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China's one-child policy Only and lonely

Analysing the psychology of a generation
Jun 6th 2015

Buy Me the Sky: The **Remarkable** Truth of China's One-Child Generation. By Xinran. Translated by Esther Tyldesley and David Dobson. Ebury; 286 pages; £20.

Vocab

1. **remarkable** adj. =**astounding** unusual or surprising in a way that causes people to take notice 非凡的；奇异的；显著的；引人注目的

e.g. She was a truly remarkable woman. 她是一位真正非同凡响的女人。

SINCE Xinran Xue wrote “The Good Women of China” in 2002, she has sought to tell the story of ordinary Chinese people. That first, **brilliant** book was based on a Chinese radio show that Ms Xue (who writes under her first name only) hosted for eight years, inviting women to call in and talk about themselves. The result was a moving and shocking account of what it was like to be a woman in socialist China.

Vocab

1. **brilliant** adj. very successful 很成功的

e.g. a brilliant career 一帆风顺的事业

2. **socialist** adj. 社会主义的 **Socialist** means based on socialism or relating to socialism.

e.g. Ethiopia was declared a **socialist** state. 埃塞俄比亚被宣布为社会主义国家。

3. **moving** adj. causing you to have deep feelings of sadness or sympathy 动人的；令人感动的

e.g. a deeply moving experience 非常动人的经历

4. **account** n. a written or spoken description of sth that has happened 描述；叙述；报告

e.g. She gave the police a full account of the incident. 她向警方详尽地叙述了所发生的事情。

Sentence

The result was a moving and shocking account of what it was like to be a woman in socialist China.

主干：The result was account of...

这里 **moving and shocking** 表示感人且震撼

account of 这里有叙述,描述的意思

what it was like to be a woman in socialist China. 具体描述的是什么

The country is far more open now than it was even two decades ago, yet the task of recounting the first-person experiences of some of its 1.4 billion people is just as vital—and sometimes as tricky. In “Buy Me the Sky”, her seventh book, Ms Xue takes on China's first generation of only children, those born between 1979 and 1984, after the one-child policy was introduced nationwide. Each chapter uses the life and experiences of a “single **sprout**”, as she calls them, to **enliven** a larger story.

Vocab

1. **recount** v. to tell sb about sth, especially sth that you have experienced 讲述, 叙述 (亲身经历)

2. **tricky** adj. difficult to do or deal with 难办的; 难对付的

e.g. Getting it to fit exactly is a **tricky business**. 使这完全合适是件很难做到的事。

3. **first-person** n. a set of pronouns and verb forms used by a speaker to refer to himself or herself, or to a group including himself or herself 第一人称

e.g. 'I am' is the first person singular of the present tense of the verb 'to be'. * I am 是动词 to be 现在时的第一人称单数。

4. **sprout** n. a new part growing on a plant 苗; 新芽; 嫩枝

e.g. After eleven days of growth the number of **sprouts** was counted. 经过11天的生长后, 对新芽的数量进行了计数。

5. **enliven** v. 使有趣; 使生动; 使更有活力 To **enliven** events, situations, or people means to make them more lively or cheerful.

e.g. Even the most boring meeting was **enlivened** by Dan's presence. 即使是最无聊的会议, 只要丹一出现, 也会变得有趣起来。

Sentence

The country is far more open now than it was even two decades ago, yet the task of recounting the first-person experiences of some of its 1.4 billion people is just as vital—and sometimes as tricky.

主干: The country is far more open now

yet the task of recounting 这里的 yet 是连词 意思是 **despite what has just been said 但是; 然而**。

the first-person experiences of some of its 1.4 billion people 14亿人的国家的经历, 这里 its 是指代主语 the country

as vital—and sometimes as tricky. 这里 as...as 和...一样, 重要且难办的

The central question is what developing an idea of children in the **singular** has done to Chinese society; what happens when those **one-and-onlies**, so long the sole focus of their parents' and grandparents' love, attention and expectations, go out into the world. Has not thinking about others until adulthood **skewed** the **morality** of a generation?

