# The Reinforcement and Reproduction of Gender Stereotypes in High Schools in Mainland China

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**By Yayun Wang**

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**Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology**

**University of Liverpool**

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**Yayun Wang**

## Abstract

It is impossible to separate gender issues in the Chinese context from its political, historical, and cultural as well as language environment. The infamous oppression of women, such as polygamy and footbinding before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 have been well-documented. After 1949, China has experienced unprecedented social changes and dramatic economic development which have made contributions to the shifts in public gender values. The current gender power relationship in the Chinese context is shaped by the long-lasting traditional gender culture which oppresses women, as well as various economic and political factors including the unique Chinese family planning policies.

This research explores the dynamic process involved in how gender stereotypes are reinforced and reproduced in Chinese school environments, in which the gender habitus in students' private sphere is intricately intertwined with the gender habitus in the public sphere to influence young people's life trajectories. This research uses an integrated theories consisting of Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986), habitus (1977) and Butler's gender performance (1988) in order to explain how gender structure combined with social status influence students' educational aspirations and choices. The active role of students in helping to construct and maintain gender relations through performing gender in school environments is also addressed.

Fieldwork for this qualitative study was conducted between May, 2017 and August, 2017 in one Chinese high school—HYA High School in Jiangsu Province in East China. The data was collected mainly by semi-structured interviews. In order to explore the active roles of different social groups in the process of reproducing gender stereotypes in educational institutions, target participants of this study include students, parents and teachers. In total, twelve teachers and seventeen students in the third grade of HYA High School as well as eight parents of those students were invited to participate in the study. The research findings have been generated by thematic analysis.

It is argued within this thesis that parents, teachers and peer groups all participate in the process which shapes young students' educational aspirations and school experiences on the basis of gender. In addition to showing the interplay of family and schools, this study also demonstrates the differences which exist between the forces of the private and the public spheres in reproducing male privileges. Compared with some parents' ambivalence in raising children in light of gender roles, the gender regime in educational institutions is found to be systematic and pervasive. The research findings suggest that both female and male students are limited by gender stereotypes and the binary gender system, but with different consequences. The rigid gender system still favours males while it is ultimately detrimental to females, namely that Chinese boys have more options than Chinese girls in different areas. The research calls for attentions to female students' dilemma in Chinese school environments.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all Chinese girls.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the Study

This is a qualitative study which aims to explore ways in which gender stereotypes are reproduced in one Chinese high school. It also draws attention to the active roles of parents, teachers and peer groups in the process of reproduction. Through analysing daily interactions between students and these three social groups, the thesis sheds light on ways students' life opportunities are shaped through gendered experiences in the private and public spheres. In this introductory chapter, I will first briefly explain why the reproduction of gender stereotypes in educational institutions needs to be taken seriously and how this research is conducted step by step. I will also provide the research objectives and research questions. Then I will present the outline of the thesis.

The infamous oppression of women in traditional Chinese society, including polygamy and footbinding, before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 have been well-documented (Jiang, 2009). The patriarchal system which emphasized patrimonialism was reinforced by a revered Confucianism resulting in the particular form of sexist situation apparent in feudal Chinese society (Zhang, 1988). As the birthplace of Confucian culture, the daily lives of people in China were shaped by Confucianism (Goldin, 2014). Ip (2009) argues that the core element of Confucianism highlights the moral ethics and ritual norms of people while it oppresses their human nature.

According to Confucianism, men are considered as the only component of social order as well as family clan while women are merely treated as family carers and reproducers of offspring (Hamilton, 1990). After the founding of PRC (1949) which marked the end of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal society in China (Zhang, 1998, p. 6), some traditions have been challenged. However, contemporary Chinese culture and the state are still influenced by Confucianism (Biilioud and Thoraval, 2009; Liu, 2015). Nowadays, the government tends to promote the renaissance of Confucianism in a political way to highlight the collective benefits of the state as well as social harmony (Billioud, 2007; Yu, 2008).

During the past seventy years, China has been experiencing radical social changes. The establishment of the new China (1949), the development of the state and the rise of the market-oriented economic system (1978) require more skilled social labour. Combined with the establishment of the Compulsory Education Law of the PRC (1986), Chinese women are now allowed to expand their participation in public education and industries which were not previously open to them. Furthermore, the implementation of the One-Child Policy (1979-2015), the family-based elderly care system in modern China together with the expansion of higher education (1998) have benefited urban women's rights in the area of education. Specifically, along with the growth in the economy, the gap between girls and boys in educational opportunities at each educational stage has been diminished dramatically since the 1980s (Yi, 2007; Ye and Wu, 2011; Zeng et al. 2014).

Radical changes in public areas will lead to shifts in the private sphere (e.g. family) in the state, while changes in the private sphere will in turn shape the movements in the public sphere (Ji et al. 2017). However, the existing literature on gender issues in China mainly focuses on inequalities in the public sphere, such as the unequal educational opportunities, the gender wage gap and gender discrimination in the labour market. Only a few research studies have noted the dynamic changes inside the private sphere and the slight changes in people's gender ideologies that were shaped by, and meanwhile shape, elements of social change. Currently, in addition to the enforcement of the social policies above, the interplay of the pervasive traditional patriarchal culture and the shifts in people's attitudes towards gender have resulted in the expansion of Chinese girls' participation in education whereas gender differences have remained in subject and industry selection (Cao and Yue, 2010; Ma et al. 2016; Qing and Zheng, 2013).

This research intends to consider the influencing factors from both public and private spheres, which took parents, teachers and students all into consideration. Therefore, I used a framework of integrated theories consisting of Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986), habitus (1977) and Butler's gender performance (1988) in order to demonstrate how and why gender stereotypes are sustained in school environments. The first theory helps to explain how gender structures combined with social status, influence students' educational aspirations and subject choices. The

second theory helps to explore a mutually reinforcing effect between the gender structure and students' individual perceptions. The third theory addresses gendered actions and highlights the active role of students in helping to construct gender relations in school environments. All these three concepts are helpful in describing the process of reproducing gender stereotypes and the gender structure in education and society.

In order to gain a deep insight into students' gendered educational aspirations and experiences, I adopted qualitative methods in the research. I conducted the fieldwork in an elite high school (HYA High School, in HY City of Eastern China). As high school education in mainland China is not compulsory and requires an entrance examination, students study in this elite school generally because of their outstanding academic records. From this perspective, the target school offered me a chance to explore the gender stereotypes and gender dynamics in the group of students who already have access to educator-desired resources. The cultural setting of the target school gave me an opportunity to rethink the interactional relation between gender, cultural capital, class, school experiences and educational outcomes as well.

I used semi-structured interviews to collect data. As well as the students, I also invited parents and teachers to share their opinions about gender roles, which gave me a full view as to how gender stereotypes in the area of education are reconstructed. Findings were discussed in the following three aspects: 1) how family habitus influences students' academic choices and educational aspirations through parents' gendered dispositions; 2) how school habitus influences students' educational choices and school experiences through teachers' gendered treatments of students; 3) how students perform gender and the impacts of their gender performances in peer groups.

As a Chinese woman, I brought into this study my knowledge of the cultural background within China and my personal experiences of difficulties that women in China encounter today. These experiences and knowledge have enabled me to act both as an insider and a researcher, which provided me with a depth of understanding of the complexity of gender issues in the Chinese context. At the same time, I am the only daughter of my parents and I was born in an urban area. I was increasingly

aware that I had benefited from my family background. I realized that girls from minority groups or those who reside in rural regions face more difficulties in many areas including accessing learning opportunities (Zeng et al. 2014). It became apparent to me that the hierarchy resulting from the geographical areas and ethnicities intersects with the gender structure, which lead to various difficulties for girls from the disadvantaged background (Martino, 1996). Limited by time and my lack of relevant knowledge, this study only targets students in a city that is a gathering place of the ethnic majority in mainland China— Han Chinese. Hopefully this study will inspire further research focusing on the interplay of gender, geographic location and ethnicity in the Chinese context.

To summarize, it is impossible to separate gender issues in education from the political, historical, cultural and language environment of a state. Parents, teachers and students are only part of the influencing factors which help spread and reproduce gender stereotypes in school environment. Behind gender stereotypes are the unequal gender relations and the national social order.

## 1.2 The Research Objectives and Questions

*Research Objectives*

This study intends to describe gender stereotypes in one Chinese high school and explores how those stereotypes are spread and sustained in the school environment. The key point of this thesis is to examine the extent to which students' educational aspirations and life opportunities are shaped by their gender through understanding students' gender ideologies as well as school and family experiences. It is noteworthy that there are different factors that make contributions to gender stereotypes in Chinese education, but given the time high school students spend with parents, teachers and schoolmates, this study will assess the role of these three groups in shaping students' life developments. This study attempts to make readers aware of the current situation of gender inequality in education in urban areas, which includes old issues and emerging problems resulting from social development and changes in public opinion.

*Research Questions*

Research questions can be understood as statements that identify what the researcher wants to know about (Bryman, 2012, p. 9). This research seeks to address the influence of gender stereotypes on students and the process of reproducing gender stereotypes in the school environment. Research questions are addressed below:

1. To explore gender stereotypes in Chinese high schools.

--Are there any gender stereotypes in high schools?
--Which kind of ideology, discourse or behaviours are gendered in the school environment?
--Which aspects of students' development could be influenced by gender stereotypes?

2. To explore the roles of parents, teachers and peers in the process of reinforcing and reproducing gender stereotypes in education.
--How do parents, teachers and peers perceive gender stereotypes?
--How do parents, teachers and peers shape students' practices and ideologies on the basis of gender?

## 1.3 Outline of Chapters

This thesis is made up of six parts: introduction, background, review of relevant theories and literature, research methodology, research findings and the discussion and conclusion of the study. All these are organised into eight chapters. In Chapter One, I introduce the research background, research objectives and research questions. I intend to provide an overview of the whole thesis in this chapter.

In Chapter Two, I will locate the research in the broader Chinese context. Firstly, I will introduce the understanding of gender in Chinese language. The fact that most Chinese people confused the concept of gender with the concept of sex made it more difficult to rethink the current gender structure and has hindered the development of Chinese gender studies to some extent. Secondly, I will provide basic information about the historic and cultural roots of the gender role expectations in China. The traditional culture, like Confucianism, which highlights men's key role

in family lineage and the traditions inherited from the agricultural economy that deems men as the main labour force will be introduced. Then I will present social changes in China in the past several decades and examine their impacts on the development of gender relations. Whether the economic growth of the country has solved gender issues and improved women's wellbeing will be discovered through this section. This will be followed by an introduction to two relevant policies—the well-known One-Child Policy (1979-2015) and the introduction of the recent elderly care system in China. I will briefly discuss the potential of these two policies in reshaping gender ideologies in modern China. In the last section in this chapter, I will introduce the education system in mainland China. The gendered academic choices centred on subject selection during high schools will be explained separately.

Chapter Three is a review of theories and the existing literature. Firstly, I will explain key concepts in this research including gender, gender stereotypes, masculinity and femininity, which will help provide a foundation for the theoretical framework of this study. Then I will frame the study in a theoretical base that draws on theories of Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986), habitus (1977) and Butler's gender performance (1988). The applications of these theories on gender issues in related areas will also be reviewed. Since this research focuses on gender issues in China, the review of literature will be extended to the Chinese context. The purpose of the literature review is concerned with what others have done to investigate gender inequality in the area of education. I will also pay attention to the gap in existing knowledge which helps identify the aim of this study.

Chapter Four is about methodology. In this chapter, I will describe the research design and methodology adopted in the study as well as a discussion of ethical considerations. Guided by research questions and the theoretical framework, I identified that a qualitative research methodology is appropriate to explore the dynamic process of reproducing gender stereotypes in the school environment. I conducted three-months of fieldwork in a high school in Eastern China. I adopted the semi-structured interview method in collecting data and used thematic analysis to generate findings. In addition to giving me rich data, the experience of fieldwork provided me with an in-depth understanding of potential difficulties that a researcher could encounter in doing qualitative research in the Chinese context.

Chapter Five to Seven presents the research findings of the thesis, which draw on data from the fieldwork. In Chapter Five, I intend to describe the influence of parents on students' educational aspirations and choices within family gender habitus. In Chapter Six, I would like to explain the influence of teachers on students' academic choices and school experiences within the impacts of institutional gender habitus. The power of habitus as well as the linkage between the existing gender structure and students' gendered school experiences will be discussed throughout the two chapters. In Chapter Seven, I will analyse the gendered actions of students which have been influenced by, and meanwhile influence, gender culture in the high school. The active role of students in constructing gender relations in the school environment will be presented through analysing their gender performances as well as the impacts that they may have on their peer groups.

Chapter Eight is the concluding chapter that summarizes the principal findings emerging from the data. In Chapter Eight, I will discuss the research findings from three main perspectives: 1) the impacts of language in reproducing gender stereotypes in the area of education as well as other aspects in society; 2) the differences between family habitus and institutional habitus in shaping students' gender ideologies; 3) The dilemma of Chinese women in the private and public spheres. In this chapter, I will also point out the significance of the study as well as its limitations that need to be addressed in the further research relating to gender issues in Chinese education.

**Chapter 2**

**Gender Roles, Relevant Policies and the Education System in Chinese Context**

**Introduction**

The situation of gender relations in a society is deeply influenced by a variety of factors, including social development, traditional cultures, the degree of urbanization and the social security systems (Arnold and Liu, 1986, p. 222). Since this study focuses on gender issues in Chinese education, understanding the cultural and political background in the Chinese context will help to have a deep insight into the gender structure in this state. In this respect, I will start the chapter with an introduction to the process of formation and development of gender roles in mainland China. I will review relevant Chinese traditional cultures which can give us a full view about the cultural reasons behind the current gender inequality. Then I will link the gender problem to the state domination, which will partly explain the political reason why gender inequality persists without effective targeted policies.

As social policies play an important role in influencing social opinions and personal lives in China (Deutsch, 2004, p. 395) I will introduce two significant policies in the second section as well. The two policies are one family planning policy and one social security policy separately. The introduction to social policies will help to give the current study a foundation to analyse the slight changes in gender role expectations compared with the past. Finally, since my research topic is about gender issues in a school environment, I will also briefly introduce the education system in mainland China. In addition, through the whole chapter, I will pay extra attention to the linkage between the historical unequal gender relations in society and the unequal expectations of teachers, parents, and students for boys and girls in the school environment.

Since China is a huge country with large population, the gender issue in the area of education in China is complicated and varies by areas and ethnicities. It is important to declare that since the target city in this study is a main gathering area for the largest nationality in China— Ethnic Han (see details in Section 4.2 of Chapter Four), I will only introduce the pervasive cultural and political background of Han Chinese. For the fifty-five ethnic minorities in China, the state implements

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preferential policies in areas like education and fertility to avoid their extinction, promote their development and avoid conflicts between ethnic groups (Settles et al. 2002, p. 4; Wang and Qi, 2009, p. 72).

## 2.1 Gender Roles in China

Gender issues in China are shaped by history, cultural, economic and political factors. In order to get a deep insight into the formation of the current gender relations, in this section I will briefly introduce the development process of gender roles in modern China from the perspective of language, traditional culture, social movements and economic transition.

### 2.1.1 Understanding Gender and Sex in the Chinese Language Environment

The term *'gender'* was introduced to China in the 1980s and started to arouse public concern during the 1990s after the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, the capital of China, in 1995 (Chen, 2010, pp.134-137; Yang, 2015, p. 158). However, the interpretation of *'gender'* in other countries could have significant differences considering the different cultural backgrounds and development phases between different countries (Min, 2005, p. 211). In this respect, people's acceptance and understanding of the concept of *'gender'* could depend on the local cultural context and the language environment. For instance, the concepts of gender and sex have obvious differences in their names in the English context. However, in the Chinese context, gender is normally translated using either exactly the same word as sex—*'sex/xingbie 性别'*，or is translated by scholars into a word that is literally closely connected with sex—*'social sex/shehuixingbie 社会性别'* (Chen, 2010, p. 137; Wang, 2001a, p. 60; Yang, 2015, p. 158).

In Chinese, the first interpretation that equates gender as sex highlights a close linkage between biological sex and social identity (Chen, 2010, p. 137), which still argues that the differences between genders are created by nature rather than history or the cultural and social structure (Du, 2000, p. 94; Wang, 2001a, p. 59). From this premise, gender inequality could be deemed as reasonable and hard to change since it results from *'natural'* gender differences. In terms of the second interpretation of gender, this has made some development. Specifically, when

translating *'gender'* into *'social sex/shehuixingbie 社会性别'* in Chinese, the influence of social factors has been noted (Chen, 2010, p. 134; Wu, 2005, p. 214). Therefore, Du (2000, p. 94) and Wang (2001a, p. 60) have argued that changing the translation of gender can be regarded as a challenge to the biological determining of gender inequality. From this perspective, the inferior position of females can and should be challenged since it results in unequal treatment, or frankly, social discrimination (Du, 2000, p. 94).

However, regarding *'gender'* as *'social sex'* in the Chinese context is still unable to either give expression to or to understand the concept of gender that western feminists have worked hard to develop and which is a system of gender which is culturally and socially created rather than biologically determined (Connell, 2002, p. 8; Kretchmar, 2009). However, when Chinese scholars simply added an adjective *'social'* before *'sex'* to explain the concept of gender, their understandings are still limited by ideas associated with biological sex. In this situation, Chinese gender research will still focus on the gender binary system rather than the complicated gender structure which constitutes social hierarchy (Wu, 2005, p. 214). In short, the both two translations of gender in current China could lead people to blame the unequal power relationship between genders merely on biological sex.

In addition, explaining gender as only an expansion of the concept of sex still regards individuals, who in fact take active parts in helping produce the gender system, as passive accepters. It neglects people's capability to adjust their positions and attitudes within the gender system according to the shifts in social structure (Borna and White, 2003, p. 90). Given the reasons above, understanding *'gender'* as *'social sex'* could confuse Chinese people who have only recently heard about the concept of gender and limit their rethinking about the structural reasons of gender inequality. Admittedly, developing from *'gender is sex'* to *'gender is social sex'* has made some progress in gender studies in the Chinese context, as it shows the influence of social culture to some degree.

However, the latter translation of gender was criticized by some Chinese scholars. For example, Li (2003, pp. 123-124) argues that the translation of *'sex'* in Chinese *'xingbie 性别'* itself is a combination of biology and social culture. Specifically, it is well-understood that the interactions of females and males

represent the interaction of the forces of *yin* and *yang* in Chinese natural philosophy (Furth, 1988, pp.4-8). The harmony of the two as relative and flexible bipolarity is believed by Chinese culture to be the foundation of the harmony of both nature and human society (Furth, 1988, p. 2). According to Li (2003, p. 124), for example, using the concept of *'social sex'* overemphasizes the impacts of social culture and could result in the consequence that people neglect the *'natural'* differences between two sexes in reality, which will lead to the disorder of the natural and human world. Yang (2015, p. 159) shows the same concern that naming *'social sex'* has the potential to cause the pursuance of gender sameness in the Chinese context. The alleged negative consequences of proposing gender sameness, both Li (2006) and Yang (2015) argue, is that women will deny or neglect their own physical traits and pursue equality through pursing masculinity. It appears that scholars like Li and Yang do not see the socially-constructed culture which limits each individual under the current gender scheme.

To conclude, *'biological'* differences and *'natural'* division are used in Chinese culture to reinforce the gender binary system and gender roles. Equating gender identity with biological sex has made it more difficult to rethink the unequal gender relations. Moreover, when gender is only understood as sex or a simple expansion of sex, only two groups are acknowledged in the Chinese cultural understandings —men and women, which also explains why in the current study, I have only used the descriptions of males/men/boys and females/women/girls. In addition, Chinese culture only recognizes heterosexual marriage (Li, 2006, p. 18; Zhang, 2017, p. 275). Homosexuality is still treated as a sexual deviation or a mental disease and is always linked to AIDS by the majority of Chinese people (Wang et al. 2004, p. 970; Zhou, 2003, p. 40). This stigma in public discourse means that homosexual people are marginalized by the mainstream Chinese society (Xu and Xu, 2008, p. 56).

This introduction to the understanding of gender in Chinese societies indicates that marriage in current China still only refers to heterosexual marriage. It has also provided an explanation as to why I tacitly approved that the discussion of Chinese marital relationships in my thesis are constituted by one male—a husband, and one female—a wife. With the basic knowledge about the spread of the term

'*gender*' in China, I will start to discuss some relevant Chinese traditional cultures in the following section. The influence of traditional cultures also could in turn help understand why the spread and development of the original concept of *'gender'* faces difficulties even today.

*2.1.2 The Influence of Traditional Cultures: Son Preference, Traditional Gender Roles and the 'Left-over Woman'*

Sons are preferred in many Asian countries for many reasons, such as the inheritance of family lineage and the provision of labour as well as old-age security (Arnold and Liu, 1986, pp.221-222). Studies found that countries which are deeply influenced by Confucianism (e.g. China, Korea, and Vietnam) highlight that the key responsibility of men is to carry on the blood lineage of the family (Gaetano, 2014, p.127; Gupta et al. 2003, p. 161; Zhai and Gao, 2010, pp.746-747). This responsibility is closely connected with the paramount filial piety. Specifically, according to Confucian values, only males constitute and remain in the family lineage, while females are merely deemed as biological reproducers (Chung and Gupta, 2007, p. 759; Gupta et al. 2003, p. 161). In other words, one man's lifelong duties include having son(s)/grandson(s), otherwise neither the family line could be continued nor the man's filial duty could be fulfilled (Bélanger, 2003, p. 323; Li et al. 2010, p. 50; Yue and Wu, 1999, p. 215).

Since Chinese society was derived from a society of agriculture-based economy, the traditional labour division in agricultural society also shaped today's gender specific expectations (Zhai and Gao, 2010, p. 746). According to the traditions that were inherited from the agriculture-based economy, men's role was primarily outside the home while women were expected to take the responsibility of domestic work, including caring for families and reproducing offspring (Hamilton, 1990; Jiang, 2009). From this premise, sons are preferred since they are considered as the main labour force as well as the current and future breadwinner of the whole family (Zhai and Gao, 2010, p. 747). As a result, in this patrilineal system, traditional Chinese families normally show favouritism toward sons/grandsons to perpetuate the family name, the lineage of the family and family property. Moreover, this kind of kinship system is also closely associated with the custom that sons traditionally provide old-age support for aging parents (Ebenstein and Leung, 2010, p. 57).

All these factors could lead to Chinese parents' preference for boys. The preference can be reflected in many ways, including wanting to have at least one son and having higher expectations of sons compared with daughters, as well as tending to merely invest in sons both in education and health care (Jayachandran, 2015, p. 79). As the superior position of sons is actually the superior position of men, the strong son preference is closely linked to the low status of females in China (Arnold and Liu, 1986, p. 223). Combining the traditional labour division in agricultural society with the patrilineal kinship system, females in China are at a disadvantage both in the private and the public spheres, as only males constitute family order and social order. Confucian thoughts even explicitly stipulate the unequal relations between two genders, such as the saying of three obedience and four virtues of women/*sancongside* 三从四德 (Leung, 2003, pp.360-361; Tang et al. 2010, p. 535).

The saying could be explained as a principle which highlighted obedience and submission of females to their fathers when unmarried, to their husbands when married, and then to their sons when widowed (Tang et al. 2010, p. 535). The principle together with the patriarchal kinship system partly explained an old popular saying in China—educating a daughter is watering another man's garden. The saying implied that educating a daughter is totally unworthy for the girl's original family, since 1) when a girl get married, she needs to listen to her spouse instead of the father; 2) after marriage, the girl's contributions will only benefit her husband's families, not her parents (Gupta et al. 2003, p. 164). For example, the children of the girl will use her husband's family name instead of the girl's maiden name. All these thoughts not only reveal that women were an inferior group compared with men, but also reflect that women's social roles in a patriarchal system are defined by their relationships with men within kinship (a daughter, a wife or a mother) rather than their personal positions (Leung, 2003, p. 362; Mao, 2012, pp.44-45; Tang et al. 2010, p. 535).

Nowadays, social revolution and economic growth, together with the implementation of family planning policies in China, have led to some slight changes in terms of the traditional gender structure. The process will be discussed in the next section. However, the *'male-as-superior'* stereotypes still exist today in both the private area and labour market (To, 2013, p. 2). On the one hand, thanks to the social

development and the movements in social opinions alongside this development, more than half of Chinese women are encouraged or expected to participate in paid work outside family (Jones, 2007, p. 440; Tang et al., 2010, p. 536). On the other hand, gender stereotypes still influence housework sharing within families in China (Lee, 2002, pp.246-249; Tang et al., 2010, pp.536-537), namely, domestic work is still seen as mainly women's duty. In a word, most Chinese women still need to take care of their husband's daily life even when a large part of these women are meanwhile active in making economic contributions to family income.

Therefore, most Chinese women in the current era which combined modernism and traditionalism have no individual freedom in choosing between work and family but shoulder double-burdens in both family and labour market (Cook and Dong, 2011, p. 955; Evans, 2002, p.336-338; Zuo and Bian, 2001, p. 1125). Interestingly, unlike families in most western countries in which the growth of women's paid employment translates into the reduced influence of gender stereotypes in the division of housework, women in China who earn a higher salary than males tend to spend more time on housework in order to *'compensate for their unconventional role'* in the family (Tang et al. 2010, p. 537). Chinese scholars blamed the situation on two reasons: 1) Chinese wives' internalization of gender roles and the need to perform their feminine role (e.g. Chiu, 2010, p. 43; Liu et al. 2015, p. 114); 2) Chinese husbands' masculine role performance which requires them to defend against threats to their role of breadwinner (e.g. He et al. 2018, p. 84). To sum up, traditional gender role expectations still function in the division of domestic work in Chinese double-income families.

The hidden truth that taking care of families hinders Chinese women from advancing at work has been noticed by the public. *Zhaopin.net*, one of the major recruiting sites in mainland China, conducted a survey of 86,510 people in 2018 and found that women on average earn 23% less than their male counterparts across the nation (see China Daily, 2019). The report discovered that the main reason for the gender gap in average salaries is women's career interruption including marriage and raising children (China Daily, 2019). Specifically, Asian women are expected to sacrifice their own careers to support their husband's when the latter one requires it (Yi and Chien, 2002; Zuo and Bian, 2001). With regard to child care, Yu and Xie

(2014) did a tracking survey on more than 1000 Chinese females and found that giving birth to each child will lead to around 7% drop in women's salary. The situation could result from women's reduced working time after having children or stereotyped assumptions that women would spend more time and energy on taking care of children than work (Yu and Xie, 2014, p. 28).

Remarkably, the multiple responsibilities of married women also include taking care of their own parents and parents-in-law. The elderly care system in China will be introduced later in this chapter. In short, the lack of public welfare service for elders in China means that middle-aged married couples act as the main care-giver for old parents (Cook and Dong, 2011, p. 954). Given the emphasis on women's role in looking after family members in Chinese culture, the burden of elders' daily care is likely to fall on women in families (Chen and Standing, 2007, p. 206; Liu et al. 2010l, p. 185). To sum up, the prescribed feminine role which requires women to take care of family members at different stages of the life-cycle can be deemed as a major hurdle for career development for Chinese women.

Apart from the traditional gender roles in the family, gender stereotypes in the workplace also bring about the situation which devalues women's economic contributions in Chinese society (Gupta, 2003, p. 171). Generally, the public regard masculinity as a more advanced and desirable personality than femininity (Tang et al., 2010, p. 535). Since leadership, competitiveness, creativity and ambitions are all attributed as masculine traits (e.g. Johnson et al. 2008, p. 48; Priola, 2007, p. 36), men and masculine characteristics are considered as the key to success in urban China (Tang et al., 2010, p. 535). However, when Chinese women tried to campaign for career development using *'male'* tactics (e.g. aggression, intent), the public perceive her as a deviant and arrogant person (Evans, 2002, p. 338; Zuo, 2003, pp.316-319). In Chinese society, women's economic contributions would not be recognized unless she has been acting as a good wife or a competent mother in her family (Gupta, 2003, p. 171; Tang et al. 2000, p. 193). Also, a woman may be seen as selfish if she gives priority to work rather than family after marriage, while men are expected to concentrate on work outside family at any stage of life (Spector et al. 2004, p. 124; Zuo, 2003, p. 318). To summarise, Chinese women receive much less family support and social recognition in the workplace compared with men.

It is worth noting that all these discussions above assume that all Chinese adults must get married. In modern China, getting married is still the norm for adults despite the rapid urbanization (Ji, 2015b, p. 1059; To, 2013, p. 2; Xu, 2010, p. 9). For instance, there is an old and famous saying in China, *chengjialiye 成家立业*, which literally summarizes a person's life as establishing a family at first and then developing a career (Liu, 2004, p. 199). However, the public seem to have gendered double standards of age of entry into marriage, and Chinese women are under more pressure to get married in their early 20s-middle 20s compared to men. According to current standards, Chinese women tend to marry men who are older and have better financial capability than themselves, and correspondingly Chinese men prefer to choose a spouse who is younger and has lower or equal educational levels than themselves (Gaetano, 2014, p. 125; Liu, 2004, pp.199-200). Tang et al. (2010, p. 539) also demonstrated that quite a lot of Chinese men would feel uncomfortable or stressful if their wives were superior to them in education, earning or social status.

From this perspective, the typical Chinese marriage pattern combined with the fact that women's fertility declines with age, women are under huge pressure if they delay marriage to their 30s (Gaetano, 2014, p. 124). Conversely, the public assumes that men may postpone marriage with the reasonable purpose of increasing their personal worth and assets (Fincher, 2016; Higgins et al., 2002, pp.79-80). In line with the discussion above that Chinese women tend to have a men-superior norm (both in social status and age) in mate selection, men are considered marriageable even at age 40 (Gaetano, 2014, p. 126). Namely, gender stereotypes in China implie that men's allure will increase with their wealth alongside their age.

Nowadays, a concept called *'the leftover women/shengnu 剩女'* has been broadly spread via Chinese social media. The derogatory label is used to describe highly educated career women in urban areas who are not yet married by their late 20s (Ji, 2015b, p. 1057). Unlike men, the characteristics of the alleged leftover women— high education, high salary and the so called *'advancing age/daling 大龄'*, are distinctly disadvantageous for females in marriage in Chinese culture (Gaetano, 2014, p. 125). However, Chinese social media blames the late marriage of those single women on their personalities, such as being too picky, too bossy and too self-centred (Fincher, 2016; Ji, 2015b, p. 1057). As I introduced in the last paragraph, the

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public regard men's delayed marriage as positive, while giving women who postpone marriage negative comments.

Public discourse does increase the pressure on Chinese single women as well as raising the anxiety of single women's parents (Gupta et al. 2003, p. 165; To, 2013, p. 2). In addition, in line with the traditional gender role expectations, Chinese culture also has a tendency to suggest that women's final feminine ideal is finding a man to complete her life (Evans, 2002, p. 354). This pressure, combined with gender stereotypes in both the private and public spheres, indicates one thing: Chinese women are supposed to give priority to finding a spouse at a marriageable age, otherwise they will lose status (Liu, 2004, pp.198-200). These ideologies above could have a negative impact on teachers' and parents' expectations for girls as well as girls' aspirations in terms of education, employment or other aspects which relate to personal development, since marriageability is treated as the primary object for a girl.

To conclude, in terms of heterosexual marriage, public scrutiny in China places rigid judgement on women's age as well as men's economic status. Both females and males are put under pressure to meet societal norms. However, in my understanding, Chinese women are more disadvantaged compared to Chinese men in this situation. Generally, high social status is linked to high income and high levels of education, while pursuing further education or accumulating working experiences requires time. In this respect, the emphasis on early marriage of females is actually limiting their opportunities for personal development, which is in turn reinforcing women's inferior position in both private and public areas. The situation further legitimizes the traditional feminine role that women should serve and take care of as well as sacrifice for men.

*2.1.3 Holding Up Half the Sky: Gender Ideologies Develop as Countries Grow?*

China has experienced dramatic social changes in the past several decades. As mentioned above, in addition to the cultural origins of women's subordination, social changes in China have played an important role in reconstructing gender ideologies today. In the early 20th century, Confucian principles which oppress women were criticized by Chinese female students and female workers in urban

areas during the period of May Fourth Movement (Zhou, 2013, pp.69-72; Zhu, 2011, p. 26). The May Fourth Movement, which broke out on May Fourth, 1919, can be considered as an enlightenment campaign by students in Chinese modern history which protested against the bullying and oppression of Japanese Imperialism, the weakness of the contemporary Chinese government and the persistence of feudal society (Chen, 2008; Wang, 2000, p. 11). The May Fourth Movement (1919) kicked off a more than two-decade-long New Culture Movement that called for the development of science and democracy in modern China (Xie, 2010, p. 64).

The fight against feudal ethical codes and the pursuit of democratic development facilitated Chinese women's participation in political and social economic activities (Chen, 2008; Lv, 2008). For the first time in Chinese history, women tried to raise their own voices to require equal educational opportunities and to denounce footbinding as well as arranged marriages (Zhou, 2013, pp.70-72). After that movement, educated Chinese women in different districts worked together to spread the disadvantages of footbinding and to encourage Chinese women to go outside their homes (Song, 2009, p. 61; Xiao, 2010, p. 32). To some extent, the May Fourth Movement (1919) was a milestone which not only ended the era of footbinding but also revealed the active role of Chinese women in the process of promoting democratic development (Lv, 2008; Xiao, 2010, p. 32).

Then, the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. As a socialist country as well as a Party-state, Marxism and Maoism have had a constant influence in China even today (Leader, 1973; Li, 2001). Maoism, which can be understood as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leader's collective wisdom, is a series of summaries of experiences and theories that evolved from Marxism-Leninism and developed it within a Chinese specific social context (Li, 2001, pp.14-16). In terms of gender issues, while Maoism emphasized women's collective importance in revolutionary process and political movements, as the famous saying alleged *'women hold up half the sky/funuchengqibanbiantian 妇女撑起半边天'* (1955) (Cheng, 2015, p. 298; Zheng, 2005, p. 521), it still ignored women's interests and needs which were raised by women themselves. According to Maoism, the best way to solve women's problems is to develop the economy, while women's liberation should be treated as

*'a subordinate but integral part'* of the revolution in China in economic, political and cultural areas (Leader, 1973, p. 79).

Maoism highlights that there is only one principal contradiction which plays the leading role in each stage of the national development while the rest occupy a subordinate position, and meanwhile, universal benefits take priority over partial interests (Rai, 1995, pp.184-185). It cannot be ignored that almost all CCP leaders from the early days of the new China were males (even up to today)[1]. Since the principle contradiction could only be decided by the Party, gender issues were not considered as the primary contradiction compared with the revolution and the subsequent reconstruction of the economic system during that time. Namely, gender issues stayed marginalized and were subordinated to the *'central work'* of the CCP (Zheng, 2005, p. 521). In this respect, the establishment of new China did not make much progress in having a deep insight into gender problems.

The gender-blindness of the CCP leadership sustained, and the post-Mao leadership continues to, marginalize gender inequality issues (Rai, 1992, p. 38; 1995, p. 185). From 1950s, in order to *'answer the state's call/xiangyingguojiahaozhao 响应国家号召'*, Chinese women in urban areas began to participate in the labour market including heavy industries that had been deemed as men's work (Jin, 2006, p. 614). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), women were mobilized by the state to engage in building the nation and the revolution of CCP (Zheng, 2005, p. 521). As one famous slogan of that period proposed—*'women can do whatever men can do'*, which required Chinese women to work '*like men*' (Jin, 2006, p. 629; Rai, 1993, p. 7). From this perspective, the state's usage of women in a *'masculine'* way not only highlighted men's dominance in social production but also reproduced the gendered norm that women should not act like traditional women to get equal rights (Zheng, 2003, p. 182).

After the Cultural Revolution, Deng X.P., a key post-Mao political leader during 1980s to 1990s, still argued that the foremost task for contemporary China

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[1]Due to the political sensitivity, systematic data relating to gender ratio of CCP leaders are not available. According to a study on the gender ratio of Chinese provincial-level leaders in July 2004, women occupied approximately 10% of the provincial elite positions (Su, 2006, p. 148). Compared to the data that 37.8% of women were participating in labour force in 2004, it is apparent that Chinese women stay marginalized in accessing political power (Su, 2008, pp.148-149).

was economic development, while women's issues were subordinated to economic agendas (Yang, 2006, pp.149-150; Zhu, 2011, p. 28). The rise of the economic market required a more skilled and educated labour force, women remained a useful group in developing the market economy while problems encountered by women should be addressed only if the issue relates to the growth of the Party-state (Zheng, 2003, p. 182). For instance, CCP prescribed that discrimination against women was illegal in socialist China because the discrimination is *'a remnant of a feudal ideology'*, while the Party needs to fight against the feudal remains (Rai, 1995, p. 184). To summarize, prioritising other social problems to women's rights implies the inferior position of women in modern China. The unequal gender relation was reproduced straightforwardly rather than challenged by the social revolution.

As the state emphasized women's liberation in acting as social labour, mainly skilled or educated working-age women in urban areas could have benefited from the state's development (Wallis, 2006, p. 95; Zheng, 2003, p. 163). However, most Chinese women in rural areas remained excluded from the improvement of social status which was merely to be gained through working outside home (Sargeson, 2007, p. 582). In addition, although more working fields and opportunities opened up to women alongside social development, gender discrimination in workplaces increased along with the return of traditional values, more specifically, the return of values that devalue women and require women to act as wives and mothers (Jayachandran, 2015, pp.66-68; Zhang et al. 2008, p. 242).

The discourse of *'returning home'* can even be found in the state-run Chinese newspapers through which the government also emphasized Chinese women's advancement in social development (Wallis, 2006, p. 103). The discourse delivered a message that devoting women to their home is good for not only women but family and society, and thus, the whole nation (Wallis, 2006, p. 103). The persistence of the traditional patriarchal culture combined with the gender-blindness of CCP led Chinese women to endure unpaid family care responsibilities to fulfil the expected gender role and meanwhile do the paid work to fulfil the task of the state (Cook and Dong, 2011, p. 949). The stereotyped requirements for women are not changed but adjusted in order to meet the needs of the market, which lead to Chinese women

having a double burden and sometimes contradictory burdens in the private and the public spheres.

Apart from hindering women from focusing on personal development, the emphasis on women's role in the family also results in the relative absence of men in marital domestic responsibilities in the Chinese context, which helps reproduce the culture that deems Chinese women as key agents of marital order and the guardians of marital harmony (Evans, 2002, p. 339; Liu, 2004, p. 198). Moreover, Chinese culture tends to blame women rather men in areas of family conflict (Tang et al., 2010, p. 538). From this perspective, the state and the Party have a tendency to take advantage of gender stereotypes and the traditional ethical codes to preserve marital stability for social stability, especially when the state experienced radical changes in its economic system since the 1970s (Evans, 2002, p. 339; Rai, 1995, pp.185-186). However, this alleged stability or harmony is superficial as it sacrifices women's rights and impedes women's development in economic, cultural and political areas (Evans, 2002, p. 339; Leung, 2003, p. 372; Tang et al., 2010, p. 535).

It is also noteworthy that the traditional son-preference together with the One-Child policy implemented in 1979 have led to sex-selection abortions and the murders of infant girls in the past, which resulted in the disordered sex ratio in China (Ebenstein and Sharygin, 2009, p. 408; Hong, 1987, p. 317). The one-child policy and its influence on the development of gender ideologies will be introduced later. Scholars predict there will be more than 30 million marriageable men who cannot find a wife in China by the 2020s (Liu et al. 2012, p. 1487; Luo, 2017, p. 194). The shortage of potential brides, named *'surfeit of bachelors/guanggunweiji 光棍危机'*, may have serious impacts on the stability of the state (Gaetano, 2014, p. 125). In other words, women's marriage in China is no longer a personal thing but a political issue relating to government. Under this circumstance, the slander of single women and traditional gender roles for women continue to be reinforced by schools, mass media, and even the official press of the CCP (Gaetano, 2014, p. 126; Ji, 2015b, p. 1057; Tang et al., 2010, p. 538).

