roles drawing mainly from girls' focus groups, the open-ended questions in the girls' and fathers' questionnaire surveys, and in-depth interviews with fathers and daughters. Firstly, the historical times in which fathers grew up will be examined together with their own fathered experiences, as this may have influenced their

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roles as fathers. Just as going through adolescence is part of the life course of their daughters, so fathers also have a life course. Therefore fathers' perceptions of being the father of a teenage girl are addressed. Finally, the ultimate focus of this chapter are both fathers' and girls' conceptions of paternal roles. Because fathers' conceptions of their roles and what they interpret as normative may be different from what they actually do, their practice of fatherhood will be further discussed in Chaps. 6 and 7.

In Chap. 3, I explored some perspectives on fatherhood that I will use here to provide deeper insights into fathers' roles and responsibilities. In addition, the late modernity theory also provides a fresh framework within which to explore fathers' identities, since people's construction of their roles is more complex and fluid. The concept of father as breadwinner has remained important over time, and much research implies that it is still a dominant feature of the paternal role (Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Warin, Solomon, Lewis, & Langford, 1999). However, others contradict this view, believing that the breadwinner role is no longer a necessary aspect of a father's identity, since some research shows that many fathers place emotional connection with their children as central to their paternal identity (Dermott, 2003). It therefore raises the question of to what extent the father's role as breadwinner continues to dominate the role of fathers in China and to what extent the importance of emotional connection has grown.

As Pleck's review suggests, the concept of fatherhood is a social construction, and it changes across time, contexts, and cultures. Matta and colleagues further suggest that the "concept of fatherhood emerges at the intersection of meaning and social interaction between men, families, extended families, and larger communities" (Matta & Knudson-martin, 2006, p. 278). Feminist theory's contribution to this discussion is the argument that "masculinity and femininity are constantly being reconstructed in a context of unequal, but shifting power relations" (Messner, 1993). In China, as women increasingly participate in the labor market and their growing economic power contributes financially to the family, traditional notions of the male breadwinner role and paternal masculinities may have new meaning.

5.2 Fathers' Roles Through Historical and Life Course Time

5.2.1 Fathers' Experiences of Being Fathered

It has been found that fathers' parenting practice is influenced by their early lives, especially by their experience of their own fathers (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). However, this does not necessarily mean they copied their fathers' approaches. Williams (2008) argues that the new generation of fathers have generally rejected their own fathers' styles as old fashioned, no longer fitting with modern circumstances. The study of Norwegian fathers who used parental leave suggests that the subjects' fathers served as negative models, and the lack of role models encouraged them to create their own ways of fathering by being more involved in the family (Brandth & Kvande, 1998). Giddens (1991) also suggests that the experiences and values of previous generations have little relevance to the lives of young people anymore, since young people tend to make their own choices. In addition, being fathered and fathers' role need to be understood within particular historical and social circumstances. As the circumstances of history, culture, community, and family change they help to shape beliefs, attitudes, and expectations regarding gender roles and responsibilities (Cabrera et al., 2000).

In my study, the majority of the fathers' experiences of being fathered when they were children were said to be very different from what they have been doing themselves. Six fathers who were interviewed saw their own fathers as strict and distant authority figures. As Father Nina recalled: "in our time, never mind parents shouting at you, if they just raised their voices a little, we felt so scared. When we were little, it was like being a mouse with a cat when we saw our parents. Just like this, when we got a bad score at school, we did not even dare to go back home." From Father Nina's perspective, a father figure at that time was someone who children should be afraid of.

When the fathers were growing up, filial piety was regarded as one of the most important aspects of parent–child relationships. At that time, being filial emphasized the idea of obedience to and eventually taking care of parents (Chap. 3). Father Li talked about the idea of being filial in a particular historical time when children had to rely totally on their parents because of the economic situation: "…at that time, that economic situation meant we should put parents in the center. Because we were very poor, if the unit of parents were separated, then you would totally lose the spiritual support. The function of parents was like that."

Two fathers also mentioned that parents, especially fathers, were not expected to communicate with their children. The reasons behind this may be that parents at that time were too busy working, and struggling to survive. In addition, children usually had siblings, and they learned to take care of one another so that their parents' caring role sometimes became the responsibility of elder siblings.

There was an exception among the eight interviewees. Father Chen thought his own father was very close to him. He recalled: "We were very close…Although he did not have a good salary at that time, but he tried everything he could to take care of us. He always helped me when I needed him." He added, "I always see my own father as an example and I miss him so much." It was clear that Father Chen's father had had a tremendous impact on his own fathering.

Fathers' reflections on their own experiences of being fathered tended to focus on the negative aspects of fathering. Only one father reported having an intimate relationship with their fathers when they were young. However, these relationships should also be put into a wider historical context, as the extreme poverty of the time meant that parents had to be the center of the family and had to put hard work before affection or else a large family simply would not survive.

5.2.2 Being a Father of the 1990s Generation

Middle-aged fathers are going through their own life course changes and struggling with the gap between their formative experience and a rapidly changing society. These include new challenges in the workplace, which is continually changing and can be very competitive.

> *As a parent, only one word to conclude: tiring and really tiring. This kind of tiredness, in another way, still tiring, and in the end, still tiring! For myself, I*

> *feel tired. Like I am from the late 1960s generation; the 1960s generation has the stress of survival [in modern society] and working stress from the working environment. We can't compete with the 1970s and 1980s [generations]. …My degree is not good enough to compete with others, so I have to study again. At work, I certainly can't beat the youngsters. They know everything, while us 1960s are the older generation and we know nothing. In addition, we feel very tired ourselves. [Father Shen]*

Father Shen's words vividly illustrate the frustration and pressure felt by fathers of his generation. Father Shen admitted that there was a lot of pressure to keep up with the younger generations, who are more educated and more knowledgeable. This was reinforced by the fact that many fathers born during the Cultural Revolution missed the opportunity for a good education. According to fathers' questionnaire responses, most fathers and mothers were educated up to secondary school level. Among 591 father respondents, 4.1 % had only been to primary school, 25.9 % had only been to junior high school, 42.6 % had only been to senior high school, and 27.4 % had been to university (including vocational college degrees). Furthermore, a man of the 1960s generation may feel his authority in the workplace erode and no longer provide him with the same masculine identity if he fails to update his knowledge. More importantly, the very idea of a threat from younger competitors may be difficult to come to terms with, as the notion that "the elderly are the authority" used to be taken for granted when a 1960s man was young but is no longer accepted among younger generations.

In addition, the biological and psychological changes of adolescence also bring new challenges for their parents, specifically, adolescents no longer regard parents as extremely powerful authorities. As Flaake suggests (Flaake, 2005, p. 203), "The processes of adolescent transformation trigger insecurities and shocks not only to the psychic balance of girls—for adults, they are also associated with frustration, confusion and conflict." Girls revealed that authority figures should be challenged if they were wrong, which may not be accepted by their fathers who still hold strong ideas of Chinese traditional values. Seven out of nine girls interviewed talked about teenagers being rebellious. Girl Mei admitted that she was not used to fighting back when she was younger but that she was doing so now. A similar situation was reported by Girl Liu. The fact that their daughters no longer respect their parents automatically and judge whether or not their parents are worth respecting means that fathers need to adjust their expectations and behaviors accordingly.

From a life course perspective, this divide between 1960s father and 1990s daughter is sharpened by changes on both sides. First of all, the biological and psychological changes in the adolescent girl can mean that they no longer have the same degree of intimacy as before. As Girl Nina explained: “before, I liked my dad lot and my dad bought me whatever I liked. He was very good to me. I still remember that I used to ride on his shoulders. With him, we played together. But now, it becomes more distant, we even could not talk for a few sentences in a week.” Girl Mei distanced herself from her father because she did not see herself as daddy’s little girl anymore and had started to rebel. Girl Shen reported a similar change: “When I was little, I was always being very sticky to my dad. At that time, I needed protection from him. In my mind, he was like a hero. But now I have grown up, there must be a little bit more distance. Not like before, I would be that sticky to my dad whatever and whenever. More and more, I will be with my mum and friends. After all, there are many things I couldn’t talk about with my dad.”

It has also been suggested that fathers of adolescents confront different difficulties compared with mothers (Flaake, 2005). There are certain barriers fathers confront as girls grow up because they are different gender. Father Chen admitted there were things that he and his daughter could not talk about since she had progressed through adolescence. He used the word *something traditional* to hint that there were barriers between girls and fathers that he found it difficult to talk about. Father Nina also expressed a similar view: “Girls are not like boys, if she were a boy, then I could say whatever I wish to talk about.” Girl Shen was more direct, when she talked about why she turned to her mother when she confronted problems, especially about her body changes and emotions. She thought fathers were not as sensitive as mothers: “For example, the biological changes, surely I would tell mum. And things like emotional problems, I think men are not very good at understanding these things, so it will be better to talk with mum or my friends. People like my dad are less nuanced.” The barriers of talking about romantic relationships will be further discussed in Chap. 6.

5.3 Fathers' and Girls' Perspectives of Fathers' Roles

A substantial amount of the research into fathers' involvement with their children suggests that fathers and mothers are different in terms of their care giving to their children (Doucet, 2006; Georgas, 2006; Gershuny, 2000; O'Brien, 2005). Fathers' involvement with their children focuses mainly on certain aspects of care tasks, particularly on play, talking, and educational and leisure activities (Lamb, 1997). This raises the question of what roles fathers do take as a parent. The fathers' role is examined by analyzing the responses to the open-ended questions of, "As a father, what has your father has done the best?', in the girls' questionnaire survey and,' As a father, what have you done the best?', in the fathers' questionnaire. In addition, eight fathers' interviews were also used to provide more in depth information.

In total, 435 father respondents wrote about what they thought they did the best as a father in the open question,' As a father, what do you think you have done the best?'. Being a parent who cared about their daughter appeared to be the most common answer, with 103 saying that they cared about their daughters a lot. Other roles that were stressed by many fathers were: being a provider (80), being a helper or supporting their daughters (76), being a communicator (62), and being a cultivator (43). Being a role model (31); respecting their daughters' choices and giving her freedom (32) were also mentioned by many. Being able to accompany their daughters and spend time with them was mentioned by 21 fathers.

Girls' perspectives were similar to their fathers' views. Among 680 girls who filled in the similar open question of,' As a father, what do you think your father has done the best?', in the questionnaire, 209 girls thought their fathers were being good parents who cared about them. Being a supporter and helper appeared to be more important than being a provider, with 139 girls seeing their fathers as supporting them well and 88 girls saying that their father provided well for them. There were 81 girls who saw their fathers as good communicators with 26 of these saying that their fathers were very humorous and funny, a point not mentioned by the fathers. Also, 77 girls saw their fathers as good cultivators who taught them how to be a good person and how to deal with things in life.

Another 56 girls stated that their fathers respected them and gave them enough freedom. Only 21 girls mentioned spending time doing things together.

Many fathers were also regarded as not fulfilling their roles. When answering the questions of, What do you think your father has done the best?, 35 girls and 14 fathers replied *nothing*.

5.3.1 Being a Parent Who Cares About His Daughter

Of the 103 fathers who reported caring as being the thing they did best as a father, some made general comments, for example, “I care about her” and, “I care about her a lot,” but some were more specific. Statements included: “I care about her studies,” “I care about her daily life,” “I care about her improvement in study.” “I care about her development and health.” A few girls and fathers related the daily housework when they talked about care for daughters. The most common example given was to prepare food: 14 fathers and 19 daughters said their fathers would prepare food for them and wait for them to come back home. Many girls also emphasized that their fathers put them first and did everything for them. Being devoted to their daughters and doing everything for them was deeply appreciated. As one girl wrote: “He lives around me and I am the center of his life.” Indulging their daughters and letting them do whatever they wished was another way fathers showed their love, from the girls’ perspectives.

Care can also be conveyed in a subtle way or remotely. One girl said, “even though he doesn’t use words to express it, he loves me a lot.” Another wrote, “even though he lives in another city, he will take care of me.” Some girls emphasized that care could be expressed even though their fathers were not spending time with them, with comments such as, “He cares for me a lot even though he is not always around” and, “my dad is busy working and comes back home once a week. He brings lots of things for us, and thinks of us a lot, and gives me lots of love.”

Caring for their daughters also becomes a source of happiness for the devoted fathers. When Father Chen talked about how much effort he made to pick his daughter up from school, he gave the following explanation, "Yes, it is very far. But this is like, like your responsibility. I think when she lives together with us then I will try my best. It is a feeling of happiness."

5.3.2 Being a Provider: Bringing Up the Child and Providing More

As discussed in Chap. 1, it is well documented that men have long seen themselves as breadwinners. However, only recently have they started to perceive themselves as involved fathers (Hobson & Morgan, 2002). This shift in men's construction of self provides an insight into the negotiation of their roles as fathers.

Being a provider was placed as the second most important role, according to fathers' responses. Fathers saw ensuring that their families were comfortable without having to worry about material needs as important. Some mentioned working hard and providing a comfortable home. Twenty-two fathers emphasized providing economic support to ensure that their daughters had a good study environment. In a number of cases, providing not only meant earning enough money to support the family but to give their daughters whatever they wanted. Twenty-seven fathers' and 16 daughters' responses suggested that providing meant fathers giving their daughters whatever they wanted.

Similar to the questionnaire survey, many fathers interviewed had higher goals than simply providing, as they wished to bring up their children to do well and be as supportive of that as possible. The fathers' childhood experiences may have contributed to their sense that being the provider was important, since they were all brought up in poor conditions. This, and the special provision and protection which daughters are believed to need, may have encouraged them to provide as much as they could to their daughters. Not being able to enjoy material wealth when they were young also encouraged them to provide the best they could for their daughters. As both Father Chen and Father Li explained, their own poor childhoods had motivated them to provide a better environment for their daughters. As Father Chen said, "I just want to try my best to let her enjoy. In my time we didn't have such good living conditions. It was very difficult even to buy a bicycle."

In the interview sample, the two fathers, Father Nina and Father Wang, who had low economic resources, saw being a provider as their main role. Father Wang was divorced, and he saw his main aim was just to get his daughter to school, and her success there was her own responsibility, "The most important responsibility is to give her, and provide for her to go to school. If you go to school and you could go to the university, the job in the future will be yours, not mine. Whether you are good or bad at study is all yours, not mine." Father Nina directly confessed that he could not do anything else apart from earning money. Fathers who have little financial resources are struggling; therefore they may find themselves very limited in terms of what they can provide for the daughters.

Some fathers also have gendered attitudes towards having a girl and having a boy. However, this does not necessarily put girls in a disadvantaged position, since many believe that girls should be brought up in an indulgent way and that boys should be brought up in a tough way. As one father wrote about father–daughter relationships at the end of the questionnaire survey, "a father–daughter relationship is very close. In China, people prefer boys to girls. But at the same time, there is a saying that girls are parents' cotton sweater and boys are shirts. Girls should be brought up in a rich way, so that they can grow up and become delicate. Nowadays, most children are only children, and I am trying my best to bring up a delicate daughter." By being brought up in an indulgent way, girls can cultivate more sophisticated tastes and also be less easily tempted by the outside world (for example by gifts from boys) when they are older. For fathers, this may reinforce their responsibility as a provider if they think girls need more material support.

5.3.3 Being a Supporter/Helper

To be highly involved in their daughters' lives by supporting and helping them was also thought to be an important role for fathers. From the girls' points of view, being a supporter and helper seems to be more important than being a provider, as 139 girls mentioned their father being a supporter, compared with 88 girls who wrote about their father being a provider.

Both daughters and fathers themselves reported that they supported, encouraged, and helped their daughters in each aspect of their lives. Statements from fathers include, “I always support and encourage her,” “I always encourage her to study hard and fulfill her dream,” “I try to encourage her to develop her confidence,” and “I will give her good advice, and help her whenever needed.” Many girls emphasized the emotional effect this had on them, for example, “He will try to make me laugh if I am upset,” “He will make me let my bad feelings out,” and “He always praises me and gives me confidence.”

Support for girls' studies was mentioned by both fathers and daughters, with 37 of the 76 fathers who mentioned helping or supporting their daughters including their studies in that. A majority of them (23) also reported that they coached their daughters, checked their homework, and helped them to solve problems they encountered. Forty-five girls also said that their fathers gave them help with schoolwork. The actual conduct of fathers helping daughters in daily lives will be further discussed in Chap. 6.

