

City University of Hong Kong

Department of Public Policy

Research Student Seminar

**The Issue of Inheriting the Mother's
Surname: an Ethical and Social
Research**

by

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Date:	4 Oct 2018
Time:	10:00 -11:30
Venue:	POL's Multi-purpose Room (B7516), Yeung Kin Man Acad Building City University of Hong Kong
Language:	English

Abstract:

One-child policy has reshaped the traditional Chinese family structure. Since the “one-child generation” born in the 1980s and 1990s reaching the age of marriage and childbearing, they began to form a family and create the third-generation. Under such special family structure, namely the “double only-child family”, both paternal and matrilineal family have only one child, and the family inheritance merely rely on the singleton son or the singleton daughter. This unprecedented family structure shows many new problems, one of them is the rise of disputes on surname inheritance. With the patriarchy and clan rituals are disappearing, the surname inheritance of the next generation has become the only symbol of family inheritance, and both the matrilineal family and the paternal family attempt to maintain their family line.

This study will address the following questions as objectives: 1) to explore whether inheritance of the mother's surname violates Confucian ethics. 2) to examine whether inheritance of her family surname is one of the singleton daughter's major motives for having the second child in practice. 3) to investigate what role does an urban singleton daughter play in the family decision-making process on surname inheritance.

Accordingly, we argue that the inheritance of mother's surname can be defended by Confucian ethics: it not only follows the Confucian requirement of filial piety, but also follows the Confucian ethics of the family inheritance; Different from the current perspectives, we believe that the major motive of a singleton daughter to let children inheriting her family surname is because of she values the Confucian family inheritance rather than to pursue the gender equality. Singleton daughters hence actually play the role of male heir, who are also responsible for family inheritance. Changes in family structure have led to patriarchal and matrilineal families fight for the issue of surname of the next generation of children, and changes in the structure of family power offer the possibility of negotiation.

This research will combine two types of qualitative methods according to the different requirements of different research objectives. For the first research objective, we will conduct literature study of Confucian classics to reconstruct arguments. In terms of the other two objectives, we will mainly conduct in-depth interviews to collect data, and use the method of snowballing to obtain the interviewees.

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(Free admission)

All are welcome!