As a consequence, scholars (e.g. Leader, 1973; Rai, 1992; 1995; Wallis, 2006; Zhou, 2013) conclude that the three main sources of oppression for Chinese women are patriarchy, paternalism and the Party. The policies in terms of gender issues

actually serve the state rather than the people (Rai, 1992, p. 23; Zhu, 2011, p. 28). Chinese women's emancipation cannot be realized unless women's autonomous assessment and expression of their needs are taken account of, and the current patriarchal dominant power within the society is openly challenged.

## 2.2 Gender, One-Child Policy and Old-Age Security Policy

Gender specific expectations of parents and teachers have been found to play an important role in shaping students' school experiences and life opportunities (e.g. Eccles et al. 1990, p. 187; Liu, 2006, p. 492; Lu and Winter, 2011, p. 345；Tenenbaum and Leaper, 2003, p. 35). In this section, I will explore two relevant policies and their impacts on the development of gender role expectations in mainland China. These two policies are the One-Child Policy (1979-2015) and the Old-Age Security Policy implemented from the 1980s. While the One-Child Policy was introduced to reduce the birth-rate, the decreasing number of children per family, combined with increasing life expectancy, lead to the tremendous burdens of supporting the elderly in Chinese families (Ji, 2015a, p. 43; Jiang, 1995, p. 136). The implementation of a One-Child Policy and the problems of the current old-age security have caused a major shift in the gender-specific expectations of parents and the whole society for young students.

### *2.2.1 One-Child Policy*

Chinese family planning policies, which consist of a set of regulations about restrictions on family size, late marriage and late childbearing, were introduced nationally in late 1970s (Hesketh et al., 2005, p.1171). The One-Child Policy (1979-2015) can be deemed as the most significant and well-known element of the family-planning policies, which aim to reduce the birth-rate and slow down China's population increase in order to lighten the pressure caused by explosive population growth (Hong, 1987, p. 317; Lee, 2012, p. 41; Xiao, 2011, p. 21). According to the One-Child Policy, most couples in mainland China were allowed to have only one child, while ethnic minorities and couples in some rural districts could have two or more children (Zhai and Gao, 2010, pp.746-748). After being implemented for more than three decades, the One-Child Policy was eliminated in 2015 by the government and replaced by a universal two-child policy (Zeng and Hesketh, 2016, p. 1930).

The One-Child Policy brought about both positive and negative consequences. With regard to positive impacts, in addition to controlling explosive population growth, scholars also found that the One-Child Policy had the potential to improve the welfare of Chinese women in urban areas. Specifically, the state-enforced low fertility 1) benefited urban mothers' health and increased their opportunities of paid-work (Fong, 2008, p. 1099; Hesketh and Zhu, 1997, p. 1685); 2) inadvertently improved the intra-household status of girls in cities, since the only child, regardless of sex, is the sole offspring of each urban couple (Lee, 2012, p. 43; Tsui and Rich, 2002, p. 74; Veeck et al., 2003, p. 82). Meanwhile, even if the economic conditions of all families remain the same as before, each female offspring has a greater share of family resources, since she has no siblings or fewer siblings than in the past (Xiao, 2011, p. 22).

Some scholars argued that the One-Child Policy, coupled with national economic growth, had led to a child-centred family environment and a 'spoiled' generation in recent China (Chow and Zhao, 1996, p. 41; Tsui and Rich, 2002, p. 74). Specifically, parents with only one child tend to invest more time and financial resources in their sole offspring than parents with multiple children (Feng et al. 2014, p. 21). In addition to investment, parents are more likely to have high expectations of the only child as he/she is 'the sole bearer' of parents' dreams and family success (Short et al. 2001, p. 56). From this perspective, it can be argued that girls in one-daughter families have benefited from the policy. For instance, given the current gender bias in the labour market, quite a few Chinese parents who have only one daughter were willing to spend more on the girl's education in order to give these girls a 'competitive advantage' in future career development (Tsui and Rich, 2002, p. 88). Apart from parental love and responsibilities, those parents have to rely on their only daughters for family ties and elderly support (Deutsch, 2006, p. 370).

Negative impacts of the One-Child Policy are complicated. The lack of support for aging people will be introduced latter. Another noticeable negative consequence of the policy is the imbalanced sex ratio[2] (Feng et al. 2014; Settles et al.

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[2] Accurate national figures of the sex ratio are hard to get given the huge population in China. According to research (Huang et al., 2016) on data from China's National Maternal Near Miss Surveillance System between 2012 and 2015 in 441 health facilities, the sex ratio at birth (males:females) was 111.04:100 in 2012, 110.16:100 in 2013, 108.79:100 in 2014, and 109.53:100 in 2015.

2002; Zhu, et al. 2009). On one hand, the habitual reliance on sons for old-age support and the deeply-rooted culture of son-preference resulted in sex-selective abortion and female infanticide as well as the abandonment of baby girls under the strict fertility regulation (Hong, 1987, p. 318; Tsui and Rich, 2002, p. 740; Veeck et al., 2003, p. 81; Xiao, 2011, p. 21); on the other hand, the One-Child Policy was implemented rigidly in urban areas while relatively loosely in rural districts (Hesketh and Zhu, 1997, p. 1685; Lee, 2012, p.43). In this respect, when parents in rural areas only have a daughter, they tend to continue to produce offspring until they have a boy, and if their first child is male, parents tend to stop (Lee, 2012, p. 43). Namely, in some rural areas, almost all families have at least one son.

Admittedly, the One-Child Policy unwittingly improved some girls' status in the family and increased their opportunities to access education and family resources. The low fertility also benefited some urban mothers' health and careers. However, it cannot be ignored that the One-Child Policy led to enforced abortion and sterilization of reproductive-age women, female infanticide and the abandonment of baby girls as well as resulting in unregistered girls[3] (Pascu, 2011; Settles et al. 2013). Under these circumstances, the positive impacts of the policy on gender equality are conditional. Namely, only a small amount of Chinese females *'who are lucky enough to live in large cities and grow up as only children'* (Tsui and Rich, 2002, p. 90) have benefited from it.

*2.2.2 Old-Age Security System*

The falling fertility, together with longer life expectancies, have been transforming China into an aging society (Feng, 2014, p. 18; Zhang and Goza, 2006, p. 161). Nowadays, the Chinese government is concerned about the huge burden of supporting the elderly in sole-offspring families (Hesketh et al., 2005, p. 1174; Jiang, 1995, p.145; Lee, 2012, p. 41). The issue of old age support in China is complicated. At first, Chinese traditional culture shaped Chinese people's attitudes towards elderly care. Specifically, in addition to the emphasis on producing male offspring for family inheritance, a deeply ingrained filial piety also requires young people to be respectful, caring and obedient to elders in the family (Deutsch, 2006, p. 369; Yue and Ng, 1999,

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[3]Unregistered girls refers to girls who were born without residence registration and therefore they cannot access social welfare like education and health care (Skalla, 2004, p. 341).

p. 215). From this perspective, even while the state has experienced radical economic changes during the past decades, most Chinese parents still deem elderly-care as their adult children's family obligation (Fuligni and Zhang, 2004, p. 180; Ji, 2015a, p. 44; Sun, 2002, pp.337-339; Yue and Ng, 1999, p. 223).

The current old-age security system in mainland China has its limitations. It is noteworthy that like most social welfare, the system varies in urban and rural areas based on different household registration systems and economic levels (Yang, 2004, p. 14). Since the target place of this study is a city, I will briefly introduce the system in urban areas. Generally, the old-age security system in Chinese cities experienced changes with the reform in the economic system. Specifically, from the 1950s to early 1980s, all urban enterprises were responsible for basic pensions for their own retirees according to employers' working years and position (Wang, 2006, p. 104). The enterprise-based security system met the requirements of the planned economy (Wang, 2006, p. 104). However, the traditional old-age security system which provided a cradle-to-grave service for urban workers was disrupted along with the gradually decline of state-owned enterprises after the market-oriented reform in 1978 (Shao and Xu, 2001; Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, p. 212). The post-reform urban old-age security system prescribes that pension financing is shared by the government, enterprises and individual savings (Ji, 2015a; Shao and Xu, 2001; West, 1999).

However, the post-reform pension system still faces some serious problems, such as the huge deficits inherited from the old system in the planned economy and the neglect of short-term contract workers as well as the large number of layoffs at state enterprises (Wang, 2006, p. 108; Zhou, 2006, p. 3). In addition, the Law of PRC on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (1996) mandated that young people in China take charge of parents' elderly care including providing financial support, daily care and spiritual concerns (see www.npc.gov.cn, 1996). In this situation, family is still considered as the primary provider of social security and healthcare for the elderly (Xu and Chow, 2011, p. 379; Shang and Wu, 2011, p. 126). Combining family-based elderly-care with the prevalent sole-offspring family structure, urban Chinese parents tend to regard the academic and career success of their child, regardless of sex, as the hope for the family's future (Fuligni and Zhang,

2004, p. 190). In this situation, even the habitual preference for sons still exists (Arnold and Liu, 1986, p. 226), when urban only-daughters do not have to compete with their brothers, they could enjoy unprecedented parental support and investment (Fong, 2002, p. 1098).

To conclude, I believe that family life in China has been strongly influenced by state policies over the past several decades (Deutsch, 2004, p. 395). Nowadays, the habitual gender-specific expectations and son-preference are still prevalent. However, the declining number of children per family in urban areas, coupled with the imperfect old-age security policy, has potential to lead to a shift in urban parents' gender-specific expectations. At the same time, it is important to remember the discussion above about the socially-negative discourse around highly-educated single women and the state's reinforcement of traditional feminine roles in the family. In this situation, on one hand, the change in parents' gender expectations may cause a slight shift in the social-stereotypical gender role expectations for students' academic and career development; on the other hand, parents who have only one daughter may still be pressed by public expectation of females. It seems that Chinese girls are standing at a crossroads and are confused and stressed by both the traditional gender stereotypes and the new expectations resulting from social development.

## 2.3 A Brief Introduction to Education System in Mainland China

In order to better understand the gender issues in the area of education, it is also necessary to introduce the education system in mainland China. Generally, the Chinese education system can be divided into four main parts: pre-school, primary school, middle school and higher school education (Ministry of Education, 2001). Pre-school, primary school and middle school education constitute the category of basic education (Ministry of Education, 2001). Specifically, pre-school education refers to kindergarten education that lasts three years for children aged three to five years; primary school education usually spans six years for students aged six to eleven years; and middle school education consists of three-year junior middle school education for students from twelve to fourteen years old and three-year high school education that covers students aged fifteen to seventeen. According to the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China [PRC] (released by NPC, 1986), the first nine years of basic education is compulsory.

After the nine-year compulsory primary school and junior middle school education, the system of higher education consists of junior college education, undergraduate education and postgraduate education according to the Higher Education Law of the PRC (NPC, 1998). The basic length of junior college education is from two to three years, while the undergraduate education covers four to five years. With regard to the length of postgraduate education, candidates usually need two to three years for a master's degree and three to four years to get a doctoral degree. Table 2-1 below shows the basic data for Chinese students in formal education by type and level.

Table 2-1 Mainstream Categories of Chinese Education System[4]

| Categories | Level | Years | Typical Age | Numbers of Enrolment in 2017 (Unit: Thousand) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Basic Education | Kindergarten | 3 | 3-5 | 46001.393 |
| | Primary School (Compulsory) | 6 | 6-11 | 100936.980 |
| | Junior Middle School (Compulsory) | 3 | 12-14 | 44420.630 |
| | High School | 3 | 15-17 | 39670.452 (including regular high schools and secondary vocational schools) |
| Higher Education | Junior College | 2-3 | 18-20 | 11049.549 |
| | University | 4-5 | 18-22 | 16486.320 |
| | Master | 2-3 | / | 2277.564 |
| | Doctor | 3-4 | / | 361.997 |

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[4] (1) The source is from the Ministry of Education of the PRC (2018). See http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A03/moe_560/jytjsj_2017/qg/201808/t20180808_344698.htmland http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_fztjgb/201807/t20180719_343508.html ; (2) Although all statistics are not up to date, they show that China is a huge country. In such a state, educational problems are complicated and various; (3) Because of different educational policies, the table only includes the statistics in mainland China; (4) The table does not include students in adult schools, special education schools (for disabled children) and web-based educational institutions.

*2.3.1 The Examination-Oriented Education and Two Important Exams*

Chinese students experience strong academic stress since they need to focus on passing different examinations from the day they enter elementary school (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011, p. 36; Liu and Lu, 2011, p. 430; Niu, 2007, p. 71). Academic pressure including a heavy home-work load and lack of sleep has been proved as the most severe source of negative impacts on Chinese secondary students' mental and physical health (Zhang, 2016, p. 464). In this respect, scholars conclude that Chinese education is an examination-oriented education (e.g. Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011). This kind of education system leads the whole society to regard good test scores as the most important thing, which may add to students' academic pressure since they need to prove their worth through achieving high scores (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011, p. 39; Zhang, 2016, p. 464). Moreover, in this situation, teachers tend to adopt a score-centred, textbook-bound and teacher-dominated teaching style rather than considering students' interests and real-life situations as the most fundamental things in their learning processes (Joong et al., 2006, p. 2; Zhang, 2016, p. 465). As a result, very few students in mainland China have the freedom to decide what to learn and how to learn according to their own interests and personality.

The state has taken actions to lessen the heavy burden and improve wellbeing of Chinese students. After the 1990s, the government started to be concerned about the negative influence of the contemporary examination-centred education on the development of students' innovative consciousness, good qualities and personalities (Dello-Iacovo, 2009, p. 243). On the 13[th]June 1999, China's Central Committee and State Council introduced a document named *'Decisions on Deepening Education Reform and Promoting Quality Education'* (Li and Li, 2010, p. 211). The document regarded promoting quality education as the core task of education reform and aimed to improve students' comprehensive qualities instead of merely emphasizing their abilities to get high scores (Liu, 2015, pp.148-150). According to empirical studies, the education reform has increased students' engagement and activeness in school education to some extent (e.g. Adams and Sargent, 2012, p. 19). However, an emphasis on examinations did not change, since all the admissions, promotions, placements and graduations in the current Chinese education system are still

dependent on the test scores (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011. p. 37; Li and Li, 2010, p. 212).

Since this study aims to do research on gender issues in high school education, I will introduce two important national examinations closely linked to it. In line with the introduction above, the Chinese secondary school system is divided into junior secondary schools and high schools, in which graduates of each part have to continue their education through an entrance examination (Joong et al., 2006, p. 3). The first examination is the High School Entrance Examination [HSEE]. Specifically, in order to get access to high schools, students who have finished nine-year compulsory education need to take this exam. The admission to high schools depends on the result of this exam since high school education is no longer mandatory (Niu, 2007, p. 84). Currently, only approximately fifty to sixty percent of Chinese students are able to continue their formal high school education (Yan, 2016, pp.7-8). The competition is brutal.

Remarkably, the formal high school qualification is essential for future admittance to universities in China (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011, p. 38). In other words, the remaining students who fail to exceed the minimum passing score for high school education can only go to vocational schools or to work, and generally they have no further chance to take the National Higher Education Entrance Examination and attend universities. In this respect, getting into a good high school can be considered as the first and an important step for students to attend universities, and the HSEE is valued by Chinese people (Niu, 2007, pp. 83-84; Yan, 2016, pp.7-9). Standards and test papers of HSEE vary in different provinces or cities according to local teaching materials and educational levels (Niu, 2007, pp. 83-84; Yan, 2016, p. 8).

After three years study in high schools, students have to attend perhaps the most important examination in their lives, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination [NHEEE]. The NHEEE, which was derived from the Chinese ancient imperial examination system, started in 1953 and resumed in 1978 after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (Niu, 2007, pp.80-82; Li and Li, 2010, p. 212). In the two decades from 1978 to 1998, the national rate of university enrolment was as low as 1.5% (Sheng, 2016, p. 729). The NHEEE was described as *'thousands of people*

*trying to run simultaneously through a single bridge which can only accommodate one person at a time'* (Li and Li, 2010, p. 212). During that period, a student who was admitted to a university would get a decent job after graduation and could be considered as a successful person who would make his/her whole family proud (Joong et al., 2006, p. 2; Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011, pp.38-40; Sheng, 2016, p. 729).

After 1998, the Chinese Ministry of Education implemented national higher education reform to encourage the expansion of higher education and this directly led to a radical increase in university enrolment (Li and Li, 2010, pp.212-213; Niu, 2007, p. 82). Specifically, the rate of university enrolment increased from 1.5% in 1978 to around 30% in 1999 (Based on China Statistical Yearbook 2000 and 2001). In 2018, the average university enrolment rate across the country exceeded 40 % (Sohu News, 2019). To some extent, the increase of university students means the decline of their competitiveness (Liu and Lin, 2013, p. 15; Zhang and Liu, 2003, pp.65-66). In this situation, the fight for getting access to universities became a much fiercer competition for elite universities (Sheng, 2016, p. 729). As a result, after the reform in higher education, which university the child gets admitted to became an important social indicator for the success of a family (Li and Li, 2010, p. 212).

*2.3.2 High School Education in Mainland China and the Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences*

As I introduced above, Chinese secondary school consists of junior secondary school and high school. Since high school education is a senior-level basic education which follows the nine-year compulsory education, students are expected to become qualified candidates for higher education or the skilled workforce after training in high school (Ministry of Education, 2002). Compared to junior secondary schools which teach all students a variety of compulsory subjects, high school students in mainland China are usually divided into liberal arts classes and science classes according to subject selection during the second year (Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011, p. 38; Zhang, 2010, p. 16). Generally, the curriculum system in high schools consists of compulsory subjects— Chinese, English and mathematics, and a list of optional subjects— history, geography, politics, chemistry, physics and biology, in which the first three are liberal arts subjects whereas the latter three are science subjects (Davey et al. 2007, p. 388).

The system of NHEEE and its admission are currently classified by subject selection during high schools (Ma et al, 2016, p. 38). More precisely, subject division in high school education in China is aimed at meeting the demands of the NHEEE system (Liu, 2010, p. 9). In short, the system of high school education together with the NHEEE are known as a 3+X system: 3 means the three compulsory subjects, while X means one or more optional subjects of pure science/liberal arts which depends on different rules in different regions (Davey et al. 2007, p. 388; Niu, 2007. P. 83). There exist debates on the 3+X mode in high school curriculum system. Some scholars argue that the division of subjects has potential to reduce the heavy academic burden on students and improve their confidence through allowing them to choose subjects that they are interested in or best at (Cai and Wang, 2009. p. 9; Liu, 2010, p. 10; Yu, 2015, p. 28; Zhang, 2010, p. 16; Zhao et al. 2009, p. 16). However, some scholars hold different views which suggest that subject division could have negative impacts on students' comprehensive development, since students will have no more chance or motivation to learn about other subjects which they do not select (Cao, 2011, p. 6; Chen and Wu, 2014, p. 22; Wang, 2013, p. 135).

It is also noticeable that students' different subject selection could influence their chances to access universities. Generally, in the current stage, high school students who choose science are more likely to be admitted by universities and have more choices in terms of future major selection (Liu, 2013, pp.193-194). The yearly intake of students of science classes in universities is far higher than for those from liberal arts classes (Liu, 2013, p. 193) (see table 2-2 below). One potential explanation is that the development of modern China still requires more skilled persons who are trained in science areas (Wang, 2013, p. 135). Therefore students' subject selection in high schools is closely linked to their future career choices and development. Cui et al. (2017, p. 116) conducted research on 4771 university graduates in Beijing and found that students who chose majors related to science in universities got 5%-8% higher starting salaries than those students who chose social sciences, since employers regard the former to have more practicable abilities (Cui et al., 2017, p. 117).

The major selections in universities are proved closely related to the subject selection in high schools. For example, Ma et al. (2016) investigated more than

30,000 students from 85 different levels of universities in different regions of China. The result suggested that almost all students who chose liberal arts in high schools chose majors of social science in universities, while nearly 80% of students who selected science in high schools chose majors related to science and engineering in higher education (Ma et al., 2016, pp.40-41). Based on the analysis above, subject selection during high school is not merely a choice related to personal interest, but also a decision linked to future income, career development and even social status (Yin et al., 2013, pp.105-106). The result resonates with some earlier research which point out that the subject of Maths can be seen as a powerful filter that controls entry into the high-status areas of further study and employment (Sells, 1980; Walkerdine, 1998, p. 10; Mendick, 2005, p. 235). From this perspective, it can be understood that Chinese students tend to choose science rather than liberal arts considering future development, which in turn benefits the development of science subjects while keep the liberal arts subjects underestimated (Ding, 2012, p. 87; Liu, 2013, pp.192-194).

Table 2-2 University Admission Rate of High School Students in Three Provinces of mainland China in 2013[5]

|  | Liberal Arts | Science |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Anhui Province | 24.00% | 46.00% |
| Jiangsu Province | 46.33% | 53.06% |
| Hebei Province | 35.20% | 50.80% |

Subject selections in high schools are gendered as well (Liu, 2013, pp.192-194; Liu and He, 2012, p. 124; Liu and Zhang, 2015, p. 8; Yan, 2009, p. 10). For example, in Liu's research (2013, p. 193) on 166 high school students in first grade before subject division, 8.6% boys and 20.8% girls wanted to choose liberal arts while 82.9% boys and 69.8% of girls would like to choose science (the rest boys and girls had no ideas about the selection at that moment). The gender imbalance on subject selection is also supported by Ma et al (2016, p. 41) who did a tracking study

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[5]See the website of the Report of an Investigation on National University Entrance Examination in 2013 (2014)http://www.eol.cn/html/g/report/2014/report3.shtml#baogao3-2

on 30907 high school students and found that up to 80% of boys and nearly 50% of girls separately chose science in the second grade. Moreover, according to Yan's research on 90 high school students (2009, p. 10), Shi's investigation on 2400 university students (2013, pp. 48-50) and Liu and Zhang's study on 220 high school students (2015, p. 8), girls were said to have less confidence in learning maths, chemistry and physics as well as biology, and even for those girls who had already chosen science, worries about future career existed in a large degree due to gender discrimination in the labour market. In other words, subject selection in high schools were shaped by gender stereotypes which allege that male students are better at science subjects than female students.

These recent empirical findings help uncover the truth that the issue of gendered mathematics and other science subjects *'cannot be blamed on the intrinsic nature'* of these subjects, but should be connected with the way the school environment and the whole society construct these science related subjects and how they position girls and boys (as incapable/capable or appropriate/inappropriate) in these areas (Boaler, 2002, p. 153). Namely, scholars who are interested in this topic are supposed to focus on *'why girls do not'* rather than *'why girls cannot'* (Boaler, 2002, p. 153). In this respect, given the connection between subject selection and university enrolment as well as job opportunities, male students are expected to choose science fields and therefore could more easily get access to universities and better working chances, which will in turn reinforce the man's dominance in science areas (Ma et al., 2016, p. 37). Sinha Mukherjee (2015) conducted a survey about connections between the expanding educational participation of girls and the participation of women in paid employment in three Asian countries, China, Japan and India, which found that the increased educational engagement of girls has not solved the gender pay gap problem in wages in any of these countries. Since Chinese Labour Law (1995) stipulates that overt wage discrimination is illegal, Sinha Mukherjee (2015) argues that, in addition to the hidden gender wage gap, one of the explanations of this phenomenon might be the different job choices of Chinese men and women and the wage gap between these gendered choices.

To summarize, as Paechter (2007, p. 18) clearly points out when some subjects that are related to high-status areas in a specific context have been labelled

particularly as masculine, girls' access to the knowledge and the related positions which connected to high-levels of power are limited. After graduating school, this trend that identifies some knowledge/subjects as masculine can result in women's exclusion from the areas of work related to the knowledge/subject, which can be named as *'counting girls out'* of the specific area (Walkerdine, 1998, p. 12). From this perspective, gendered knowledge can produce gendered power (Foucault, 1977, p. 27) which can affect students' school-based performances as well as their life-pathways in the future (Paechter, 2007, p. 19). Therefore, it is necessary to consider gender issues of subject division as complicated social problems instead of pure educational problems (Yin et al., 2013, pp.105-106). Although the Third Plenary Session of 18th Central Committee (2013) indicated that neither students nor the national exam should be classified based on different subject selections, this educational reform policy which ended grouping students by science and liberal arts classes is still at the experimental stage, and so far only a few schools in two districts (Shanghai City and Zhejiang Province) in mainland China were chosen as pilot areas (The Third Plenary Session of 18th Central Committee, 2013). The majority of Chinese areas still implement the subject division system in high schools.

**Summary**

In this chapter I briefly introduced the Chinese background including relevant culture, politics and policies to provide information about the complexity of gender issues in China. The information reveals that gender ideologies in this state are not static in different stages. With the rapid economic and social development, traditional gender role expectations for women have experienced changes. Women have started to share the burdens of social labour rather than merely acting as family carers and child-bearers. In contrast, men's roles have seemed to keep almost the same as the past. Chinese men are still expected to concentrate on work outside home rather than being encouraged to share domestic housework. While the government needs to keep the society harmonious through keeping family stability, the emphasis on women's role inside the home returned and spread. In this respect, gender issues are only addressed in China according to the need of the state's domination and economic development. Chinese women actually face double burdens from the old and the new

gender role expectations, while requirements for men have little changed (Cook and Dong, 2011).

The unique One-Child Policy combined with the old-age security system to some extent improved girl's status in Chinese urban families. These policies influenced parents' expectations on only-daughters as well as girls' self-expectations. From this perspective, Chinese one-girl families can be seen as a potentially important force to challenge the current unequal gender structure and improve the well-being of urban women (Du, 2014; Wang, 2007). However, some traditional parents are still influenced or pressured by gender stereotypes which are pervasive in society, and girls with parental support could still encounter unequal treatment in school and labour market as gender discrimination increased with the expansion of girls' participation in various social areas. It also can be concluded from the introduction to the Chinese education system that the subject selection in high schools could lead to hierarchy in future personal development. Given that pervasive gender stereotypes still link females to subjects which are underestimated compare to allegedly male subjects, the subject division combined with gendered subjects have potential to reinforce women's inferior status in Chinese society.

**Chapter 3**

**Theoretical Framework of this Study and the Review of Empirical Literature**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, I will introduce a broad theoretical context about the reproduction of gender stereotypes in educational institutions as well as offer an overview of the literature which has described how young students' experiences in schools and future life choices are influenced by gender stereotypes and who takes active roles in the process. I will also discuss the existing studies about gender stereotypes found in education in this chapter. Since this global problem has only recently been drawn to the attention of Chinese scholars, the scope and number of the studies that focus on mainland China is limited. In this situation, both Chinese studies as well as research from other countries will be reviewed, as international research is likely to provide valuable information and suggestions for the future study of gender issues in the Chinese education system. Most of the existing literature in this chapter is in the field of education, psychology, social work, language study and sociology during the past thirty years.

This study adopts an integrated theory consisting of Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986), habitus (1977) and Butler's gender performance (1988) to analyse the issue of gender in education. Bourdieu's theories help explore how people's practices are embedded in the field through habitus based on their positions in the social structure, while Butler helps explain the power of people's repetitive and performative actions in reproducing social norms (Nentwich et al. 2015, pp.239-240). The two scholars focus on different areas, but they are both powerful in showing the process by which gender norms and relations are practiced, confirmed, challenged and reconstructed in a specific context.

This chapter has three parts. Firstly, I will state key concepts relating to this study. Secondly, it will be very helpful to review Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital, habitus and field as well as their applications in the area of gender and education. Bourdieu's theories offer the theoretical foundation to explain the role of school in sustaining gender structures and how young people's behaviours are continuously affected by gender stereotypes via the education system. Also, through

reviewing the applications of Bourdieu's theories on gender issues in the school environment, I will present ways in which a gender regime is reproduced in educational institution within the gendered habitus. Remarkably, there are multiple influencing factors which make contributions to legitimating and reproducing gender inequality in school environment. In this study, given the time students spend with parents, teachers and peer groups, I will only focus on the role of the three social partners above in shaping students' life trajectories based on gender.

Since the target country of this thesis is mainland China, I will extent the application of these theories on gender inequality to the Chinese context. I will pay attention to the different social cultural and political factors in China that may have impacts on issues of gender and education equality. Then, as this study is in no way ignorant of research that demonstrates the active role of students in helping reproduce gender stereotypes and sustain gender regimes in educational institutions, I will also bring in Butler's theory of performing gender (1988). The work of Butler (1988) which deems gender as repeated practices within a rigid gender system is a challenge to the taken-for-granted assumptions that sex/gender is a given division, namely, the gender binary system (Kenny, 2007, p. 94). More details of the process of reproducing gender will be found through investigating the interactions between the three social partners on the basis of related theories.

## 3.1 Key Concepts of this Study

A comprehensive understanding of relevant key concepts can help produce a fuller picture of how and why gender stereotypes are reproduced and sustained in the school environment. In this section, I will outline several key concepts which are helpful in conceptualizing this research topic.

### 3.1.1 Gender and Gender Stereotypes

People in society can be divided into different groups on the basis of different categories (gender, race, religion, etc.). According to Crespi (2003, p. 2), when we meet someone new, one of the first necessary things we are eager to know is which sex that the person is so that we can decide our attitudes and behaviours depending on our understanding of the other person's gender. In this premise, gender can be deemed as the cultural differences between men and women which exist on the basis

of, but do not fully comply with, the biological or genetic differences between males and females (Connell, 2002, p. 8; Kretchmar, 2009). Generally, people are simply shaped into two categories, men and women, within the social structure and social culture into which they are born (Delphy, 1993, p. 1; Jones, 1997, p. 262).

However, the definition of gender can be subject to more critical enquiry. For instance, it is not convincing enough to simply divide all human beings into two groups, since this binary definition ignores various differences within the category of men and women (Connell, 2002, p. 9). In addition, there are LGBT+ groups which may wish to expand the definition of gender (Connell, 2002, p. 9; Parent et al. 2013, p. 641). Therefore, Connell understands gender as *'the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes'* (Connell, 2002, p. 10).

Oakley (2015, pp.125-135) uses newborn babies as an example to explain that distinctions between genders are culturally and socially, rather than naturally, constructed. In her work, newborn babies were found to be treated differently on the basis of sex by parents and staff in most maternity hospitals. For example, people normally used different comments to describe babies' look based on sex, and some hospitals still kept baby boys in blue blanket while kept baby girls in pink (Oakley, 2015, p. 125). From this perspective, the gender identities of these babies, are very largely constructed by other's attitudes, actions and expectations (Oakley, 2015, p. 135). Furthermore, Butler defines gender as repeating acts under a rigid frame, which also in turn controls the frame and sustains the hierarchy (Butler, 1988, p. 526; 1990, p. 25). Butler's theory will be introduced later in this chapter. To summarize, gender can be considered as a verb rather than merely a noun, as it describes a social and dynamic process (Salih, 2006, p. 55).

Gender stereotypes are another key concept of this study. Before explaining what gender stereotypes are, it is necessary to know what a stereotype is. Stereotypes can be defined as *'beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviours of members of certain groups'* (Hilton and Hippel, 1996, p. 240). These beliefs may have long-term impacts on people's cognition and behaviours, sometimes they are based on accurate representations of real circumstance, but sometimes they are not

(Hilton and Hippel, 1996, pp.240-241; Ma, 2000, p. 35; Qian et al. 1999, p. 14). In other words, stereotypes are held as a result of people's knowledge or experiences as well as lack of knowledge or experiences (Crespi, 2003, p. 3).

In addition, stereotypes in the same cultural context or in the same group are usually coherent and stable (Ma, 2000, p. 35; Qian et al. 1999, p. 16; Zhao, 2010, p. 82). Specifically, when stereotypes of a particular group of people reflect the general situation of that group, they can be used as an easier and more efficient way for outsiders to understand the target group. However, this kind of over-generalized belief about the group ignores individual differences. From this perspective, the socially constructed binary gender system which neglects the diversity among groups of men and of women can be considered as a stereotype. It is also noticeable that language can be treated as the main tool which is used to help to construct and disseminate stereotypes. According to Šikić-Mićanović (1997, p. 586) and St. Pierre (2000, p. 483), group beliefs and stereotypes can be reflected, constructed and stabilized through language when people use words to share their individual experience.

In terms of gender stereotypes, these can be briefly defined as a stable viewpoint of people's attributes which others ascribe to them on the basis of their gender (e.g. Courtenay, 2000, p. 1387; Qian et al. 1999, p. 14; Zhao, 2010, p. 82). Combined with the definition of gender, gender stereotypes are also produced by social cultures, as these stereotypes mirror and reinforce the traditional gender specific expectations as well as the current structural inequalities (Crespi, 2003, p. 2; Ma, 2000, p. 36). In addition to being congruent with the different requirements of gender roles in the current social context (Diekman and Eagly, 1999, p. 1171; Gaucher et al. 2011; Prentice and Carranza, 2002, p. 269), gender stereotypes also help prevent social structure through interplaying with stereotypes based on other social factors, such as race. For example, as Kenny (2007, p. 96) demonstrated, members of some political/religious institutions (e.g. the military, Roman Catholic Church or the United States Congress), used the stereotypes of gender and race to reinforce the power hierarchies inside these institutions. I will discuss institutional power in sustaining gender regimes later in this chapter. Here, it can be concluded

that gender relations, like the relations of class or race, are part of the process which constitute social hierarchy (Acker, 1992, p. 567).

To sum up, gender stereotypes could affect people's development paths and life opportunities. Specifically, stereotypes made on the basis of gender have potential to lead to gender bias and gender discrimination, which could result in negative impacts on a group's behaviours (Du, 2004; Zhao, 2010). In China, for instance, there is a generally held belief that female drivers are not as skilful or professional as male drivers (Dai, 2007; Xuan, 2017). This gender stereotype may lead to gender discrimination when females apply for jobs which require driving skills (Dai, 2017). In addition, the stereotypical prejudice about female drivers could reduce females' self-confidence in learning and practising driving, which may in turn reinforce the stereotypes (Xuan, 2017).

Gender stereotypes in the area of education are also well-documented. For example, different subjects in school are associated with gender—which mainly assumes girls have aptitude in liberal arts while boys have aptitude in science (e.g. Francis, 2000b; Howe, 1997; Mai, 2015; Sheng, 2017). Combined with the linkage between subject division and further opportunities for education and jobs in current China (see details in Section 2.3.2 of Chapter Two), gender stereotypes in school subject selection have negative effects on girls' access to higher education and further job opportunities. Moreover, as educational attainment and income can be seen as two main factors helping social mobility (Du, 2004, p. 48), gender stereotypes in the area of education not only restrict females' development but also hinder the growth of the whole society, which can be deemed as one of the motivations to do this research.

### 3.1.2 Gender Relations: Hegemonic Masculinity, Emphasized Femininity, and Patriarchy

The fundamental step to analyse gender relations is to understand how masculinity and femininity are culturally constructed. According to Connell (1995, p. 68), masculinity is an historical product which cannot exist without the concept of femininity. In other words, masculinity can be defined as *'not-femininity'* (Connell, 1995, p. 70). From this premise, the concepts of masculinity and femininity are

relational and need to be considered as embodiment of gender relations rather than merely gender identities (Connell, 1995, p. 71; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 844). Combined with the discussion about the concept of stereotypes, masculinity itself can be understood as a stereotype which results from constructing gender and reflects an agreement on an occupational role in gender relations (Brescoll et al. 2012, p. 357; Mosse, 1998, p. 5), as is femininity.

Masculinity is differently (re)constructed by various social factors like race, age and social class (Coles, 2009; Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Laslett and Brenner, 1989). In other words, the forms of masculinity are different since men in different social groups own different social resources. Within the interplay between gender, race and class, there exists a form of masculinity which is culturally dominant in the whole gender order—hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1996, p. 209). Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as a configuration of practices that express an ideal masculinity that is typically associated with dominance, power and physical strength (Carrigan et al. 1985, pp. 577-579; Light and Kirk, 2000, p. 165). It should be pointed out that hegemonic masculinity not only subordinates women but also marginalizes other forms of masculinity (Connell, 1996, p. 209; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846).

Similar to the interdependency between masculinity and femininity, the concept of hegemonic masculinity was initially constructed with the concept of hegemonic femininity. However, since all forms of femininity are formulated to guarantee the subordination of women to men in current society (Connell, 1987, pp.186-187), there is no dominant model of femininity which offers women the privileges and ascendency that the ruling class, inside male group hold (Martino, 1996, p. 125; Schippers, 2007, p. 87). In one word, there is no real hegemonic femininity that gives women authority in gender relations. For this reason, hegemonic femininity was renamed as emphasized femininity (Connell and Messerchmidt, 2005, p. 848). Emphasized femininity can be understood as one model of femininity which is established to meet the desire of men and emphasizes subordination to patriarchy (Connell, 1987, pp.187-188). Patriarchy here refers to the gender structure in which men oppress women (Foord and Gregson, 1986, pp.198-199; Walby, 1989, p. 214). From this perspective, patriarchy is sustained by both

hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity (Connell, 2002, p. 73; Schippers, 2007, p. 87). Overall, men collectively have privilege over women in this situation (Connell, 1996, p. 209; Robinson, 2006, p. 22).

In addition to all forms of femininity, hegemonic masculinity also constructs other masculinities, especially ones connected with homosexuality, as subordinate and inferior masculinities (Schippers, 2007, p. 87). As I introduced above, masculinity and femininity are constructed as relational as well as polar, highlighting heterosexuality and homophobia are important foundations to construct the binary gender system and make gender differences meaningful (Martino, 1996, pp.134-135; Tyler and Cohen, 2010, p. 179). To conclude, excluding anything associated with feminine attributes and sustaining two constructed genders as oppositional play significant roles in policing hegemonic masculinity as well as perpetuating the superiority of males. In this respect, gender itself is constituted by division and hierarchy (Delphy, 1993, p. 6).

*3.1.3 Gender Regime and Gender Order*

Gender regimes refers to the state of play in gender relations within a given institution (Connell, 1987, p. 120; 1990, p. 523). Institutions can be understood as different settings in which people live most of their daily lives, like school and workplace (Bishop, 2001, p. 4; Connell, 1987, p. 120). As Fleetwood (2008, p. 260) argued, social structure cannot generate rules or dispositions directly but only functions through influencing rules, norms and culture in various institutions. In turn, the gender regime is constructed through institutional gendered practices which mirror and legitimate unequal power relations of gender (Dunne, 2007, p. 502).

According to Connell (1990, p. 523), an important feature of a state's gender regime is the gender division of labour which sheds light on unequal gender relations. For instance, women were expected/regulated to occupy positions associated with part-time, casual and low skill requirements, while men predominate in positions with superior career prospects (Connell, 1990, p. 523). From this perspective, in addition to formal institutions like schools, Connell (1987, pp.121-122) argued that family also can be seen as an institution with an obvious sexual division of labour which mainly means that women do most domestic and unpaid work while men are

in charge of public and paid work. Then the gender order can be deemed as the relationship between gender regimes and multiple social patterns (Bishop, 2001, p. 4; Connell, 1987, p. 130; Kenny, 2007, p. 94).

## 3.2 Bourdieu's Concepts of Cultural Capital and Habitus

The key focus of this study is the dynamic process of the reproduction of gender stereotypes and the gender structure in the field of school. The theoretical framework of this study which is built on the basis of Bourdieu's theories as well as their specific application will be discussed in this section.