The rigid education system also put much pressure on parents, as every school student needs to pass the national entrance examination to get into university. In the interview, Father Chen explained why parents' support was so important for his daughter and also explained the pressure, “Once you have your own child, you support them from kindergarten to primary school, and then junior high and senior high school. In this particular Chinese context, there is no equality in terms of educational resources. However, you always wish that your kid will be able to go to a good school, so you need to make a lot of effort. I feel very tired.”

5.3.4 Being a Communicator or a Friend

Being able to communicate with and to understand the next generation seems to be an important paternal role. Sixty-two fathers and 81 girls mentioned the importance of the father being willing to talk to and communicate with his daughter. Fourteen fathers mentioned they were like friends and could talk about many things. One father said, “I take her to school everyday and talk to her about the way things are at school and her study." Another father believed that his daughter could tell him everything, writing, "I understand my daughter well and she tells me everything." Being able to communicate with each other was very important. Fourteen fathers emphasized that they treated their daughters as friends and respected their ideas. However, only 5 girls thought their fathers treated them as friends. For girls, their fathers' manner and tone of communicating were also important, as 26 girls mentioned that their fathers were humorous and funny. Girls' statements included, "He is very humorous, and he tells me stories about when he was little," "Sometimes, he is quite humorous, and he brings happiness to me," and "We live happily and can joke with each other."

In the interview, two fathers also talked about how happy they felt being able to communicate with their daughters and being treated as friends.

> *Like yesterday, my wife had to work, and I also worked late. My kids went to the after-class lessons, so [afterwards] we had dinner outside together. At that time, we became friends, not parents any more. As a friend, we are just very casual, as Shanghainese say, just rambling, chatting, and playing. I felt so happy, really. At that moment, I was so happy, better than if I got a prize or something.*
>
> *[Father Shen, college education, university staff, daughter aged 16 when interviewed]*

The extract here shows how Father Shen was satisfied with being able to chat with his children. Daily activities, such as going out for dinner together, provided a good opportunity for parents and children to talk freely. Possibly the change of geographical space has had some impact on the roles of parents and children. Both may feel free to act and create new roles for themselves because they feel less restrained than they do in the home environment.

However, when communication becomes difficult, it also causes huge confusion to both. "Three years is a gap" is a common saying in contemporary China, meaning that people with three years' difference in age will have different values and attitudes, due to the rapid changes in Chinese society. The gap between fathers and their daughters is closer to thirty years and so (according to 553 fathers' responses, the average age at which they became fathers was twenty-nine years old), if there is any truth to this saying, the difference in values and attitudes will be significant. In a study of value differences between generations in China, Sun Jiaming and Wang Xun grouped Chinese people into four categories according to the different historical periods in which they grew up. These four generations are called the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Beginning of Economic Reform, and the Social Transition (Sun & Wang, 2010, p. 68). The people from the Social Transition generation were born after 1992, similar to the age groups of the girls in my study, who were mostly born 1992/1993 and 1995/1996. In many ways, this youngest generation holds different values from the older generations. The Social Transition Generation has been found to value self-development more than the other three generations: 54.5 % of them strongly advocated individualistic values. However, all four generation groups agreed that family was important in their live (ibis.).

Girls' lack of knowledge about their fathers' time also contributes to the generation gap between the two generations. Not many fathers talked about the times they went through, and recent history was ignored in most parts of the school curriculum. Therefore, it was difficult for the girls to understand their fathers' time since it was so different from the world they live in now. Although many girls knew their parents were poor when they were growing up, not all the fathers talked about these times with their daughters. As Father Li admitted, it was one of the aspects of her education in which he was involved the least. He assumed that his daughter would not understand his old times, and he should not emphasize the suffering period too much. Fathers might have been discouraged from talking about these times because they wished their daughters to enjoy their current relatively wealthy lifestyle, as Father Li suggested. However, the lack of communication on this subject could increase the chance of misunderstanding between fathers and daughters.

The barriers to parent-teenager communications not only lay in the power imbalance or different values between fathers and daughters, but also in the fact that the girls were going through adolescence and did not necessarily agree with whatever their fathers said, nor did they do whatever they were told. Instead, girls had different ideas of what things should be like and had different opinions that fathers found difficult to understand. Father Li explained that having different values made it difficult for both sides to understand one another, “What you think can be given up, is exactly what she values. What you value is exactly what she thinks is worthless. Her understanding is the opposite, so how can you possibly communicate with her, how to understand?.”

In the interviews, six fathers talked about the challenges of being fathers of teenagers and the problems of communication. Both fathers and daughters talked about the differences in taste or opinions about things, such as music, appearances, clothing, and home decorations. Father Shen, who worked at a university as a member of the administrative staff and had a college degree, talked about the tension he experienced, “The point is that there is no way to communicate. I have many ideas and thoughts. My children, in the end, will say, we have a few gaps between us, three years is a gap, I wonder how many gaps are there between us?.”

Some girls adopted a more aggressive way to control the conversation with their parents, by giving perfunctory answers or even answering back. Unsurprisingly, their parents often found this very irritating. Father Mei explained how his daughter was difficult to communicate with, saying, “it seems to be very difficult to communicate with her. If I talk with her, she always answers back. Whatever you talk about with her, she will do the same. Sometimes I am telling some jokes, she then feels that I am making fun of her. I really don’t know what she thinks. When she wants something from you, then she will be very good to you.” Girl Mei’s reaction to her fathers’ attempts to communicate suggest that she no longer saw him as an authority figure that she had to obey and cooperate with.

Some choose to close down the conversation with their parents. For example, Girl Li illustrated the way she and her father communicate,

> *Q: Do you communicate with each other?*
> *A: I listen to his talk, this is so-called communication. This is what he thinks is communication.*
> *Q: How often do you talk with each other?*
> *A: When we can see each other. I normally lock the door. Before, I tried to bear this when he came in and interrupted me. He came in and interrupted what I was doing, just started endless talking.*

> *Q: What does he talk to you about?*
> *A: Study, study, and study again.*
> *[Girl Li]*

Girl Li clearly believes that her father was not trying to be open with her and initiate a two-way conversation, but rather to impress his views upon her. Because of this, she decided to shut off communication, either by just pretending to listen and not responding or actually locking the door. Girl Li went to one of the key schools for the most academically able students and in the interview she implied that she was very good at studying and knew how important it was to her life, so she felt that it was not necessary to talk about it all the time. For her father, studying was supposed to be an easy way to start a conversation but his pushing too hard, without granting her any freedom and equality in the interaction, resulted in her not giving any feedback.

Gender may also play an important role in the way fathers treated their daughters and the way they communicated with each other. Father Nina complained that his daughter was not willing to open up when he wanted to know more about her studies. He further explained, "Her mum was always more protective. Of course, I love her dearly since we only have one child. But if a child is not afraid of her mum or dad, we shouldn't let her do whatever she wants. After all, she is a little girl, not a boy." More importantly, he seemed to think that his daughter should be less independent, simply because she was a girl. Father Nina realized that his daughter tried to keep her bad news from reaching him because she knew he would probably scold her. He said, "Normally I will go to talk to her, but she never comes to talk with me…And she only chooses the good news to tell me, never tells me the bad one. She knows that if she does not get a good result, I will scold her…Instead, she will tell her mum. Sometimes she needs parents' signature; she will take the good result to me. If it's a bad result, she won't let me sign for her." To an extent, he had pushed his daughter away by being strict with her; as a result, his daughter went to her mother for help and support instead. In fact, Father Nina thought it was the mother who should take the main responsibility for his daughter's emotional and school life but he still complained about his daughter not opening up. His attitudes were somewhat contradictory.

Communication between fathers and daughters may be constrained by a variety of factors. Firstly, some barriers to parent-teenager communication lie in different values between fathers and daughters. In my study, the difference in values was mainly due to the fact that the girls were going through adolescence and did not necessarily agree with whatever their fathers said, nor did they do whatever they were told. Instead, girls had different ideas of what things should be like and had different opinions about various issues, which fathers found difficult to understand. Secondly, the idea of opening up to others poses a challenge for many Chinese fathers, who are influenced by a traditional stereotype of masculinity which advocates being reserved. Secondly, there is a power imbalance between parents and children, even though the parents highly value emotional closeness with their children. In some cases, parents may use communication as a way to control or monitor their children (Williams, 2002). As a result, communication may reinforce the child's subordinate position. Therefore, many children may find seeking equality and openness with their parents difficult. On the one hand, adolescents wish to be treated as friends. On the other, parents still want to maintain their authority, and this inevitably conflicts with their wish to be close to and open with their children. Last but not least, the issues of gender are significant in terms of parent–child communication about romantic relationships, especially for girls who are going through adolescence. When traditional forms of masculinity are still dominant, fathers may also find it difficult to talk about romantic relationships. It may be a big challenge for many fathers to balance "the tension between men as sexual beings and as participants in affectionate relationships" (Kirkman, Rosenthal, & Feldman, 2001, p. 405).

5.3.5 Being a Cultivator: Cultivating Daughters in a Deliberate Way

In Chinese culture, the father's role as a cultivator is reflected in an old saying: "failing to educate the child is the fault of the father" (*zi bu jiao, fu zhi guo*). The word *educate* here has a broad meaning—including the whole personal development of the child. Forty-three fathers in the questionnaire survey expressed their ambition to cultivate their daughters and saw this as what they did the best. Seventy-seven girls also mentioned this. Some emphasized moral education, with many fathers wishing to teach their daughter to be a good person. There were 12 fathers who mentioned that they taught their daughters *ru he zuo ren*, which means how to be a good person, a useful person, a responsible person, an earnest and a kind person. Others talked about how to develop their daughters' intelligence, way of thinking, personality, or interests. Some also mentioned that they were trying to teach their daughters to be independent.

The Chinese word *peiyang* was regularly used by the fathers in the interviews when talking about their responsibilities. It has a broad meaning which can be interpreted as to bring up or cultivate. All fathers in the study admitted that bringing up their children was important, yet they emphasized different things, depending on their own education and/or resources. Some fathers had no specific ideas of how to bring up their children, while others were very clear of their goals, for example giving their daughters life skills such as money management and a sense of responsibility.

Father Nina had migrated from the countryside to Shanghai and his family lived in a very small place. His economic condition constrained his ability to provide for his daughter, as discussed before. However, he hoped that his daughter could have a better future. As Father Nina said, "all I wish is to *peiyang chulai* (to bring her up so that she could exceed her roots), am I right?." *Peiyang chulai* vividly described his ambition to be able to help his daughter to move up the social scale. We can see that Father Nina's perception of *peiyang chulai* is strongly associated with educational success.

When fathers were better educated, they sometimes had more ideas about how they wanted to bring up and cultivate their daughters. In Father Zhan's case, he had a Masters degree and a more ambitious aim. Father Zhan described in detail the aspects he wished to *peiyang* his daughter.

> *Q: What do you think is your main responsibility as a father?*
> *A: My responsibility is to peiyang [cultivate] her. Um…*
> *Q: In which aspect do you mean?*

> *A: This is in every aspect of her ability. But I don't want to constrain her, or limit her to develop in one direction. Then, it is about being able to peiyang (cultivate) every possible aspect. Then, we will see what her own interests are. We think she should be allowed to do whatever she likes.*
>
> *[Father Zhan, younger group]*

There are also gender differences that affect how fathers think about bringing up their daughters. One father illustrated this:

> *Since she [his daughter] is a girl, that is to say, ok, I should hao hao peiyang [bring her up well]. To my understanding, daughters should be focused on cultural qualities and artistic accomplishments. There are more things to educate girls I am also doing now.*
>
> …
>
> *A: If it was a boy, this cannot be peiyang. He should be left to learn by experience, in order to develop his strong will and therefore to conquer difficulties. These are the things that need to be done. If I had a son, I would use different ways to educate him. I can say that.*
>
> *[Father Zhan, younger group]*

5.4 Summary

In this study, fathers' own experiences of being fathered suggested that most fathers had experienced a distant relationship with their own fathers. The traditional Chinese father–child relationship was best captured as a cat and mouse relationship. There were exceptions, as one man thought his own father had been extremely devoted and that they had had a close relationship. Therefore, the positive image of his father set an example he wished to follow. Once again, the historical economic situation becomes important as survival was the first priority of the family. Parents at that time were trying hard to work and get food for their children. Parent–child relationships were not such a high priority for parents.

From a life course perspective, fathers also confront many challenges while having a teenage girl. Growing up in a very different historical time from their daughters has created many barriers to communication with them. In particular, while fathers are facing challenges in their work place due to their lack of education, many are also confronted by their daughters' challenges at home. However, they do not expect it to weaken their masculine identity. Instead, they wish to strengthen their role as provider by meeting their daughters' increasing demands. It therefore is a time of life that is both physically and emotionally tiring for many fathers.

This chapter explored fathers' views of their paternal roles and their perspective on being fathers of teenage girls. Historical and social changes have shaped the popular image of fatherhood in China. Historically, a strict, remote and authoritative figure was promoted, in accordance with Confucian ideals. However, the local context in Shanghai promotes a stereotypically feminine Shanghai man who is capable of doing cooking in the kitchen and worth taking out (*ru de chu fang, chu de ting tang*). In some ways, the two conceptions are contradictory, as the former advocates patriarchal masculinity and the latter encourages a role and identity perceived as more feminine. Therefore, the new, more emotionally involved father figure is not completely new to many Shanghai fathers. Many fathers and girls reported that fathers did care and help their daughters. Being the only child in the family, probably makes it easy and possible for the father to take more care of their children. Caring for their daughters was the most mentioned action when fathers were asked what they had done the best as a father. Being a helper and supporter was also mentioned by 76 fathers. Girls' views were similar to the fathers, who valued their fathers' care and help even more.

When some aspects of traditional fathers are declining, the breadwinner role is still central in terms of fathers' roles, especially from the fathers' own points of views. Many Chinese fathers wish to provide their family with the best they can offer and take a pride in this. If at all possible, they wanted to provide for more than just their daughters' basic needs. Having suffered themselves when they were young, their role as providers has a particular historical significance. Similarly, fathers' own experiences of education and career were also influenced by historical events. Some fathers talked in detail about their unfortunate youth, as they missed their opportunity for schooling and were sent to the countryside to be re-educated. Their memories of childhood and youth were marked by the Cultural Revolution and its consequences, especially the lack of a good education. These experiences may limit their paternal roles as educators of their daughters.

As shown in a UK study, mothers, fathers, and children may have different views of what are the most important roles of a father. In that study, being a provider was perceived as a father's primary role while mothers and children see fathers' involvement in the family as more important (Warin et al., 1999). In this study, both fathers and daughters see being a parent who cares about his child was the most important. However, girls placed being a supporter and helper more important than the provider role. For fathers, provider was the second most important role they perceive.

As Brandth and Kvande suggests (1998, pp. 296–297), "masculinity (femininity) are formed and maintained in everyday negotiations about child-care, housework, and employment. Negotiations and the context in which it takes place, give us insight into what significance and meanings fathers attach to their parenting and what implications it may have for their masculine identity." The fathers' construction of their masculinity was also revealed when they discussed their responsibilities and roles. The majority of them mentioned four main responsibilities: care about their daughters, providing financially for the family as a breadwinner, being a helper or supporter, and being a communicator. However, none of them explicitly mentioned that they should take care of their daughter's daily life. Instead, there were a few of them who admitted that the mothers were responsible for their daughters' daily lives. It seems that they assumed it was the mothers who should take the responsibility. It raises the questions of whether fathers opt out of their childcare roles and thus lay the burden on their wives deliberately. Although detailed data are lacking, it seems that fathers in my study tend to apply their own gender ideology to their fathering practice. This raises the question of why they were willing to choose the provider and educator roles. Perhaps being a provider and educator reinforces their masculine identity at home. In which case it strengthens the domestic hierarchy.

A number of studies have drawn attention to the disparity between the cultural expectations and the actual conduct of fathering (LaRossa, 1988). As Burgess suggests, "the apparent disparity in the attitudes and behavior of fathers is often seen as an expression of the ideal versus the possible, or personal desire countered by societal constraint because, "choice for fathers is severely limited" (Burgess, 1997, p. 214). Fathers' perceptions of themselves as caring, emotional parent do not necessarily result in fathers' greater participation in childcare. This again calls into question how much fathers are actually involved in their children's lives. In the next two chapters, I will give detailed data on fathers' family practices and their negotiations with their daughters to clarify the issues of the conduct of family fathering.

