"Whose Culture Has Capital?": Chinese Skilled Migrant Mothers Raising Their Children In New Zealand

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List of Abbreviations

AUT	Auckland University of Technology
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
MBA	Master of Business Administration
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UK	The United Kingdom
USA	The United States of America

A Note on Translation and Spelling

All Chinese names or terms in this thesis, except for well-known names/terms in the Western literature such as "Confucian", are translated using the *pinyin* system. In Mandarin, there are four tones to indicate different sounds on the vowel. The tones are not specified in the current thesis. However, for key words, I add the Chinese characters in brackets in addition to the pinyin translations for clarification. All Chinese characters used in this thesis are simplified Chinese.

Pinyin is the Chinese phonetic system. It is the Romanization system for standard Mandarin, a measure by the Chinese government that aimed to increase the literacy rate. The first edition of *pinyin* was adopted at the Fifth Session of the First National People's Congress on 11 February, 1958 (see Xinhua News Agency, 2008a).

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with a group of Chinese skilled migrant mothers' experiences in relation to their children's early childhood care and education in New Zealand. Utilising Bourdieu's concept of capital, habitus and field, the current research addresses the complexity and ambiguity of the Chinese migrant mothers' lives whose social position transcends multiple fields. Because their children attend mainstream education, and the local educational system is different from those where the migrant mothers were brought up, the migrant mothers had to transcend different cultural fields. Chinese skilled migrants, who were middle class professionals in their native country, usually experienced social and financial downturns in New Zealand. Although skilled, the migrant mothers encountered difficulties in finding paid employment that matched their pre-migration job status. These mothers were more likely to give up paid work or reduce paid working hours on the birth of their children than were their male partners. The current study focuses on these transcendent experiences, encompassing both embeddedness and ambiguity across different fields by examining the interplay of class, gender, and ethnicity in the daily lives of these mothers. Traditional interpretations of cultural capital usually refer only to dominant social and cultural capital, whereas the current thesis expands the concept to include both dominant and non-dominant forms of social and cultural capital. The findings showed that the migrant mothers redefined and reconstructed the concept of capital. The migrant mothers' attitude towards mainstream education was ambiguous and complex: covering the full spectrum from willing embracing, reluctantly following, selectively utilising to firmly rejecting. Simultaneously, the mothers promoted, criticised, and rejected various traditional Chinese practices and beliefs in order to maximise benefits for their children.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Capital and Mother of Mencius

"Meng Mu San Qian" [1](孟母三迁) is a well-known Chinese idiom that allegedly came from the real life story of Mencius (孟子，*Mengzi*). Mencius was a famous philosopher and scholar in the fourth century B.C. China. He was brought up by his lone mother. In his tender years, his mother (孟母 *Meng Mu*) relocated three times until she found a neighbourhood that she believed to be a proper environment for his upbringing. The story illustrated the important role that a parent or, more precise, a mother plays in the children's upbringing. Whilst this story happened in ancient China, the same notion is still relevant today. In Auckland there have been cases of which parents were caught "cheating" to get their children enrolled with some top state schools (Trevett, 2006). In Europe, some tabloid papers even reported parents' extreme efforts to get their children to top schools for the best possible education (e.g. Keeley, 2008). What *Meng Mu* did and what today's parents do, in contemporary sociological terms, could be understood as investing in their children the social and cultural capital for their future. Relocating to a proper environment and getting their children to top schools are just two of the many strategies, which parents deploy to maximise benefits for their children's future. These stories raise a few questions concerning parenting practice and decision-making: how do parents know what is worth investing in and what is not? What standards or norms do they use to evaluate an appropriate learning environment for their children?

The current thesis is concerned with the experiences of Chinese skilled migrant mothers [2] raising their young children in New Zealand. Chinese migrants cited "better

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[1] *Meng Mu* (孟母) means Mencius's mother, "*san*" (三), means "three times", "*qian*" (迁) means relocate or move.

[2] Skilled immigrant: According to the New Zealand Immigration Act 1987, eligible skilled migrants immigrate to New Zealand under the general category. Under the points system, the applicants will be granted a resident's visa after accumulating certain points required by New Zealand Immigration. When a couple applies, one will be the principal applicant with the other spouse as secondary applicant. Secondary applicants' qualifications and work experiences are also assigned with points which contribute to the total score of the application. In this study, the mothers are either principal or secondary applicants.

education" for their children as a reason to immigrate (Friesen & Ip, 1997). So was migration used as a strategy similar to *"Meng Mu San Qian"*? Unlike Mencius's mother who relocated only within the neighbourhood, Chinese migrant mothers moved across the ocean to New Zealand, more than ten thousand kilometres away from their native land. What kind of environment did the migrant mothers regard as "better" for their children? A focus of the research is to study the mothers' strategies to maximise the benefits of various forms of capital for their children in New Zealand.

1.2 Background to Research

1.2.1 Bourdieu and capital

According to Bourdieu (1986), *cultural capital* refers to the dispositions, including beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, customs, taste and so on of a particular culture. *Social capital* is one's connections or access to a particular social group. Different forms of capital, under certain conditions, can be converted and thus generate profit, which may take the forms of material, embodied, as well as symbolic benefits and power.

Habitus is the mechanism that people continuously acquire and apply consciously or unconsciously through the social interactions in the field (Bourdieu, 1977a). *Field* is an arena of social struggle and it refers to the social and structural reality which people inhabit. The field conditions the habitus, and habitus in turn gives subjective meanings to the field. The field and habitus define the materialistic and symbolic values of various forms of capital and their conversions. Habitus develops early in one's life, thus the family plays an important part in how children possess and acquire various forms of capital later in life (Bourdieu, 1989a).

A major theoretical undertaking of Bourdieu's work is to break down various perceived binaries such as subjectivity and objectivity, theory and practice, individual and society, and structure and agency in order to understand the intricate and dynamic nature of social relations (Grenfell & James, 1998; Mahar, Harker & Wikes, 1990; Swartz, 1997). An outstanding contribution of Bourdieu's work in education is that it offers "coherent accounts of the central role that schools have in both changing and in reproducing social and cultural inequalities from one generation to the next" (Harker, 1990, p. 86). Bourdieu (1977a) used the term

"cultural reproduction" to describe the phenomenon that more advantaged social groups possess and have better access to institutional resources which in turn reaffirm their advantaged position in society (p. 487). Therefore, cultural reproduction is a process of inequality reproduction. Elsewhere, research findings indicated the reproduction of inequality in the parent-school power relationship (e.g. Griffith & Smith, 2005; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987; 1989; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1995; 1998a; 1998b; 1999).

1.2.2   Social class, ethnicity, and gender

Applications of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction were originally focused on the reproduction of class inequality. Increasingly, his theory has been applied to study ethnicity and gender. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus enable researchers to examine interactions of class, ethnicity and gender (e.g. Bentley, 1987; Ramos-Zayas, 2004; Reay, 1997).

In light of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, many researchers have studied home-school relations as well as parents' time and work with their children at home (e.g. Lareau, 2003; Li, 2007; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1998a; 1999). When dealing with their children's school, parents from the dominant middle class usually displayed a sense of entitlement or legitimacy. They had the cultural and social resources to demand that schools change or work in their children's favour. Although these parents did not always win, they instilled in their children the same sense of entitlement (Lareau, 2003). In contrast, parents from non-dominant groups did not have the same degree of cultural and social resources. Moreover, their habitus was routinely dismissed or undermined by the school. (Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1999). Studies of this kind illustrated how different forms of capital were transmitted within the family from the parents to their children and how subsequently inequality was reproduced, and thus made explicit how the legitimate power was maintained. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued, "Every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations" (p. 4).

Researchers (e.g. Lareau, 2003) usually categorise social class according to the family's current occupation and income. Reay's (1997) case study challenges the conventional definition of class. In her study, "Christine" grew up in a working class family and eventually became a middle class professional as defined by her current income, occupation, and educational credentials. Yet, Christine was ambiguous about her social status and defined herself as "classless". Unlike mothers from middle class families, Christine felt uncertain when dealing with her son's school. Reay argued that Christine's working class habitus acquired from her upbringing did not fit in well with her present situation as a middle class professional. The "lack of fit" of the two forms of habitus "generates a sense of inadequacy and feelings of negative self-esteem (p. 229). Reay pointed out the importance of examining the interplay of race, class and gender in women's lives. She argued that class should be conceptualised as a dynamic process. She iterated that Bourdieu's concepts of 'field' and 'habitus' are useful to capture such a dynamic process.

In a review of the educational research literature in the USA, Dika and Singh (2002, p. 36) noted that in the first half of the 1990s, a trend began with "a focus on minority populations". In some of their studies, Lareau and colleagues (Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) investigated how the interplay of race and class influenced parents' relationships with their children's schools. Driessen (2001) examined how inequality was reproduced in relation to ethnic minority in the context of Dutch primary education. Utilising Bourdieu's concept of social capital, Ream (2003) investigated Mexican-Americans' school underachievement. Reay (1998a) studied migrant mothers' experiences in relation to their children's schooling. She contended that migrant mothers did not have the relevant linguistic capital and were not familiar with the local educational system. All these factors had an impact on their work in regard to their children's education.

Although he examined gender inequality in relation to male domination (Bourdieu, 2005) and discussed the important role that women played within the family in cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1996), Bourdieu's work did not directly deal with women's experiences. However, many feminist researchers saw the relevance of his theories to feminist research (e.g. Dillabough, 2004; McCall, 1992; McLeod, 2005; Moi, 1991). Bourdieu's work has inspired many studies on women's (mothers')

experience on subjects such as gendered habitus (Reay, 1997), linguistic capital and gender (Reay, 1999), gendered (maternal) capital (e.g. Gillies, 2006; O'Brien, 2008; Reay, 1998b; Zembylas, 2007), interplay of gender and social class (Allard, 2005; Bullen & Kenway, 2005). These research findings proved that gender is an important element in the social and cultural reproduction process.

1.3 The Current Research

1.3.1 The key issues and research questions

The current study is concerned with the experiences of Chinese skilled migrant mothers raising their young children in New Zealand. A focus of the study is the interplay of class, ethnicity and gender embedded in skilled migrant women's lives in relation to their children's care and education in early childhood.

The current research aims to capture the complexity in the lives of the Chinese migrant mothers whose social position transcends multiple fields. First, because their children attend mainstream education, and the local educational system is different from those where migrant mothers were brought up, migrant mothers' children are in a different cultural field, a field that can be alienating to the mothers. As a migrant mother in Reay's (1998a) study said: "I am not used to the system of education here, the nursery rhymes, the fairy stories I have not grown up with. They are not part of my culture" (p. 65). Because of the mother-child relationship, the mothers' work has to transcend the cultural fields.

Second, when the mothers crossed the cultural fields between China and New Zealand, their cultural capital from China was devalued after migration (Ho, 2004), and it was usually difficult for Asian skilled migrants to seek paid employment that matched their pre-migration job status (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Compared to their male counterparts, female migrants faced not only cultural and structural barriers but also gender obstacles (Lee, Chan, Bradby & Green, 2002; Ho, 2004; Salaff & Greve, 2003). Ho (2004) studied female Chinese migrants in Australia. She argued that Chinese female migrants not only experienced downward social mobility but also "feminisation"—retreating to home as wives and mothers. After migration, they had to shoulder high domestic demand because of the loss of family support and unavailability of hired domestic help. Moreover, they usually placed their husband's

career ahead of their own. She called this phenomenon "migration as feminisation". Therefore, female skilled migrants from China transcended the field of social class in their downward social mobility and this situation was coupled with gender inequality when they were caught in between being workers and mothers/wives. The current study aims to focus on this transcendent experience, encompassing both embeddedness and ambiguity across different fields by examining the interplay of class, gender, and ethnicity in the experiences of Chinese skilled migrant mothers raising their children in New Zealand. Consequently, the main research questions in this thesis are:

1) What did the mothers perceive as the most valuable form(s) of capital to acquire, accumulate, convert and transfer to their children?

2) How did the mothers relate to their children's early childhood centres?

3) How did the mothers deploy different forms of capital to provide their children the best care and education in the early years?

An aim of early childhood education in New Zealand is to support women to participate in the paid labour force and achieve a better life-work balance (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004). However, Kahu and Morgan (2007; 2008) argued that this aim remained a political rhetoric that contradicted mothers' lived experiences. This raises a further question in the current study:

4) Did New Zealand early childhood education help Chinese skilled migrant mothers achieve work-life balance?

1.3.2   The theoretical framework

An overview of the research literature suggested that applications of social and cultural capital in empirical studies are prolific and confusing. A major problem is the meaning of capital which has been defined as a range of elements and variables from highbrow cultural activities to various competencies and abilities; from parental educational credentials to various forms of parental involvements (see Dika & Singh, 2002; Lomant & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Portes, 1998). To solve this problem, Lareau and Weininger (2003) proposed to conceptualise social and cultural capital as "evaluative norms" that are imposed on and consequently

disadvantage people from less privileged social groups (p. 589). Compliance with the dominant norms will lead to social and cultural inclusion and entitlement to its subsequent benefits and power, and vice versa. This definition of capital is broad and abstract enough to accommodate different research topics and contexts while enabling researchers to achieve a certain unity and consistency in empirical research.

Although research findings (e.g. Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1995; 1998a; 1998b; 1999) have confirmed the imposition of dominant norms on less privileged social groups with disadvantageous consequences, other research findings (e.g. Baker, 2005; Carter, 2003; McKeever & Miller, 2005; Pearce & Lin, 2007; Willis, 1981; Young, 1999) demonstrated another side of the story, that people from non-dominant social groups resisted the "imposition" of dominant evaluative norms. The cultural norms are not reproduced without contest and resistance. Willis (1981, p.174) summarised that "[t]he cultural is part of the necessary dialectic of reproduction…This view of cultural forms and reproduction is both pessimistic and optimistic." It is pessimistic that the inequality does tend to reproduce itself through individuals' daily practices. In his study, the majority of working class boys, despite their vigorous protest and resistance, ended up with working class manual jobs. It is also optimistic because "there is no inevitability of outcomes. Subordination and failure is not unanswerable."

In her article *Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth*, Yosso (2005) challenged "traditional interpretations of cultural capital" that define only dominant class culture as cultural capital; a deficit lens that tends to devalue other non-dominant cultures (p. 69). Moreover, for individuals from subordinate groups, both non-dominant and dominant cultural norms exist and interplay with each other in their daily lives (Bentley, 1987; Carter, 2003; Young, 1999).

In the current thesis, I define both non-dominant and dominant evaluative norms as capital. Non-dominant norms refer to Chinese traditions and values while dominant norms refer to various mainstream norms and standards in New Zealand. In this thesis, I utilise Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field to analyse the research data. Bourdieu's concepts have inspired a wealth of research in education for the last three decades. To apply these concepts in the current research enables me

to make use of the richness of existing research findings but also to critique and extend traditional empirical applications of Bourdieu's concepts.

1.3.3 The research process

In total eight recent Chinese skilled migrant mothers were recruited in the current study. Data was collected through audio-taped, face-to-face interviews. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin, the participants' as well as the researcher's native language. Following the approach of institutional ethnography (Smith, 1987; 1991; 1992; 1999), a main focus of interviews was to encourage participants to recount their daily experiences in detail. To achieve this aim, the participants were asked to take photos of their daily lives; collect textual data such as their children's portfolios, and correspondence between home and early childhood centre. The visual and textual information was used as a stimulus for them to describe their lives in more detail. I transcribed and translated the data. I adopted Thematical Networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to organise and present the data.

1.4 Rationales for the Research

There are four main reasons for choosing to apply Bourdieu's theory to investigate the experiences of Chinese skilled migrant mothers raising their children in the New Zealand early childhood context[3]:

1) The existing research literature on cultural reproduction has been in the school and higher educational context. However, the younger the children, the more dependent they are on their parents and families to provide care and education. Parents' responsibilities and obligations are more salient compared with parenting at other phases. Mothers are generally the primary caregivers for their young children, particularly so with preschool children. The gendered role of parenting has been insufficiently studied (Reay, 1995). Therefore, early childhood as a particular context is particularly suitable for examining the relation of gendered parenthood and cultural reproduction.

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[3] The research focus is on the migrant mothers' experiences with their preschool children. However, some mothers also have school children and children just started school. Data about school and school children were sometimes included in order to understand the mothers' experiences in a broader context of (early childhood) education.

2) The early childhood education sector seems to be less competitive and less structured than the school sector. In early childhood education, the *process* of learning rather than academic *outcome* is emphasised. For example, in the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whaariki*, "well being" and "belonging" are among the goals of achievement outcomes (Ministry of Education, 1996). This situation of early childhood education is supposed to allow more freedom for interpretations and diversity, and subsequently a more equitable learning environment as it is held that different values can be accommodated and tolerated more easily. Therefore, this is an ideal site to apply Bourdieu's theory and to investigate whether cultural reproduction is indeed inescapable in people's everyday lives. A key issue is to examine how the immigrant mothers decoded various evaluative norms to decide what is the best early education and care for their children's future.

3) Social class has been conventionally defined according to one's current occupation, income, and educational qualifications. These three factors are normally positively correlated to each other. Higher educational credentials normally lead to better jobs and higher incomes. But Chinese skilled immigrants belonged to the middle class before migration and most of them experienced downturns in New Zealand in terms of their after-migration occupations and incomes (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). Applying Bourdieu's concept of habitus raises the question of whether the middle class habitus persisted after migrants entered another field where their situations changed. Choosing Chinese skilled mothers as the participants in the current study aims to highlight the complexity of class and cultural reproduction.

4) Formal early childhood education in New Zealand is defined as for children from birth to five year old when most of the children begin school in New Zealand. More generally, early childhood refers to the period from birth to eight years of age. I adopt the more general definition in the current thesis and mothers' accounts of their older school-aged children are also included although data collection and analysis will be focused on the mothers' experiences with their preschool school (before five years old). The current thesis focuses on the migrant mothers' experiences in relation to their children's early childhood

centres in New Zealand, but the concept of early childhood care and education goes beyond the physical boundaries of the fully fenced early childhood centres. This is because an educational institution is an integral part of the wider society (Steedman, 1987, cited in Aliwood, 2008).

In the current thesis, formal early childhood education or the early childhood institution are terms used to refer to a range of licensed early childhood education providers that are in a charter relationship with the government. These include teacher-led centre-based services such as kindergarten, full-day and sessional daycare, as well as parent-led centre-based Playgroup and home-based care services. Licensed early childhood education providers are required to abide by government regulations and rules and are in return entitled to government funding. Formal early childhood education can be thought of as an especial instance, a manifestation of the confluence of various forces from the political, educational, employment and familial sectors. So, in relation to the various forms of 'early childhood' I mean to refer to: early childhood' in general, including the elements of political, educational, employment and familial forces as the 'early childhood context'.

The early childhood institutions, including teacher education, early childhood centres etc might be thought of as part of the early childhood education. In the case of this thesis, because the mothers do not use the full range of early childhood institutions, I focus on the early childhood centres. Although teacher education institutions have an influence on the children's experiences, the mothers seldom mentioned its direct influence, and I have consequently not addressed them or their influence to any great extent.

A focus of the current thesis is to study the migrant mothers' experiences. I assume that what the mothers do at home with their children and the family relations are also part of the early childhood experiences. The mothers' practices and beliefs inevitably have intricate linkage with their own upbringing and past experiences back in their birth country, China. Therefore, the early childhood also includes cultural practices and beliefs in China. The concept of early

childhood in the current thesis thus transcends time (present and past) and space (New Zealand and China). But it is assumed that the transcendences are brought together and manifested in the participants' daily experiences of mothering.

Early childhood care and education is a gendered sector where more than 90 percent of the teachers are female and mostly mothers the primary caregivers. Childcare has traditionally been a women's job in the private sphere. There are intricate links between mothering and teaching young children (Acker, 1995; Aliwood, 2008). Feminist researchers (e.g. Graham, 1991, Griffith & Smith, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Uttal, 2002) considered taking care of and teaching young children as both a feeling and paid/unpaid labour. When this "women's job" moved into the public domain, it inherited the low pay and low social status that were a result of the traditional gender inequality (May, 1997). As a bid to gain recognition of what had been traditionally women's unpaid work as a paid profession and subsequent respect, funding, better pay, and higher social status, the early childhood sector has made efforts to professionalise. As a result, In New Zealand, the last 15 years has seen early childhood increasingly institutionalised (Farquhar, 2008).

So what are the migrant mothers' experiences in relation to such gendered professionalisation? These mothers were brought up in mainland China where their mothers had paid full time work and where extended families particularly grandparents were considered to play an important part in bringing up young children. This group of women might view their mothering experiences differently from mothers who were brought up in New Zealand. So what are migrant mothers' experiences with their children's early childhood centres when this "women's job' is moved out of the home? Does this move elevate the social status of this "women's job" as a whole? How do the migrant mothers view the professionalised early childhood in the public domain and what do they do with their job remaining in the private home? This thesis aims to examine the migrant mothers' experiences in relation to the early childhood sector as a gendered profession and institution and some of their responses give us some clues as to answers to these questions. The unprecedented situation of the mothers might generate perspectives and insights that are new to the existing literature.

1.5 The Research Audiences

The current research is intended for four different audiences:

First, the academic community may be interested to see this thesis as a modest contribution to extending the application of Bourdieu's concepts in empirical work. Traditionally, only the dominant social and cultural resources are counted as capital. I followed and extended Lareau & Weininger's (2003) proposal to include the non-dominant social and cultural resources as capital. Under this theoretical conceptualisation, the findings of this research complicated previous research conclusions (i.e. Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) that non-dominant families are disadvantaged simply because the families cannot provide their children access to the dominant social and cultural capital. The thesis challenges the notion that social and cultural reproduction is linear, and thus supplements other researchers' work (e.g Carter, 2003; McKeever & Miller, 2004; Reay, 1997; Willis, 1981; Young, 1999) in concluding that the process of social and cultural reproduction is complex and dynamic.

Second, immigration and education policy makers may find the information provided in this thesis useful. The purposes of early childhood education in New Zealand have been to provide quality education for the children, to support and empower parents and families (Ministry of Education, 1996), and to enable women to achieve "a greater work-life balance" (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004). Almost 20 years after the implementation of the points system of immigration, the New Zealand government conducted its first large-scale survey of skilled migrants in New Zealand (Department of Labour, 2006). Statistics New Zealand (2004) also gathered information about skilled immigrants' employment status. However, in statistics, "Asians" are always grouped together and statistics do not provide more personal details and insights in context. The Chinese are the largest group of Asian ethnicity in New Zealand. There is a dearth of empirical research on recent female skilled immigrant from China[4]. It is hoped that this project can provide some information for

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[4]An exception is Ip's (2002) article examining Chinese female migration in New Zealand.

policy makers to consider how government can support this group of skilled migrant women to achieve a "greater work-life balance" during the settlement process.

Third, the last decade has seen Auckland became more and more "ethnically diverse" (Statistics New Zealand, 2003a). The majority of Chinese migrants to New Zealand settled in Auckland and more children of Chinese ethnicity are attending early childhood centres. Findings from this project may provide some insights into the migrant mothers' expectations and aspirations for their children in early education thus providing useful information for teacher educators as well as early childhood practitioners in understanding recent Chinese immigrant families.

Finally, this project could be of interest to migrant mothers in general and Chinese skilled migrant mothers in particular. As a recent Chinese immigrant mother myself, I found participants' accounts extremely insightful. Some participants also told me that they had enjoyed the talks. The conversations brought insights to otherwise seemingly ordinary and tedious daily lives.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis comprises two parts. Part 1, "Whose culture has capital?" begins with Chapter 2 and includes a total of three chapters. Part 1 is more concerned with the theoretical elements of this thesis. It comprises two chapters of literature review and a chapter on research design. Part 2, 'Chinese migrant mothers raising their children in New Zealand', includes four chapters of empirical findings and discussions. They are chapters 5 to 8.

Chapter 2, "Whose Culture Has Capital?" presents a literature review on Bourdieu's concepts and their applications in empirical research. The chapter starts with an introduction to Bourdieu's concepts: capital, habitus and field, followed by a review of primary studies applying these concepts as well as secondary studies (appraisals and reviews of the primary studies).

Chapter 3, 'Migration, Motherhood, and Childrearing: The Two Sets of Norms' presents a literature review on the two sets of norms in New Zealand and China. This chapter places Bourdieu's concepts into the research context of the current thesis.

Chapter 4 details the research process. The research adopts Bourdieu's concepts as a theoretical framework using the approach of institutional ethnography. A key object of the research design is to make explicit the taken-for-granted and the legitimate norms that coordinate people's daily lives.

In Chapter 5, 'Transnationalism: what is it really?' the migrant mothers explained their reasons for migration. The mothers' accounts about their lives in New Zealand revealed that it was impossible to break through the ethnic divide. They were also concerned that because of family influence, their children might experience difficulties breaking into mainstream cultural and social circles. The mothers also stated that it was not easy to return to China with children in tow. Caught in between the two worlds of New Zealand and China, West and East, the migrant mothers tried to forge a new way of living and provide the best of both worlds for their children.

Chapter 6, 'The silent partners?' presents the Chinese migrant mothers' experiences in relation to their children's early childhood centres. This chapter covers four areas: the mothers' choices of their children's early childhood education; their daily encounters with the teachers; their comments on the centre's practices in terms of their children's portfolio; and finally their views on play in mainstream education. Although the mothers were not vocal during the direct encounters with their children's centres, they still played a very proactive role in their children's education. The mothers were not entirely satisfied with mainstream education and they did not think the dominant cultural norms always suited their children. This view was further supported by the mothers' work at home.

Chapter 7, 'The mothering work' describes the migrant mothers' work at home with their children. This chapter covers three areas of the mothers' work: general teaching/learning and daily routines; language(s) learning; and organised extracurricular activities. In general, the mothers' work tended to reinforce and extend what the children had learned in the early childhood centres/schools as well as bridge the gaps between home and school. The mothers' work also supplemented what their children missed from mainstream education.

Chapter 8, '"The family" documents what the mothers did to maximise the benefits for their children within the family context. This chapter has three sections: 1)"two

generations" reports the situation of grandparents as cultural and social resources in New Zealand; 2) "gendered parenthood" describes the gender differences in parenting; and 3) "mothering and paid work" investigates how the mothers balance their roles as workers and mothers in relation to their children's care and education.

Chapter 9, "conclusion" is the final chapter of the thesis. Here, I summarise the major research findings and discussions; answer the research questions; outline the contributions of the current thesis to the existing research literature; discuss its implications and suggestions for early childhood education in New Zealand; analyse the strengths and limitations of the current thesis; and finally make recommendations for further research.

1.7 Summary

In this introductory chapter, I have presented: the theoretical background to my research; the main issues and concerns of the current research in light of the theoretical background; research questions derived from the research topic; the theoretical framework of the current thesis; the research process; the research rationales and audiences; and finally the organisation of the thesis. The next chapter is the first chapter of Part 1 "Whose culture has capital?" This chapter presents a literature review on Bourdieu's theories and concepts as well as their application in educational research.

Part I

"Whose Culture Has Capital?"

CHAPTER 2 "Whose Culture has Capital?"

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a literature review of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory and its applications in empirical research. The chapter begins with an introduction to Bourdieu's theory focusing on his three concepts: capital, field and habitus. It then provides a critique of Bourdieu's theories and concepts, and a review of its applications in educational research literature. Gaps and issues in the literature are identified. Addressing these gaps and issues forms the theoretical framework of the current thesis.

2.2 Pierre Bourdieu: Capital, Field and Habitus

Throughout his work, Bourdieu made consistent efforts to dissolve various dichotomies in the academic field, such as: subjectivity and objectivity; theory and practice; individual and society; and structure and agency (Grenfell & James, 1998; Mahar, Harker & Wikes, 1990; Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu (1977a) proposed "a science of dialectical relations between objective structures…and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them" (p. 3). Bourdieu's three main concepts of capital, field and habitus describe relations between the objective world and human activities as dialectical (Grenfell & James, 1998). I use Bourdieu's three concepts as the theoretical framework for the current thesis. The three concepts are introduced in the following sections.

2.2.1 Different forms of capital

According to Bourdieu (1986, p. 241), capital can be "materialized" as well as "embodied". Capital has both material and symbolic power. Different forms of capital are convertible under certain conditions. Capital is "accumulated", an investment that takes time. Bourdieu defined cultural capital as:

> Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural good… and in the *institutionalized* state… (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243, italics original).