### 3.2.1 Cultural Capital and Habitus

The concept of capital is usually used in the economic field. Bourdieu extends the definition of capital by using it to denote other forms of resource in a wider system within complex networks (Moore, 2012, pp.99-100). Briefly, capital can be understood as social resources held by some social groups and mainly consists of living labour and its generated values (Abel, 2007, p. 1; Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46). In fact, the distribution of different types of capital mirrors the existing social hierarchy, as capital/resource is linked to power and opportunities for success (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 47). Capital can be presented in three fundamental types—economic capital, cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.47-48). Generally, economic capital can be transformed into money directly and immediately (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 48). In other words, economic capital reflects commercial resources and economic status (Anheier et al. 1995, p. 862). Social capital refers to resources that can be gained through possessing membership of a social group (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 51-52). For this reason, social capital is collectively credited as well as sustained in a particular social network (Anheier et al. 1995, p. 862; Bourdieu, 1986, p. 52).

With regard to cultural capital, it plays a significant role in Bourdieu's work and is applied across a number of dimensions. There are three forms of cultural capital: the first is in the embodied state, including habits and dispositions acquired through socialization (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.48-49). Socialization can be deemed as a process through which people learn the laws, norms and customs of the social environment and are trained to behave in accordance with them to become a member of a given group (Emolu, 2014, p. 22; Šikić-Mićanović, 1997, p. 577). It is

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noteworthy that the main agents of socialization include family, school, peer groups and mass media (Crespi, 2003; Emolu, 2014; Kretchmar, 2009), but as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, I will only discuss the impacts of parents, teachers and peer groups on students' life trajectories in this study. The second form of cultural capital is in the objectified state, which can be accumulated via the form of cultural goods like paintings or books (Anheier et al. 1995, p. 862). The third form of cultural capital can be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.48-49). Cultural capital in the last form can be expressed through academic competence or educational level (Lareau, 1987, p. 74; Sullivan, 2001, p. 899).

The three types of capital can be converted into each other in certain conditions (Abel, 2007, p. 2; Bourdieu, 1986, pp.47-48). For example, a family needs to invest economic capital (including time and resources) in the development of children's cultural capital in institutionalized state, namely, education. Then, cultural capital in educational form can be transformed to economic capital through the post-school labour market. Specifically, people could create different monetary values which are closely linked to the accumulation of economic capital according to their educational levels. Moreover, socio-economic success likely means broader social networks/connections which in turn give people more opportunities to own social capital. Among the three kinds of capitals, cultural capital in the institutional state plays an important part in this study to help analyse the linkage between unequal distributions of social resources and inequality in educational outcomes (Barone, 2006, p. 1041; McLeod, 2005, pp.15-16).

Habitus is another key theory of Bourdieu which is associated with the discussion of cultural capital. Habitus can be defined as a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which integrate previous life experiences and knowledge, and meanwhile shape people's values as well as actions (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). From this perspective, if cultural capital refers to resources influenced by family background and social status, habitus can be considered as how people treat and implement the resources (Dumais, 2002, p. 45; Sullivan, 2016, p. 149). Since people are regulated to possess an appropriate habitus that can match a particular field (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp.78-81), peoples' attitudes, behaviours and interactions with the

outer world are affected by habitus on the basis of their social status. Therefore, habitus reveals the connection between the individual's inner world and the objective social structure (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 65). In this respect, combined with the discussion of gender, the understanding of gender can be treated as a particular kind of habitus that constitutes part of the social order and has force to shape the practices of individuals (McLeod, 2005, p. 18; Powell et al. 2009, p. 412).

Field, the concept closely linked to habitus, refers to a network of social relations which operates and distributes capitals according to its own rules (Moi, 1991, p. 1020). Each field is a structured place in which different groups fight for the possession of resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 117). From this perspective, habitus functions in the social structure defined by field, and accordingly, each field has its own habitus (Moore, 2012, pp.99-103; Swartz, 1997, p. 118). In the context of this research, school can be treated as a field which has its own rules, dispositions, and standards of assessment, while cultural capital in the field of school consists of possession of knowledge which is legitimated by the current educational system (Sullivan, 2016, p. 149). Remarkably, Bourdieu in his research (1986, pp.243-247) has criticized people's ignorance of the active role of school education in reproducing social structure. Since this study focuses on the gender inequality in school environment, it is necessary to understand the role of education in reproducing the distribution of cultural capital among different social groups, which will be discussed below.

*3.2.2 Linking Bourdieu's Cultural Capital and Habitus to Gender Relations in Educational Institutions*

It is well documented that the reproduction of unequal distribution of resources in school environment sustains social stratification through the hereditary transmission of existing inequalities among students including their social advantages and disadvantages (e.g. Bourdieu, 1973; 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; 2002; Collins, 2009; Laslett and Brenner, 1989; Stuber et al. 2011). In this respect, school can be regarded as a place for playing games in which everyone seems to have equal chances and the rules seem negotiable, but in truth the games are merely controlled by the dominant group (Mills, 2008, pp. 85-87). Bourdieu (1973, pp.57-59) also argues that cultural capital can be accumulated or bequeathed by

previous generations inside a family, namely, children can easily get cultural capital from their family which has already acquired it. In this situation, cultural capital is very unequally distributed among students originating from different families before gaining school education. Therefore, through the intersection of family and school education, students from socially dominated groups are doubly advantaged in both the private and the public areas.

It is also noteworthy that Bourdieu's cultural capital and habitus cannot be isolated from one another in explanations of the hidden linkage between social order and inequality in education. Just as Moore (2012, p. 105) concludes that habitus and cultural capital are *'continuous with each other, as [moments] of the same process'*. In the school *'field'*, students' different previous family life and school experiences lead to their different value systems which in turn reshape students' different aspirations, decisions and behaviours (Davey, 2009, p. 277; Li, 2012, p. 48). Then, students acquire different experiences and dispositions through different practices in the school *'field'* (Moi, 1991, p. 2012). For this reason, habitus in school can be considered as a never-ending process affected by students' history (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78; Davey, 2009, p. 278).

Each school can be seen as a cultural/educational institution within which students spend most of their daily lives. Therefore, when discussing the mechanism of rules in school, it is helpful to introduce the concept of institutional habitus. Institutional habitus can be understood as predispositions within each institution which includes biases, prejudice and taken-for-granted assumptions held by people inside it (Atkinson, 2011, p. 334). Compared to individual habitus, institutional habitus is less fluid and has its own ways and powers to shape individual values and generate collective practices as well as collective notions that go beyond individual (Burke et al. 2013, p. 167; Reay, 1998, p. 521). From this premise, one of the key factors influencing students' school experiences and academic outcomes is the degree of match between dispositions students gained from early family education and the institutional habitus within the school (Atkinson, 2011, p. 344; Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 199). Also, the power of institutional habitus helps explain how different factors come together to structure students' choices through regulating what

is routine/possible/impossible for them in school environments (Oliver and Kettley, 2010, p. 739; Smyth and Banks, 2012, p. 265).

The concept of institutional habitus helps to explain not only the linkage between habitus and field but also the intersections of different habitus within the given institution (Burke et al. 2013, p. 167). Given the functions of education include adapting people to mainstream culture and to legitimate, as well as reproduce, unequal allocations of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, pp.5-10; Swartz, 1997, p. 190), the habitus in school tends to comply with the habitus of the dominant group in society. In other words, there exist a dominant habitus, which is constituted by the values of the dominant group, in the educational institution (Sullivan, 2016, p. 149). In addition, since the value of cultural capital can be accumulated by practices that are generated by appropriate habitus in a specific field (Edgerton and Roberts, 2014, p. 209), having rich cultural capital can be equated to having dominant habitus to some extent. In this situation, school education sustains the social structure through rewarding students from dominant groups, since these students have rich cultural capital and the right habitus which is congruent with norms in school (Davey, 2009, p. 278; Moi, 1991, p. 1021).

Bourdieu has been criticized by some scholars (e.g. Laberge, 1995, p. 137; McCall, 1992, p. 842; Skeggs, 2004, p. 22) for solely focusing on class division when talking about institutional power, but this does not mean that Bourdieu was blind to gender, in fact, as Krias and William (2000, p. 58) argued, Bourdieu shows his concerns about the power of gender in demonstrating the impacts of habitus in *male domination* (1990). However, when discussing the process of constructing gender, Bourdieu tended to analyse gender mediated by habitus at the individual level (Mennesson, 2012, p. 6), so that Bourdieu deemed gender as a *'hidden'*, *'unofficial'* and *'secondary'* factor in social reproduction (Laberge, 1995, p. 137; McCall, 1992, p. 842; McLeod, 2005, p. 19; Smith et al. 2016, p. 4). In line with the discussion about gender relations and gender regimes above, gender itself participates in the process of distributing power and constituting social hierarchy (Acker, 1992, p. 567; Connell, 1987). In other words, gender is one socially constructed mode to distinguish men and women as two classes of people (Butler, 1990, pp.20-21; Schippers, 2007, p. 89). As institutions mediate social structure and

individuals through institutional habitus and institutional power (Fleetwood, 2008, p. 261; Kenny, 2007, p. 94), no institutions are neutral, and they mirror gendered power relations (Franceschet, 2011, p. 65). Namely, each institution is gendered.

To summarize, Bourdieu's theories make contributions to analysing the process of reproduction of cultural/social inequality, but he failed to include gender as one of the major structures in the process (Connell, 1987, p. 120). As Reay (1995, p. 359) highlighted, habitus is affected by power and social status so the concerns of gendered habitus in all types of institutions help explain the dominance of hegemonic masculinity as well as the domination of femininity which are affected by the existing gender structure (Kronsell, 2005, p. 281). From this premise, schools, as cultural/educational institutions, have their own powers and methods to reproduce gendered power relations (Wang, 2007, p. 8; Yang, 2012, p. 80). Given that institutional habitus can be seen as a product of its history and experiences (Doucet, 2008, p. 113), the opinions of the past and the present staff in the school on gender and the gender culture the staff help produce can be deemed as part of gender habitus in school (Atkinson, 2011, p. 335). Combining that, institutional habitus is more powerful and stable than explicit rules in guaranteeing the appropriateness of practices (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54), gender habitus in school reinforces gender identities and gender relations through setting up norms and regulating practices in students' daily school lives (Dune, 2007, p. 502).

### 3.2.3 The Extensive Application of Cultural Capital and Habitus in Gender Issues in Education

In line with the discussion above, although Bourdieu's original concepts of cultural capital and habitus focus on class division, considering gender itself constitutes social hierarchy, Bourdieu's theories have been expanded to analyse the reproduction of gender inequality in public institutions, such as school and the labour market. Specifically, combined with the discussion about hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, while the male group get privileges from the current gender structure, they tend to use education as one of the tools to sustain gender biased cultural capital and habitus in order to guarantee the collective ascendency of men. Given that cultural capital and habitus are grounded in one's position in society which can be reflected in his/her family life and school experiences, more details about how the

gender system is perpetuated in school institutions will be found through investigating the roles of parents, teachers and peer groups on the basis of empirical studies.

a. The Role of Parents

Before school education, students' dispositions and their views of the world have been derived from family upbringing (Bourdieu, 1973, p. 57). It is argued by many scholars that children's attitudes and reactions to the outside environment, such as rules and norms in educational institutions, are grounded in family habitus (e.g. Bodovski, 2014, pp.392-394; Claringbould and Adriaanse, 2015; Dumais, 2002, 2006; Edgerton et al., 2014, pp.197-202; Silva, 2005, p. 85). Family habitus in this study can be conceptualized as parents' expectations of students' choices and parents' responses to students' practices in everyday life (Tomanović, 2004, pp.343-344; Vincent et al. 2012, p. 342). Given that habitus restricts students in what they can think or do and defines what is right or suitable for them (Li, 2012, p. 50; Nash, 1990, pp.436-437), gender habitus in the family tells students what a specific gender is expected or supposed to do before their decision making.

In this situation, children's gendered performances in school environments are affected by their understandings of gender identity, which are partly shaped and judged by parents in the family on the basis of the current gender structure (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 42; Dumais, 2002, p. 47; Sheng, 2013, p. 229). In short, the gender habitus individuals have acquired in their family acts as the foundation of an individual's gender ideologies and structures the school experience (Bourdieu, 1972, cited in Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 134). This kind of impact may be invisible and unaware (Bempechat, 1992, pp.33-36).

Therefore, although boys and girls who are from similar families seem to receive the same cultural training, their dispositions, which are influenced by family experiences, may be quite different based on their gender (Basu et al. 2017, p. 525; Hill, 2002, p. 501; Parish and Willis, 1993). Bempechat (1992, p. 33) demonstrated that parents' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations according to children's gender could affect the latter's self-evaluation, attitudes, confidence and performance towards learning different subjects in school through daily interactions. Makwinya and

Hofman (2015) conducted a survey of 184 second and third graders in Tanzania. The result revealed that if parents have gendered opinions on education and careers, their children tend to develop such perceptions in a similar way (Makwinya and Hofman, 2015, pp.73-74).

Cultural capital in the family should also be brought into the discussion. Family cultural capital represents a combination of language, knowledge, skills, experiences and values as well as habits which can be acquired from family education and be influenced by family resources and parents' educational level (e.g. Bourdieu, 1973, pp.58-60, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, pp.70-72; Tsoi, 2015, p. 127). In line with the discussion about cultural capital, family cultural capital makes contributions to a family's possession of social advantages. Although it seems to be mainly used in discussing the role of social class in the area of education, according to empirical studies considering gender itself is a mode which makes distinctions (see discussion above), family cultural capital can also be seen as a tool to investigate the connection between students' gender and their school experiences/attainment.

Specifically, in current patriarchal society, since women and men have different structural opportunities in both the area of education and the labour market, the volume and values of students' cultural capital depend on gender to some extent (Dumais, 2002, p. 47; Laberge, 1995, p. 140). In this situation, if investing time and cultural resources in boys can perpetuate family cultural capital better than transmitting it to girls, parents' treatment of boys and girls may be different. Besides, Li (2012, p. 16) also argued that family cultural capital includes the ability of parents to realize, comply with and negotiate institutionalized standards. From this premise, given that each institution is gendered (see discussions above) and could in turn lead to different earning levels and social positions of males and females (Dumais, 2002, p. 45; Jacobs, 1995, pp.83-87), family cultural capital is not merely class-based but also gendered to fit in with gendered rules in educational institutions.

Some scholars have also found the intersectionality of gender and class in analysing family cultural capital. Specifically, well-educated parents who are very likely to have positive attitudes to education, raise students' opportunities for education and participation in cultural activities regardless of their children's gender (Alvi and Dendir, 2015, p. 113; Sullivan, 2016, p. 155). According to Laslett and

Brenner (1989, p. 383), Nash (1990, p. 438) and Sănduleasa (2015, pp.50-52), couples with higher educational levels may hold relatively equal gender ideologies and tend to invest family resources in daughters, which has potential to offer these girls positive aspirations to education as well as more chances to get further education.

The increasing concerns on the interplay of gender and social class also result in the argument which constructs working-class boys as a disadvantaged group in education and calls for attention to them (Epstein, 1998, pp.4-5; Gilbert, 1998, pp.18-19). So some research has called for greater concern about *'the crisis of boys'*, *'disappearing boys'* or *'saving boys'* rather than girls (Li and Zhao, 2010; Sun et al. 2010; Wang, 2010; Yang, 2010; Zhang, 2014). They have argued that boys' academic performance and masculinity have been challenged because the current education system benefits girls. However, those arguments assume that boys and girls enjoy equal school and family status and fail to consider the unequal distribution of resources and support between men and women within the current gender regime (Martino, 1996, p. 124; Wearing, 1994).

In line with the discussion above, family, as a private or informal institution, is also gendered. A family's unequal investment in boys and girls exists because of gendered habitus inside the family that is in light of a gender structure, which therefore can never be changed thoroughly (merely improved) by changing the social position of the family. Combined with the introduction to hegemonic masculinity in the first section of this chapter, girls are never the dominant group in schools within the gender regime in school institutions, while the hierarchy resulting from social class just exacerbates the existing gender inequalities and leads to more disadvantages for girls than boys in the same disadvantaged social-cultural background (Martino, 1996, p. 126).

In mainland China, it also has been found that family cultural capital and habitus affect students' gender consciousness and practices in educational institutions. Lu et al. conducted a large-scale (2003) survey of 10,909 high school graduates from 90 schools in three provinces of China and found that there was still an obvious gender division in terms of subject selection in high school education which was influenced by students' family gendered habitus (Lu et al. 2009, pp.22-25). Similarly,

Cao (2013, p. 16) and Chen (2014, p. 3) also demonstrated that boys and girls internalized gender habitus from family and formulated their own gender dispositions before academic decision-making in school environments.

In addition, Sheng (2015) employed a mixed-methods survey consisting of a large-scale questionnaire on 2200 students and an interview survey on fifty parents and forty-seven students from ten schools across the city of Beijing. The study discovered that most male students tended to choose such subjects as engineering and science while female students tended to study arts subjects, which is in accordance with traditional gender role expectations (Sheng, 2015, p. 229). Then the scholar argued that parents' gender dispositions had huge impacts on children's subject selection through shaping students' educational aspirations and gender practices, e.g. instilling ideas to students about which field of study is suitable, appropriate or impossible, inappropriate for a specific gender (Sheng, 2015, p. 236).

It is interesting that the findings of Sheng (2015) and Sănduleasa (2015) above about the intersectionality of parents' gender specific expectations on students and family's social status are inconsistent. In detail, Sheng (2015, pp.230-236) found that parents who had a higher social position and economic income were more likely to have gendered expectations for their children, especially for daughters, while working-class parents tended to make less gender-stereotypical choices. The researcher explained this as a result of the observation that people from the working class were *'more enthusiastic'* about considering social mobility through education and gave priority to *'economic consideration'* rather than the prescribed gender stereotypes in academic choice (Sheng, 2015, pp.235-236). In contrast, Sănduleasa (2015) shows that in Romania parents with higher education may have relatively equal gender ideologies and tend to give girls more support in resisting gendered culture in academic development.

More differences between the situation in China and in other countries have been explored. For instance, a comparative study about the influence of parents' gendered expectation on early adolescence in India and Shanghai demonstrated that both Indian and Chinese parents passed on traditional gender ideologies to their children (Basu, et al. 2017, p. 525). However, there were differences in parents' expectations for the academic choices and development of girls. Parents in Delhi

tended to have higher expectations of sons while the majority of parents in Shanghai expected children to do well in school and in the future job market no matter their child's gender (Basu, et al. 2017, p. 527). In contrast, in terms of behaviours in daily lives, most parents in that study, regardless of nationality and social status, expected that girls should act like a lady while boys should be brave and tough (Basu, et al. 2017, p. 527).

The differences can be attributed to the unique social context of China which has been discussed in the previous chapter—e.g. the traditional culture of Confucianism, the one-child policy as well as inadequate old-age security systems (Basu, et al. 2017, p. 5270; Liu, 2006, p. 500; Yu, et al. 2010, p. 813; Zhai and Gao, 2010). The cultural context and relevant policies which make contributions to shaping Chinese parents' complicated expectations of children as well as gendered investment in children has been discussed in Chapter Two. To conclude, family gendered habitus, which can be recognized by parents' gender dispositions and gendered ways of raising their children in the context of this research, help reproducing gender stereotypes through influencing parents' investment of cultural capitals in students, which has potential to affect boys' and girls' different educational aspirations and academic choices as well as life trajectories.

b. The Role of Teachers

With regard to school education, Mills (2008, p. 85) argued that teachers serve as an important role in transmitting required knowledge and skills to students and enable the latter to comply with rules in the groups they belong to. In other words, teachers help sustain the current social structure through keeping students in their prescribed social position (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, pp.5-10; Nash, 1990, pp.435-436). The unequal distribution of knowledge, skills and resources from teaching does not only happen in the formal curriculum, but also functions in interactions with students outside class, which can be deemed as a hidden curriculum in the school environment (Frawley, 2005, p. 224; Jack, 2016, pp.6-8). Generally, teachers are found to have more positive interactions with students from socially advantaged group than the ones from family with lower income and less cultural capital (e.g. DiMaggio 1982, pp.193-198; Farkas et al. 1990, pp.133-134). Combined with the discussion above that schools reproduce social inequalities through

perpetuating the unequal distribution of cultural capital and legitimating the dominant habitus acquired by family, children from the privileged class will perform better in the school as they have already been prepared within the culture from their families before schooling, which further results in these students being *'doubly disadvantaged'* from the mainstream culture operating both in school and in family (Mills, 2008, p. 85).

In this respect, given that each school is gendered in light of the gender structure, school has its own power and methods to reproduce current gender structures. The dominant groups who get privileges and resources in patriarchal society tend to use school education as a tool to maintain male privileges (Brink and Stobbe, 2009, pp.461-462). During the process, teachers undertake the main task in ensuring boys stay in the dominant social position while keeping girls in an inferior position and behave in accordance with the rules constructed for females through daily gendered interactions between students and teachers (Heyder and Kessels, 2015; Huangfu, 2014; Riley, 2014). Considering the linkage between educational development and income in the career market, namely, the transformation between institutional cultural capital and economic capital, gender inequality will be sustained in post-school life.

Scholars have also explored gender bias in teacher's discourses, which could shape students' practices and school experiences. Teachers' discourse refers to the speech that teachers use to speak to students in the school environment (e.g. Gillies and Boyle, 2008, pp.1334-1336; Lu, 2010, p. 18; Reay, 2001, pp.161-163). The power of language in constructing gender regimes and assessing people's performances was emphasized by Butler (1990, p. 74) and Salih (2006, p. 56). From this premise, teacher's gendered discourse can be regarded as an important tool to shape students' practices in school on the basis of their gender (Dillabough, 1999, p. 375; Reay, 2001, p. 164). Students who do not *'fit'* the rules constructed by teachers' discourse could meet punishment from both teachers and other students (Riley, 2014, p. 4). Unfortunately, in most cases, teachers did not realize the gendered notions inherent in their language (Lavy, 2008, p. 2083; Myhill and Jones, 2006, p. 111). Namely, gender stereotypes can be conveyed from teachers to students through teacher's discourse at a subconscious level.

In addition, teachers also help produce gendered habitus in school through treating boys and girls unequally. For instance, teachers, no matter female or male, have been found to give more attention to male students who have already inherited privileges from their position in the gender regime (e.g. Howe, 1997, p. 15; Jungwirth, 1991, p. 280; Tatar and Emmanuel, 2001, p. 216; Tiedemann, 2002, p. 49; Riley, 2014, p. 14). Also, teachers tend to show more tolerance to boys who tend to dominate teachers' attentions through talking a lot in seminar groups, while showing less tolerance to girls who failed to fulfil the *'well-behaved student'* role (Francis, 2004, p. 43). In this situation, teachers' different expectations of and responses to students according to gender could affect the latter's understanding of and attitudes towards their own gender identities as well as their educational aspirations based on gender values (Francis, 2000b, p. 60; Paechter, 2004, pp.88-90). For this reason, teachers help construct the distribution of unequal cultural capital in the gender structure as reasonable (McLeod, 2005, p. 20) through legitimating the gendered habitus that girls and boys are expected to uphold (e.g. Arnot and Gubb, 2001; Renold, 2004, pp.252-253).

In addition to valuing male students while devaluing female students within the gender regime in school (Biemmi, 2015, pp.819-820; Frawley, 2005, p. 223; Priola, 2007, p. 36; Skeggs, 1991, p.129), the gendered treatment from teachers could also result from gender stereotypes that females are perceived as more mature and more obedient to teachers compared to their male peers (Frawley, 2005, p. 223; Riley, 2014, p. 14). In this respect, those teachers tend to give less support to girls than boys. Combined with the discussion about the interplay between gender and class in the previous part, this kind of argument does not only fail to realize the existing gender hierarchy constructed by hegemonic masculinity, but also provides *'justifications'* for teachers to distribute time, attention and educational resources unequally to boys and girls (Riley, 2014, p. 14). As a result, boys receive more opportunities to participate in elite cultural activities than girls through teachers' different expectations and treatment, which strengthens the notion that boys should be the winner in school and keeps the collectively dominant position of male students (Frawley, 2005, p. 223; Marojele, 2012, p. 122; Stuber et al. 2011, p. 448; Tatar and Emmanuel, 2001, p. 216).

Combining the introduction to the concept of gender regimes with the introduction to the gender blindness of the Party of China (see details in Chapter Two), I perceive Chinese schools as gendered institutions for reproducing gender relationships and standards. The issue that teachers participate in legitimating a gender binary system and the gender structure in school have been increasingly realized by some Chinese scholars. Yang's study (2012) in mainland China found that teachers take part in reproducing gender inequality through sustaining the unequal distribution of knowledge, space, discourse and learning opportunities in class between boys and girls (Yang, 2012, p. 26). Specifically, some teachers in his study encouraged boys to attempt difficult problems while giving the most basic questions to girls, in trying not to frustrate girls as those teachers alleged (Yang, 2012, pp.32-34). Similar things also happened in Wu et al. 's (2015, p. 163) study in several Chinese pre-schools, teachers gave more attentions and criticism to boys since girls were alleged to be shy and quiet in accordance with gender expectations of girls in Chinese culture.

Those teachers' gender-biased behaviours seen in the form of protecting girls can be called benevolent sexism, which still reinforces the traditional gendered identities that highlight the weakness and incapability of females (Cheng and Yang, 2015, p. 328). In a word, no expectations, so no need to push girls. Shi (2007, p. 8) also found that in order to get more resources and opportunities, some male teaching staff and male students tend to collude with each other to take advantage of patriarchal rules to oppress females in Chinese school space, like making fun of girls who show non-gender-stereotypic behaviours and legitimating the oppression as *'man's humour'* (Shi, 2007, p. 8). The process reveals one of the ways the privileged gender group maintains their interests in Chinese school environments.

When discussing the reproduction of social class in education, it has been discovered that teachers tend to promote the privileges of students who come from a similar social status to theirs in order to maintain teachers' positions and privileges (DiMaggio 1982, pp.193-198; Farkas et al. 1990, pp.133-134). In this premise, within the current gender structure, the gender of teachers, which does affect their positions in society, will be taken into account in this study. Given that the unique One-Child Policy in China leads to a child-centred family environment (see details in

Section 2.2.1 of Chapter Two), the gender of a teachers' child will also be brought into the discussion of this study about the role of teachers in constructing gendered standards in institutions. To conclude, teachers play an important role in helping gender skills, knowledge and competences within institutional gender habitus, in which values and volume of cultural capital keep being gendered and gendered habitus acquired from family keeps being legitimated.

c. The Role of Peer Groups

Given the amount of time students spend in school, aside from teachers, peers can have effects on students' academic and social development, including values, behaviours, abilities and mental health (Fabes et al. 2015; Gupta et al. 2013; Kindermann and Skinner, 2009, p. 33) and this influence could be negative in some areas. For example, being accepted by other peers is found to be very important for the majority of students of all ages, since failure may lead to negative consequences, like marginalization of classmates (Francis, 2004, p. 45; Reay, 2001, p. 157). Existing studies on gender construction in school have also found the remarkable role of peer groups. Specifically, Mulvey and Killen (2015, p. 686) state that challenging mainstream group norms such as gender stereotypes, held by the majority of peers, may lead to exclusion, which has negative impacts on students' academic motivation as well as mental health in school.

In this premise, in order to fit in and avoid being punished by other members inside the group, girls have to give up their power and be well-behaved, soft and selfless in accordance with their feminine identity as most peers in school believed (Francis, 2004, p. 48; Osler, 2004, pp.74-76). Claire (2004, p.16) also found that students who stepped out of line established by the gender system would be punished by other peers through exclusion, mockery or bullying. Specifically, boys who showed behaviours that were seen by peers as *'inappropriate to proper masculinity'* can be marginalized by both boys and girls (Claire, 2004, p. 16). As Connell (1987, p. 131) argued, hegemonic masculinity does not eliminate other masculinities but marginalizes them.

It is interesting that in some school environments, giving priority to academic records is associated by students with the feminine, since good learning outcomes are

equated to being obedient to teachers' authority (Renold, 2004, p. 253; Younger and Warrington, 1996, p. 305). In this situation, male students who do their schoolwork quietly and diligently may not be considered masculine enough, which leads many boys to reject schoolwork (Phoenix, 2004, p. 33). It cannot be ignored that the assessment of masculinity by peers is influenced by various school environments (Kessler et al. 1985, p. 42; Legewie and DiPrete, 2012, p. 464). Since the target school in this study is an elite high school that attaches great importance to learning ability (see details in Section 4.3.1 of Chapter Four), the linkage between masculinity and attitudes to school performance will be reconsidered in analysing findings.

In addition to punishment, young people also reinforce gender stereotypes in school through rewarding people who engage in stereotypically gendered behaviours. For instance, boys who showed masculinity in class through speaking in class without permission and making other students laugh are praised by other classmates (Francis, 2000b, pp.50-79; Kessels, 2005, pp.310-311). In a word, being a typical boy/girl on the basis of gender stereotypes is associated with acceptance among peers, which can be seen as the central concern in adolescent's eyes (Eaton, Mitchell and Jolley, 1991, p. 566; Heyder and Kessels, 2015, pp.474-477). In this situation, most students tend to adopt similar attitudes and behavioural styles to others' which accords with the dominant gender culture in peer groups in order to avoid trouble.

It is also noteworthy that both female and male students engage in this process which reconstructs the privileged position of boys in the school environment. For example, Howe (1997, p. 18) found that boys were deemed as the main source of providing help by both male and female students in group work. Specifically, students, regardless of gender, prefer to ask boys for help, and meanwhile those boys tend to respond to enquiries of their male peers more often than they answer girls (Howe, 1997, p. 18). It is similar to the discussion about teacher's unequal treatment of students—regarding boys' learning ability as better than girls and taking boys seriously while ignoring girls' requests.

However, the influence of peer groups remains hidden to studies of gender issues in Chinese schools. Given the highlight of the authority of teachers (e.g. Luan, 2010; Yu, 2013) and filial piety which includes being obedient to parents in Chinese traditional culture, students are still considered as passive learners instead of taking

an active role in reproducing gender stereotypes in existing Chinese studies. From empirical studies above, students do not only inherit gendered notions from parents and teachers, but also help legitimate and reconstruct the unequal gender positions in school lives. For this reason, the theory of performing gender needs to be brought into this study.

**3.3 Butler's Theory of Performing Gender**

Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and cultural capital help explain the hidden linkage between inequality in education and the gender structure. However, from the reflexive perspective, the two theories fail to explore the dynamic changes in the process of constructing gender regimes, as the positions of the two gender groups and their relationship to outside world could change by time through interference of individuals inside the structure (Bondi, 2009, p. 335; Mouzelis, 2007, p. 107; Thorpe, 2010, p.195). In other words, habitus and cultural capital set boundaries for people to some extent (Macleod, 2005, p. 20; Mills, 2008, p. 88), but people have potential to realize that they are part of the regime and to change their reactions to the system, such as questioning it (McNay, 1999, p. 107; Thorpe, 2010, p. 196).

While habitus can be deemed as a theory which explains why people from similar social status have similar habitual behaviours even when they had totally different life paths, reflexivity can be treated as a concept which demonstrates why people have different responses to social influences even when they stay in the same position in the current structure (Brock et al. 2016; Wimalasena and Marks, 2019, p. 14). Bourdieu's original theory of habitus focuses on the external forces in shaping individual dispositions and practices, and the development of reflexivity highlights the internal practices which are generated by, and constitute dispositions of, the habitus (Adkins, 2003, p. 193). From this perspective, reflexivity can partly explain why feminists, like me, still keep thinking about the unequal power relationship in gender structures although it cannot be overcome (Bondi, 2009, p. 328).

However, does gender reflexivity mean undoing habits of gender or reproducing gender in new but old ways (McLeod, 2002, pp.212-213)? Could people's reflexivity get rid of the constraints of his/her condition in the social structure (Kenway and McLeod, 2010, p. 536)? Does there really exist individual

freedom without any regulations or punishment mechanisms? In this study, in order to fully explain why gender structure has been sustained in the school *'field'*, Butler's theory of gender performance, which shows students' active roles in constructing gender through daily routines, will also be introduced.

### 3.3.1 Performing Gender Is an Active Process

The theory of performing gender transforms the understanding of gender from a noun into a verb. Specifically, gender is not an identity that we were born into, but a routine, active and ongoing social process that we continue doing in everyday practices through social interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 126). Furthermore, gender can be deemed as a set of repeated social practices constituted by discourse and acts under a strict regulatory frame (Butler, 1988, p. 522; 1990, p. 45). In this situation, the gendered speech and actions we see are the dynamic process of expressing gender identity rather than the result of gender itself (Butler, 1990, pp.26-34). Here, scholars' emphasis on the power of language is consistent with the poststructuralist feminist approach which contends that discourse produces gender differentiations and the hierarchy (Happel-Parkins, 2016; Llewellyn, 2009; St. Pierre, 2000). Besides, it cannot be neglected that doing gender is not always blatant, sometimes it is invisible and subtle, such as touch, facial expressions, gestures and posture (Wallis, 2011, p. 461).

Since gender performance is an effect of acts and discourse, doing/performing gender appropriately requires people to use masculine or feminine forms of speech and behaviours by avoiding performing in *'other'* ways which may primarily be associated with the *'other'* gender (Brickell, 2005, p. 26; Disch, 1999, pp.548-550). In this situation, gender performances which can be assessed as successful need to comply with expected sex roles and simultaneously help maintain the binary gender system (Butler, 1988, p. 526; 2009, pp.x-xi; Tyler and Cohen, 2010, p. 179). Namely, only a particular kind of repeated performances which accords with the rigid regulations in the gender system will be considered as performing gender (Butler, 1990, p. 45), in which process practices and standards cannot be freely chosen by individuals (Salih, 2006, p. 56). In a word, gender is not pre-existing, but is constructed by us in a regulated way.

Then, what is the ultimate aim of performing gender? We do it for what? In line with the discussion above, scholars have pointed out that the essence of *'doing gender'* is performing different appropriate roles for females and males (Adler, et al. 1992, p. 170; Lesnick, 2005, p. 188; Wallis, 2011, p. 461). Combined with the discussion about hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, gender differences are created by the privileged group in the current social structure to sustain their superior positions (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 142). Also the emphasis on the opposites between females and males only makes sense in the institution of heterosexuality (Blaise, 2005, p. 86), which argues there are only two genders in the world and only natural attraction between these two genders is accepted (Kitzinger, 2005; Schilt and Westbrook, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Under this kind of gender dualism, the gap between males and females is legitimated and strengthened, which helps perpetuate the gender rule that to be masculine is to be strong, positive and ascendant while to perform as feminine is to perform weak, problematic and powerless (Ingraham, 1994, p. 212; Priola, 2007, p. 27).

In addition, gender is a regime with rewards and punishment mechanisms, in which appropriate gender behaviours which accord with the standards of heterosexuality will be rewarded, while stepping out of line will be punished (Blaise, 2005, p. 86; Butler, 1988, p. 522). Heterosexual discourse is legalized and enforced constantly in this way. When combining heterosexual expectations with the gender structure, heteronormativity guarantees that hegemonic masculinity, which values masculinity and highlights heterosexuality, has more privileges, resources, and power than all forms of femininities as well as other masculinities. In this situation, doing masculinity means doing dominance, while doing femininity means doing the opposite, submission (Blaise, 2005, p. 86; Schilt and Westbrook, 2009, p. 442; Skeggs, 1991, p.129). To conclude, the process of doing/performing gender is the process of sustaining and reproducing power relations in the binary gender system which values and prioritises men and masculinity (Cooke, 2006, p. 446; Schilt and Westbrook, 2009, p. 442; West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 146).

When the reality of doing gender is uncovered, the unavoidability of doing gender can be explained. Power, capital and social status are distributed differently in both the private and public places, in which one's prescribed sex category and the

conformity of performance to the gender system could be important evaluation criteria (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 145). Each individual is both the recipient and the participant of doing gender and reproducing the gender culture (Gherardi, 1994, p. 607; Wallis, 2011, p. 461). No one can get rid of it. In everyday practices, women may feel uncomfortable and be excluded in domains which are traditionally dominated by men, not only because of the dominance of men but also the dominance of masculine style in these areas (Van den Brink and Stobbe, 2009, p. 454). The masculine-gendered system maintains the current gender bias in different places through setting barriers for women (Treviño et al. 2017). Women are judged by male gatekeepers and the standards are set by dominant masculinity (Priola, 2007, p. 23). In this respect, in line with the discussion in the first part of the chapter, all forms of femininities, are constructed by hegemonic masculinity for the interests and desires of men (Blaise, 2005, p. 86). Namely, women are expected to do femininity established by the dominant masculinity.

Doing gender could lead to different outcomes in different social and cultural contexts. For example, in both Lesnick's study (2005, pp.188-189) and Lester's research (2008, p. 278), women employers feel obligated to provide emotional support to students, and colleagues as well as family members, which rarely benefits women's career development. This kind of femininity performance is linked to traditional stereotypes of gender regulated by the dominant masculinity, and at the same time, reinforces the traditional feminine roles (Lesnick, 2005, p. 189; Lester, 2008, p. 278). On the contrary, Priola (2007, p. 36) found that some female managers tend to deny feminine attributes to make themselves fit the ideal leader role which have traditionally been acted by men. However, it can be concluded that regardless of the acceptance or denial of feminine attributes in order to play appropriate roles in organizations, men and women reinforce the priority and dominance of masculinity. In this process, females, who intend to fit in but fail to question the gender system, cannot merely be seen as victims but also are co-producers of the gender culture, whether consciously or unconsciously (Katila and Meriläinen, 1999, p. 164; Wallis, 2011, p. 461).

To conclude, the theory of performing/doing gender proves the discussion above that the word of gender is actually a verb rather than a noun. The heterosexual

system is not produced by the natural distinction between men and women. On the contrary, the concepts of females and males are generated by the binary gender framework and in turn reproduces the framework continuously (Tyler and Cohen, 2010, pp. 178-179). Moreover, doing/performing gender does not mean that people just simply reiterate some norms that they were previously given. In fact, people enact gender differently in various circumstances, since people are not passive learners but active producers who may take advantage of their awareness of the gender identity that attaches to specific behaviours to produce a variety of effects (Cameron, 1997, pp.328-332).

### 3.3.2 How Students Do Gender in Educational Context

With the interplay of school and family, students are trained to do gender-appropriate behaviours through daily interactions (Stanworth, 1984; Thorne, 1993). It cannot be ignored that students are also active in constructing gender identities, for example, they can reinforce the binary gender system through gender-labelling their own behaviours and insisting on boundaries between boys and girls (Francis, 2004, p. 44; Paechter, 2004, p. 88; Skeggs, 1991, p. 128). As Throne (1993, p. 67) concluded, students are not passive learners, but producers in the process of reproducing the gender system. In line with the discussion that gender is a scheme with reward and punishment mechanisms, both Adler et al. (1992, p. 170) and Francis (2004, p. 43) have demonstrated that children will be rewarded for appropriate gendered behaviours and be bullied for non-conventional performances. The peer pressures, which come from the same gender as well as the opposite one, can be deemed as students' participation in helping sustain a gender structure (Francis, 2004, p. 43; Skeggs, 1991, p. 129). Jordan (1995, p. 71) also demonstrated that students were observed to divide themselves consciously on the basis of gender when playing group games in the class, although teachers did not mention gender in game rules.

Butler (2004, pp. 16-19) and Deutsch (2007, p. 122) introduced a new concept to the area of gender study, *'undoing gender'*. Undoing gender refers to social interactions that do not comply with stereotypes based on sex-category and instead reduce gender differences (Deustch, 2007, p. 122). Combined with the discussion about the social reproduction function of school, if doing gender can be explained as students' interactions with educational institutions which accord with

gender rules in the school *'field'*, then can undoing gender be treated as the changed social interactions between students and schools which destabilize or challenge the prescribed gender norms in school? Given the role of peer groups in supervising each other's gender performance, Messerschmidt (2009, p. 87) found that girls who did not want to look like a typical girl were often bullied in school because hegemonic masculinity only accepts male-bodied youth and discredits *'masculine practices performed by socially recognized female-bodied youth'*. Wallis (2011, p. 461) further concluded that a woman who acts masculine could be considered offensive since she threatens the power relationship in the gender structure. It is noteworthy that the pressure young people who try to undo gender undertake comes from gender role expectations from their own as well as other students (Jordan, 1995, p. 81; Scott, 1981, p. 359).