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6

A Journey Through Time: Precious Time and Family Practice

6.1 Introduction: Present Time, Generation Time, and Life-Course Time

This chapter will focus on the theoretical frameworks of time, including: present time, life-course time and generation time. Through the lens of present time I will look at both girls' and fathers' time at home and their activities together. By looking at generation time the generational relationship between fathers and daughters will be examined, especially their communication and the conflicts that lie behind the generational differences. Running through the whole chapter—just as it runs through family life—will be an examination of life-course time, focusing on two different stages of adolescence. Issues of gender will also run through each aspect of family time, as they are relevant to all three time dimensions.

With regard to present time, a growing lack of parental time at home is not only a western issue. Building on the pre-existing culture of hard work that is deeply rooted in Chinese history, the need to maximize profits and catch up with the west has placed increasing demands on the workforce. In the cities, most Chinese parents both work full-time (Chap. 1), and

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this has changed the pattern of parenting, leaving much less time for family life. Unlike many western countries, there are few opportunities for flexible working or part-time positions, making it hard for parents to balance work and family. According to the Law of Labor, Article 36, workers are not allowed to exceed eight hours a day and the maximum working week is forty-four hours (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 1994). However, employers' expectations are high and competition for employment and promotion is fierce, so many people still work long hours regardless of regulations. In recent years, parenting has become a major task for grandparents, largely due to young couples' overloaded working lives (Nyland, Zeng, Nyland, & Tran, 2009). The time that parents and children spend together at home is under threat.

Because the father–daughter relationship is the focus of my study, generation time is also key. In relation to western modernity, Gidden's concept of the pure relationship in families characterized by mutual self-disclosure has important implications for parent–child relationships. Nowadays a good parent–child relationship is often described as open and equal (Kirkman, Rosenthal, & Feldman, 2005). In China, similar changes in attitude have been noted, as discussed in Chap. 3. However, this openness in communication between parent and child confronts many, barriers as discussed in previous chapters. Furthermore, there are issues of gender between fathers and their teenage daughters (Kirkman, Rosenthal, & Feldman, 2001; Wyckoff et al., 2008). To further complicate the issue, the generation gap between fathers and daughters, who were brought up in very different historical and political backgrounds, makes this even harder. These communication barriers call into question the extent to which girls and their fathers communicate with each other and how the issues of gender and life course time may affect their communication. It is my intention to test the relevance of the concept of the pure relationship with respect to modern Chinese families. It is hoped that this will throw light on some of the tensions that emerge between adolescent girls' desire to be treated equally and their fathers' gendered role, which advocates authority and power.

A third relevant concept of time is life-course time. The changes associated with adolescence pose unique challenges for both parents and children. By comparing two cohorts of teenage girls from different stages in their adolescence, one from junior high school and another from senior high school, a better understanding of the challenges at different points on the life course will be gained.

As discussed in Chap. 5, the roles of fathers in contemporary Chinese families seem to be more diverse, and fatherhood has gradually evolved from the traditional strict, distant image into a more engaged, involved and caring one, which is similar to the western idea of fatherhood. However, we still cannot simply conclude that the practice of fatherhood has changed at a similar pace, as LaRossa (1997) argues that the actual conduct of fathering still lags behind people's perception of fatherhood. Therefore, it is the intention of this chapter to explore fathers' family practice, with a focus on their time, activities, and communication with their daughters.

6.2 Present Time: Fathers' and Daughters' Time and Activities Together

In this early part of the chapter, I wish to examine fathers' and daughters' time spent at home, which is referred to as present time. The following two questions will be addressed: How much time do the girls spend with their mothers and fathers at home? What kinds of activities do girls do with their fathers when they are together?

6.2.1 Two Trajectories: Fathers' Working Lives and Girls' Academic Lives

As Morgan suggests, "family practices are not necessarily practices which take place in times and spaces conventionally designated to do with family, that is the home. It is possible to see paid work outside the home as constituting part of family practices" (Morgan, 1999, p. 20). Therefore, I will start this section by examining adolescent girls' school hours and fathers' working hours to get an overall picture of how much time is available for both to spend time together at home.

Home and school are the two places where teenage girls spend the most time. Many secondary school students concentrate much of their time on their studies, doing lots of homework and exercises to get good exam results. The girls who participated in my study have not yet faced the fierce competition involved in the entry process to university, which all depends on success in their final year examinations. Nevertheless, the younger girls, who are around thirteen years old, will soon take the exam that will decide which senior school they can enter in one year's time. Meanwhile the older girls, who are around sixteen years old, will soon begin their final year in secondary school. The pressure on both groups to achieve forces them to study for most of every day. Table 6.1 below illustrates how a thirteen year old student [Girl Liu] spends a normal school day:

The data from the questionnaire survey also shows that many girls have various tutorials or clubs after school or on the weekend. According to the survey results, only 12.4 % of girls have never been to after-class clubs or tutorials ($n = 760$). 51.4 % of girls reported occasionally going to after school clubs, while 36.2 % reported going to after-class clubs very often. The difference between the two age groups is not significant, according to Pearson Chi-Square tests.

Concerns that students devote too much time to their studies are much discussed in the press. The government has published regulations to prevent schools from making students spend too much time on homework. According to the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission (2008),

Table 6.1 Girl Liu's timetable on a school day from the questionnaire survey

Time	Activities
6:30–7:30	Get up, have breakfast and go to school
7:30–8:30	At school
8:30–11:45	Start lessons
11:45–12:30	Have lunch and go to school shops
12:30–16:30	Have lessons
16:30–17:00	Go back home
17:00–19:00	Do homework and have dinner
19:00–23:00	Do homework, shower and play piano
23:00	Go to sleep

schools should ensure that they assign no more than 1.5 hours of homework to primary and junior high school students, and 2 hours at senior high school. However, it seems that this rule is widely ignored, because both schools and students are driven by the fierce competition for success in the annual university entrance exams. According to the China Youth Development Project, 55 % of urban junior high school students did more than 2 hours of homework a night on weekdays in 2005, which was 34.4 % more than the result in 1999 (China Youth Development Project, 2006).

Another fact that should be considered is that many students in senior high school can choose to live at school where they will be provided with accommodation and night self-learning classes in which they can finish their homework and study more. The main reason for this is that many students live far away from school because, although every urban student will have a local junior high school, there are relatively few state senior high schools in each district and so it is very likely that it will be some distance away. Being able to live at school saves a lot of time spent on commuting, so students can concentrate more on studying. However it also means they are able to study a lot more than 2 hours a night.

While the girls concentrate on their academic lives, most of the fathers in the study focus on their own careers. One of the most important foundations of men's masculine identities is work (Morgan, 1992), and many of the fathers in my study still saw being a provider as an important role as discussed in Chap. 5. Regardless of their occupation, most fathers seemed to be very busy with work. Fathers' busy working lives were revealed in the question, "What are your normal working hours?" in the fathers' questionnaire. Among the 452 fathers who gave their working hours, the average was 9.17 hours a day. Mothers seemed to work even longer, as the average working time for them was 9.27 hours. These figures obviously exceed the maximum 8 hours stipulated by the Labor Law (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, 1994). This result differs from another study that found that average working hours for fathers with up to junior high school degrees, senior high school degrees, and above were 7.1 hours, 7.2 hours and 7.6 hours respectively (Xu & Liang, 2007). The sample of the results from Xu and Zhang's study was different because it included all fathers under 65, not only the fathers of secondary school students.

Similar to the questionnaire results, seven out of eight of the fathers interviewed reported being busy with work and normally coming back home late. One father (Father Nina), a construction worker, normally got up around five or six o'clock and came back home around six or seven, often with a long commute to work. Another, (Father Wang) who worked in a restaurant as a member of the administrative staff, reported that he did not live at home most of the time and spent only two or three days with his daughter in one month. As for fathers in professional jobs, such as engineers or teachers, they also had to work long hours. In addition, regardless of their work or occupation, many fathers often had to do things that did not necessarily count as work itself, but which were vital for maintaining critical working relationships and career success, such as dinner with colleagues and business partners. As having working meals is so common in Chinese work culture, especially among businessmen and the public sector, time with families at home is further reduced. Three fathers admitted that they normally came back home quite late, either because they needed to have business meals or to work extra hours. As Father Chen admitted "[I spend the most time on] my work, probably because society now is different. It is developing so fast. The pressure comes together. As a result, I have to use 80 % of the time on my work. I spend less time on family." One of the four professional fathers (Father Li) said he had meals at home most of the time, but more often than not his wife and daughter had already finished their meal before he arrived.

6.2.2 When Two Trajectories Meet: Time Together at Home

Time Together with Mum

Of the two parents, it is generally the mother who is most directly involved with the girl's day-to-day life, and the girls in my study still reported being close to their mothers. In answer to the question, "Who do you talk to the most at home?" 63.6 % of girls reported that they talked with their mothers the most, compared with 16.3 % who named their fathers ($n = 700$). In addition, 55.4 % of girls reported that they were closest to their mothers, compared with 32.4 % who reported that it was their fathers ($n = 670$). In addition, mothers were found to spend more time with their daughters at each level of daily life: time spent together at weekdays and weekends, time having breakfast together, and time having dinner together (Table 6.2).

Not only did girls report having less time together with their fathers than their mothers, they also reported that their fathers were less involved in monitoring their lives and less involved in their studies. When girls were asked about parents' knowledge of their whereabouts after school, 33.4 % reported that their fathers did not always know where they went, compared to 16.8 % who said their mothers did not always know ($n = 761$). Similarly, more girls reported talking with their mothers about their ideas for future careers: 60.5 % talked with their mothers, compared to 47.4 % with their fathers. However, in terms of giving advice rather than being asked for it, fathers were almost as highly involved as mothers, with 68.1 % of girls reporting that their fathers gave advice about which university they should go to or which subject they should study, compared with 74.5 % who said their mothers did.

Girls who said they were closest to their mothers also tended to argue more with them than with their fathers. In fact girls generally reported fewer arguments with their fathers than their mothers: 60.9 % ($n = 754$)

Table 6.2 Girls' response in relation to the time together with their mothers and fathers

	Mother ($N = 755$)	Father ($N = 756$)
Girls' time spend with mothers and fathers	Mean number of hours	Mean number of hours
Time spent together in the last school day	2.80	2.52
Time spent together in the last Sunday	3.34	2.92
Time having breakfast together in the last week	2.23	2.02
Time having dinner together in the last week	3.32	3.07
Time having arguments in the last week	1.72	1.60

of girls reported having no argument with their fathers in the last week, compared with 48.2 % ($n = 753$) of girls with their mothers. The obvious interpretation of this is that if girls spend less time with their fathers then there will be less time for them to argue. However, this also suggests that responsibility for controlling girls' behavior and challenging transgressions falls mainly to the mother.

Time with Fathers

Although girls tend to spend more time with their mothers, as discussed in Chapter 4 they still reported talking a lot with their fathers about study and future jobs. Moreover, when looked at closely the amount of time girls spent with their fathers was still significant in three particular aspects: time together on weekdays, time together at weekends, and time spent having dinner together. In a separate question, "On the last school day, how many hours did you spend with your father, around half (52.2 %, $n = 756$) of girls reported that they spent more than three hours with their fathers. The amount of time spent together also increased slightly at the weekend, with 65.4 % girls spending more than three hours with their fathers.

There are statistically significant differences between the younger and older cohorts in the amount of time spent on weekdays with fathers. More girls from the younger than the older cohort spent over six hours with their fathers and fewer younger girls spent less than one hour (Table 6.3).

The differences in time spent with daughters among fathers with different occupations were significant on school days but not at weekends.

Table 6.3 Girls' responses to the question, "How many hours did you spend with your father in the last school day?" and "How many hours do you spend with your father in the last Sunday?"

		Less than one hour	1–2 hours	3–5 hours	More than 6 hours
Time spent last weekday	Younger	16.5 %	23.6 %	36.3 %	23.6 %
	Older	30.8 %	25.5 %	28.1 %	15.6 %
Time spent last Sunday	Younger	15.6 %	13.7 %	23.1 %	47.6 %
	Older	21.2 %	17.9 %	24.5 %	36.4 %

Table 6.4 Fathers' time spent with their daughters according to their occupations (fathers' responses combined with daughters only when fathers did not fill in their occupation question)

	Less than one hour	1–2 hours	3–5 hours	More than 6 hours
Manager in company	33.3 %	27.8 %	36.1 %	2.8 %
Owner of private enterprises	35.7 %	42.9 %	21.4 %	.0 %
Professionals	17.9 %	17.9 %	37.2 %	26.9 %
Office workers	15.7 %	20.0 %	45.7 %	18.6 %
Small business	10.0 %	30.0 %	47.5 %	12.5 %
Business/service worker	10.5 %	30.8 %	33.1 %	25.6 %
Manual workers	8.8 %	24.2 %	47.3 %	19.8 %
Unemployed	100.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Total	17.5 %	26.1 %	39.0 %	20.3 %

Company managers and owners of private enterprises spent less time with their daughters, compared with other occupations (Table 6.4). Similarly, while there was no difference in time spent having breakfast together, paternal occupation did affect the amount of time fathers spent with their daughters at dinner. It seems that around half of fathers who were professionals, office workers, small businessmen, business and service workers, and manufacturing workers have dinner with their daughters more than 4 times in a week, while only about a quarter of company managers and owners of private enterprises did. However, there were no significant differences in time spent with daughters among fathers who had different levels of education.

There are also differences between the younger and older girls in time spent on the weekends with fathers. The biggest differences lie among the girls who said they spent more than 6 hours with their fathers. Among the younger cohort, 47.6 % spent over six hours with their fathers at weekends compared to 36.4 % of the older one (Table 6.3).

As previously mentioned, many fathers led very busy working lives which they find difficult to balance with family life, while at the same time the girls had very busy academic lives. Having meals together seems to be one of the few occasions when fathers and girls could spend some time with one another on a weekday. Shared meals serve as an important indicator of family togetherness.

As for having breakfast, many girls reported having their breakfast by themselves without either mother or father: 45.4 % of girls (*n* = 756) reported that they had not had breakfast with their father in the last week and 36.4 % of them (*n* = 755) said they had not had it with their mothers. The differences between younger girls and older girls were significant, both in terms of having breakfast with mothers and fathers. The girls from the older cohort reported that they had breakfast with their parents less often than girls from the younger cohort.

From the questionnaire, it appears that more than half of the girls had dinner regularly with their fathers. Half of the girls (52.0 %, *n* = 752) and just over half (55.7 %, *n* = 584) of their fathers reported having dinner with one another more than four times in the last week. Only 14.1 % of girls and 8.4 % of fathers reported not having a dinner together in the last week. The differences between the younger and older cohort is not statistically significant either.

In addition, the very ordinariness of family time spent together, such as in everyday routines, was what children and parents valued (Christensen, 2002). According to their daughters or themselves, three fathers from the interview drove their daughters to school. Not only did these fathers regard it as their responsibility to support their daughters' studies by taking them there, they also saw it as precious time together. Father Chen, admitted that his daughter's school was far away but said, "Although it is very far to travel every day, it is like a responsibility. What I wish is that I could try my best to take care of her when she is living with us. I get a sense of happiness. This is the tradition from my father. He took good care of us. So I do the same for my daughter."

The answers to the questionnaire indicate that despite, or perhaps because of, the fathers' feelings of guilt for not spending much time with their daughters, the men tended to report spending more time with their daughters than the girls reported spending with their fathers (Table 6.5).

The data from the questionnaire and interviews both give a general picture of the time girls spent with their mothers and fathers. Compared with fathers, mothers were more involved in girls' daily lives in each aspect, including spending time with them. When examined closely, the data shows that fathers and daughters still spent quite a lot of time together, and more than half the father and girl respondents reported

Table 6.5 Comparison between girls' responses to fathers' responses

	Girls' response *N*=756	Fathers' response *N*=585
	Mean	Mean
Time spent together on the last school day	2.25	2.67
Time spent together on the last Sunday	2.92	3.08
Time having breakfast together in the last week	2.02	2.34
Time having dinner together in the last week	3.07	3.20

spending more than three hours a day together during weekdays, and on the weekends the time spent together increased. However, when we look at certain aspects of time together, such as meals, the picture is different. Many girls tended not to have breakfast either with their fathers (45.4%) or mothers (36.4%). In terms of having dinner together, the data from the questionnaire and interviews contrasted. In the questionnaire, around half of both the girls and the fathers reported having dinner together more than four times in the last week. However, in the interviews, fathers and daughters reported that they did not often have dinner together. In the interviews, both fathers and girls emphasized the reality that fathers were busy with work and thus did not have much time at home with their daughters. However, some of the fathers tried to create more opportunities to have more interaction. In the following section I will examine the activities they share when they do manage to have some time together.