Social capital is:

> the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network or more or less institutional relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 284).

Cultural capital entails cultural values, attitudes and "dispositions" of a cultural group. Social capital is one's connections or access to a particular social group. The group membership entitles one to share the group's communal capital. To be accepted into a social group, one needs to possess the appropriate cultural capital. Because the dominant class possess various forms of capital, in materialised or symbolic forms that are endorsed by the dominant society, these various forms of capital are subsequently convertible to power and privilege; thus class dominance is maintained and reproduced.

Language, "linguistic capital" is a special form of cultural capital, (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 51). "Linguistic exchange" is:

> established within a particular symbolic relation of power between a producer, endowed with a certain linguistic capital, and a consumer (or a market), and which is capable of procuring a certain material or symbolic profit (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 67).

Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital challenges the Saussurian and Chomskyan concepts of linguistic competence that often assume "the knowledge of a language possessed by an ideal speaker-hearer in a completely homogeneous speech community". Language, in Bourdieu's definition, "is in fact the product of a complex set of social, historical and political conditions of formation" (Thompson, 1992, p. 5).

According to Bourdieu (1992), there is no pure linguistic competence. Linguistic exchanges are embedded in the structure, history and politics, which define who has the power to say what, and how words should be uttered:

> But the linguistic relation of power is not completely determined by the prevailing linguistic forces alone: by virtue of the languages spoken, the speakers who use them and the groups defined by possession of the corresponding competence, the whole social structure is present in each interaction (and thereby in the discourse uttered) (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 67).

2.2.2 Capital and cultural reproduction

Reproduction is "the science of the reproduction of structures". Bourdieu (1977a) further explained it as "a system of objective relations which impart their relational properties to individuals whom they pre-exist and survive" (p. 487). In other words, individuals are born into the existing social relations. Reproduction is not only achieved through possession of certain resources but also through having the power to impart meanings and values to various resources, symbolic or materialistic, and to decide the conversion rates of different forms of capital. For example, when Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) examined higher education in France, they argued that examinations carrying structural values and meanings were used to include and exclude students. Examinations, while regarded as neutral and objective, in fact favoured students from the dominant class and endorsed their habitus. Thus they legitimated the reproduction and dominant power. Explaining how dominant groups legitimate their power as neutral and objective is a key contribution of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory. To further illustrate this point, it is necessary to understand Bourdieu's two other important concepts: *field* and *habitus*.

2.2.3 Field and habitus

Field is an arena of social interactions and power struggles:

> I define field as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). Each field presupposes and generates by its very functioning, the belief in the values of the stakes it offers (Bourdieu, 1989a, p. 39).

Field entails a structured and relatively objective social reality where individuals, social groups and institutions have different material situations, social functions and obligations according to their social positions and are related to each other in "a structured system" (Grenfell and James, 1998, p. 16).

Habitus is the mechanism that people continuously acquire and apply consciously or unconsciously through the social interactions in the field. A *habitus* is:

the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations… a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems, and thanks to the unceasing corrections of the results obtained, dialectically produced by those results (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 72, pp. 82-83, italics original).

For Bourdieu, the relation between *field* and *habitus* is interdependent. Field is the social condition where a habitus develops. A habitus is social because it is conditioned by various social interactions in the field. In turn, habitus constructs the meanings of the field.

On the one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of immanent necessity of a field (or of a hierarchically intersecting set of fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value, in which it is worth investing one's practice (Bourdieu, 1989a, p. 44, italics original).

Habitus develops very early in life when individuals experience the objective constraints in the field. Because of this, family and family relationships play important roles in fine-tuning the development of habitus.

2.2.4 "Feel for the game"

Bourdieu's (1990, p.166) term "feel for the game" indicates the social rules based on implicit consensus of the players of the game:

produced by experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, the 'feel for the game' is what gives the game a subjective sense—a meaning and a *raison d'être,* but also a direction, an orientation, an impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake (this is *illusio* in the sense of investment in the game and the outcome, interest in the game, commitment to the presuppositions – *doxa* – of the game)

The above excerpt is a perfect example of how Bourdieu tried to transcend the traditional dichotomy of subjectivism and objectivism. The "feel for the game" gives the game a subjective direction and at the same time, its subjectivity is objectified. The collective consensus of the feel for the game enables society to run in certain unity and harmony and to generate cultural reproduction.

Since its debut in the English language academia, Bourdieu's work has inspired many educational empirical research projects on a range of topics, such as cultural production and educational outcomes (e.g. De Graaf, 1986), linguistic practice in classrooms (e.g. Grenfell, 1998; Palludan, 2007), career decision (e.g. Hodkinson, 1998; Willis, 1981) and parental capital (e.g. Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1998b; 1999). Bourdieu's theory has also attracted many criticisms. A thorough examination of Bourdieu's work is beyond the scope of the current investigation. I have briefly explained Bourdieu's three main concepts: *capital, field* and *habitus*, and explained how capital and "feel for the game" play their parts in cultural reproduction. In the following sections, I provide an overview of research applications of Bourdieu's three concepts. The overview focuses on parental and family roles/backgrounds and activities in relation to how social and cultural capital is transmitted (or intended to be transmitted) to children, with an emphasis on the conversion of different forms of capital, and its relation with field and habitus as these are relevant to the current research.

2.3 Bourdieu: Critiques and Applications

Bourdieu's theory has inspired numerous studies. This review of its applications is organised in two parts. The first part reviews research applying cultural and social capital to study students' family background in relation to educational outcomes. I first discuss some prevailing definitions of cultural and social capital in educational research and their limitations. Second, following Lareau and Weininger (2003), I propose an alternative definition of capital. Third, I draw on existing literature to further illustrate and justify my proposal. In the second part, citing studies that specifically applied Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus I discuss how both concepts of field and habitus enable researchers to better understand the process of conversion and transmission of various forms of capital. This discussion leads to a proposal of a theoretical framework for the current thesis.

2.3.1 "Whose culture has capital"?

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is popular in the English language sociology of education, particularly in the USA and the UK (see Dika & Singh, 2002). However, the empirical applications of Bourdieu's theory are often inclusive. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argued that educational institutions reproduce social inequality

through cultural reproduction. They emphasised the important links between family background and acquisitions of cultural capital. Following Bourdieu's argument, many empirical researchers defined dominant culture as the only cultural capital and hypothesised a positive relationship between cultural capital and various educational outcomes. Researchers (i.e. De Graaf, 1986; DiMaggio, 1982; Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999) used quantitative data to study how family background mediates the correlations between cultural capital and academic achievement. The results are ambiguous. DiMaggio (1982) concluded that cultural capital did have an impact on students' academic results despite "the relatively low correlations" and the less-than-ideal data available (p. 198). Adding parents' participation in their children's learning as a variable, De Graaf (1986) believed that parental cultural capital brought better results in their children's academic achievement. Other studies (e.g. Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999) could not establish a substantial correlation between (parental) cultural capital and students' academic achievement.

Before discussing whether the correlation can be significant enough to prove the relation between cultural capital and educational outcomes, it is necessary to understand the construct of cultural capital. Cultural capital is often defined as a few factors that are related to highbrow cultural activities such as art, music and literature reading (e.g. De Graaff, 1986; DiMaggio, 1982). This kind of definition is "pervasive" in research literature (Kingston, 2001, p. 90). This might be due to the influence of Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, in which he discussed French elite culture. Bourdieu used the example of elite taste to illustrate the arbitrary nature of cultural capital, and how the dominant group objectified such arbitrariness as legitimate cultural capital to differentiate themselves from other social groups, and thus exclude subordinate cultural groups from power and privileges. Bourdieu made explicit the arbitrariness of highbrow cultural taste to illustrate that highbrow culture is not of such intrinsically superior quality as to warrant a superior social position. Moreover, Bourdieu's study was conducted within a particular French context. Caution should be taken when it is applied in another context (Grenfell & James, 1998; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Kingston, 2001). Therefore to define cultural capital as an assembly of some variables from highbrow

cultural activities and to use this definition as a universal concept regardless of its context does not grasp the core tenet of cultural capital.

Indeed, conceptualisations of both cultural and social capital in empirical studies have proliferated[5] thus causing confusion (see Dika & Singh, 2002; Lomant & Lareau, 1988; Portes, 1998 for detailed reviews)[6]. One of the possible causes of this situation might be due to different interpretations drawn from Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu was known for using "obscure" and "ill-defined language" as well as for his dislike of specifying operational definitions for his concepts (Health, Hasley & Ridge, 1982, p. 88). However, Bourdieu's theories should not be treated as manuals for research application (Grenfell & James, 1998). Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory and particularly his concepts of cultural and social capital, despite their various shortcomings, have provided a wealth of conceptual frameworks for sociological research. How to utilise Bourdieu's work relies on "the different projects which researchers set for themselves" (Shirley, 1986, p. 111).

There are two main unresolved issues in the existing research literature. First is the definition of capital. Second is how to empirically prove the relationship between social and cultural capital and their conversion into benefits (Kingston, 2001). To solve the two problems, Lareau and colleagues (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Weininger, 2003) offered an innovative solution. They proposed an abstract definition to achieve certain unity among researchers, and yet a definition broad enough to allow researchers to contextualise it according to their special research topics and contexts. In a critical review of empirical applications of cultural capital in American studies, Lamont and Lareau (1988) proposed that cultural capital be defined as:

> institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion (p. 156).

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[5] Apart from the prevailing definition of highbrow cultural activities, cultural capital is also defined as/ related to various "skills", "competence", parental educational credentials and so on (see Lareau & Weininger, 2003)

[6] Articles reviewed by Dika and Singh (2002), Portes (1998) included articles applied or drawn from the concept of social capital of James S. Coleman.

Fifteen years later, Lareau and Weininger (2003) further expanded the definition of cultural capital as: "the direct or indirect 'imposition' of evaluative norms favoring the children or families of a particular social milieu" (p. 598). "Imposition" means that dominant social groups are able to impose their norms and values on non-dominant groups and to exclude subordinate groups from the dominant power and privilege. This definition of cultural capital is "highly abstract" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 588). This broader definition serves as a departure point, and researchers are able to identify the specific "micro-interactional process whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills and competence comes into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation" (p. 569). This is an innovative solution: a broad definition unifies and clarifies the core meanings of cultural capital whilst allowing flexibilities to capture the diverse micro-interactional processes whereby cultural capital is acquired, transferred and exchanged.

By providing ethnographic details of parent-school interactions and encounters, Lareau and colleagues (Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) described how parents from privileged social groups (white middle class) had the appropriate cultural and social capital to maximise benefits for their children when dealing with the school. Values and practices of dominant social groups were routinely endorsed by the school and validated through parent-school interactions. Although parents of dominant groups did not always win against the school, these parents transmitted to their children a sense of entitlement and strategies to effectively deal with institutions. On the other hand, parents from working class and poor families lacked capital of "the right currency" to handle the institution. Their childrearing practices and values were often dismissed by the school and the children were subsequently disadvantaged. The social divide permeated every single part of families' daily lives. Children from the middle class and working class had different schooling, different home lives, and even their extracurricular activities were marked with class differences. Such social segregation reinforces and reproduces the inequality (Lareau, 2003).

The social divide in every aspect of people's daily lives enables the dominant class to further consolidate their various forms of capital. For example, through their children's school and extracurricular activities, middle class parents established

social networks among themselves that became social and cultural capital from which they could draw cultural resources when dealing with their children's school. When the parents had a dispute with the school, middle class parents utilised their parental social network for mutual benefits: middle class parents sometimes approached the school collectively, and parents who were legal professionals were able to use their professional knowledge during the process while working class and poor parents usually lacked such resources (Horvat et al, 2003).

Bourdieu (1978) asserted that sport and leisure activities are all part of the wider socio-political struggles: "that this field is itself part of the larger field of struggles" (p. 826). It is all defined by who plays what sport and how sport should be played, and consequently who associates with whom—social separation continues in the field of sport and leisure. Bourdieu (1978) argued that "it is first necessary to consider the historical and social condition of possibility of a social phenomenon which we too easily take for granted: 'modern sport'" (p. 820). Belich (2001) observed such historical and social conditions in New Zealand history. He argued that New Zealand, as a British colony, sought its collective identity with the mother country. In sports, New Zealanders played cricket and rugby as did the English. Cricket as the symbol of the English "genteel" was used for character training. Rugby became the 'national game' of New Zealand due to its international success. Symbolically, rugby also affirmed the New Zealand collective identity as the "better Britain". As Belich (2001) put it, "how better to prove better Britishness than by being better than Britain at the most British of games?" (p. 388).

Griffith and Smith's (2005) study in Canada revealed that the smooth operation of the school and children's education required time and energy from the mothers that many working class and/or sole mothers could not afford and as a result inequality was reproduced. Similarly, Reay's (1995; 1998a; 1999) studies in the UK also confirmed that dominant middle class mothers had the appropriate cultural resources, and usually displayed a sense of certainty and legitimacy when dealing with their children's school. Reay (1998a; 1998b) particularly examined the interplay of gender and class during the process of cultural reproduction. She argued that it was the mothers who were involved with their children's day-to-day care and education in primary school. The mothers carried out the work without much involvement by

their male partners. She further examined class differences in the mothering work as "gendered class processes" (Reay, 1998b, p. 195). Reay (1999) also explored the role linguistic capital played in teacher-parent encounters. She argued that middle class mothers had linguistic capital that associated with the right type of vocabulary when dealing with the school. Linguistic capital is also genderised. The women in the study realised that male utterances generated more weight and some mothers tried to persuade their male partners to talk to the teachers at school.

These studies (e.g. Griffith & Smith, 2005; Horvat et al, 2003; Lareau 1987; 2003; Reay 1995; 1998a; 1998b; 1999) confirmed Bourdieu's (1996) argument that the family is an important site for social and cultural production and reproduction, and highlighted the importance of examining the family, and particularly mothering work in educational research. The studies also made explicit how different forms of capital were converted and accumulated and how inequality was reproduced through various forms of capital conversions (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). However, these studies also raised several questions: When people from certain social groups are deemed "disadvantaged", are they aware of their disadvantaged position[7]? Are they aware that certain groups are advantaged? How do they deal with disadvantages? What perceived capital do they have? Do they try to make unavailable access available and turn available resources into profit? To put it differently, do people from non-dominant social groups resist their fate to be dominated? Do they make use of their own cultural resources to overcome various disadvantageous situations in their daily lives? What is "the feel for the game" like for non-dominant groups when the game is not in their favour?

A traditional interpretation of capital, by counting only white middle class values and practices as cultural capital, adopts a deficit lens (Yosso, 2005). To describe only how certain social and ethnic groups are disadvantaged is to identify what those groups do not have rather than what they have. In this way, these studies may reinforce the stereotype that ethnic minorities and the working class are culturally

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[7] Reay's (e.g. 1995; 1998a; 1998b; 1999) studies focus on the interplay of class, gender, and ethnicity. Her studies highlighted the dynamic and complicated nature of social and cultural reproduction. However, unlike some other studies (e.g. Carter, 2003; McKeever & Miller, 2004; Young, 1999), resistance from members of less privileged groups was not the focal point of Reay's work.

deficient (Young, 1999). In addition, to take account of only the dominant cultural norms and social connections does not capture the complexity of lived experiences subordinate social groups. Young (1999, p. 224) observed "alternative forms of social and cultural capital" were "immensely" important in poor black Americans' lives. Individuals from non-dominant social groups have to deal with the dominant values and norms as well as their own group values in their daily lives. People from non-dominant groups deploy strategies to increase the value of their cultural resources. For example, ethnic Chinese were marginalised in the USA. There were many stereotyping assumptions about Chinese and Chinese culture. That all Chinese were good at martial art was one of them. To utilise their cultural resources in light of this stereotype, some Chinese staged martial art fights in China Town to attract customers (Chang, 2003). Although this strategy did not directly confront the dominant norms, it was used by Chinese Americans to convert their non-dominant cultural resources into economic profits.

Stanton-Salazar (1997) studied the socialisation and schooling experiences of working class minority children and youth in the United States. This study portrayed the institutional barriers that denied these children and youth access to the dominant social capital. On the other hand, these children and youth were able to strategically use available resources to overcome institutional constraints. Other research findings (i.e. Carter, 2003; Solorazano, 1997) showed that ethnic minorities and working class children and youth were aware of the value of dominant capital in achieving upward mobility. Both forms of dominant and non-dominant capital co-exist in the daily lives of people from non-dominant groups, who strategically acquire, reject, accumulate and convert different forms of capital for different purposes.

Although the dominant class has the power to impose meanings and values on subordinate groups, the process is not always as simple as Bourdieu speculated (Young, 1999). McKeever and Miller (2004) studied a group of Canadian mothers who cared for their children with disabilities and severe chronic illness. Instead of being "imposed upon", the mothers "paradoxically" accepted and refuted the "devalued" social positioning of their children (p. 1178). Pearce and Lin (2007) conceptualised Chinese traditional parenting style as non-dominant capital to examine the academic success of Chinese American secondary students. Baker (2005)

termed the non-dominant cultural resources as "ethnocultural capital" to study the experiences of *Zainichi*[2]. This kind of study represents a new but growing trend that challenges traditional definitions of social and cultural capital.

In light of the above literature review, I propose to follow Lareau and Weininger's (2003) conceptualisation of capital but replace the word "imposition" with "interpretation". Lareau and Weininger drew their definition from Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) that the dominant class has the power to impose their evaluative norms that in turn favour and maintain their dominant social position. Bourdieu (1992) also elaborated the "feel for the game" that all the players who participate in the game are able to interpret various unspoken rules. The word, "interpretation" allows me as a researcher to understand the other side of the story: that the "feel for the game" and the "imposition" can be objectified as well as resisted.

In this section, I have argued that counting non-dominant cultures as having social and cultural capital is particularly salient when studying less privileged social groups. I have proposed to adopt and extend Lareau and Weininger's (2003) proposal as an alternative definition of capital. In the following section, I review a range of empirical studies applying the ideas of social and cultural capital in educational research. The purpose of this review is three-fold: 1) to explain the importance of studying multiple forms of capital and different ways of capital conversions in different fields; 2) to make clear that quantitative data alone are insufficient to accommodate such dynamic concepts of social and cultural capital; 3) to argue that the Bourdieuian concepts provide a more comprehensive framework to study the experiences of ethnic minorities compared to acculturation theory and cultural oppositional theory, two very influential theories in ethnic and cultural studies.

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[2] *Zainichi* refers to Korean Japanese.

2.3.2   How to make your capital count

As briefly discussed earlier, a traditional trend of applying cultural/social capital in educational research is to establish or test a linear correlation between (highbrow) cultural activities (other activities that are defined as cultural capital) and educational attainments or other educational outcomes (i.e. De Graaf, 1986; DiMaggio, 1982; Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). The failure to establish such a correlation has caused some serious doubts about the worth of the Bourdieuian concept of capital (e.g. Kingston, 2001). However, the two components are not always linearly related. For example, Zweigenhaft (1992; 1993) studied Yale and Harvard graduates in the 1960s. He concluded that (upper) middle class students were more likely to have better academic achievement and to earn a doctoral degree than their more affluent elite counterparts who were more likely to join various prestigious clubs rather than pursuing further educational attainment. Using Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital, Zweigenhaft (1993) explained that it was due to the two groups' different strategies for accumulating and mobilising different forms of capital. Following up Yale graduates 25 years after their graduation, Zweigenhaft (1992) discovered that middle class students had less economic wealth compared to the elites. Academic achievement was a means for middle class students to accumulate cultural capital. With excellent academic records, these students were likely to enter prestigious professions such as medicine and law. But for elite students, who had already inherited various assets from their families, further academic attainments did not significantly generate more cultural and social capital. Instead, the elites tried to expand the social networks and relations that would later contribute to increasing their existing wealth. A conclusion can be made from Zweigenhaft's findings that participation in highbrow cultural activities does not automatically result in better academic achievement. The elites join prestigious clubs to establish social networks: to associate with those who are in prestigious social positions in order to expand their existing family business. These cultural activities are obviously not intended to generate better academic attainment. Bourdieu (1977a) noted a similar situation in France:

> …the most privileged section of the dominant classes from the point of view of economic capital and power are not necessarily the most well-off in terms of cultural capital… (p. 497).

These findings indicated the dynamic nature of cultural production and reproduction: individuals interpret their own situations and strategically acquire and convert different capital. The findings pointed to the importance of incorporating the concepts of habitus and field when examining various forms of capital. To seek a one-to-one correlation between highbrow cultural experiences and academic achievement oversimplifies and distorts the gist of cultural reproduction theory.

Generally speaking, socially privileged groups tend to fare better academically and later secure better job opportunities. However, academic betterment is just one of the many strategies to acquire and accumulate one form of capital—cultural capital. In different fields, different forms of capital have different values, and these different forms of capital have different accessibility and convertibility for different social groups and subgroups. The fluidity of capital allows researchers to explain the complex and dynamic social process. In explaining how ethnic minority families generate capital for their children to achieve upward social mobility, Bourdieu's concept of capital offers more insightful explanations than two other influential theories in ethnic studies: acculturation theory and oppositional theory. I use studies of Chinese American academic achievement[3] to further explain this point.

2.3.3 Different forms of capital and different pathways

Stories of American Chinese academic success are well known and have attracted many studies (i.e. Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Mouw & Xie, 1999; Pearce & Lin, 2007; Schneider & Lee, 1990). Three popular views have been identified to explain the phenomenon. The first attributes success to Chinese culture. The second explanation concerns acculturations where Chinese traditional values and Western cultural practices are integrated (Li, 2001). Oppositional theory offers a third explanation.

Berry and his colleagues' fourfold acculturation paradigm (Berry, 1970; 1992; 2001; Berry & Annis, 1974) has been widely replicated and accepted in research on ethnic minorities (Rudmin, 2003). According to the acculturation paradigm, the process of acculturation is a fourfold continuum. Assimilation is at one extreme with separation

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[3] Chinese American academic success stories are often grouped under the name of Asian Americans in research literature. The reality is that not all Asian Americans fare well academically.

at the other. Between these two, there is integration and marginality. Research using this paradigm usually concluded that integration is the most desirable outcome of acculturation (e.g. Berry, 1970; Eyou, Adair & Dixon, 2000). However, empirical findings revealed that the four dimensions of acculturation are not mutually conclusive. Instead, they coexist with each another (Rudmin, 2003). This situation is not problematic if the concept of field is applied: in different fields, people use different strategies (habitus), and individuals' daily lives transcend multiple fields.

According to Ogbu's (1978; 1991) oppositional theory, ethnic minorities are categorised into two groups. One includes immigrant minorities, referring to people who came to the host countries voluntarily; the other is named as involuntary or caste-like minorities, referring to people who were historically conquered, colonised or enslaved. Voluntary minorities came to the host countries for a better life. Although experiencing exclusion and discrimination, voluntary minorities identified themselves with their native lands and thus were more optimistic about their future and upward social mobility through efforts and academic achievement. Involuntary minorities were forced into a caste-like position in society. Their situation led them to feel resentful of the dominant group and pessimistic about their future, which contributed to their school underachievement. Gibson (1997) has pointed out that Ogbu's immigrant typology oversimplifies the "empirical reality" (p. 441). For a start, there are refugees, guest workers, and undocumented migrants to name a few that cannot be simply categorised as voluntary or involuntary. In addition, students' academic achievement does not linearly relate to their voluntary or involuntary migrant status. Not all voluntary migrants do well at school and some involuntary immigrants fare well (see Gibson, 1997 for this argument).

It was not just a few Chinese American students who slipped through the structural barrier but Chinese Americans were over-represented in academic achievement. This phenomenon raises the question of whether their academic achievement was due to Chinese cultural capital or the dominant cultural capital. Pearce and Lin (2007) attempted to answer this question. They utilised quantitative data and defined cultural capital as having "four components: parental educational attainment, parental educational expectation, parental involvement, and parenting style" (p. 21). They then measured these components in relation to both Chinese and white

American secondary students' academic achievement. The authors concluded that Chinese Americans' academic achievement was not due to assimilation. On the contrary, the parental cultural capital components leaned more towards traditional Chinese cultural practice. Adopting Ogbu's (1978; 1991) cultural oppositional theory, Pearce and Lin (2007) divided the non-dominant cultural capital into oppositional and complementary culture in relation to dominant culture. Citing cultural oppositional theory, they explained that involuntary immigrants often resist dominant institutions and develop oppositional culture. Voluntary immigrants such as Chinese Americans do not resist white dominance "in an oppositional manner". Although the two cultures are different they agree with each other "in promoting social factors such as education achievement" (p. 22). The complementary nature makes it easier for the non-dominant group (Chinese) to convert their cultural capital into academic achievement. However, this argument needs to be substantiated. Many scholars (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Hayes, 1992; Mickelson, 1990; Solorazano, 1991) have pointed out that involuntary immigrant students/parents hold positive attitudes towards school and have higher regard towards fellow high achieving peers. Chinese is not the only ethnic group that values academic achievement and sees educational attainment as a means of upward social mobility.

Nevertheless, the key question is how and why the Chinese convert their Chinese values into better school performance. As noted, Pearce and Lin (2007) conceptualised several elements as parental capital. The first is parental educational attainment. The authors noted that Chinese parents were more likely than white American parents to have a formal qualification: 65% of Chinese parents had bachelors degrees compared with 42.7% of white American parents. The authors attributed this difference to Chinese values of "正名", meaning a proper name or proper qualification. Although parents' educational attainments generally predicted students' school performance, Chinese mothers' educational qualification was the strongest predictor. The next component is parents' expectations of their children's education. Chinese parents had higher expectations than white American parents. The authors admitted that questions remain unanswered and "further study" is required (p. 22).

Applying Bourdieu's (1977a) cultural reproduction theory and qualitative data from previous studies could have answered some of the unanswered questions in Pearce and Lin's (2007) study. Pearce and Lin noted that the Chinese parents' higher educational attainment did not transfer into higher incomes. They used this data to argue that Chinese educational attainment was indeed due to cultural capital.

> Although we see substantially higher attainment among Chinese Americans when compared with White Americans, we find almost counter-intuitive figures when we examine such factors as family income…It seems reasonable then to turn to cultural capital as a factor in the shaping of a child's educational attainment (p. 27).

In fact, that Chinese Americans' higher education attainment did not transfer into high income precisely pointed to the structural constraint. With the same education, Asian Americans earned less than the majority Americans (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1980). Chinese Americans' academic success was not able to transfer into equal power and privilege. The phenomenon is better explained in terms of how cultural and structural factors are entwined. Because of the discriminating nature of the social structure, Chinese parents motivated their children to work harder not just by appealing to traditional Chinese values but also by telling them that Chinese need to have better academic qualifications to be able to compete against the dominant group (Siu, 1992). So it is not surprising that Chinese parents had higher expectations of their children's education and the parents were more likely to have university degrees than white American parents. This indicated the social reality that the parents defined, their habitus within the field: Chinese were discriminated against, and there were fewer opportunities available to them compared to the dominant group. A university qualification therefore constituted important cultural capital for Chinese Americans to enable upward social mobility when other resources were limited or denied. This finding is parallel to Zweigenhaft's (1992; 1993) conclusion that middle class Harvard students were more likely to resort to academic achievement for social mobility than were elite students who had other forms of capital and resources.

Sue and Okazaki (1990) argued that because of the American Chinese's lower social position in the American hierarchy, academic excellence became an important tool for social advancement, and that structural factors were far more important than

cultural factors. Salili (2005) did not agree. He questioned why other ethnic minority groups did not use the same tool for upward social mobility. There are two possible answers to this question. First, different ethnic groups occupy different social positions in the hierarchical structure, thus different groups use different "tools" for social advancement. For example, in New Zealand history, while the dominant group periodically sought to assimilate Maori, Chinese were always regarded as aliens to be eliminated. Maori played rugby, "the white man's game" and took part in "the white man's war" (the First World War) to seek recognition from the dominant power (Belich, 2001). But these "tools" were not possible for Chinese who were not allowed to become New Zealand citizens through naturalisation until the 1950s (Ip, 1995). Second, structural and cultural factors are both important and they interplay with each other. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus allow researchers to investigate such interplays.