Vocab

1. **singular** n. (名词的)单数, 单数形式 **The singular** of a noun is the form of it that is used to refer to one person or thing.

2. **one and only** 唯一的; 单个的 unique; single (used for emphasis or as a designation of a celebrity)

3. **skew** v. to change or influence sth with the result that it is not accurate, fair, normal, etc. 歪曲; 曲解; 使不公允; 影响...的准确性

4. **morality** n. principles concerning right and wrong or good and bad behaviour 道德; 道德准则; 道义

e.g. matters of **public/ private morality** 公共/个人道德问题

Sentence

The central question is what developing an idea of children in the singular has done to Chinese society; what happens when those one-and-onlies, so long the sole focus of their parents' and grandparents' love, attention and expectations, go out into the world.

主干: The central question is... 后面接了两个 what 从句

developing an idea of children in the singular 这个不好理解, 或许可以理解为: 发展单个孩子的概念, 加上后面 has done to Chinese society 可以理解为 发展单个孩子的概念对中国社会做了什么。所以前面的就可以理解为单个孩子的政策了。即发展独生子女政策对中国社会的影响 (做了什么可以理解为有什么后果, 即影响)

what happens when those one-and-onlies go out into the world 会发生什么, 当这些独生子女走向社会

中间的插入语 so long the sole focus of their parents' and grandparents' love, attention and expectations, 强调这个独生子女所受到的溺爱

Her **thesis** is that today's only children are **materially** better off than their **forebears**—sometimes hugely so—but that they are a lonely generation whose parents' dreams **lie heavy on** their shoulders. Economic change has made the **generational divide** sharp and deep, says Ms Xue. “Chinese children are the property of their parents, and we single children, in particular, are the property of all the generations before us,” says one only child she meets. Another woman notes that she spent the nine months of her **pregnancy** under the “direction and protection” of 12 relatives from two generations above her, every move she made linked to the fate of her family.

Vocab

1. **thesis** n. 命题;论点 A **thesis** is an idea or theory that is expressed as a statement and is discussed in a logical way.

e.g. This **thesis** does not stand up to close inspection. 这个命题经不起仔细推敲。

2. **materially** adv. 重大地; 相当地 **substantially**; **considerably**

e.g. **materially** different circumstances. 有实质性不同的情况。

3. **forebear** n. 祖先;前辈 Your **forebears** are your ancestors.

4. **lie heavy on one** 让人感到麻烦, 让人不舒服 cause one to feel troubled or uncomfortable

5. **generational** adj. 一代的; 两代之间的 **Generational** means relating to a particular generation, or to the relationship between particular generations.

e.g. generational conflict 两代人之间的冲突

e.g. **generational divide** 代沟

6. **pregnancy** n. the state of being pregnant 怀孕; 妊娠; 孕期

e.g. Many women experience sickness **during pregnancy**. 许多妇女在怀孕期都会有恶心现象。

No wonder, says Ms Xue, that many find it hard to discover their own path in life: “A bird cannot carry its cage when it flies.” One young man is so **ill-equipped for** adulthood that he cannot pack his own suitcase, yet, away from family **scrutiny**, he transforms from being a **picky** eater into a happy **omnivore**. Several of her onlies **embody** the spoiled generation of the title, others are “labouring ants”. One **interviewee** moans that in America and Europe people under 30 are knowingly **hedonistic** and encouraged to explore their **options** in life, whereas in China, another says, the young instead spend those years studying and setting themselves up in a profession, trying to buy a house and car, making themselves worthy of marriage. A third disagrees: being an only child “has become an excuse for my generation”, he says.