6.2.3 Help on Girls' Studies

Children's academic achievement is highly valued by Chinese parents and most believe that academic success is an effective way to secure a bright future (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1996). In addition, success in education is regarded as a filial duty that can bring honor and other benefits to the family, as advocated by Confucian philosophy (Salili, Zhou, & Hoosain, 2003). Therefore, many fathers see it as their responsibility to monitor and help their children's studies at home. Furthermore, as most families had only one child, that one is the only hope for their parents to see a child succeed, regardless of its gender (Tsui & Rich, 2002). Therefore, despite the traditional focus on the education of sons, the education of daughters is now very important.

The fathers in my study showed tremendous interest in girls' educational achievement. As revealed in the open question, "What's your wish for your daughter?" in the fathers' questionnaire survey, fathers' responses indicated that they were very demanding in terms of their daughters' academic achievement. Among 467 fathers who answered the question, 234 wrote wishes related to girls' academic achievement, such as going to university, getting a good result in the exam or improving her studies. Among them, 139 wanted their daughters to go to university or senior high school and 64 wished that their daughters would study hard. In the girls' questionnaire, girls reported similar interests to their fathers about their education. When girls were asked, "Is your father interested in your study?" they answered: 27.3 %—a lot, 45.5 %—some, 21.2 %—little, and 3.9 %—not at all ($n = 757$). There was no statistically significant difference between the younger group and the older group in terms of fathers' interest in their daughters' studies.

According to the questionnaire survey, 4.1 % fathers had only been educated to primary school level, 25.9 % had finished junior high school and 42.6 % had attained their senior high school degree. Only 27.4 % had been to college or university ($n = 591$). The question of, "What does your daughter plan to do after she finishes secondary school?" provided strong evidence of fathers' high aspirations for their daughters' education, in which 91.9 % of fathers assumed that their daughters were planning to go to university ($n = 590$).

In regard to the actual help fathers had given their daughters, 17.7 % said a lot of help, 61.2 %—some help, and 21.1 %—no help at all ($n = 755$). However, fathers from the younger cohort were reported to be more involved in helping their daughters with their studies, compared with the fathers from the older cohort. 21.6 % of the younger girls reported their fathers helping them a lot, compared to 11.9 % of the older group (Table 6.6). Overall, most fathers were reported to be relatively active in their girls' education.

Table 6.6 Comparing girls' responses to the question of, "Does your father help with your studies?" by the younger and older cohort

Age group	A lot	Some	Not at all
Younger	21.6 %	59.6 %	18.8 %
Older	11.9 %	63.6 %	24.5 %
Total	17.7 %	61.2 %	21.1 %

Similar to the questionnaire responses, accounts given in the interviews by both girls and fathers revealed that fathers were more active in their daughters' academic lives when they were younger. None of the fathers with older girls reported coaching their daughters. However, many fathers reported being involved in their daughters' studies while they were at junior high school. The reasons varied: some fathers thought the girls had developed their learning skills and thus were able to study by themselves; some girls preferred not to ask their fathers for help and most significant of all was that, even though they were very willing, many fathers were not equipped to give help due to the limitations of their own education.

In a way, the father's role as helper was embodied in family practice as they assisted their daughter with her studies. Father Li, who held a Master's degree was very proud that he was able to coach his daughter,

> *Everything she needed, I would provide her. Any help that she hadn't thought of which I thought was necessary, I would still do it for her, whether she wanted it or not. Let me give you an example: I am very keen on her math studies and I would buy her exercise books. Every time I bought one, I would buy two copies. I would give one copy to her to do first. When she was wrong, I would give her another copy to do. Or when she finished the first one, I would give her another copy to do it again.*

In addition, fathers' coaching activities were associated with their education levels, especially for the younger girls. Out of four pairs of father and daughter interviews from the younger cohort, three fathers only had a primary or secondary school education. All three admitted that they did not coach their daughters. As Father Wang explained, "It is impossible for me to coach you. Do you think I have finished my senior high school and I would know everything? Sometimes I don't know either. After all, I haven't done this for over ten or even twenty years. After all, you should rely on yourself. You can go to ask your teacher, or your classmates. Don't you come and expect me to answer your questions. That's impossible." Father Mei, who only finished primary school, was also not confident about helping his daughter, admitting that he was not good at school when he was younger. This was consistent with the questionnaire survey (Table 6.7), which shows a strong association between fathers' own education and their help with girls' education.

6.3 Generational Time: Communication and Conflicts

In China, being an only-child seems to have two contrasting effects in terms of inter-generational relations. On the one hand, only-children are more likely to be friends with their parents and to appreciate their companionship, as discussed in Chapter 3. On the other, there is always tension between the two generations (Chapter 5) since they were brought up in two very different historical periods and had different social backgrounds. Therefore, there is also a gap between the traditional Chinese masculine identity and the new "like friends" parents in the father–daughter gender dyad. In this section the discussion will therefore revolve around generation time, with a focus on fathers' and daughters' communication with each other.

Table 6.7 Comparing girls' responses to the question, "How much does your father help you with your studies?" with fathers' level of education

Father's level of education	A lot	A little	Not at all
Primary school	16.7 %	37.5 %	45.8 %
Junior high	10.6 %	65.6 %	23.8 %
Senior high	18.1 %	63.5 %	18.5 %
College level	30.4 %	47.8 %	21.7 %
Undergraduate	28.1 %	64.8 %	7.0 %
Master or higher	57.1 %	42.9 %	.0 %
Total	19.2 %	62.4 %	18.4 %

6.3.1 As Girls Grow Up: Communication and Understanding Between Father and Daughter

According to Giddens (1999), the intimate relationship between parents and children is an active process of opening up to each other and involves self-disclosure. There is a mutual understanding and open dialogue between the two, as discussed in Chap. 3. However, there is very little evidence of pure relationship between the fathers and daughters in my study.

The girls did show strong interest in their fathers' lives. With regard to hearing about their fathers' childhood stories, 53.4 % (N = 726) of the girls reported that they 'wanted to know very much'; 27.4 % said they were 'a little bit interested' and only a few, 11.7 % of them, were 'not very interested.' Despite this keen interest however, only a small minority (7.4 %) reported that they did had heard stories about their fathers when they were young. Even so, most remained curious about other aspects of their fathers' lives. For example, a majority of girls told the study that they 'want to know very much' or were 'a bit interested' in their father's hobbies (69.2 %, N = 725), work (51.7 %, N = 722), dreams (76.9 %, N = 724), and expectations of their daughters (72.6 %, N = 731).

This raises some interesting questions about why fathers, who want more and closer communication with their daughters, and daughters, who want to know more about their fathers, do not communicate more. It seems there is little support for Gidden's pure relationship in terms of mutual disclosure between parents and children. With regard to the fathers' own lives, dreams and concerns, only a minority of fathers reported talking with their daughters about these topics (Table 6.8). Indeed, a large number of fathers reported that, in the last month, they had not discussed anything about their own life (39.1 %), their own dreams (39.8 %), or their own concerns (56.6 %). In the light of this data it was therefore surprising that fathers' responses to the question 'How well do you think your daughter knows you?' (N = 571) indicated that the majority of fathers thought that their daughters did know them 'very well' (37.7 %) or 'quite well' (53.2 %). Only a very small minority (8.2 %) thought that their daughters knew them 'not very well' and a tiny minority (0.9 %)

Table 6.8 Fathers' responses to three questions concerning their communication with their daughters in the last month

	0 times	Less than 2 times	2–3 times	More than three times
How often did you talk with your daughter about your life in the last month? (*N*=588)	39.1 %	29.6 %	19.7 %	11.6 %
How often did you talk with your daughter about your dreams in the last month? (*N*=583)	39.8 %	33.6 %	16.6 %	9.9 %
How often did you talk with your daughter about your concerns about life in the last month? (*N*=578)	56.6 %	27.7 %	11.1 %	4.7 %

'not at all.' Fathers also appeared to think that they knew their daughters well. There was a difference between the cohorts however. The fathers of the younger cohort thought their daughters knew them better than the fathers of the older cohort thought their daughters knew them: 47.7 % of fathers of the younger cohort thought their daughters knew them quite well and 42.9 % thought they knew them very well. Meanwhile, although 62.2 % of the fathers of the older cohort thought their daughters knew them quite well, only 29.0 % thought they knew them very well.

When fathers' knowledge of various issues in their daughters' lives was examined (employing a dichotomous choice question format: I know well and I don't know well), 75.8 % (n = 582) of fathers believed that they 'know well' about their daughters' studies, 69.8 % (n = 580) 'know well' about their hobbies and 53.6 % (n= 580) 'know well' about their daughters' social lives after school. Furthermore, in regard to their daughters' career aspirations, 48.4 % (n = 579) of the fathers believed they had a good knowledge. In spite of this, only 38.1 % (n = 577) of fathers said they had a 'good understanding' of their daughter's life at school and only 39.0 % (n = 574) reported a 'good understanding' of their daughter's worries. There were no differences between fathers of the two different cohorts in the above questions.

In comparison, fathers seemed to think they knew their daughters better than their daughters knew them. In response to the question 'How well do you think you know your daughter?'(N = 584), 47.3 % of fathers answered ‘very well’ and 43.8 % replied ‘quite well.’ Only a few, 7.9 %, answered ‘not well’ and 1 % ‘not at all.’

However, although most girls thought their fathers knew them very well or quite well, overall the girls’ belief in the extent of their fathers’ knowledge of them was significantly lower in comparison to the fathers. Only 19.6 % thought their father knew them very well and 51.8 % thought he knew them quite well. Meanwhile 20.9 % thought their father knew them not well and 7.7 % that he knew them not at all ($n = 755$).

Given that Chinese culture has traditionally been characterized by non-confrontational communication, the lack of strong evidence of communication is unsurprising. Non-confrontational communication “is evident among family members, not only to preserve an individual’s dignity, but also to protect family harmony and family ties” (Xia, 2005, p. 102). In the fathers’ case this may be a result of them modeling themselves on their own fathers. Indeed, in this context it is more of a surprise that 90.9 % of fathers believed that their daughters knew them ‘very well’ or ‘quite well,’ in spite of the lack of reciprocal and direct communication between them. Perhaps fathers assumed that their daughters had attained a good understanding of their lives, just by being together and living under the same roof.

In a similar vain, Jamieson suggested that good relationships between parents and children did not necessarily involve disclosure (Jamieson, 1999); they could be achieved by actions rather than words. Indeed, Jamieson sees not saying too much and giving the adolescent space as beneficial: “a good relationship between some parents and their growing-up children requires increasing silence on the part of the parents rather than intense dialogue of mutual disclosure” (Jamieson, 1999, p. 489). Therefore, silence could be another form of care, and parents and children can still be close without verbal communication with each other. As Father Li explained in the interview, he was having fewer verbal interactions with his daughter as she grew up. He described,

> *Because she is grown up now and she understands things, thus you don’t need to say that much to her. For her it is the same, she should understand my feelings, without saying much. Like this, actually the relationship is closer in minds, but there are fewer and fewer verbal interactions.”*

Father Li thought his daughter was old enough to understand him without communicating in words. Instead of verbal communication, they used more non-confrontational communication, which "refers to expressing one's thoughts and feelings in an indirect and implicit manner" (Xia, 2005, p. 102).

However, Father Li was ambivalent. He admitted, "I will say we do not understand as well as before. … But the actual change is that I can say that we have less verbal communication. She talked less with us. It seems that she has grown up." Although he wished that he was closer in minds with his daughter by communicating in a non-confrontational way, he realized that they talked with each other less often as she grew up. The lack of direct communication ran the risk of translating to lack of closeness. Father Li's feeling of closeness to his daughter did not mean that his daughter felt the same. In fact, his daughter reported that she did not think they were close. Non-confrontational communication, from his daughter's perspective reflected her unwillingness to communicate, which was in contrast to what her father wished.

6.3.2 Communication About Romantic Relationships

There are a number of barriers for girls regarding communication about certain topics with fathers. In particular, teenagers are generally found to prefer to talk about romantic relationships with their same-gender parent (Wyckoff et al., 2008) and three daughters and three fathers in my study mentioned this difficulty. Girl Cai and Girl Nina both found it difficult to discuss romantic relationships with their fathers. Girl Cai further described how embarrassed she felt when, while watching TV with her father, they saw an actress and actor embracing each other. She tended to ignore and avoid any opportunities for discussion about such things. Similarly, Girl Shen's emergence as a sexual being caused her to distance herself from her father. She said she no longer saw him as a hero and singled out certain things she could not speak to him about.

Four girls reported that they did not discuss romantic relationships with their fathers, and one girl admitted that she avoided talking about anything to do with boys at home. One girl said that her father knew that she had once had a boyfriend. As for fathers, three fathers admitted that they never discussed this issue with their daughters, three did not even mention the topic in their interviews, and only two fathers reported that their daughters had asked them about their own romantic relationships and both fathers had told them their personal stories. It seems that in most cases, both sides preferred to keep a closed attitude and avoid talking about this issue.

The general lack of father–daughter communication about sexuality (except one father) may also be due to the fathers', as well as their daughters', discomfort. Traditionally Chinese men do not feel comfortable talking openly about sexuality. In the interview, it was noticeable that most fathers used very subtle words when talking about romantic relationships. Rather than saying *fall in love*, they preferred to use the phrases *have contacts with boys* (和男孩子接触), *play with boys* (和男孩子一起玩), *this thing* (这个东西), *chat with friends* (谈朋友), *between boys and girls* (男女之间), *making friends with opposite sex* (异性交往), and *things like making friends* (交友阿什么的). They tried to avoid any words directly describing romantic relationships. Only the father whose daughter had had relationships before used the phrase *lian ai* (fall in love). On top of the discomfort that originated from the girls themselves, the fact that their fathers used very imprecise words to address this sensitive issue may signal their discomfort to their daughters and discourage them even further. The fathers' reticence also reflects their ambivalence about their daughters growing up and moving away from them physically and emotionally in the future.

Fathers' strong opposition to their daughters having romantic relationships may also contribute to the fact that they chose not to talk about sexuality with them, feeling that their refusal to discuss it might send a stronger signal that their opposition was non-negotiable. Father Cai responded very strongly when asked about his attitude to the idea of his daughter having a boyfriend at this stage in her life, listing several reasons why it was not a good idea:

> *A: We will surely be against it. You should study while you are a student, if you* TAN PENG YOU *[translates directly as* chat with friends*, but means to have a boyfriend], you will have no future. Am I right? What's more, now it is impos-*

> *sible. Even if you have a good relationship, this is not true love. Not at all. It is waste of time and will ruin your study. There is no point. We are against it. You haven't got to the right time, you can do it when you are 23, or 24. This is allowed. But when you are studying, there is no way.*
>
> *[Father Cai, university degree, worked as a civil servant, daughter aged 16 when interviewed]*

Fear that the very mention of romantic relationships during adolescence might make them more likely also stopped fathers opening up and discussing their concerns with their daughters. Father Li admitted that he wished his daughter not to understand romantic relationships too early and by not talking to her about them, he hoped that she would not even think about them. This contrasts with evidence from an American study, in which much discussion about romantic relationships was instigated by the mother's concern to raise the matter (Raffaelli, Bogenschneider, & Flood, 1998).

On the other hand, having the right words or feeling comfortable enough to talk about romantic relationships may boost communication between parents and their children (Kirkman et al., 2005). Father Chen, one of the two fathers in the interview who had reported that his daughter had asked about his own romantic relationships and who had talked about them with her, showed that the daughter's approach can influence the degree to which the father feels comfortable about the subject. In Girl Chen's case, she had asked whether her father had had other girlfriends before he got married to her mother. Father Chen had mixed feelings about this, saying, "Also she wanted to know about my other girlfriends before her mum, who her mother had told her of. This is strange, but also very normal." His daughter joked with him about these previous girlfriends and thus managed to explore romantic relationships with him: "So I will tell her most of the stories, but she is always very curious about this. She would talk about it and tease me. Just like this." As many Chinese men are not used to talking about such things, a humorous approach by the daughters may help relieve their fathers' nerves and encourage communication. This is an interesting mirror image of a European study, which found some fathers managed to ease their adolescent daughters' tension about growing up by adopting a jocular approach (Flaake, 2005).