In addition, girls who seemed to have undone gender (e.g. showing denying feminine attributions) in order to fit in (e.g. proving their ability in learning science subjects or taking leadership roles) reinforce the gender culture which values the masculine higher than the feminine (Powell et al. 2009, p. 412; Priola, 2007, p. 36; Van den Brink and Stobbe, 2009, pp.453-454). Moreover, non-stereotypical behaviours of students could result in new kinds of gender stereotypes instead of questioning the structure (Rism, 2009, pp.83-84). For example, girls are much freer to develop their economic role today than in the past, but this has not changed the taken-for-granted assumption about feminine role in private institutions like the family but saw the emergence a new kind of feminine identity which requires women to do both well in work and in family (Baruch, et al. 1987, p. 130; Rism, 2009, p. 83).

To sum up, doing gender in school can be regarded as the process through which students learn how to perform a particular gender role (Danielsson, 2011, p. 27), and to reproduce the rules of the gender system which are coproduced by both individuals and the external school environment (Paechter, 2003, p. 70). In this process, educational choices and other practices in school are used by students to form and perform their gender identities (Mendick, 2005, p. 245; Danielsson, 2011, p. 25). Both Butler (1988, pp.522-526) and Mendick (2005, p. 247) emphasize that doing femininity and masculinity are never practices that can be selected by individuals at will. Instead, the practices associated with a specific gender have to be

recognised by the members of the community in which they live (Paechter, 2003, p. 76; 2007, p. 2). In this situation, undoing gender is meaningless without changing the binary gender system. Namely, gender can never be undone, but actually *'redone'*, in combined new and old ways (West and Zimmerman, 2009, p. 118). After all, from a sociological perspective, the primary function of constructing gender is social control and to serve the gender hierarchy (Connell, 2010, p. 32).

**Summary**

The literature review provides current research progress about the role of education in reproducing the gender structure. In the process, parents, teachers and peer groups all play active roles. Valuable information in different regions can be concluded from the existing empirical studies in terms of the relevant influencing groups and how they influence the process. The existing literature helps to uncover interactions among groups inside and outside the school environment. They also demonstrate the negative impacts of reproducing gender stereotypes in the school environment—the development of both boys and girls is limited, but the disadvantage of girls is serious. The perpetuation of gender stereotypes in education is a complicated problem which can be linked to not only the school system, but also the social order. From this perspective, the reproduction of gender stereotypes in educational institutions is a structural problem which results from gendered distribution of cultural capital and in turn legitimated gendered habitus. In this respect, gender issues in school cannot be solved simply by the individual or cannot be changed suddenly.

The theoretical tools of Bourdieu and Butler are brought together to provide a conceptual framework for exploring how gender relations are practiced and reproduced in the school context. Bourdieu's theories make contributions to analysing the process of reproduction of cultural/social inequality, but he failed to include gender as one of the major structures in the process (Connell, 1987, p. 120) and kept relatively silent about people's active role in the process of reproducing gender relations (Nentwich et al. 2015, p. 239). Butler emphasizes that people are able to construct and reconstruct routines and norms through everyday acts within the gender system, which was neglected by Bourdieu. From this perspective, Butler also helps redefine gender as a set of active and repeated social practices constituted

by discourse and daily actions under a strict regulatory frame (Butler, 1988, p. 522; 1990, p. 45). Using Bourdieu's and Butler's theories is useful in providing a new understanding of the process by which gender relations are reproduced through different types of practices. The conjunction of the theories also helps uncover the traits of the interaction between gender and social structure in daily lives—powerful, and meanwhile various as well as negotiable within conditions (Huppatz, 2006, p. 130).

Combined with the introduction to the background of this study in the previous chapter, the applications of theories in Chinese context are also noticed, but more studies which integrate western theories and social cultural factors in China in analysing gender structure are needed.

## Chapter 4

## Methodology

## Introduction

Choosing appropriate research methodology is essential to research as these methods can decide whether the whole study will be successful or not (Bryman, 2012; Schrauf, 2016). The choice of research methods depends on what kind of problem the research is to explore. As I introduced in previous chapters, this study intends to discover how gender stereotypes and gender structures are reproduced in educational institution and influence young students' life opportunities. It describes a process rather than demonstrating measurement by numbers, therefore, I chose to use qualitative research methods to collect relevant data and information. Qualitative research refers to an inductive research strategy that focuses on discourse and values of participants instead of quantification during data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 380, p. 408; Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, pp.3-4). Qualitative research allows the researcher to take the diversity of participants into consideration based on various methods and theories (Flick, 2009, pp.14-17).

In this study, I offered young people in one Chinese high school an opportunity to express their attitudes, values, experiences and beliefs about gender. Apart from the students, I also invited parents and teachers to participate in the fieldwork to order to explore the active roles of different social groups in the process of sustaining and reproducing gender stereotypes. In this respect, each group's voices can be heard, rather than being represented by some statistical tables. I will begin this chapter with my theoretical position. Theoretical tools which guided this study will be outlined. Next, I will introduce the sample size as well as the sample selection procedure. Further, I will explain my design of a semi-structured interview. Then, I will briefly present the procedure of data analysis. Finally, I will discuss the relevant ethical issues in detail.

## 4.1 Epistemological Issues and Theoretical Perspective

Epistemology is closely associated with the choice of methodology. According to Bunge (2012, pp.3-4), Gray (2009, p. 17) and Travers (2001, p. 9),

each researcher brings some epistemological assumptions into the process of study, which influences how the researcher acquires, understands and analyses his/her qualitative data. More specifically, the assumptions concern what can be obtained and assured as legitimate knowledge in a discipline and which design is most suitable for the research topic (Bryman, 2012, p. 27; Gray, 2009, p. 18). In this respect, the epistemology approach which I have adopted in the study influenced how I conducted my fieldwork and how I interpreted my data.

There are two basic positions in terms of epistemology: objectivism and constructionism (Crotty, 1998, p. 17). Unlike objectivism which asserts that organizations and culture are external realities and are independent of social actors (Bryman, 2012, p. 33), constructionism can be deemed as understanding that truth and meanings of social phenomena do not pre-exist but are created by the individual's actions and interactions with the external world (Bryman, 2012, p. 34; Gray, 2009, p. 18). Through the whole study, I am aware that I am conducting research which explores how school education legitimates a gendered distribution of resources and sustains the gender structure. Specifically, I would like to provide insights into the key roles of parents, teachers and students in the process of reproducing unequal gender relations through reproducing gender stereotypes and performing their gender identities in the school environment. Since themes emerged through analysing interactions between different social groups, the epistemology of this study was based on constructionism.

Since constructionism provides a unique perspective to consider the world as a socially constructed consequence in which context individuals' actions and experiences are shaped by, and simultaneously shape, culture, history and social norms, an understanding of the world could differ based on individual's different experiences in it (Crotty, 1998, p. 56; Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p. 19). From this perspective, combined with the literature discussed in previous chapters which outlined gendered interactions inside school, girls and boys could have different school experiences and different educational aspirations even sitting in the same classroom. The roots and the process, as well as the impacts of the different understandings of education and different school experiences of students based on their gender, can be considered as a foundation to guide my research design.

Constructionism is generally associated with interpretivism (Gray, 2009, p. 21). There are two theoretical significant perspectives in social research: positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2012, p. 28). Positivism refers to an assumption that facts are objective and can be deduced by empirical science (Crotty, 1998, p. 36). On the other hand, interpretivism intends to interpret people's motivations, values and meanings behind their behaviours, so it is inductive and focuses on subjective knowledge which is culturally and historically created (Bryman, 2012, p. 28; Crotty, 1988, p. 79). I chose a qualitative research approach, which highlights words/discourse instead of statistical data during information collection and analysis (Bryman, 2012, p. 36), to understand daily interactions of different social groups in the dynamic process of reproducing gender stereotypes.

## 4.2 Location of the Study

I conducted this study in HY City (pseudonym). Geographically, HY City is situated in the middle part of Jianghuai Plain and lies in the central Jiangsu Province which is located in East China. The city covers land over 6000 square kilometres and has a population of around 4.5 million (see Jiangsu Statistical Yearbook, 2016). With regard to population composition, the majority population in Jiangsu province is the ethnic majority, Han Chinese, while less than one per cent of the population in the district are ethnic minorities (see Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission of Jiangsu Province, 2015). Broadly speaking, the whole Jiangsu Province is treated as a main gathering area for Han Chinese (See National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The long history of HY city, which is more than 2500 years, has offered the city a large number of treasures, such as valuable architecture and splendid arts culture. Currently, HY has become well known as a nationally famous tourist city. The city and the whole Jiangsu Province act as a powerful engine in leading Chinese economic development since they are located in a fertile plain (Dai, 2008).

A report of the Chinese Women's Research Society (2005) appraised the development of gender equality in Jiangsu Province. The report showed some significant indicators in evaluating the development of women within the province, including employment status, educational level, health status and participation rate of national level decision-making of local females (Chinese Women's Research Society, 2005). In terms of the educational system, HY City and the whole Jiangsu Province

follows the national system of public education, which consists of pre-school education, six-year primary school education, six-year middle school education and higher education or vocational education (see details in Section 2.3, Chapter Two). In which system, six-year primary school education and three-year junior middle school education are compulsory (NPC, 1986).

In this situation, high school education can be treated as an important link connecting compulsory education to higher education. The quality of three-year high school education can decide directly whether students are able to gain access to higher education and which level and which kind of higher education they could access (Peng, 2009; Zhang and Feng, 2010). Currently, the quality of high school education in Jiangsu Province takes the leading position in the mainland China, which also benefits from its advanced economy (Peng, 2009; Zhang and Feng, 2010). The whole province, including the target city HY, still implements an educational policy which divides high school students into liberal arts and science classes during their second year according to students' subject selection. A detailed introduction of the Chinese education system can be found in a previous chapter. Moreover, there are thirty-five high schools in HY City at present.

I chose this site as the target city of my fieldwork for two main reasons. Firstly, both the educational level and the development of gender equality in Jiangsu Province rank higher than most other Chinese provinces. Since my topic focuses on gender issues in school education, I believed that I could get information about both improvements and shortcomings relating to the present developing status of gender equality in education within China from this province. The relevant experiences in HY City could be deemed as a reference for scholars who want to do further research in a similar topic in other Chinese areas. Secondly, I was born and grew up in HY city until entering into the university. Before conducting this work, I read some studies that aimed to explore different social issues in mainland China, in which all of the researchers found that social networks in contemporary China are so important and can directly influence the implementation of their studies (Deutsch, 2004; Goh, 2009; Liu, 2015; Mao, 2012; Xu, 2006; Zhu, 2011). From this perspective, my interpersonal relationship with this site could give me assistance in doing fieldwork. After overall consideration, I decided to set my study in HY City.

**4.3 Sampling the Research Respondents**

*4.3.1 School Selection: HYA High School*

I chose one high school as the sample school: HYA High School (pseudonym). In line with the introduction in Chapter Two, high school education is no longer compulsory or free in the Chinese educational system. Generally speaking, students who finish nine-years of compulsory education need to attend the High School Entrance Examination to be admitted into high school according to their examination results (more details can be found in Section 2.3.1 of Chapter Two). Therefore, students study in this school generally because of their similar academic performances instead of being determined by their similar residential location or family backgrounds. In this respect, choosing only one target school also gave me a potential sample size of students from different social status. HYA High School is a national elite high school and is one of the top four high schools in the whole Jiangsu Province. It has more than 120 years' history and is well-known for a lot of famous alumni. Each grade of HYA High School has fourteen to sixteen classes, and each class has nearly forty-five students. In addition, the school was my alma mater, which provided favourable conditions for me in the fieldwork to get access to research respondents from different social groups.

*4.3.2 Sample Size: Thirty-seven Participants*

As a whole, I recruited twelve teachers, seventeen students in third grade and eight parents mainly via the snowball sampling method (details can be found in the next part). Seventeen students were from six different classes and eight parents were from eight families, namely, no father and mother in a family both acted as participants in the study. In terms of gender of participants, I interviewed sixteen males and twenty-one females altogether. As I intended to do research relating to gender, I tried my best to keep the relative gender balance in all three target groups when inviting participants. I wanted to ensure that different views from both genders were involved. However, I met difficulties in the process of recruiting fathers to do the interview. At first, I asked students to invite one of their parents to talk to me, all of those students chose their mothers. So I changed my question to ask the remaining students if their fathers were available to do the interview.

During the process, thirteen students (of seventeen) said that their parents may be willing to talk to me. Specifically, seven students chose their mothers, and only one mother declined. By contrast, the other six students asked their fathers directly, only two fathers said yes. I think that this in itself can be regarded as an interesting finding in terms of gender. Since my research does not focus on gender roles of parents or the different influences of fathers and mothers on students' school experience or life development, I think description from one parent in each family can represent how students' gender values are instilled through family life. The way that I contacted parents will be explained in the following part.

With regard to the selection of students, the third grade is the highest one of a high school in mainland China. Namely, students in the third grade have fully experienced the whole three-years of high school. Also they may already have a brief plan of the university application, their major selection and even their future career choice, in which context each choice could link with their previous subject selection in the second academic year. Accordingly, I also chose teachers of the third grade and parents of these third-grade students. Clearer personal profiles of participants from the three groups are summarized in Table 4-1, Table 4-2 and Table 4-3 separately. Each student participant was assigned a code to replace their name, like Girl A, Boy B; each parent was described based on the code of their child, like Girl G's mother; each teacher was named according to gender and subject, like a female teacher of Maths subject.

All participants were aged 18 or above, please see details in ethical concerns section.

Table 4-1: Teachers (7 males and 5 females):

| Required Courses (8 teachers) | Language | Chinese | 3 males |
| | | English | 1 male, 2 females |
| | Math | | 1 male, 1 female |
| Liberal Art Courses (2 teachers) | Politics | | 1 male, 1 female |
| | History | | |
| | Geography | | |
| Science Courses (2 teachers) | Physics | | 1 male, 1 female |
| | Chemistry | | |
| | Biology | | |

Table 4-2: Students (7 boys and 10 girls):

| Liberal Art Class (5 students) | 2 boys, 3 girls |
| Science Class (12 students) | 5 boys, 7 girls |

Table 4-3: Parents (2 fathers and 6 mothers):

| Son in Liberal Art Class | 2 mothers |
| Daughter in Liberal Art Class | 1 mother |
| Son in Science Class | 1 mother, 1 father |
| Daughter in Science Class | 2 mothers, 1 father |

**4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews**

I used a research design of semi-structured interviews with field notes. Semi-structured interviews refer to interviews in which researchers ask interviewees questions, including prepared ones, based on the research topic and other questions which are not pre-listed but emerge according to the responses of interviewees (Bryman, 2012, p. 471; Flick, 2009, p. 74). I chose to conduct individual semi-structured interviews with all participants in order to get deeper and real insights into how these people view gender stereotypes in and outside the school environment. All the interviews were conducted one-to-one. Field notes were written immediately after each interview to avoid missing any important information and to track my thinking on the main topic.

*4.4.1 Project Dates*

My fieldwork started from 25th May and ended on 25th August 2017. It lasted three months. In line with the discussion on the Chinese education system, in order to fight for the opportunity of access to higher education, most Chinese high school students at the end of third grade need to attend the National Higher Education Entrance Examination which takes place each year on 6th-9th June. After this examination, generally speaking, students can enjoy a summer break and have time to discuss their application to university with their parents, classmates and teachers. From this perspective, before 9th June in 2017—the end date of that year's examination, I only arranged to do interviews with teachers, since they did not need to prepare lessons during that time. Meanwhile, I did not want to bother students or their parents who needed to focus on the examination.

After the 9th June, I started contact with students. During my fieldwork, students did show enthusiasm in joining my social research as they had spare time after the examination. I guess that they were also eager to talk with people who had experienced university life. Besides, as there is only one university in the target city and it is not very famous in China, most of these high school students chose to apply for better universities in other regions. A few of them had decided to go abroad to get higher education. Given the new semester of most universities starts around the end

of August, I planned to finish all interviews before September. Three months were enough for the fieldwork.

*4.4.2 Getting Access to Participants*

I had acquired the permission of the Institute of Education Sciences in HY city before the fieldwork took place. In mainland China, getting access to public schools requires the permission of the local government department of education. In HY City, the Institute of Education Sciences is the subordinate body of the local Education Bureau. Specifically, the Institute of Education Sciences is responsible for supervising and evaluating all teaching and research activities in all educational organizations within the city. In the year of 2016, when deciding to do the research in HY City, I sent a formal application form which briefly introduced my identity and my study topic to the agency. Then I got the chance to explain my research plan and the objectives of the research to the Principal of the Institute by telephone in December 2016. The Principal was interested in it and approved it after an internal meeting. At the end of 2016, I obtained the official approval from the Institute of Education Sciences with a seal of the agency on the form.

It should be mentioned that in the Chinese context, schools tend to cooperate with a research project which has been approved by the local government department of education. During the fieldwork, when I entered into the target high school for meeting potential participants, I showed my form with the seal to the gatekeepers. This form with the seal was also included in my research package as a part of the introduction to my research which was shown to all potential participants. In the process, I did not contact the HYA High School in advance, as I wanted to minimize the interference of the school on participants' opinions. Even the Principle of the local Institute of Education Sciences, who approved the research, was not expected to know which school was engaged in my study. For this reason, I listed a range of high schools on the application form.

I used the snowball sampling method to find potential participants. Snowball sampling is a sampling method in which the researcher knows or finds a small group of people relevant to the research topic as the initial sample, and finds other potential participants who have the characteristics relevant to the research through the network

of the initially sampled participants (Bryman, 2012, p. 424).I had kept in touch with my teachers in HYA High School for around ten years. After confirming the target school, I contacted them and introduced my research to them through emails and messages. All of the teachers who I knew agreed to do the interviews. In addition, they also proposed some colleagues who might want to join my study. I contacted those potential participants directly and all of them showed willingness to participate.

Apart from teachers, I have three close friends who have cousins in the third grade in HYA High School in the year of 2017. I also introduced and explained my research to my friends. At first, my friends asked their cousins in private. When these students expressed their interests in my study, my friends gave their contact information to me. I contacted those students directly and explained my research to them again. All the three students who I found through my friends said that they were willing to talk to me. Then I asked them for help to allow me to join in their group chat through QQ software which is a famous instant-messaging software in China. As far as I know, most of these students used these chat groups to communicate with each other after school and after graduation. These chat groups were divided generally based on students' class and grade.

I introduced myself and my research briefly in the chat groups and offered my detailed contact information as well, including my telephone numbers and email address. In order to build a good relationship with my potential interviewees, I said that I could share my experiences of university life and my feelings about study abroad with them. As a result, fourteen students from different classes contacted me in private and joined my study. In terms of parents, I gave the students who had agreed to do the interview a research package after the interview, which included 1) a brief introduction to my research; 2) my personal introduction and contact information; 3) an explanation of the confidentiality and voluntary nature of this study; 4) the permission of the Institute of Education Sciences; 5) the approval from Ethics Committee of University of Liverpool; 6) an informed consent form.

I asked these students for help to turn over the package to their parents. Four students declined to do this and said that their parents were busy or travelling on business. The remaining thirteen students helped me convey the research package and my oral invitation. I planned to give those parents two days to consider, then I

would contact those parents through the students to ask them if they would like to do the interview. In fact, eight parents who did the interview successfully all responded to me on their own initiative within one day. Their adult children gave them my phone numbers, and these parents called me directly to ask relevant questions about the interview and make appointments with me. Five parents refused me when I contacted their children again after awaiting two days.

*4.4.3 The Main Study*

Before all the interviews, I introduced my study briefly and asked all participants for permission to do sound recording. All interviewees that I recruited agreed and all the interviews were recorded. In addition, I asked them to read the consent form carefully and sign it if they agreed. Participants who had already scanned the consent form to me with a signature did not sign it again (more details can be found in the part on ethical concerns). I wrote three topic guides for the interviews with students, teachers and parents groups separately. All interview questions were based on the guides.

In line with the discussion of the translation of gender in the Chinese context (see Section 2.1.1 of Chapter Two), I have not found a Chinese word to express the term of *'gender'*. However, language is important in this thesis. In this situation, I particularly avoided using *'gender'* when I designed the interview questions. Instead, I proposed to only use the word *'sex/xingbie 性别'* (e.g. sex of your child, sex ratio of class cadres) or directly use boys/girls and women/men during interviews. The responses of participants, including their descriptions, expectations, behaviours and attitudes, could reflect their understandings of gender. Therefore, I am going to use the term of *'gender'* in translating interviews and analysing data that I collected from the fieldwork.

For students, the interview schedule consisted of four dimensions: personal background, opinions of gender stereotypes, experiences in terms of gender stereotypes, and other general questions. The background section focused on students' family background, status of romantic relationship, hobbies, motivation for choosing the science/liberal art class, their description of parents' expectations and self-expectations on subject selection and future major selection in university as well as a

brief introduction to their class (e.g. sex ratio of students and teachers). The second section mainly focused on students' opinions about gender stereotypes which included their understandings of their own gender identities, masculinity and femininity as well as their views about different expectations and limitations for boys and girls in school and post-school life. The third section consisted of questions relating to students' personal experience, such as: *'Have you ever experienced gender discrimination in school or family?' 'Did you feel limited or privileged as a boy/girl? Why did you think so?'*. In the last section, the general questions were quite open. Enquiries depended on students' previous answers. The last section helped elicit more students' ideas about gender stereotypes in education and the gender system in society.

For teachers, the topic guides consisted of three main parts: personal background, opinions of gender stereotypes, and interactions with students and students' parents. The first section focused on teachers' family background (e.g. sex of the child) and professional background (e.g. the subject, in science or in liberal arts class, and working years). The second section mainly intended to investigate teachers' opinions about gender stereotypes in education based on their working experiences, such as: *'Do you think boys and girls have different performances in the subject you taught based on your experiences?' 'What do you think about the saying that some subjects are suited to males and the other subjects are fit for females?'*. The last section consisted of two parts. The first one focused on interactions between teachers and students. Questions here were relatively open. Teachers were asked to talk more about the examples they used in the previous section. Conversations in this part helped me discover whether teachers revealed different expectations or demands of students based on gender. The second part of the last section was about the interactions between teachers and parents, which mainly happened in parents' evenings and the monthly phone talk according to the school policy. Guiding questions relating to teachers' interactions with parents were also quite open, for example, *'Do you have different suggestions for parents of girls and parents of boys?'*

For parents, the interview schedule also consisted of three main dimensions: family background, expectations for children, and interactions with students and teachers. The background section included a set of questions focusing on parents' job

backgrounds, family structures and whether it is the father or mother who takes responsibility for the child's education and so on. The second section mainly aimed to obtain information about parents' gender specific expectations on their child's academic, career and family life in the future. The conversations in this section also uncovered some parents' reflections around when their child's personalities or behaviours did not accord with gender stereotypes. This section helped me understand parents' gender ideologies. The third section consisted of open questions about two topics: parents' interactions with students and parents' direct or indirect interactions with teachers. The first topic provided me with valuable data about students' daily interactions with parents in family life. Parents' responses about the second topic supplemented teachers' answers, which provided me a complete perspective to explore school's cooperation with family in reproducing gender stereotypes and shaping students' gender identities.

After each interview, I checked the guide to ensure that I had asked all the questions which I intended to. I also asked all participants again whether they had any questions or any comments about this interview or this research. The majority of interviews (31 of 37) were conducted in quiet cafés. I chose public cafés for interviews for safety and convenience. One teacher was interviewed in his office in HYA High School. In addition, I conducted telephone interviews with five parents who were not available to do face-to-face interviews. According to Bryman (2012, p. 488), sometimes telephone interviews can be more effective than face-to-face interviews since participants may feel less distressed about answering personal and sensitive questions by telephone. Before each interview in a café, I planned to buy coffees and cakes for all participants to express my gratitude. Interestingly, three male teachers refused this and insisted on buying coffee for me. They said that I was a young student with no income so they were supposed to pay. In my opinion, this also could be regarded as an interesting finding linking to the performance of masculinity.

All the interviews were carried out in Mandarin and were transcribed in Chinese. Recording participants' discourse in its original language helped maintain a language specificity which may benefit my analysis. Only the quotes used in my thesis were translated into English. To sum up, interviews with students lasted

around one hour per person, which were longer than interviews with other groups. Each interview with teachers lasted on average forty minutes with additional time at the beginning for exchanging greetings, and each interview with parents lasted around twenty minutes.

**4.5 Data Analysis**

In line with the discussion above, I applied a semi-structured interview method to collect data and kept writing field notes after each interview. All the verbal data was transcribed into written form for further analysis. After transcribing all the interviews, I conducted a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis refers to an empirically-driven analysis approach for identifying, analysing and reporting themes from qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.79-80; Bryman, 2012, pp.578-579; Joffe, 2012, p. 210). This method is widely used in analysing verbal interview data (Joffe, 2012, p. 215). Theme is a key concept in this analysis method. A theme refers to a pattern which can be found through reading and discussing the data with or without theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82; Lempp and Seale, 2006, p. 2). A theme is supposed to describe and present the researcher's observation and interpret the data based on research questions (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vii).

The whole process of thematic analysis includes five main steps (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.87-93; Joffe, 2012, pp.219-223). Firstly, researchers familiarize themselves with the data (Bryman, 2012, p. 578). In this step, I read and reread the transcriptions of interviews. Secondly, researchers generate initial codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 88). I chose to code data manually through an open coding system. During this process, I coded for as many potential patterns as possible. Meanwhile, I tried to give full and equal attention to each data item. Thirdly, researchers think about developing themes. In this study, I kept considering the connections between different codes through the whole coding process (Joffe, 2012, p. 220). When I finished collecting codes, I combined codes into several themes, in other words, after steps two and three, I organized data into patterns, and then coded patterns into themes (Boyatzis, 1998, pp.29-30). Fourthly, researchers need to review and check the reliability and applicability of the themes which have emerged from data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 89; Bryman, 2012, pp.578-579). I checked themes and reread through transcripts several times. I tried my best to ensure there was enough

evidence for each theme and not too much overlap between themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.91-92). At the end, I was ready to present my findings in the thesis.

Data analysis of this study was also guided by an important principle of grounded theory which highlights that all is data (Glaser and Holton, 2004, p. 11). Briefly, grounded theory allows theoretical ideas to emerge from data and be systematically analysed during the whole research process (Bryman, 2012, p. 567; Fei, 2008, pp.25-28; Stauss and Corbin, 1998, pp.273-274). According to the principle that all is data, when researchers start qualitative research, as well as participants' personal information, the researchers' opinions, personal information and individual history should be deemed as data (Fei, 2008, p. 31; Glaser and Holton, 2004, p. 11). With regard to this study, participants' gender, age, opinions, family background, life experiences and my gender, age, origin, experiences and educational level are all data.

In addition, researchers can be treated as insiders when they conduct studies with a community or identity groups of which they are also members (Kanuha, 2000, p. 439; Kerstetter, 2012, p. 106). From this perspective, I realized that I was an insider researcher, since I was born in HY city and received full high school education in HYA School. As an insider, I have more complete knowledge of the research context than outsiders (Bell, 2010, p. 55; Griffith, 1998, p. 363). I also engaged participants more easily than outsiders through social networks and shared experiences (Kerstetter, 2012, p. 100). In this situation, insider researchers are able to get rich data in fieldwork. During the process of recruiting participants and collecting data, my identity, 1) as a mature researcher who was introduced by some teachers of HYA school to other participants, helped me talk with teachers and parents as an equal; 2) as a graduate of HYA School who has also experienced the tough high school life in China, this helped me gain the trust of students.

I was also aware of the disadvantages and challenges that could be associated with my insider identity. For example, some researchers suggest that insider researchers may find it difficult to maintain objectivity when combining their personal experiences with the research (Asselin, 2003, p. 100; Bell, 2010, p. 55; Griffith, 1998, pp.361-362). According to Asselin (2003) and Dwyer and Buckle (2009), it is better for the insider researcher to assume that he/she knows nothing

about the phenomenon he/she needs to study. Therefore, before each interview, I reassured all interviewees by stating the academic purpose of this study and highlighting that there would be no right or wrong answers. I also checked the tone and the content of my questions when I was transcribing interviews. These actions helped minimize the drawbacks of doing insider research to some extent.

However, I still have to acknowledge that the process of some interviews was influenced by my insider identity, especially when I talked to these teachers who used to teach me. There is an old saying about the authority of teachers in China, *'one-day teacher, life-long father[6]'*, which can be interpreted literally as the teacher who teaches me for one day can be seen as the life-mentor for a lifetime. Through checking fieldnotes and the records of interviews, I have realized that in the interviews with teachers who used to teach me, I have used a humbler attitude unconsciously. Among the three teachers, one male teacher of Chinese, who also currently acted as the Dean of the third grade in the school, tried to influence the topic and the way of my research during the interview through using his identity—as a man and a powerful school leader as well as a teacher who used to teach me, even though I, a female researcher who was sitting in front of him, would obtain a higher degree than him in the area of this research topic and had been graduated from the high school for around ten years.

The interview with this Dean will be discussed in 6.1.1, Chapter Six, but the situation actually helped explain the necessity of this research as : 1) the power of school education and the influence of teachers will continue to exist in the post-school life; 2) the gender issue in education could be uncovered by observing the interaction between male leaders/teachers and female students, and the issue is still kept invisible and unvalued in the eyes of some school leaders. All the truths make my arguments more powerful.

## 4.6 Ethical Concerns

### *4.6.1 Ethics Approval*

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[6] According to Chinese traditional culture which was introduced briefly in Chapter Two, in the past days, Chinese women were only active inside family. So the original old saying assumed all teachers are males.

I obtained ethical approval prior to conducting fieldwork. Specifically, I gained formal approval from the Ethics Committee, School of Law and Social Justice, University of Liverpool, in advance of arranging all interviews. In addition, since I intended to undertake the fieldwork overseas, the university also requires an approval from a local Ethics Committee or the local government. In line with the introduction in how to get access to participants, I also got formal permission from the Institute of Education Sciences in HY City which is in charge of supervising all educational activities in the city.

### 4.6.2 Working with Adult Students

This research did not involve participants who were particularly vulnerable. All of the participants were adults. According to the Compulsory Education Law of the PRC (NPC, 1986), only children aged six years can enter into primary school. Generally speaking, after six-year primary school education and six-year secondary school education, the majority of students who have finished the Higher Education Entrance Examination are adults above eighteen years old. During the fieldwork, I confirmed their age again through asking the young participants their birthday when starting to do the interviews.

### 4.6.3 The Informed Consent of Participants

Researchers can only study with people who are competent to give consent and these participants should be adequately informed about the study (Flick, 2009, pp.41-42). As I mentioned in the sampling part, I explained my study to students, teachers and parents who were interested in it. Then, in terms of students and teachers, potential participants who showed their willingness verbally received a research package including a brief introduction to my research and myself, an explanation of the confidential and voluntary nature of this study, the permission of the local government and the approval from my university, and an informed consent form as well. I gave the package to those students and teachers through email. I did suggest all of them should read the consent form carefully and sign it if they agreed. Students and teachers who agreed to participate chose either to send the form to me through email or to sign it at interview. We made appointments for the interview through email, message or phone calls.

With regard to parents, I gave them the research package through their adult children. I gave all parents two days to consider it. During the process, parents who agreed to join the study chose to contact me directly. I contacted other parents through the students after two days to ask the parents if they would like to do the interview. Similar to students and teachers, parents who chose to participate either emailed a scanned copy of the signed form to me or brought it back to me when we started to do the interview. In addition, I did tell all the participants again and again that they were welcome to contact me before or after the interview in case that they had further questions about this research.

*4.6.4 Voluntary Participation*

I explained the voluntary nature of participation in social research surveys when I introduced my research to all potential participants. Also I emphasized it in the research package. When I started to do interviews with each participant, I highlighted this again to make it clear that everyone was entirely free to join and could withdraw at any time. It also should be noted that I did not contact any student through teachers. In China, students may not be accustomed to refuse teachers' direct requests because of the authority of school education (Zhang, 2015, p. 90). I wanted to minimize teachers' influence on students' participation. I respected each student's decision and tried my best to ensure the voluntary nature of this study.

*4.6.5 Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is also an important issue in doing social research. When I decided to do research with several members of a specific setting, such as in a school or in a family, I needed to pay attention to confidentiality not only in relation to a public outside this school or family but also among the members inside it (Flick, 2009, pp.41-42). In my study, I tried my best (e.g. using pseudonyms) to guarantee that all participants cannot identify each other from the information about my research. Given the authority of teachers and parents in China, I also informed them clearly that it would not be possible to tell them their students' or child's responses during the interviews.

**Summary**

Through the whole process of planning and doing fieldwork, I was aware that my research focuses on the dynamic process of reproducing gender stereotypes and gender structures through people's daily interactions. I intended to give people from different groups, especially young students, opportunities to talk about their life choices and experiences based on their understandings of their gender. In this respect, I identified semi-structured interviews as the most suitable method, since it enabled me to gain a deep insight into individuals' real life and to think how people constructed gender through their own initiative or passively. I chose to collect data from an elite high school in a province of East China. Students in this school had similar academic performances but different family backgrounds, which could provide a reference for further similar studies in mainland China.

I was born and grew up in the target city. My identity as an insider researcher offered me certain conveniences. Apart from convenience in recruiting participants, I had a good understanding of local cultural context, which benefited my data analysis. As an insider, I also paid attention to maintaining objectivity during the process of data collection and analysis. I checked my discourse and tone through recordings after each interview and reread my field notes regularly. In addition, all the participants were recruited and all the interviews were conducted following the ethical consideration of University of Liverpool.

I applied a thematic analysis method to analyse data. Themes were generated gradually from data after careful consideration and reading through transcripts many times. I also used the principle of grounded theory as a reference to consider all information as data. In this study, apart from the participants' personal information and experiences, my gender, age and education were also considered as important information when doing analysis. I have gained rich empirical data from the three-month fieldwork. I will present my findings in the next three chapters.

**Chapter 5**

**The Influence of Parents on Students' Academic Choices and Educational Aspirations**

**Introduction**

In line with the introduction in Chapter Three, this thesis will use integrated theories utilising the concepts of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) and gender performance (Butler, 1988) to account for the dynamic process involved in how gender stereotypes are maintained and reproduced in educational institutions. Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus offer a useful framework for a systematic examination of the relations between gender structure in society and different educational aspirations, choices and experiences of male and female students. Butler's theory of gender performance helps to explain students' active roles in the process in which students' gendered practices were shaped by teachers and parents and in turn helped to reinforce the gendered habitus in both private and public areas.

The findings in Chapter Five to Chapter Seven seek to discuss how, and why, family and school influence the type of support offered to students, the attitudes of students towards pursing personal development and ways in which students aim to translate education-based resources into social advantages. Through the detailed analysis in the three empirical chapters, I will introduce how the gender stereotypes students encountered in the private sphere and the public sphere can be engaged in forming gender values of students and render boys and girls different life stories. Specifically, in Chapter Five, I will focus on parents' influence on students' educational choices and aspirations. In Chapter Six, I will pay attention to the impacts of teachers on students' academic choices and school experiences. Then, I will discuss gender performances of students in Chapter Seven, in which the influence of peer groups in reproducing gender stereotypes in the educational institution will also be presented.

In this chapter, I will start with family gender habitus which can be recognized by parents' gender dispositions that have been shaped by traditional Chinese culture, parents' past experiences and the one-child policy. The research

discovered that the increasing number of one-daughter families has the potential to shift parents' expectations and investment in daughters in education. Next, I will describe parents' stereotyped gender opinions on school knowledge through exploring parents' reflections on their child's subject selection. Parents' opinions on the linkage between educational choices and gender could influence their children's subject selections. In the third section, I will introduce parents' narratives which showed that parents tend to place different weights on boys' and girls' life trajectories. In this situation, parents participated in gendering students' aims of accumulating and using capitals gained from educational institutions.

## 5.1 Family Gender Habitus

Combined with Reay's definition that family habitus can be deemed as *'the deeply ingrained system of perspectives, experiences and predispositions'* shared by members within the family (Reay, 1998, p. 527), family gender habitus in this context can be considered as the taken-for-granted assumptions held by parents about children's appropriate actions and likely development pathways based on gender. In this section, I will list statements which describe parents' gender expectations of children through analysing interactions between students and parents in everyday family lives. The potential influencing factor on parents' belief system about gender in this study include the traditional Chinese culture, their past life experiences and the implementation of the one-child policy.

*5.1.1 The Persistence of Traditional Gender Values: (Grand)son-Preference*

During interviews, two female students mentioned the (grand)son-preference of their grandparents when they were asked if they had observed or experienced gender-biased treatment in their family lives. Girl H from a science class complained that her grandparents tried to persuade her parents (but failed) not to organize an 18th Birthday Party for her since it would cost a lot and girls did not deserve that. Girl D from a liberal arts class said that her grandparents always ignored her and showed more concerns for their grandsons during family dinners in holidays. As has been discussed in Chapter Two, boys in China are expected to carry family lines and economically support their elderly parents in the future, which led parents to tend to invest more in boys' education and restrict girls' educational opportunities when

there were both male and female offspring and the family resource was limited (Barcellos et al. 2014, p. 157; Liu, 2006, p. 501; Wang, 2005, p. 8).

Even today, with the improvement in living standards and the reduced number of children per family, it seems that some of the older generation still hold the view that male offspring are more valuable than females. When I asked both girls separately whether these unfair treatments from their grandparents had affected them, Girl H answered no, while Girl D said that she did feel wronged in childhood, but when she grew up and felt surrounded by her parents' love, she did not care any longer. The direct influence of grandparents' gender opinions on the gender perceptions of parents and students cannot be examined in this research, but to some extent, the support and love from parents may be seen as a slight movement which has challenged the traditional son-preference.

The cases of Girl H and Girl D also showed the possibilities that family habitus can be changed through different generations in different situations. Even though the two girls' fathers[7] came from families which valued male offspring over female, those two fathers still gave their daughters both financial and emotional support. This change was started by parents who interrupted family gendered habitus held by the previous generation in order to protect the next generation. The interference of girls' parents cut off their daughters' connections with a past that was unfair to females and enabled girls not to be influenced by family's traditional gender bias. The change came along with the one-child policy as well as the development of different social norms.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the increase in household income after the Reform and Opening up Policy (1978), combined with the enforcement of the One-Child Policy (1979) in urban areas, generated a large amount of one-daughter families in which girls, as the only offspring, do not need to compete with their brothers and have the chance to inherit all the resources and enjoy love from parents. These one-daughter families and parental investment in their only daughters, has contributed to a rise in the educational level and earning power of women in Chinese urban areas (Lee, 2012, p. 45). Even though habitus connects the individual's past,

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[7]The translation of mother's parents (*YeYe* 爷爷 and *NaiNai* 奶奶) and father's parents (*Waigong* 外公 and *Waipo* 外婆) are different in Chinese language, so I can tell which one the participants mentioned.

present and future, people can change it more or less to maximize their benefits in the current position in each social field (Li, 2012, pp.49-50). As parents who have only one daughter, parents of Girl D and Girl H gave their daughters support and hindered their daughters from being influenced by the (grand)son-preference of the grandparents, namely, the gender bias from the parents' original families. However, although students did not live with their grandparents, they still had opportunities to be exposed to traditional gendered values in the family.