Academic achievement is a form of capital investment for the children's future. Chinese Americans have made the investment strategically—Chinese students have done well in mathematics and science more rather than in any other single subject (Macias, 1993). Although it is a Chinese tradition to value education, traditional Chinese schooling emphasised classic literature learning rather than subjects in natural science. The Chinese achievement in science and mathematics cannot merely be attributed to Chinese traditions. Chinese migrants' choices of study and employment were carefully made:

> Rightly or wrongly, for instance, it is generally felt that a Chinese stands a better chance of advancement if he or she works in a job such as research where he or she does not have to deal with personnel problems… (Chen, 1981 cited in Siu, 1993, p. 26).

Academic excellence in natural science rather than social subjects was deemed to be easier for the Chinese to convert into other capital in the United States. In the case of Chinese Americans, parents instill in their children what is achievable, accessible and valuable in relation to the perceived social reality. Children learn about the *illusio* and the "feel for the game" from a young age.

So how does Chinese parents' educational attainment, particularly that of the mothers, convert into their children's academic achievement and attainment? Siu's (1993) ethnographic data, about a Chinese American boy Ivan Chan, provided some

clues. Ivan Chan was seven years old from a "working class" family. The whole family supported Ivan's early education but it was his mother who was involved in Ivan's daily life. She gathered information about childcare and schools; she assigned extra homework for Ivan and taught him at home. The father's involvement was restricted by his work schedule—long working hours in a Chinese restaurant. Although neither parents had university degrees, they continued their study. The father took ESL classes to improve his English and the mother took university papers for "self-improvement" (p. 17). This example suggested the different gender roles in parenting during the process of generating capital on behalf of their children (Reay, 1998a; 1998b)

Not only did American Chinese do well academically, but Chinese children in Holland also had exceptional academic performance (Pieke, 1991). Statistics showed that Chinese children had excellent school performance regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. Despite language barriers and home-school cultural differences, Chinese children were "able to compete on a par with, and even outperform, native Dutch children" (p. 170). One could easily use the data to attribute this phenomenon to Chinese culture. Pieke went beyond reading the statistics. He conducted interviews in Dutch Chinese communities and found out more than the statistics could tell. He discovered that the statistics only showed the school performance of children who were actually enrolled at school. In other words, Chinese children who were at school did exceptionally well academically. Chinese children who dropped out of school were not in the data. Most Chinese in Holland ran family restaurants. "The family is by far the most important social institution within Dutch Chinese community". The family is "the basic unit" of "consumption" as well as "production" (p. 171). The family provides individuals with shelter, safety, food as well as apprenticeships and jobs—children usually help and later work in the family business. The survival of the family (business) is of priority as it guarantees the survival of family members. Family is an important site to generate cultural production and reproduction (Bourdieu, 1996). Capital investment is not an individual affair but a familial matter.

Investments in children are essential for the family's social upward mobility. The key is to know how to invest—"the feel for the game". The Dutch Chinese

investment strategies usually included older children helping and working in the family restaurant because the family business was the safest way for the family as a whole to make a living in a foreign land. Moreover, older children were more likely born overseas and did not have the chance to learn Dutch from a very young age. When the family business was established and had accumulated wealth, the family were willing to invest in the children's education—normally in the younger intellectually bright offspring who were more likely born in Holland and more likely to speak fluent Dutch. Children's obtaining higher education and subsequently a career in mainstream society was a means for the whole family's social advancement. But it was riskier and could only be supported by the financial security of the family business. With limited resources and choices, the family would only invest in a child who was perceived as "capable enough to produce a sufficient return" (Pieke, 1991, p. 172). Children, who were unlikely to succeed academically, had to help with the family business and thus left school earlier. Pieke used his findings to illustrate the limitation of Ogbu's (1978; 1991) oppositional cultural theory. He explained that although Ogbu's theory is very useful, it is too static. Culture only provides a guideline for individuals' perceptions and actions. Structural, contextual, and personal factors at the micro-interactional level are left out in Ogbu's theory.

Compared to the acculturation paradigm and cultural oppositional theory, Bourdieu's concept of capital provides better answers as to how families and parents transmit and transfer their values, attitudes and practices to the next generation. The concept breaks down the dichotomy mentality evident in such binaries as assimilation versus acculturation, or dominant culture in opposition to non-dominant culture. With Bourdieu's concept of capital, it is possible to depict the complexity of how individuals strategically use their resources in different fields.

Like Ogbu (1978; 1991), Bourdieu (1977a) emphasised the importance of historical conditioning on individuals. Nonetheless histories are not fossils of time. "People construct the past in way that reflects their present need for meaning" (Ang, 2001, p. 28). Unlike Ogbu's theory where history becomes a set destination (Carter, 2003; Pieke, 1991), Bourdieu's concept of habitus allows personal interpretations and reconstruction, and allows accounts for subgroup differences within a social group (Carter, 2003). Compared to social and cultural capital, Bourdieu's concepts of

habitus and field and how these concepts are related to capital have caught less attention in empirical research literature. In the following section, I review research applications of these two concepts. I argue that the concept of field provides contextual background to study capital and capital conversion; and the concept of habitus yields better understanding of the micro-interactional process of cultural reproduction. Field and habitus should be analysed together with capital to enhance understanding of how various forms of capitals are acquired and converted.

2.3.4   Research applications of field, habitus and capital

Bentley (1987) argued that Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus* are especially pertinent to the study of ethnicity phenomena because ethnic minorities transcend "cultures" and "societies", individuals and collectives. Bentley used the case of Soraya Monap, "a daughter of a well-to-do Maranao family living in the Islamic city of Marawi", to support his argument. Soraya's upbringing intertwined influences of both Maranao traditions and modern Western values. Caught in between, Soraya had to reconcile the conflicts in her life that transcended multiple social and cultural fields. Bentley (1987) further illustrated the relations of capital, field and habitus:

> She (Soraya) shares different aspects of her life with different categories of people, categories mutually exclusive in the Philippine social context. She has chosen to live among Maranao and enjoys close relations with some members of her family (especially her mother and younger sisters), but she has also found sympathetic acquaintances among foreign residents who share her aspirations, her command of English, and her sense of alienation from the Maranao community. With urban Filipino middle class she shares a devotion to modernity. With her husband[8] she shares an inability to fit into traditional Maranao categories (p. 36).

The above description reiterates the multiplicity of women's lives (Reay, 1997). This is particularly accurate for women of ethnic minorities. The different categories of people in Soraya's life can be conceptualised as occupying different *fields*. There are different values, beliefs, social relations and capital at stake in different fields. Field conditions the development of habitus, a set of endurable dispositions that guide individuals' actions and thinking. Different fields produce different habitus. In

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[8] "Her husband was of lower descent rank than she and as a missionary stood outside of the Maranao system of status competition" (Bentley, 1987, p. 39).

different fields, Soraya used different habitus. Access to different fields also provided Soraya access to different forms of capital. Bentley explained that, with a law degree required in Manila, Soraya's father was able to secure "new sources of wealth, prestige and power" that were not available in the traditional Maranao community (p. 36). Soraya's father encouraged his daughter to pursue education and modern values, but also required her to be a traditional Maranao. Soraya's life story illustrates a dynamic relation among *capital, field* and *habitus*. Soraya's personal story is social because her life experience is the experience of different social categories. At the same time, her story is individual because the different combinations of the social categories and interactions are unique in her life. Her personal life was also structural. The different social categories are "mutually exclusive in the Philippine social context". Soraya's story illustrates the importance of examining the different sets of evaluative norms as well as the interplay of class and ethnicity in ethnic minorities' daily lives.

Ramos-Zayas (2004) studied the Puerto Rican diasporic community in Chicago. She argued that modernists' constructions of ethnicity based on "geographic territory, linguistic, and juridical criteria" are inadequate to explain the new transnational phenomenon of Puerto Rican migration (p. 37). "Inspired" by Bourdieu's work, Ramos-Zayas defined cultural capital as

> knowledge, meanings, and symbolic markers that are considered legitimate in a given society and contribute to the reproduction of dominance and privilege in the society (p. 37).

Ramos-Zayas applied the concept of cultural capital to study the interplay of ethnic identity and social class. Puerto Rican immigrants to the United States during the 1940s-1960s were constructed as people who left home to escape poverty, hoping to acquire wealth in America and who would eventually return home for a better life with their savings. New middle class emigrants from Puerto Rica distanced themselves from these historical images: "We don't live in ghettos like here. We're not like them" (Ramos-Zayas, 2004, p. 44). The genuine "Puerto Ricanness" was constructed as 'whiteness' or 'non-blackness'; as a "dark skinned" Puerto Rican born and raised electrical engineer commented, the American-born Puerto Ricans do not speak good English but "Black English, not the English we learn in Puerto Rico or in college" (p. 45).

As shown in both Bentley's (1987) and Ramos-Zayas's (2004) research, Bourdieu's conception of field is malleable. It imposes constraints but allows room for changes. A habitus develops from a field, bearing all the social restraints. When they move from one field to the other, people bring the habitus with them. The habitus is reshaped in the new environment. Habitus is also durable: it persists even when people physically leave the field. This explains, as shown in Ramos-Zayas's (2004) research, why Puerto Ricans were able to claim the authenticity of Puerto Ricanness regardless of where they lived; and how assertions of possessing certain cultural capital created "social space" for one's belonging, and to exercise exclusion and inclusion. Utilising the concepts of field and habitus, Bentley (1987) and Ramos-Zayas (2004) were able to capture the complexity of the interplay of ethnicity and social class.

Despite its frequent usage in academic research, social class is a problematic concept (Reay, 1997). It is common for researchers (e.g. Lareau, 2003) to adopt a general definition of social class where class is divided according to income, educational credentials, and occupation/profession. Often, one's academic qualification (cultural capital) is correlated to occupation and incomes. However, for Chinese skilled immigrants, the situation can be quite different. Among the main credentials for skilled immigration selection in the points system are their educational qualifications and work experiences. They belonged to the middle or upper middle class in China. Once they moved to New Zealand, this group usually encountered difficulties in employment (Statistics New Zealand, 2004; Wilson, Gahlout, Liu & Mouly, 2005). Many of them went through re-training to gain local qualifications. In general, they experienced a financial and social downturn compared to their pre-migration situation (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Moreover, they became members of a visible ethnic minority in New Zealand.

If a once-middle-class professional from China has to push trolleys at the supermarket to make a living in New Zealand, is this person counted as middle class or working class? This kind of issue concerning social class has seldom been addressed in existing research literature. One of the few exceptions is Reay's case study (1997) of "Christine" who came from a working class background but achieved social upward mobility. However, Christine defined herself as "classless".

Her ambiguity about her social class influenced the way she dealt with her son's school as a mother. Compared to other middle class women, Christine was less confident and did not have the "sense of entitlement" that other middle class women usually displayed (p. 229). Reay used habitus as well as field and capital to analyse the case. Bourdieu (1977a) argued that habitus evolves from individuals' early experience and persists after the individual physically moves into another field. Christine was brought up in a "poor, rural Irish background" (Reay, 1997; p. 227). Although her current occupation and income suggested middle class status, the habitus lingered and resulted in her ambiguity about her present social class position. She then resolved this ambiguity through identifying herself as classless. A feature of Bourdieu's (1977a) conceptualisation of capital is that capital takes different forms, economic as well as social and cultural. Christine belonged to the middle class according to her occupation and incomes. However, the capital in material form did "not make up for her lack of psychological and social resources" (Reay, 1997; p. 229): the latter are important components of cultural capital that Christine did not acquire from her upbringing. So it raises a question of how Chinese skilled migrant mothers identify themselves. These women, once members of the dominant middle class professionals in their native land, are members of an ethnic minority in New Zealand. According to the existing research literature as discussed above, in New Zealand they belong to a less privileged or non-dominant group who do not possess the dominant cultural and social capital or linguistic capital. So what do the mothers do to generate capital for the next generation in New Zealand? The current thesis aims to answer this question.

2.4   A Theoretical Framework: Capital, Habitus, and Field

For the purpose of this thesis, I follow Lareau and Weininger's (2003) position that capital is defined as various evaluative norms that serve as symbolic markers for exclusion: those who do not or cannot comply with the norms are consequently excluded. Lareau and colleagues (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Weininger 2003) focused on how subordinate groups were excluded. However, as shown in the reviewed literature (e.g. Baker, 2005; McKeever & Miller, 2004; Mickelson, 1990; Ramos-Zayas, 2004; Siu, 1992; Solorazano, 1991; 1997; Young, 1999), individuals from subordinate groups are not passively excluded. Instead, they moderate and endorse, as well as reject, various dominant norms. Therefore, I define capital as

comprising various evaluative norms of both dominant and non-dominant social fields for inclusion or exclusion. The core component for data analysis is how individuals interpret the norms of different fields in relation to their social positions, personal situations and power relationships. The interpretation is a habitus, "the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations" (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 72). The habitus "functions…as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*" (p. 82, italics original). Structural factors, personal experiences, relationships, and situations intertwine and shape the development of habitus. Habitus constructs meanings for different social contexts (fields) where an individual is situated. Values and conversion of different forms of capital depend on different fields. Because of the continuity of habitus, habitus transcends multiple fields; merges the past, present, and future; breaks down the divisions between the subjective and objective, and structure and agency.

The current thesis is concerned with how recent Chinese skilled migrant mothers raise their children in New Zealand. Guiding questions for analysis include:

1) What did Chinese skilled migrant mothers perceive as the most valuable form(s) of capital to acquire, accumulate, convert and transfer to their children?

2) How did the mothers relate to their children's early childhood centres?

3) How did the mothers deploy different forms of capital to provide their children the best care and education in the early years?

2.5 Summary

I have provided a review of the applications and critiques of Bourdieu's concepts of capital in educational research, concentrating on parental/maternal capital. Two main issues emerged from this review. The first is how to define capital. Conventionally, Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory has focused on how dominant powers are reproduced. While the application has been broadened to study the oppressed, the focus still remains on reproduction rather than resistance or awareness of resistance in the non-dominant groups. The second issue concerns the relation between cultural/social capital and cultural reproduction. Regarding the first issue, I follow Lareau and Weininger (2003) by adopting an abstract and broad definition of capital,

with an expansion to include both dominant and non-dominant evaluative norms. Regarding the second issue, I have argued, by illustration, that the three concepts of capital, field and habitus combined provide a better analytical tool to analyse the process of reproduction. These two solutions form the theoretical basis of this thesis.

This thesis is concerned with a group of Chinese skilled migrant mothers' experiences of raising their young children in New Zealand. In the next chapter, I provide a brief history of Chinese immigrants in New Zealand; a review of parenting practices of Chinese (migrant) parents; a comparison of the different norms of mothering and early childhood practices both in China and New Zealand; and a brief history of early childhood care and education in New Zealand. This information presents the historical, social and political context (field) in which to study Chinese immigrant mothers' experiences.

CHAPTER 3   The Two Sets of Norms

3.1 Introduction

Capital in the current thesis is defined as various evaluative cultural and social norms of both dominant and non-dominant fields that serve as symbolic markers to include or exclude. Compliance or non-compliance with the norms executes social and cultural inclusion or exclusion. It is assumed that for Chinese migrant mothers, the two sets of norms, that of the Chinese and New Zealand dominant cultural and social norms, are entwined in their daily lives. This chapter presents a review of the literature on both dominant Chinese and New Zealand culture [9], focusing on education, particularly early childhood education, parenting practice and motherhood. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background understanding of the sociopolitical and historical context, the norms as well as the "fields" (Bourdieu, 1989a, p. 39) in order to appreciate the aspirations of recent Chinese migrant mothers in raising their young children in New Zealand.

This chapter comprises five sections: 1) "Chinese migration in New Zealand", provides a brief history from the 1860s to present. Drawing from New Zealand as well as international literature, 2) "Chinese migrant families: Raising the next generation" discusses how Chinese traditions are related to Chinese migrant parenting practice as well the family-school relationship in their host countries. 3) "The fall and rise of Confucianism in China" briefly traces the vicissitudes of Confucianism in China. This section aims to examine one of the most influential elements in Chinese culture, Confucianism, in a historical context. 4) "New Zealand and China: Postwar to the new millennium" presents a comparison of the two cultures, focusing on educational policies, practices and values, parenting practices and the roles of mothers in the two cultures. 5) "New Zealand early childhood education" briefly describes the development of New Zealand early childhood over the last two decades.

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[9] Dominant New Zealand cultural practice in early childhood education, childrearing and parenting has strong links and roots to Britain, the mother country of New Zealand during the colonial time as Helen May's (1997) book *Rediscovery of Early Childhood* on New Zealand early childhood history and development shows. In this thesis, New Zealand culture's links and relevance to Western industrial countries, mainly the UK and North America, are included.

3.2 Chinese Migration in New Zealand[10]

China, defeated in the first Opium War (1839-42), was forced to sign the Treaty of Nanjing. Under this treaty, China conceded Hong Kong to Britain and opened treaty ports allowing free trade with the West. Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong province, South China, was the first treaty port. Natural disasters, foreign invasions, internal turmoil of peasant rebels and wars among warlords were important reasons for Chinese to emigrate (Saari, 1990; Ip, 1995)[11]. It was against this background that emigrant workers from China went to America, Australia and New Zealand during the gold rush period. The Chinese saying "falling leaves return to the root" (落叶归根) summarises the traditional mentality of Chinese migration. The early Chinese migrants were sojourners. If they could not return home alive, their bones or ashes would be sent back home (Ip, 1995). But eventually, instead of returning to the homeland, many Chinese migrants grew roots in New Zealand, a place that was once so alien and hostile to them.

3.2.1 "Old settlers"[12]: 1860-1985

In 1866, twelve Chinese migrant workers were invited by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce to New Zealand from Australia to work in the abandoned Otago goldfield. This was the first organised group of Chinese migrants to New Zealand although the first known Chinese came to New Zealand as early as 1842 (Ip, 1995). By the end of 1869, there were 2,000 Chinese migrant workers in New Zealand. They were from the Pearl River Delta area of Guangdong province. When the gold rush declined in the 1880s, most of the Chinese migrant workers returned home, or moved to other countries. Those who stayed in New Zealand headed to towns and cities where they made a living by working in laundries, fruit shops or market gardens. Before the

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[10] Immigration indicates migrants coming to a country, but an immigrant is at the same time emigrating from a country. Judging from today's multidirectional migration, I use migration here. In a similar vein, migrants are used instead of immigrants/emigrants

[11] Chen (1997) argued that established communication with the Pacific Ocean was also an important attribute of the emigration.

[12] I follow Ip (1995) in using the term "old settlers and new immigrants" to distinguish Chinese migration before and after 1985.

Second World War, the majority Chinese migrants in New Zealand were bachelors or married men whose wives and children living back in China (Ip, 1995).

Until the Second World War, numerous government policies were purposely made to exclude Chinese. New Zealand's anti-Chinese laws were similar to those in North America and Australia. However, unlike the Mayflower pioneers of American colonies who believed that the new continent was for diverse migrants from the Old World, "the New Zealand dream was much more exclusive and restricted" (Ip, 2003, p. 339). New Zealand was meant to be the "better Britain" in the southern hemisphere (Belich, 2001). Accordingly, legislation aimed to ensure that New Zealand was for British settlers (Ip, 2003).

During World War II, wives and children of Chinese migrants were first allowed to temporarily enter New Zealand as refugees but eventually they stayed. The permanent presence of wives and children marked a turning point for the Chinese community in New Zealand: a group of sojourners was transformed into a settlement of families. However, it was not until 1952 that Chinese New Zealanders were able to become New Zealand citizens through naturalisation (Ip, 1995). Free education provided opportunities for Chinese children to integrate into mainstream society[13]. Many offspring of those illiterate gold miners, market gardeners and launderers eventually excelled in the New Zealand educational system and entered professions such as engineering and medicine (Ip, 1996; Ng, 1999). The small Chinese community kept a low profile in New Zealand and gradually gained tolerance by mainstream society as the "model minority" until the new wave of Chinese migrants came in the 1990s (Ip, 2003).

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[13] Although free education was available before the 1950s, before the 1950s, the Chinese community comprised mainly sojourners of bachelors or married men without having families living with them. After the World War II, children and wives of the Chinese migrants were allowed to stay in New Zealand. After the established of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many Chinese migrant families decided to stay in New Zealand.

3.2.2 The new wave of Chinese migration: 1986 - Present

In Mao's China (1949-1976), international migration and individual overseas travelling was restricted if not totally forbidden. In 1978 China's economic reform began and China gradually opened its doors to the outside world. After decades of isolation, Chinese people were eager to go abroad. There was a "going abroad fever" during the 1980s and early 1990s, particularly among young university students (see Zhao, 1996). Globally, starting from the 1990s, the numbers of international migrants[14] have increased. According to the OECD (2008a), in the year 2000 there were 200 million international migrants, which is three percent of the world's population. This international migration shows some trends: 1) Because of the advancement of communication technology and transportation, migrants are able to keep close economic, social and political ties with both their home and adopted countries; 2) Circular and return migration[15] are more common; 3) From 1990s, receiving countries adopt immigration policies to seek skilled migrants; this caused a new trend of international professional migration (OECD, 2008a). In a broad sense, the new wave of Chinese migration in New Zealand is part of this global trend (Ip, 2003).

At the same time, more than ten thousand kilometres away from China in the South Pacific Ocean, the New Zealand Government introduced the Immigration Act 1987. This aimed to abolish discriminatory restrictions on non-Anglo immigrants (Ng, 1999). In 1991, the points system (Immigration Amendment Act 1991) was introduced to admit skilled migrants (Ip, 1995). Unlike the previous immigration law that was based on race, the points system was based mainly on eligible migrants' skills and knowledge, qualifications, age, work experiences, and employment in New Zealand.

In the past, Chinese migrants were never included in the New Zealand dream (Ip, 2003). Chinese in New Zealand were regarded as "undesirable aliens" and had been

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[14] International migrants are people who live at least one year outside of their countries of birth.

[15] Return migrants are those who return to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants and who intend to stay in their own country for at least a year. Circular migrants are those who move back and forth between/among countries.

subjected to legislative exclusion (Ip, 1995; 2003). "For most of its history, New Zealand's identity was linked with the idea of Britishness, with belonging to the Anglo-Saxon community and to the British Empire" (Murphy, 2003, p. 48). After Great Britain joined the EEC and later the EU, New Zealand's economy had to change and turn to alternative markets (Preston, 1997). Greif (1995) described this change:

> New Zealand Ministers of Trade finally succumbed to the reality of the situation and belatedly, very belatedly, turned to Asia for trade, and …a new strategy of immigration. But old habits and attitudes die hard, and we still hand out songs that relate to a non-existent empire… (p. 9).

Within this context large numbers of Chinese immigrants began to arrive in New Zealand from the 1990s. Ip (2003) maintained that the arrival of Chinese migrants was not New Zealand's intention. Rather it was "coincidental" that many people who met the immigration criteria "happen to be ethnic Chinese" (pp. 340-341).

Whilst the old settlers came from southern China, the new migrants came from all over the world. While the main sources included China, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Ip, 2003), from the mid-1990s the vast majority of Chinese migrants in New Zealand came from China (Henderson, 2003). Chinese migrants came from different parts of mainland China where Mandarin is the official language and dialects are spoken in different provinces. For example, Cantonese is a dialect spoken in Guangdong province. Most Chinese, particularly educated Chinese, are able to speak Mandarin as well as at least one or two local dialects. Compared to the old settlers' community, the new Chinese community is much larger and more diverse.

The majority of new immigrants from mainland China are skilled migrants (Henderson, 20003). Because they have been screened by the points system, skilled migrants in general are well educated and were middle class professionals before emigration. Asian skilled migrants normally faced employment difficulties particularly at the point of initial arrival. Many of them went through retraining for local qualifications in the hope of better employment opportunities (Statistics New Zealand, 2004). Chinese skilled migrants' downward social mobility was reported in Australia (e.g. Ho, 2004), Canada (e.g. Salaff & Greve, 2003), and the UK (e.g. Lee et al, 2002). Some migrants resolve to commute between New Zealand and their homeland. These migrants are termed as "frequent flyers" or "astronauts": usually

the men return to the homeland to work while the wives and children live on the husbands' remittances in New Zealand. Some whole families return to China. Others leave New Zealand for other countries because migrants who have met the credentials to enter New Zealand are also "highly desirable workers in many other countries" (Ip, 2003, p. 352). New Chinese migrants' mobility led to them being accused of disloyalty to New Zealand. Likening this mobility to Kiwis' cherished "Big OE", Ip (2003) argued, "The educated middle class has always been the most socially mobile group, irrespective of ethnicity" (Ip, 2003, p. 352).

The points system favours young professionals who are also in their active childrearing years. In 2001, the median age of overseas-born Chinese was 34.2 years while the median age of New Zealand-born Chinese was 12.4 years. This implied that new Chinese immigrants were likely to start their young families in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2003a). It is at the onset of childbirth and the consequent demands of childcare and childrearing that gender inequality becomes the most obvious (May, 1992). This is because as primary caregivers for their young children, women have to give up or reduce their paid work during the active childrearing years and become financially dependent either on their male partners or state welfare. Apart from facing the same structural and cultural barriers as their male counterparts, Chinese female migrants have to deal with gender obstacles in their host countries. Ho (2004) found that Chinese female migrants in Australia retreated to play domestic roles as mothers and wives due to the increasing demands of childcare and housework as well as the cultural and social barriers to attaining jobs that could utilise their previous skills and experiences. Lee et al (2002) and Zhou (2000) examined the experiences of working and professional Chinese women in the UK. Salaff and Greve (2003) focused on the gender barriers to paid employment opportunities for Chinese skilled migrants in Canada.

In the past, research on Asian female migration has been focused on female migrants taking up domestic and sex work (see Raghuarm & Kofman, 2004). Recently there is an expanding body of literature on Chinese skilled female migrants' experiences (e.g. Ho, 2004; Lee et al, 2002; Salaff & Greve, 2003, Zhou, 2000). In 2004, *Women's Studies International Forum* dedicated a whole issue to the special topic of Asian skilled migrants (see Raghuarm & Kofman, 2004). The current thesis complements

this body of research by focusing on Chinese female migrants' child rearing and childcare experiences in New Zealand. There is a dearth of primary research on Chinese migrants' childrearing practices. Drawing from New Zealand as well as international research literature, the following section provides a brief summary of overseas Chinese parenting practices, their expectations of their children and their children's schools. It aims to provide background information on how Chinese migrants raise their children away from their native home.

3.3. Chinese Migrant Families: Raising the Next Generation

Baumrind (1991) identified three types of parenting practices: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parents set clear rules but are responsive to their children's needs at the same time; authoritarian parents emphasise control; permissive parents do not define boundaries for their children. Research on parenting styles conducted in Western culture suggested authoritative parenting styles were related to positive child outcomes (e.g. Maccoby & Martin, 1983). When this notion was applied to study Chinese parenting practice, the Chinese parents were frequently identified as being authoritarian and restrictive. However, Chinese parenting practices did not result in negative outcomes for the children. This is because the parenting style developed in a Western context has different meaning to Chinese parents due to different cultural values (Chao, 1994; Gorman, 1998).

Chao (1994) explained that *"Guan"* (管) is one of the most important words in Chinese childrearing and parenting practice. Literally, it means "govern" or "discipline". But the word in Chinese also implies "love" and "care for" (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989, p. 93). Chao (1994) studied a group of Chinese American mothers and concluded that authoritarian style could be understood as training according to Chinese tradition. Chinese parents used different strategies because their parental goals were different from those defined by the dominant western culture. For example, Chinese American parents promoted interdependence whilst European American parents promoted independence (Wang, Wiley & Chiu, 2008).

A broader socio-political and economic context should be applied when viewing parenting as cultural practices. For instance, the Industrial Revolution changed people's way of production and consequently their way of reproduction. In feudal society, home was an economic unit—people either worked at their own home or

other people's homes. Along with industrialisation, more and more people were employed outside the home. Educating the young and taking care of the elders used to be the family's functions. Prost (1991) described the situation after industrialisation:

> The rise of wage labor stripped the family of its economic function. At the same time the decline of employment in the home went hand in hand with socialisation of education and elderly care. Young people increasingly learn their trades in school, and a state-financed society security system has supplanted the family's role in care of the elderly (p. 16).

With the separation of home and work, the family gradually lost its status as "a powerful institution" in an industrial society. The family has less control over its members, and a more egalitarian relationship among family members is emphasised. The image of parents becomes more affectionate than authoritative, and the parent-child relationship more equitable (Prost, 1991, p. 51). Western capitalism requires independent and autonomous workers. Therefore socialising children into independent individuals becomes a goal of childrearing practice.