In conclusion, gender and traditional expectations of gender play a powerful role in the communication, or lack of it, between fathers and daughters about romantic relationships. In this area, most of the fathers in my study played the traditional masculine paternal role of taciturn moral guardian. Concerned about their daughters' vulnerability in early romantic relationships and desiring that they succeed in their education, they expected their daughters to focus on their studies and not even think about romantic relationships. By keeping silent on the subject, some fathers hoped that their daughters would not become interested. In addition, many fathers in my interviews were not used to talking about sexuality, and could only use very subtle language and euphemisms to describe romantic relationships. Their awkwardness and reticence may have heightened their daughters' own feelings of discomfort and a kind of feedback loop of mutual embarrassment may have arisen. Furthermore, although adolescent girls are sexual beings, deeply curious about romantic relationships, most of the girls in my study thought it was not the right time to have one themselves and so agreed with their fathers. In one case in my study, Girl Mei had had a romantic relationship. Her father found out about it and vigorously opposed it. The one girl who was in a romantic relationship at the time of the interviews had made sure to keep it a secret from her father.

Despite these barriers, two father–daughter dyads showed that it was possible for the two sides to at least talk about romantic relationships. By using humor and focusing on events in the fathers' remote past they made the subject less serious and did not threaten the gender roles of proud, protective father and studious, chaste daughter.

6.3.3 Arguments: Keep Fighting

Many parents and adolescents in this study found it difficult to communicate with each other. The reasons varied and included fathers having no interest in certain aspects of girls' lives or maintaining gendered views about what communication with girls should be like. However, the main obstacle seemed to be fathers not having a more egalitarian, open attitude towards adolescents, combined with the fact that fathers still wished to retain authority and influence over their daughters. The evidence in this study resonates with Beck's argument that "the elements of dialogue, of a virtual exchange of roles, of listening, and taking responsibility for one another remain under-developed" (Beck, 1997, p. 166). Some Chinese fathers appeared to have a fixed attitude about how children should grow up, and they did not see their daughters as equals. For the girls, who were dependent on their fathers for financial support, it was difficult to balance a desire for autonomy with continuing to be the daddy's little girl who elicited indulgence. In response to their fathers' desire to investigate rather than communicate, many girls refused to answer their questions, or simply struck back.

When fathers insist on their authority and girls insist on their independence, conflict inevitably occurs. In some cases this leads to face-to-face arguments between the two. As the questionnaire survey results show, 60.9 %, 24.9 %, 7.3 % and 6.9 % of girls reported having arguments with their fathers none, once, 2–3 times, and more than 3 times in the last week respectively (Table 6.9). From the questionnaire survey, older girls were also found to have fewer arguments.

For the girls from the younger cohort, 13–14 years old may be the time that conflicts between them and their fathers start to arise. Therefore, they choose to fight for their own rights when they have disagreements with their fathers. As Girl Mei, who was from the younger cohort, admitted, she used to obey her father in everything. But now she has started to argue with him. She became more aggressive as she described their arguments: "If he argues with me, I will fight back. So we just fight and fight. Sometimes, just for a word, for a tiny reason, then it becomes a huge fight."

Table 6.9 Girls" responses to the question, "How often did you have arguments with your father in the last week?"

	0 time	Less than 2 times	2–3 times	More than 3 times	Total *N*
Younger	59.7 %	25.0 %	6.6 %	8.6 %	452
Older	62.6 %	24.8 %	8.3 %	4.3 %	302
Total	60.9 %	24.9 %	7.3 %	6.9 %	754

In contrast, the girls from the older cohort appeared to be less argumentative, according to both interviews and questionnaire survey data. Instead, they simply gave up and kept silent. When Girl Shen looked back on the times when she had had lots of arguments with her father, she concluded, "It was the time when I was not very understanding." She used to fight with her father about tiny things, such as being late for dinner. It made her cry a lot when she had arguments with him. However, in hindsight she thought it had been foolish to do that. As she put it, "I think it is pointless to cry all the time. My eyes were red, and I thought it was meaningless. In the end, I calmed down." As she grew up, she learned to adopt a more peaceful way to deal with conflicts: "It is very rare that we have arguments now. It seems that we just don't argue. It is a kind of chat, talk in a reasonable and calm mood."

The girls reported becoming very emotional when they had arguments with their parents, either during or after the fight. Girl Liu was very aware of her father's reactions after each argument. She gave an example: "It was Tuesday, when I came back home. He did not even look at me. He was not even bothered to look at me. It was like this, I felt very disappointed." Although she had fights with her father, she still did not wish to upset him and when, after an argument, she observed that he ignored her or was still angry with her, she felt hurt and disappointed. It seems likely that she wished to make up with her father after the fight, but being aware of losing face made it difficult for her to take the initiative and to break the ice after they had fallen out. Emotionally, girls still wanted to be daddy's little girl, but needing to assert their independence sometimes created a dilemma for them.

When fighting with their fathers, girls may feel hurt and unloved as well as failing to get what they want. As they grow up, girls may learn to use alternative strategies. Three girls in the interview reported having no arguments with their parents. As Girl Wang explained, "We have a good relationship and we never fight with each other. I think he is very good to me so why should I argue with him? My dad never swears at me nor spanks me. It is for my own sake when he is reasoning with me, why should I fight with him?" However, she also admitted that when she did get angry with her father, she would keep silent for a while and then let it go. By adjusting her attitude she managed to avoid arguments with her father and by being reasonable rather than heavy-handed, he encouraged her to be reasonable in return. Girl Wang and her father may be lucky that they are both such reasonable people, but this is nevertheless an example of how fathers and daughters can handle the conflicts by effective resolution, in which compromise and understanding of another's point of view is achieved (Tucker, Michale, & Crouter, 2003).

Avoidance has been found to be another common strategy for coping with conflict in relationships, along with others such as problem solving, social support seeking, distraction, and positive cognitive restructuring (Skinner, Edge, Altman, & Sherwood, 2003). Not all the older girls believed that their fathers were reasonable in the way that Girl Wang believed hers was, and two reported choosing compromise or avoidance instead of arguments. Girl Cai admitted that she would feel very unhappy when she had arguments with her parents so she would choose to give up and agree with them, even though she was still not convinced by their reasons. Not being accepted by parents was seen as very upsetting, and the girls tried hard to find the balance between intimate relationships with parents and their own ideas. Similarly, when Girl Li recalled her arguments with her father, she said, "In my memory, I have the feeling of having arguments. Every time when I talk with him, I won't agree with him. There are very few things I will agree with him about. So I don't feel that comfortable in my heart. That's probably why I have the feeling of having arguments when I recall them. But probably, the arguments never happened. It is an argument when I have the chance to interrupt his talk. This happened very rarely." The power of parental authority left little opportunity for the girls to insist on their own ideas when they had different opinions from those of their fathers. Instead of standing up for their opinions and fighting a battle they could not win, some girls chose to keep silent and avoided the conflicts directly. However, the uncomfortable feeling may still remain.

Family time is clearly not always a positive experience. Fathers' and daughters' memories of conflicts in their daily lives reveal another aspect of their family practices, and a number of girls find arguments with their parents very hurtful. According to the questionnaire survey, the majority of girls reported not having regular arguments with their fathers. However, the interview data contradicts this, possibly because perceptions of what counts as an argument vary, and possibly that many girls in the questionnaire survey enjoyed more reasonable relationships than the ones in the interviews. There were also significant differences between the younger and older girls, according to both interview and questionnaire data. Young adolescent girls tended to use a more direct way to deal with the conflicts, while the older girls tried to avoid fighting, choosing to step back and keep silent instead. This may partly be because they have become calmer and more reasonable as they have grown up, but a bigger factor seems to be that they have learned that they will not win anyway, and so the argument is not worth the emotional distress. Whichever approach the girls adopted, it seems that fathers were still the ones who held the ultimate power, as the girls did not usually get what they wanted. In spite of this, some girls still tried hard to get their own independence and autonomy, even though their chances were very slim.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter, the exploration of family time has involved present time, which covers issues of girls' time spent together with their fathers; generational time, regarding the communication between daughters and fathers, and finally life course time, which is associated with different life course stages during girls' adolescence. These three timelines have been used as a way to understand their daily experiences of family practice and the possible changes across different generations and life course stages.

As Daly (1996, p. 470) argues, "the discourse of making time for children and family activities after business commitments and social activities is not only indicative of the challenge associated with producing time for family, but also reveals the values and priorities associated with time allocation." The findings from this study serve as a basis for understanding fathers' values and beliefs about time with their daughters. The data analyzed in this chapter suggest that many fathers spent a large proportion of their time at work and thus little was left for the family. Their prioritization of work suggests that many Chinese fathers define their role mainly as caregiver and breadwinner, as discussed in Chap. 5. Although many fathers claimed to want to spend more time with their daughters, and some made efforts such as driving them to school and tutorials, there was actually little evidence of them shifting their priorities from work to family time. On the one hand, fathers wished to fulfill their caretaking responsibility by giving as much time as necessary to their families and not counting the cost. On the other, fathers felt constantly driven to give up their family time in order to gain more financial profit, which relates to the economic profit aspect of time which can be measured and traded (Kremer-Sadlik & Paugh, 2007). The concept of spending time can either be driven by economic profit, such as through work, or morality, such as being with the family (Daly, 1996). Therefore, these two contradictory approaches to time may coexist and cause conflict in people's family lives.

Similar to many western studies, the fathers in my study were more distant than mothers, spending less time and having fewer conversations with their daughters. In addition, fathers differed from mothers not only in the amount of time they spent with their children, but also in the way they practiced parenting. Fathers were found to be highly involved in girls' studies, and this suggests that they had a different focus on their children's lives from the mothers. Although many fathers saw home as a place to relax, fathers' concern for their daughters' education and future career encouraged them to get more involved in girls' education and to talk about it.

However, everyday family experience also has inherent contradictions (Morgan, 1975). People's ideas, values, and expectations of family life may not always be in line with their practice (Daly, 2001). The discourse of fathers' time at home and shared activities with their daughters may help to show the reality of family practice. It is true that both girls and fathers reported that the fathers spent a significant amount of time with their daughters (though not as much time as mothers spend), especially during the weekend. However, they shared relatively few activities, suggesting that their understanding of family time was not quality time, which emphasizes doing things together, but included the times when fathers and daughters were doing things separately, such as when the father was watching TV and the girl was doing her own homework. The evidence indicates that the girls themselves did not mind this but that the fathers felt guilty for not being able to spare more time for specific activities, as was also reported in an American study (Kremer-Sadlik & Paugh, 2007).

In fact, despite their father's guilt about a time deficit, more attention from their fathers was not what the adolescent girls wanted. Although comparable data were not collected from the fathers in this study, accounts given by girls themselves showed that they were closer to, talked more to, and spent more time with their mothers. Moreover, the communication between fathers and daughters seems to become more difficult when fathers crossed the line. The girls repeatedly reported that their fathers tried to impress their ideas upon them. For example, some fathers kept talking about education and put too much emphasis on their concerns about girls' studies. Although the fathers tried very hard (in their view) to find things to talk about, excessive (in the girls' view) concern and investigation became the main causes for girls to close down communication. Being only-children they had quite possibly had enough attention and care from both parents and no longer wished their fathers to be too involved. In this regard the powerful western idea of family time, togetherness, and involved fatherhood may have different implications in Chinese one-child families.

Fathers showed a huge amount of interest in and high aspirations for girls' educational achievement, across both age groups. Therefore, fathers' communications with their daughters mainly focus on education. The role for father as a supporter or helper was very evident, and many fathers saw it as their responsibility, regardless of their own limitation of education. Fathers who held higher degrees tended to be more involved in helping girls' studies, such as coaching. Fathers who were not able to coach still tried to emphasize the importance of education, wishing their daughters could study harder. Some girls appreciated this and some did not. The evidence from fathers' concern of girls' education and their active involvement again confirm that fathers' time spent were strongly associated with their values and their beliefs of what they should do as fathers.

There also exist fundamental differences between the younger and older girls in many aspects of everyday family life. Girls from the younger cohort spent more time with their fathers, both on weekdays and weekends. They also had more communication with their fathers, including getting more praise, more criticism, and having more arguments. Many girls, both younger and older, did not have breakfast with either their mothers or fathers, but older girls had it even less often. Although there were no age differences in fathers' interest in their daughters' education, fathers of the younger cohort tended to help more with their studies because they were more capable of doing so. The message that emerges from these findings is that as the girls grow up, they become more distant from their fathers not because they become more outwardly rebellious but because they learn to deal with conflict more subtly, are spending even more time on schoolwork and are studying at a higher level than their fathers can be closely involved with.

There was also very little evidence of a pure relationship in the communication between the fathers and daughters in my study. Some girls wished that their fathers could be open with them, by listening to them more and respecting their needs. However, there was little sign of fathers' willingness to do this. In addition, the data was contradictory. Although there were few elements of mutual disclosure in these relationships, they still reported knowing each other well. Most fathers thought their daughter knew them quite well, with only 8.2 % knowing them not very well and 0.9 % not at all. Furthermore, around half the fathers reported know about the girls' studies, hobbies, and their wishes for their jobs. On the one hand, data from the questionnaire shows that fathers tend not to talk with their daughters about their own lives, regardless of girls' strong interests in their fathers' lives. Moreover, fathers in the interview reasoned that they did not see it as important. However, the questionnaire data also shows that both fathers and daughters reported they knew each other well. It could be understood that knowing family members well does not necessarily involve activities together or spending time together, more important, is to be there. Without direct communication, they could still be emotionally close and understand each other well. Both fathers and daughters in my study summed up the significance of unspoken communication or untold closeness. The non-confrontational communication, however, sometimes lead to contrasting views between fathers and daughters. Also, it would have been be more valuable if the questionnaire had comprised similar questions on what the girls thought they knew about their fathers.

Family time is not all about positive experiences. It is a mixture of both positive and negative. When fathers shared similar views or experiences with their daughters, they were much more appreciated by their daughters. In contrast, when fathers ignored their daughters' view and insisted on their authority, the communication often closed down or caused conflicts. Not having similar interests and views about things was an obstacle for their communication. In addition, when fathers believed that it was the mother who should take care of girls' daily lives, they made less effort to communicate. While facing the strong force of parental authority, many girls chose to give up or keep silent. However, some girls, especially the younger girls, chose to answer back. This was when fighting began. Many girls no longer saw themselves as obedient and close. Instead, they were trying hard to be independent and wished to standup for their own rights. However, the battle was not finished yet. On many occasions, both girls and fathers had to negotiate with each other to achieve balance between paternal authority and girls' independence. I will explore this balance in the following chapter.

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7

Negotiation in the Family: Parental Authority and Adolescents' Autonomy

7.1 Introduction

The analysis of previous chapters has thrown light on some of the tensions that emerge between fathers and their daughters when the girls are growing up. As part of the developmental process, parents gradually have less and less control over their children. As girls grow up, they increasingly demand autonomy and for some, they no longer see their fathers as their hero or definite authority. However, such significant shifts in the balance of parental authority and adolescents' autonomy do not happen overnight. It is a relatively slow process, in which both parents and children try to adapt to the new situation. However, there are many obstacles, for example, girls are financially dependent on their parents, fathers still wish to retain their parental authority, and fathers and daughters hold different values and different views. All these mean that girls have to negotiate with their fathers and, without that, freedom and autonomy will not easily be granted to them.

Some western scholars have found that young people do not automatically respect authority (Holland & Thomson, 2002; Thomson &

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Holland, 2004). Instead, they judge whether or not the authorities are worth respecting (ibid.). Many studies also have suggested that adolescents' beliefs in the legitimacy of parental authority vary according to different issues in their lives, especially among moral, social convention, and personal issues (Nancy Darling, Cumsille, & Peña-Alampay, 2005; Smetana, 1988). However, Chinese culture that emphasizes family hierarchy and harmony may put pressure on adolescents and may discourage them from expressing their disagreement openly (Fuligni, 1998). The Chinese word *guan* (管) is a culture-specific concept that has a double meaning of to take care and to control, govern, monitor, and interfere (Chao, 1994; Wu, 1996). The word *guan* (管), vividly highlighted the importance of parental authority as well as parental responsibility in Chinese family (Chaps. 1 and 2). One of the key aspects of the parent-child relationship in Chinese families is the reciprocal expectation of children. As Chinese parents sacrifice whatever they can to care for their children, children are expected to obey and respect their parents in return (Xu et al., 2005). Furthermore, Chinese adolescents are more reluctant to express their disagreements with parents (Yau & Smetana, 1996) which may result in more implicit forms of negotiations rather than explicit ones. Last but not least, the boundaries between what is personal for Chinese adolescents is rather ambiguous, and includes not only the inherent overlap among different issues such as safety but also Chinese people's idea of self (Chap. 3).

