



# Being 'cared for' and growing up in Shanghai: a study of adolescent girls in Chinese contexts

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# Structure of the topic

- The Context of Chinese family in relation to home and space
- Research Design
- Data
- Discussion



# Home

- Space matters to family life
- Gender differences between boys and girls
- Lack of research on fathers' care to their children



# Care and space in the Chinese context

- The importance of reciprocity from children
- Growing up in contemporary Chinese cities
- The influences of the West and internet



## My study

- 4 Focus groups
- Questionnaire survey : 773 girls and 598 fathers
- Interviews: 8 pairs of f-d were interviewed individually and 1 girl - 17 in total



Surname	Daughter's Age	Father Year born	Father Occupation	Father Education	Home Size	Properties owned	Notes
Shen	16-17	1965	University Student Support Officer	Diploma (3 yr Diploma)	3 bed	2	Father Shen has two children, (twins, one girl, one boy).
Li	16-17	1964	Senior Manager in Trading Company	Masters Degree	2 bed	2	
Chen	16-17	1959	Officer in Foreign Trading Company	Senior High	2 bed	1	
Cai	16-17	1963	Civil servant	BA	3 bed	2	
Xiao	13-14	1973	Labourer	Senior High	1 bed	Rented	Xiao's parents migrated to Shanghai to work.
Zhan	13-14	1967	Engineer	Masters	2 bed	3	
Wang	13-14	1961	Administrative staff (in a restaurant)	Junior high	2 bed	1	Father Wang is divorced and lives with his daughter and his mother.
Mei	13-14	1968	Manufacturing worker	Junior high	2 bed	1	
Liu	13-14	1965	Owner of private enterprises	BA	3 bed	2	Liu's father did not take part in the interview



# 'I Start to lock my door': home as a private space for teenagers

- A: Now I start to lock my door. Not like before I have to bear that. My dad will come in and interfere with whatever I was doing. And he just comes in to my room and starts to talk about study. Recently, he came into my room and took my exam paper out while I was asleep. I was very upset about this. No one would allow his/her own room to be entered without permission, not alone her stuff being looked at. I was very angry and feel uncomfortable. But I am just so used to it now.
- Q: So how about your father, does he know that?
- A: He is very traditional and stubborn. So he has not thought that people has their own rights. He is not treating me as an individual. He always thinks people as a group. He won't think I have my own needs as well.



# The impact of the One Child Policy

- A: As long as we are alive, this is one family, it will be like this forever. I can't make clear line with her. It is impossible for me.
- Q: So you wish you are always together?
- A: It is not what I wish, it is the fact. In parents' mind, children will always be children, no matter how old their children are. Although their children are 40, or 50, parents will always treat their children as children as long as they are alive.
- [Father Li, Master's degree, manager in a trading company, daughter in the older group]





# The society is very dangerous: the visible public space for girls

- I think my parents are very strict in every aspect. For example, during the school holidays, they don't let me go out with my classmates. They think the society is very dangerous. My mum is so funny that she will threaten me saying that if I go out I will meet some bad people. She keeps talking about that and it does scare me. I know these are probably not totally true. But sometimes, it happens. So I normally won't go out at night and I will definitely be back home by 1800.
- [Girl Liu, younger group, father had a university degree and owned his own company]



# The issues of gender

- I will let her do whatever she wants to do if she is a boy. It doesn't matter. I won't worry that much even if he is fighting with others. What worse can happen to a boy, apart from being caught in a fight? Maybe, stealing or something. But girls are different, if she make one mistake, then it will be a disaster.



# The world is one click away

- The living environment that 90s generation live in is closed. I feel that the relationships between people are closed up, and their virtual world can't be possibly compared with ours. Ours was just the opposite. We didn't have the Internet world. The living condition of our children now is much better and independent. They get home and they can close their doors if they are not happy. For example, my son's study room, apart from sometimes we getting in to get books, we cannot get in. They all have their own independent space. And what he thinks and feels are mostly reflected in the Internet world. He will chat online. I only have my working email address, that's all. And I don't understand their Internet world.
- [Father Shen, college education, university staff, daughter in the older group]



# Climbing the great wall

- ‘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 the computer. 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 you are playing inside?... When you grow up, you know what you really need and you know things, I can buy you one.’



## Discussion

- How children are perceived?
- Home is an important spatial site for reconstruction of parent-child relationships.
- Fathers act as a protective role over young people and limit their children's autonomy.
- The role of internet





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*Thank you!*