*5.1.2 The Influence of Parents' Past Experiences*

I also asked all parents in this study about their original expectations and opinions about their child's sex. With the exception of Boy B's mother, parents in this study did not show a preference for sons explicitly. However, Boy B's mother frankly expressed her son-preferred opinion from another perspective. As Boy B's mother said:

*'I was happy that I had a son. It has no connection with the traditional son-preference. I am a woman, I met so many limitations in my whole life, from a little girl to today. I don't want my child to have the same experience… I need to worry more if I had a girl.'* –From Boy B's mother who works as a kindergarten teacher.

Apparently, the mother herself had been limited by gender stereotypes in her life. She realized that there must be totally different life experiences to *'grow up as a girl'* and *'grow up as a boy.'* However, instead of raising her son to respect women based on her own experiences and the understanding of the gender biased society, the mother expressed gladly that the sex of her child was favoured by society. It seems to be enough for her that her only son would encounter fewer restrictions than she had. Girl A's mother also mentioned her unhappy experiences as a girl, but expressed this differently, this mother has a daughter:

*'**Did Girl A talk with you about her experiences in school? Did she complain about any teachers who showed gender discrimination?'** –Girl A complained about a male maths teacher in her interview, so I asked Girl A's mother directly.

*'Yes. An old male Maths teacher. The teacher is a traditional person. He, kind of looked down upon girls, according to my daughter. This teacher always emphasized boys' talent and ability of learning in Maths…I talked to my daughter about it. I told her that I was angry at the teacher's discourse as well, I let her just ignore him…It is inappropriate for a teacher to say this in public with prejudice, right? You know, when I was a little girl, my father always said that you were a girl so you can't do this, you can't do that… He disliked me… I hope that my daughter can have more chances than me. I told her that you always have my support.'* – Girl A's mother answered.

The statement above revealed a lot of things. It showed that the support of Girl A's mother for her daughter in resisting unequal treatment in school partly resulted from the mother's own regrets and denied dreams in her past (Deutsch, 2004, p. 404). As introduced in Chapter Three, habitus was shaped but not determined by, past family experience (Davey, 2009, p. 277). According to the response, the mother was born into a family which valued sons over daughters, and her life experience was inevitably limited by the gendered habitus of her original family. However, the mother tried to adjust the current family atmosphere for her only daughter. Therefore, when the mother found that Girl A had been exposed to a biased environment which was supposed to be neutral and just, she felt angry.

The answer of Girl A's mother also showed a conflict between family habitus and the habitus in educational institutions, namely that the possibilities to adjust girls' gender ideologies and pursue gender equality in one-daughter families could be negatively affected by teachers' gender bias in school. How school habitus shapes students' life experiences based on gender will be analysed in the next chapter. Given the authority of teachers in Chinese culture (Littlewood, 2000, p. 32; Lai et al. 2015, p. 419), expressing dissent to a teacher in front of the child and telling Girl A to ignore the teacher's gendered discourse can be deemed as a resistance to gendered habitus in the school environment.

*5.1.3 The Impacts of Chinese Traditional Marriage Mode: 'Marry-in' and 'Marry-out'*

The previous discussion about parents' interference in traditional son-preference sheds light on the changes in gender ideologies within family through generations. However, has everything really changed? When I asked about parents' expectations of their child's future partner, two boys' mothers expressed their opinions in accordance with the traditional Chinese marriage mode that a girl should fulfil the family's requirements she marries into:

'…*I talked to my son that there were three simple requirements if a girl wants to marry our family (jiajinwomenjia 嫁进我们家) - kind, sunny and beautiful…*' –From Boy B's mother. As mentioned before, she was the only one parent who expressed that she was glad that she had a son.

'*I just talked about this with him [Boy C] last month at his 18 years' birthday dinner. The girl should be well-educated. An uneducated girl lacks cultural literacy, I told him that if we let her marry our family, it would have bad impacts on their next generation, the intelligent development of their next generation…*' –From Boy C's mother.

I would like to put the detailed requirements of the two boy's mothers aside. Have you noticed the claim *'marry our family'* in the two statements above? The word *'marry'* in English can be translated into two different words in Mandarin depending on the gender of the subject in the sentence. For instance, *'Lily marries Michael and Michael marries Lily[8]'*, the same verb *'marry'* i*s* used in the English context, while in Mandarin, the sentence has to be translated into *'Lily jia (嫁)Michael while Michael qu (娶)Lily'*. *Jia* 嫁 literally means that women are supposed to join their husbands' households after marriage while *Qu* 娶 refers to men bringing someone's daughter into his family through marriage (Chun, 1987, p. 125; Wang, 2005, p. 8; Liu, 2009, p. 147).

In a word, when describing a woman marrying a man, the verb *'marry'* can be understood as '*marry-out'出嫁* (of her original family) in the Chinese context,

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[8]Here assuming Lily is female, and Michael is male.

while when a man marries a woman, the word *'marry'* should be interpreted as *'marry-in'* 娶进门 (marry a girl into his family). Besides, *Qu* 娶 (the verb for men) is an initiative word but *Jia* 嫁 (the verb for women) is a passive word in Chinese, which mirrors the unequal position of women and men in Chinese traditional culture since, before the May Fourth Movement (1919), women had no choice in selecting a spouse and were waiting for men (and men's family) to pick them out (Liu, 2009, p. 148). Even though the May Fourth Movement (1919) denounced arranged marriage and contributed to raise women's decision-making power in the marriage market (Zhou, 2013, pp.70-72), the tradition is still carried in the language.

It is noteworthy that nowadays more and more couples have chosen the nuclear family structure in Chinese urban areas (Liu, 2006, p. 492). With regard to this study, no mothers or fathers interviewed lived with their parents-in-law. In this situation, the term *'marry our family'* in the two mothers' responses could refer to the traditional mode of patrilocal residence that girls should move in to their husband's household, or only the taken-for-granted habitus that girls will belong to her husband's family after marriage in the perspective of affiliation. From this premise, the two mothers expressed that their potential daughters-in-law should meet some requirements and then be accepted by her future family, namely, her husband's family. Whether in the one-child/one-son situation the traditional idea of patrilocal residence in marriage has been retained may need further research, but the gendered family habitus can be uncovered by analysing the taken-for-granted assumptions of the two boys' parents about the future marriage mode for their sons.

I never heard any girl's parents in this study say that they expected a boy would marry (into) their family or should meet their family requirements. However, a few girls' parents have accepted the traditional marriage mode and meanwhile tried to resist it for their daughters. For instance, Girl E said that her parents worried that she would be restricted by her future husband's family after marriage, especially if the husband's family is rich. On the one hand, Girl E's parents still believed in the view that a girl would join her husband's family after marriage, so their daughter's post-marriage life status was assumed to be deeply affected by her husband's family background and habitus. On the other hand, in contrast to the taken-for-granted assumption inside Chinese marriage that women are supposed to marry men whose

earning and social status are superior to that of their potential wives (Gaetano, 2014, p. 125; Liu, 2004, pp.199-200; Tang et al. 2010, p. 539), Girl E's mother told Girl E that girls would be *'happy and free'* in marriage only if they listed personal characteristics like thoughtfulness and respecting a wife, prior to any other external factors such as higher income or good family economic status when looking for a future spouse.

In addition to unequal gender positions in marriage based on traditional culture, the mother of Girl E was aware that the unequal economic status of original families may lead to unequal status in the marital relationship. Even though Girl E's mother did not directly challenge the traditional marriage habitus, namely that women should join men's family affiliation and obey the rules of the man's family after marriage, she still hoped that her girl would not be affected by the unfair tradition but that would mean avoiding a huge gap between the couple's incomes and the social status of the two original families. Girl E's parents attached importance to their daughter's individual happiness and freedom rather than being an *'obedient'* wife after marriage, and this appeared to me as a slight resistance started by one girl's family to the traditional assumptions about marital relationships.

Cases above exposed that parents' gender perceptions were shaped by traditional gender role expectations even when some showed a *'slight resistance'* to them. As habitus generates actions (Dumais, 2002; Mickelson, 2003), it is no wonder that parents who believe the assumptions that daughters will belong to someone else's family someday will not encourage higher ambitions in their daughters. In this situation, just as Rai (1992, p. 20) argued, investing more in a daughter's education means *'watering another man's garden'*. The fiercely competitive test-oriented education system in China has been well-documented (e.g. Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Kirkpatrick and Zang, 2011). In the Chinese context, in addition to the cultural environment parents created at home, cultural capital can be particularly measured by parents' investment of cultural resources and attention to students' education including helping them to pass various examinations at different stages (Wu, 2008, p. 204). From this perspective, Chinese boys and girls could get different resources and support from their parents in accessing further education.

It should be pointed out that since students in this study were too young to get married[9], parents just expressed their expectations and assumptions in interviews. To summarize, family gendered habitus has potential to shape parents' different opinions, attentions and investment in students' educational development, which in turn can influence students' choices and experiences in the school environment as well as opportunities to access further education (Bhanot and Jovanovic, 2005, p. 597; Tenenbaum and Leaper, 2003, p. 35). Parents' attitudes towards gender stereotypes in education will be introduced in the following section.

**5.2 Parents' Attitudes towards Gender Stereotypes in Educational Choices**

*5.2.1 Understanding Gender Stereotypes as Male Privileges*

In this section, I focus on the attitudes of parents towards gender stereotypes in terms of students' academic choices. The findings suggest that almost all parents in this study tended to believe that it is possible to ignore or overcome gender stereotypes in subject selection. For instance, Boy C's mother argued that conforming or not to gender stereotypes in subject choices made no difference to his son's life since these stereotypes sometimes can be interpreted as male privileges:

*'Honestly, we were shocked that he chose liberal arts class. But he insisted. We wanted to respect his choice. And his father discussed with me, we think that in the future, he may have privileges in job market…In social science, the majority of job seekers are girls. But you know, employers prefer boys.'*—From Boy C's mother who works as a university lecturer.

The response of Boy C's mother on her son's subject choice showed that selecting liberal arts class was still deemed by some parents as an unconventional choice for boys. However, she decided to respect Boy C's choice in the end. I also interviewed Boy D's mother. Boy D and Boy C were the only two boys in a liberal arts class. Boy D's mother also showed doubt upon her son's subject choice, but like Boy C's mother, Boy D's mother also decided to respect her sons' choices. In addition to these two mothers, almost all students in my study expressed that their

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[9]According to the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China (1980), in mainland China, the legally marriageable age of women and men is twenty and twenty-two separately. See details in the official website of the Central People's Government of PRC http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2005-05/25/content_847.htm

parents respected their subject selections even when those selections were different from their parents' original expectations. These may be deemed as positive cases which proved that some children have autonomy in educational choices.

However, for parents whose sons selected liberal arts, another possible reason for their eventual agreement cannot be ignored—Chinese boys have far more privileges than girls, in which situation the benefits of being males are enough to make up for any impacts caused by their unexpected choice. Boy C's mother argued that her son would have privileges in the current unequal job market, since the majority of job seekers in social science were girls while employers always preferred boys. In this case, gender stereotypes in subject selections offer boys privileges. In other words, gender stereotypes did not fade out but could be realized and taken advantage of by some parents. Some girls' parents in this study also showed support to their daughters when those girls chose science subjects that were alleged as boys' strengths. Considering that students in science classes have more opportunities to access higher education and industry than those in liberal arts classes (e.g. Liu, 2013, p. 193;Wang, 2013, p. 135), the shift in girls' parents opinions can be deemed as a challenge to gender labels on subjects while prioritising girls' further personal development.

*5.2.2 Deeming Gender Stereotypes as Individual Issues*

Girl G's mother was the only parent who openly blamed her daughter for using gender stereotypes as an excuse in subject selection:

*'Yes, many people said that boys are better than girls in maths or physics. But so what? In her school, many girls used to get good grades in physics. It's just her* [her daughter's] *problem, fear of difficulties, fear of hardship.'*—From Girl G's mother (Girl G was in a liberal arts class) when talking about her opinions on Girl G's subject selection.

According to Girl G's mother, the impacts of gender stereotypes on girls' subject selection were simply considered as a girls' personal problem, namely, Girl G chose to live in the shadow of gender stereotypes and even used those stereotypes as an excuse to give up science subjects. It seemed that girls were blamed for the problem of being limited by gender stereotypes and were even expected to change

the problem through their own efforts. Remarkably, sometimes parents' perceptions of their children's ability in a particular subject were influenced by their children's sex independent of the children's academic performance in tests (Eccles et al. 1990, p. 184). As Girl C's father argued:

*'You see, boys may blame learning methods or attitude if they cannot get good scores in maths test, but girls may blame their lack of talent…Those old opinions influence them. Sometimes my wife and I are influenced by these, too… For example, we gave more attention to her Math learning, and we showed our trust in her English and Chinese learning. Actually, she did very well in each subject. But we may have led to her anxiety unintentionally…but we did that for her good.'* –From Girl C's father (Girl C was in science class) who works as a chemistry researcher in a local private company.

Girl C's father thinks that his concerns about his daughter's academic performance could have been influenced by the assumption that girls are weaker than boys in learning maths. He admitted that sometimes his unintentional behaviours may have transmitted this gender bias to his daughter, but he thinks that he did it for her own good. In fact, his response to some extent contradicted Girl G's mother who blamed girls for gendered academic choices: when girls and boys were raised surrounded by the taken-for-granted assumptions that linking science to males while labelling liberal arts as female, is the gendered academic choice still an individual issue? The different life experiences of students based on gender will be uncovered throughout the findings.

## 5.3 Placing Different Weights on Boys' and Girls' Life Development: Hegemonic Masculinity and Emphasized Femininity

### 5.3.1 Highlighting Girls' Marriageability

In this study, some parents showed their complicated and sometimes conflicted expectations for their only-daughters. Take the case of Girl C's father as an example who complimented his daughter's maturity and constancy of purpose when talking about Girl C's advantages:

*'My daughter, she always knows her goal…she wants to get further education in America, so she needs a high GPA in university…we've talked about it, we encouraged her to stick to her concrete target…we raised our daughter like a son, right?'* –From Girl C's father.

Even though still stereotyping encouragement of their child' ambitions for personal development this was framed as a way for raising boys, the father has showed his values that girls were allowed to pursue assumed manly goals (Liu, 2006, p. 500). However, when talking about the assumption of spending many years in PhD study for a girl, Girl C's father expressed typical worries about his daughter's marriage:

**'In future, if she wants to pursue a doctorate degree in America, will you support her?'** – I asked.

*'…You know I have a friend, his son spent nearly seven years to get a doctorate degree in Chicago. Seven years, OMG, too long, especially for girls…She would miss some other beautiful things in life. I always tell her that people should do appropriate things at an appropriate age/zaishenmenianlingzuoshenmeshi 在什么年龄做什么事. When it is time to get married, you need to get married…We told her that the final goal for higher education is to live a better life.'* – Girl C's father answered.

It appears that Girl C's father believed that getting married at *'an appropriate age'* is important for girls to *'live a better life'*. In line with the discussion about the *'left-over women'* in China in Chapter Two (Ji, 2015b, p. 1057), all adults in China are expected to get married and women are under greater pressure than men to get married at an *'advantageous'* age (early 20s-middle 20s) (Gaetano, 2014, p. 125). In this respect, women who are not yet married by their late 20s are called the '*left-over women/shengnv 剩女*' and may well feel stress from public opinion even when these women are highly-educated and have a good income. Conversely, given the broadly accepted assumption that a man is supposed to be superior to his wife in age, earning and social status, men are considered marriageable even at age 40 (Gaetano, 2014, p. 126). Therefore, Girl C's father expressed worries about his daughter's marriageability if she were to pursue a long-term learning project. It is worth noting

that this father showed his worries shaped by traditional gender role expectations, but did not forbid his daughter from pursuing a PhD explicitly. Nevertheless, this girl's father still helped to reinforce the hegemonic gender habitus within his family implying that: 1) further education is good but marriage is more essential for a girl; 2) girls are supposed to get married at a proscribed age.

Girl G's (Girl G was in a liberal art class) mother also mentioned her opinions on girls pursuing a PhD degree when she talked about her expectations for Girl G's future career. Specifically, the mother wishes her daughter to be a university lecturer in the future, since the job is *'stable'* and *'less stressful'* and has *'a lot of holidays to take care of family'*. Girl G's mother was aware that a lecturer position generally requires a doctorate, so she encouraged Girl G to apply for a PhD programme after finishing undergraduate university study. However, the mother also shared her anxiety about the marriage opportunities of highly-educated girls:

*'I really hope that my daughter can be excellent, but meanwhile we are worried that she would be too outstanding to find a boyfriend in the future. I think that your parents may have the same concern…We have only the one daughter.'*

On one hand, in line with the discussion about the influence of one-child policy on parents' expectations, this mother also hoped that her daughter could gain good progress in academia. On the other hand, unlike Girl C's father who highlighted girls' marriageable age, Girl G's mother expressed her worries about girls' marriageable educational background, namely that her only daughter could encounter difficulties in finding an appropriate spouse in the future if the girl gained a doctorate. The worries also resulted from Chinese traditional gender ideology that women are not supposed to be superior in education level, earnings and achievements to their male spouses (Evans, 2002, p. 338; Tang et al. 2010, p. 537; Zuo and Bian, 2001, p. 1125). Combining the situation introduced earlier that the *'leftover women'* are generally under big pressure not only from family members but also from the public, instead of saying the mother of Girl G upheld a stereotyped ideology about women's choice in family and work, I would conclude that the mother compromised on gender role expectations since she did not want her daughter to pay a price for being different from the mainstream in society.

This kind of ambivalence appeared quite a few times in the narratives of girls' parents when talking about parents' expectations of their daughters' future development. For instance:

*'My daughter is eager to do everything well, and she really did everything very well….I am not sure if she told you, I separated from her father three years ago. She [Girl A] is like me, I am happy about that, but…I don't want her to repeat my life trajectory... I told her that you can work hard to pursue your dream, like a man, but you still need to find a balance, you know, between family and work, between your goal and other people's feelings…Being a superwoman is hard, really hard, I've paid the price.'* – Girl A's mother (Girl A was in a science class) who works as an administrator in a famous foreign invested enterprise

Since asking the marriage status of people in public is impolite in Chinese culture, I did not list any questions about it in the interview (I only asked students who they were living with). Girl A's mother was the only parent in this study who said clearly that she was divorced. It was inappropriate to talk more about the reason for the divorce, but the mother implied that it was partly caused by the conflict between the family and her work. The mother argued that she was proud of her daughter's outstanding performance and ambitions at school, and meanwhile, she also expected her daughter to have a happy marriage life in the future. It cannot be neglected that Girl A's mother suggested that women who only pursue individual development would pay the price, such as loss of marriage. Then the mother's contradictory expectations which encouraged girls to fight for her dreams *'like a man'* while recommending girls prioritise the work-family balance could be transmitted to the daughter through daily conversations inside the family.

Another typical case is Girl E's mother (Girl E was in a science class) who works in the city government. The mother argued that girls need to be financially independent. From this perspective, Girl E's mother encouraged her daughter to pursue career promotion in the future and *'get married a little bit late…but not too late'*, the mother added, *'we don't want our only daughter to feel alone and helpless when her father and I have both died.'* It is noteworthy that in her response marriage was admitted as a serious career interruption, so the mother argued that in order to get promoted Girl E could get married a little bit later than the public expected.

However, the girl was still supposed to get married according to the mother's beliefs. The answers of Girl A's and Girl E's mothers are similar to the response of Girl G's mother above. Instead of simply claiming that these mothers advocated gender stereotypes, I prefer regarding them as mothers who wanted to protect their girls from being punished for challenging the traditional gender norms in China which require women to get married at an appropriate age and meanwhile to be soft, obedient and inferior to their spouse. It is also noteworthy that none of the girls' parents in this study expressed that they expected their girl to be a housewife in the future.

My findings suggest that parents with only one daughter seem to have developed a new way to bring up their daughters to fit in with the current hegemonic masculine habitus. In this kind of family environment, girls were encouraged to resist traditional gender roles within certain limits and to develop some so-called manly characteristics in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity, such as having a strong will in pursuing academic and career goals. However, erasing all traditional requirements of femininity in marriage life, or more precisely, in heterosexual marriage life was discouraged by parents and would cause parents' anxiety. As Deutsch argued, the biggest gendered expectations from parents on girls' life paths may await these girls *once they get married and start families'* (Deutsch, 2004, p. 415).

To summarize, although gender specific expectations towards the only daughter's academic and career development have decreased to some degree, it would be over-optimistic to assume that parents could overcome stereotypes on femininity in all areas for their only daughters. Most girls' parents in this study showed worries about challenging the public assumption of the ideal femininity in their daughters' future family life. As Liu (2006, p. 501) and Yu and Winter (2011, p. 345) concluded, Chinese parents with only one child tend to be cautious in breaking gender norms, since they have only one chance to be parents and they tend to avoid any risk their child may encounter.

*5.3.2 Prioritising Boys' Career Development*

In contrast to girls' parents in this study who expressed concerns about their daughter's future marriage or work-family balance spontaneously when sharing their expectations of their children's academic and career development, parents of boys in this study never mentioned these kinds of worries but argued that they supported their sons to go for personal development as those boys wished. A typical case is Boy B's mother who shared her opinions that boys and girls are supposed to do different, or frankly, unequal jobs. After being told by Boy B that his mother is a kindergarten teacher, I added one question in the interview of Boy B's mother:

***'I have read a report in the newspaper claiming that almost all kindergarten teachers in Jiangsu Province are female. As an experienced teacher in a public kindergarten, could you please share your opinions about it?' – I asked***

*'I think that it's unfair to let boys work as kindergarten teachers. You know, in the past, kindergarten teachers were regarded as child carers rather than educators. A boy who just graduated from the university is around twenty-two. They are too young. The boy himself may also need his mother's care. It's cruelty to ask young boys to look after kids. And because of physical characteristics of gender, girls are more careful and patient. They can do it well…the average salary of a kindergarten teacher is not high. Boys are not willing to do this.'*—From Boy B's mother (Boy B was in a science class).

The mother was labelling the position of kindergarten teachers as a female job which is shaped by the deeply ingrained assumptions that women should act as carers, but men should not. Specifically, boys over twenty-two, as she alleged, need *'a mother's care'* while their female counterparts are believed to be talented in caring for others. From this perspective, when work relates to child-care, they are seen as jobs suitable for women. Here, combining the belief that boys need a mother's care more than a father's, women's social roles were still narrowly combined with carers within or without the family (Evans, 2002, p. 336; Tang et al. 2010, p. 535). Given the situation that the income level of Chinese kindergarten teachers is quite low (Wang, 2018; Zhang, 2015), Boy B's mother also suggested that boys are not

supposed to do a job with low salary and low social status which is, by contrast, deemed acceptable for girls.

To summarize, when talking about expectations for children's future academic or career development, most girls' parents in this study had to consider the additional burden of domestic work and fulfilling the requirements of femininity as the public expected (Ali et al. 2011, p. 5). Compared with the ambivalence of parents with an only daughter, parents who have an only son in this study seemed to be less willing to challenge traditional gender stereotypes, or frankly, to give up male privileges (Tang et al. 2010, p. 548). It appeared to me that parents of boys knew about male advantages in society, such as more working opportunities and no career interruption (Trevino, 2017), and assumed that a boys' future partner would take the main responsibility for caring for the family (Drinkwater et al. 2008, p. 424). From this premise, while girls' parents are more likely to view a happy marriage as the norm for their daughters than boys' parents, they tend to consider pursing a high-salary and high-status job as the norm for their sons. The gendered habitus in the family could shape students' gendered aspirations to attend further education and career life (Holloway et al. 2011, p. 2287).

*5.3.3 Gendered Sex and Relationship Education within Family*

The different weights parents place on boys' and girls' life trajectories were also reflected in gendered family sex and relationship education. In fact, the question about sex education was not listed in my handbook of interview at first, since discussing sexuality in public is still traditionally taboo in the Chinese context and people may feel uncomfortable to talk about it (Zhang et al. 2007, p. 352). However, I got an unsolicited answer relating to family sex and relationship education when I asked Girl A's mother to share her expectations of Girl A's future boyfriend/husband:

'*Haha [laugh], she is too young, I don't think about it for now…I told her that she could date boys when entering into university, she can try to have romantic relationship…but of course we need to set up some regulations, you know, you need to understand where the bottom line is.*' –Girl A's mother mentioned family sex education vaguely.

'***Do you mind talking more about the regulations and the bottom line that you mentioned?***' –I asked

'*Girls need to respect themselves and love themselves. I told my daughter repeatedly that girls should protect themselves…Girls are vulnerable, you know what I am talking about, I guess that when you just left for the UK, your parents had talked about it to you, too…We girls' parents always worry more than boys' parents.*' –Girl A's mother added

Girl A's mother highlighted the importance of sex and relationship education for girls through her own words. In my understanding, the sex education that she described in the interview is in fact the sex prevention education for girls. This mother inspired me, and I added a question for the other four parents: '***Do you have any suggestion for your child's dating in university? Have you talked about it?***' Then I got a similar response from Girl G's mother who also expressed that '*the thing [she meant having sex] before marriage is absolutely prohibited for a girl*'. Girl A's mother was not the first parent I interviewed, so I could not ask all parents the question. As a whole, five parents (of eight) shared their suggestions in terms of their children's dating in university.

With the exception of Girl A's and Girl G's mothers who both showed their concerns about the issue of sex spontaneously, the other three boys' parents (Boy A's father, Boy C's mother, Boy D's mother) did not mention their worries relating to the topic of sex at all. Specifically, Boy A's father encouraged Boy A to meet different people and make different friends in university, and Boy C's mother only worried if having a romantic relationship in university would affect her son's academic performance, while Boy D's father claimed that it would not be necessary to talk about dating in university unless his son needs advice. Although the number of parents who answered the question about students' dating was limited, the data reveals that two girls' mothers were extremely cautious about the issue of sex in heterosexual relationship and conveyed the caution to their daughters through family sex and relationship education, actually, sex prevention education, before students' university life.

The two girls' mothers both gave priority to talking about the severity of the issue of having sex before marriage when giving suggestions to young girls on university dating. Their narratives both equated to considering girls having sexual relations in university as a terrible thing which means lack of self-respect and a loss of a moral bottom line that would be blamed on girls themselves. Conversely, the other three boys' parents in this study seemed to take no account of it. Does the result mean that boys' parents in my research were more open-minded compared to girls' parents? Yes and no. I tend to blame parents' different attitudes towards the issue of sex on traditional Chinese ethical codes which only underline females' *'purity'* (Jayachandran, 2015, p. 77), namely that sex before marriage would have negative impacts on the girls' reputation rather than boys.

Liu (2010, pp.32-33) argued that Chinese people's opinions about sex are mainly shaped by public supervision which always set up more rules for females who own fewer social resources and have less power than males in the current patriarchal society. In this situation, I also assume that girls' parents were using their own ways to protect young girls from public judgement. In addition to conveying to girls an unhealthy attitude towards sex that could lead to the loss of autonomous rights in sexual relations (and maybe in future marital relations), as scholars (e.g. Wang, 2011; Wang, 2019) argue there still exists in the Chinese context the saying that *'Virginity is girls' best dowry/zhencaoshinuhaizuihaodejiazhuang 贞操是女孩最好的嫁妆'*, the highlight of girls' *'purity'* before marriage also reinforced the norm that being marriageable is significant for girls.

It also can be discovered from the findings that parents tend to give different evaluations of boys' and girls' non-gender stereotypical traits. Boy B's mother showed her dissatisfaction with Boy B's shyness in a university interview when she was asked to describe her son's characteristics. According to the mother, shyness and introversion, which are stereotyped as feminine characteristics in the Chinese context, are *'not desirable for a boy'*. These characteristics will impede the boy's development since they did not accord with the ideal masculinity according to social expectations, namely, hegemonic masculinity (Liu, 2006, p. 496). In contrast, as mentioned above, most girls' parents in this study showed their tolerance or even encouragement when it was mentioned that their daughters have developed

characteristics alleged as manly in school or at work. Parents of girls expressed their positive responses through statements such as *'we raised our daughter like a son'* (from Girl C's father) and *'you can work hard to pursue the dream like a man'* (from Girl A's mother).

It appears that both boys and girls have to fulfil particular requirements, otherwise, the inappropriate behaviours of either group could result in punishment. Male students, have to pursue a hegemonic masculinity which not only subordinates femininity but also marginalizes other forms of masculinity mainly associated with feminine traits and homosexuality (Schippers, 2007). For female students, the requirements are complicated as they have to pursue hegemonic masculinity in order to fit into a hegemonic habitus in the public area, and meanwhile keep emphasized femininity in other areas to meet the requirements of the dominant hegemonic ideology regarding the current gender order (Connell, 1996, p. 209; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). Nevertheless, within certain limits, a female's movement into the highly valued male position is more acceptable than a male's movement into the inferior female status, and boy's rejection of the superior male role could be considered as a serious problem (Martin, 1990, p. 10). This contradiction still reveals that femininity is constructed to be inferior to masculinity and to guarantee the subordination of women to men (Connell, 1987, pp.186-187).

My findings suggest that both male and female students were limited by these gender rules, but boys still have more options than girls. Specifically, being trained to pursue hegemonic masculinity and being trained to achieve emphasized femininity could result in different social ends. In this study, the highlighting by girls' parents of women's roles in marriage has the potential to limit a girls' intention of maximising their cultural capital in education as well as the labour market (Holloway et al., 2012, p. 2287), since girls were expected to focus on family. Even though some girls were encouraged to pursue a high-level degree, the potential aim is to find a stable and easy job, which could reinforce the gender bias associating women with weakness in workplace (Coltrane, 1997; Liu, 2006, p. 495) and help to gender the ways girls make use of their education-based cultural capital (Tolonen, 2005, p. 344). While women's centrality in the home cannot be translated into a higher social value in the

current society (Acker, 1992, p. 567; Silva, 2005, p. 84), boys were trained to pursue resources and capital desired by the current gender regime (Mennesson, 2012, p. 16).

To conclude, it can be discovered from the data above that parents tend to teach male and female students different means to gain socially desirable ends, which can be seen as gendered capital that parents invested in students (Lareau, 2001; Lee and Bowen, 2006, p. 197). During the process, family habitus plays an important role in students' academic development through shaping parents' attentions and investment in education (Wu, 2008, p. 202). Students' gendered access to family resources from early childhood decides the starting point of their life development, since differences in cultural capital gained from family may result in students' different opportunities to obtain other social capitals from the school and labour market (Walpole, 2003, p. 49). From this perspective, students learn the gender-based cultural orientations of their parents through the influence of family habitus, which could shape children's life trajectories.

**Summary**

Discussions in this chapter aimed to reveal how gender stereotypes in the family environment influence students' educational aspirations and assessments of gender. Habitus is generally subtle, but family gender habitus in this context can be recognized through parents' dispositions, decisions and actions on the basis of their child's gender. In short, the research discovered that most parents in the study choose to accept, approve or adapt gender role expectations that males are believed superior and should take charge of financial affairs while females are deemed inferior and are bound to serve family. Parents also engage these norms in the way they raise their only child. However, it cannot be neglected that in the Chinese context, parental expectations of children's future development could be affected by the previous one-child policy (1979-2015) as well as the undeveloped old age security system (Basu et al. 2017, p. 527). As scholars have claimed, nowadays Chinese parents may well have high academic expectations for their child regardless of gender since these parents have only the one offspring and may rely on her/him when parents get older (Tsui and Rich, 2002, p.76; Lee, 2012, p. 51; Veeck et al. 2003, p. 90; Xiao, 2011, p. 22; Zhan and Montgomery, 2003, p. 223).

Lee and Bowen (2006, p. 198) argued that the greater the cultural capital an individual has, the greater advantage he/she has in pursuing additional capital that will in turn benefit families. From this perspective, parents with one-daughter in this study show a tendency to give girls investment and support in order to maximize their only daughter's benefits in school. However, compared with boys, girls were expected by parents to prioritise future heterosexual marriage and family life rather than personal growth when considering academic and career development. In this respect, boys and girls learn what is appropriate/inappropriate and /possible/impossible for their gender in education and post-school life from parents' gendered expectations.

It appears that parents with one daughter are in a dilemma. On one hand, they hope their girls will have some traits associated with men in public areas, like school and workplace, to fit in to the situation and pursue more social resources and profits but on the other hand, these parents clearly knew about the boundaries of the emphasized femininity that girls have to fulfil. As Deutsch (2004, p. 415) argued young girls in early adolescence are generally allowed by parents to have more freedom in school, but the biggest gendered expectations transmitted from parents on girls' life paths may await girls once they enter into a heterosexual marriage. Boys seemed to be less suppressed than girls overall. In terms of boys' parents, they tend to advocate and follow the gender rule which regulated the dominant position of masculinity in order to maintain their son's privileges in school, labour market as well as the future family. Even though boys are also expected by parents to achieve masculinities to avoid the risks associated with being excluded from *'the real men'*, the social gender role expectations obviously favour males and are ultimately detrimental to females.

To sum up, within the gendered family habitus, boys and girls get different attention, support and investment from parents, which can be deemed as the original cultural capital students gained from family. From this perspective, even when a girl and a boy come from a family with similar cultural resources, girls are more likely to encounter more restrictions and pressures in accumulating cultural capital through education and work. The hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity parents conveyed to children intentionality or unconsciously in daily family lives help to

maintain the gender structure in society. Parental gendered cultural investment and attitudes to further the ways students make use of cultural capital could shape children's aspirations to transform their cultural capital into resources in the labour market (Holloway et al. 2006, p. 2287). The generated practices, namely, students' gendered self-expectations and choices, will be introduced in Chapter Seven.

**Chapter 6**

**The Influence of Teachers on Students' Educational Choices and School Experiences**

**Introduction**

The significant role of school in reproducing gender stereotypes has drawn the attention of researchers for several decades (e.g. Dillabough, 2003; Dumais, 2002; Gray and Leith, 2004). Gender stereotypes have been found in some studies to be reproduced through not only the formal curriculum but also a hidden curriculum in the school environment (e.g. Basow, 2004; Blumberg, 2008). Hidden curricula can be understood as knowledge that students gain outside classes, but which is intricately intertwined with the formal curriculum to influence students (Cheng and Yang, 2015, p. 323). Through the whole chapter, I will explore how the institutional habitus (Bourdieu, 1996; Reay, David and Ball, 2001) in school forms unequal gender relations through legitimating the hegemonic position of intellect that is linked to a particular gender (Dunne, 2007, p. 509). In Chapter Five, I discussed the role of parents in shaping children's gender dispositions that could influence students' choices and behaviours in the school *'field'*. In Chapter Six, since teachers are seen as the main delivery tool of education (Biemmi, 2015; Yang, 2012), I will focus on the influence of teachers on students' academic choices and school experiences as well as gender ideologies.

In this chapter, I will firstly introduce teachers' attitudes towards the *'natural'* differences between boys and girls. Then I will analyse teachers' role in sustaining male superiority in the institution through presenting their gendered assumptions and assessments of students' intellects. I will also introduce teachers' gendered interactions with students, which reflect and make contributions to shaping the gender culture in the school environment. Finally, I will list impacts of teachers' gender and occupation as well as their role in the private sphere on their gender values. It is noteworthy that the assessment and feedback from peer groups was also found in this research to play an active role in influencing boys' and girls' school experiences and life choices. The gendered interactions between students could be

seen as the students' generated practices after possessing gendered cultural capital and engaging gendered school experiences, so I will discuss it in the next chapter.

## 6.1 Teachers' Reflections on Gender Stereotypes

In this section, I will outline teachers' views on the justification of gender stereotypes in subject-selection. It draws on four typical narratives of teachers. The first two teachers argued that gender stereotypes in school subjects were in line with the traits of biological sex, namely, the *'natural'* differences between males and females, and in turn guaranteed a reasonable division of labour. The other two teachers seemed to deny the negative influences of gender stereotypes on students' academic choices.

### 6.1.1 Rationalise Gender Stereotypes: 'What Exists Is Reasonable'

As one male Dean who had taught Chinese for nearly twenty years said:

*'What exists is reasonable/cunzaijiheli 存在即合理. It has rationality. Boys and girls do have differences, in thinking mode…As we all see, there are more girls than boys in liberal arts class and more boys than girls in science class…It's not only about the influence of social opinions. There must be natural differences. Actually, these social opinions about gender stereotypes may originate from the truth, from the accurate observation.'* –from the male Dean of the third grade in HYA high school

The Dean acknowledged that gendered opinions can influence subject choices but also argued that those social opinions originate from *'natural'* differences. He emphasized that the gender differences he alleged exist in the thinking modes of boys and girls as well as their subject selection are *'reasonable'*, *'natural'* and historical. He also suggested that the different sex distributions in science and liberal arts classes proved his opinion. The Dean used to teach me the subject of Chinese ten years ago, so after the discussion about gender differences in learning areas, he gave me advice on my research. '*Not everything is about unfairness or inequality. It's just different. Don't play gender antagonism.*' In which the Dean implies that gender stereotypes were *'natural'* and true, whereas questioning them is to create new gender barriers.

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Similarly, when talking about the gendered division of students between liberal arts classes and science classes, one young male teacher of Maths also acknowledged that Chinese traditional culture and labour division had influence on today's polarized subject selection, that is, girls and boys tend to choose different subjects. However, the young teacher also argued that the division made sense to him, as he used the similar term to the Dean's: '*What exists is reasonable. I don't think that it is necessary to judge whether these opinions are right or wrong…It is the natural choice.*' The responses above can be connected with the well-known Chinese natural philosophy: females mean the force of *Yin* while males represent the force of *yang* in the universe. According to the traditional Chinese culture, the forces of *Yin* and *Yang* distinguish between and supplement each other, which can be deemed as the foundation of the harmony of both the natural world and human society (Furth, 1988, p. 4). In this premise, women and men, like the two forces, are supposed to be opposite to, and cooperate with each other, in accordance with natural laws that conventional people believed. Therefore, the Dean believed that breaking gender stereotypes means ruining the order of nature as well as the stability of society.

Given the fact that the concept of sex and that of gender are generally translated into the same word in the daily lives of Chinese people (Chen, 2010, p. 137; Yang, 2015, p. 158), the culture which linked the two bipolarities in nature to females and males also partly explain why '*natural*' differences in biological sex and '*division of labour*' on the basis of gender in real life were treated as a coherent thing and repeated in the different narratives. Both male teaching staff indicated that they took those stereotypical sayings about gender differences in subject selections for granted— '*What exists is reasonable/cunzaijiheli 存在即合理*'. While this research aimed to explore how gender stereotypes constantly affect school experiences and academic choices of boys and girls, they both tried to use one result of gender stereotypes in education to convince me that stereotypical gender identities were rational, as these stereotypes concluded the *'natural'* facts they observed in reality. It appears that they never questioned what conditions may have produced these results.

However, even comparing students' scores in some standardized tests cannot accurately reflect true sex differences in either talent or competence. There are several explanations: firstly, in most research, assessment of children's competence

only measures the correlation between scores and talent, rather than taking effort into consideration (Eccles et. al. 1990, p. 187); secondly, studies which claimed that evidence of sex differences in subjects have been found through analysing boys' and girls' scores were not concerned with the influence of prior exposure of students to the subject, such as early family education (Jovanovic and King, 1998, p. 478). As such, it is impossible to get a neutral indicator of *'natural'* talent since boys and girls are treated so differently from very early in their lives (Eccles et. al. 1990, p. 187; Tiedemann, 2000, p. 144).

To summarize, given the limitations in translation, respondents above (actually most respondents in this study) lacked the awareness of the differences between biological sex and culturally constructed gender. They also seemed to be blind to the unequal status of different subjects and the related industries in China. As the data introduced in the part of Chinese education system in Chapter Two, in contemporary China, students who choose liberal arts have reduced opportunities in entering both universities and high-salary trades. From this perspective, the girls' talents in liberal arts, those teachers assumed, are harder to translate into advantages in the workplace than it is for boys who take sciences. The words like *'reasonable'* or *'necessary'* which respondents used when describing a gender division in labour imply that either they neglect inequality in the labour market or they think the disadvantaged position in educational and working areas caused by gendered subject selection is acceptable for girls.