Vocab

1. **ill-equipped** adj. ~ (for sth) | ~ (to do sth) not having the necessary equipment or skills 装备不完善的；技术不够的

2. **scrutiny** n. careful and thorough examination 仔细检查；认真彻底的审查

e.g. Foreign policy has **come under** close **scrutiny** recently. 近来，政府的外交政策受到了认真彻底的审查。

3. **picky** adj. = **fussy** liking only particular things and difficult to please 挑剔的；难伺候的

e.g. Everyone knows children are **picky** eaters. 众所周知，小孩子吃东西挑食。

4. **omnivore** n. an animal or a person that eats all types of food, especially both plants and meat 杂食动物；杂食的人

5. **embody** v. = **represent** to express or represent an idea or a quality 具体表现，体现，代表（思想或品质）

e.g. the principles **embodied in** the Declaration of Human Rights 体现在《人权宣言》中的原则

6. **interviewee** n. 被采访者；被面试者 An **interviewee** is a person who is being interviewed.

7. **hedonistic** adj. 享乐主义的 **Hedonistic** means relating to hedonism.

e.g. ...the **hedonistic** pleasures of the South... 南部的各种享乐消遣

Sentence

making themselves worthy of marriage

使他们自己值得结婚，即买房买车的行为让他们有能力结婚

SYNONYMS 同义词辨析

option

choice | alternative | possibility

These are all words for sth that you choose to do in a particular situation. 以上各词均指某种情况下的选择。

》 **option** something that you can choose to have or do; the freedom to choose what you do 指可选择的事物、选择、选择权、选择的自由：

As I see it, we have two options... 据我看，我们有两种选择...

Students have the option of studying abroad in their second year. 学生在二年级时可以选择出国学习。

NOTE **Option** is also the word used in computing for one of the choices you can make when using a computer program. * option 亦指计算机程序里的选项、选择：

Choose the 'Cut' option from the Edit menu. 从编辑选单上选择“剪切”项。

》 **choice** the freedom to choose what you do; something that you can choose to have or do 指选择权、选择的自由、选择、可选择的事物：

If I had the choice, I would stop working tomorrow. 如果让我选择，我明天就停止工作。

There is a wide range of choices open to you. 你有很多选择。

》 **alternative** something that you can choose to have or do out of two or more possibilities 指可供选择的事物、其中一种选择：

You can be paid in cash weekly or by cheque monthly: those are the two alternatives. 你的工资可以按周以现金支取，或按月以支票支取。二者可选其一。

OPTION, CHOICE OR ALTERNATIVE? 用 OPTION、CHOICE 还是 ALTERNATIVE ?

Choice is slightly less formal than **option** and **alternative** is slightly more formal. **Choice** is most often used for 'the freedom to choose', although you can sometimes also use **option** (but not usually **alternative**). * choice 较 option 稍非正式, 而 alternative 更正式些。表示选择权或选择的自由最常用 choice, 不过有时也可用 option, 但通常不用 alternative:

If I had the choice/option, I would... 如果让我选择, 我会...

~~If I had the alternative, I would...~~

parental choice in education 父母在教育方面的选择权

~~parental option/alternative in education~~

Things that you can choose

are **options**, **choices** or **alternatives**. However, **alternative** is more frequently used to talk about choosing between two things rather than several. 表示可选择的事物用 option、choice 或 alternative 均可。不过, alternative 较常用以指两个而非多个可选项。

› **possibility** one of the different things that you can do in a particular situation 指某种情况下可选择的事物:

We need to explore a wide range of possibilities. 我们需要探究各种可能的情况。

The possibilities are endless. 可想的办法是无穷的。

NOTE **Possibility** can be used in a similar way

to **option**, **choice** and **alternative**, but the emphasis here is less on the need to make a choice, and more on what is available. * possibility 的用法与 option、choice 和 alternative 相似, 不过其重点主要在于可选择的事物而非需要作出选择。