The focus of this chapter is the process of negotiation between parents and their daughters relating to girls' personal lives. The data from this chapter will be mainly drawn from seventeen interviews with both fathers and daughters, as well as some results from the survey questions that were used in the section about negotiation over study issues. Three specific questions are therefore addressed:

1. How do fathers and daughters perceive parental authority and adolescent independence?
2. How much freedom do fathers grant their teenage daughters? And do these vary across the two cohorts? If they do vary, in what ways?
3. How do fathers and girls negotiate parental authority and girls' autonomy, in the areas of study, social activities (going out and making friends), romantic relationships, and Internet use?

I will begin with an overview of fathers' and girls' beliefs in relation to family authority. This can provide insight into how girls and fathers think about young people's autonomy and to what extent girls can make decisions about their daily lives. Personal activities including academic issues, going out, the use of their allowance, use of Internet, and romantic relationships, will be therefore investigated.

7.2 Beliefs About Parental Authority and Young People's Autonomy

7.2.1 Children's Autonomy and Independence

Children's belief about the legitimacy of parental authority plays an important role in their autonomy-seeking process, particularly because independence is an important developmental process during adolescence. More importantly, the realms of parental authority and adolescent autonomy-seeking may be a source of conflict between adolescents and parents. Adolescents' beliefs about parental authority may influence how they react to the conflicts when parents and children have disagreements about how much freedom parents should grant to their children.

In China, most school children are still financially dependent on their families, and it is the parents' responsibility to support children until they are in the labor market. Thus it becomes difficult to achieve their autonomy through financial independence from the family. Another factor that may strengthen parent-child interdependence is that most Chinese children are only children. They may take it for granted that parents will support them whenever they need it, even if they have left home or have gotten married and live independently.

Two girls from the older cohort talked about going to boarding school as a process of being independent from parents. Most of the girls thought that having a job was the symbol of being independent. Only one girl mentioned that having an ID card was a sign of being independent. However, this was mainly because she wished to leave home as soon as possible and having an ID card could help her find a job.

Although most of the girls thought earning money and having their own jobs enabled them to be financially independent, some girls still thought they would never be totally independent from their parents. Girl Nina wished that she could still live with her parents even when she had grown up and had a job. However, Girl Li thought she probably would never gain her own independence unless her success had exceeded that of her father. In this sense, being independent also has an important aspect of power relationships between parents and daughters. When she could exceed her parents and became the one to make family decisions, she could fulfill the dream of being totally independent.

Fathers also had a different insight into girls' independence. Similar to the girls' response, some fathers thought that when their daughters went to boarding school, or started working, they would be independent. Only one father believed that independence came when his daughter had her own family.

In addition, the idea of financially supporting daughters was prominent in many fathers' narratives. It seems that fathers tend to assume they will keep supporting their children even though they do not need financial support. As Father Shen suggested, "Chinese people may never stop supporting their children financially." Father Wang, a single father with a senior high school degree, working in a restaurant, with a daughter aged 14 when interviewed, also talked about his plan to give his daughter money when she got married and had her own family. Father Cai also said, "We [parents] will get older one day, and all the houses, the car, will be hers. As long as we are able to [give to her], after all, she is the only child. It is a matter of how much you give." Father Li thought he would not stop giving his daughter money even though she no longer needed it: "Who else should I give it to?" As many children were only children, the parent-child link might be stronger and neither side wished to be totally independent.

However, it was particularly difficult for the fathers to accept the fact that their daughters may leave them one day. As Father Li believed that even though his daughter would leave him when she went to university in the USA, she would never be totally independent from him. He believed that the connection between his daughter and him was never going to break. In his mind, the concept of independence was more related to emotion and feeling. When parents or children had strong sense of belonging to each other, the children were not independent.

A: I think she will never be independent. As long as we are alive, this is one family, it will be like this forever. I can't make a clear break with her. It is impossible for me, I can't do that.
Q: What if she has her own family, then you are from one family and they are one family, do you think these two are one?
A: It is together forever. You won't say this is my family and this is your family. Impossible. For me, it is impossible, I don't know how other people understand.
Q: So you wish you will always be together?
A: It is not an issue of what I wish, it is the fact. This is the connection of your feeling and emotion. Am I right? If you make a clear connection with her about this, I feel I don't think so.

[Father Li, Master degree, manager in a trading company, daughter aged 17 when interviewed]

Both girls and fathers seemed to have different interpretations of being independent, in terms of leaving home. Girls' claims of planning to be independent in the future seemed like just wishful thinking, since their perspective of being independent mainly focused on being independent in a physical or emotional way. Although the girls did not talk extensively about how they wished to be financially independent, many fathers assumed that they would keep supporting their children whether they needed money or not, which is similar to a British study which found that non-UK born parents expected their children to stay part of the family and giving financial help to remain an obligation even after they grew up (Brannen, 1996). The bond between parent and child may be strengthened as a result of parents' financial generosity. In a sense, the situation of being the only children has created a unique pathway for only child's autonomy seeking.

7.2.2 Attitudes Towards Parental Authority

In traditional Chinese society, it was a social norm that girls should obey their parents, especially their fathers, following Confucius' three obediences: "as an unmarried woman she must obey her father, as a married woman she must obey her husband, and as a widow she must obey her adult sons" (Zang, 2003, p. 295). As a result of modernization, along with the social changes during recent decades, major changes have taken place in parent-child relationships in Chinese families, such as some children seeing their parents as friends (Chap. 2). Therefore, this raises the question of how much parental authority remains and to what extent parental authority has been shaken or is disappearing. I will explore this question by looking at both daughters' and fathers' views of being obedient as a child.

The question: "In traditional families, children should be obedient to their parents, what do you think?" was asked in the interview to investigate both girls' and fathers' opinions. More generally, girls thought that authority figures should be challenged if they were wrong; being able to challenge authority is important for their personal development. As Girl Liu from the younger group argued, "A child should have her own personality, if you only follow what your parents say, I think when you join the society in the future, you will only learn how to obey your boss." Girl Li, who was in the older group, explained that modern society was more reliant on knowledge than experience. Therefore, modern parents were not necessarily seen as more knowledgeable than their children. It was not reasonable to obey parents just for the sake of obedience. Girl Shen, in the older group, who had a twin brother reasoned, "My family is not that traditional anyway. We are a bit more westernized. I think as long as we are right, we don't need to obey parents. Sometimes parents may be wrong, or they may not fit with the current society anymore. My brother and I then must speak out, because it is out of date and old views. They must accept new ideas. So I don't think we should follow parents blindly." Girl Nina recognized the changes that she went through as she grew up: "When I was little, I did not know much. When he asked me to kneel down, I was just obedient and did it. But now I have my own thoughts. I will tell him not to beat me. The other night he was still beating me. Then I shouted, 'Don't beat me!' He still did it, and then I shouted again, he eventually stopped."

Girl Nina, whose family has migrated to Shanghai from the countryside, was the only one who insisted that children should obey whatever parents say. For her, being obedient serves as a way to fulfill filial duty to her parents since she was too young to do other things to fulfill the filial duty. She tended to talk very little with her father as a strategy to avoid conflicts. “The more you say, the more mistakes you make. So I rather say less and make fewer mistakes.”

Although most girls think children should have their own opinions and follow their own thoughts, this may only happen in an ideal world since parents still have the ultimate power. As Girl Zhan agreed, “Parents should respect children’s ideas, but we should still listen to our parents on important issues. After all, they are more experienced about all of these things than we are.” Girl Shen also agreed, “After all, parents are above us, but we can only suggest some oppositions.”

Fathers’ narrative in the interview focused more on their understanding of generational differences, and they said they were open to different opinions in the family. Fathers reported that they did not insist that their children should hold the same opinions as they did. Four fathers who discussed this in the interviews all agreed that children should hold their own opinions and it is not always necessary to obey parents’ suggestions. As Father Cai reasoned, “It depends, parents’ opinions are not always right. If they are right, children should agree. But nowadays, the time has changed and children should have their own thoughts.”

Father Li approved of the idea of children having different opinions because he was driven by a more ambitious wish that his daughter could exceed him. As he argued, it was not beneficial for children to merely follow parents blindly. If parents wished their own children to exceed themselves, they should not blindly ask their children to obey them. As he said, “If your children are able to exceed you, why should you let she/he obey you. Am I right? I think Chinese parents always wish their children might exceed them. The parents are very silly if they only ask their children to obey them. Very foolish.” Therefore, more freedom should be granted.

However, not all the fathers were convinced. Father Shen insisted that adult authority was absolute and that children should surrender to that. Furthermore, he seemed confident in the strength of adult power: “There is no point in speaking out, not allowed is just not allowed. In the end, you will surrender to the power. Haha, adults are the power. Haha (laughing).”

7.3 Negotiations Over Greater Autonomy

The focus of this section is to discuss how adolescent girls negotiate with their parents to seek autonomy in relation to study issues, going out with friends, having romantic relationships, and use of the Internet. These are the crucial issues girls are undergoing as they go through adolescence. Things such as starting new friendships or romantic relationships or the transition of moving into a new school form an important part of young people's lives. The Internet has increasingly become an essential component of many young people's lives, especially for only children who do not have siblings to play with. Therefore, it will also be discussed.

7.3.1 Negotiations Over Studying

Conflicts about studying are reported between Chinese adolescents and their parents (Yau & Smetana, 1996). However, girls did not report significant conflicts with their parents in terms of study related issues in my study. In both the questionnaire survey and interviews, adolescent girls from both cohorts tended to have freedom to decide whether to go to after-class clubs and most other study related decisions.

In the questionnaire survey, girls from the younger cohort were less likely to make decisions by themselves, in terms of whether they should go to after-class clubs. Overall, 50.1 % girls reported that they were the one who decided whether or not go to after-class clubs: 42.7 % girls from the younger cohort and 60.2 % in the older cohort ($N=661$). However, mothers and fathers became less involved in girls' after-school academic activities: 38.0 % mothers and 17.3 % fathers from the younger cohort decreased to 31.2 % for mothers and 8.2 % for fathers in the older cohort. When it comes to study related issues in general, 35.9 % girls in the older cohort said they decided by themselves, compared with 27.8 % in the younger cohort ($N=729$).

In the interview, four girls (three from older cohort and one from younger cohort) talked about how much freedom they were granted in relation to study related issues. Girl Chen also mentioned that she made her own decision on which subject she would choose for the final entrance examination for university.

However, when girls could not make up their minds, or confronted more important decisions, parents took charge. In Girl Chen's case, there was an opportunity to go to America as an exchange student during a summer holiday. Girl Chen felt it was a serious issue and she was not able to make up her mind. Girl Nina also confronted a big decision when she was embarking on the final year in junior high school. As her parents were non-Shanghai householders, she could not take the entrance examination for university in Shanghai. She had to decide whether she should continue her education in Shanghai or go back to her hometown. She thought it would better to allow her father to decide.

Some girls were totally determined about what they wanted to do and got their own way. Two girls in the older cohort admitted that they would not accept their parents' suggestions and that they would make the final decision.

However, parents still closely monitored their daughters to make sure they were not distracted from their studies by other activities. Two fathers said that they had the authority to withdraw the autonomy granted to their daughters in pursuing activities that could affect their study. As father Chen explained: "In principle, as long as you tell us and as long as it doesn't affect your study, if you want to play then just go and play." Father Zhan was also concerned that other activities would have a negative impact on his daughter's studies. Therefore, he set limits on the number of the novels his daughter read and additional limits on Internet use.

7.3.2 Negotiations Related to Social Activities: Going Out and Making Friends

During adolescence, girls are going through many social and emotional changes, including their relationships with peers. Making friends and going out are two particular areas that caused concern to parents as the girls spent more and more time with friends rather than with family. Some girls reported that their fathers had many restrictions about what and who their daughters could go out with.

Concerns about girls choosing the wrong friends may be one of the main reasons that parents have restrictions about whom their daughters can make friends with. As Father Nina revealed, "It is normal to go out and play with your classmates. But the point is who you are playing with, good students or bad students. After all, you should go out with good students. We say '*one who mixes with vermilion will turn red, one who touches pitch shall be defiled therewith*' (近墨者黑)."

Some parents had specific preferences about who their daughters should make friends with, usually the ones who had higher academic achievement. This was similar to the study by Sun and Zhao (2005). In my study, Girl Liu and Girl Zhan talked about their own experiences when asking for permission to go out; they said that their parents normally judged their friends' according to their friends' academic performance at school. If they were good students, parents normally would agree to let their daughters become friends.

Safety is another concern, especially for girls. From the parents' point of view, being a girl meant being vulnerable to many dangers. In order to protect them, some restrictions were reinforced. Father Wang emphasized this, "I am not against you playing, but you should know your boundary. Don't you think that I have grown up now, it will be fine. Sometimes she asks to play until 8 p.m., 9 p.m. or even 10 p.m. This is not allowed. I ask her, 'Why do you come back so late? You are a girl.'" Parents also warned their children by giving some vivid stories and examples. Sometimes, it was effective as girls were scared and imagined what might happen to them if they didn't follow their parents' advice. As Girl Liu convinced herself, "My mum is so funny, she always insists that I shouldn't go out at night or even afternoon. What if I meet some bad boys, or robbery, or things like this? Lots of this kind of talk scares me. But I know it was not true. But sometimes it is true. Maybe I will meet something dangerous. My neighbor had this experience once. Since there are not many people walking on the street around here, I do not like to go out at night. I have to come back home before six.'

The discussion of girls' going out and making friends throws light on some of the tensions that emerge between fathers and daughters since fathers had many concerns about girls' safety, academic achievement and meeting bad friends. Under these circumstances, the desire of adolescents' autonomy-seeking did not decrease. On the contrary, some girls used their own strategies to negotiate with their parents. In some cases, strategy management of information served as a useful tool for girls' autonomy seeking.

Parents' knowledge of their children's activities and whereabouts was a way of maintaining control over their children's daily lives. Children's willingness to disclose can also act as an important factor in terms of parents' knowledge of children's personal lives (Darling, Cumsille, & Loreto Martínez, 2007; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). None of the girls in my study mentioned lying to get their own way. Lying to parents may also be seen as morally wrong for Chinese adolescents, something also found in Perkin and Turiel's study on American adolescents (Perkins & Turiel, 2007).

However, girls may encounter denial when they ask permission from their parents. In Girl Liu's case, her mother was trying to convince her and hoped she could change her mind by continuing to talk. Girl Liu recalled, "My mum said, now I control [*Guan*] you for your own sake, such as these things. Endless talk, so I am not willing to tell her what I'm doing or ask her for permission. Because once I started to ask, she begins to talk endlessly."

In my study, concealing information from parents was used as a way to avoid parental disappointment and intervention. If the girls asked parents for permission, they knew that the chance of rejection was high. This is consistent with a study which found that American adolescents from Latino and Chinese backgrounds were more likely than European adolescents to "conceal information from their parents to avoid upsetting their parents, getting in trouble, or disrupting family harmony" (Yau, Tasopoulos-Chan, & Smetana, 2009, p. 1482). In the interviews, two girls [Girl Zhan, Girl Liu] talked about finding ways not to let parents know who they went out with or where they went to. Both girls were from families with high socio-economic status. Girl Zhan gave an example of when she did not tell her mum where she had gone to while her mum was not in Shanghai. Her mother did not ask her about that and there was no need and no harm in saying nothing about it afterwards. Therefore, she was convinced that she was not lying.

However, girls could not always avoid concealing their whereabouts from their parents. As Girl Shen and Girl Nina admitted, they had to tell their parents every time they went out, otherwise they would be punished or be in big trouble. On the one hand, the thought of parental disapproval could encourage adolescents to conceal information from their parents (Darling, Cumsille, Caldwell, & Dowdy, 2006). On the other hand, the fear of punishment could also encourage the girls to give in and confess to their parents. This was particularly true when safety was concerned. Safety was one of the reasons parents restricted their children's activities. At the same time, safety was also one of the main reasons girls concealed their whereabouts to their parents. In the interview, Girl Shen explained why she had to tell her parents about her whereabouts:

> *Q: So do you tell your parents every time you go out?*
> *A: Must do, firstly, I don't want to be blamed when I come back home. Secondly, I try to make them at ease. In case they didn't see me for a long while.*
> *Q: What does your dad worry the most about you?*
> *A: Safety. It must be. I don't think my dad worries about my studies that much. Sometimes I will come back home late, he will call my mobile phone all the time.*
> *[Girl Shen, aged 16 when interviewed, whose father had a college degree and worked as a member of university staff]*

Worry was a symbol of concern, which symbolized parental affections. It had many forms, such as "nagging, interfering, fussing, insisting on times to come, helping with homework" (Allatt, 1996, p. 134). Children try to reciprocate this care and concern by doing things that could ease parents' worry.