### 6.1.2 Gender Stereotypes Exist But Do Not Matter?

In addition, some teachers in this study showed their ignorance of the influence of gender bias in students' academic choices. Two typical sayings are listed below:

*'Good students did well in every subject, no matter their gender. Only average students may be affected by those sayings.'* –From One female teacher of history who has more than ten years teaching experiences.

*'It's just some girls' excuse to avoid working hard. They choose to give up maths…They convince themselves that they are not talented in maths. It's just their excuse.'* –From one young female teacher of English who had worked for two years.

Like Girl G's mother, who imputed her daughter's choosing liberal arts class to the girl's fear of difficulty (of science class), these two teachers also seemed to ascribe the gendered academic choices of some students to their own choices. Considering gender stereotypes in school environment as individual issues could reduce the possibilities to rethink and question students' gendered practices and the gender norms in educational institutions (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1994, p. 25; Tatar and Emmanuel, 2001, p. 222). From this perspective, these two teachers also helped to legitimate a gendered habitus in the school environment as they failed to realize how wider factors influenced the girls' beliefs about their aptitude in Maths. It cannot be neglected that there also existed several teachers who reflected on gender stereotypes relating to students' educational choices and academic abilities. I understand their self-reflections partly result from the gender of their only child, and those responses will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

## 6.2 Gendered Assessments on Students' Education-based Cultural Capital: Constructing Male Hegemony in School

Different from the responses in the previous section that argued boys and girls have different thinking modes and *'natural'* strengths, narratives in this section expressed open gender discrimination from teachers which suggested that boys had superior abilities and characteristics to girls. There were five teachers (of twelve) in different subjects who clearly pointed out that boys learned better than girls in high school regardless of subject. One male teacher of English who has nearly thirty years' teaching experience and acted as a class advisor in a science class stated:

*'Honestly, boys have more potential than girls…when entering into the high school, the subjects of Maths, Physics or Chemistry become more difficult and these subjects frustrated girls… Normally, boys are good at those subjects, whereas girls have to spend most time in these. It has negative impacts on girls' English scores. So during the last year of high school, in general, boys did better than girls in each subject in my class.'* –From the male teacher of English.

He mentioned girls' unsatisfactory performance relating to science subjects, so I asked about boys' performances in his class in the subject of English or Chinese. The male English teacher added:

*'The examination system of language has changed… English test, you know, nowadays there are more readings from Economics or New York Times, which requires more logic thinking ability. Some readings are about new technologies. Girls are not interested in it. Boys have broader knowledge background, so now they also did better than girls in exams of language.'* – The male teacher of English added.

According to the statement, on the one hand, girls in high schools had to overcome their disadvantages in science through spending more time on exercises, which could lead girls to neglect other subjects; on the other hand, since the current English test requires more knowledge about logical thinking and science as the teacher alleged, girls lose their original advantages in the subject in which they were talented. In short, his response actually expressed that girls could not learn science, and anything science-related, well. In this situation, as the teacher implied, since the structure of scripts in English has been transformed to assessment about economic knowledge and science in the English language, girls lose advantages in all subjects. The teacher of English seemingly held the view that boys and girls have talents in different areas, but he was actually constructing the superiority of males in high school study through gendering subjects and ability to learn, in which context knowledge relating to economics, sciences and technologies combine with traits like having *'broad knowledge background'* and *'logic thinking ability'* which were labelled as masculine.

One female teacher of History who has more than ten years' teaching experience also referred to boys' current achievements in liberal arts subjects, but by expressing a more open gender bias than the male teacher above. In this female teacher's opinion, learning both natural science and social science in high schools requires a clear mind and logical thinking ability, which are alleged by her as boys' strengths. Then the teacher of History recalled her past working experiences and concluded her views with one sentence: *'the most outstanding overall students are always boys.'* Apparently, these two teachers both indicated that all subjects in high school were difficult. After synthesizing their responses, it can be summarized that achieving a high score in high school requires good organizational ability, clear logical thinking ability, long working hours as well as high efficiency. In this respect,

some teachers have stereotyped competences as belonging to males rather than females.

In short, when a subject or a working position is associated with logical thinking, competitive power or any ability in various professional areas, they would be considered as men's areas by some teachers, since all these abilities are linked to their assumption of male-dominated knowledge and skills (Harris et. al, 2011, p. 54; Lempp and Seale, 2006, p. 21; Reay, 2001, p. 162). This gender bias concerning academic ability was not uncommon in my study. Then what about girls' performance?

*'Compared to boys, girls are more obedient, especially during high school. But generally, some girls have low learning efficiency…sometimes they even think that if they spend more time sitting at the desk, they are good students in people's eyes.'* –From the female teacher of History.

*'Generally, girls are well-behaved. They are willing to listen to teachers' suggestions. But I think that it could be a double-edged sword for girls…you know, in the other hand, they may lack the ability of innovative thinking, compared with boys. Girls just do whatever teachers or parents require them to do…'* –From one young female teacher of English who just worked for two years.

The two respondents used the words *'obedient'* and *'well-behaved'* in relation to girls' performance in school. The two words in their statements are not only seen as character traits of girls but also factors relating to academic ability. Specifically, the traits these two teachers believed associated with female students were not deemed as strengths in this study, since obedience or obeying teacher's requirements were equated with lack of creative thinking ability and low learning efficiency as well as lack of concentration (girls are easily distracted by other people's judgement). It appears to me that those traits, which the two teachers implied that all boys were born with but girls lack, are good and necessary ones in gaining outstanding academic performance.

These two female teachers taught in two different liberal arts classes. I asked the Dean of Studies about the ratio of gender in each liberal arts class. The Dean showed that there had been no more than ten male students in each liberal arts class

in the past five years in the high school (each class has around forty-eight students). During the year of doing this study (2017), one of the liberal art classes in third grade only had two boys. Strictly speaking, these two female teachers' ideas about students' different learning styles or abilities to learn, relating to gender, seem to be based more on stereotypes than observation. Van den Brink and Stobbe (2009, p. 461) found in their fieldwork that female students were seen as representing the female gender rather than being an individual. Also, in this research, in these teachers' responses, a few girls' characteristics and learning modes were blamed on gender and seen as common problems of the female gender. On the other hand, academic performance of boys was considered as common inherent ability of the male gender.

Moreover, assuming their descriptions of students' different performance were true, that is, all (or the majority of) girls in their classes were more obedient, well-behaved and sensitive to others' comments than boys, could that result from public expectations of females? As introduced in Chapter Two, according to Confucianism, women are expected to be obedient and care about their own reputations (Gupta et al. 2003; Jayachandran, 2015; Zhai and Gao, 2010). However, it seems that female students who behaved in accordance with the requirements of Chinese traditional culture were linked by quite a few teachers to having a weak ability to learn in school. In this premise, instead of saying that women are expected to behave well in Chinese culture, women are actually expected to be weak, in any area.

The other two male teachers revealed a similar opinion in a contradictory way. Specifically, they argued that high scores in exams cannot represent good competence, especially for girls. Boys are still believed by the two male teachers to have better competence than girls even if boys did not do well in tests. Unlike other discussions about different academic abilities of boys and girls which were expressed by participants at the beginning of interviews, the answer below was gained near the end of an interview when discussing the ratio of female teachers and male teachers in HYA School:

*'We have more female teachers than male teachers, regardless of subject. Honestly, the situation is the same in the whole nation. This is because girls have*

*excellent test-taking skills[10]. In this situation, compared to girls, boys have less chances to become a teacher… Boys maybe did not get high scores in tests, but they have good competences.'* –From one male Physics teacher who has seventeen-years teaching experience.

It can be discovered from the narrative that this male teacher has stereotyped not only female students but also his female colleagues whom he has associated with lack of competence. Contrary to teachers above who argued that boys had higher scores in tests for all or most subjects, this male teacher expressed a view that girls in his class generally had better test scores than boys in exams. However, the result was blamed on an unfair educational system as well as girls' test-taking skills which obviously were not deemed as *'good competence'* in his mind. In addition to competition in school, this teacher of Physics also implied that female teachers have gained teaching positions through skills in dealing with exams rather than competence at work, as they gained high scores in tests during studenthood. The male teacher believed that males are more qualified in terms of teaching jobs compared with females.

Then the teacher of Physics also talked about his worries about the existing gender ratio of teachers in the school:

*'We actually prefer more male teachers. You know, we male teachers are more tolerant, and good at sports, which will benefit students' overall development…I didn't mean that female teachers were not good, they are professional, they are just emotional. And they focus on details, so they always feel anxious, which could make students feel anxious.'* –From one male teacher of Physics

He concluded with the disadvantages of female teachers and advantages of male teachers. Male teachers were claimed to have better characteristics than female ones. In line with his gender biased evaluation of female teachers, he also mentioned that female students were frail and need to be protected when talking about his

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[10]In mainland China, teacher candidates need to participate in a qualification examination before working in public middle schools and elementary schools. See details of the examination in Jiangsu Province from the official website of Jiangsu Provincial Department of Education http://jyt.jiangsu.gov.cn/art/2016/12/30/art_38047_3293751.html

interactions with girls. The gender discrimination rhetoric behind *'protecting girls'* and teachers' different treatments of male and female students will be discussed in the next section. In short, the male teacher believed firmly that the characteristics of males were strong while traits of females were weak, and the differences on the basis of sex will be persistent and hierarchal from school to society and lead to unequal academic and working performances.

Similarly, another male teacher of Politics who has nine-year's teaching experience also argued that the current examination-oriented education system benefits girls who have strong examination skills. The teacher of Politics also showed some reflections on the influence of gender stereotypes in subject selection, or more precisely, the subject selection of male students. As he claimed:

*'...If we had a different situation now, for example, if elegant, gentle and scholarly boys are more popular today, I think maybe more boys would be willing to choose liberal arts…Many boys who perform very well at Politics subject have to choose science class because of the pressure...'*

It seemed that this teacher had realized the impact of public gendered expectations on students' academic choices. He also complained that the school, even the whole nation, did not value liberal arts subjects. In line with the introduction to the Chinese education system found in Chapter Two, in contemporary China, higher educational institutions and job markets both have a preference for students who choose science classes (Cui et al. 2017, p. 116; Liu, 2013, p. 193; Wang, 2013, p. 135). As a male teacher of a liberal arts subject which will always be associated with females, he seemed to question those rules of masculinity for the subject area he worked in, but meanwhile endorsed the taken-for-granted assumptions that values masculinity in academia. He was questioning gender stereotypes to some degree, but it appeared to me that the teacher was focusing on *'negotiating'*, or expanding hegemonic masculinity in order to maintain male privileges (Wetherell and Edley, 1999, p 335). His statement which mentioned that boys may give up liberal arts because of pressure also indicated that both genders could be limited by gender stereotypes (Harris, 2011, p. 54; Liu, 2006, p. 496).

To summarize, these viewpoints from the five teachers all helped construct male superiority in high school environment consciously or unconsciously. They tend to attribute a boy's success to his talent which will unfold as he grows up and meanwhile held the view that a girl's success has to be trained and cultivated with the assistance of others (Jussim and Eccles, 1992; Siegle and Reis, 1998; Tiedemann, 2000). In this respect, everything associated with girls those teachers alleged was inferior to boys or cannot be deemed as professional competences in the school institution. Institutional habitus can be seen as a product of its history and experiences (Doucet, 2008, p. 113), so the opinions of the past and the present staff in the school on gender and the traditions as well as the atmospheres the staff formed can be deemed as part of gender habitus in school (Atkinson, 2011, p. 335). As Bourdieu (1990, p. 54) argued, the habitus is more powerful and stable than explicit rules in guaranteeing the appropriateness of practices. In this respect, through gendering abilities, skills and characteristics by teaching staff, boys' superiority was legitimated in the school.

The finding is similar to Eccles et al.'s study (1990) which explored the linkage between academic performance and gender role stereotypes: when boys got higher scores than girls, boys were deemed more talented than their female peers. If there are no obvious gender differences in test scores, then natural gender differences in terms of talent were believed as being overcome by gender differences in effort (Eccles et al., 1990, p. 189). In short, boys were deemed gifted while girls were believed only diligent, whereas the diligence of girls sometimes does not work and was merely associated with low efficiency. In addition, from the findings in this research, respondents even added a new viewpoint: if girls have achieved higher scores than boys, then girls got benefits from the current unfair examination system in which girls' test scores could not represent the modes of knowledge and competences education and society valued.

In fact, stereotyping obedience, emotionality, lack of creativity and test-taking skills as female could reduce the values of the educational qualifications of female students to some degree. In this situation, girls were hindered from finding diverse ways to transform their institutional cultural capital into social profits. In contrast, connecting males with innovation, logical thinking, strong working

competence, which were legitimated by education as valuable capitals, provided boys with benefits in the job market and even in their future social status (Scott, 1981, p. 356). The values of education-based cultural capital of male and female students were sustained and produced by gender hierarchies

**6.3 Teachers' Gendered Treatments of Students**

In the previous two sections, I described teachers' gender bias in the school which shaped the gendered habitus in the educational institution. In this section, I will present teachers' gendered treatments towards students even when the male and female students were in the same class and had similar academic performance. Family gender habitus which shaped students' gender ideologies in everyday interactions between parents and children have been discussed in the previous chapter. In this section, in addition to further exploring the school gender habitus through analysing teachers' gendered attitudes and behaviours towards students, I will also demonstrate the potential impacts of the institutional gendered habitus on reinforcing the gender stereotypes that were instilled, adapted, questioned or resisted within families.

*6.3.1 Teachers' Gendered Treatments of Students in Formal Curriculum*

The first example has been mentioned above in the interview of Girl A's mother when she complained about a male Maths teacher's gender discrimination against female students. The narrative of Girl A's own will be listed below to show more details of the case:

*'Our Maths teacher, he always said that girls have less talent than boys in Maths for many times in Maths class...He never said anything to depress boys, he loves boys. When boys asked him for help about figuring out a Maths problem, he always showed extreme patience, I saw it. However, I asked him a question a long time ago, he was very impatient, and told me to make clear some basic principles before trying challenging problems…It sounds like that I wasted his time…Some other girls in my class experienced the same thing, you can ask them. And I had not asked the Maths teacher any question until then.'* – Girl A answered when I asked if any teacher in her school treated students differently or unequally based on gender.

Girl A's classmate, Girl H, also mentioned that the male teacher treated boys and girls unequally. Obviously, this teacher did not think that girls could learn Maths well because of their sex. The teacher's gender bias, namely, boys are believed more gifted than girls in Maths, shaped his attitudes to female and male students, and then generated his unequal treatment of students on the basis of gender. Even worse, the teacher had expressed his gender discriminatory opinions in public more than once. Female and male students, regardless of academic records in the subject, had different experiences even in the same class. In this situation, those female students may well learn two things from their interactions with the teacher of Maths: on the one hand, all girls are believed inferior to boys in learning Maths since the gap was caused by natural differences which cannot easily be covered by hard work; on the other hand, girls are very likely to meet exterior difficulties and have an unpleasant experience if learning a subject which is stereotyped as a man's speciality.

As both Girl A's and Girl H's reactions were to give up asking any Maths question to the teacher, it can be argued that those girls' attitudes towards Maths, even to male teachers and to that school have been affected through these experiences. Then those young girls' experience in high school Maths class has the potential to further shape their future academic and life choices. In other words, the future decisions of girls like Girl A and Girl H relating to Maths and education could be partly based on what they have experienced in high school, which in turn could reshape their university/career experience in the future. The process proceeds circularly (Li, 2012, p. 48).

These girls also understood the potential risks associated with challenging rules in school institutions, especially when the gender biased discourse was relayed by their teachers (Adelman and Woods, 2008, p. 15). In addition, a student's school experiences and the potential advantages he/she could gain in school depend on the relationship between the student's belief system and the habitus in the school environment— is it a fit or inconsistent (Grenfell and James, 1998, p. 15; Nora, 2004, p. 182). From this premise, the institutional gendered practices of teachers were rarely questioned explicitly by either students or their parents even though the latter two groups felt offended by teachers' unfair treatment.

In addition to that teacher of Maths who was blamed by parents and female students in my study, one male teacher of Physics claimed clearly by himself that he has treated boys and girls differently. The quote is listed below:

*'...I criticized boys more often and, harshly. You know, teenage girls, they are a little bit sensible, bashful and vulnerable, we teachers should be aware of their feelings...In contrast, boys in my class, they are simple and firm. I just spoke everything directly to them. Honestly, criticism works on boys.'* –The teacher of Physics subject explained why he chose different teaching methods on boys and girls.

According to his response, all girls in his class were deemed the same— too emotional and sensitive to be criticized. Based on this opinion, the teacher of Physics tried not to criticize girls for the girls' good as he alleged. In contrast, the teacher gave frank criticism and suggestions to male students in his class since that *'works on boys'*. It is noteworthy that all boys were regarded to have the same personality as well: *'simple'* and *'honest'*. In fact, the teacher helped construct an environment in the class that the group of girls was weak and vulnerable while boys were strong and firm, which is consistent with gender stereotypes based on patriarchal norms (Cheng and Yang, 2015, p. 325). It needs to be pointed out that linking *'emotional'* and *'vulnerable'* to females could mean that males are not allowed to be *'emotional'* and *'vulnerable'*, which has set up restrictions for boys as well.

However, as discussed above about the different aims of encouraging boys to pursue hegemonic masculinity and asking girls to fulfil emphasized femininity, the traits of girls presumed by the male teacher, namely that girls need boys' protection, would not bring girls benefits in the school environment like boys who achieved the hegemonic requirements. Teachers' gendered treatments of students limit both genders but are ultimately detrimental to girls. The two cases above also partly present the process as to how gender stereotypes are transmitted and maintained in the school system. Besides, if the statement of the teacher of Maths can be deemed as *'hostile sexism'* which emphasized the inferiority of girls definitely, the opinions of the teacher of Physics can be considered as *'benevolent sexism'* that uses the form of protection by males to reinforce the traditional image of femininity (Cheng and Yang, 2015, p. 323). The latter one is subtler and harder to recognize than the former one.

The teacher of Physics and the teacher of Maths above both taught subjects which are stereotyped as traditional male subject areas. Does the issue of teachers' different treatments of students relate to subject? I cite one statement below which came from a teacher of a language subject that is always associated with girls:

*'Boys answered my questions more often in class. You know, compared with girls, boys are more willing to talk in public. I sometimes wanted to choose a girl to answer the question, I looked at girls in my class, most of them lowered their heads coyly, and at that time some boys just spoke out the answers…I know, boys were showing off, I said to them that you need to give other students time and opportunities to share their opinions…They promised, and then did the same thing again…so I let it go, you know, I do need some boys to create an active classroom atmosphere.'* –One young male teacher of Chinese answered when he was asked whether there existed gender differences in boys' and girls' performances in class.

It appears that boys in this teacher's class used the way of speaking out in class to dominate the class discussion as well as the teacher's attention (Myhill and Jones, 2006, p. 102; Tatar and Emmanuel, 2001, p. 216). I also paid attention to the teacher's reaction to the situation, telling male students to *'give opportunities to'* other students rather than criticizing boys directly for their disruptive behaviours, which also has potential to spread the norm that girls were too weak to get opportunities in the class unless their male counterparts released some chances. The male teacher of Chinese also argued that girls had a strong sense of shame when they did not get expected scores in a test, so girls did not need to be chastised while boys need to be pushed by teachers. Even though he did not express it explicitly, he gave more criticism, encouragement and attention to boys in his class.

Similar to the male teacher of Physics above, this teacher of Chinese also alleged that he treated students differently in order to *'protect girls' dignity'*. The teacher was unaware of the subtle gender bias in his discourse and interactions in the classroom, such as double standards for students according to their sex. Here, just like Moss-Racusin et al. (2012, p. 16477) argued, sometimes gender stereotypes could be spread unintentionally because they were generated from widespread stereotypical cultures rather than a conscious intention to harm females (although

they did). From the statements above, gender bias in the school environment was masked by the purpose of protecting girls' fragile dignity.

Similarly, Girl C, who was from a science class, also complained that her teacher of English (female) showed more tolerance to boys' interruptive behaviours like making jokes with teachers in class. According to Girl C, the teacher did not pay attention to girls' lack of participation in teacher-student interaction in class. Combined with the discussion about the teacher of Maths and the one of Physics, although these teaching staff of different subjects expressed their stereotyped gender ideas in different ways, they have spread their attitudes to students that boys deserve more attention and guidance from teachers as well as more freedom in class than their female contemporaries. These attitudes set by teachers helped reinforce the gendered habitus in class that boys are allowed to break rules and challenge teachers' authority while girls are expected to be well-behaved. In this situation, students can also be deemed as individual agents who inhabit a gender habitus which integrates students' school experiences and further shapes their future probable pathways (Atkinson, 2011, p. 335). The gendered actions of students will be discussed in the next chapter.

*6.3.2 Teachers' Gendered Treatments of Students in Informal Curriculum*

This research also discovered that in addition to the formal curriculum, informal education which students acquire outside classes is also an important part in shaping their school lives (Eder and Parker, 1987, p. 209). Students will bring the information from the informal learning process into their formal education and combine these into daily practices (Cheng and Yang, 2015, p. 323). In this study, I found some typical statements from students which described that they had experienced or observed teachers' unequal treatment of boys and girls outside classes:

*'I knew a campus couple in another class. They travelled together on a holiday secretly, but their teachers found out. Their class advisor criticized the girl harshly in his office, we even heard his angry voice in the corridor out of the office, like [girls should be self-dignified]…They did not talk too much with the boy. I guess that they did this for the girl's own good. You know, they tend to think that girls' reputation may get hurt in this situation.'* – Girl F from a science class.

Girls' reputation was highlighted in this case again, in which the situation of girls travelling with a boyfriend was seen as inappropriate and equated with undignified and immoral behaviour only for the girl. Combining it with the discussion about family gendered sex and relationship education in the previous chapter, the gender norm that girls should keep *'pure'* before marriage in the Chinese culture were reinforced in school by the teacher's discourse. In addition, Boy D and Girl J also expressed that there were teachers around them who only judged girls' looks/dress, while Girl I and Girl H said that some teachers in their class only warned girls to behave well in public:

*'If some girls dressed beautifully or looked fashionable, my previous English teacher would say [what would you want to do in these clothes? You are in campus now! Please have self-esteem and self-respect/zizunziai 自尊自爱!] But she never judged boys' looks.'* – Girl J from a science class.

*'…We had a group discussion after his class. We have two girls including me and three boys, we need to talk about our project, in order to hear each other clearly, the other girl and me leaned on our desks. My class advisor saw it and came to say that girls should pay attention to her deportment and have self-respect/ziai 自爱…I didn't get his point. One boy was even sitting on the desk, but the teacher said nothing…'* – Girl I from a science class.

*'…We had a class spring tour last year. That was the first time we travelled with classmates to another city, everyone was excited. They planned to arrange two students in a bedroom, but everyone can choose their roommate. During a whole month before the trip we kept talking about who you want to live with, we made jokes, like asking friends [anyone wants to sleep with me in one bedroom] or [who wants to spend a whole night with me], I swear we didn't say anything inappropriate, but our Maths teacher stopped us and said that our jokes were too frivolous…He said that girls are supposed to respect themselves and behave properly.'* – Girl H from a science class.

These teachers' behaviours can be interpreted from two perspectives: First, these teachers' attitudes to girls' behaviours, dress and actions were inevitably shaped by the mainstream gender expectations in society. Second, these teachers, just

like some girls' parents, were trying to protect girls from suffering potential discrimination or unfair judgement through pushing these female students to have appropriate behaviour to fit in to the current school *'field'* which always has stricter moral requirements for girls. However, these teachers all helped to reproduce gender stereotypes in subtle ways outside the formal curriculum regardless of their original aim. They participated in reproducing a school environment which associated girls' actions, which were not in accord with patriarchal norms, with issues relating to females' dignity and morality.

All teachers mentioned above were intentionally treating boys and girls differently according to the quotes. However, sometimes, teachers may spread gender stereotypes to students in a more hidden or unintentional way. The typical case is stated below:

*'Who participated in Boy D's parents' evening in these three years? You or Boy D's father?'* – I asked.

*'We rearranged our engagement in parent's evening when he entered in high school. At the beginning, it was always me to communicate with teachers since Boy D started school education. One male teacher in his class said that more fathers were expected to be engaged in students' education at a parents' evening in the first year. The teacher said that fathers' participation was better for children's personality development and learning confidence, especially for boys. You know, mothers are careful, while fathers have broad minds, which is more helpful when children get older…My husband and I agreed to his opinion, we also conveyed the teacher's suggestion to our son…He was happy to accept it. So his father went to school more often than me during the three years in high school…'* – Boy D's mother recalled.

In my study, all participants claimed that mothers had participated in school events many more times than fathers. Some students' fathers or grandparents occasionally took part in the parents' evening only when students' mothers were unavailable (e.g. on a business trip). It was unsurprising since Chinese men's role is considered primarily in the work area while the ideal Chinese wife is expected to take responsibility for looking after children, both in health and education (e.g.

Hamilton, 1990; Jiang, 2009; Zhai and Gao, 2010). Seemingly, the male teacher argued that caring about children's education was not only the task of mothers. It appeared at first that the teacher was trying to break the traditional gender roles inside family for students. However, the male teacher explained that fathers were superior to mothers in minds and characteristics to persuade parents. In other words, he still held the gendered view that all men are born superior to women in some areas.

It cannot be neglected that parents of Boy D agreed with these values and conveyed them to their child. Also, they finally followed the suggestions proposed by the teacher. It was a typical case which presented direct interactions between teachers and parents in spreading and reinforcing gender stereotypes. In this situation, the teacher's gender views interacted with a similar family gender habitus through their interactions at a parents' evening in school (Lavy, 2008, p. 2083). Moreover, in this case, the school habitus and family habitus legitimised and corroborated each other which could reinforce gender stereotypes, that girls' minds are not as broad as boys, to students directly both in the student's family and school life.

All students who did the interviews came from seven different classes, and I asked questions about the gender ratio of class cadres in each class. Generally, each class in the school had two class monitors, one monitor and one vice-monitor. The result exposed that all seven classes had one male monitor and one female vice-monitor, including the liberal arts class which had only two boys. All students said that the monitors had been selected by class advisors. Among the twelve teachers in my study, there were only four teachers who acted as class advisors, so I asked them about the selection criteria. All four teachers argued that they had selected class monitors only based on students' performance, including their academic reports and comments from students' previous class advisors before the subject selection. All of the four class advisors in my study claimed that the class cadres' selection had no relation to students' sex, while only the statement of a young male teacher of Chinese subject showed reflections on gender stereotypes:

*'Actually, I have organized a class election meeting and gave these volunteer candidates time to do a presentation. Then I arranged for a boy to act as the monitor and another girl to act as the vice-monitor according to their performances. I did not think about their sex at that moment, but since we had this conversation about*

*gender today, I guess that I may think subconsciously that boys have better leadership skills while girls are scrupulous to assist others' work…but they cooperated with each other very well.'* – From one young male teacher of Chinese who also acted as a class advisor in a science class.

Since the election meeting happened nearly two years previously, the teacher did not remember details. This study cannot examine if these teachers selected class monitors according to students' sex, but the self-reflection of the young teacher exposed that sometimes individuals may not be aware of the gender habitus behind their taken-for-granted gender expectations. Besides, he still implied that this arrangement worked. As the discussion above, habitus sometimes is unconscious, but attitudes and behaviours shaped by habitus can be recognized. In my understanding, the arrangement of one male monitor and one female vice-monitor in different classes is very likely to strengthen the idea in school environment that boys have better leadership skills while girls should take assistant roles.

To conclude, the institutional gender habitus in school in this context is constituted by teachers' taken-for-granted assumptions about the different purpose of students' education and students' probable life trajectories based on the latter's gender (Atkinson, 2011, p. 335). From this perspective, the gender of students did not directly determine the form of capital they gained in education, but it provided different ways that cultural capital is accumulated, organized, valued and taken advantage of in academic areas (Tolonen, 2005, p. 357). Students' appropriate behaviours and school experiences on the basis of gender, for instance the possibilities to be deemed as a capable individual, the possibilities to challenge teacher's authority in class, the possibilities to be taken seriously by teachers, are shaped by the institutional gender habitus which is hidden but hegemonic.

Combined with the discussion in the previous chapter that boys have inherited more valuable cultural capital from family within the impacts of their gendered family habitus which could help boys translate their resources into socially desired profits, male students are generally *'more successful players'* than girls in the *'field'* of school (Lee and Bowen, 2006, pp.197-198). In this situation, similar to the relation between class and the distribution of educational resources, boys who have higher status capital and higher expectations than girls from society as well as the

family are also rewarded well in the school *'field'* which constructed a gender regime in accordance with the social gender structure through regulating appropriate behaviours of gender (Dune, 2007, p. 502; Mennesson, 2012, p. 16; Silva, 2005, p. 87). From this premise, male students who possessed more capital that educators valued, can gain access to educational resources more easily than female students, and therefore boys were equipped with valuable education-based cultural capital in school and in the labour market (Walpole, 2003, pp.50-51), which in turn legitimates institutional gendered practices and reinforces the gender structure both in and outside school.

## 6.4 Teachers' Self-reflections on Gender Stereotypes: Does Teachers' Gender Matter? Does the Sex of Teacher's Child Matter?

Research has argued that teachers' gender has a relation to their patterns of interaction with students (Duffy et al. 2001; Einarsson and Granstrom, 2002; Hopf and Hatzichrisou, 1999). This study did not find significant evidence to prove that teachers' gender influenced their attitudes or treatment towards students. It can be concluded from the study that there existed both male and female teachers of different subjects who have treated boys and girls differently and helped reproduce gender stereotypes in the school environment. In line with the findings of Drudy and Chatháin (2002, p. 380), Howe (1997, p. 15), and Jungwirth (1991, p. 266), compared with girls, the research also discovered that both female and male teachers tended to give more attention to boys. However, some teachers did start to think about the rationality of gender stereotypes.

*'People have different thinking modes, yeah, I acknowledge that, but I don't think that it should be classified by sex…You know, our school is the best in our city, all students here had strong academic records. In terms of the differences in academic performances during high school, I think that it could be blamed on different learning attitudes rather than differences in natural intelligence or thinking modes. And learning attitudes could be affected by diverse factors, including those traditional opinions that you mentioned.'* –From one female teacher of Chemistry who has sixteen years teaching experience.

This teacher of Chemistry worked as a class advisor in one of the best science classes in HYA High School. Additionally, she has acquired the honour of Outstanding Teacher at City Level twice. It is noteworthy that this teacher was invited by the regional Government to organize a quantitative investigation about natural differences between girls and boys in learning Chemistry across six cities. According to her, the investigation did not find any direct evidence which proved that boys and girls have different intelligence in the subject of Chemistry. *'You see, I am a girl.'* She laughed. From the female teacher's statement above, the public presumptions about academic ability based on gender have the potential to affect students' learning attitudes.

Her response resonates with the study of Schmuck and Schmuck (1994, p. 25) which argued that some female leaders in school might be more sensitive to gender issues and needs of female students than their male counterparts. In my understanding, whilst an outstanding female teacher who works well in a traditional male-dominated area, she also needs to prove her competence and to protect her capital, which may facilitate the female teacher to question the existing gender stereotypes that underestimate ability of females in science.

*'According to Chinese traditions, for girls, working hard is not the only choice to make changes. The most important thing, they call it [the second choice for life], is marriage. I guess that during your childhood, you may have heard some sayings like 'you are so pretty/lovely, you don't need to work hard in the future'...As a child, I don't think that they were born with the gender identity, but the environment, the sayings from parents, the society, the book they have read, you know, everything around a girl may influence her opinions.'* –From one young female teacher of English who just worked for two years

This young female teacher was the one above who argued that boys had better innovative thinking ability than girls. She realized that a girl could be exposed to gender stereotypes from different sources. She is the same age as me and she was pregnant at the time of interview. When talking about the limitations on girls, she complained that marriage was unfair since maternity damaged women's career development. On the one hand, as a teacher, she felt that boys and girls had unequal ability to learn; on the other hand, as a career woman who has already married and

got pregnant, compared to her husband and male colleagues, she felt more pressure, more limitations, less support and less expectations from society as well as from the family. Her example can also illustrate that females cannot merely be seen as victims of gender stereotypes but as co-producers (Katila and Merilainen, 1999, p. 164; Van Den Brink and Stobbe, 2009, p. 459).

Noteworthily, there was a male teacher of Chinese who also questioned gender stereotypes:

*'Outstanding children have some common characteristics, they generally are more focused and have strong ability of self-control, regardless of gender. People who have these good characteristics are more likely to get success, rather than one specific gender…I don't agree with them, those good characteristics do not merely belong to men. I guess that it must be a man who invented these sayings [gender stereotyped sayings]. It's crafty.'* –From one male teacher of Chinese who has eighteen years' teaching experience.

The male teacher suggested that the group which gets benefits from linking masculinity to success could play a lead role in gendering characteristics for success. Even though a lot of male teachers (and male students as well, which will be discussed in the next chapter) did participate in reproducing hegemonic masculinity in the school environment, this teacher was the first person in my study who started to reflect on the process: men get male power through acting out and taking on some prescribed traits associated with hegemonic masculinity (Wetherell and Edley, 1999, p. 350), then men use male power to institutionalize men's dominance over women through constantly defining and constructing the dominant style of masculinity (Blaise, 2005, p. 86). Like the two female teachers above, the male teacher's reflections on gender stereotypes could partly result from his gender and his position, namely, a male teacher who works in the subject associated with females.

There is another common ground among the teachers above: they all have only one daughter. As the number of cases were limited, the sex of teachers' only child cannot be claimed to determine teachers' gender ideologies. However, there was a female teacher who claimed clearly that her child's sex had influenced her

attitudes to male students. This teacher was the one mentioned by Girl C for showing favouritism towards male students:

*'To be honest, compared with girls in my class, boys are more willing to communicate with me, no matter whether they are asking questions about the subject, or just free talk. I think the reason could be that I have a son. Boys in my class and my son are about the same age. They may feel relaxed when talking with me. Also, I treat them like my sons, I think that they sometimes see me as their mother, so I can criticize them and punish them, they knew that I was concerned about them. In contrast, I have to say that sometimes I don't know how to talk to girls…Girls are relatively vulnerable and sensible compared to boys.'* –The female teacher of English answered when we were talking about her interaction with students at Q&A evening[11].

There is rarely literature arguing that the sex of teachers' children could influence teachers' attitudes to students. However, this teacher above expressed her concerns about male students and the neglect of female students undisguisedly. She blamed her unequal treatment of students on her child's sex and did not think the behaviour needed to be adjusted. It is impossible to exam if it would be different if this teacher had a daughter, but her stereotyped gender ideology that girls are '*vulnerable and sensible*', was uncovered through the statement. The gendered ideologies had resulted in negative impacts and led the teacher to give more attention, concerns and feedback to male students than female students.

The female teacher of English is not an individual case whose attitudes towards students could have been influenced by the sex of their only child in this study. Remember the two boys' mothers who acted as a university lecturer and a kindergarten teacher separately in Chapter Five? They tended to maintain the current gender bias both in education and in the job market, for maximizing their sons' benefits. Similar to this teacher of English, those participants are both parents and teaching staff. It appears that an only child's sex may matter in analysing the gender ideology of teachers. The situation could be linked to the unique one-child policy in

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[11]In the target high school, from Monday to Friday, each evening is a Q&A evening for one subject. Students can go to the teachers' office to ask questions about the specific subject. It was set up only for students in the third grade.

China which has created a child-centred environment which placed the only child at the centre of Chinese adults' life (Yu, et al. 2010, p. 813). As the findings in the previous chapter suggest, those parents with only one child tend to maximize their child's benefits through supporting, adapting or resisting gender stereotypes in society. From this perspective, teachers' gender opinions behind their gendered actions including gendered attitudes towards students in school could be influenced by roles of teachers inside their family as a parent of a boy or a girl.

**Summary**

Few teachers in this study were aware that they had gender bias. However, cases in this chapter showed that many teachers had different evaluations, feedback and treatment of students according to the latter's gender. In the formal and hidden curriculum, teachers also conveyed their gender values to students, whether intentionally or unconsciously. Through gendering knowledge as well as constructing the hegemonic position of intellects, ability and personalities that are linked to male (Dunne, 2007, p. 509) in the school institution, gender is not only constructed but also stratified (Messner, 2000, p. 463). From this premise, the opinion that school education can eliminate gender inequality is over-optimistic, since teachers, as the main delivery tool of education, are also part of the issue.

Some teachers showed awareness and self-reflection on the negative influence of gender stereotypes on students' development. In addition to these teachers' own gender and occupations, their self-reflections could be blamed on the reality that these teachers all have only one daughter. In line with the discussion in Chapter Five, parents with an only-daughter tend to maximize their daughter's value and capital. However, the research did not find any staff who questioned institutional gendered practices openly, which can be attributed to the hegemonic power and mechanism of educational institutions. My findings resonate with the argument that one of the functions of school education is to legitimate and reproduce the unequal distribution of social resources (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; 1990). From this perspective, the habitus in school is inevitably characterised by its privileging of a particular group (Forbes and Lingard, 2014, p. 126).

Within the gendered school habitus, even when girls and boys have inherited the same foundation of cultural capital from their families, they are trained to think and act in a particular way in school and then get different assessment, support and attention, as well as resources, from teachers. As cultural capital gained from education can be transformed to economic capital and social capital through the post-school labour market (see details in Section 3.2.1 of Chapter Three), it is no wonder that women still remain in an inferior social status after saying farewell to school life and the situation will persist. In other words, gender stereotypes in education are more than matters of gender, as they rationalize the unequal distribution of cultural resources (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009, p. 442) through the power of public institutions. In this respect, the gender regime in school which functions in light of social relations of gender makes a gender-neutral habitus in school impossible (Dunne, 2007; Kessler et al. 1985; Mennesson, 2012).

**Chapter 7**

**The Gendered Actions of Students: How Students See and Perform Gender**

**Introduction**

In Chapter Five, I introduced ways in which parents shape students' educational aspirations and life trajectories through family gender habitus and gendered investment in children. In Chapter Six, I demonstrated how teachers influence students' academic choices and legitimate students' gendered school experiences through the institutional gender habitus. My findings suggest that students were under pressure from different sources to conform to prescribed gender roles. According to Dumais (2002) and Mickelson (2003), cultural capital, habitus and field will operate together to generate social actions. In this chapter, I will present some ways students themselves assess and perform gender in HYA High School.

Performing/doing gender is an active process. We are not simply born into a specific gender role, but construct gender as a *'routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment'* (West and Zimmerman 1987, p. 126), as Butler argued, gender is a *'doing'* before a *'being'* (1990, p. 34). Butler (1990, p. 45) also offered more detailed explanations on performing gender, as she argued that one's gender is constructed through one's own repetitive acts under *'a highly rigid regulatory frame'*. In a word, gender is not merely a dynamic process, but a regulated type of repeated process that cannot be freely chosen by individuals (Salih, 2006, p. 56). In this study, I found that students were performing gender in their daily lives in different ways.

The power of language in the process of constituting gender cannot be neglected. Briefly, language constructs and assesses gender identities (Butler, 1990, p. 74; Salih, 2006, p. 56). Given that the majority of gender stereotypes in this study were conveyed to students through speech and conversation within family and school, spreading gender stereotypes by discourse is both doing and producing gender. During the process, however, students are not passive receivers. These young people are trained by parents, teachers and peer groups to make use of cultural resources in different ways and behave in their everyday lives in light of gender roles. They also spread gender stereotypes inside their peer groups and influenced other peers in

performing gender (Thorne, 1993). Moreover, failure to express gender correctly in school leads to punishment from other students (Butler, 1988, p. 522).