PATTERNS

- Ⓒ **with/without** the option/choice/possibility **of** sth
- Ⓒ a(n) **good/acceptable/reasonable/possible** option/choice/alternative
- Ⓒ the **only** option/choice/alternative/possibility **open to** sb
- Ⓒ to **have** a/an/the option/choice **of doing** sth
- Ⓒ to **have no** option/choice/alternative **but to** do sth
- Ⓒ a **number/range of** options/choices/alternatives/possibilities

Ms Xue raises more questions than she answers—her book is a series of observations rather than a rigorous study, a little too **reliant on** individuals who have travelled far from China and into the author's path. **Weighing** the consequences of one of the most extraordinary social experiments on earth is not an easy venture.

Vocab

1. **reliant** adj. =**dependent** ~ on/ upon sb/ sth **needing sb/ sth in order to survive, be successful, etc.** 依赖性的; 依靠的

e.g. The hostel is heavily reliant upon charity. 这家收容所在很大程度上依赖赞助。

2. **weigh** v. ~ **sth (up)** | ~ **(up) sth (against sth)** **to consider sth carefully before making a decision** 认真考虑; 权衡; 斟酌

e.g. She weighed up all the evidence. 她慎重地考虑了所有的证据。

Sentence

Ms Xue raises more questions than she answers—her book is a series of observations rather

than a rigorous study, a little too reliant on individuals who have travelled far from China and into the author's path.

主干: Ms Xue raises more questions than she answers

—her book is a series of observations rather than a rigorous study. 这里的破折号就直接理解为一个从句, 她的书是一系列的观察而不是一个严谨的研究

a little too reliant on individuals who have travelled far from China and into the author's path. 这里的 too 在这里的意思是: **used before adjectives and adverbs to say that sth is more than is good, necessary, possible, etc.** (用于形容词和副词前) 太, 过于, 过度

解释为: 过于依赖离开了中国的个体们和 into the author's path. 这里 into ...path 可以理解为和进入了作者的道路的, 即在同一条路上的人, 即相同经历的人...

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China's one-child policy

Only and lonely

中国独生子女政策: 独生与孤独

Buy Me the Sky: The Remarkable Truth of China's One-Child Generation. By Xinran.

《给我一片天空》: 关于中国独生子女一代深刻洞察。薛欣然著。

Since Xinran Xue wrote "The Good Women of China" in 2002, she has sought to tell the story of ordinary Chinese people. That first, brilliant book was based on a Chinese radio show that Ms Xue (who writes under her first name only) hosted for eight years, inviting women to call in and talk about themselves. The result was a moving and shocking account of what it was like to be a woman in socialist China.

从2002年写下《中国的好女人们》开始, 薛欣然就想要向世人讲述中国普通老百姓的故事。这是薛欣然出版的第一本书, 内容引人入胜。薛女士(她在书中落款只写了自己的名字)在一个中国广播电台主持了八年的节目, 之后写下了这本书。在节目当中, 薛女士邀请女性朋友打进电话, 倾诉她们的故事。最终薛女士收获了感人且震撼的故事, 讲述了在社会主义的中国, 女人是怎样一种存在。

The country is far more open now than it was even two decades ago, yet the task of recounting the first-person experiences of some of its 1.4 billion people is just as vital—and sometimes as tricky. In "Buy Me the Sky", her seventh book, Ms Xue takes on China's first generation of only children, those born between 1979 and 1984, after the one-child policy was introduced nationwide. Each chapter uses the life and experiences of a "single sprout", as she calls them, to enliven a larger story.

同20年前相比, 中国现在已经开放多了, 然而要以第一人称来写下这个拥有着14亿人口的泱泱大国中一些人物的故事, 依然很重要, 但同时也是很棘手的。在她出版的第七本书《给我一片天空》中, 薛女士展示了新中国的第一批独生子女的现状, 她们出生于1979至1984年间, 那时计划生育政策刚刚在全国范围内推广。书中每一章都讲述了一个“独苗”的人生和经历, “独苗”是她给这些孩子起的, 这样就能构建起更生动的故事。

The central question is what developing an idea of children in the singular has done to Chinese society; what happens when those one-and-onlies, so long the sole focus of their parents' and grandparents' love, attention and expectations, go out into the world. Has

not thinking about others until adulthood skewed the morality of a generation?