By contrast, in China, with more than two thousand years of feudalism, interdependence among family members was of paramount importance. For migrants in an alien and hostile country, families, kinships and clans were important during the 1900s when anti-Chinese racism was rampant. It was due to the interdependence among fellow Chinese that the early migrants were able to survive in the USA (Hsu, 2000). Because of the particular situation rather than the culture *per se*, the cultural importance of interdependence in childrearing practice has been preserved and promoted.

In Chinese tradition, along with the notion of interdependence was adults' close involvement in their children's lives including close physical contact during the early years of childrearing. Children from birth up to primary school age often slept in the same bed with adults. In the past, because of constant natural disasters and social turmoil, inadequate medical care and a high infant mortality rate, young children were regarded as "weak, vulnerable and dependent beings" (Saari, 1990, p. 8); precautions were deemed necessary to protect young children from physical harm and evil spirits (Wu, 1996). In practice, close physical contact served to promote bonding and interdependence between the child and the caregiver.

This child-parent interdependence emphasises mutuality because parents would rely on their children in their twilight years. Confucius (2000) defined the child-parent relationship: parents should care for the child, and the child is supposed to show reciprocality (*bao*, 报) and filial piety (孝) to the parents. Children were taught to obey authority and the elders, and care for others. It has been a long-established belief in China that children belong to the whole (extended) family and the clan. A child's achievement and success in the future brings glory and benefits to the family, the clan, and ancestors (光宗耀祖). These familial obligations have been used to cement and harmonise self-sufficient communities in a self-contained feudal system. In China, it is common for grandparents to look after grandchildren when both their young parents are working. The whole family looks after grandparents in their ailing years.

The traditional notion of parent-child interdependence was heightened in migrant Chinese communities particularly when migrants experienced exclusion and discrimination in host countries. Because of limited opportunities and resources, migrant parents took "no chances"[16] (Siu, 1994, p. 19), but closely supervised and were involved with their children to ensure limited capital and resources were not wasted. Taking any risk might ruin precious opportunities that were already restricted for the migrants. Because of limited resources and opportunities, it took generations for Chinese migrants to accumulate wealth; and dreams and aspirations could only be fulfilled in the next generation. Thus Chinese migrant parents could be more reliant on their children for a better life that resided possibly only in their children.

Explicit racism has long been outlawed in Western societies. Yet recent Chinese skilled migrants in some Western countries still perceive constraints on them as members of a visible minority. The perceived social reality consequently shapes their expectations of their children's education and their parenting practices. Li (2001) studied a group of recent Chinese skilled migrant parents in Canada. All the parents

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[16] American slang "Chinaman's chance" means no chance at all. This expression captures the harsh situation that the Chinese faced in the 19th to early 20th centuries (Chen, 1981, pp.127-193).

believed that their children should choose to work in "engineering and other technical fields" because qualifications in "arts, politics, or law" would not materialise in the mainstream job market (p. 486). One of the participants did not support her daughter's interest in law. She believed although "multiculturalism" was a written "government policy", racial discrimination was still common. She explained that members of visible minority groups were "in a very disadvantaged situation" because the law was decided by the dominant group; and coming from a visible minority group, her daughter would not be able to "argue with the dominant society" about what justice should be. A father said that he often told his son that a minority group was not on the equal footing with the dominant group in terms of employment. To overcome the barriers, the minority had to be "much better than the whites" to compete in the job market. Other parents also believed that opportunities for visible minorities were not given but are created only by their very own hard work and academic excellence (Li, 2001, pp. 486-488). The parents believed that in the US, equality for Chinese migrants was mere rhetoric. They articulated their version of the "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66). Because they were not on an equal footing, Western notions of individual preferences and personal interest did not provide the best future for Chinese migrant children. Instead, the parents believed in hard work. Other studies (i.e. Siu, 1994; Zhang, Ollila & Harvey, 1998) similarly found that Chinese migrants held high expectations of their children's academic achievement—the Chinese migrant parents believed their children had to be "better" to be able to overcome the racial barriers, as shown in Li's (2001) study.

Researchers usually attributed Chinese migrant parents' different views about education to cultural influences (see Guo, 2006, for a comprehensive literature review). This kind of conclusion, although valid to some extent, oversimplifies complicated social reality: ethnic minority parents' different views resulted from the interplay of their different positions in the socio-ethnic hierarchical structure as well as cultural factors. For example, in Li's (2001) study, a father believed his son should pursue careers in science and technology and attributed his belief to the Confucian tradition that values education. Li (2001) concluded that the father used Confucianism to justify their beliefs and actions. However, Confucius did not promote science and technology in education. In fact, the prevalence of Confucianism in Chinese history may actually have suppressed the development of

science and technology (Tsou, 1998). Alternative explanations to Li's (2001) findings would be: 1) Culture is not consumed as a whole. Some aspects of a culture can be drawn out and highlighted while other elements downplayed or ignored in different situations; 2) This tactical consumption of culture allows individuals to deal with various situations, turning abstract cultural values into practicality; 3) Making reference to a shared culture for personal actions is to claim group ownership of the cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1986) argued that membership of a social group provides access for an individual to share the group's communal benefit. The above example shows that individuals draw abstract values from the communal pool of cultural capital, and then apply abstract beliefs to their concrete daily practices. During this process, I believe individuals make contributions to the communal reserve of capital. By claiming ownership of a group, individual practices become the communal capital that can be shared among the group members, thus cultural capital is generated and made valuable for the whole group. For instance, after the Second World War, through hard work and academic excellence, the Chinese earned a reputation as a "model minority" in New Zealand as well as in North America. Although this "reputation" was not without negative consequences (e.g. U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1980) and neither did it radically change their marginal social positions (Macias, 1993), hard work and academic excellence became a claimed trademark of migrant Chinese in their adopted countries. With this trademark effect, Chinese migrants increased the value of their (non-dominant) cultural capital. They gained acceptance in the dominant society (see Ip, 1995; 1996). With such a dynamic understanding of culture, it is not difficult to explain variations and changes within a cultural group. It is common sense to acknowledge that not all ethnic Chinese are academic high achievers and not all ethnic Chinese are diligent workers. But the point is not about how objective this statement is. It is about Chinese ethnics making and promoting their cultural capital when their equal access to dominant cultural capital is denied.

How individuals acquire and utilise different forms of capital depends on their socio-economic situations, structural factors, and their perceptions of the situation as well as various material constraints. For instance, Lin and Fu (1990) described how

Chinese parents valued and encouraged independence in their children, and paradoxically used "controlling" parenting strategies. They assumed that, on the one hand, the parents encouraged their children to be independent in the wider society so to better adapt into the mainstream; and, on the other hand, promoted interdependence in the family. Kelley and Tseng (1992) reported that Chinese migrant mothers and Caucasian American mothers shared similar goals of child rearing including academic achievement and independence albeit Chinese migrant mothers tended to use Chinese traditional parenting approaches.

Li (2007) studied four Chinese migrant families in Canada, two "academic families" and two "entrepreneurial families" (p. 5). Her focus was on family capital in relation to their children's second language (English) acquisition. Although all participating parents had high expectations of their children's school achievement, they differed in practices to achieve this goal. In the two academic families, all parents gained university degrees in China before going to Canada and both fathers were studying in the local university. In the two entrepreneurial families, none of the parents had university qualifications. But compared to the academic families, they were much better off financially with the income from the family business. The two academic families, although poor financially, were able to utilise resources with minimum monetary investment by such means as using free library service and buying second hand books for the children to learn English. The entrepreneurial parents worked long hours in their family restaurants and had little time available for their children. Due to their limited English ability, they were isolated from the English-speaking community. Even though they were willing to support their children's literacy they seemed to lack appropriate resources. Nevertheless they made efforts to use external support. For example, a father often asked a bilingual long-time customer of the restaurant to help deal with his children's school. Li's (2007) findings illustrated that although all parents expect their children to succeed in school, turning aspirations into practices depends on a matrix of individuals' perceptions and dispositions as well as their personal situations and the field.

Language and cultural barriers combined with lower economic status are often cited as major barriers to parental involvement with their children's school (Dyson, 2001). Dyson surveyed and interviewed recent Chinese migrant as well as European

Canadian parents. Although language was a barrier for Chinese migrants, many who had difficulties with the language were able to have the help of translators or interpreters. The major barriers were different cultural expectations. For example, one mother complained that her child's school report had too much superficial good news and did not point out how the child needed to improve. Others complained school reports were too ambiguous. European Canadian parents were more satisfied with the school and had more frequent contact with the teachers. Dyson maintained that better home-school communication requires mutual understanding and respect between the school and the migrant parents.

However, understanding and respect can be problematic when the power in the school-home relationship is inequitable. Other studies (e.g. Crozier, 1997; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1995; Todd & Higgins, 1998) showed that schools are operated according to the dominant norm about how parents should be involved in their children's schooling. Non-dominant cultural practices that deviate from the norm, including those of working class, ethnic minorities and children with special needs, are likely to be dismissed by the school, and the families and children are consequently likely to be disadvantaged. Griffith and Smith (2005) pointed out that due to diminishing public funding, many schools delegated their responsibilities to parents in the name of parental involvement. While the white two-parent, middle class families normally had the resources and cultural capital to comply with schools' requirements, the working class and single parent families could not. As a result, daily operations of the school for working class, single parent families were undermined. Bourdieu's (1990) concept "feel for the game" (p. 66) particularly problematises understanding or mutual understanding. According to Bourdieu, the "feel for the game" is an implicit mutual agreement and understanding about how the stratified society functions and "the feel for the game", in turn, objectifies the hierarchical order. Thus understanding different cultural expectations/practices does not necessarily change either the feel for the game or the power relationship.

Todd and Higgins (1998) noted that in the research literature the power relations between parents and schools was often "absent or undertheorised" (p. 227). When trying to locate comparable primary studies in New Zealand, I found there was a

dearth of research on recent Chinese migrant parents. Published empirical research on Chinese migrants with preschool children is almost non-existent. One exception is Guo's (2005) small-scale study offering information about Asian immigrant parents and early childhood teachers' on teacher-parent partnership. However, the study was focused on "cultural differences" rather than on an unbalanced power relationship within the socio-political context of New Zealand. Parents from the dominant class usually displayed a sense of legitimacy when demanding that schools should change while working class parents often lacked the cultural and social capital to do so (e.g. Lareau, 1989; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay 1995). So, did the Asian immigrant parents lack the cultural and social capital when dealing with educational institutions? In Guo's (2005) study, a parent commented, "I don't think they respect our opinions" (p.129). A comment like this can be analysed in terms of power relations rather than mere cultural differences if Bourdieu's concept of capital is applied. Reay (1999) examined the role of linguistic capital in teacher-parent interactions. She argued, whether the parents' utterances are heard or dismissed is mediated by the relevant power relations, which are related to social class as well as gender. In a similar vein, "I don't think they respect our opinions" revealed the powerlessness of migrants' utterances.

Apart from dealing with their children's school, their children's home language maintenance is a major issue for many Chinese migrant parents. In Yu's (2005) study of Chinese migrant families in New Zealand, parents identified three major reasons for their children to maintain the home language. First, being bilingual in both English and Chinese would increase their children's employment opportunities in the future. Second, Chinese was seen as a tool to keep the ties with families and relatives. Third, it should be maintained simply because it is the mother tongue. However, Yu maintained that although migrant parents realised that it was important for their children to maintain Chinese language, they were not aware of the tremendous efforts they had to invest in order to achieve this goal because his findings clearly showed that English language gradually took over within the family. A study (Zhang, Ollila & Harvey, 1998) in Canada also reported that Chinese migrant parents believed both English and Chinese were important for their children albeit for different purposes. The parents believed that English language is important for their

children to succeed in Canada while Chinese language is important to communicate with relatives.

In this section, I have provided some background information on traditional and recent Chinese migrant parenting practices in their Western host countries. The review also focused on untangling the myth of cultural values and practices. I have argued that culture should not be viewed as fixed. Rather, individuals are able to use culture as a resource and reference to guide and justify their daily practice to achieve a range of aims. Confucianism has been one of the most important elements in Chinese culture. In the next section, I trace the development of Confucianism in Chinese history to further illustrate the dynamic nature of culture. The development of Confucianism in China illustrates how cultural symbolic meanings are confined by the material aspects of the field, and in turn, symbolic meanings guide human beings to understand their material environment.

3.4 The Fall and Rise of Confucianism in China

Confucianism took shape during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) of the Zhou Dynasty. That was a turbulent time when China was in the transition to a central feudal society with many feudal states fighting for the central power. Confucius considered that achieving peace was a major goal for a society:

> Confucian morality revolves around family relationships, especially around the relationships between parents and children, between elder and younger brothers, and between husband and wife. In these relationships, the primary emphasis is put on fulfilling responsibilities to each other with a sincere and conscientious heart. However, Confucian ethics is not confined to the family. It takes family virtues as the cornerstone of social order and world peace. Its logic is that the family is the basic unit of the human community and that harmonious family relationships will inevitably lead to a harmonious society and peaceful state (Yao, 2000, p. 33).

In Confucius's lifetime (551-479BC), his thoughts were largely ignored by feudal rulers. In the Qin Dynasty (秦朝), the first central power in China, the Qin Emperor ordered that Confucian scholars be buried and Confucian books burned (焚书坑儒) as one of his many measures to eliminate dissidents and consolidate the central power. It was not until Han Wu Di (汉五帝), the sixth emperor of the Han Dynasty, came to power in 141BC, more than 300 years after Confucius's death, that Confucianism was adopted as the only state ideology whilst other schools of thought

were banned ("罷黜百家，独尊儒术"). Under Han Wu Di's reign, China's territory was greatly expanded to include part of today's Korea and Vietnam. As a result, Confucianism flourished and its influence reached East Asia.

Land has been the major means of livelihood in China, an agricultural society. "The family in the wider sense must live together (on the land) for economic reasons" (Fung, 1976, p. 21). The Chinese social and political system was based on the family system, and Chinese society functioned as a hierarchical extended family. Whilst a society's political system was generated from its economic conditions, and influenced by its geographic surroundings, Confucianism justified such a system, which was one of the reasons why Confucianism had become the most influential ideology in China (Fung, 1976).

During the mid 1800s to the early 1900s, "the arrival of a militant West coincided with the dynastic decline" of China (Berthrong, 1998, p. 174). Confucianism, a symbol of the Chinese traditional way of living and thinking was blamed for China's defeat. Imperial China was a patriarchal society. The control and oppression of women was a symbol to reinforce such a social and political structure. Consequently, the issue of women's equality signified the nation's break from its feudal past in its quest for modernity. During the anti-feudalism May 4 Movement in 1919, women's liberation became an integral part of national progress (Bossen, 1999; Zheng, 2000). After 1949, the Chinese government implemented a series of radical measures to abolish Confucianism.

Since the 1980s when China gradually shifted to an open market and Communist ideological control weakened, Confucianism and other traditions began to rejuvenate to fill the ideological void, usually under the name of "culture fever" or "searching for roots" (Sun, 2002). Ghai (1998) maintained that with the end of the Cold War, "Asian values" served as a counterpoint to the West's dominance. The rise of East and South-East Asia as a new political and economic power further strengthened "Asian values" (Ang, 2001). However, the revival of Confucianism is not a mere return to the past: it "is related to the renewal of culture and the transformation of tradition in order to redefine cultural identity and to guide social and economic development" (Yao, 2000, p. 275). The history of Confucianism is entwined with the

change and development of China. Kluckhohn's (1985) words perfectly summarise the vicissitudes of Confucianism in China,

> The full significance of any single element in a culture design will be seen only when that element is viewed in the total matrix of its relationship to other elements (p. 34).

In the current study, such a matrix is explored by using the concepts of capital, field and habitus. In the following section, I depict such a matrix to understand the childrearing strategies of Chinese migrant mothers by providing a literature review of New Zealand dominant culture as well as traditional Chinese values concerning education in general and childrearing and parenting practices in particular.

3.5 New Zealand and China: Postwar to the New Millennium

The following section briefly describes various dominant social and cultural norms in both New Zealand and China from end of World War II to 2008. This account shows that dominant evaluative norms are never "fixed once and for all" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 588). On the one hand, it illustrates that dominant norms are arbitrary with no intrinsically superior quality (Bourdieu, 1984). On the other hand, it demonstrates that the value of various forms of capital is constrained and defined by the field (Bourdieu, 1989a) and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977a). The value is defined by the field because the ebb and flow of the norms arise from the objectified conditions—the social, political and economic changes. Meanwhile, the habitus gives subjective meanings to the objective conditions in the field. The objectivity and subjectivity are entwined and interdependent.

3.5.1 From "Order, security and prosperity" to protest: postwar -1970s

After the Second World War, the Cold War established a new order. Globally the Western world sought to "uphold democracy and capitalism against totalitarianism and communism" (May, 2001, p. 41). The ideals of 'autonomous individual' and 'free choice' were endorsed with new meaning—these were symbols of the Western free world standing in sharp contrast to the dictatorship of communism. Child-centred approaches to education and free play gained momentum as a learning medium for young children. Although the idea of free play could be traced back to Froebel during the Enlightenment (May, 1997), the practice was given a new meaning in the new situation.

In New Zealand, "the postwar years were characterised by a quest for order, security and prosperity" (May, 2001, p. 41). Psychology appeared as a perfect device to achieve these goals. Viewing human development as linear and universal, Psychology provided scientific solutions to define normal and abnormal thus setting a clear order of what a progressive society should be. Psychology suggested the early year experiences were important for people's later development and adjustment. To eliminate and prevent disorders was to provide the right environment for children, and the "right" environment was a middle class nuclear family with father as the breadwinner and a full time mother. The deviants, such as working mothers, divorcees, illegitimacy, were deemed to have disastrous consequences (May, 2001). Psychology would offer solutions to turn the abnormal to the normal, the disorder to order, and thus would lead society to security and prosperity.

On the other side of the hemisphere, in Communist China, order, security, and prosperity were also high on the state agenda albeit with different interpretations. The CCP (the Chinese Communist Party) came to governance of China in 1949 after four years of civil war against the US-supported National Party. The CCP depicted a bright future for Chinese people—Marx's Communist society where inequality, poverty, and social divisions would be erased and life would be totally satisfactory and fulfilling.

After it came to power, the Chinese Government implemented a series of measures to establish order and peace. Through educational campaigns and provision of basic medical care, such as public sanitation and childhood immunisation, epidemics and infant mortality rates were reduced. Health campaigns also aimed to promote modern scientific knowledge in contrast to traditional myths and superstitions (Barrett & Li, 1999). In urban areas, men and women were guaranteed permanent employment and housing was provided by the State (Zheng, 2000).

The CCP adopted Engels's belief that women's liberation would only be realised through participating in the paid workforce. Consequently, full time mothers and housewives disappeared in Mao's China from the 1950s. Childcare services were provided in the workplace (Barrett & Li, 1999). According to Chinese traditional beliefs, children are an extension of the entire family or the clan. Besides, with limited housing, young couples usually had to live with their parents, and

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grandparents and relatives are usually involved in childrearing (Barrett & Li, 1999). Thus childcare services at the workplace did not radically contradict traditional communal practices in relation to children. Despite the Chinese Communist Party's intentions to combat gender inequality through universal paid employment for women, and available affordable childcare, gender inequality still prevailed (Robinson, 1985). Nevertheless, paid employment became the entitlement for many educated urban women (Zhou, 2000).

Traditionally, children's survival and development are the responsibility not just of the parents but also of the entire clan. In Communist China, this traditional view was used as propaganda that children did not just belong to the family but also to the state (Wu, 1996). According to Confucianism, children should obey their parents, and this requirement of loyalty to one's family was replaced by love for the Party and the Communist State (Baum & Baum, 1979). In this sense, the tradition did not conflict with the CCP's political interests. As Harris (1980) pointed out, Chinese Communism has substituted "a proletarian" for a Confucian ideology whilst the structure remained basically the same (p. 52).

Internationally, from the 1950s to 1970s, China experienced constant military threat, economic isolation, and diplomatic exclusion from the US-led allies. From the mid-1950s, the relationship between China and the (former) Soviet Union began to deteriorate; in the 1960 when the relationship turned hostile, the latter subsequently withdrew all technical advisors from China (Hunter & Sexton, 1999). In this international political situation, national security was the first priority. Patriotism and commitment to the motherland was a key component of in early education (Sidel, 1982). Indeed, patriotism was pivotal for the State's survival. Anyone who put personal life and individual desires above the collective needs was considered selfish. Women were encouraged to put work ahead of their families (see Wu, 2003).

By way of contrast, at the same time, in the capitalist West, mothers who worked outside the home were labelled selfish. Married women working outside the home deviated from religious traditions and capitalist ideals (Coontz, 1997). Despite the political propaganda and "scientific" evidence, more and more women sought work outside home, and after World War II, the divorce rate and illegitimate birth rate

continually increased (Coontz, 1997; May 2001). Such changes challenged notions of the normal and the abnormal.

The supposedly universally valid, objective and scientific ideas of childrearing and early education changed from time to time. In the 1920s, Dr. Truby King was influenced by Behaviourism which emphasised external conditioning. By the 1950s, the Freudian school was in full sway. Whilst King believed regularity and discipline were the cure for decadence, Freudian psychologists blamed harsh repression for causing mental problems and disorders. Subsequently the new and progressive messages were that "parents should be more permissive in managing their children" (May, 2001, p. 33). This "new" idea was in accordance with the concepts of freedom and democracy in the capitalist West, a perceived distinction from the high control in Victorian times as well as the totalitarian Communist East (May, 2001). Buoyant economic growth during the postwar years[17] laid the material foundation to support such expressions of pleasure seeking and indulgence.

On the contrary, during Mao's time, the Chinese government condemned pleasure seeking and the expression of personal emotions. Individualism (个人主义) was deemed a bourgeois value that would dampen the spirit of socialism and the socialist construction. Mao believed that consumerism and material incentives would result in capitalism (Harris, 1980). From 1962 to 1965, Mao launched the Socialist Education Movement. The aim was to carry on the Revolution, intensify class struggle, and eliminate counterrevolutionaries. Thus "correct" political thinking was more important than skills and knowledge. The movement evolved into the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (known as the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1977) when young people (Red Guards) were encouraged to rebel against authorities and experts. Mao's personality cult reached its peak during the Cultural Revolution. Learning Mao's quotations (Little Red Books) was an important part of the school curriculum. In preschools, children were taught to "love Chairman Mao" (Sidel, 1982).

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[17] The 1950s-1960s saw a "slow" but "long" economic boom in New Zealand (Belich, 2001, p. 307).

In the industrial West, although there has been freedom allowing different schools of thought to emerge, there were always some trends and currents more dominant than others. For instance, Piaget's cognitive theory was first published in the 1930s when Behaviourism was dominant in American Psychology. Not surprisingly, Piaget's ideas did not come into mainstream education until the 1960s (Beilin, 1992). Vygotsky's (1978; 1987) socio-cultural theory of child development was published during the 1930s in the Soviet Union but did not catch any attention in the Western academia until the 1980s when the socio-political tides changed again. The 1980s saw a crucial turning point for both China and New Zealand.

3.5.2 Changes and challenges: 1980s-2000s

Mao's death in 1976 marked the end of an era in Chinese history. China started its economic reform in 1978. The aim was to move away from a central government-controlled to a free market economy. This was also the time when the Cold War was drawing to an end, and a new wave of globalisation was emerging. In the 1950s, China's early childhood education took on the Soviet model; in the 1960-70s during the Cultural Revolution, political and moral education was a main focus. From the 1980s, early childhood education turned to America and Japan for new educational ideas (Chiaromonte, 1990).

Traditionally, children did not start formal learning until six years of age. But formal learning was pushed down to three and four year olds (Wu, 1996). During the 1980s, formal learning of basic skills and knowledge, for example learning colours and numbers in preschools, was observed. Western theories were introduced to kindergartens as well as teacher training programmes in China in the 1980s (Spodek, 1989). Stimpel, Zheng and Meredith (1997) observed a mixture of traditional values and new ideas in preschool education in China during the 1990s. They explained that physical education, academic learning, and moral education were the three core objectives set in the national guidelines for early childhood education. Under the broad guideline, subject knowledge areas were also defined for the preschool curriculum. They covered "maths, language, music, painting, storytelling and knowledge about nature" (p. 14). Teaching was very teacher-centred. However, in the meantime, individualised learning was gaining a place in preschool daily teaching (Stimpel et al, 1997).

In the new millennium, within the thirty years of economic reform, the Chinese economy increased tenfold (Fenby, 2009). Chinese people's material lives have been dramatically improved. Pleasure and leisure that used to be against the socialistic norm became a norm for the newly emerging middle class in China (Xinhua News Agency, 2008b). In the globalisation era, China's communication and trade with the rest of the world started to expand. In the 1990s, the influence of Western educational ideas was evident in China's preschool education (Cooney & Sha, 1999). Liu and Feng (2005) observed some major changes during the past two decades in China's kindergarten education reforms. "Respecting children", "active learning" and "teaching for individual learning needs" are emphasised in the national curriculum (p.95). Western educational models such as High-scope and Reggio Emilia were introduced in China (Liu & Feng, 2005).

Subsequently, like Western early childhood education, "play" as a means of learning is also recognised in China. In Chinese language, play has two meanings, (1) *wan* (玩) refers to free play and (2) *youxi* (游戏) refers to games or play with rules (Rao & Li, 2009, p.100). Rao and Li observed mainly four types of play in China's kindergartens. They were teacher-led activities, teacher-supported activities, play arranged by teachers, and free play. In the first two categories, teachers played more active roles while in the last two teachers were observers and facilitators. Teachers and parents believed that free play and deliberate adult teaching were both important. Rao and Li named it as "eduplay". In Chinese tradition, skills are regarded as important tools for free exploration (Biggs, 2005). Therefore, children's free play does not contradict adult-led teaching.

In the southern hemisphere, New Zealand, too, has gone through major change since the 1980s. New Zealand was once a British colony. More than ten thousand miles away from the "motherland", the "better Britain" has been portrayed as a classless, racially harmonious, and laid back paradise (Belich, 2001; Ip, 2003). Until the 1980s, New Zealand was largely a welfare state with guaranteed high employment. The government-controlled economy made New Zealand vulnerable in the globalised market. The 1984 Labour Government and subsequent governments adopted neoliberalism in an attempt to cope with the new environment. Neoliberalism emphasised economic profit, free market, and minimum government interventions.

Neoliberalisation did not revitalise the New Zealand economy. "Socially, New Zealand's neo-liberal 'experiment' resulted in growing inequality and poverty…" (Duncan, 2007, p. 226). Therefore the New Zealand's 'third way' emerged, aiming to offer an alternative to neoliberalism. Third way had been high on the Labour-led Government[18]'s political agenda (p. 230).

Duncan (2007, p. 230) described,

> The **third way** could be defined as a centrist political movement which seeks to revive social-democratic values (e.g., social justice, equal opportunity and community responsibility) while wishing to preserve the achievements of market liberation, monetarism and free international trade made possible through neo-liberal policy.

New Zealand early childhood education developed within this economic and socio-political context over the last two decades. The following section provides a brief account of this development. It does not intend to be a comprehensive assessment of early childhood education in New Zealand but aims to provide background information for understanding the Chinese migrant mothers' experiences within the New Zealand early childhood context.

3.6 New Zealand Early Childhood Education 1988-2000s

3.6.1. Early Childhood: A Context with Multiple Fields

Before I describe the context of New Zealand early childhood, I would like to briefly explain the difference between field and context. Citing Webb, Schirato and Danaher (2002), McLeod (2005) stated, "Fields are structured contexts" (pp.13-14). Zarycki (2007) proposed to reinterpret fields as dimensions of a context. In this way, a context comprises various fields. The above citations clearly indicate the overlapping or interchangeable nature between the two terms "field" and "context". For the purpose of the current research, the former is treated as a context where power struggles and relations are emphasised while the latter refers to a more neutral milieu. As defined earlier in chapter 2, field is an arena of social interactions and power

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[18] The fifth Labour Government was the government of New Zealand from December 1999 to November 2008.

struggles. When defining a field, "a structured context", the emphasis is "the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc)" (Bourdieu, 1989a, p. 39).