I will begin this chapter with a discussion of the findings from students' answers about their attitudes towards gender stereotypes in subject selection. Then, I will also introduce students' self-expectations on career development. The findings in the first two sections showed that most students in my study had internalized gender stereotypes which have regulated and influenced both boys' and girls' academic choices and educational aspirations, and these impacts could remain in post-school life. The discourse and actions of these students which ascribed gender labels to knowledge, abilities, jobs and family roles also helped to reinforce the binary gender system. Next, it can be discovered from the data that students did not only do gender by themselves but also influenced each other in peer groups. The analysis shows that students maintain the current gender structure by marginalizing non-gender-stereotypic students and rewarding students who behave in line with gender norms. Finally, some girls showed that they have made some shifts when performing gender. They did choose to adopt some traits linked to masculinity, but they were actually creating new standards for feminine identity. In this situation, the gender system which highlighted men's superiority over women was reinforced and reproduced in the school environment rather than challenged.

## 7.1 Gender Labelling Subjects: Assessing Ability to Learn in light of Gender Stereotypes

In this section, I will describe students' attitudes towards gender stereotypes in academic choices. The research discovered that the majority of students in this study believed the saying that boys are more talented in maths and science subjects while girls are better at language and liberal arts subjects. In addition to Boy F and Boy G (both from a science class) who briefly concluded that the gender division in subjects and other areas must be *'natural'* and *'smart'* choices since it has lasted several decades, some students even used themselves as examples to prove the rationality of the gender stereotypes in learning. The argument of *'natural difference'* in some teachers' answers were reflected in the statement of some students:

*'When I did homework about Solid Geometry, I sometimes envied boys…I tried my best but still couldn't imagine the folding pattern. It never bothers boys. It seems to be easy for them…I guess that I need to acknowledge that there exists a natural difference between boys and girls…I'd better avoid learning Solid Geometry or even Maths in choosing a university subject.'* – Girl H from a science class

Girl H blamed her lack of interest and confidence in Solid Geometry on her sex. The term *'natural difference'* was repeated quite a few times in Chapter Six when teachers were asked to share their opinions about gender stereotypes in terms of ability to learn. I also asked Girl H if *'boys'* in her answers referred to a specific boy or all boys. Girl H answered that she previously learned about the *'natural differences'* between the two sexes from teachers, and the excellent performance of her desk mate in Solid Geometry had corroborated the knowledge that boys were generally talented in learning geometry. It is noteworthy that teachers made contributions which gendered subjects in school. In this situation, Girl H stereotyped Geometry (Maths) as a subject suitable for boys based on her school experience, which also shaped her future university subject selection.

Another two girls, Girl I and Girl J also expressed a similar viewpoint that boys were believed more talented than girls in Physics. Specifically, both girls felt diffident when they had been selected as candidates to participate in a national Physics contest. *'How can I compete with boys in this? I guess that I was selected to serve as a foil to other male students.'* Girl I added. It cannot be neglected that Girl I and Girl J had excellent academic records in the subject of Physics as HYA High School has quite strict selection standards in choosing contestants in order to assure that all candidates would present the top academic level of the school.

Then why had the two girls argued that their capabilities and potential were inferior to boys? Girl J said it was *'common sense'* since *'everyone said so'*, and Girl I mentioned that in addition to opinions of teachers and parents, she was the only one female contestant in her class. It appears that the perception of these girls about maths and science subjects, which was partly shaped by their school and family experiences, is solely linked to gender while it is independent of their actual academic performance (Eccles et al. 1990, p. 184; Tiedemann, 2002, p. 50). In all probability, the facts in the girls' life which seemingly proved gender stereotypes in

some subjects, like one boy's good ability in Geometry and that most contestants in a Physics contest were boys, could have already been constructed by gender stereotypes.

A female student, Girl E, described the paradox of *'natural'* differences in subjects and thinking modes that the *'natural'* thing she alleged can be reconstructed by environment. As Girl E claimed:

*'I think that there exist natural differences…Take myself as an example, I was a girly girl, you know, emotional and have liberal arts thinking style… And I chose science class. After nearly two years stay with male classmates, I changed…became more rational, more rigorous, like boys, have thinking style of science subjects.'* – Girl E from science class

Girl E, according to the conversation, was not interested in science at first. She chose a science class because she did not want to be separated from her three close friends. In her view, rational thinking style is a thinking style of science subjects, which was said to be male. Similarly, the traits of being *'girly'* were equated with having *'liberal arts thinking style'* in Girl E's narrative. That is, each subject and the related academic ability are gendered in her understanding. How different traits (e.g. emotional or rational) are stereotyped associated with sex by students will be discussed later, but it also can be discovered from Girl E's answer that her emotionality that was linked to girls and liberal arts subjects was '*changed*' when she was exposed to a class environment in which there were more male peers than females.

If all these gender differences in terms of subject choices, thinking modes and abilities to learn are *'natural'*, how could she change her thinking mode in two years? If rational thinking mode only belongs to males, how can Girl E obtain it without changing her gender during high school? Girl E just indicated that the ability of boys and girls to learn could be influenced by external factors. As some previous research has argued, these gender differences in confidence, interests, attitudes and choices, which could lead to different academic attainments are socially constructed and influenced by formal and informal pedagogies (Belcher et al. 2013, p. 193; Madden, 2004, p. 99; Phoenix, 2004, p. 35). The potential impacts of habitus in family and

school in shaping students' educational aspirations, decisions and choices on the basis of gender has been introduced in the previous two chapters.

It appeared that all girls mentioned above are victims whose attitudes, beliefs and ambitions in science subjects have been affected by gender stereotypes which surround them. However, using their own gender as a label to reflect their academic performance and ambitions in science subjects is in turn reinforcing the binaries that different gender groups are prescribed and expected to have different subject choices. In other words, when girls have internalized gendered habitus in school and link knowledge to gender, they have participated in constructing the culture that the subject of Maths and science subjects were more suited to males. As discussed in Chapter Three, gender stereotypes refer to traits that people ascribe to groups of people rather than traits of individuals (Guimond and Roussel, 2001, p. 276). In this respect, some girls have ascribed the good ability of a few boys in an assumed male-dominated subject, to the natural talent of all boys while ascribing some girls' gendered actions that could have already been influenced by gender stereotypes (e.g. lack of confidence in learning maths) to the natural problems of all girls in learning men's subjects. As a result, these girls also highlighted the binaries of two gender groups which could lead to limitations for individuals as well as the gender group. In a word, performance of the female students was shaped by gender, and meanwhile, helped to reproduce regulations of gender.

Similar things were believed to happen to boys as well:

*'I just don't know how to write a good composition. Girls, they are good at it, they just write anything at random and get higher marks in Chinese subject than us…I gave up, I prefer to spend a little bit more time in Maths, to make up the gap [between my marks in Chinese subject and girls']'* –Boy G from a science class

Boy G's response also indicated that he believed the stereotypic viewpoints linking subjects of language to girls. The boy expressed that he could do no more to improve his performance in Chinese since that is a girls' subject. As Song et al. (2016, p. 951) argued, in addition to impairing students' confidence and self-expectation, gendering subjects also decreased students' effort in the subjects associated with another gender group, as it would be meaningless to make an effort if

the gap is natural. It also should be pointed out that Boy G also implied that he could get higher marks than girls easily in Maths, which also conforms to the gender stereotype that boys are born with better ability in Maths and science subjects than girls. In this situation, gender difference and the culture of gendering subjects are reinforced again.

As a whole, there were five of seven boys in the study including Boy G who expressed the opinion that boys could not compete with girls in Chinese study/writing composition just because of sex. Some boys blamed the differences they alleged on a natural gap in talents between males and females, and the others blamed it on the current education and marking system, such as *'markers always love clear handwriting'* or *'the current standard of good composition requires the ability of perceptual description'*. The latter is in accordance with gender stereotypes as some teachers believed—girls are deemed cautious, careful and to be good at perceptual description, while boys lack the skills but have an ability of logical thinking, high efficiency, special imagination and creativity. Academic competences and the effort of girls were never considered.

There is one typical case which explored the situation of a male student whose academic performance seemingly did not conform to gender stereotypes:

***'Have you met any students in your class who were good at one or more subjects but obviously weak at some other subjects?'*** – I asked.

*'I am. I am not able to keep the balance of my study in all subjects. I am good at English subject, but weak in Maths…am I weird?'* – Boy F said.

***'Why did you think so?'*** – I asked.

*'Because boys are supposed to do Maths well, but I am really weak in maths. Also boys should feel miserable in learning English.'* – Boy F said.

***'But you are not?'*** – I asked.

*'No. Actually I enjoyed learning English. Learning a language needs accumulation, there is no shortcut, I think. I started to watch American TV series from a very early age.'* – Boy F answered.

Boy F is also the subject representative of English in his class chosen by the teacher. Boy F's answer revealed two things: firstly, he has recognized that his academic performance in Maths and English subjects were different to gender stereotypes he encountered in the past; Secondly, his response demonstrated that a good academic record in English or any other subject can be linked to many factors, such as interests *('enjoyed')*, early exposure *('watch American TV series from a very early age')* and effort *('accumulation', 'no shortcut')*. Besides, early exposure to a foreign language and the role as a subject representative mean that Boy F also gained parental support and teacher encouragement in learning English. Namely, learning a particular subject well could depend on various factors apart from *'natural'* talents.

When I asked him why he thought that boys should learn Maths well rather than English, he told me:

*'No one told me that, but you can feel the pressure… I just feel confused and embarrassed…sometimes I even think that if my English is not so good but Maths is better than now, I would feel less stressed…at least I would not reflect on myself in perspective of gender.'* – Boy F responded.

Contrary to the majority of male students in my study who have never realized the effect of gender stereotypes on their school experiences and even claimed that they have not been influenced at all, Boy F was the only one who talked frankly about the pressure caused by gender stereotypes. Boy F's answer demonstrated that male students could feel pressure when their academic performance does not conform to public assumptions about gender. Boy F even suggested that he would rather be weak in English but be good at Maths than the reverse, which revealed that the boy's self-evaluation was not only determined by his actual record in some subjects but also was influenced by whether his performance matched the standard linked with masculinity.

As Boy F did not show *'talent'* or *'gift'* in the subject that is stereotyped as masculine, he felt confused and started to doubt whether he performed his gender identity appropriately. The finding implies that students could learn one subject or do one thing well just in order to meet the requirement of the specific gender identity, namely, to do gender. Then negative consequences could be that: 1) for individuals,

students have to make time and energy to worry about being excluded from their gender group than merely to consider how to improve the performance in one subject; 2) for the group, using gender as a standard to evaluate oneself is reproducing the gender regime in the institution. However, it also appears that the unsatisfactory performance of Boy F in the subject assumed as male did not lead to strong exterior pressures on him. It could be ascribed to his outstanding performance in other subjects as well as his role as a subject representative, which still maintained men's superiority in learning capabilities as well as leadership in the school environment. From this perspective, Boy B's performance did no harm to hegemonic masculinity, namely that he still performed his gender appropriately.

Labelling something with one specific gender identity is to emphasize that the thing/behaviour is appropriate for one gender group, so doing gender in school is in fact learning and doing gender-appropriate behaviours (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 142). Combining these students' answers with the gendered evaluations on students' abilities to learn from teachers, when science subjects, creativity and logic thinking abilities are reproduced as masculine, it can be considered by each male and female student as a public guideline to evaluate their own gender expression and adjust their ways to conform to their gender identities, which in turn reinforces the binary gender system again.

Similar to some responses of teachers and parents, there was a boy who also believed that girls should be blamed for being influenced by gender stereotypes:

*'Why girls are supposed to be convinced by those bullshits? These stereotypes are stupid. You can choose whatever you want to do and whatever you want to learn. Girls can just choose science class, you can just ignore those sayings, you can show your competence, you can prove them wrong through your performance.'* –From Boy D from a liberal arts class.

Boy D's statement implied that in his minds, there would be no more gender bias if girls chose to ignore the stereotypical sayings. Actually, when talking about students' opinions about current limitations on boys and girls based on social expectations, all girl participants in this study expressed that it would be better being a boy since there were many limitations for girls. In contrast, all boys in the study,

including Boy D, expressed their desires to be boys although some of them, like Boy D, argued that socially gendered expectations could be ignored easily by individuals. The finding resonates with the research of Katila and Merilainen (1999, p. 169) which argued that men tend to retain their authority by assuming that women had an equal chance to compete but lack capability or chose not to. The authority of male students and how they keep these privileges will be discussed later in this chapter.

**7.2 Understanding of Masculinity and Femininity: Students' Gendered Self-expectations and Gendered Ways They Make Use of Cultural Capital**

Students' gendered actions were found both in academic and non-academic areas in this study, since behaviours, habits and careers are also stereotyped to the *'essentialness'* (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137) of female or male identity. For example, Boy G associated disruptive behaviours in class with boy's things:

*'I am a little bit talkative. I often talked in class. But I don't think it's a disadvantage…Sometimes teachers criticized me, not seriously. I don't care. If it can prove that I am quick-minded. I can understand all they taught in class, so I gave a response…In my class, intelligent boys are all chatty in class. It is an interaction… I don't think talking in class is a big deal.'* –Boy G from a science class answered when he was asked to describe his shortcomings.

Although Boy G mentioned *'talking in class'* when answering the question about his shortcomings, it seems that he did not deem it as a problem. In detail, Boy G equated talking and interrupting teachers in class as *'quick-minded'*. Also, he thought that it was acceptable and normal for *'intelligent boys'*. Previous studies (Beaman et al. 2006, p. 354; Legewie and DiPrete, 2012, p. 464; Younger and Warrington, 1996, p. 305) also argued that disruptive behaviours in class and rebelling against teacher's authority were labelled as masculine in some situations. From this premise, Boy G did not want to change his behaviour since he needed to keep his privileged position in the class through performing as a *'quick-minded'* and *'intelligent'* boy.

Furthermore, Beaman et al. (2006, p. 354) also indicated that boys who disrupt class discipline would be characterized by a high degree of creativity and expressiveness which could be considered as advantages for employers in a future

job market, which is also in line with the discussion in Chapter Six as to how some teachers constructed male superiority in school. The findings above suggest that school education was unable to eliminate the impacts of gender stereotypes. In contrast, educational institutions legitimize gender stereotypes through providing more opportunities than other places (like family) for comparing and contrasting students on the basis of gender. Then, students constantly learn gender from school experience through the constructed *'facts'* (e.g. most boys chose science class/other clever boys also talk in class) and then reproduce gender in the school environment again through their own performance.

While Boy G performed gender in high school life through his behaviours in the classroom, another male student, Boy A, expressed his gender identity in choosing university and a career. Unlike other students in my study who just shared their general expectations about future life, Boy A answered frankly that he would apply for a military academy in order to grow up as *'a real man/zhenzhengdenanren 真正的男人'*:

*'Military affairs could strengthen my will, build my body… In our generation, most of us are the only child in the family, today some boys are weak, are spoiled…Each man should get military training…A good cadet must be a real man, a strong, responsible man.'* – Boy A

Boy A's response mirrored West and Zimmerman's argument (1987, p. 129) that some roles in our society are already gender marked, and a cadet in the Chinese context is conceptualized as masculine (Ren and Zhang, 2017; Zhao, 2008). Specifically, necessary qualities for good military performance are always associated with the masculine, such as physical power, effectiveness, leadership and motivation (Boldry et al. 2002). It appears that Boy A's life choice has been guided by his sex as well as the gender requirements of masculinity he received in daily life. It is also noteworthy that he seemed to exclude boys who are *'weak/rouruode 柔弱的'*, *'spoiled/beijiaoguande 被娇惯的'* or would not get trained in military affairs from the group of *'real man'*. In addition to performing masculinity, Boy G also participated in producing strict rules of hegemonic masculinity, which marginalized

other forms of masculinity, especially those associated with feminine traits, in order to maintain the authority of the dominant style of masculinity.

All the students in this study were asked directly to share their understandings about the defining characteristics of men. Two girls said that they had no ideas about these. Among the remaining fifteen students: three girls and three boys assumed '*to be responsible/youzerenxinde 有责任心的*' was required for a man; four boys deemed it was necessary for a man to be '*strong-minded/yizhijianqiangde 意志坚强的*'; three boys and two girls emphasized '*be unemotional/buqingxuhuade 不情绪化的*'; two boys mentioned '*leadership*' and one boy linked '*muscle*' and '*Captain America*' to masculinity. Then these respondents were asked to describe what '*being a woman*' was to them. Sixteen students gave responses while one boy refused to answer: three boys and three girls used the word '*gentle/wenroude 温柔的*' to describe the characteristics of women in their eyes; four boys linked '*considerate/titiede 体贴的*' to femininity; three girls emphasized the word '*graceful/youyade 优雅的*'; three boys mentioned '*innocent/tianzhende 天真的*' and two boys highlighted '*good-looking*' when talking about the '*ideal woman/lixiangxingdenvren 理想型的女人*' in their minds.

By and large, these students' conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity were consistent with gender role requirements in Chinese traditional culture that girls are expected to be obedient, soft, and well-behaved as well as good at caring for others while boys are supposed to be mighty and act as mainstays of family (e.g. Leung, 2003, pp.360-361; Tang et al. 2010, p. 535). Some descriptions in students' answers were also repeated in the responses of teachers and parents when sharing their gender specific expectations of students. In addition to the typical sayings above, which were in accordance with the traditional gender expectations, another three respondents expressed their new expectations for feminine characteristics when talking about their expectations for a future partner or for themselves:

*'Did you see the movie Wonder Woman? She almost met all my fantasies about an ideal woman. She is not that kind of traditional women. She is strong and good at war. When she dated with her boyfriend, she also showed some boyish*

*characteristics, such as be piquant and humorous. At the same time, she kept some traditional female characteristics, like be gentle, be kind to everyone, be innocent like a child when she went to the outside world for the first time…She is perfect.'* – From Boy A from a science class

On the surface, Boy A showed his desire for a non-traditional woman with strong battle ability and some '*boyish/nanhaiziqide 男孩子气的*' characteristics. However, according to his description, this '*perfect*' woman still kept some traditional gender role expectations for females in daily lives and in romantic (heterosexual) relationships, such as '*gentle*' and '*innocent*'. Instead of breaking old gender stereotypes of femininity, Boy A actually proposed some new requirements for the emphasized femininity, namely, the '*ideal women*' he presumed. Then he was asked to explain his understandings about '*boyish*'. As he claimed:

*'Boyish characteristics refer to some good characteristics during interactions with others…When we described a girl as boyish, we meant that she was cute, humorous, decisive, easy-going and maybe lordly. I think that it's a compliment.'* – From Boy A

Boy A was also asked to share his viewpoints about *'girlish/nvhaiziqide 女孩子气的'*. He said: *'We tend to use girlish to describe one's personality, for example, an effeminate/yinroude 阴柔的 person.'*

Unconsciously, like subjects and abilities, character traits were also gendered by Boy A. Specifically, *'humorous/youmode 幽默的'* and *'piquant/wanpide 顽皮的'* were still associated with males, while *'gentle/wenroude 温柔的'* and *'innocent/tianzhende 天真的'* were linked to females. Boy A also expressed his opinion that male characteristics were more valuable than female characteristics, as he suggested that girls becoming boyish is forward-thinking while boys becoming girlish is retrograde. Besides, Boy A also implied that girls could not get traits he believed associated with boys easily. In this situation, he thought that girls who behave like a boy during interpersonal communication deserved a *'compliment'*. His views resonate with Maclean's research which argued that students, especially male students, tend to conceptualise the typical girlish behaviours of girls as being natural

whereas deeming girls' behaviours in masculine ways as valuable characteristics that require girls' extra efforts (Maclean, 2006, p. 146).

Boy A's perception about an *'ideal woman'* is parallel to Girl B's opinion about the *'modern woman'*. Girl B was one of the top students in the best liberal arts class in the third grade. She claimed:

*'Seriously, modern women are supposed to ignore those bullshits. Girls also can do well in any job…Of course she can be a leader. Girls also can be mighty/qiangshide 强势的 at work. I don't think there is a problem if a girl shows strong competence/qiangjindegongzuonengli 强劲的工作能力 at work.'* –From Girl B

Since Girl B mentioned '*at work*' twice, I asked Girl B to share her opinions about how modern woman should behave after work. As she answered: *'She can be a little bit bossy/zhuanduande 专断的 at work, but when communicating with others, she had better not be too bossy.'* Apparently, Girl B put forward different expectations for woman at work and in interpersonal communication. It can be concluded from her statement that girls can adopt a more masculine persona at work but are supposed to comply with traditional gender expectations for women after work. Girl B's classmate, Boy D as well as two girls Girl E and Girl F from the same science class held the similar viewpoint that girls can be bossy and even be aggressive at work which they believed to be associated with men, but only at work. Characteristics stereotyped as masculine were deemed inappropriate for women in daily lives after work. In other words, *'modern'* or *'ideal'* women were expected to adopt both masculinity and femininity which should be performed in different situations appropriately in light of the rules set by hegemonic masculinity.

It also should be pointed out that most girls in my study did not totally eschew the traditional stereotypes of femininity. They both endorsed the gender stereotypes of femininity (in domestic practices) whilst trying to challenge them in academic and career development (Anyon, 1983; Skeggs, 1988, p. 141). The slight changes in the new expectations of being an ideal woman may be in tandem with the changing position of women in contemporary China. It seems that there exist various new ways for girls to live, but the combination of new and traditional gender-related

expectations could place contradictory pressures on girls (Chan and Ng, 2012, p. 5; Maclean, 2006, p. 123; Sin et al. 2001).

Overall, when asking about students' self-expectations for their future career development, most girls in this study showed that they need to consider work-family balance in terms of job hunting, including one girl who wanted to find an easy and comfortable job to take care of children, and seven girls who wished to pursue success in personal development and meanwhile give consideration to taking good care of a family. Only two girls, Girl A and Girl H, expressed that they would only care about the salary and personal development in seeking a job. For now, even though taking no account of potential limitations these girls could meet in the future caused by gender bias in the job market or unequal support inside heterosexual marriage, the self-expectations of the majority of girls in this study were already gendered. The situation could shape these girls in assessing their gender identities and further lead them to make use of their capital/resources in a way in accordance with gender role expectations, like pursuing being marriageable and fulfilling the requirements as family carer.

In terms of male students, all ten boys argued that economic capability is very important to men. Four boys assumed that they would be the main breadwinner in the family. Typical narratives are listed below:

*'I want to be a leader, a senior management staff. Because I need to support the whole family, you know, spouse, children, old parents. I need to fight for a good economic condition.'* —From Boy C who was in a liberal arts class

*'You know, in our society, men are expected to support the whole family. I need to make more money…but I will try my best to spare some time for my family…you can't always ask your wife to do those things.'* –From Boy A who was in a science class

Responses of Boy C and Boy A also mirrored the current social expectations for men in marital relationships in China, that is, men are supposed to make the majority contributions to family income (e.g. Zhai and Gao, 2010). Specifically, Boy C showed his ambitions in career development and assumed that his future spouse would financially rely on him, while Boy A assumed that his future wife would take

responsibility for the majority of domestic work and he just needed to try his best to *'spare some time'* for family. The other two boys Boy D and Boy G both held the similar opinion that men should financially support the whole family.

It is noteworthy that all boys in this study came from double-earner families. With regard to these four boys: Boy A's mother and father work in different nationalized banks; Boy C's mother is a university lecturer and his father works in a real estate company; Boy D's mother works in the government and his father works in a financial company; Boy G's parents are both teachers of Maths, his mother works in an elementary school while his father works in a junior middle school. However, these mothers' economic contributions to the family did not change these boys' taken-for-granted assumptions that their future wife would economically rely on their husband and take main responsibility for caring for family.

Similarly, Girl D's working mother had not changed the girl's self-expectations, either.

*'I sometimes think that working hard is meaningless. My mother is brilliant, she got an MBA, works as a leader in her company. But so what? After work, she has to cook for Dad and me, clean the house, do every housework.'* – Girl D from liberal arts class said.

Girl D's narrative shows the cyclic endless procedure of constructing femininity. This girl has realized the double burdens for women. She has found that her mother and father both worked hard for the family, but only her mother had the extra burden of household tasks in addition to paid work. Remarkably, Girl D used the word *'meaningless/haowuyiyi 毫无意义'* to suggest that she cannot escape the gender regulation frame for females which still emphasizes women's domestic tasks, regardless of their economic contributions in a family or active role in society. In other words, a good academic degree, high salary as well as elevated social status still cannot change the traditional role of a mother/wife inside the family which mainly focuses on looking after family members and doing housework. As a result, Girl D's aspiration for working hard in the labour market has already been limited by the gendered practices she has observed in her family.

Girl D was complained of by her mother for using gender as an excuse to avoid learning hard in Maths (see Chapter Five). The mother argued that gender stereotypes did not matter, but Girl D's answer just explained that gender stereotypes did matter, since if a good performance in Maths or other subjects could not change any rules proscribed to women, then why should she work hard in it? It needs to be noted that, in Chapter Five, Girl D also mentioned that she had received enough love from her parents, so she did not care about her grandparents who had a preference for grandsons. The discussion about son-preference in these one-girl families demonstrated a slight shift by generations. However, gender-roles in the family still influenced the girl's understanding of femininity in everyday lives even though the gendered family habitus was not shown via clear discourse or treatment to the child. Maybe in the future, after encountering different factors in other public areas, these students could accept, select, adjust or even resist their ideologies achieved from family, but their original gendered value system had been instilled since they were born and was sedimented in daily family lives (Gorely et al. 2003, p. 441).

In addition to Girl D, the other example which demonstrates a participant has been influenced by the gender performance of family members is Girl I. In contrast to Girl D, Girl I found the positive consequence of conforming to the feminine from her cousin's life. As she told me that her cousin found an *'ideal job for girl'*, namely an *'easy'*, *'stable'* and *'comfortable'* job near home, and therefore lived *'a happy life'*. Girl I concluded that *'It is not bad if I live like that'*. I rarely heard this kind of answer from male students when talking about their expectations of a university subject or future job. The majority of boys in this study did not mention any role model, but all of them suggested that they expected themselves to have endless potential and possibilities in career development. These findings resonate with previous research which states that women have few positive role models in labour markets which, combined with the current gender stereotypes in school, could lead male and female students to have different career aspirations and trajectories (Drinkwater et al. 2008, p. 424).

**7.3 Performing Gender within Peer Groups: Students' Participation in Policing Masculinity and Femininity**

Thorne (1993, p. 67) suggested that students themselves play active roles in performing, acting, reworking and recreating gender rather than being merely passive learners of the framework of gender in school, which also can be discovered through the interviews of students in this research. Thorne (1993, p. 67) pointed out that children were influenced by others and influence others at the same time. In this section, I will explore how students learn, confirm and reproduce gender through supervising and influencing others' gender performance within peer groups.

In Chapter Six, I discussed the gender ratio of class cadres in the target school. In detail, all participating students came from seven different classes, and each class had two class monitors: one male monitor and one female vice-monitor. According to students' responses, both were selected by class advisors, and the explanation of selection criteria was introduced briefly in the last chapter. Here, I will introduce a girl's description of the work distribution between the two monitors in one class:

*'In fact, our vice monitor did all the things, organizing class events, checking our homework…the class monitor, he only did a few important things, like registering our ID card before some national unified examinations, or reporting the situation of our classroom to the Dean's office monthly…but you know, the reports were actually written by our vice monitor.'* –From Girl C

*'Is this arranged by your class advisor?'*– I asked

*'By themselves. I once heard that our vice class monitor wanted to discuss one thing with the class monitor, and he said "you do not need to ask me about these insignificant things". Maybe he thinks that only significant things are worth his attention or time, I guess.'* –Girl C added

*'Can you share your ideas about it?'*– I asked

*'I felt that the girl [the vice class monitor] really liked doing these things, and all of us think that she did them well. She is quite patient. Boys control the overall*

*situation, girls are circumspect, the working distribution makes sense.'* – From Girl C

According to Girl C's response, the working relation between the male monitor and female vice monitor sounds more like the one between a boss and a secretary. Girl C suggested that the female vice class monitor did not raise an objection to the monitor's behaviour, neither had this study found any other student who questioned the situation. I did not interview the monitor or the vice monitor, so I cannot attribute their behaviours only to the influence of gender stereotypes. However, they were both performing gender. Specifically, the male monitor was performing masculinity through performing power, while the female one was performing femininity through performing obedience.

Girl C's attitude also reflects that she has combined the working relations between the two monitors of different sexes with the current gender stereotypes, and she has found the linkage: the situation conforms to the current gender structure— masculine means leadership/dominance, feminine means supporting. Besides, the female vice monitor, who shouldered most tasks in the class, did everything well in Girl C's eyes, which in turn helped reinforce the gendered work distribution as Girl C argued that *'it makes sense'.* From this perspective, Girl C's understanding of two gender identities was reinforced by the teachers' intentional or unconscious arrangements about class cadres, as well as her peers' practices. Both the monitor and the vice monitor were performing gender, and the other students who take the arrangement for granted were also participating in constructing the system of gender which highlights men's superiority to women in the area of work.

The following case will introduce how students treated peers who did not do gender appropriately:

*'We have one sissy/niangniangqiangde 娘娘腔的 boy in our class…When he spoke to others, his voice sounded like a whisper, if you asked him to speak it again, he would blush and almost cry. Come on, his voice was too low to be heard, we just asked him to repeat it, his reflection made us feel that we were bullying him. Every boy in my class could not bear his characteristics, not like a real man.'* – From Boy B

Boy B's response indicated that a male student with a quiet voice and a shy personality had been marginalized by other boys in his class, since the shy boy did not behave *'like a real man'*. Also, in Boy B's understanding, the boy's characteristics and behaviours did not conform to the rule of masculinity, so the shy boy's performance could be deemed as in accordance with female identity, as Boy B called him a *'sissy boy'*. Boy B's statement emphasized the binary gender system in which if a male's traits or practices were classified as non-male stereotypical, then it would be labelled as feminine. As Frawley (2005, p. 222) said, students who hold gender binary opinions failed to recognize that there is a middle ground for people who are not gender-stereotyped as typically masculine or feminine.

In fact, the boy in Boy B's answer is performing gender. However, only behaviours which accord with the gender binary system and the heterosexual identities were identified as *'essential'* and *'natural'* according to the current hegemonic discourse (Salih, 2006, p. 57). In other words, without the institution of heterosexuality, gender would be meaningless (Blaise, 2005, p. 86). From this premise, hegemonic masculinity set up regulations to maintain the current gender order, and those who fail to do gender in line with the norms are punished (Butler, 1988, p. 522). Therefore, Boy B's classmates were all performing gender and reproducing a gender binary system through marginalizing the boy who did not act the particular masculinity legitimated by the gender regime correctly.

Another boy's case also exposed that in addition to doing gender-appropriate behaviours, students were under peer pressure to join the team in punishing non-gender stereotypical behaviours:

*'The sissy boy in my class is not popular. I didn't mean to discriminate against him. But you know, most of the students inherited their parents' old traditional values. Even when there are some people who have modern or open-minded opinions, like me, the number of the latter group is much smaller than the former one. If you don't laugh at the sissy boy together with most classmates, you may be marginalized as well… Sometimes marginalization was forced. You know that it was wrong, but you had no choice. The price of resistance is high. And when my friend mocked the boy, all I needed in that moment is to express my support for my friend and the mockery ended quickly.'* – From Boy E

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Boy E argued that questioning gender rules within peer groups was unadvisable and pointless since the majority of peers in his class inherited gender stereotypes from their parents. Boy E showed that he was different to others since he did not agree with the traditional regulation of gender. However, the boy could not express his opinions when seeing others mocking a *'sissy boy'*. He suggested that stopping others from punishing non-masculine boys in public has potential risks. The potential price is that the one who raised an objection to the peers could be marginalized as well. In this respect, it would be much easier for students to keep silent and accept the maintaining behaviours for gender stereotypes (Brink and Stobbe, 2009, p. 461). Therefore, the norms of masculinity were highlighted again in the school environment through marginalization of male peers who fail to perform hegemonic masculinity as well as the other students' acquiescence to the marginalization within the peer group.

Generally, male students in my study were unanimous that they would never make friends with a *'sissy boy'*. This is not a phenomenon merely in male peer groups, in Lees' work (1993, pp. 266-272), one strategy for girls to deal with sexist abuse is avoidance and resignation. Specifically, this includes changing behaviour to avoid abuse, ignoring the abuse as well as avoiding girls whose reputations were already attacked (Lees, 1993, p. 268). In other words, students avoid being excluded through avoiding same-gender peers who were labelled as inappropriate in performing gender. To sum up, in my study, students are under pressure to conform to their gender identity as well as to surveil peers' performances.

Female students were also found to join male students to ridicule and bully boys who performed differently compared to proper masculinity in girls' eyes (Claire, 2004, p.10). Girl F told me that a boy in her class *'always twisted his fingers and lowered his head'* when talking to others. Girl F even used the word *'disgusting'* to describe this behaviour. Just like the two shy boys in Boy B's and Boy E's classes, this boy also received punishment from peers, as Girl F said, *'Not only boys want to punch his face, we girls do not want to talk to him.'* The boy was punished by classmates for failing to express his gender in light of the hegemonic masculinity. Girl F also labelled this boy as *'a sissy boy'*.

It is noteworthy that when I asked if there was any girl in Girl F's classroom who behaved like the shy boy she alleged as *'sissy'*, her answer was no[12]. Then Girl F added that other classmates cannot stand the boy since he did the thing that *'even we girls disdain to do'*. The additional answer of Girl F revealed two points that: firstly, according to the gender binary system, when a male's actions did not conform to hegemonic masculinity, he would be labelled as girly/womanish, although no girls around him had shown the same behaviour. Secondly, bashfulness maybe considered as a disadvantage in interpersonal communication in Girl F's class, and she suggested no one else behaved like the boy when talking to classmates. From this premise, the situation that no girls showed the trait of bashfulness which were believed as feminine could also result from the fact that girls in this class were attempting to avoid manifesting some feminine traits to fit in to the class environment which devalues femininity. In a word, shyness/bashfulness, as a perceived inferior trait, was defined as femininity through students' discourse to keep the dominant position of masculinity. As Butler (1988, p. 522) argued, in addition to actions, language inside the class helped to recreate the identity of gender.

Another case of Boy A demonstrated the whole process of how males supervise and influence same-gender peers to maintain hegemonic masculinity through discourse:

*'I intended to apply for universities abroad. Two of my friends argued that going abroad for education only suits girls. They said that if a girl has received further education in foreign countries, she can marry a better man. It is like the gold-plating. They said that I was a boy, even if I had a foreign diploma, I could not marry a rich man, and I still need to come back to my country and develop my career from the very beginning. I did not agree with my friends at first, but my friends convinced me. Boys need to fight for good economic capability, right?'* – Boy A said.

Boy A was discouraged from getting further education abroad by his best friends, since the choice has been connected with girls, as they alleged. In order to convince Boy A, the first step other boys took was labelling one specific behaviour as female, *'only suits girls'* as they argued. Then, the two male students openly disparaged the choice linked to girls. In detail, they stereotyped a girl's aspiration of

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[12]There were eighteen girls including Girl F in the science class.

getting education abroad as merely attempting to be marriageable, namely, *'marry a rich man/jiageyouqianren 嫁个有钱人'*. Combined with other cases in my study, the first two steps can be transposed. It could mark some inferior behaviours as feminine or devalue some behaviours connecting to femininity. Next, the two friends of Boy A emphasized the difference between male and female identity, or precisely, male's superiority to women. They argued that men should work hard independently, while women depend on others/men to live.

As a result, Boy B seemed to be convinced. He gave up the study plan voluntarily or under pressure, in order to disassociate himself from the feminine, or frankly, from the inferior (Renold, 2004, p. 259). The case also mirrored the culture that Chinese women and men are believed to use education-based capital in different ways. Cultural capital in developing or undeveloped countries sometimes can be institutionalised through the accrual of gaining an overseas education (Holloway et al. 2012, p. 2289). However, for women, cultural capital they gained through overseas study has a potential to lead to a high social status through finding a male spouse with higher status in the current marriage market (Kataoka, 2015, p. 78), while the way women use cannot apply to men. In this situation, according to Boy A and his friends, the overseas education for boys is meaningless in increasing male's chance to get success in the labour market.

It can be discovered from the cases above that boys who showed non-gender stereotypic behaviours will be punished by not merely other boys but also girls. As a result, other students would learn from these boys' result what behaviour is inappropriate for a male, then rules for masculinity were reinforced under peer pressure. However, Girl H mentioned the different experience of a boy in her class who had a strong academic record but did not act like other boys. According to Girl H, the boy was not like a typical boy since he liked *'reading novels'* and *'writing poetry'* rather than going out with other boys to play basketball or football. As Gorely et al. (2003, p. 46) argued, basketball and football are still perceived as stereotypically masculine. Girl H highlighted that the boy did very well in each subject especially the subject of Chinese, so all classmates in her class liked to ask the boy for suggestions on homework.

The finding suggests that Girl H also gender-labelled different hobbies and behaviours. She judged other students on the basis of gender standards in her understanding, and she argued that the boy's behaviours did not conform to typical boys' performance. However, she also suggested that the boy in her class who likes doing *'girly things'* was not marginalized by classmates, on the contrary, he was popular among peers since students got help from him in homework. Girl H's comments on the boy supports previous studies that the conceptions of masculinity could be influenced by school environment through peer cultures (Kessler et al. 1985, p. 42; Legewie and DiPrete, 2012, p. 464). Since the target school HYA is an elite high school, the academically oriented environment in the institution constructed the masculinity which promotes strong academic competition as an important aspect of masculine identity (Legewie and DiPrete, 2012, p. 464).

In this situation, good records in examinations will be linked to good competence, natural talent and even leadership, which is always associated with hegemonic masculinity and is seen as deserving to be honoured (Kessler et al. 1985, p. 42). As a result, although the boy did some non-masculine stereotypic behaviours, he was not marginalized by other students. In other words, some boys are allowed to blur gender boundaries as long as they participated in hegemonic activities (Renold, 2004, p. 254), like showing good academic reports in an elite school. From the perspective of maintaining superiority of masculinity, the boy in Girl H's statement performed his gender identity correctly.

In contrast to students' almost unified negative feedback when talking about boys who did not behave in accordance with the hegemonic masculinity, students showed diverse attitudes to girls' non-stereotypical behaviours. To be specific, the majority (thirteen) of seventeen students in this study expressed that they themselves were *'boyish girls'* or that they had some female friends who were like boys. According to their statements, all these *'boyish girls'* were accepted and sometimes favoured by both genders since those girls were described as *'sincere/zhenchengde 真诚的'*, *'easy-going/suihede 随和的'*, *'generous/dafangde 大方的'*, *'brave/yonggande 勇敢的'* and emotionally stable. In line with the discussion above, the acceptance of girls' movement towards boys' roles results from the ideology that masculine qualities and pursuits are constructed as superior to feminine ones. Some concepts

like toughness, aggressiveness, courage or generosity are good personalities for individuals, but in patriarchal society they were linked only to males (Harris et. al, 2011, p. 54). In this situation, girls who wanted to fit in with the class environment chose to get rid of some traditional feminine attributes and demonstrate masculine qualities (Priola, 2007, p. 36). Girls' denial of femininity will be discussed in the next section of undoing gender.

Boy B, however, was the only one who claimed that a girl in his class was annoying since she did not *'behave like a girl at all'*. Compared to the first case in this section, Boy B described a different dynamic of two class monitors in his class:

*'We have one male class monitor and one female vice monitor…They were selected by our class advisor, but they always had arguments…To be honest, our vice monitor is too bossy. You know, she is so stubborn/guzhijijiande 固执己见的, she always thinks that she is right but others are wrong. She didn't behave like a girl at all. We boys call hermiejueshitai 灭绝师太[13] (the Destroy Nun) in private.'* – Boy B said.