问题的核心在于，独生子女政策究竟对中国社会产生了怎样的影响。这些独生子女一直是家中父母和爷爷奶奶们的疼爱、关注和期盼的唯一焦点。一旦步入社会，他们会怎样？他们直到成年之后才开始有为他人考虑的概念，这样的心态会不会已经歪曲了这一代人的价值观？

Her thesis is that today's only children are materially better off than their forebears—sometimes hugely so—but that they are a lonely generation whose parents' dreams lie heavy on their shoulders. Economic change has made the generational divide sharp and deep, says Ms Xue. “Chinese children are the property of their parents, and we single children, in particular, are the property of all the generations before us,” says one only child she meets. Another woman notes that she spent the nine months of her pregnancy under the “direction and protection” of 12 relatives from two generations above her, every move she made linked to the fate of her family.

薛女士认为，如今的独生子女们在生活水平上已经高于他们的祖辈们了——有时甚至是远远超过——但是他们同时也是孤独的一代，他们的父母将自己的梦想太多寄予在孩子的身上。薛女士说，经济的转变也使得代沟越来越深。“中国的孩子是父母的财产，而我们这些独生子女尤其是如此，我们也还是我们祖祖辈辈们的财产。”薛女士所遇到的一名独生子女对她如此坦言。另一位女性谈到，在她怀孕的九个月里，她受到了上两辈一共12位亲戚的悉心指导和保护，她的一举一动似乎都与整个家族的命运联系在了一起。

No wonder, says Ms Xue, that many find it hard to discover their own path in life: “A bird cannot carry its cage when it flies.” One young man is so ill-equipped for adulthood that he cannot pack his own suitcase, yet, away from family scrutiny, he transforms from being a picky eater into a happy omnivore. Several of her onlies embody the spoiled generation of the title, others are “labouring ants”. One interviewee moans that in America and Europe people under 30 are knowingly hedonistic and encouraged to explore their options in life, whereas in China, another says, the young instead spend those years studying and setting themselves up in a profession, trying to buy a house and car, making themselves worthy of marriage. A third disagrees: being an only child “has become an excuse for my generation”, he says.

难怪薛女士说，有很多独生子女觉得找到人生中属于自己的道路那么困难。“鸟若背负牢笼，则难以翱翔青天。”这样的年轻人对于长大成年一点准备都没有，他们甚至都不会整理自己的行李箱。而一旦脱离了家庭的控制，他们马上就会从一个挑剔的食客变成快乐的杂食动物。只有几名独生子女的经历符合“被溺爱的一代”这个主题，其他的孩子仍是“工蚁”。其中一名受访者抱怨说，在美国和欧洲，30岁以下的年轻人内心里都有一种享乐主义，父母也会鼓励他们去探索人生中自己的选择。另一人补充道，然而在中国则恰恰相反，年轻人在这些年只能去读书，找个好工作，努力挣钱买房买车，然后才有资本结婚。第三个人不同意了，他认为独生子女身份对于自己这一代人来说，已经成为了一个借口。

Ms Xue raises more questions than she answers—her book is a series of observations rather than a rigorous study, a little too reliant on individuals who have travelled far from China and into the author's path. Weighing the consequences of one of the most extraordinary social experiments on earth is not an easy venture.

比起回答疑问，薛女士在书里提出了更多的问题来让我们思考，而她的作品就是对中国的不间断发现和观察，而不是一份很严格意义上的研究。这本书的研究对象有些局限于离开了中国、并且和作者有相同经历的人群。要想衡量世上这样一个浩大社会实验的结果，也的确不

是一场简单的探索。