As discussed previously on pages 9-11, in the current thesis, the early childhood centre can be thought of as an especial instance, a manifestation of the confluence of various forces from the political, educational, employment and familial sectors. Moreover, the early childhood also includes cultural practices and beliefs in China. This is because the migrant mothers were brought up in mainland China where they had acquired their habitus. According to Bourdieu (1977a; 1989a), their habitus is an important element that influences their mothering practice in New Zealand The concept of early childhood in the current thesis thus transcends time (present and past) and space (New Zealand and China). But it is assumed that the transcendences are brought together and manifested in the participants' daily experiences of mothering. When the early childhood is conceptualised as a context comprising of different fields these confluence of different forces and transcendences are not long neutral. Instead the power relations among them will be closely studied.

When early childhood is conceptualised to comprise multiple fields, this, traditionally a women's domain becomes problematic. What women do with regard to each other; how they define their roles and jobs; what they do with the children, the family relationships, and their relationships with the wilder world would be examined in terms of how the power (capital) is distributed; who "has access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field"; and their "objective relation to other positions" are analysed in terms of "domination, subordination, homology, etc". For example, mothers' work at home is both a feeling and labour (e.g. Graham, 1991, Griffith & Smith, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Uttal, 2002). However, mother's work is traditionally regarded as a relation to women's maternal instinct without any material reward as unpaid labour; mothering does not provide the women access to (material) power (capital) and thus the mothers are subject to subordination (when mothers have to rely on their male partners for financial support). In a similar vein, early childhood education, a traditional woman's job in the public domain and the

subsequent professionalisation can be analysed through whether women have gained power/capital as a consequence of elevating the job to the status of paid labour (profession). In this way the early childhood profession and professionalisation become a gendered, social, political, and economic issue.

In the current study, following Zarycki (2007)'s proposal, early childhood is viewed as a context comprising multiple fields or multiple dimensions as fields within the early childhood context. Apart from the gender field as described above where distribution, possession and accessibility of power and capital concerning the gender are involved, there are other fields such as the field of social class, and the field of ethnicity. For instance, research findings suggested that schools usually endorse middle class values that possess greater market capital thus children from working class families are deprived of power (Lareau, 2003). In early childhood education, researchers (e.g. Cannella, 2002; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005) issued a call to challenge the hegemony, which refers to dominant middle class norms and values. Closely related to class, is the issue of ethnicities. Different cultural practices associated with ethnicities are not simply neutral or cultural differences *per se*. When applying the concept of field, the differences can be studied in terms of power and capital. For instance, families of Chinese migrants who do not possess the "right" linguistic capital might feel inadequate providing their children access to such capital. Therefore, early childhood is a context where multiple types of capital are at stake where multiple fields are conceptualised within the context.

Many feminist researchers have used Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus to study gender. McLeod (2005) explained that one school of thought presented by McNay proposes to study instability of gender. Another school of thought presented by Adkins focuses on the stability of gender. McLeod (2005, p.24) pointed out that the purpose, "(f)rom the perspective of feminist education studies of gender… is to research both change and continuity (or instability and stability) in gender relations, as complex processes that happen simultaneously". Therefore, the two schools of thoughts can be brought together to understand "how gender instability and stability and process of re- and de-traditionalization intersect and happened contemporaneously." The current thesis follows this line to conceptualise early childhood as comprising different fields with multiple research contexts and

locations such as the mothers' encounters with their children's early childhood centres; their experiences at home with their children, their arrangements of the children's extracurricular activities outside the home; family relationships; and their roles as mothers and paid workers. The purpose is to grapple "with the extent to which, in different contexts and locations, fields and habitus are differentially embedded may enrich understandings of how change and continuity happen subjectively (contextually)" (McLeod, 2005, p.24).

3.6.2 Women and Children: "A foot in the door"

In 1988, *Before Five* (Lange, 1998) set the tone for reform in early childhood education. *Before Five* promised the early childhood sector an "equal status with other education sectors" (Lange, 1988, p. 2). In the past, early childhood was excluded from mainstream education (May, 1997). Working with preschool children, like other women's work, was unpaid or low paid and low in social status. Meade (1990) contended that with this reform, women and children were able to "gain a foot in the door" (p. 96). Participation in early childhood education increased 27.7 percent from 1992 to 2001. In total 60 percent of children under the age of five attended some form of early childhood education. Among them, the participation rate of three year olds was 90 percent, and 98 percent of four year olds attended early childhood education (Statistics New Zealand, 2004b).

A similar trend in childcare has been observed in other OECD countries (UNICEF, 2008). Four major causes of this trend are identified. First, more than 60 percent of working-age women have paid employment. Second, childcare, by enabling women to work outside the home enables government to increase income from taxes and reduce welfare costs. Third, both parents and government believe quality childcare increases the opportunities for "future academic success and employment prospects". Fourth, childcare is viewed as a way to boost declining birth rates (UNICEF, 2008, p. 3-4).

Childcare has been an integral part of the women's movement (May, 1992; 1993). The last Labour-led Government promoted childcare as one of the ways for families to make choices to balance work, living and caring (Clark, 2006). However, Codd (2008) contended, "many critics of Third Way politics have drawn attention to the contradictions between its rhetoric and its policies" (p. 17). He cited Callinicos

(2001), Kelsey (2002) and others (Codd, 2001; 2005; Roberts, 2005) to argue that the third way in fact adhered to the "neoliberal agenda of globalisation" but in the guise of "a social face" (p. 17). Kahu and Morgan (2007) examined New Zealand government policies for women (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004a; 2004b) and argued that despite the Government's rhetoric to improve the quality of women's lives, the polices' main concerns were economic productivity while women's work in the private domain was undervalued. Duncan (2007) explained that because full employment is not guaranteed, the third way "social policy aims to improve 'employability'" (p. 231). Childcare becomes a means to enhance the employability of women. Although this rhetoric came out with "a social face", its core intent still belonged to the "neoliberal agenda". Moreover, women's paid employment does not necessarily improve their quality of life when women tend to cluster in low paid unskilled jobs or part time employment while at the same time paying expensive childcare fees (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).

Kahu and Morgan (2008) further examined the differences between government policy and women's lived experiences. They argued that government policy valued paid employment over women's domestic roles, while women still viewed themselves as the primary caregivers who had to balance the demands of paid work and unpaid childcare. More than a decade ago, Uttal (1996) studied a group of employed mothers in the USA. The mothers had to invent their own interpretation of childcare in light of the dominant discourse of motherhood to reconcile the contradicting demands made on women as mothers and workers. Harrington (2002) studied urban Pakeha mothers in New Zealand. She too reported that the mothers had to reinvent what good mothers are in light with the dominant discourse of motherhood. Reconciling the contradictions between being a mother and a worker remains an unresolved issue in women's lives.

Despite hiccups and doubts, childcare as a form of "women's work" has gained momentum over the past two decades. Research in neuroscience confirmed the significant long-term effects of early experiences on children's development (UNICEF, 2008). Whether at-home or out-of-home care, it is mostly women who carry out this work. In the private domain, mothers' work is not fully recognised although "the mother has been held responsible for the child's wellbeing throughout

his/her life" (Cannella, 2002, p. 65). But in the public domain, at least, women and children indeed gained "a foot in the door". In New Zealand, early childhood teachers have achieved pay parity with school teachers, and were recognised as professionals rather than childcare workers. Yet, this gain was not without cost or dilemmas. The next section discusses one such cost and dilemma.

3.6.3 Women's work and professionalism

The early childhood sector is a gendered field: more than 90 percent of its teachers are female, and mostly the mothers are the primary caregivers of the young children. So from aspects, the professional and the familial, early childhood education is the responsibility, in the main, of women. Childcare has traditionally been women's job in the private sphere. However, the divide between public and private is never clear. While taking care of babies and young children is considered women's work at home, this women's work has always been linked to the state's welfare and survival. In New Zealand at the turn of last century, high infant mortality rates and malnutrition were viewed as a threat to the wellbeing of the state. Truby King's Plunket movement aimed to "help the mothers save the babies", and thus to save the state. As Koven and Michel (1990) contended,

> Maternalism always operated on two levels: it extolled the private virtues of domesticity while simultaneously legitimating women's public relationships to politics and the state, to community, workplace, and marketplace. In practice, maternalist ideologies often challenged the constructed boundaries between public and private, women and men, state and civil society (p.1079).

The history of early childhood has been intertwined with many issues and tensions, such as women's roles, the wellbeing and right of the child, women's right and emancipation, the welfare and control of the state (May, 1993; 1997; 2005). Therefore this "women's job" has always transcended the public and private realms. There have been intricate links between the role of mothers and teachers of young children. While Truby King believed mothers needed help, advocating learning scientific methods from the public/medical sphere to raise their young children in their private home; Froebel on the other hand promoted that "an ideal teacher of young children" should be "the mother made conscious" (Steedman, 1985, p.149). Froebel's idea provided women in some western countries with a choice beyond marriage and the family home (Aliwood, 2008) at a time when other opportunities for women were either restricted or denied. Formal education to train middle class

women as teachers based on the maternal ideals offered women opportunities to gain social status similar to that of men in male professions (Taylor Allen, 1985 cited in Aliwood, 2008).

In New Zealand, "since the nineteenth century, early childhood advocates have sought to persuade society in general and politicians in particular as to the benefits of early childhood care and education". The advocacy was driven by "dreams of social and political changes" and yet "rationales of social and political orders were always high at the government's agenda" (May, 2006, pp.245-246). In the twentieth century, the links among women's (unpaid/paid) labour, maternal discourse, and early childhood teachers are still as complex and contradictory as ever. Aliwood (2008) summarised some of the examples of such complexity: scientific methods, often associated with masculinity, subjected women to subordination in formal education and studies; teaching young children in the public domain has been denied equal pay and social status comparable to other professionals because the job was viewed as an expression of women's natural maternal instinct. Not surprisingly, some women rejected this "naturalization" that "undermines their struggle for professional status" (p. 162).

The past two decades saw an increasing professionalisation of early childhood education. In New Zealand, in the 1990s, state funded colleges offered diploma courses for early childhood teachers (Meade, 2000). The new millennium saw universities provide degree courses as well as postgraduate studies for early childhood professionals. The purposes and assumed consequences of this move are mainly four fold. First, it is believed that professionalisation will improve quality of education for young children and reduce inequality. Second, quality education for young children is supposed to support mothers to achieve better life-work balance and participate in paid labour force (Ministry of Women's Affair, 2004). Although this might be viewed as a way to liberate women from domesticity, the government agenda is more about lowering state welfare, increasing state tax incomes, and economic growth through women's participation in paid work force (UNICEF, 2008). Third, along with the professionalisation comes the request for respect and better paid for the teachers of which the majority are female. This can be understood as a move of women's struggle for equality and emancipation. Fourth, professionalisation

increases the government control and surveillance of the sector (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005). Cannella (2002, p. 137) warned that professionalisation could be a "double-edged sword" that while professionalisation strengthens the position and gains respect it could also lead to "increased domination by those in power".

Early childhood education and care is now "firmly on government agendas in many countries" (Miller, 2008, p. 255). In New Zealand, early childhood care and education started as a form of advocacy for children, but it has become increasingly institutionalised. As a result, the increasing pressure for compliance replaces the children's needs and teachers' autonomy (Farquhar, 2008). In England, the government raised requirements of early childhood teacher's qualifications and increased its regulatory control, and yet higher teacher qualification did not always match with increased remuneration and better working conditions. This situation also raised the question whether the employers of early childhood providers can afford the better qualified and better paid workforce (Miller, 2008) or indeed if childcare is still a job of low pay and low social status. Moreover, the increasingly regulated environment of early childhood could constrain "professional autonomy" (Miller, 2008, p. 257). Although regulations can provide teachers with a sense of certainty, they also impinge on the teachers' "professional freedom, integrity and passion for teaching" (Brown & Sumsion, 2007, p. 30). Teachers might merely perform government regulations without internalizing or resisting them (Ball, 2003). Osgood (2006, p.5) put it bluntly that

> (t)he preoccupation with satisfying dominant and externally imposed constructions of professionalism leaves little time to engage in meaningful critiques of the status quo, and as a consequence of social engineering those working in the early years become constrained by demands for technicist practice.

Professionalisation, the "double-edged sword" presents early childhood a dilemma as to where to go and how to construct professional identities and improve quality education within this trajectory. While the debate concerning professionalisation/professionalism and the early childhood profession is still going on, it is important to acknowledge that these issues are multi-faceted rather than unitary. Murphy and Gale (2008) argued that policies on quality teaching and learning and professional standards are driven by various discourses of human, social and cultural capital. They pointed out that

(h)owever proposals to address these issues require that attention also be paid to the twin realities of power/knowledge positions and stances that enable practitioners to address future challenges (p.1).

It is not my intention to have a full discussion of early childhood professionalisation in this thesis. This section aims to provide some background information. My purpose is to understand the migrant mothers' experiences in relation to the so-called professionalisation in early childhood. Given the fact that there has always been intricate linkage between the maternal ideals and early childhood profession, it is all the more important to study the mothers' experiences to provide better understanding and insights of this issue.

3.6.4 *Te Whaariki*: The high ideal and practices

Te Whaariki, the Early Childhood Curriculum of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 1996), introduced in 1996, aims to provide guidelines for early childhood centres to provide quality education for children under five years of age. The name "Te Whaariki" refers to a "mat". This is a metaphor. "The principles, strands and goals defined in the document provide the framework, which allows for different program perspectives to be woven into the fabric of the weaving" (May & Carr, 2000, p. 156). The curriculum advocates integration of care and education. The four principles of *Te Whaariki* are empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationship. Interwoven with these principles are the five strands: well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration (Ministry of Education, 1996). The curriculum promotes biculturalism and acknowledges the multicultural reality of New Zealand society (May, 2002a). In fact, the curriculum takes an eclectic approach. It endorses a developmental continuum; it also adopts a Vygotskian socio-cultural approach with an ecological standpoint. Not telling "practitioners what to do" was a deliberate decision of *Te Whaariki* (May & Carr, 2000, p. 156). "It resisted telling staff what to do, by 'forcing' each programme to 'weave' its own curriculum" (May, 2002, p. 32).

More than a decade ago, Cullen (1996) observed the tensions between different theoretical perspectives in *Te Whaariki*. She contended that for the high ideal of *Te Whaariki* to be realised in daily practices, teachers were required to have the relevant knowledge base and skills. Because *Te Whaariki* did not provide concrete criteria for evaluation it could create ambiguity for implementation. Nuttall (2002) investigated

how early childhood teachers used *Te Whaariki* in planning. She observed that the teachers'

> ideological positions can be maintained and enacted *despite* the teachers' apparent use of *Te Whaariki*. This raises the question of whether the open framework provided by the document is robust enough to guide teachers through continued exploration of their professional practice and, in turn, their ideological position (p. 101).

For the past ten years, there has been more "telling" about how to implement the curriculum. For example, the Ministry of Education published *Quality in Action* (1998) and *Assessment for learning: Early childhood exemplars* (2004) to guide the teachers on how to implement quality with reference to *Te Whaariki*. However, more regulations and requirements have their side effects as discussed earlier, namely that they impinge on teachers' autonomy and professionalism.

As well as planning, assessment is important part of the implementation of *Te Whaariki*. Documenting children's learning and activities has long been a tradition in early childhood practice (Katz & Chard, 1996, p. 1). In a New Zealand early childhood centre, children normally have a collection of documentation and assessment of their experiences in the centre. Early childhood centres usually have adopted "learning stories" (Carr, 2001), a narrative approach to assess children's learning and development. While early childhood documentation contributes to quality education (Katz & Chard, 1996), it is also a means to achieve accountability (Ministry of Education, 2009). Documents are required as demonstration of teachers' knowledge and understanding. "At times, teachers report a tension between these requirements and the desire to develop effective and meaningful methods" (Bayes, 2006, p.295).

Hedges and Nuttall (2008) identified other tensions: interest-based learning process versus knowledge-based learning outcomes. In early childhood, teachers are required to follow children's interest and learning process is emphasised. This competence-based model of *Te Whaariki* places the learning process ahead of the traditional "knowledge-based learning outcomes." (p. 84). However, knowledge-based learning does not conflict with interest-based learning process because content knowledge contributes to both children's knowledge building as well as learning process based on children's interest (Hedges & Cullen, 2005).

Finally, there is tension between the wilder socio-political context and the early childhood sector. While the document emerged at a time of global neoliberalism, May (2001) argued that early childhood education was against the dominant political current. *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) is a democratic and inclusive document. It values the child, family and community, and emphasises collaboration and partnership. The document has received much positive attention both at home and overseas (see Hedges & Nuttall, 2008). The "ideal child" portrayed by the curriculum, nonetheless, inevitably reflects the ideal child of neoliberal discourses (Duhn, 2006, p. 191). May (2002b) also noted the tension between the early childhood dream and the government gaze. Tracing the political history of early childhood education in New Zealand, she argued that there have been "continual transformation and repositioning" between the dream and gaze (p. 24). From the late 1980s, the government policy shifted to the "economic gaze" (p. 21). So the ideal child could be a result of "transformation and repositioning" between the dream and the gaze. The ideal could not always rise above its political and social context.

The curriculum might have aimed to swim against the economic and political tide but it does exist within such a socio-political and economic context. For example, diversity is a characteristic of New Zealand early childhood education. Diverse early childhood services aim to cater for families' different needs and thus enable equitable access to early childhood education. This is the early childhood "dream". However, in reality choices do not exist in a vacuum. Crozier (1997) argued that the prevailing consumerism in education, viewing education as a free market and parents as consumers who were able to make decisions among a string of free choices, actually empowered the powerful. The "free" choices masked inequality. Vincent and Ball (2006) argued that childcare is "a key arena of class reproduction…childcare opportunities and choices are strongly stratified and very closely tied to family assets" (p. 63). So can the early childhood sector in New Zealand be totally unaffected? This thesis intends to answer this question through Chinese migrant mothers' accounts.

An aim of early childhood care and education was to help women to achieve "life-work balance" (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004, p. 7). This raises the fourth

research question (the other three research questions stated earlier in the previous chapter):

4) Did New Zealand early childhood education help the Chinese skilled mothers achieve work/life balance?

3.6.5. Diversity in Early Childhood Education

According to the OECD (OECD, 2008a), in the year 2000 there were 200 million international migrants, people who live in countries other than their native land. This number comprises three percent of the world's population. Along with the demographic changes, some traditional ways of understanding and living are also challenged. Such challenges and various responses to such challenges are evident in early childhood education (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001). "Since the late 1980s there has been a significant increase in awareness of the importance of early childhood education policies, practices and curriculum positively reflecting the diverse cultural identities of children and their families" (Robinson & Dĭaz, 2006, pp.1-2). They argued embracing and promoting diversity and differences is vital

> in a world that is encountering broad social, economic, political and technological shifts that are continually challenging and changing the lives of children, their families and communities at both global and local levels (p.2).

Diversity has always existed in history. But there has been a need to homogenise the state to make minorities and "others" invisible or less worthy to maintain dominance of power (Vandenbroeck, 2007). The norms have always co-existed with the deviants because the "us" is not only defined as what we are but also need to be as what we are not. For instance, in the industrial west, although the middle class nuclear family has been the norm, the "deviants" had always existed but were only made invisible or devalued (Coontz, 1997; May 1997). Furthermore, "us" and "others" are constantly defined and redefined throughout history. For example, in New Zealand history, Maori has gone through a lot of "colours" which reflect dominant perceptions of Maori. "Red" Maori were described as fierce warriors; "green" Maori were idealised as environmentalists; "black" Maori were savages to be excluded. There was even a legend of "White" Maori that claimed Maori as Aryans. The White Maori story allowed Maori to be smoothly assimilated into Pakeha society (Belich, 2001). A similar story might be told about the British who

began to emerge as a superpower from the eighteenth century. The British started to conquer and "enlighten" the "primitive" people. But the British were once called barbarians by the Roman in the heyday of the Roman Empire (Johnes & Eeira, 2007). The world is and has been diverse and struggles among different groups are not something new. The recent move to acknowledge diversity in education should not be viewed as a mere reflection of the "fact" of increasingly diverse student and teacher groups, but it as a political response to cultural, sociopolitical and economic shifts.

According to the statistics, the New Zealand population became more ethnically diverse during the past 20 years, with most of the new international migrants settling in Auckland. More precisely this "ethnic diversity" refers to a dramatic increase of Asian migrants: among them people of Chinese ethnicity made up the biggest group (Statistics New Zealand, 2003a). Although the majority of over-seas born migrants were still from the UK (Department of Labour, 2005a) it was the increase of Asian and other non-White migrants that made New Zealand look more "diverse". It could be argued that Asian and other non-White migrants are visibly different. Then again, differences are not an eternal fact. In the 19th century America, Irish were not considered White (Ignatiev, 1995). The "White" Maori legend has a similar storyline albeit with a different twist. The colour tone is a social and political construct. Therefore, the visible different colour of Asian and other non-White migrants in New Zealand is not just an issue of different skin colours or cultural norms but because it challenges the New Zealand's dream of itself as the "better Britain", as I have discussed in the previous chapter. The diversity issue is a political and social construct.

Inevitably, early childhood centres in New Zealand, particularly in Auckland are also becoming more "ethnically diverse". Working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds becomes a daily requirement for many early childhood teachers. The New Zealand early childhood curriculum, *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996) requires teachers to respect and promote children's diverse social and cultural identities and background. In general, teachers are not fully prepared for such a change to work with families from different social and cultural backgrounds (Nieto, 2004). Novice early childhood teachers found it most difficult to work with families

of ethnic minorities (Mahmood, 2000). This situation is certainly not surprising given the complex nature of diversity as discussed above.

Robin and Dĭza (2006)'s research findings suggested that although many practitioners are positive about diversity, in reality, they do not always have the skills and acknowledge implementing the political rhetoric of diversity. For example, although most teachers believed children's home language is important little was done in practice to actualise this belief. When they were asked to offer the most important factor about promoting the children's home language, many regarded the most significant reason as self-esteem while other more political and social related factors were not considered. They argued,

> (t)his preoccupation with self-esteem is an indication of how developmental psychology predominate in education, which tends to depoliticize or downplay the equity issues (p.113)

The above argument can be understood in terms of habitus. The teacher have acquired the habitus (influence from developmental psychology that views development as linear and decontexualised) from an early point in their own intellectual history they entered the early childhood profession. Although they wanted to embrace the more progressive ideas, the old habitus lingered, and thus it prevented a genuine breakthrough while the old practices and beliefs were reproduced. This highlights the need for practitioners to re-examine their assumptions underpinning their practices and beliefs.

If diversity is a political issue, in practice, it should go beyond "respecting" different cultural background or learning "meaningful communication" techniques to work with families. Robinson and Dĭza (2006) stripped off many disguises of the issue and reached some core problems underneath. They argued that while differences are tolerated social and structural inequality that marginalises minority groups is reproduced. This point is important as the so-called "differences" generate inequality, and the toleration of "differences" actually covers up the inequality underneath. Moreover, "categories of ethnicity are constructed as homogenized entities, in which social and cultural histories are silenced" (p.65). In this way, many ethnic minority's cultural beliefs and values become fixed labels to distinguish the minority groups from the dominant groups. The complexity disappeared and so did the social political

context where the differences emerged. Consequently, detaching from their context the differences became a "fact" standing alone by itself.

Vandenbroeck (2007) provided a more thorough and critical analysis of diversity in early childhood education. He pointed out that there are in fact various discourses and theoretical concepts underpinning diversity. The "essentialist multicultural approach" as Vandenbroeck named it, superficially promotes respect for differences and ignores the sociopolitical and economic contexts where the relationships among different groups take place. In addition, this approach focuses on minority and tolerating minority's differences while failing to question the norms that define minority as different in the first place. For example, viewing Asian migrants as "different" while ignoring why they were defined as such (I have explained the sociopolitical and historical context earlier and in the previous chapter). This leads to objectifying such differences and once the differences are "respected" and "tolerated", the inequality and power relations that are buried underneath will be perfectly disguised and forgotten.

Built on the criticisms against the essentialist approach is a new anti-bias approach that acknowledges power relations. This is a big step forward. Even when the power relation is made visible the minority groups are still defined as others. This frame of mind does not put the minority or the disadvantaged at an equal footing with the dominant power. As Vandenbroeck (2007) explained,

> (Power relation) are often described in a dichotomous way, defining victims (ethnic minorities) and perpetrators (majority)…This dualistic model does not allow us deep analysis of how power relations occur...The framework fails in analysing the subtleties and reciprocities of power relations (; p.26).

The above discussions illustrates that diversity is again multi-faceted rather than unitary. This issue should be examined in its historical, socio-economic and political context. The current thesis does not collect first hand data from the teachers about their practices in relation to the diversity issue and working with the Chinese migrant families. This thesis, however, intends to provide useful implications and information from the migrant mothers' experiences for early childhood professionals, and in some instances those experiences are a direct reflection of such teacher practices as have been described above.

3.7 Summary

This chapter first provides a brief history of Chinese migrants in New Zealand. The second section presents an account of traditional Chinese parenting practice and how the tradition is pertinent to recent Chinese migrants' parental practice and aspirations in their host countries. This is followed by a brief account of the history of Confucianism in China, and educational policies, parenting/childrearing practice in both New Zealand and China. The accounts demonstrate that the dominant cultural and social norms are arbitrary because the norms are never permanent. Norms have symbolic as well as material meanings. The formation and interpretation of the norms are confined by the wider economic and socio-political situations. The last section briefly describes the growth and development of New Zealand early childhood education over the last two decades. This description is not a comprehensive assessment but points out some tensions within the sector. In *Te Whaariki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), "Empowerment" and "Family" are two of the principles. "Belonging" was the strand where children and their families all have a place. Did Chinese migrant mothers feel empowered? Where was their place in terms of "the Family" and "Belonging"? How did these women "weave" their experiences of all the tensions and components into their lives as migrant mothers? Using Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus as a framework, I intend to investigate the experiences of Chinese skilled migrant mothers raising their children in New Zealand, focusing on the mothering work in relation to their children's early childhood centres, at home, and within the family. In the next chapter, I explain in detail the research design of the current project.

Chapter 4   Making Explicit "The Taken-for-Granted": Research Design

4.1   Introduction

Brewer (2000, p. 195) observed two trends in the current textbook literature of social research methods and methodology. First, research methods are not just techniques. Researchers are required to examine their theoretical perspectives underpinning their research methods. Second, social research is perceived as both a "process" and a "practice". Now, doing social research is no longer considered as a series of neutral, value-free activities seeking for eternal truth. It follows that a methodological approach should be judged in relation to the research topic as well as the researcher's philosophical and theoretical perspectives on the topic. In this Chapter I outline my research design, and ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the design. The chapter is organised in the following manner. First I briefly restate the research topic and the conceptual framework based on Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field. Ontological and epistemological positions of the conceptual framework will be explained. I then discuss Bourdieu's three concepts in relation to institutional ethnography (Smith, 1987; 1990a; 1990b). I argue that Bourdieu's concepts and the approach of institutional ethnography are complementary. Interweaving the Bourdieuian conceptual framework with institutional ethnography methodology suits the particular research topic of this thesis and my role as a female researcher. I then outline the research design, and finally reliability and validity pertinent to the current research and practical procedures to ensure validity and reliability.

4.2   Contextualising the Conceptual Framework

The study is informed by the broad epistemological stance of social constructionism. Social constructionists acknowledge that although the existence of a physical world is beyond our consciousness, individuals construct meanings about the world through social interactions. Various social constructs in turn guide and shape individuals' actions and perceptions.

The thesis is situated within a theoretical perspective based on Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field. Habitus is "the strategy-generating principle" (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 72). Habitus is conditioned by the objective situation of the field, the social arena. In turn, habitus gives meanings to the social field and guides individuals'

practices. Bourdieu (1986) posited that different forms of capital could be converted to gain power, either in material or symbolic forms. He believed that evaluative norms for conversions of capital arise from power relations. A main goal of Bourdieu's theory is to challenge the legitimate dominant ideology and power. Bourdieu's theory belongs to critical inquiry within the broad frame of social constructionism. Focusing on power relationships and questioning false consciousness and assumptions are among the most important features of critical inquiry (Crotty, 1998). Guided by the constructionism epistemology, critical inquiry should be viewed as "an ongoing project", a "process" of constant "reflections and actions". This is because "with every action taken, the context changes and we must critique our assumptions again" (Crotty, 1998, p. 157).