Girls tried to reciprocate parents' care by telling parents when they went out so that parents could stop getting worried. However, they still had choices of when and how to conceal the information since they still wanted their own privacy and freedom. They could tell only when asked, and choose the details they wished to tell their parents. The strategy of partial disclosure was used by some girls as a way of managing the information. Two girls talked about how they managed to do whatever they wanted to do and then reported it afterwards to parents, or did whatever they planned to do by ignoring parents. When making friends and going out with friends were regarded as personal issues, the girls considered these actions beyond parents' legitimate authority. In addition, this daring approach of just doing it without permission may be related to girls' assumption that they would not have to face serious punishment and consequences. Girl Zhen described how she handled it: "Normally they will not be against it. For example I want to go to Jing'an Temple with classmates. They will ask, 'Who are you going with?' Especially my mum, she will be thinking over, of course she was thinking whether the person is good at study, whether the person is a nice person, to decide whether I can go out together with her? I didn't wait until she had finished thinking, I just went back to my room. I just waited until that day, then I just said 'bye bye' and left."

7.3.3 Negotiations Over Romantic Relationships

Having romantic relationships is not as common for Chinese adolescents as in many western countries (Chap. 4). According to a comparative study of Chinese and Canadian adolescents aged 16–17 years old, only 10.1 % of Chinese girls were currently in a relationship and only 10.1 % had had a relationship in the past (Li, Connolly, Jiang, Pepier, & Craig, 2010). However, the issue of romantic relationships is one of the most sensitive areas that concerns both adolescents and their parents.

In my study, only one girl admitted to having a boyfriend at the time of the interview and another girl admitted that she had once had a boyfriend. Both were from the younger cohort.

Two fathers in the older group claimed that they did not try to control their daughters' involvement with boys (Chap. 6). They also reported that they discussed their own romantic relationships with their daughters. As a result, this openness encouraged their daughters to share their experiences with boys. Both daughters did not report any conflicts with their fathers in terms of romantic relationships.

However, most of the fathers thought secondary school age was too early for their daughters to have romantic relationships, which was consistent with girls' opinions discussed in Chap. 4. Among the eight fathers interviewed, five fathers expressed strong opposition to their daughter having romantic relationships. They clearly stated that having romantic relationships was not allowed either in senior schools or junior high schools.

Most girls were aware of their fathers' disapproval. Among the nine girls interviewed, eight thought their fathers were against the idea of having boyfriends. They also understood their fathers' disapproval: that they were too young to fall in love and that it would have some negative impact on their studies, or that girls were more vulnerable when they were in relationships, compared with boys. Girls used lots of strong language to emphasize their fathers' attitude when they talked about their fathers' view of romantic relationships. Both Girl Nina and Girl Wang said that their fathers would "kill them" if they ever had a boyfriend. This seemed like exaggeration when they said it (honor killings are very rare in China and not part of traditional culture) but it reveals the girls' worries about what would happen if they did cross this line regarding their fathers' wishes. The girls also tended to imagine dire consequences if they were found out. Girl Liu said that her father would forbid her from attending any local school and move to a home far away.

Girls' sexuality is also associated with the family's reputation and shame, which was another reason why fathers were against the idea of their daughters' having a boyfriend. As Father Wang understood it, playing with boys was dangerous and could end up with serious consequences for his daughter. Girls would be shamed and girls' parents should be blamed if anything bad happened. Although he admitted that they lived in a much more open society now, these attitudes have brought danger and risks for girls at the same time. The open society meant open information and more chances for girls to go out and meet boys. However, it would be an unforgivable mistake that neither he nor his daughter could afford. It is clear from Father Wang's narrative below that he was concerned about being blamed by the society and losing face.

> *A: The worst thing that could happen to me is that I will be condemned when I go out. But you did the shameful thing and it is your whole life, especially for girls. If boys made the mistake [making a girl pregnant], it is an honor. It is very open now, still like this, very honored. You, especially you are a girl, shameful, shameful for your whole life.*
>
> *[Father Wang, single father, senior high school degree, worked in a restaurant, daughter aged 14 when interviewed]*

Fathers used different ways to deal with their daughters' desires for and curiosity about romantic relationships, because there was an emerging need for fathers to be responsible for girls' sexual lives. Some fathers were more direct and straightforward. In the interviews, two girls reported that their fathers said directly to them that they were not allowed to have romantic relationships. Other girls reported that their fathers used all possible means to stop their daughters from having any contact with boys. For example, Father Nina forced his daughter to avoid any social activities in which boys were present. When Father Mei discovered that his daughter had a boyfriend, he confiscated her mobile phone so that she could not contact anyone.

Others adopted indirect ways to control their daughters' thoughts and activities. Two girls reported how their fathers indirectly found out what they were doing and what their attitudes to romantic relationships were. There was not much communication involved, since the fathers were very sensitive about this topic. On the one hand, they did not want to talk about it. By not talking about that, they were trying to convince themselves that nothing was happening in their daughters' social lives. On the other hand, they wanted to be able to control the situation by confirmation that their daughters had not attempted to date boys at all. Thus, the conversations happened abruptly and finished suddenly. As Girl Cai recalled, she and her parents once saw a classmate dating a boy while they were having a walk together in the park. Seeing her classmates on a date in the park, her mother criticized them straightaway, while her father directly asked, "Are you thinking of having a boyfriend?" This stopped her from making any conversation. As a result, Girl Cai only talked about female classmates at home because she was aware that her parents were too sensitive about romantic relationships.

Girls confessed a feeling of not being trusted because fathers were trying hard to protect them. To avoid her fathers' disapproval or any arguments with her, Girl Nina would not go out with friends if there were boys in the group. However, she had complicated feelings about that, as she explained, "Sometimes I will think my father supports me, really. But sometimes I think he doesn't trust me. I do really think that way. Sometimes I feel, I am your daughter, why don't you trust me. Who else will you trust then? But I will sometimes comfort myself by saying to myself, 'He is my dad, if I don't listen to him, who else would listen to him?' Plus, he must do it for my own sake." On the one hand, she felt a lack of trust from her father because if his request not to have any contact with boys. On the other hand, she was trying to convince herself that what her father did was to protect her.

In terms of romantic relationships, fathers were the ones who often employed different strategies, compared to the girls. Some fathers tended to use more force to forbid their girls getting involved and to threaten their daughters with serious consequences. Other fathers tended to use an indirect way to test whether their daughters had any potential boyfriends. Fathers also encountered embarrassment when talking about the topic, which implied that they may chose to avoid the topic. Two fathers from the older group and both from better off families were more relaxed, and they adopted open communication with their daughters. Although girls were faced with strong disapproval and pressure from their fathers (and probably mothers and teachers) not to have a romantic relationship, they did not disagree or agree with their parents. Instead, they saw themselves as not ready for a boyfriend at the life course of adolescence. It was through self-recognition, but not negotiation, that girls constructed their own way of growing up, in terms of romantic relationships.

7.3.4 Negotiation Over Internet Use at Home

The Internet has become an essential part of young people's lives. However, the introduction of the Internet to family space has posed a challenge for parents who wish to protect their children from a questionable world and thus can create more conflicts between parents and children. As many have argued, new technologies such as media and the Internet have transformed traditional family relations and power structures between children and adults (Holloway & Valentine, 2001, 2003). Parents may be able to forbid their children from going out or may set a curfew. However, with Internet access at home, they are less able to limit their children's access with the wider world. The home, therefore, is more connected with society and some parents may feel powerless in keeping control over their children's lives. Fathers' views of the Internet and how they controlled the use of Internet at home are two questions that I will look at in this section.

All the girls admitted that they wished to have Internet access at home. However, among nine girls I interviewed, three girls, Girl Nina, Girl Wang and Girl Mei had no Internet access at home. All these three girls were from the younger cohort and all were from families with relatively fewer family resources. Girls reported that they used the Internet for many daily activities, such as looking at the news, chatting, reading novels, and watching cartoons. Sometimes, they also used the Internet as a tool to study, to check things, and to look at the notes that teachers posted online.

However, all the fathers who talked about the Internet were negative about it. They preferred that their daughters not use the Internet as often as the girls did. Most fathers thought the Internet was not trustworthy and that children would easily learn bad things from it. More importantly, spending too much time would have a negative effect on their study. The fact that fathers often had less knowledge than their daughters also contributed to the fathers' fear over their daughters' Internet use. Father Wang explained why he did not agree to buy his daughter a computer: "Why I don't buy her one? When she is using the Internet, I don't know what kind of website she is looking at. I won't come and check her computer. I don't know things about computers. How could I check her? I'll say the Internet has everything inside, whatever you want. There is so much in it, how could I know what she is playing inside?… When you grow up, you know what you really need and you know things, I can buy you one then."

Both fathers and daughters talked extensively about how fathers controlled use the Internet. It seemed as if fathers used all possible ways to stop girls and limited girls' use of Internet if they had access at home. Some fathers made rules about how much time and when the girls could use the Internet. In Girl Chen's case, she could use the Internet for about one hour on the weekend, as a way to relax. In Girl Zhan's case, her father set a password on the computer so that she had to ask for permission every time she used the computer.

Some fathers tended to be less restrictive about their daughters' use the Internet. However, they still monitored their daughters' activities occasionally to make sure they did not do anything bad. Father Chen checked the websites his daughter had visited once in the past two years, and he sometimes would have a glance at the website when his daughter was using the Internet. He wanted to reassure himself that everything was fine. Although he did not interfere with his daughter's activities and did not set any limitations on Internet use, he was not totally at ease.

Although most fathers did not wish their daughters to spend too much time on the Internet, girls' desire to spend more time on it were not been reduced. The girls demonstrated in the interview that they tried to use every possible opportunity use it. Two girls from the older group [Girl Li and Girl Cai] talked about how they secretly used the Internet while their parents were not at home. Girl Li reasoned that as long as her father was not at home, she could get her own way. However, her father actually was aware of her behavior. As her father described, "Once I came back, as soon as she heard the knock on the door and my footsteps, she then turned off the computer and left."

Girl Mei was an extreme example who got addicted with Internet. Girl Mei started to make friends with people she chatted online. She got addicted to the Internet and her life had changed since she made friends with people online: she learned to be rebellious and no longer listened to her parents; she started to hang out with people she met online who dropped out from the school. She then spent most of her allowance on the Internet cafés when her father stopped her Internet access at home; sometimes she even stayed in the cafés overnight. She once ran away from home and wanted to leave home and start to work. Her father then tried to forbid her to go to Internet cafés. This did not work, and Girl Mei kept going to the Internet cafés without permission. Her father then had to go out and search for her until he found her in the Internet cafés. Knowing that her father was looking for her, Girl Mei changed the Internet cafés regularly and went to cafés that were further from home. Her father was very concerned about his daughter and sought help from different people including a psychotherapist, teachers at school, and even the police.

From Father Mei's perspective, he was trying all the possible ways to help his daughter and to save her from being addicted to the Internet. However, as Father Mei expressed in the interview, it seemed very difficult to convince his daughter to study, and she was not interesting in studying at all. All she wanted to do was to leave home and spend time with her friends. Stopping the Internet at home did not stop his daughter from using it. On the contrary, it caused a bigger problem since his daughter started to go to Internet cafés and did not want to come back home.

7.4 Summary

Different aspects of parents' and adolescents' beliefs about adolescent independence were examined in the study. Although their daughters were growing up, fathers did not see them as equals and did not treat them as independent individuals. Many fathers wished them to be more obedient than they were. In fact, the fathers' concept of the self as essentially indivisible from the family meant that they did not really conceive of their daughters as ever being independent from it, even if they physically left home. From the fathers' perspectives, family ties and obligations still played an important role, which was also found in a UK study (Gillies, McCarthy, & Holland, 2001). In contrast, the girls' concepts of self were halfway between the great self and small self, wanting certain freedoms associated with the modern individualized self but expecting their parents' support to be unending.

This casts some doubt on the supposed distinction between individualistic and collectivistic orientations of self. The Chinese adolescents were concerned about maintaining harmony in their families and earning respect from their parents, as an aspect of bigger self, which is closely related to family and society values. At the same time, they wanted their own choices and their own freedom, ideas that reflect the independent self. Findings from my current study suggest that the differences between these two are often not clear and cannot so simply be defined as individualistic or collectivistic. More often than not, they coexist with one another (Yau & Smetana, 1996). The complex coexistence of different orientations should be studied more closely; as adolescents gain more independence, their development within a cultural context helps to inform the process. Adolescents seek more freedom but at the same time, they obey their parents. They build a life in which individualism and collectivism coexist.

For the adolescent girls, they expected to be treated as equals with the adults in the family. In addition, they perceived independence as a necessary and natural process of growing up. However, being an adolescent girl was rarely seen as a process of increasing independence by the fathers. Most fathers associated girls' independence with risk and moral responsibilities that were strongly associated with gender. This was in contrast to the English study (Gillies et al., 2001), in which parents understood independence in a more straightforward way but young people related independence with more responsibility and morality. Furthermore, there was little trust from the fathers, while the fathers expected their daughters to respect them completely.

Independence was understood differently by parents and young people. Therefore, there were many obstacles to the girls' desires for more autonomy in their own personal lives. However, many fathers did grant certain freedoms to their adolescent daughters. Many girls were able to make decisions about their own studies, perhaps because a lot of fathers were not educated enough to feel qualified to interfere and so gave up their parental authority over that area.

However, parental authority still dominated girls' social lives, including going out and making friends, romantic relationships and Internet use. In these aspects of girls' lives, parents usually revealed their concerns for their daughters' safety and commitment to studying. However, some of the examples they gave and language they used suggest that what worried the fathers most was that going out and Internet use could increase their interest in, and access to, romantic relationships.

In terms of the negotiation process between parents and their daughters, parents tended to use more explicit negotiation. Most parents set clear boundaries and restrictions for girls' activities, especially Internet use and romantic relationships. For Internet use, it was usually relatively easy to control by setting rules, guarding access with passwords, or simply not providing computers. In terms of romantic relationships, it could be more nuanced. Some fathers stated their disapproval of their daughter having a romantic relationship openly, and others explicitly imposed moral responsibilities on them. However, some avoided talking with their daughter about romantic relationships at all, partly in the hope that by not raising the issue it would not appear and partly because they were too embarrassed. This refusal to communicate does not fit neatly into either the implicit or explicit categories of negotiation. The fathers did not explicitly say their daughters could not have a romantic relationship but neither did they say something less direct which implied that. However their resolute silence on the matter made it abundantly clear to the girls that romance was off-limits.

Although Chinese adolescents were found to be more subtle and indirect in expressing conflicts with their parents, many adopted more pragmatic strategies such as implicit negotiation or concealment. For example, the girls learned to use more implicit negotiation to gain access to the Internet, such as using it when their parents were away. However, with regard to not having romantic relationships, the majority of girls already shared similar attitudes with their fathers so there was nothing to negotiate. There were two interesting exceptions though. In one case a girl had a boyfriend but kept it secret and in another the girl's father did discover his daughter had a boyfriend and tried hard to stop it. So it seems that ultimately the girls would find a way to achieve autonomy in this area.

Going out and making friends seems to be a more complicated issue, as parents could not insert their power over their daughters by simply disapproving, as with romantic relationships and Internet use. Therefore, girls were freer to try out their different strategies. However, full disclosure or lying were not often used, instead the girls prefered partial disclosure and avoidance. This finding suggests that Chinese adolescents based their negotiation on their own judgment, but not their family obligation to obey, as was found in other studies (Yau et al., 2009). When they saw the action as not harmful, and their parents were not strongly against it, there was more space for them to develop their own freedom.

In girls' and fathers' narratives, there was no evidence of girls preferring to disclose more to their mothers than to their fathers, which was evident in other research (Yau et al., 2009). This doesn't mean there are no gender differences in disclosure. Further research should examine whether girls have the same level of disclosure to mothers and fathers.