**'How about the monitor?'** – I asked.

*'He is bossy, too. Outstanding boys are more or less bossy. They are two similar persons, so they have arguments, you know, one nation couldn't have two kings/yishanrongbuliaoerhu 一山容不了二虎.'* – Boy B concluded.

Boy B declared that being stubborn and bossy was a problem for female students, but not for male students. Specifically, Boy B equated being bossy with being outstanding for boys but being annoying for girls. Also, he implied that when a male and a female had arguments at work, he tended to blame girls since females were expected to listen to others' opinions and be obedient to males. Compared to those harmless *'boyish girls'* in other students' responses, the female class monitor in Boy B's class had challenged the male dominant position since she used non-feminine attitudes to interact with the male class monitor. In other words, the

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[13]The Destroy Nun is a character in a famous Chinese Kung fu novel called Dragon Buster. She took charge of Emei which was one of the four biggest organizations for developing martial arts in Chinese history. According to the novel, the Destroy Nun was an old, powerful, rigorous, crotchety and cruel woman that never got married in her whole life. It is generally used to describe mature single women who are bossy and mean in peoples' assumptions, e.g. female PhDs.

ascendancy of hegemonic masculine was threatened. According to Messerschmidt's research, males sustain the authority of hegemonic masculinity in school *fields* in two ways: policing hegemonic masculinity and bullying *'masculine girls'* who challenged the exclusive possession of hegemonic masculinity by males (Messerschmidt, 2009, p. 87). As a result, Boy B and his classmates used an unfriendly nickname to ridicule the female class monitor, to punish her inappropriate gender performance.

To sum up, on one hand, students shape peers' behaviours to conform to a gender binary system dominated by hegemonic masculinity; on the other hand, students' behaviour is *'tried out'* on peers and they adjust behaviours according to peers' feedback, e.g. if they are rewarded, they will continue; if they are punished, they tend to stop (Witt, 2006, p. 3). However, the consequence of gender nonconformity differed for female and male students. Specifically, *'sissy boy'* is seen as a pejorative label for boys who did not meet the requirements of the hegemonic masculinity whereas the label of *'boyish girl'* may be given to girls who reject what are perceived to be negative values of females and embraced positive values associated with male roles (Hibbard and Buhrmester, 1998, p. 194; Martin, 1990, p. 164). Besides, both girls and boys in this study tend to react harshly to boys who perform gender roles inappropriately (Fagot, 1994, p. 60). In one word, students collude with each other to perform gender and supervise each other to maintain the superiority of hegemonic masculinity in the school environment.

## 7.4 Are Girls Undoing Gender?

In the previous section, I mentioned that some girls described themselves as *'boyish girls'*. One of these girls, Girl E, expressed her scorn clearly at typical girly things, such as *'crying'* and *'discussing gossip/liaobagua 聊八卦'*. Girl E argued that she was *'not a typical girl/bushinazhongdianxingdenvsheng 不是那种典型的女生'* since she has some boys' persona, being *'forthright and sincere/zhishuaide 直率的'*. Girl E also said that she did not have many female friends since typical girls are *'trouble-makers/mafanzhizaozhe 麻烦制造者'*. It seemed that Girl E had devalued femininity at first and rejected all *'negative'* things labelled as feminine. The rejection to the *'typical girl'* suggested that Girl E had a degree of shame and fear of

femininity (Reay, 2001, p, 162). Powell et al. (2009, pp.418-420) argued that women use different ways to fit into male-dominated areas, including: acting like one of the men; accepting gender discrimination; fighting to achieve a reputation to prove oneself and adopting an anti-feminine approach.

Girl E seemed to find an integrated way to fit in the current situation, rejecting femininity as well as performing traits associated with masculinity. Girls' self-description as *'boyish'* showed that they intended to keep distance from a traditional femininity, which has been interpreted by some scholars as the practice of doing *'a female masculinity'* (Danielsson, 2011, p. 28; Halberstam, 1998). Even though the practice is for *'fitting in'* the school-based environment which favours masculinity and is not helpful in challenging the current gender structure (Powell et al. 2009, p. 412), it does challenge the understanding of the simple binary gender system and the heteronomy at some degree, since it shows that not all women are happy to be feminine (Danielsson, 2011, p. 28).

The denial of femininity actually reproduced hegemonic masculinity which upheld the masculine and devalued the feminine as reality again (Butler, 1988, p. 526; Van den Brink and Stobbe, 2009, p. 453). In this situation, new rules have been created for females, which require girls to reject some feminine attributions in the public sphere (at work/in the school) to adapt to the hegemonic culture and meanwhile keep some feminine traits in the private sphere to fulfil men's desire (in heterosexual marriage). Now the pressures on girls come from both the old gender stereotypes that girls are expected to behave like girls and the new requirements that girls have to exhibit resistance to some traits linked to the feminine, in order to fit in to the current gendered public and private areas which both value masculinity over femininity (Priola, 2007, p. 36).

To conclude, challenging gender stereotypes could not succeed within the binary gender system, and gender stereotypes were made to legitimize the binary frame. Female students, like Girl E, have undone the feminine, but failed to challenge the gender system. Although these girls spent huge amounts of time and energy to prove that they had met the new requirements, they helped to preserve and reinforce the ascendancy of masculinity rather than change the inferiority of femininity. The various actions keep recreating and maintaining the gender structure.

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Therefore, students' performances of gender are not merely the result of a constructed gender system, but also part of the process of producing gender.

**Summary**

Students' performances of gender were interpreted by adults as the inevitable consequence of natural differences between sexes rather than a construction of gender (Messner, 2000, p. 770). However, the research discovered that students' gendered actions in school were deeply influenced by the social gender order and in turn reinforced the gender scheme which emphasized the domination of masculinity. It also can be concluded from all the cases that students were no longer passive receivers of gender stereotypes. They also play active roles in spreading, reinforcing and reproducing the gender system through their daily actions and interactions with the exterior world (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Thorne, 1993).

This chapter also discovered that the institutional gendered practices were rarely questioned by students. The tendency for male students to exhibit traditionally masculine qualities and misogyny in their school lives is not surprising given that most boys grow up in a culture which emphasizes men's superiority to women. From this premise, students performing gender in school is in fact performing the power relation between males and females (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009, p. 442). In other words, male students have been trained to do dominance and superiority, while female students have been shaped to do submission and inferiority (Lester, 2008, p. 280; West and Zimmerman, 1987).

The first step for male students to maintain the superiority of masculinity is to police masculinity. They collude with each other to label superior traits/behaviours as masculine and then define non-masculine behaviours as inferior and associated with feminine. As a result, the binary and unequal gender structure is constructed. All male students were under pressure to legitimate and internalize the rules for the masculine, or their failure to do masculinity correctly will lead to punishment within peer groups. Both male and female students make contributions in reinforcing the ascendancy of masculinity through marginalizing boys' nonconformity to hegemonic masculinity.

On the other hand, some girls realized the unequal gender structure and wished to join the powerful position. In this situation, these girls have to reject feminine traits in some particular areas and adopt some positive features of the masculine group to fit in to the current condition which devalued femininity. Girls' shame and denial of the feminine revealed that they had already internalized the institutional gender regime and began to consider themselves, as well as other same-gender peers, as inferior (Bohmer and Briggs, 1991, p. 159). In other words, female groups internalize oppression and at the same time help to perpetuate the unequal gender structure rather than challenge the situation. However, those girls' behaviours should be seen as one of the consequences of the unequal gender structure rather than the cause (Bohmer and Briggs, 1991, p. 159).

To sum up, girls and boys are trained to perform gender appropriately under the gender binary frame in school environment. In group lives, students also supervised each other at following gender regulations. From this premise, students are part of the issue of constructing gender. As a result, students, as individual agents, will inhabit a habitus which integrates their gendered school experiences and influences their future life story; school, as a *'field'*, its institutional habitus will be shaped by students' acquired and ingrained gender dispositions and help to structure students' gendered school life. The power relationship between genders was constantly produced as reality in the institution.

# Chapter 8

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Introduction

This thesis explored the process of reproducing gender stereotypes in one Chinese high school –HYA High School in Jiangsu Province in East China. After reviewing the research background in Chapter Two and setting up a theoretical framework in Chapter Three, a qualitative research methodology was carried out and described in Chapter Four to disclose the dynamic process of reproducing gender stereotypes in the target high school. Then, the following three chapters (Chapter Five to Seven) each focused on a particular theme emerging from the rich data of the qualitative study. These findings are summarised as: the influence of parents on students' academic choices and educational aspirations; the influence of teachers on students' educational choices and school experiences; the gender performances of students and their active roles in the process of reproducing gender stereotypes. How and why parents, teachers and peer groups function as part of the gender issue in school environment have been presented through the three empirical findings chapters.

Throughout the conclusion, common gender issues experienced across the world as well as the specific problem resulting from the traditional culture and policies in the Chinese context will be uncovered. The research findings suggest that it is impossible to separate gender issues in education from the political, historical, cultural and language environment of a state. In other words, each gender issue is more than a gender issue. The key findings also show that it is important to change our attitudes toward gender issues in China. The gendered habitus in both the private and public spheres which could lead to the gendered ways young people accumulate and the cultural capital they make use of, have the potential to shape educational aspirations and life opportunities of both boys and girls. The situation both reflects and reinforces the gender structure in society.

My personal reflection about the process of data collection and the findings will be concluded in this chapter. The contributions and limitations of the study will also be reviewed. Overall, the purpose of this study is to understand the causes, the

process and the impacts of the reproduction of gender stereotypes in school institutions. Hopefully this research will provide new directions for further studies about gender issues in the educational field of mainland China.

**8.1 A Brief Presentation of Critical Research Findings**

In this section, I will examine and conclude the key findings of this research from three perspectives.

*8.1.1 The Value Carried in Language: 'Sex' or 'Gender'?*

As discussed in Chapter Two, the term *'gender'* was introduced to China in the 1980s and started to arouse public interest during the 1990s after the Fourth World Conference on Women held in the Capital of China in 1995 (Chen, 2010, pp.134-137; Yang, 2015, p. 158). However, in the Chinese context, gender is normally translated using either exactly the same word as sex—*'sex/xingbie 性别'*, or is translated by scholars into a word that is literally an expansion of the concept of sex—*'social sex/shehuixingbie 社会性别'*. As I introduced in Chapter Four (Section 4.4.3), I have not got the solution to express the term *'gender'* in the Chinese language environment. So I avoided using *'gender'* directly during interviews. The responses of participants reflect that they lacked the understanding of gender which particularly means a social process that sustains and reproduces social relations within a rigid frame (Connell, 2002; Butler, 1988; 1990).

The research discovered that quite a few respondents in HYA High School, who expressed the view that the differences between girls' and boys' intellects, abilities and personalities are *'natural'*, are equating the term *'gender'* with *'sex'*. While considering gender bias as a rational conclusion based on *'natural'* differences between biological sexes, the different treatments and expectations of students are disguised as a result of natural difference rather than as one cause of inequality in school. Through legitimating gender stereotypes as innate and rational, possibilities to question the unequal gender relations are covered up, and the gender roles within the gender binary system are reinforced.

Remarkably, some participants in this study did realize that cultural factors existed, such as the historical gender division of labour and widespread gender–

specific expectations, which could influence students' educational aspirations and academic choices. However, these respondents tended to believe that gender stereotypes can be overcome through individual efforts. It appears that they neglected the unequal power relationship between two genders. The lack of understanding about the structural reasons that make contributions to produce gender also leads to the phenomenon that people are still simply divided into two gender categories based on sex in China, men and women. Combined with the Chinese traditional culture which highlights adults' duties to reproduce offspring and the importance of the gender binary system in sustaining social harmony (see details in Section 2.1.2, Chapter Two), all participants in this study assumed that marriage and romantic relationships they talked about were heterosexual.

Either interpreting students' life trajectories as an inevitable consequence of natural differences between sexes or exaggerating individual freedom in life choices which have already been stereotyped and associated with gender, failed to understand gender as a set of repeated social practices under a strict regulatory frame (Butler, 1988; 1990). The former deemed gender as a solely static identity people are born into rather than a routine, dynamic and ongoing social process, while the latter neglected the rigid gender regulations which require people to perform masculinity and femininity appropriately in order to maintain the binary gender system (Butler, 1988). The research discovered that within the interplay of gender habitus in family and school, almost all students know the gender requirements they have to fulfil as well as the boundaries they cannot cross. In other words, girls and boys are trained to perform gender correctly within the expected sex roles under the gender binary system. Failure to do so could lead to risks such as being mocked and bullied by other peers, as Chapter Three introduced, gender is a regime with a rewards and punishment mechanisms (Butler, 1988, p. 522; Blaise, 2005, p. 86).

It is interesting that a few boys in this study behaved in *'other'* ways which are generally associated with females, such as being better at English than Maths or writing poetry instead of playing sports, and were not marginalized in school. These boys performed their masculinity through either building strong academic records or acting as a class cadre. As Connell (1996) argued, forms of masculinity are different since men in different social groups own different social resources. Within the

interplay between gender, race and class, there exists a dominant form of masculinity—hegemonic masculinity, which expresses an ideal masculinity linked to dominance, power and physical strength (Connell, 1996). In line with the discussion in Chapter Seven, in an academically oriented elite high school, these boys' performances and roles in class are linked to competence, natural talent and leadership, which are important aspects of hegemonic masculinity (Kessler et al. 1985; Legewie and DiPrete, 2012). Therefore, some boys who have outstanding academic outcome are allowed to blur gender boundaries as long as they have participated in hegemonic activities and do no harm to the superiority of masculinity in the school environment (Renold, 2004, p. 254). In one word, within conditions, masculinity can be performed in different ways.

Noteworthily, the sets of hegemonic masculinity are not fixed, instead, they can be diversified along with the changes in the wider society (Connell, 1998, p. 3). In this situation, the practices of hegemonic masculinity in this specific elite research school could be different from forms in other school settings. However, this research does not mainly focus on boys' social practices when adopting the concept of hegemonic masculinity, instead, it intends to explore the process by which hegemonic masculinity helps legitimate patriarchy in which males are dominant while females are subordinate. From this perspective, whether hegemonic masculinity has been renamed in different research, as *'elite masculinity'* (Goh, 2015, p. 137) or *'exemplary masculinity'* (Liu, 2017), and no matter whether the form of hegemonic masculinity emphasizes economic competition, parental wealth, intellectual ability or individual achievement in different cultural settings, all of these forms can be connected with authority, success, power and dominance. Considering the reasons above, the notion of hegemonic masculinity fits the case in a specific Chinese elite school well.

Combined with the fact that hegemonic masculinity subordinates all forms of femininity (Connell, 1996), it is argued by this study that boys have more options than girls. As Treviño et al. (2017) demonstrated, the masculine-gendered system maintains the current unequal gender relation through setting barriers for women in different ways. From this perspective, it is no wonder that some girls chose to adopt an anti-feminine approach to fit into the school environment in which resources are

unequally distributed based on gender. However, in addition to rejecting some feminine attributions at school/work to maximize their own capitals and benefits gained in the public sphere, these girls meanwhile have to keep some feminine traits to fulfil the requirements of hegemonic masculinity in their future heterosexual marriage. Otherwise, in a patriarchal society, women who fail to enter into, or act as an ideal wife in, a heterosexual marriage in which rules are set up for men's benefits and desires, may well face pressure from both family and the public.

Throughout the three empirical chapters, the process of reproducing gender in the school environment is the process of sustaining power relations in the binary gender system which prioritises men and masculinity while devaluing women and femininity (Schilt and Westbrook, 2009). In this context, boys and girls both have to achieve some requirements, but the rewards when they succeed are totally different, namely that there is no form of femininity which offers girls the ascendency that the dominant male group hold (Martino, 1997; Schippers, 2007). As both hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity sustain the current gender structure (Connell, 2002, p. 73; Schippers, 2007, p. 87), participants from different gender groups all practiced gender relations through different forms of performances within the school context in order to protect the male-dominant position.

Overall, this thesis extended the discussion of gender relations and the forms of hegemonic masculinity practiced in the target school: they existed in thinking and actions of teachers, parents and students, and meanwhile, they still controlled and guided the practices of all forms of femininities and other masculinities. In this situation, male superiority is reproduced consistently in the school environment, and each individual is both the recipient and the participant of reproducing the gender system (Wallis, 2011).

*8.1.2 Family Habitus and Institutional Habitus: the Role of Parents, Teachers and Peer Groups*

The findings in Chapter Five to Seven have shown that parents, teachers and students all participate in the process which shapes young people's life trajectories on the basis of gender. Specifically, Chapter Five has revealed how students' educational aspirations and weights they need to place on life development are

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gendered through a gendered family habitus which can be recognized through parents' dispositions, expectations and investment on the basis of their child's gender. Chapter Six has discovered how students' school experiences and academic choices are gendered through the gendered school habitus that can be reflected through teachers' gendered evaluations of students' intellects and different attention distribution to students based on gender in both the formal and hidden curriculum. Chapter Seven has discussed students' self-expectations, judgement of peers and attitudes towards accumulating and taking advantage of capitals they have gained in educational institutions which have been shaped by gender.

Through the interplay between school and family, the values of students' education-based cultural capitals are gendered, or more precisely, are stratified based on gender. Boys who have already gained support and resources from family in accumulating capitals through pursuing academic/career development are also rewarded well in the school environment in which the dominant habitus is characterised by the values of the dominant group, namely the hegemonic male group in the gender order (Mennesson, 2012; Silva, 2005; Sullivan, 2016). From this perspective, male students who possessed more dominant group-desired capitals from family and school than their female counterparts are doubly-rewarded in both the private and the public spheres. However, although school and family both make contributions to constructing male privileges, this research still discovered that differences exist between the forces of family and educational institutions.

In line with the discussion in Chapter Two, the Reform and Opening Up Policy (1978), which adopted a market-oriented economy to replace the central planned economy, brought about national and dramatic economic development. The increase in household income combined with the enforcement of the One-Child Policy (1979-2015) in urban areas generated a large amount of one-daughter families in which girls do not need to compete with their brothers and have the chance to inherit all the resources from their parents. These one-daughter families partly contributed to the rise in the social status of women in Chinese urban areas (Lee, 2012, p. 45). Combined with the undeveloped old age security system in China, parents with one-daughter in this study showed a tendency to give the only female

offspring support and investment in pursuing benefits in school, as the more capitals the only child gets, the more benefits parents will gain.

However, compared with boys, girls were expected by parents to prioritise future heterosexual marriage and family life rather than personal growth when considering academic and career development paths. As identified in Chapter Five, parents with one daughter are in a dilemma. On the one hand, parents hope these girls will maximize their own benefits through adopting socially-desired traits that are always associated with men; on the other hand, these parents encourage these girls to fulfil emphasized femininity in order to avoid potential risks, such as being marginalized in school or facing pressure from a patriarchal society. In terms of boys' parents, the data suggests that most of them realized male privileges in the current society and tended to take advantage of those privileges in helping their sons to gain profits in school as well as in the labour market. However, boys' parents also knew the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity their boys need to comply with, so they showed tolerance when boys select liberal arts subjects since employers prefer males no matter which area they study, but expressed worries when boys showed personalities that are stereotyped as feminine which are *'not desirable for a boy'*.

Compared with some parents' adapting, adjusting, negotiating and questioning gender stereotypes inside the family, a gender bias which values boys and masculinity while it devalues girls and femininity in the school environment is systematic and pervasive. Given that education mirrors and legitimates an unequal distribution of resources according to social structure (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Swartz, 1997), the habitus in school inevitably complies with the habitus of the privileged group in society (Dunne, 2007, p. 509; Sullivan, 2016, p. 149). This also explains why the institutional habitus is less fluid than habitus in the private sphere (Reay, 1998, p. 521). From this premise, considering that gender also constitutes a social hierarchy, school has its own power and methods to reproduce the current gender structure (Wang, 2007, p. 8; Yang, 2012, p. 80). In turn, the dominant groups who get privileges in patriarchal society tend to use school education as a tool to maintain existing inequalities in gender structures (Brink and Stobbe, 2009, pp.461-462).

In this study, through legitimating the hegemonic position of intellects, abilities and personalities that are linked to a particular gender—male (Dunne, 2007, p. 509), the norm associated with hegemonic masculinity in the educational institution is, I would suggest, constructed based on the taken-for-granted assumption that males will inhabit the role as active subjects of society while women remain inferior and excluded (Skrla, 1999, p. 12). The research discovered that the institutional gendered habitus was rarely questioned openly by staff. As I have discussed in Chapter Six, teachers as principle transmitters of knowledge use their position to not only teach the curriculum, but impart wider knowledge about socio-cultural norms, which has potential to reproduce gender culture in the institution (Atkinson, 2011, p. 335). In this study, most teachers were found to participate in conveying gender stereotypes to students intentionally or unconsciously. Noteworthily, in addition to teachers, interviews with young people in this research revealed that students also take the role of gatekeepers in supervising gender performance within peer groups and sustaining a gender regime in the school environment. To conclude, even though there appeared some slight changes inside the family, institutional life re-inscribes gender stereotypes and reinforces the gender structure using the power of the institution (Dunne, 2007, p. 509).

### 8.1.3 Chinese Girls at Crossroad: from 'Holding up Half the Sky' to 'Return Home'; from Someone's Only Offspring to Someone's Wife

China is ranked 103 out of 149 countries and territories in the Global Gender Gap Report in 2018 which was published by the World Economic Forum (see https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2018), four places back compared with the rank in 2016 the year I started my PhD journey. Remarkably, in the report of 2018, the gender participation ratio (female to male) of Chinese for professional and technical workers, as well as the enrolment in tertiary education, are ranked top in the world. However, the overall ranking of gender equality in China is still low. Combining the report with the analysis in this thesis, it appears that the hitherto gained rights and investment of women from the family resulting from the previous one-child policy has not effectively been transformed into women's profit in the public sphere.

As mentioned in Section 2.1.3 of Chapter Two, China has experienced unprecedented social changes and dramatic economic development over the past century. The state has witnessed the extinction of the agricultural society, the feudal society and has transitioned from a collectively centralized socialist state to a modern market-oriented socialist country since the establishment of the new China in 1949. In line with the discussion in Section 2.1.2 of Chapter Two, before the founding of the new China, the combination of the demand for labour in the agricultural economy, the patriarchal kinship system as well as the Confucianism which highlights family blood heritage and a gender hierarchical system, all means men occupy higher-status roles than women in the public as well as the private sphere. After the Communist Party founded the new China, the social roles of women as important forces in social production and political movements, were emphasized by the Party. During that period, Chinese women were encouraged to go outside the home to make contributions to social development, as Chairman Mao alleged in 1955 that *'women hold up half the sky/funvnengdingbanbiantian 妇女能顶半边天'* (Zheng, 2005, p. 521; Cheng, 2015, p. 298).

The policy seemed to improve gender inequality in the job market and the earning gap over a period of time, but the domestic roles in family life still remained gendered. In the past twenty years, there have been several male leaders of the Party who have highlighted, in public conferences, the domestic responsibility of women (Jiang, 2001, p. 24; Wang, 2001b, p. 38). It can be concluded that Chinese women went into the public sphere to some degree whilst Chinese men did not go into family life. In this situation, traditional gender roles are not broken at all. On the contrary, the combination of old gender stereotypes and new requirements for female roles lead to double burdens for Chinese women. The ideology of gender equality was used by the state merely to mobilize women's sacrifice for state development, and the equality of gender was understood in the way of *'obligation equality'* (Ji et al. 2017, p. 768) rather than the equality of human rights.

Similarly, the imposed One-Child Policy (1979) as well as its abolition (2015) also exposed the state's gender blindness (see details in Section 2.2.1 of Chapter Two). Seemingly, the implementing of one-child policy improved the social status of Chinese women through reducing the burdens of reproduction and allowing the only

girl to get all resources and investment from her parents (e.g. Du, 2014; Wang, 2007). However, the aim of the One-Child Policy was to reduce the heavy population burden of the country for the construction of socialism (Hong, 1987, p. 317; Xiao, 2011, p. 21; Lee, 2012, p. 41). It was not created to solve gender issues, although the position of women in some urban areas was improved under the policy. My findings suggest that some women gained rights solely as a result of being the only-offspring, namely, the only child whose capitals will benefit the family, rather than being seen as deserving of equal rights with men as individuals. Under this circumstance, it would be over-optimistic to think that the One-Child Policy could improve gender inequality in mainland China.

Nowadays, as the state needs more reserve labour, the one-child policy was abolished in 2015. Acting as the principle undertakers of reproducing labour, Chinese women are now encouraged to have two children (Zeng and Hesketh, 2016, p. 1930). Since there is a lack of support from social welfare, having more children means more time and energy in domestic work as well as more serious career interruptions than during the one-child period for Chinese women (e.g. Yi and Chien, 2002; Yu and Xie, 2014). Besides, the interference of the state in family childbearing actually made the boundary between the public sphere and private family life thinner. As a result, combined with the discussion above that the domestic responsibilities of men are still ignored by the whole society, Chinese women are expected to be stuck in the home both for the gendered family roles and the growth of the country.

In this premise, it can be summarized from the discussion above that the personal freedom of Chinese women in life choices is still controlled by the state. Women's rights, needs and interests are deemed as a subordinate part of state development (Leung, 2003, p. 372; Tang et al., 2010, p. 535). Gender issues are still neglected by rulers of the country. In addition, the huge changes in the Chinese economic environment could threaten social harmony (Rai, 1995, p. 185). The absence of men in marital domestic responsibilities, policy guidance of the state together with traditional gender role expectations, make Chinese women act as the key agent of marital order and the guardians of marital harmony (Evans, 2002, p. 339; Liu, 2004, p. 198). Linking the requirement of social harmony to the demand for reserve labour, it is not hard to understand why only heterosexual marital

relationships are acknowledged and the gender binary system is still highlighted in mainland China. Overall, a hidden linkage can be revealed about gender ideology and dominance in a patriarchal society, which is also able to explain why the concept of gender cannot be totally spread and understood in the Chinese context.

## 8.2 Contributions to Knowledge

In Chinese studies on gender inequality, much attention has been paid to gender discrimination in the public sphere (e.g. school and labour market). There are few studies which set up a conceptual framework using a sociological perspective to review how the state's domination has combined with traditional gender ideologies to exacerbate women's disadvantages in both the public and private spheres (Ji et al. 2017, p. 766). This study can be seen as a pioneer which has revealed a regressive gender ideology in China and explored the deep reasons behind it. As research about gender issues in the area of education, it has adopted Bourdieu's cultural capital (1986) and habitus (1977) and Butler's gender performance (1988) to analyse the dynamic process of reproducing gender relationships in school.

Through analysis, a hidden linkage between gender relationships, social hierarchy and social stability in the Chinese context is uncovered. This study also paid attention to the specific cultural and political environment in China when applying western theories to the state. The issue in the translation of the concept of gender in the Chinese language was specifically addressed, which could help readers from other cultural environments to understand some responses which equated gender with sex. Additionally, attention was also devoted to the governmental policies which have potential to influence women's situation. The implementation of the One-Child Policy (1979-2015) and the problem of the old-age security system in China were introduced briefly. The study has shown how these policies interact with the rejuvenation of Confucianism to reconstruct gender specific expectations. Findings about the influence of the One-Child Policy on women's position may therefore provide a starting point to future study which would research the impacts of the abolition of the one-child policy on Chinese gender issues.

Compared to most Chinese gender studies which have adopted quantitative methods, this study chose semi-structured interviews as a research method in order to

offer participants an opportunity to express their attitudes, values, experiences and beliefs about gender ideology. Groups inside and outside school are both considered. Rich data has been collected during the three-months of fieldwork. It is noteworthy that the role of students in reproducing gender stereotypes has always been neglected in previous Chinese studies. In this research, students' voices were heard rather than being represented by some statistical tables. Drawing on the analysis, students' active roles in reproducing gender relationships have been made clear.

To sum up, it can be said that this research has explored the complexity and serious impacts of the reproduction of gender stereotypes in a Chinese school environment. The problem is systematic and has long-term impacts under the current social structure. Hopefully, this study could help Chinese scholars to change their attitudes toward gender issues and gain a deep insight into the gender problem in both the public and the private spheres.

## 8.3 Limitations and Prospects of the Study

There are still quite a few limitations to my study. Firstly, China is a huge country in which gaps exist in economic and educational levels between different regions. The target city of the study is in a developed province which is also a gathering place of the ethnic majority in mainland China— Han Chinese. I was increasingly aware that girls from minority groups or those who reside in rural regions would face more difficulties than girls in this study in many areas including accessing learning opportunities (Zeng et al. 2014). It became apparent to me that the intersectionality of the gender structure and the hierarchy resulted from areas and ethnicities could lead to more disadvantages for girls than boys from the same disadvantaged social-cultural background (Martino, 1996).

Limited by time and my lack of relevant knowledge, this study only targets students of the ethnic majority in one city in China. I hope that this study will inspire further research focusing on the interplay of gender, geographic location and ethnicity in the Chinese context. In addition, the target school is an elite high school. As introduced in Chapter Four, a general picture of the severity and pervasiveness of gender inequality could be gained by this research since it has found that students with educator-desired resources were still limited by gender stereotypes. If future

research could be conducted in different levels of educational institutions across China, a more comprehensive picture of differences and sameness of students' responses to gender stereotypes in various situations would be presented.

Secondly, I was born and grew up until eighteen in the target city. The target school was my alma mater. As an insider researcher, the social network allowed me to collect rich data and assisted me in understanding the local social environment when doing data analysis. However, my position, my age, my gender, my appearance as well as my educational background inevitably influenced the research process. When I was transcribing the data from my interviews, I found that some interesting topics mentioned by participants were neglected by me in interviews. I should have expanded the discussion on those topics, but I overlooked them and continued to ask other questions. This could be attributed to my insider position. Since I had a similar experience of studenthood with the young persons in the study, I might have been less sensitive to some issues which deserve more exploration.

At last, as the discussion above reveals, the translation of the concept of gender in Chinese context, language and cultural differences could be obstacles for Chinese scholars who want to develop gender studies. Even though the research has connected foreign theories to the Chinese environment, the translation problems caused by both language skills and cultural gaps have constrained the presentation of data as well as the expression of analysis.

**Conclusions**

This study has discovered that gender stereotypes have more serious consequences which extend beyond limitations on individual levels and help to immortalize structural inequality. In order to preserve the current structure, the unequal gender relationship must be reproduced constantly. The research revealed that educational institutions play a significant role in legitimating and reinforcing a gender system, and teachers, parents as well as students, all participate in the process. As we all live in a human society, we are not only males or females. In the complicated gender system, not only members of non-privileged groups but also people of privileged groups are constrained in life chances. However, since there

exists a hegemonic group in gender order, the restrictions on males and females are different.

To conclude, gender inequality is a systematic and pervasive issue which cannot be isolated from social power relationships. In other words, gender issues are more than gender issues, while all unequal relationships contain gender inequality. Combined with the Chinese background, the gender inequality nowadays can be understood as a *'socialism-and-Confucian-patriarchy hybrid gender inequality'* (Ji et al. 2017, p. 771), in which the patriarchy, paternalism as well as the politics seen as three main sources of oppression for Chinese women.

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**Appendix One: English and Chinese version of content form**



# Committee on Research Ethics

## PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:**
The Reinforcement and Reproduction of Gender Stereotypes in High Schools
in Mainland China

**Researcher(s):**                                                                                    **Please**
 WANG Yayun                                                                                          **initial box**

1.  I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [DATE]
    for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask
    questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2.  I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any
    time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should
    I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3.  I understand that, under the Data Protection Act,  I can at any time ask for access to
    the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information
    if I wish.

4.  I agree to take part in the above study.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Participant Name | Date | Signature |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name of Person taking consent | Date | Signature |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Researcher | Date | Signature |

**Principal Investigator:**                                    **Student Researcher:**
Name                Dr Karen Evans                       Name                Yayun WANG
Work Address        University of Liverpool               Work Address        University of Liverpool
Work Telephone      01517942974                          Work Telephone      07907973022
Work Email          evansk@liverpool.ac.uk               Work Email          alexwang@liv.ac.uk

# Committee on Research Ethics
# 利物浦大学伦理委员会

## 参与者知情同意表

**研究课题名称: 性别刻板印象在中国高中教育的强化与再生产**

**研究者:王雅韵**

请填写

5. 我确认我已经仔细阅读并理解以上研究的信息表。我已经获得时间考虑并询问相关问题，且得到满意答复。

6. 我的参与是出于自愿并且有在没有任何理由和解释的情况下，随时终止访问的权利。另外，如果我不愿意回答任何问题，我有拒绝的权利。

7. 我明确知晓在数据保护法案下，我可以在任何时间要求查看我提供的信息，我也有在我的要求下销毁信息的权利。

8. 我同意参加以上研究

_____          _____          _____
参与者姓名                              日期               签字


_____          _____          _____
知情同意者                              日期               签字


_____          _____          _____
研究者                                  日期               签字

**主要导师信息:**
姓名          Dr Karen Evans
工作地点   利物浦大学
联系电话   +44 01517942974
工作邮箱   evansk@liverpool.ac.uk

**研究者信息:**
姓名          王雅韵
工作地点   利物浦大学
工作电话   +44 07907973022
工作邮箱   alexwang@liv.ac.uk

**Appendix Two: English and Chinese version of participation information form**



UNIVERSITY OF
LIVERPOOL

**Committee on Research Ethics**

**Participant Information Sheet**

**1. Title of Study**

The Reinforcement and Reproduction of Gender Stereotypes in High Schools in Mainland China

**2. Version Number and Date**

Version 3.4, February 2017

**3. Invitation Paragraph**

You are being invited to participate in a research on gender stereotypes in Chinese high schools. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. Please also feel free to discuss this with your friends, relatives and family members. We would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

*Thank you for reading this.*

**4. What is the purpose of the study?**

This research aims to explore how students' gender consciousness be shaped by gender stereotypes as well as the process of spread and reproduction of gender stereotypes in educational area. Specifically, this research will focus on the interaction among teachers, parents and peers in order to get a fuller picture about the roles of these three significant social partners during the process of reproducing gender stereotypes in Chinese high schools.

**5. Why have I been chosen to take part?**

Since I would like to explore the roles of teachers, parents and peers during the process of reproducing gender stereotypes in Chinese high schools, I want to do interviews with people who are 1) students in grade three of high school; 2) teachers of different courses in grade three; 3) parents who have adult children in grade three of high school

**6. Do I have to take part?**

Participation for this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without explanation and without incurring a disadvantage.

**7. What will happen if I take part?**

You will take part in a semi-structured interview which will last for about half an hour. With your permission I will record the interview but all interviewees will remain anonymous and none of your personal information will be disclosed in the report. I will give all of you a research package including a brief introduction of my research, my personal introduction and detailed contact information, an explanation of the confidentiality and voluntary nature of this study as well as an informed consent form before the interview. We can find a mutual convenient date and location for the interview. I will give you time to read about them. And if you still have questions about it, you can contact me no matter before or after the interview.

**8. Expenses and / or payments**

Unfortunately, there is no reimbursement for participants

**9. Are there any risks in taking part?**

There are no risks. If you experience any discomfort or disadvantage as part of the research please let me know immediately. You can suspend or stop it at any time.

**10. Are there any benefits in taking part?**

There are no direct benefits to the participants. This research is not designed to influence policy-making directly, nevertheless, it can provide direct insight into how students' gender convenience be influenced by their parents, teachers and peer friends.

**11. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to let me know. You can also contact my first supervisor directly to deal with your problems (Dr.Karen Evans phone: 01517942974 or email: evansk@liv.ac.uk ).

**12. Will my participation be kept confidential?**

Participation will be anonymous. All data referring to your personal information (name, places, dates, times, locations or any other specific or identifiable information) will be omitted from published data and will be anonymous in the completed data transcripts. Only I can get access to the data.

**13. What will happen to the results of the study?**

Data collected by interviews will be analysed and used for my PhD thesis. In the informed consent form, you are guaranteed your personal information will not be identifiable from the results.

**14. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?**

During interviews, you can withdraw at any time, without explanation. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy for this to be done. Otherwise the data will be destroyed and no further use is made of them. If results are anonymised, results may only be withdrawn prior to anonymisation.

**15. Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

Yayun WANG
Phone: 07907973022
Email: alexwang@liv.ac.uk

**利物浦大学伦理委员会**

**参与者信息表**

## 1. 研究课题
性别刻板印象在中国高中教育的强化与再生产

## 2. 版本和日期
2017 年 2 月 第 3.4 版

## 3. 邀请函
很高兴邀请您参加一项关于中国高中教育中性别刻板印象的研究。在您决定是否参加之前，取得对本研究的研究目的，研究意义以及研究对象的了解非常重要。请仔细阅读下面部分所提供的信息。假如您有任何存在疑问或者不懂的地方，或者您想要了解更多关于本研究的额信息，请直接询问我。您可与您的朋友亲戚或者家庭成员讨论后再做决定。再次强调，此次研究纯属自愿。

感谢您花费时间阅读。

## 4. 研究目的
本研究试图探索学生的性别意识是如何被性别刻板印象所影响以及性别刻板印象在教育领域的传播与再生产过程。具体来说，本研究将关注教师与学生，家长与学生及学生与同龄人之间的互动过程，以期得到这三种重要的群体在中国高中性别刻板印象再生产过程中所扮演的角色。

## 5. 为什么是你？
由于我想探究教师，家长与同龄人在性别刻板印象再生产过程中所起的作用，我需要对以下人群进行访谈：1）高三学生；2）高三不同科目教师；3）子女处于高三的家长

## 6. 是必须参加吗？
本次研究完全是自愿的，你可以随时随地在没有任何解释的情况下放弃参加本研究。

## 7. 我要参加的内容。
您将会参加一个约半小时的半结构化的访谈，一些开放性的问题会被问及。得到您的允许后我会对我们的谈话进行录音。所有的参与者都将是匿名的，任何有关于个人的信息将都不会被识别和追踪到，作为最终结果的数据中也无法分辨参与者的任何信息。在访谈前您将得到一份研究文件夹，其中包括此次研究的简介，我的个人简介与联系方式以及本研究的知情同意书。我会给您时间阅读这些相关材料。我们可以安排一个彼此都方便的时间与地点进行访谈。在此期间您如果有任何问题，无论是访谈前或访谈后您都可以随时与我联系。

## 8. 花费和报酬。
很遗憾没有任何报酬提供给参与者。

## 9. 参与本次研究有任何的风险吗？
本研究不存在任何风险。如果在研究中，您感到任何的不适，请随时让我知晓。您可以随时提出延后与终止访谈。

### 10. 参加后会有任何的好处吗？

本研究不会为参与者带来直接的好处。本研究并不会直接影响到政策制定，然而，仍然可以帮助深入的了解学生的性别意识是如何被家长，教师以及同龄人所影响的。

### 11. 如果在此过程中您有问题怎么办？

如果您不高兴，或者您感觉有问题，请直接询问王雅韵。或者可以直接联系我的第一导师Dr.Karen Evans 电话号码: +44 01517942974 或者电子邮件:evansk@liv.ac.uk。

### 12. 我的参与会保密吗？

所有的参与者都将是匿名和保密的。所有涉及到参与者，地方，日期，时间及地点以及任何其他可识别身份的信息都将被删除。所有公开的数据都将是匿名的。只有我本人能获得信息。

### 13. 研究结果将会怎样呈现？

所有的数据将被用于我的博士论文，在知情同意书里面，你们会得到身份不被辨识的保证。

### 14. 我能终止参与此次研究吗？

在研究过程中，你可以随时在没有任何解释的情况下退出本次研究。如果您想继续，那么结果将被继续使用。否则，所有信息将被销毁并不再使用。

### 15. 如果我有其他的问题，我将联系谁？

王雅韵
电话：+44 07907973022
邮箱：alexwang@liv.ac.uk.