In this thesis, following the proposal of Lareau and Weininger (2003), I define capital as evaluative norms that serve as symbolic markers for exclusion and inclusion. Unlike Lareau and Weininger (2003) who focused on how the dominant class imposes norms and standards to exclude non-dominant groups, I visualise a more ambiguous relationship between dominance and non-dominance, dominant groups and non-dominant groups.

Lareau and Weininger's (2003) proposal has followed Bourdieu's emphasis on class struggles and conflicts. I argue that there are coalitions as well as collisions among different social groups. For example, in New Zealand, the success of Chinese New Zealanders as a model minority, namely social elevation through hard work and academic excellence exemplifies the ideal of "egalitarianism and meritocracy". In this way "an alliance between Pakeha and Chinese … serves to legitimise the meritocracy myth …" (Yee, 2003, p. 219). This Chinese-Pakeha alliance could be interpreted as Chinese compliance with the dominant norms. However, this alliance can also be interpreted as a way by which different social groups tactically negotiate, interpret and manipulate various norms with a purpose or intention.

Conflicts do not just exist between dominant and non-dominant groups but also among non-dominant groups. For instance, Walker (1995) warned that the new wave of Asian immigrants could eventually swamp New Zealand as the European colonists did to Maori. Walker added that the consequences might not be "as disastrous as for the nation as they have been for Maori" but negative outcomes of

new Asian immigration "impinge on both Maori and Pakeha" (p. 28). Under this circumstance, an alliance between Maori and Pakeha was necessary to fight against the "Asian invasion".

Moreover, social and cultural norms are not always obvious. Bourdieu (1990) elaborated the implicitness of the norms; he called it "the feel for the game" (p. 66). In today's global capitalist world, the norms are more volatile. In a feudal society, assets and feudal titles (status) were passed from one generation to the next. In an industrial society, intergenerational transmission is more complicated. Peng (2001) studied intergeneration mobility in England[19]. He observed that there has been a downsizing of "the old propertied class" and an increase of the technical-professional "New Class". "The old English capitalists" tend to convert their material capital into cultural capital for the next generation "in response to the ascendance of the New Class or the institutionalisation of professional power". Bourdieu observed a similar trend in France (Peng, 2001, p. 302). Peng noted that

> The technical professional "New Class" shows a much weaker inheritance tendency than the old capitalist upper class. In this sense, the skill-based occupation hierarchy is more open and universalistic than the property-class system. This reflects the reproduction of technical division of labor is only indirectly linked to the family system via the educational system (pp. 302-303).

Peng's findings suggested that, first, educational institutions have become more prominent in cultural reproduction. Second, norms and reproduction are becoming more subtle and ambiguous. I am not arguing that reproduction of inequality is disappearing. Quite the opposite, according to the OECD (2008b), the gap between the rich and poor in many OECD countries, including New Zealand, has widened between 1980 and 2000. I argue that a dominant group[20] is too broad and too complicated to be defined only by occupations and incomes or authority. An

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[19] There is no similar research in New Zealand. But traditionally, the propertied class in New Zealand has been perceived to be less prominent than it is in England (see Belich, 2001).

[20] In this thesis, I follow Bourdieu (1977a), Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) and the majority of the research literature to define dominant group as the white/middle class group and the rest of the social groups as non-dominant in Western industrial society. This definition follows the consensus of the research community to avoid confusion. But the data analysis will focus on the complex relations among different social groups.

intention of the current project is to make explicit the implicit and taken-for-granted norms, and the complex social interactions that construct and reproduce these norms.

This thesis aims to study how migrant mothers interpret and negotiate various norms in order to provide the best for their children, from their personal accounts of their daily lives. Migrant mothers' personal accounts are socially constructed. People's interpretation of norms and standards (habitus) come from a matrix of personal situation, disposition, perceptions, historical and social, economic, and political factors. The participants' accounts are social because they come from social interaction within a socio-cultural and political context. In turn, habitus developed during the social interactions gives meaning to the social world where individuals live.

The participants in this research project are recent skilled migrant mothers from China. The current project focuses on these mothers' accounts about their daily work of raising their children in New Zealand. It is about women doing women's work (Smith, 1987). My decision to study the migrants' accounts of their everyday lives and my tendency to visualise the class struggle and power relationships as more ambiguous and complex came from my own experience and social position. In the next section, I examine how the Bourdieuian concepts are related to women's experience including my own.

4.3 Women's Experiences—Bourdieu and Institutional Ethnography

"Ontology is the study of being. It is concerned with 'what is', with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such" (Crotty, 1998, p.8). "What is" and what is the "nature of existence" as far as I am concerned stemmed from my personal experiences. Like these participants in the current study, I belonged to the dominant middle class professionals in my birth country. Arriving in New Zealand I found myself jobless and have become a visible minority. Having my first child in my adopted country, I became interested in childcare. I studied early childhood education and worked in various childcare centres in Auckland and later worked as a lecturer. My being is not innate, fixed, and eternal. Rather, the being is constantly constructed in relation to its various social milieus.

The being is neither absolutely "objective" nor it is purely "subjective". It is not

absolutely objective because the existence of being could exist independent of human consciousness but the meaning of existence is not possible without a mind (Crotty, 1998). The different social categories that I have moved in and out always have different social meanings and outcomes ascribed to them. It is not purely "subjective" because the social meanings and outcomes are conditioned by objectified social reality. For example, being a middle class professional implies higher social status and better salary while a student has to accept a lower salary, and a visible migrant might indicate difficulties in finding a decent employment at all. So, it brings out my epistemological standpoint that meanings and realities are social constructed.

Moreover, my own experience as a middle class professional, a student, a mother, a teacher, a researcher etc has convinced me that the construction of social reality is multi-layered and multi-directional rather than fixed and singular. While I was a undergraduate student in the university, I became aware that mothers' experiences, particularly ethnic minority's mothers' experiences were not vocal or even silenced (Pence & Goelman, 1987; Reay, 1999; Smith, 1987) in my textbooks. A purpose of this current study is to provide a different voice to honour the multi-layered and diverse social reality constructed by different beings and experiences.

Although I have similar experience as the migrant mothers, I do not claim to faithfully present only their voices and their perspectives. Although I agreed with the notion of being "objective" to some extent that researchers should listen to what the informants say and should not misrepresent and fabricate data, I do challenge the notion of mere objectivity. In the current study, the migrant mothers' voices are constructed and reconstructed within the current research context. I am particularly aware of how the immediate interview context might have affected such "objectivity" (Please see my discussion on page 82). My personal epistemological standpoint is reflected in the current research as how I collected and analysed the research data -- more detail of this point is discussed in 4.4.4 *The Researcher's Role* and 4.6 *"Reliability and validity reconsidered"*.

I became interested in the current research topic when I was enrolled with Auckland University of Technology (AUT) as an undergraduate studying early childhood education while working in various early childhood centres. The idea started as a

hunch and it changed and evolved over the years. When I first started the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme in 2004, I was drawn to the theory of symbolic interactionism. I was interested in identity theory (Burke, 1980; Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 1968) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, 1981; Tajfel, Flament, Billing, & Bundy, 1971; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, & Wetherell, 1987). According to these two theories, how individuals identify themselves influence their perceptions and actions during social interactions.

However, the two identity theories, particularly identity theory, inherit an interpretive viewpoint. Crotty (1998) argued that "most interpretivists are content to adopt a professedly uncritical stance vis-à-vis the culture they are exploring" (p. 159). This stance sits uncomfortably with many radical changes in my life: a middle class professional who became a jobless new immigrant by definition. Being a new immigrant and a first time mother, I realised the tremendous demands in being a mother, a supposedly rewarding job without any material reward. But in order to make a living, paid work was a necessity. I could not agree more with May's (1992) argument that it is at the onset of motherhood that gender inequality reaches its peak. I became interested in the issues of women, motherhood, women's work, and children. But the issues were no longer personal. I started to wonder what other Chinese skilled migrant mothers think and do. Eventually, it went beyond women's experiences. I started to see the embeddedness of structure, culture, history, politics, society, and people's daily lives.

In the later part of my research, I came across Bourdieu's theory. His concepts of capital, habitus and field helped to make sense of my experience: the social and cultural capital I brought with me was discounted or depreciated in a different field, in a similar fashion to what happens in the currency exchange market. A matrix of factors decides the exchange rates, power being the most fundamental element. Bourdieu's concepts enabled me to explain the situation in a simple, easy-to-understand and yet philosophical way.

Bourdieu focused on class struggles, and many of the research projects inspired by his theory have been concerned with the divide between the working and middle class (i.e. De Graaf, 1986; DiMaggio, 1982; Lareau, 1987, 2003; Katsillis & Rubinson, 1990; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). However, the social reality

for me is more blurred and subtle. I do not know where exactly I belong. I had a similar sense of ambiguity when I read Reay (1997) who used habitus and field to study the ambivalence of social class in the case of "Christine".

Reay (1998c) talked about the influence of both Bourdieu and feminist theory and methodology on her "research endeavours":

> In some ways, I feel more at ease with feminist writing on methodology… than Bourdieu's somewhat daunting accounts which appear to advocate a 'properly scientific' way of undertaking research (p.140).

My research endeavours echoed Reay's (1998c) experience. As a female researcher who is particularly concerned with women's (mothers') lives, I have also read feminist theories and methodologies. Among them the most influential for me was Dorothy Smith's (1987 ; 1990a ; 1990b ; 1991; 1992; 1999) institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography was started as "sociology for women" (Smith, 1987). Smith (1991) spoke about how women's experience was excluded in the male-dominated academic field. She spoke about how her life as a single mother with two children was alienated from her academic life in the university (Smith, 2005). I had a similar feeling. Even though I was studying early childhood education, a "women's" subject, mothers' voices were largely silent (Pence & Goelman, 1987; Reay, 1995).

Like Reay (1998c), I found Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field "illuminating" (p.140) but also felt more attuned to Smith's (1987) research approach. Consequently, I adapted Dorothy Smith's (1987) institutional ethnography as the methodology in this research project.

Smith (1990a, 1992) believed that to understand women's experiences, researchers should start from the actuality of women's everyday lives. She viewed everyday practice as problematic. An aim of institutional ethnographers is to explicate the social ruling in everyday practices. Smith (1990a) argued:

> When I speak here of governing or ruling, ... I refer rather to that total complex of activities, differentiated into many spheres, by which our kind of society is ruled, managed, and administered … These are the institutions through which we are ruled and through which we, and I emphasize this we, participate in ruling (p. 14).

Bourdieu, too, aimed to break down various dichotomies of subjective and objective, structure and agency (Grenfell & James, 1998). Reay (1998) noted many parallels between Smith and Bourdieu. For example, both aimed to make explicit "notions of taken-for-granted" (p. 139). While Bourdieu leaned towards structural reproduction through individuals' daily practice, institutional ethnographers emphasised that "we all play a part in generating the phenomena that seem to occur independently" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 28). I have argued in the previous chapters that evaluative norms or "the relation of ruling" are not just imposed but are concerted, coordinated, negotiated or rejected in people's ordinary activities (Smith, 1990, p. 14). My argument fits with institutional ethnographers' stance.

Researchers of institutional ethnography take a grounded theory approach. Institutional ethnographers emphasise the actuality of real people's ordinary activities and are against using abstract concepts in research. Using abstract concepts to examine ordinary lives tends to fit the actuality into the existing literature and causes the researcher to lose "the stance in the everyday world" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p.52). When Dorothy Smith (1987) first developed her theory, she found all the male-dominated sociological theories excluded women's lived experience. So she proposed to place people's lived experiences ahead of theories.

Bourdieu (1989a) also emphasised practice:

> I never set out to 'do theory' or to 'construct a theory' *per se*….There is no doubt a theory in my work, or better , a set of thinking tools visible through the results they yield, but it is not built as such … It [a theory] is a temporary construct which takes shape for and by empirical work (p. 50).

My understanding of the Bourdieuian concepts took shape during the empirical work and continued to evolve during the data analysis and writing the current thesis. Contrary to alienating me from "the stance in the everyday world" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 52), Bourdieu's concepts offer a fresh perspective to explain people's lived experiences, including women's. Many female (feminist) researchers (e.g. Allard, 2005; McCall, 1992; McKeever & Millers, 2004; Mickelson, 2003; Reay, 1998; 2004) have found Bourdieu's work useful for the study of women's lives. Inspired by Bourdieu's concepts, new concepts are created to study the oppressed, marginalised or the less powerful including women, for example, ethnocultural capital to study ethnic minorities (Baker, 2005); emotional capital to

study mothers' emotional work with their children (Gillies, 2006) and emotional capital in education (Zembylas, 2007). Rather than affirming the "ruling relations", these studies showed that using Bourdieu's concepts could be liberating.

Nash (1999) maintained that Bourdieu's concepts are tools for thought that force us to think and thus make progress. Institutional ethnographers aim to present ordinary people's experiences as they are by abandoning abstract concepts. However, researchers always bring their own assumptions and perspectives when studying other people's lives whether or not they use theoretical concepts. "The stance in the everyday world" does not come in a vacuum. The key is to make explicit these assumptions.

Smith (1987) argued that the "everyday life" is problematic. People's daily lives are part of the extended social relation of "ruling". Bourdieu's concept of habitus has a similar notion. Habitus entails a medium where the social relations of power and structure are ingrained in individuals' perceptions and daily practice. The concept of field enables researchers to better understand the fluidity of habitus: how individuals' strategies change and evolve in multiple social arenas or when they move from one social field to another. The concept of capital offers a focus to study the migrant mothers' daily lives: at the empirical level, the question is, "what counts as capital for their children's future?" At the theoretical level, the question is, "how are power relations maintained, reproduced and resisted when the mothers convert and accumulate capital for their children in different fields?" (different fields such as, at home, at the childcare centre, within the family). The guiding research question of this thesis is how the migrant mothers negotiate, interpret, reject or coordinate the various evaluative norms of different fields. The norms are the structural rulings that specify what counts as capital and subsequent values and rewards of various forms of capital.

In line with institutional ethnography's research approach, the aim of data collection is to gather detailed accounts of individuals' daily lives. The goal of data analysis is to understand how people's daily lives are coordinated with "the ruling". The task is to observe how data are related to each other (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). In the current research project, I gathered data on the participants' daily lives through their accounts in face-to-face interviews, and asked participants to collect documentation

from early childhood centres and photos of their daily lives. Emphasis is on the participants' lived experiences and actualities of daily life. I employed thematic networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001) as an analytical tool to organise the data with a focus of how different themes are coordinated with each other, more specifically. In the following section, the research design is discussed in more detail.

4.4 Research Design

In all, eight participants were recruited in this research project. Data were collected through multiple face-to-face interviews. The aim of the interviews was to encourage participants to describe their daily lives. Photos and texts were used in interviews as stimulus to elicit detailed information from the participants about their lived experiences. Photos and texts used included participants' family photos, texts that participants deemed of value and meaningful, including their children's works, correspondence with the childcare centres which their children were attending. Details of the research design are discussed in the following four sections: 1) the participants, 2) data collection, 3) data analysis, and 4) the researcher's role.

4.4.1 The Participants

The eight participants were recent skilled migrant mothers from China whose preschool children were currently attending a licensed centre-based early childhood centre and had been in a formal early childhood service or services in New Zealand for at least six months in total. Two of the participants' male partners voluntarily joined their wives in the interview. But the male partners' interview data were not included in the final findings due to ethical considerations. The early childhood centre is conceptualised as an important agent of institutionalised cultural capital, and an aim of the current thesis is to understand the participants' experience in relation to the institution. I assumed six months to be the minimum period of time during which the migrant mothers could have acquired sufficient interactions in relation to mainstream early childhood education. All participants in this research project had at least two years experience with mainstream childcare centres. The participants were granted residence visas to New Zealand based on the points system,

the Immigration Amendment Act 1991[21]. They are in general terms called skilled migrants.

I achieved a certain degree of diversity in the small sample size[22]. This is similar to what Uttal (1996, p. 295) called "maximum variation sampling". Uttal explained that diverse sampling was not for the purpose of generalisation but to understand "unique variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, cited in Uttall, 1996, p. 295). In the current thesis, "diversity" refers to the different family structures and personal backgrounds of participants. The purpose of diversified sampling is to understand how Chinese migrant mothers deploy different resources available and strategies to provide the best for their children's care and education according to their different personal situations within the seemingly homogenous group normally known as Chinese new migrants. At the theoretical level, this is also to understand better the concepts of habitus and field where individuals use habitus to guide their practice according to their different personal situations.

Why Chose the Number Eight?

Choosing a small size of participants but focusing on generating in-depth information is suitable for this project. "Depth means getting a thoughtful answer based on considerable evidence as well as getting full consideration of a topic from diverse points of view" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.76). In order to collect in-depth information on each participant, I conducted at least two interviews with each participant. Choosing a small number of participants was also a practical consideration. Hinds (2000) advised that for every one-hour interview data, one should allow ten hours to transcribe and analyse those data. In the current project, because interviews were conducted in Mandarin, the participants' native language, apart from transcribing, I had to translate the data from Chinese to English. For a small research project with limited budget, time and resources, it was not possible for

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[21] Under the points system, if a couple applies for immigration to New Zealand under the points system, normally one applies as the principal applicant and the other as the secondary applicant.

[22] Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of participants' background information.

me to interview a large number of people and at the same time obtain information with sufficient depth from each participant.

I used saturation as a yardstick to decide the total number of participants. Saturation means data collection stops "when no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units … redundancy is the primary criterion" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). Some scholars (Bernard, 2000; Creswell, 2007) suggest a range of interview numbers for different research paradigms. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) did an experiment on saturation. They found that saturation occurred at the twelfth interview while the first six interviews normally provide sufficient information for thematic analysis. Morse (1995) argued that saturation in qualitative research is not the quantity that matters. She stated: "[R]esearchers cease data collection when they have enough data to build a comprehensive and convincing theory. That is, saturation occurs" (p. 148). I used Guest et al's (2006) indication for a practical reference during data collection. I also followed Morse' (1995) definition of saturation. Saturation in the current thesis means that collected data are sufficient and rich to answer the research questions and to achieve the purpose in the particular research context. In short, the data collected from eight participants were sufficient and satisfactory to achieve the goals of the current research project.

Gaining Access

Information in both English and Chinese about this project and invitations to participate were given to the supervisors or teachers of five licensed early childhood centres in Auckland. In one centre, information was placed in the centre without any promotion from the teachers. I had only one response, from a Chinese migrant father. I explained that I needed to interview the mother but he said that his wife did not have time. The supervisors of four other centres talked to eligible and willing mothers in their centres and made a total of eight recommendations for me. I contacted each potential participant by telephone. Two mothers recommended by one centre did not meet the criteria: one, although a Chinese ethnic, was not from China; the other, although from China, came to New Zealand before the Immigration Act 1987. These incidents suggested that some early childhood teachers might not always be aware of the diversity among Chinese migrants.

In the initial contact through telephone, I briefly explained the purpose and procedures of the research to six other eligible participants. Two indicated that they did not have time. I left my telephone number and email address for them to contact me if they made up their minds to participate. I did not receive any response afterwards. Four other participants were willing to take part. Three of these participants later recommended another four contacts after I completed interviews with them. All of the four recommended Chinese migrant mothers agreed to participate in this research project. Participants were not recruited at the same time. There was an eight months' gap between the first contact with a participant and the last recruitment.

The last four out of the eight participants were selected through snowball sampling, "a method for identifying and sampling (or selecting) the cases in a network", which "begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on the basis of links to the initial cases" (Neuman, 2000, p. 199). Snowball sampling "is useful for studying communication patterns, decision making or diffusion of knowledge within a group" (Kumar, 1996, p. 162). Through snowballing selection, each individual case is to some extent connected and related to each other while still maintaining some diversity in terms of their various personal situations within the group.

Kumar (1996) cautioned:

> The choice of the entire sample rests upon the choice of individuals at the first stage. If they belong to a particular faction or have strong biases, the study may be biased (p. 162).

Nevertheless, this small group inevitably belongs "to a particular faction". This circumstance is not problematic in the context of the current research project, because it does not intend to produce statistically generalisable information. In the current project, the participant selection was purposive, because "it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested" (Silverman, 2001, p. 250).

4.4.2 Data collection

Face-to-face interviews

Data were collected through audio-recorded face-to-face interviews. I conducted a total of 17 interviews [23] with eight participants. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin. I asked the participants to choose where to be interviewed. All but one chose their home. People are most likely to feel comfortable and in control in their own home (Kvale, 1996). Conducting interviews at participants' home allowed me to better understand the context of their everyday lives. I introduced myself as a recent Chinese migrant mother in the research invitation. Sometimes, after I turned off the tape recorder, the conversation continued about the children, schooling, career and life here and back in China. I did feel I was accepted as one of them, or an "insider".

How were interviews conducted?

Broad guidelines to conduct interviews

I followed the broad guidelines of institutional ethnography's approach to conduct interviews in the current project. First, interviews are understood as an "open-ended inquiry" or "talking to people". Interview questions are not necessarily standardised. The purpose of interviewing is to understand how local or independent activities are coordinated in "multiple sites" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, pp. 756-757). Interview questions evolve and emerge during the interviews. When interviewing different participants, interview questions can be drawn from previous interviews (e.g. Smith & Smith, 1990). This is also a reason why all eight participants were not recruited at the same time but over a period of time. The gap allowed ideas for interview questions to evolve and emerge. Second, in institutional ethnography interviews, jargons are not taken for granted and they should be explained in terms of people's lived experiences or actualities. For example, when a participant talked about identity, I would ask her to explain what the term means in her daily activities with some concrete examples.

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[23] One participant had only one interview due to her lack of time. This participant was not given a digital camera to take photos.

In-depth interviews

Seidman (1998) proposed that an in-depth interview normally takes 90 minutes to obtain sufficient information. If an interview is too short, it is not likely to obtain in-depth meanings. If an interview is too long, it might cause fatigue and boredom. In the current study, each audio-taped interview lasted about 60 to 90 minutes. Each visit lasted about two hours. I would have a cup of tea and chat with the participants before I turned on the tape for a formal interview. After the tape stopped, some participants would chat to me about their daily lives, and sometimes they asked about my life. I viewed these conversations outside the formal interviews as necessary to build up rapport with the participants and further establish my role as an insider. Data used in this thesis have been derived from the information gained during the "formalised' taped interviews, because once the audio recorder was turned off, participants might not realise that the data collection was still going on. If they talked about something interesting, I would ask them if I could use what they said as data or asked them if they could say it again so I could tape it.

The first interview

I introduced myself at the beginning of the first interview. I talked about the research project and answered the participants' questions. I then asked the participants to sign the research consent. The first interview normally aimed to build up rapport and obtain the participants' background information. Typical questions included: when and why they came to New Zealand? Other information collected included their family and personal background; information about their children; and their experience with the mainstream early childhood education. In general, I would encourage the participants to take the lead and I followed through their responses.

At the end of the first interview, I asked participants to collect correspondence/text between home and early childhood centre, including children's works that they thought were important or valuable to talk about in the next interview. A digital camera[24] was given to each participant to take photos of their children in their daily

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[24] All but one participant were given a digital camera. The cameras were for the participants to keep as a token of my appreciation of their time and contribution to the research project.

lives. Locations could be home, childcare centres, playgrounds and other places of social gatherings such as birthday parties. The mothers were asked to capture the moments that were important and cherished in their children's lives. The mothers were also encouraged to collect other photos, stories and artworks of the children during the research process. The mothers would select the photos and tell the stories of the photos, in what circumstances the photos were taken, and what the photos meant for the mother and the child. As discussed earlier, photos and texts were used as a stimulus or tool to encourage the participants to talk about more details of their daily activities.

This method is inspired by Fleer's (1996) approach. In Fleer's study, "[e]ach indigenous family was given a video camera to record aspects of their child's life which were important for growing up as an Indigenous child in Australia today" (p. 194). This method positions the indigenous families as "the central agents" to articulate their viewpoints of best early childhood education for their children (p.194). To recognise the participants as "the central agents" is also the intent of the current thesis.

In the current study, asking the participants to take photos of their children aimed to elicit details of their lived experiences. I opted for a digital still camera instead of a video camera. The reasons are, first, a still camera is, in general, easier to carry and operate than a video camera. Thus it would be convenient for the mothers to move around with a child or children in tow. Second, still photos leave out more detail and would require the mothers to use their own words to account for, describe and interpret the photos. Their perspectives, emotions, hopes and desires of what is best for their children would reveal themselves through their words. The matrix of these perspectives, appreciations and aspirations disclosed in the migrant mothers' account would be what Bourdieu (1977) called habitus.

The second interview

The gap between the first and second interview was two to three weeks. This allowed me to look at the data and prepare questions for the second interview. The gap would also allow participants to gather information and photos for the next interview. If the gap was too long, time might undermine the rapport built during the previous interview as suggested by Seidman (1988). I asked myself if two or three weeks were

enough for the participants to collect the information. The participants did not need to go out and collect information. They only needed to put together all the information available in their daily lives. So this interval appeared to be sufficient for the participants to collect the information.

In the second interview, each participant showed me the photos they had taken, and other artefacts/documentations (for example, the child's portfolio, artworks they had done at the centre, daily communication/new letters from the centre) about their children's learning and development. The interview focused on these photos and artefacts/documentations. The aim was to understand the participants' current care arrangements and their perceived daily interactions with these arrangements. The participants were invited to describe their typical daily activities and incidents both at home and at the early childhood centre or in relation to the early childhood centre. The participants' accounts would help to understand how abstract norms and standards are negotiated, constructed and reconstructed in people's everyday lives.

The third interview

Any questions emerging from the data would be discussed in a third face-to-face interview, phone conversations, or through emails. How the third interview was conducted also depended on what the participants felt the most convenient. I kept in touch with the participants after the data collection was completed. During the data analysis, if I was not sure about the meanings of their words; or if I felt further clarification was necessary, I would email them asking for further explanations.

4.4.3 Data Analysis

Transcription and translation

I transcribed verbatim interview data and translated selected interview segments into English. During the translation, an English-Chinese bilingual peer proofread the transcription and translation and made comments. The translations and transcriptions were sent back to participants for clarification and approval. For those who wanted to make amendments, it was always to do with some specific details, such as the year they had arrived or the exact title of a qualification. These amendments indicated that the participants were concerned with the factuality of what they had said. I assumed that the participants did not want to be viewed as lying about their experiences or not

supplying accurate information. I had explained to them that some details might be changed deliberately to ensure their privacy. However, the overall transcription and translation should reflect what they meant to say.

I have tried to translate the data from Chinese into English as close to the original words as possible. However, the English translation did follow the common usage of English grammar and idioms. Wherever there was a gap between the two languages, I preserved the Chinese words (both the Chinese characters and *pin yin*) in the text and used footnotes to explain the meaning in context. Colloquial Mandarin was used in the interviews and interview segments were selected. So when I translated the words into written English, I would fill in the gaps with the missing words in brackets to achieve clarity and coherence of the translation.

Organising the Data: Thematic Networks

Institutional ethnographers who were against coding data took a very different direction from the prevailing qualitative data analysis approach where coding is routinely applied to reduce the volume of data (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). However, data cannot be presented as "raw" material. Some rearrangements and organisation are needed to present the data for analysis. Textbooks on institutional ethnography methodology (e.g. Campbell & Gregor, 2002; DeVault & McCoy, 2002) did not offer explicit solutions as to how the data could be presented and organised without being de-contextualised. In the current thesis, I adopted thematic networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001) to organise and present the data for analysis.

Thematic networks comprise three levels of themes allowing a thesis to develop from explicit empirical data to more abstract concepts: 1) *Basic Theme,* the "lowest-order premises" drawn directly from the textual data; 2) *Organising Theme;* "a middle-order theme that organizes the Basic Themes into clusters of similar issues"; 3) *Global Theme,* comprising "sets of Organizing Themes that together present an argument, or a position or an assertion about a given issue or reality" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389). The method of thematic network enables researchers to examine the interrelations and connections among the themes rather than treating themes as discrete categories in isolation. "Thematic networks aim to explore the understanding of an issue or signification of an idea, rather than to reconcile conflicting definitions of a problem" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387).