In conclusion, the balance between parental authority and adolescent autonomy is more complicated than expected. It is too simplistic to say that there is less adolescent autonomy in collectivist cultures, or that Chinese parents are more respected by their children. On the surface, adolescents do get a certain amount of freedom of choice about what they do with their studies and allowance. However, this may be because parents and society are encouraging children to focus on academic achievement. Another reason may be because this generation of parents' relatively limited education means they do not feel intellectually qualified to interfere in their children's choices. They do feel morally qualified to interfere in their children's social lives, especially going out and making friends, which they largely wish their children to avoid. Girls from a collective culture still have a strong desire to go out and make friends with whoever they want to, however, the pressure against this from parents may force them to use implicit strategies to get their way. This is in contrast to girls' financial autonomy, where there is less tension between what parents and adolescents want. Parents wish their children to develop their financial management skills, so they only set a few boundaries about what they cannot spend on. In addition, these are boundaries which, unlike the limits on socializing, they do not always feel the need to cross because they are generally sensible with their money.

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8

Conclusion

This book set out to understand father–daughter relationships in two groups of girls living in Shanghai. By comparing the two groups of adolescent girls, it analysed father–daughter relationships at two points in girls' life courses when they were growing up. This final chapter summarizes and concludes the book. First of all, I review the research rationale and objectives, and how they are addressed through the findings. Secondly, I link the discussion of findings and theory to the particular context of contemporary China. The findings are examined in relation to three theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed the study: individualization and collectivism; fathering and care; and family negotiations. Lastly, I will provide some suggestions for future directions.

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8.1 Research Findings and International Comparison

The thesis' contribution is to describe and map the patterns of the family lives of girls and their fathers at key points of historical change and in the life course of young people. The findings suggest that growing up in contemporary Chinese society is similar in some respects to western society, such as the attention girls place on their appearance and their desire for more independence. At the same time, adolescent girls' self identity is still strongly influenced by Chinese culture, which advocates obedience to parental authority. Most girls reported they were generally happy with their relationships with mothers and fathers. The survey data on the frequency of girls' arguments with their parents also suggested that most girls did not frequently argue with their parents. Furthermore, the focus group discussion of what defines a good or bad daughter indicated that many girls saw being an obedient daughter as the important criterion for being a good daughter. However, the interview data suggest that many girls thought challenging authority was the norm for being an adolescent. Also, they were starting to pay more attention to their own appearance and wished to be fashionable. Girls' construction of their own identity seemed to be influenced by a traditional collectivism ideology; at the same time, they were trying hard to live according to their own will.

As for fathers, their own experiences of being fathered contrasted sharply with their own fathering. In addition, fathers had lived through a dramatic period of political reforms during which material resources were scarce and people's values of family life were very different from those of today's young people. Moreover, the fathers were brought up with other siblings and experienced strict parenting, making for a very different kind of formative experience from that of their daughters. As a result, these created generational differences between the two.

The research data also shows the importance of both financial and emotional aspects of fatherhood. Many fathers in the interview expressed their wish to provide their families with the best they could offer and took pride in this. Having suffered themselves when they were young, their role as providers had a particular historical significance. Having only children who are growing up in a consumerist society also strengthened fathers' role as providers by meeting young people's increasing demands. At the same time, both the questionnaire and the interview data demonstrated that many fathers tried to be supportive of their daughters, and communicated with and cultivated them. This is consistent with western studies which suggest that a father's role as breadwinner remains central to men's identities, along with the increasing importance of the emotional connection with their children.

There also exist fundamental differences between the younger and older girls in many aspects of everyday family life. Fathers with younger daughters seemed to spend more time with them, which concurs with the Western evidence. In the survey, the younger girls were found to spend significantly more time with fathers both at weekdays and weekends, compared with older girls. In addition, fathers with younger daughters tended to praise them more and at the same time criticized them more than older girls. Similar to the Western studies, Shanghai fathers spent less time with their daughters, compared with the mothers. Moreover, time together with their daughters seems to be mostly passive, although most fathers wished to be more supportive and do more things together. One of the reasons for spending little time together was that most fathers spent a huge amount of time at their work rather than with their family. There also existed many barriers between fathers and daughters: generational differences, power imbalance, and gender differences. However, most fathers had very high expectations of their daughters' educational achievements and education became the main bridge between father–daughter interactions.

The tension between parental control and children's autonomy has become one of the important features of young people in China, as already found in the west. Fathers and daughters often have different and sometimes opposing goals. This study suggests that fathers were trying to take control of their daughter's lives through both implicit and explicit negotiations. They were concerned about their daughters' social activities and Internet use for the following reasons: safety issues because of girls' gender, and the danger of wasting too much time and affecting their studies. Fathers used different strategies to control their daughters such as making rules and guarding access to the Internet. Meanwhile, girls used a variety of methods to get their own way, such as concealing information from their parents, giving them late notice of their plans, or doing things surreptitiously. As a consequence, some girls were able to get their own way and did whatever they wished to do. In terms of romantic relationships, fathers were strongly against their daughters' having romantic relationships but at the same time, they had little communication with their daughters on this topic. From both fathers' and daughters' narratives, it was clear that neither the fathers nor their daughters approved of having romantic relationships during adolescence. As both girls and their fathers did not feel comfortable to talk about this matter, the negotiation process became more complicated and was often not possible to achieve.

8.2 Theoretical Contributions

As noted above, the book's contribution is to describe and map the patterns of the family lives of girls and their fathers at key points of historical change and in the life course of young people. Its contribution to knowledge also rests on exploring the applicability of western theories about changing family practices and relationships in a different context. The overarching framework applied in the study was a time perspective that illuminated intergenerational relations between fathers and their daughters. It drew attention to issues of the historical time in which each generation was raised. In addition a time perspective was used to explore everyday relations between fathers and daughters.

Three sociological concepts were fruitful in the analysis of these Chinese data.

First, the concepts of individualization and collectivism proved useful sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969). In exploring girls' constructions of female adolescence it appears that both the trend of individualization and collectivism coexist within a fast changing Chinese society. Chinese girls' lives are more individualized in areas such as perceptions of adolescence and attitudes towards authority. However, they were under social pressure to dress in certain ways and disapproved of romantic relationships. Their perceptions of good daughters also reinforced the importance of cultural and gender aspects of identity.

Second, the concepts of fathering and caring for provided useful tools to examine fathers' involvement in their daughters' lives. Fathers generally worked long hours and the daughters were busy with their own studies. As a result, little time was left for both to spend together. There was actually little evidence of the fathers shifting their priorities from work to family life and being involved in other aspects of their daughters' lives, with the exception of one important domain, namely girls' academic lives. Moreover, there existed many obstacles for fathers caring for their daughters even though they said they were willing to spend more time with their daughters and communicate more. In particular, as only children the girls felt they had enough attention from their parents.

Last, via the concept of family negotiations I examined the conflicts between fathers and daughters. This concept was particularly useful in applying notions of explicit and implicit negotiation, as both fathers and daughters often used different ways to deal with conflict. However, by looking at different issues of potential conflict separately, it appeared that negotiations were almost impossible where sensitive matters such as romantic relationships were, since most fathers and daughters did not communicate about this matter. However, this did not mean that fathers did not exercise their power over their daughters, or that daughters had given up their bid for more autonomy or freedom. The process of negotiation became subtle and fathers found other ways to exercise their power.

8.2.1 Individualization and Collectivism

Many western scholars argue that people's lifestyles are more individualized, which allows for greater personal autonomy and the possibility of being less determined by gendered social norms (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1992). Some scholars researching Chinese society also advocate this view, arguing that there is a rise of the individual in modern Chinese society (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010). To some extent, the interview data illustrate that girls were trying to create their own identities. For example, their adolescent bodies are actively involved in the shaping of their identity and the girls are paying more attention to their own appearance.

However, individualization seemed to be constrained by traditional gender stereotypes, while the girls considered that good daughters should be feminine and obedient. Despite the fact that this generation of young people desires the same brands as their counterparts in the west, they still promote the idea that good girls were those that conform to their parents' expectations. This raises the question of to what extent the influx of global culture has changed Chinese society. Moreover, the fashionable outlook of adolescent girls in modern Shanghai society is widely seen as a sign of being liberal and free. However, some girls in the interviews confessed that they were under peer pressure to care about their appearance. Similar to this, all girls thought that having romantic relationships during secondary school was too soon, despite the fact that many had emotional desires in relation to romantic relationships. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the new generation has totally abandoned traditional attitudes, or that they are a modern generation that has emerged from globalization or completely opened itself to the west.

The data on family negotiations show that girls' concepts of self were halfway between the small self and great self as conceptualized in Chap. 1. The concept of the self in Chinese culture is normally defined in relation to others and it is defined in a hierarchy of relationships. For the girls, they wanted certain freedoms associated with the modern individualized self but saw the necessity to compromise their desires. On the one hand, they were concerned with maintaining family harmony and respecting their parents, as an aspect of the great self, which was closely related to family and societal values. On the other, they wanted to make their own choices and to have certain freedoms, which reflect the independent small self. This casts some doubt on the supposed distinction between individualized and collectivist orientations.

The adolescent girls are going through a process of seeking independence within a cultural context that emphasizes the importance of the great self, which is embedded in the hierarchy of parent–child relationships. Parents' continuing financial support for their daughters and the importance placed upon educational success together with a highly competitive education system are additional important factors that work against independence. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that the differences between these two concepts are often unclear and cannot be simply defined in an either/or way—as individualization or collectivism. Rather the two trends coexist with one another in a complex and changing society (Weber, 2002; Weber, 1999). Such coexistence of different orientations should be studied more closely when researching society that is experiencing complex and rapid change.

8.2.2 Fathering and Caring For

The findings from this study point to the need not only to examine perspectives on, and the conduct of, family lives but also to examine different sources of evidence. On the one hand, we can argue that fathers' greater participation in childcare is in accordance with the popular images of Shanghai man. In the survey, both fathers and daughters reported that fathers can be actively involved in their daughters' lives in different ways: caring about their daughters, providing well for the family, supporting and helping when needed, and communicating well. Both fathers and daughters also reported spending a lot of time together. On the other hand, the majority of fathers in the interviews admitted that they spent a large proportion of their time at work and thus little was left for the family. The questionnaire data on father's working hours reflect this. We could therefore argue that father's commitment to work suggests that many Chinese fathers prioritize their role as breadwinners. Although many fathers (and daughters) claimed to spend a large amount of time together and some made efforts, such as driving daughters to school and clubs, there was actually little evidence of the fathers shifting their priorities from work to family life and being involved in other aspects of their daughters' lives, with the exception of one important domain, namely girls' academic lives. Most fathers had high expectations of their daughter's academic achievement and wanted their daughters to go to university, which most fathers had never had the opportunity to do. Their high aspirations for their daughters' education and future careers encouraged them to get more involved in girls' education and to talk about it. Therefore, fathers' communication with their daughters mainly focused on education. Many fathers saw it as their responsibility to help and to support their daughters, and fathers tried different ways to do so regardless of their own education. My study therefore serves as a basis for understanding fathers' involvement with their daughters by looking at different perspectives and asking questions about different family practices. The evidence suggests that the actual conduct of fathering and family practices is complex. It is too simple to categorize fathers into either highly involved or not involved. Fathers feel they are obligated to be involved in their daughters' lives and at the same time, in their work they are also obliged to keep up with the fast changing society. The stretch at both ends created a dilemma for many working fathers.

Furthermore, the fact that fathers were mostly concentrated on girls' education but not so much involved in other aspects of their daughters' daily lives also suggests that fathers saw taking care of their daughters on a daily basis as the mother's job. The popular image of the involved father in the west and in big cities like Shanghai has not shifted the divisions between mothers and fathers in the family. Many fathers saw their main role as the ones who cared about their daughters and mothers as the ones who took care of the children. The survey data reflect this, as the fathers in my study were more distant than the mothers, spending less time and having fewer conversations with their daughters. This may also result from girls' growing up, since many girls sought help from their mothers rather than fathers once they reached adolescence. The older girls tended to have less contact with fathers, compared with the younger group. In addition, as some fathers preferred a non-verbal method of communication, this may make caring for their daughters even more difficult and invisible. Although many fathers wished to build an intimate relationship with their daughters, they were limited not only in the time they spent together, but, more importantly, in the things they could do together or for each other. Another interesting factor is that none of the girls in the interviews and focus groups expressed a wish to spend more time together. This, again, may be a result of their process of seeking independence as they reached adolescence and of being only children who felt they had enough care and attention from adults. The girls no longer wished their fathers to be too involved. In this regard, *caring about* daughters can be easily achieved, but *caring for* daughters was more difficult, since in adolescence girls desired greater independence from adults.

8.2.3 Family Negotiations

The concept of family negotiation is useful in understanding how fathers and daughters deal with situations where there are conflicts. As Finch (1989) suggests, family obligations are not rules to obey but are actively negotiated in particular relationships and situations. Family negotiations between fathers and daughters are often complicated. Moreover it is too simplistic to say that there is less adolescent autonomy in collectivist cultures, or that Chinese parents are more respected by their children. Adolescent girls from a collectivist culture have a strong desire to do things they wish to do, as in the west. They perceive independence as a necessary and natural process of growing up. However, independence is understood differently by parents and young people. Therefore, there are many obstacles to the girls' desires for more autonomy in their own personal lives.

In addition, their fathers' attitudes about different activities that their daughters engaged in were different: they were less concerned about their daughters' going out and making friends; they interfered more in relation to Internet use and were definitely against the idea of their daughters having romantic relationships. Many girls were able to make decisions about their own studies. But in areas such as Internet use and romantic relationships, most parents set clear boundaries and restrictions for girls.

Although the emphasis on filial piety and demand for obedience are slowly fading away in modern Chinese family life, the negotiation process in which children had little control and power to struggle with their parents indicated that parents were still trying to impose their wishes and deeply hoped that their children would obey. The form of it may have changed from a more explicit and direct way to a more implicit and indirect route, such as attention, overprotection, and constant monitoring.

In conclusion, the concept of negotiation is a useful one with which to explore how fathers and daughters deal with potential conflicts. The distinction between explicit and implicit negotiation is also beneficial to see how both fathers and daughters have become used to dealing with the conflicts and how daughters get their own way in relation to going out and Internet use. However, the lack of discussion or any possibility of compromise in the area of romantic relationships between Chinese fathers and their adolescent daughters suggests that these are areas that are non-negotiable. Parental authority was strongly retained in this sphere. Its non-negotiability may have been exacerbated by the gendered Chinese cultural inhibitions about expressing personal desires and emotions for both daughters and fathers.

8.3 Further Directions

In this book, adolescence is a concept that focuses on important phases young people are going through and it is often seen as a socially significant and psychologically complex. Although there are a considerable number of recent studies that have focused on non-western cultures, studies focused on mainland Chinese adolescents are scarce. More observations of young people's lives will inevitably enrich our understanding of Chinese society's past, present, and future. Compared to the western research, there is also a lack of research exploring Chinese adolescents' relationships with their parents. Therefore, a focus on adolescence more generally would be beneficial for studying parent–child relationships.

The increasing interest in the studies of fatherhood in the west has resulted in rich and diverse insights into fathers' role in the family. The Chinese literature has focused on two different times: the Confucian time, in which the father was seen as the authority figure and strict disciplinarian; and the post communist period in which fathers were mainly seen as breadwinners. In the western literature a change is discussed in terms of fathers' greater involvement and emotional closeness although their importance as providers has continued to be salient. Similar to the west, being the provider is seen as one of the most important roles for Chinese fathers, although more fathers are emotionally closer to their children. However, there were very few studies exploring fathers' involvement in relation to the gender of their children. This study has specifically focused on daughters and fathers. This focus has become one of the original features of this book. The gender of the child is one of the important factors influencing the relationships between parents and children in Chinese families. Traditionally, father–child relationships were mostly focused on sons. However, party-state programs and policies, such as the One Child Policy and, women's involvement in education and the workforce, have had tremendous impact on women's family and public life. In addition, the gender imbalance which leaves millions of young men wanting a wife means that having a daughter can be advantageous for parents, even though the One Child Policy has reinforced the traditional preference for a male child. However, the end of One Child Policy announced in 2015 will again create new types of family relations, intimacy, love, and sociality. It also raises many questions for the ever-evolving Chinese society: whether ordinary families will opt for having two children; whether the policy will benefit the economy as the government hopes; and whether having more children will help ease the problem of an aging population. These all need further investigation and research.

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