This aim fits with the Bourdieuian theoretical framework of the current thesis as well as the approach of institutional ethnography. The concept of field, capital and habitus as the framework stresses the embeddedness of social and personal, theories and practices. Similarly, researchers of institutional ethnography focus on how people's daily practices "are coordinated with outside events and are part of social relations" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 27). Therefore, the use of thematic networks as an analytical tool is appropriate to organise and analyse the textual data in the current thesis.

In the current thesis, themes are referred to as "abstract constructs" that "link expressions" to all empirical data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87). The themes in the current thesis were derived from empirical data as well as from the researcher's "prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 88). The migrant mothers' daily lives were conceptualised as comprising different *fields*. The concept of field was used as a basic unit because capital and habitus are specific to the field. Another reason to organise data within different fields was to avoid de-contextualising the data while reducing the raw material into manageable analytic units.

The fields include: 1) the wider society of New Zealand as well as China, as the migrants are currently living in New Zealand but have various cultural and familial ties with China; 2) the relation between the early childhood centre where their children were attending and the home. The literature review demonstrated that the relation between home and educational institutions is an important site where parents gain or are denied access to capital on behalf of their children; 3) at home; and 4) within the family. A review of literature in the previous chapters also illustrated that the home, particularly the mothering work at home, is an important source which generates various forms of capital for children. The different roles that the family members play, particularly the gendered roles of parenting, are pivotal elements to understand capital production and reproduction. Therefore, the accounts emerged within the above four sites are the four Organising Themes in the current thesis (see Figure 1). Within these boundaries, Basic Themes were identified and grouped together respectively.

The Basic Themes were derived directly from the empirical data. To develop the Basic Themes, I read the interview data of each participant, and identified information from the different four sites as discussed. I then coloured the data within each case before comparing and grouping the coloured data across all eight cases. The aim was to understand the data within the context of each participant before they were cut and regrouped from their immediate context. Finally, the coloured data were group under the respective Organising Themes (see Figure 1).
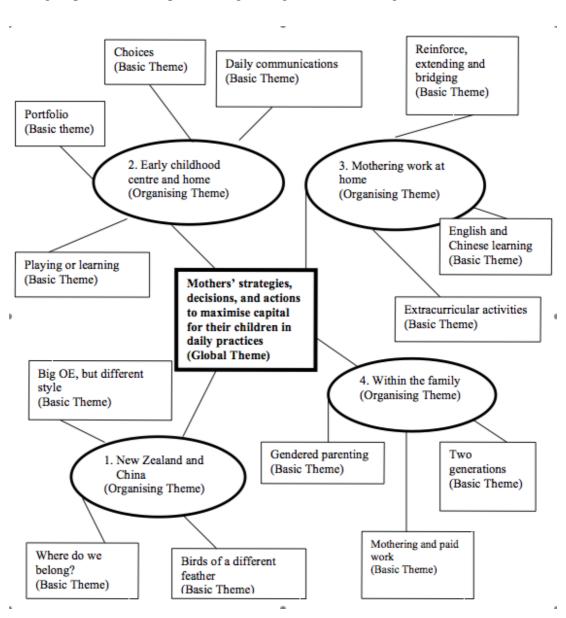

Figure 1: The thematic network structure of the current thesis

Subsequently, information grouped under each Organising Theme was presented and analysed as a chapter of the findings and discussions[25].

The proposed theoretical framework of *habitus, field and capital* was utilised to analyse the data organised within each level of the themes. Finally, the Global Theme was developed when an argument or position was presented about the Chinese migrant mothers' experiences of raising their young children in New Zealand.

Thematic Analysis: Pros and Cons

A common practice in qualitative data analysis is to categorise and summarise common themes that arise in the data. The first step of thematic analysis involves coding during which "[a] researcher organizes the raw data into conceptual categories and creates themes or concepts, which he or she then uses to analyze data" (Neuman, 2000, p. 420). Through coding, the raw data are reduced which enables the researcher to go beyond mere descriptions to be able to conceptualise data at a more abstract level (Neuman, 2000). Thematic analysis can provide information that is "accessible, practical, and of immediate use" (Roulson, 2002, p. 285) for practitioners. This is particularly useful for the current thesis considering the dearth of such information in the New Zealand early childhood context.

Major criticisms of thematic analysis are, first, that talk is de-contextualised. The problem with classifying and locating different categories is that meanings are often dislocated from their contexts (e.g. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Mishler, 1986). Second, there is a lack of reflexivity because the interviewer's role in the research process is deleted, and interviews should be treated as a series of social interactions (Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

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[25] Organising Theme (1) became Chapter 5: "Transnationalism, What Is It really?"; Organising Theme (2) became Chapter 6 : "The Silent Partners?"; Organising Theme(3) became Chapter 7 : "The Mothering Work"; Organising Theme (4) became Chapter 8 : "The Family".

Miles and Huberman (1994) contended that there are two common problems in data analysis. One is the inability to conceptualise or theorise empirical data. The other is theorisation stripping away necessary contextual factors. The pitfall of thematic analysis is that although it reduces data and thus allows more abstract theories, it also isolates data from its contexts.

Another shortfall of thematic analysis is that language is theorised as mere system and structure in which meanings are considered universal without a context. Linell (1998) explained that "language can be conceptualized in basically two ways, as system or structure, or as discourse, practice (praxis) or communication" (p. 3). The first conceptualises language as a form while the latter emphasises the content. These two concepts are actually complementary to each other. Many researchers take a middle ground to investigate both form and content of language (Lieblich et al, 1998). In the current study, following Bourdieu's (1977b, 1992) theorisation of linguistic capital and institution ethnography's approach, language is treated more as a discourse and practice than as a pure linguistic system. However, the form of the language is also important as it contains the content/discourse of the language. So a middle ground (Liebilich et al, 1998) is taken in the current project.

To offset the shortcomings of thematic analysis, I analysed my role as a researcher and interviewer (more detail is given in the next section and throughout the data analysis process) to contextualise the interview segments. During the analysis, the emphasis was on why and how the participants spoke rather to merely report what they actually said. In this way, the selected interview accounts were analysed against a wider socio-political, economic and cultural context. Campbell and Gregor (2002) offered two practical guiding questions for data analysis from institutional ethnography's standpoint: "How does it happen as it does? How are these relations organized?" (p.7). Assumptions underlying these questions are that the local experiences and activities "are tied into extended social relations" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002 p.154). I used these two questions as an analytical tool in this thesis. This analytical tool is also congruent with Bourdieu's theoretical perspective that capital, habitus and field are situated in a matrix of social interactions and relationships.

4.4.4 The Researcher's Role

When May (1992) interviewed women for their life stories, many participants needed assurance that their lives were interesting enough to be studied. This might reflect the traditional gender ideology that belittles women's lives and experiences. One of the intentions in the current study is to stress that the participants' ordinary child rearing lives are meaningful enough to be taken account seriously. As a mother, and a new Chinese immigrant, I am someone who is empathetic and interested in the migrant mothers' lives.

Situating the Researcher: Insider or Outsider?

A researcher's identity in research interviews can influence the data collected (Gunasekara, 2007). The researcher's subjectivity is not to be eliminated but to be made explicit because the subjectivity is an integral part of the research. For example, Willis (1981) studied a group of working class "lads" and argued that "[c]ultural forms cannot be reduced or regarded as the mere epiphenomenal expression." Despite the fact that the majority of working class "lads" in his study ended up with working class manual jobs, Willis saw the cultural reproduction with strong resistance and contests: "Subordination and failure is not unanswerable" (p.174). Willis was born into a working class family. "His perspective is that of a working class kid who chose mobility, while retaining the viewpoint of the 'lads'" and his "superb study" was due to this "unique class location" (Aronowitz, 1981, p. xii).

In a broad sense, the researcher can be identified as either an insider or outsider. Generally, researchers are warned not to be too involved and to keep a certain distance or balance between being an insider and outsider (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1996; Kvale, 1996). The puzzle remains unsolved— what distance is the most appropriate? This depends on the research issue, situation and context. For example, research in American Indian communities can be a very political and sensitive issue (Brayboy & Dayhle, 2000). Non-native scholars often lack "the passion from within and the authority to ask new and different questions based on histories and experiences as indigenous people" (Swisher, 1998; p. 193) because an outsider is not able to understand indigenous people's experiences. In the current study, I presented myself an "insider": someone who shares similar experiences with the participants and has the empathy and "passion" derived from such experiences. Insider

researchers can construct knowledge from inside using academic conceptual tools to present knowledge in a way that is "comprehensible and sympathetic" to both outsiders and insiders (Foley, Levinson, & Hurting, 2001, p. 37).

However, a shared ethnic identity does not guarantee mutual understanding between the researcher and the researched (Sprague, 2005). Banks's (1998) statement clearly described this situation:

> An individual scholar's ideological commitments and knowledge claims cannot be predicted by his or her ethnic socialization because of the complex factors that influence knowledge production. (p. 5)

The definition of outsider and insider is not discrete. A person can be both an insider and outsider subject to the situation and context (Nelson, 1993). In the current study, despite having a shared ethnicity and similar experience as an immigrant mother, the very fact of my affiliation with a mainstream institution can disqualify me from being an insider. No matter what position a researcher takes, there are always issues to address. In the current thesis, I followed Brayboy and Dayhle's (2000) suggestion to "address the issues in a manner that shows integrity and an awareness of some of the complicated issues" during the research process (p. 166).

The Researcher's role and position during the interview

During the interviews, my role as a researcher was to initiate questions, listen attentively and follow up with questions for further explanation and clarification. The purpose of doing so was to invite the participants to talk, and to show a genuine interest in what the participants said. This position was not to maintain objectivity but to allow the participants more freedom and autonomy to recount their experiences during the interview. However, an interviewer should be sensitive to the specific situation. If an interviewee is not responding, the interviewer should be able to use a range of strategies to elicit information. For example, sharing personal information/perspectives might help to get interviewees to talk (Douglas, 1985). Oakley (1981) argued that self-disclosure is a useful technique to build up a more equitable relationship between interviewers and interviewees. People do not provide "in-depth" information about themselves unless they feel comfortable and trusting (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 77). Therefore, I occasionally shared my personal

information and opinions but conscious of the need for the interviewees to remain the centre of the conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

To further illustrate my role during interview, I give the following example. Fang was commenting that her son could not bring rice to school so he had to have sandwiches. Fang's mother said the grandson was eating (Western) "rubbish food". In Chinese tradition, main meals are cooked and served hot. This is a reason why rice cannot be brought to school, as it will get cold. A cold meal is not considered healthy, particularly in the winter. Listening to her, I thought of myself in a similar situation and commented that my son didn't eat cold sandwiches at school. Fang said: "Neither does my son". My comment was more spontaneous than strategic. Having very similar experiences as these mothers, I could not help showing my empathy during the conversations. My comments like this might have in turn encouraged the participants to share insider information that might otherwise not be available if the researcher did not speak the same language or did not share the experience.

Nevertheless, I was more than a sympathetic listener. I did see the world through a particular lens that was not always the same as the participants'. Sometimes when the participants did not agree with me, I would ask them for explanations. This created an opportunity to elicit further details of their lived experiences. For example, I asked if New Zealand early childhood education centres and public schools should offer lessons using Chinese language as instruction. The participants all said it was not possible and further explained that New Zealand is an English-speaking country, and Chinese is a minority language so it is not possible to gain government support.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The main ethical issues were examined in reference to Auckland University of Technology's Ethics Committee (AUTEC) Guidelines (AUTEC, 2005). Ethical approval for this project was granted by the Ethics Committee on 30 January 2007, AUTEC reference number 06/175. Some major ethical considerations are:

Informed consents were gained to ensure that participants understood their rights and the procedures of the research, and that their participation was voluntary. Efforts

were made to preserve privacy and confidentiality. Pseudonyms[26] were used for all participants. Identifiable details of the participants were moderated or omitted to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Without participants' written permission, original interview data will not be accessible to anyone else other than the researcher's supervisors and critical peers. However, because children's photos might be used in the thesis, participants might not be able to remain anonymous as photos can provide identifiable information. This situation was explained and stated in the consent form although none of the photos was eventually used in the thesis. I further explained in person to each participant about the current research project before starting the first interview. Informed consents were sought from the parents to use their children's photos. All but one participant[27] agreed for me to use their children's photos in this thesis. I gave each participant a digital camera, a memory card, rechargeable batteries and battery charger which the participants used to take photos of their daily lives, and these were also gifts for the participants to show my appreciation of their time and efforts.

Research transcriptions and translations that were used in the thesis were sent back to participants for clarification to avoid misrepresentation. This is to respect the participants' rights; they have access to the information they provided and have right to know about processing of the data. The participants have the right to delete, change and add information of their interview statements during the process of data collection.

4.6 Reliability and Validity Reconsidered

In line with the constructionist epistemological stance of this thesis, reliability and validity, like all other concepts, are socially constructed within a context. In the following, I define reliability and validity. I make explicit the assumptions

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[26] Six out of the eight participants had English names while only two used their Chinese names. I used English pseudonyms for those who preferred to be called their English names and Chinese pseudonyms for those who preferred to keep their Chinese names.

[27] One participant did not provide any photos because she did not have time and we had only one interview at a café. She agreed to participate in the research but could only spend less than one hour for one interview and was not given a camera.

underpinning the definitions and the reasons for the way they are defined. I discuss the practical procedures to ensure reliability and validity.

4.6.1 Reliability

The key to reliability is consistency. A textbook definition of reliability refers to a situation when the result can be replicated by other researchers or the same researcher at another place or another time (Hammersley, 1992). This definition indicates a fixed and eternal reality outside human perception. This does not fit with the notion that knowledge is socially constructed. I have argued that different researchers studying the same phenomenon would have different findings, and even the same researcher's viewpoints change and evolve during the research process (see Brewer, 2000; Davies, 1999).

The aim of this research project is not about discovering eternal or objective "truth". Adopting Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus and field, I assumed that the migrant mothers' experiences are socially constructed through social interactions. Reliability in this thesis is to make explicit various social interactions within different contexts.

Therefore, reliability is a set of criteria to evaluate the worthiness of knowledge, achieving consistency at its face value should be regarded as one of the possible criteria; consistency is not a goal but a means to achieve such a goal. For the purpose of this project, I adopt Merriam's (1998) definition of reliability:

> Reliability—the extent to which there is consistency in the findings—is enhanced by the investigator explaining the assumptions and theory underlying the study, by triangulating data, and by leaving an audit trail, that is, by describing in detail how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived from the data (p. 218)

In reference to the above definition, reliability in this project consists of three kinds of consistency: 1) theoretical consistency, 2) data consistency, 3) procedure consistency.

1) Theoretical consistency refers to making explicit one's assumption and designing the research within a theoretical framework congruent with the resultant ontology, epistemology and methodology. I have discussed

rationales for such decisions earlier. The issue is concerned with "why"—why I designed the research in certain directions from certain angles compared to other possibilities.

2) Data consistency means collecting data through different methods that are congruent with the theoretical perspectives. In this project, the face-to-face interview is the major research method. This consistency is concerned with "what"—what kinds of data are needed for what purposes within the chosen theoretical framework. I have explained these earlier in the section on research design.

3) Procedure consistency deals with "how"—how each step of the research is conducted. Knowledge is socially constructed within a particular time and place. Describing in detail the procedure of research is to describe how knowledge is constructed within the research context, without which the knowledge will be impossible to evaluate. I have described how the research was conducted and the research context including the researcher's role to achieve the procedure consistency.

4.6.2   Defining validity

Bryman (2004) defined validity as "a concern with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research" (p. 545). The concept of validity is socially constructed and has changed in different contexts (Ratcliffe, 1983). Therefore, it is not surprising that the debate about the validity of qualitative data is still continuing without reaching a clear consensus in the research community. Rolfe (2006, p. 304) observed mainly three positions on validity of qualitative research: 1) To apply the same criteria of quantitative to qualitative research; 2) to seek alternative criteria; 3) to reject "any predetermined criteria". Rolfe advocated that researchers adopt the third position and stated, "Each research methodology (and perhaps each individual study) must be appraised on its own merits" (p. 310). Following this position, I define validity as an "ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal" process. I utilise Cho and Trent's (2006) framework as a guide during such a process. Some practical techniques such as triangulation and audit trail are

applied to ensure validity within the framework. However, such applications are under scrutiny and self-appraisal.

The first of the above positions clings to the notion of objective and "hard" science (Rolfe, 2006, p.305): it does not apply to the current thesis. The second position has "generated the most debate" (Rolfe, 2006, p.304). First, there were suggestions of using alternative terms such as "rigour", "credibility" and 'trustworthiness" (see Rolfe, 2006, p.305). Long and Johnson (2000, p. 30) argued, "there is nothing to be gained from the use of alternative terms which on analysis, often prove to be identical to the traditional terms of reliability and validity" (see Rolfe, 2006 for more detail on this debate). Second, there were arguments about distinctive quality criteria for quantitative and qualitative research. Rolfe (2006) argued that the division between quantitative and qualitative research could be misleading. Citing Powers and Knapp (1990), Rolfe pointed out that the difference lies on "the epistemological or even ontological rather than methodological ground" (p.306). This argument was supported by Crotty (1998). Moreover, the methodological differences between qualitative and quantitative research are often confused as epistemological differences. "The quantitative/qualitative *methodological* distinction is often taken to be identical to positivist/interpretivist *epistemological* distinction" (Rolfe, 2006, p. 306, italics original).

To move away from the quantitative/qualitative trap, Creswell and Miller (2000) proposed a model assessing validity based on research paradigm and lens. However, Cho and Trent (2006) pointed out that Creswell and Miller's model is based upon the assumption that paradigms are distinctively different but in fact the differences are not always clear and they often overlap (Donmoyer, 2001). Again, as discussed earlier, different paradigms and lenses can be mixed under ontological or epistemological stance. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 14) called for a truce in the paradigm war and for researchers to embrace "methodological pluralism or eclecticism" to achieve breakthroughs in research. A paradigm-based model to assess validity can be restricting. Alternative is Seale's (1999) notion of validity that to achieve validity is to provide evidence in support of the key claims in research.

In a similar vein, Donmoyer (2001) proposed a framework to assess validity based on how research purpose and key research questions are achieved by providing relevant evidence (see Table 1, adopted from Cho and Trent, 2006, p. 326). Extending Donmoyer's (2001) framework, Cho and Trent (2006) developed a holistic model (see Figure 2) to accommodate different discourses and purposes of research by focusing on matters that are "specific to the problem/research" (p. 333). In this thesis, I follow Cho and Trent's framework to ensure validity of the current thesis.

To achieve validity, researchers routinely apply practical techniques, such as triangulation, audit trail, and member checking. Citing Maxwell (1996), Cho and Trent (2006) iterated that the above mentioned practical techniques are not magic wands that guarantee validity. However, the authors did not rule out employing these techniques that may be "necessary" although never "sufficient" (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 333). In the current thesis, the techniques regarded as tools are applied to achieve the special aims of a particular research project.

Table 1, Use of validity in five overarching purposes undergirding contemporary qualitative research

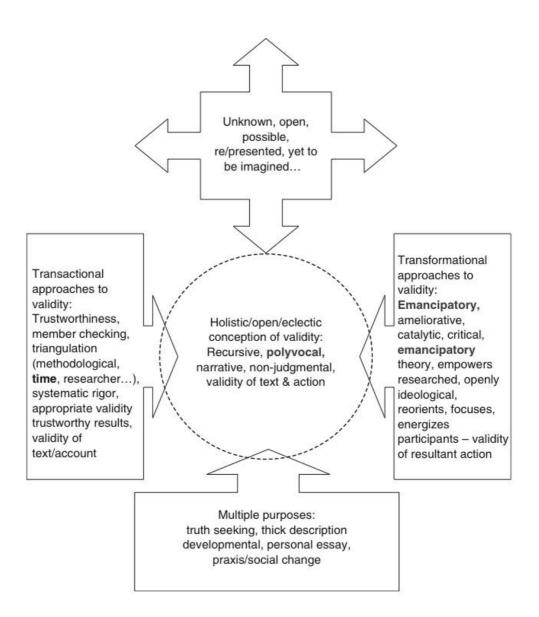| Purpose	Fundamental questions	Validity as a process	Major validity criteria
'Truth' seeking	What is the correct answer?	Process induction	Member check as technical; Causality-based triangulation
Thick description	How do the people under study interpret phenomena?	Holistic Prolong engagement	Triangulation, descriptive data; Accurate knowledge of daily life; Member check as recursive
Developmental	How does an organization change over time?	Categorical/back and forth	Rich archives reflecting history; Triangulation, member check as ongoing
Personal essay	What is the researcher's personal interpretation?	Reflexive/aesthetic	Self-assessment of experience; Public appeal of personal opinion of a situation
Praxis/social	How can we learn and change educators, organizations or both?	Inquiry with participants	Member check as reflexive; Critical reflexivity of self; Redefinition of the status quo

Figure 2, An alternative framework for understanding validity in qualitative research

The purposes of the current thesis fall into somewhere between the thick description, personal essay, and praxis/social in Donmoyer's (2001) model. But with Cho and Trent's (2006) extended framework, the different purposes are no longer discrete but

can be integrated. A main purpose of the current thesis is to make explicit the taken-for-granted values and norms. There are three levels of explicating meanings[28]:

1) The first level is similar to what Donmoyer (2001) described as "thick description". At this level, the aim is to make explicit the meanings constructed by the Chinese migrant mothers living in New Zealand. To achieve this goal, I adopted institutional ethnography's approach to collect detailed lived experiences of the participants. I used multiple interviews to ensure prolonged engagements, and used photos and other texts as stimulus to elicit the participants' detailed descriptions of their daily lives. At this stage, interview transcripts and translations were sent back for feedback and comments. In this case, member checking is to gain confidence (Geertz, 1973 cited in Cho & Trent, 2006) that descriptions did indeed record the meanings constructed by the participants. It is to create another interaction situation to allow communication between the researcher and the participants (Gray, 2003). Another purpose is to respect the participants' right to ethical consideration. At this stage, triangulation is to generate rich and holistic data. To obtain multiple sources of information I have recruited participants with diverse personal and family backgrounds to understand how different daily practices are coordinated (Smith, 1992).

2) The second level is similar to what Donmoyer (2001) defined as "personal essay". At this level, the participants' words are not just open for readers to interpret but the researcher's "intentional subjectivity" is made explicit. The purpose is to offer alternative explanations to the thick descriptions. The reader can then ponder questions such as "does the researchers' work lead me to see educational phenomena differently and to think of educational questions in different ways?" (Donmoyer, 2001, pp. 192-193). The aim is not to seek the "right answer" but rather alternative and useful explanations of the phenomena under study (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 331). At this level, reflexivity is emphasised. The objective world experienced by human beings including

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[28] The three levels are interrelated and interdependent rather than in a hierarchical order.

researchers is filtered by their viewpoints. Brewer (2000) defined reflexivity as:

> It requires critical attitude towards data, and recognition of the influence on the research of such factors as the location of the setting, the sensitivity of the topic and the nature of the social interaction between the researcher and researched (p.19)

Reflexivity does not mean merely excessive self-confession, but "*relevant* information" about researchers' positions is important (Wellington, 2000). In this thesis, I have explained my perspectives, my reasons for choosing the epistemological stance and my general role as a researcher as well as my more specific role during the interviews. How my position and perceptions influence the research outcome and interpretation are further scrutinised during the data analysis process.

3) At the third level, explicating meanings is concerned with the praxis/social change as described in Donmoyer's (2003) framework. Here, the focus goes beyond the participants' experiences or my personal interpretations. Based on the participants' accounts, I utilised Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus as well as the research literature to challenge the notions of ethnicity, motherhood, class, and early childhood. For the purpose of this thesis, at this level, a criterion of validity is "redefinition of the status quo" (Cho & Trent, 2006, p. 332). This is further demonstrated in the data analysis. The audit trail refers to the researcher's detailed documenting of the research process to ensure validity, to which I have provided detailed information of the research process. In this way, the research is open for readers' critique and scrutiny so that "claims are always subject to revision by new evidence" (Seale, 1999, p. 52). This is to acknowledge that validity is an on-going process rather than an end product.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have explained the epistemological stance and theoretical perspectives of this thesis. I have outlined the research context in terms of the particular research topic and my stance. The thesis is situated in a broad frame of social constructionism. I adopted a Bourdieuian theoretical framework and institutional ethnography as the research methodology. Eight recent skilled

immigrant mothers from China participated in this research and data were collected through fact-to-face interviews. Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data. I then defined validity and reliability of the current research in line with the epistemological stance and theoretical framework. This is the last chapter of part I. Part I is concerned with the theoretical aspects of the thesis while Part II, "Chinese skilled migrant mothers raising their children in New Zealand", comprises four chapters of findings and discussions of the participants' mothering experiences.

Part II

Chinese Skilled Migrant Mothers Raising Their Children in New Zealand

Preamble

Part two of this thesis presents research findings and discussions. In each chapter, the findings and discussions are integrated. A possible danger of combining findings and discussion could be that the separation of "fact" from "interpretations and discussions" might not be clear enough. However, I have taken the epistemological stand that the "findings" are always found through a certain lens. Putting the findings alongside the discussions is to make explicit what lens I used to collect and interpret data.

I utilise Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field and habitus to analyse the data. A review of the existing research literature indicated prolific applications of Bourdieu's concept of social and cultural capital (see Dika & Singh, 2002; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Portes, 1998), which have caused theoretical confusion and ambiguity. In the current research, I have proposed to follow Lareau and colleagues' (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) suggestions to define social and cultural capital as "evaluative norms" that serve for institutions to exclude families from subordinate social groups (p. 589). While Lareau and Weininger called for researchers to focus on how dominant norms were imposed, in the current research project, my analyses emphasise how the migrant mothers interpret the various norms of the mainstream society as well as their native country. There are always two sets of norms intertwined in the migrants' daily lives. Adopting the above mentioned approach as an analytic tool, I study the norms of behaviours, attitudes, preferences, goods and so on, and examine how these norms served as "symbolic markers" to exclude or include people in terms of their access (or non-access) to various forms of capital and all benefits or disadvantages associated with the inclusion or exclusion.

Part two comprises four chapters and provides detailed information about how migrant mothers raised their young children in New Zealand. Chapter 5, "Transnationalism, what Is It Really?" outlines the migrant mothers' accounts of their reasons for migration, their general impressions of living in New Zealand and their sense of belonging. The mothers described the invisible ethnic divides in their daily lives and the difficulties breaking into mainstream social and cultural circles. While "fitting in" was difficult, returning to their native home with children in tow was not easy either. The migrant mothers explained that because of the different

educational systems in New Zealand and China, it was not easy to move their children back to China after years of living in New Zealand. Therefore frequent flying between the two countries seemed to be an obvious solution to maintain ties in both their adopted and native counties. For some, frequent flying was not affordable because of the high cost of time and money.

Chapter 5 presents the "scene" of the rest of the findings. Bourdieu (1989a) defined the field as an arena of social interactions and power struggles. Chapter 5 describes the migrant mothers' such an arena in a broad sense.

The other three chapters show how the migrant mothers deployed a range of strategies to generate social and cultural capital for their children in relation to the mainstream centre, at home and within the family. The findings illustrate that the migrant mothers are aware of the two different cultural norms of New Zealand and China and how the values of these two cultural capitals change in different fields. They all realised that because they were in New Zealand, they had to follow various mainstream norms. However, the process was complex and dynamic. The mothers deployed various strategies to maximise benefits for their children. These ranged from willingly embracing and pursuing to rejecting, from reluctantly following to utilising, from praising to critiquing the various mainstream norms. The findings of this research complicated previous research conclusions (i.e. Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) that non-dominant families were disadvantaged simply because the families could not provide their children with access to the dominant social and cultural capital. The thesis challenges the notion that social and cultural reproduction was linear, and thus supplements other researchers' work (i.e. Carter, 2003; McKeever & Miller, 2004; Reay, 1997; Young, 1999) in concluding that the process of social and cultural reproduction was complex and dynamic.

Chapter 5   Transnationalism: What Is It Really?

5.1   Introduction

Bourdieu (1989) defined "field" as networks of social and power relations with its distinct sets of beliefs and values. It follows that, China and New Zealand can be conceptualised as two fields where Chinese skilled migrant mothers' lives are emplaced. This chapter describes and discusses how the participants' personal experiences were situated and ingrained in the fields and the relation between fields. The first section "Big OE, but a different style" describes the participants' reasons for migration. The second section, "Birds of a different feather?" explains the migrant families' social circles and the social environment the families provided for their children. The third section, "Where do we belong?" investigates what transnationalism means for these migrant families.

5.2   Big OE, But a Different Style

In New Zealand, the phenomenon that young people having overseas experiences is normally known as the big OE (overseas experiences). Globally, in the year 2000, 200 million people lived in countries other than their birth countries (OECD, 2008a). Skilled Chinese migrants moving to New Zealand is a part of this global trend of migration. However, the participants in this project constitute this trend with their diverse personal experiences and reasons that were particularly ingrained with the localised socio-political and economic situation in both China and New Zealand, as well as the relation between the two countries.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the 1980s and 1990s was a time when China was going through economic reform, and for the first time since 1949, travel abroad for personal purposes became possible. In the 1990s, there was a "going abroad fever" particularly among university students (Zhao, 1996). One of the participants, Alison described to me her personal life situated within the broader context of that time:

> (Going abroad) was a trend, or a habit. 50 percent of my former classmates (from the university) were in America, probably another ten percent in Europe. Not many actually stayed in China (after graduation). 'Going abroad' was something kind of natural (for young university graduates) to do. Everybody, at some stage, would go overseas. Just want to go out and have a look anyway. I wasn't particularly keen because I was quite happy with the life in China. But my husband was very keen about this idea. He has always followed the trend.

He took TOEFL, GRE, and applied to study in America, and then the door was closed[29]. So we stayed. Then there was such an opportunity that you could emigrate and no need for a student visa.

Alison graduated with a masters' from a prestigious university in China, with a strong emphasis on science and technology. She explained:

In America, not many people would choose those majors, such as chemistry, physics. So (if you study those majors) it is very easy to go abroad. If you apply for a school, they would look at your record, and you've got such very good (academic) results, and good scores in TOFEL and GRE. Of course they would admit you. 'Cos it was impossible to have domestic students (who were willing to study those majors). They had funding as well. So going abroad was just very natural to do.

The "going abroad fever" spread like an epidemic among young university graduates who shared information about emigration. The "going broad fever" started when university students during the 1980s and 1990s rushed overseas, mostly to North America to study. The subjects these young people chose largely depended on the local market demands of the receiving country. Later emigrating from China with a resident's visa became an available path to continue the trend.

Lan came to New Zealand by herself. She later met and married her husband and had two children in Auckland. In an email to me, she wrote (in English):

I got the information (about immigration to New Zealand) from a friend and made the decision all by myself 'cos I was single at that time. The reason I came to NZ was quite simple. I just wanted to experience a different lifestyle and broaden my horizon, if possible tried to do some trade between two countries. But that is only a dream now. Busy with two kids and daily chores, struggling with language and culture shock, that is life as you know.

Polly and her husband thought they would come to New Zealand to further their study first. But instead her husband found a job in Auckland shortly after they arrived. Polly then gave birth to their two sons in Auckland. Cathy and her husband decided to emigrate from China for a new life. Before emigration, Cathy worked as a lobby manager in a four-star hotel and her husband was self-employed. Life was comfortable but they felt it was static. Cathy said:

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[29] After 1989, the Chinese Government tightened the controls on students applying to study overseas.

At that time, I thought I was unlikely to change jobs or have opportunities for promotion. You feel you can see your future, it was all known. My husband's business was already developed to an extent that it was difficult to have any further development. At that time, people always thought that there were more opportunities overseas.

Therefore, Cathy resigned from her job and her husband closed down the business. The couple sold one of their apartments before coming to Auckland.

We were not like some other people, who just came here and stayed for a couple of days then returned. We had two apartments back at home. We sold one and kept the smaller one. But later we sold that one as well. When we came here, we decided to live here permanently.

Anna came to New Zealand for a different reason. She and her then husband already had a daughter. China's one child policy meant the couple could not have another child. Anna's husband and his family wanted to have a son. This is a Chinese traditional idea, to have a male heir to carry the family name. Emigrating from China was a way to have another child. So Anna came to New Zealand as a principal applicant. The original plan was that eventually her husband would join Anna, their daughter and the unborn baby. But the husband changed his mind and had never come. Anna wrote to me in English:

The reason that I came to NZ was that my ex and his family wanted to have a boy with his blood (the typical Chinese concept!). I came to NZ by myself in Dec. 2000, and helped him to apply for immigration at the same time. It was approved but he gave up. He promised to visit us and supported us financially, but has never done so! Feeling that I was manipulated, I initiated the divorce.

Although skilled migrants in New Zealand can be viewed as a part of the global migration trend where there has seen an increase of skilled migrants moving to live in developed countries (OECD, 2008a), individual migrants' reasons to immigrate to New Zealand were consistent with the popular image of New Zealand as an idyllic destination. According to Statistics New Zealand's (2008, p.1) longitudinal immigration survey, the three most frequently cited reasons for choosing New Zealand as a destination are: relaxed "lifestyle (44.1 percent)", "green environment (39.6 percent)", and "desire for a better future for their children (39 percent)". An earlier survey by Friesen and Ip (1997) showed that Chinese migrants in Auckland cited better education for their children as a reason for coming to New Zealand.

Emma's husband came to New Zealand under the points system in 1995. He met Emma in 2000 during a visit back to China, and they were soon married. In 2001 when Emma was pregnant, her husband believed that New Zealand was better for the mother and child. So Emma came to Auckland. The couple's idea about immigrating to New Zealand was similar to what Alison said: it was just the time when almost all educated young people wanted to go overseas. Emma said that her husband emphasised that coming to New Zealand was good for the children because of a more relaxed lifestyle. [30]

Having family members already living in New Zealand was another reason for immigration. Eligible applicants for immigration under the skilled migrant category normally gain extra points by having close family members already living in New Zealand (see Immigration New Zealand, 2007). Gillian's older sister, her only sibling, and her parents were already in New Zealand when Gillian, her husband, and their eight-year-old son came. Gillian said that her parents wanted her family to come to New Zealand:

> My parents insisted that I come over. The work unit (where I worked) was becoming less and less productive. It was an industrial enterprise[31], you know.

The factory eventually went bankrupt. Gillian said both she and her husband, thought that, at least, living in New Zealand was better for their children: schooling was more relaxed compared with the Chinese educational system. Gillian said: "Of course, he (her son) likes it here". Like Gillian, Fang had families in Auckland before she and her husband emigrated from China.

Ip (2003) likened the new Chinese skilled migrants' experiences to the traditional big OE of young Kiwis. Traditionally the big OE for young Kiwis meant going to work

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[30] All participants said living in New Zealand was good for their children even though it was not the original reason for migration. "Good" also referred to a more relaxed approach to education, which is consistent with the nation's image as a green and relaxed country. This information was discussed in more detail later.

[31] With the economic reforms, China's economy shifted from state control to open market. Less productive state-owned enterprises went bankrupt or were taken over by private or more efficient state-owned enterprises. In general, industrial enterprises were hit harder by this reform and were more likely to face bankruptcy. For more detail, see Solinger (1993) and Zheng (2000).

in the UK. As Great Britain's former colony, New Zealand had many links or strived to maintain colonial connections with "the mother land" (Belich, 2001). New Zealand has also been a popular destination for British migrants. In 2005, the UK was the largest single source country of immigration, making up 40 percent of the skilled category and 18 percent of the family reunion category (Department of Labour, 2005a, p. 16). However, historically, Chinese ethnics were excluded from the New Zealand dream (Ip, 2003). Although Chinese migrants shared with many young New Zealanders a similar dream of a big OE (Ip, 2003), Chinese migrants coming from China to New Zealand is quite different from the Kiwis' big OE to the UK or the British coming to New Zealand. The big OE would be of a different style for Chinese migrants.

The new wave of skilled migration was situated in a wider context where China relaxed its control over international migration and overseas travel at a time when New Zealand implemented its new immigration policy. Despite citing slightly different reasons for coming to New Zealand, all participants were looking for an alternative way of living and hoping for a better future for their children. One issue that the migrants faced after uprooting from their native land was adapting to the new environments. Making friends and socialising was frequently mentioned as important for themselves as well as for their children. The next section presents information about the migrant families' social circles and networks in New Zealand.

5.3 Birds of a Different Feather?

McPherson and colleagues (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001) used the term "homophily" to describe the inclination people have to group together with those who are similar to them. Homophily is the nature of human networks, with "race and ethnicity" being the "biggest divides" (p. 420). The participants in the current study said that their family friends were all ethnic Chinese. They described invisible barriers for new Chinese migrants to break into mainstream English-speaking social circles.

For a start, residential locations are separated by social class and/or ethnicities. But when the physical boundary is overcome, the social divide is not easy to break through. Fang lived in a largely white middle class suburb. She said that most of their neighbours were white with a few Indians. But they were not socialising with

the neighbours except for a brief greeting if they met on the road. Fang said, "Our friends are all Chinese. My husband's colleagues are Chinese too." Lan said that if there were some outings or activities at the weekends, she normally went out with her two daughters together with other Chinese mothers who had children of a similar age.

Alison had brought her daughter to the playcentre. She was often the only Chinese mother in the playcentre, and said most new Chinese migrant mothers were either busy working or studying. There had been two new migrant mothers in the playcentre but they soon left because they could not break into the social circle of the playcentre mothers. Besides, they had to work for a living. She was the only Chinese ethnic who stayed the longest:

> Except for Chinese, I didn't make friends with other parents (at the playcentre). Can't have very deep friendship (with non-Chinese parents). It was not like visiting each other's home, unless there were some group activities. Then I could go to their home. It was not like if the children wanted to play with each other, then she came to my home or I went to her home. It seemed that we could not reach that level. But this could happen with Chinese. Last time, I mentioned the mother who came (to New Zealand) when she was eighteen. Her English is very good. But there is a sense of being Chinese. I would visit her home and she would come over to mine.

When they were able to physically enter New Zealand, Chinese migrants did not automatically enter the cultural field of New Zealand. A field is an arena of power and social relations. A cultural field generates norms to execute exclusions and inclusions (Lareau, 1987, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The norms determine what counts as valuable capital and how it is distributed (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002). The field conditions how individuals perceive their social reality and that conditioning starts very early in life (Bourdieu, 1989a). People start to observe the unspoken rules or the feel of the game from a very young age, and eventually the rules are internalised as habitus.

Alison observed that this "birds of a feather" phenomenon started in very young children:

> If I was the "parent help"[32] (in my daughter's kindergarten), those Chinese children would come to me, pulling my shirt: "Auntie[33], what is this? Auntie, what is that?" They were very willing to talk to me. Whenever there was something, they would rush to share with me.

Those Pakeha children would follow a Pakeha "parent help," Alison concluded. Fang had similar observations. She noticed that although different ethnic children often played together, Chinese children tended to make friends with Chinese children. Fang's son had just started school. Fang said, when she asked who his best friends were, the ones he named were all Chinese.

The divides were invisible. Nonetheless, children seemed to be able to grasp all those implicit clues through social interactions. Emma said that her daughter once came home and told her: "You are not allowed to speak Chinese in the (early childhood) centre." Soon after her daughter had started school, the little girl came back with another discovery: her daughter said that another child in her class told her: "Black hair is ugly." Children noticed the differences between home and school. The children also seemed to understand the norms and requirements of the two different settings. Lan said her younger daughter's centre once held a "breakfast in pyjamas" activity. Children were asked to wear pyjamas to go to the centre in the morning and eat a healthy breakfast. Lan said her daughter did not really have typical pyjamas as seen in the local shops, so she suggested that her daughter go to the centre in a traditional Chinese gown. But the little girl said no, because that did not count as pyjamas.

Language barriers serve as a very obvious explanation for this "Chinese-mix-with-Chinese" situation. Fang said the ethnic divides were due to language barriers: "You see, Japanese mix with Japanese, Chinese with Chinese, Korea with Korea, it is all because of the language." Alison also mentioned language barriers for not being able to make friends with the Pakeha parents. Later in the interview, Alison said although

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[32] In New Zealand, kindergartens have a tradition of inviting parents to work there voluntarily. Colloquially, it is usually called "parent help".

[33] In Chinese custom, children call non-family adults aunties or uncles.

she had "deep" friendship only with Chinese, she became very good friends with two Japanese mothers. So I commented:

> You spoke English to each other (with the Japanese mothers). So speaking (different) native languages should not be a barrier (for making friends).

Alison paused for a second and said:

> So it has something to do with the cultural backgrounds. Is it something to do with skin colours? Anyway, I was very comfortable with these two parents. Whenever there was a meeting, we would go together. We did cooking together. I made dumplings and spring rolls for them.

Similar skin colours and cultural backgrounds make it easier for people to communicate. Alison gave me a plausible explanation. However, she also mentioned that she and her daughter were able to make friends with a mother and son from Egypt. I asked Alison why. She said maybe they were in a similar social position as new migrants.

An aspect of linguistic competence refers to the mastering of pure linguistic techniques such as such as grammars and vocabularies. Bourdieu (1992) pointed out that linguistic situation is embedded in the wider socio-political structure. Bourdieu defined languages as linguistic capital, a form of cultural capital. The cultural elements of linguistic competence include mastering a particular accent, understanding the slang, and having knowledge of socially acceptable and cultural specific ways of communication (Ho, 2004). According to Bourdieu (1984; 1989a), to acquire cultural capital, one needs to be accepted in the relevant cultural field preferably at a very young age because cultural capital is acquired through daily social interactions. Ho (2004) argued that most new Chinese migrants in Australia might never able to reach the cultural specific linguistic competence. This was because the Chinese migrants who had learned English at school in China (rather than in the cultural field of Australia) would never posses the *natural ease* with English language. The Chinese migrants would not have "the self-certainty which accompanies the certainty of possessing legitimacy, and the ease which is the touchstone of excellence" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 66).

The "linguistic capital" phenomenon that indicates power relation is called "language or cultural barriers" or lack of "English proficiency" in people's everyday

vocabulary. These terms are often ambiguous because they mingle the cultural and linguistic elements together. This ambiguity neutralises linguistic situations. During the interviews, I tried to encourage the participants to clarify this ambiguity. Fang had mentioned earlier in the interview that young Chinese children tended to play with each other rather than mixing with children of other ethnicities. I thought Fang's statement hinted of a very good example of exclusion and inclusion in a certain field based on whether one possesses the legitimate cultural capital rather than because of the language skills *per se*. So I asked Fang why young Chinese children who had no problem with English still tended to play with children of the same ethnicity. Fang paused for a few seconds and explained:

> Maybe they (the children) notice the differences, looks are different, different customs, and, Chinese children are shyer, not like *Yang Ren*[34] children.

Fang thought there were fewer barriers among children, although it was different for adults. However, she wondered, the adults' behaviour influenced the children:

> Adults, if your (English) language is not that good, it is very difficult to communicate with *Yang Ren*. I think, maybe, adults' (behaviours) contribute to it. If (Chinese) adults' (English) language is good, and are able to communicate with other parents, visit each other during the weekends, maybe the children could be better (mixing together).

In Fang's observations, even though the young Chinese children were able to master the language skills with both linguistic and cultural competence, the sense of being different in the mainstream society and "the family influence" could prevent the children from socialising with *Yang Ren*.

Even when Chinese children mixed well with *Yang Ren* children, the divide still existed. Alison said her eleven-year-old son's best friends were *Yang Ren*. But he seldom invited them to his home. Thinking of Fang's comments that children's

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[34] *Yang Ren* (洋人) in Chinese refers to non-Chinese. "*Yang*" means ocean and "*Ren*" means person/people. China is on the mainland and foreigners come from the other sides of the ocean. So *Yang Ren* refers to people from outside of the mainland. In this project, the participants used *Yang Ren* to refer to Europeans or Pakehas. If they mentioned other non-Chinese ethnics, they would refer more specifically to Japanese, Pacific Islanders, or Maori and so on. In this thesis, I used "*Yang Ren*" directly to honour this complex context of the words.

behaviours were influenced by their parents, I asked Alison if she thought this situation might have something to do with the parents' relationship. She said:

> Yes, I have always thought that because our relationship with the (Chinese) children's parents, they brought their children to our place. They would feel more comfortable, not that nervous. So he was willing to invite those Chinese children. He did invite some *Yang Ren* children home. But he was quite nervous. He was always afraid that they could laugh at him, because of this and that Chinese custom. Say, we invited *Yang Ren* children for dinner, he was always very worried and asked: "Are you OK with this? Do you like it?" He was really worried about these things. Also, we are the new immigrants and financially are not better off than those *Yang Ren*. This area where we are living is generally quite affluent. He would compare our home with others', and felt a bit inferior … He would tell me that their (his *Rang Ren* friends') houses have two levels, even three or four lounges, the TV set is enormous … like this, he would talk about these things.

I asked about their Chinese friends' situations. Alison continued:

> most Chinese families are in a similar situation as us. There are not many differences so it is easy to communicate. But he does not have problems communicating with others at school.

I asked: "Did they (her son's friends) say they didn't want to come to your home?"

> No, they didn't. They always call and chat on the phone with my son. But he (her son) never invites them to come over. In this respect, I have always thought that he can't mix—he does not really merge into the Kiwi social circle. But as friends, he plays with them very well at school.

According to Alison's narrative, the sense of being "different" was not just the skin colour, different cultural practices and customs but also the family living or economic condition that was often associated with social status and class. The mothers attributed this situation to family influence. But the mothers did not think children from the dominant group actively excluded their children. In fact, according to Alison's account, her son's *Yang Ren* friends were more than friendly to her son. My inference is that the rules of the game were never spoken but interpreted and internalised. "The relation of ruling" is concerted and coordinated through people's ordinary activities (Smith, 1990, p. 14). Alison's son displayed a sense of difference that is similar to "a sense of constraint" in working class children (Lareau, 2003). To me, Alison's son was comfortable socialising with his *Yang Ren* friends but he felt uncertain about bringing his migrant families into his social circle with *Yang Ren*

children and families. The borders of the fields were invisible, nevertheless clearly existed in these migrants' everyday lives.

When the adults migrated, they left their social networks behind. New migrants often felt isolated particularly if they were not working or studying. Emma said:

> When I first arrived, I wasn't studying, so didn't have much contact with the society. Stayed home most of the time. It was not until 2002 and 2003 when I started studying that I started to have contacts of the outside world.

For the older generation, the situation could be more difficult. Alison's parents-in-law came to Auckland and planned to help her after childbirth. But they felt so lonely that they left before the grandchild was born. Fang's mother was living with Fang's family. Fang said her mother often did some gardening and learned English at the local community centre. The older generation's ties with their homeland were important for their wellbeing. Fang said her mother visited China once a year. Emma talked about the experience of her mother-in-law:

> She's got some friends from China. Her contacts (with the outside world) are far less frequent (than mine), 'cos she doesn't drive, (she can't go out). She can only make some phone calls. During the day, she can only chat with friends on the phone.

But even Chinese friends did not meet very often. Fang said that during the weekends, when her husband had a day off, they would have some family outings. I asked Fang if the family went out with other friends or by themselves. Fang said,

> We don't often go with other friends because some friends don't have time. Some, the children might not be able to play together, could be that their children are older (than our children) so can't play together.

Polly said her friends were all Chinese, and the Chinese friends were all busy:

> …Everybody is busy, not only all are studying, going to class, working, but also we all have very young babies (apart from having an older child). We are all busy, occasionally (we meet). Now my holiday is different from theirs. I only have one week break. When they are having the break, I am busy. When I am free (from study), they are busy. So we hardly see each other.

The participants conceded that their family friends were all Chinese. As an ethnic minority in Auckland, the Chinese community was small and meetings with friends were not as frequent as in China. This situation echoed Li's (2002) research findings

of new Chinese migrant families in Canada. One of her participants, a father was concerned that because the family could not break into the mainstream social circle and the local Chinese network was restricted, his child would be disadvantaged as a result of this—the child would not acquire proper cultural capital to be accepted into either the mainstream society or the wider Chinese community. The participants' accounts in the current project affirmed Bourdieu's argument that to acquire cultural and social capital that is specific to a field, one needs to be living in the particular field.

Recent Chinese migrants have been described as transnational, and transnationalism is seen as a survival strategy. The phenomenon of new migrants frequently flying across the Pacific between New Zealand and Asia was "one of the most noticeable features" (Ip, 2003, p. 351). Transnationalism means going beyond the conventional definition of national boundaries. When they crossed national borders, in Bourdieu's (1989) term, the migrants entered a different network of power and social relations. The boundaries that defined the fields were both physical as well as socio-psychological. The participants' narratives showed that when the Chinese migrants physically left China, they met and made friends with Chinese in Auckland. Although they were physically living in New Zealand, the migrants found it impossible to break into the local socio-cultural field. The mothers, however, believed that the next generation would have better chance of integrating into the mainstream society. The next section takes a closer look at what transnationalism meant in these migrants' daily lives.

5.4 Where Do We Belong?

Compared to the locals, new Asian migrants flew more frequently across the Pacific Ocean between Asia and New Zealand. "Socially, the transnational movements of the new migrants have generated negative comments about their perceived 'lack of commitment to New Zealand'" (Ip, 2003, p. 351). Although Asian migrants made more frequent short-term departures, it was the British migrants who were more transient, with half of them eventually returning to Britain. Ip (2003) used the statistics to argue that Asian migrants were no less loyal to New Zealand than the British while the former were singled out. The statistics might also prove the fact that

it was easier for the British migrants to move more freely between New Zealand and Great Britain than the Chinese to move between New Zealand and China.

Fang's words summarised the lives in Auckland for many skilled migrants from China:

> Our friends in China, they have a good life, they have their own cars and apartments. Everything is very good. But they want to come to New Zealand, and yet can't meet the requirement. It is due to the language. In most cases, it is because of the language. His (her husband's) former classmates, wanted to come. But can't. It was the language, can't pass the test. It is difficult, can't pass the ESL test … Even they could pass the test, life here would still be very difficult (for them). They are already in their 30's or 40's. If they come over, they have to start over again. Study, or work, what they can get is those very low paid, basic jobs. It is very tiring. They already have a very good foundation back at home. Coming over here, they have to start over all again. It is not very realistic.

According to the New Zealand government's survey (Department of Labour, 2005b), compared to their British counterparts, Asian skilled migrants in New Zealand had a higher unemployment rate. Asian skilled migrants who were working tended to earn less than their British counterparts. When the Chinese skilled migrants arrived in New Zealand, they faced difficulties in transferring their social and cultural capital into employment. This situation was similar in other Western countries (e.g. Ho, 2004; Li, 2001).

Return migration and multidirectional migration, although never new, has been one of the features of the new migration globally (Ip, 2003). Although returning to China remains an option, for some Chinese migrant families with young children, return migration is not always easy, and neither is the frequent flying between the two countries.

Alison was a senior engineer in China. She has a masters' of science, majoring in chemistry from a prestigious university in China. Alison said the job market of her profession is very limited in New Zealand. After two years in New Zealand, she actually went back to China with her two children while her husband was studying in Auckland. She went back to work for her previous employer. Alison said that was the place where her skills and experiences were recognised and utilised. Alison's son was born in China and came to New Zealand at the age of five. After two years in New Zealand, Alison's son returned to China at the age of seven, the age when most

children start primary school in China. So Alison sent her son to a local top school. She said:

> He forgot about his Chinese. The Chinese educational system is so different (from New Zealand education). Every day, (he) carried a big schoolbag. A lot of stuff in the bag. At the beginning, I was very pleased. "Oh, you finally can learn so many things. You are so lucky." There were lessons on music, Chinese brush calligraphy; there were so many lessons. Every day, the timetable was full. "Oh," I said, "you are really lucky". At the beginning he was fine, the first two months. The third month, he rebelled. He said, "I made such an effort, I wrote my Chinese very well. But just the last full stop[35], I used a dot rather than a circle. Then the teacher told me off, she didn't give me an 'excellent'. Moreover, she criticised me. I don't want to go to school here".

Her son complained that the classmates were "mean" because his Chinese was not good enough. Her son finally refused to go to school. She thought maybe because her husband was still in New Zealand, her son thought that going back to New Zealand was an option. If the adults had insisted, her son would eventually go to school. However, Alison did not always agree with the Chinese educational system. So after three and half months in China, Alison and her two children returned to Auckland.

Alison told me that the Chinese policy towards returning Chinese migrants also made it harder for people to return. Before leaving China, Alison and her husband had to resign from work. Although her daughter was born in Auckland, when she returned with the children, she broke the law of one-child policy. Alison was still holding a Chinese passport at that time. Strictly speaking, she was still a Chinese citizen. Fortunately, the company she worked for was willing to pay the fine to have her back. Alison said although more recently China changed its policies to encourage migrants returning to work and live in China, she did not want to move again. "Too much trouble" she said.

Even though there were no legal barriers for migrants to move back to China, all participants said that it was not easy to move around frequently with young children in tow. Emma said:

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[35] In Chinese writing, full stop is a small circle "。".

> Our age, our family, a family with two children, it is not easy (for us) to go back to China as one might imagine. You have managed to have a life, an average life here. But you go back to China again; it is hard to predict what kind of life you will have.

Emma said because she now had a decent permanent job here, they would not return to China for sure. Without the job, life could be less certain:

> If I didn't have the job, it could be quite miserable. I won't be able to make up my mind whether to go or stay. I did have a job at that time. Yes, a job. But (it was) temporary, and it was not stable.

Lan took her two daughters back to China shortly after the birth of her second daughter. She needed a break. She said at least she could have some decent sleep back in China[36]. In Auckland, housework, gardening and working plus two children under two, she was sleep-deprived. The mother and daughters had been in China for almost two years and came back to Auckland when Lan's older daughter started school. Although Lan's husband wanted the two girls to stay in China, Lan said permanently resettling in China was not easy either. The best way could be taking the girls back to China during New Zealand's long summer holiday:

> From November until February the next year, I want to take her (the older daughter) back to China to have a look. If possible, I would let her experience the education in China. The summer holiday (in New Zealand) is quite long. That's what I thought. Because my working hours are flexible, we can go back (to China) for quite a long period of time.

Lan wanted her two daughters, particularly the older one, who had started school in New Zealand to receive education both in New Zealand and China. The only feasible way to achieve this goal is to live in China during the long New Zealand summer school holiday. Compared to return migration, making frequent short-term trips back to China seems more realistic for Lan to bring up her daughter with a bilingual education.

Nevertheless, this plan was not without cost and did not work for everyone. Gillian said that frequent flying between New Zealand and China required time and money

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[36] In China, Lan's mother was helping with the childcare and they were able to hire a domestic helper.

that the family could not afford. Unlike Lan who worked as an interpreter on casual contracts, which allowed flexible working hours; Gillian and her husband's fulltime work commitment did not allow long holidays that always coincided with their children's school holidays. Frequent air travels involve financial costs. Anna had not been back to China since the birth of her second child. She said she did not have the money.

For those whose extended families were in New Zealand, visits to China were far less frequent. Fang's family were all in Auckland so it was unlikely that they would go back to China. Fang said, besides the children might not be used to the life there. At the time of interview, Fang had been in New Zealand for more than seven years during which she and her two children visited China only once. Gillian's family were all in Auckland. Since arriving in New Zealand, they had not returned to China for a visit. The family did not have a plan to go back to China for a visit in the near future. They were definitely not returning to China. Gillian said:

> Just like my husband had said, we had never planned to go back to China. Besides, with children, it is difficult, schooling and *Hukou* [37]… we were so determined, and made such a sacrifice (to come to Auckland).

Cathy and her husband also came to New Zealand with the same degree of determination and sacrifice. But after being in Auckland for six years, the couple decided to return to China. As mentioned earlier, the couple had sold their two apartments in China and resigned from their work. Their original plan was that Cathy would work while her husband was studying for a New Zealand qualification. Then her husband would have a better job with a local qualification, and Cathy would go to university to gain a local qualification. Eventually the couple would establish new careers here and provide a better future for their son. But things did not work out the way they had planned. She had been working but could not have a job where she

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[37] *Hukou* refers to China's household registration system. It started in the 1950s although its roots could be traced back to the feudal Chinese administration system. Urban dwellings had urban household registration, which entitled them to governmental ratio/provision of food, medical care and public education. After the 1980s there was a series reform of *Hukou*. However, there are still many restrictions. Without a local Hukou, one is not able to access public education and other services. By law, Chinese migrants who have overseas residence permits have to have their *Hukou* cancelled (See Chen & Selden, 1994; Solinger, 1999; Wu & Treiman, 2007, for more detail about the *Hukou* system).

could utilise her past experiences or qualification. She thought that working at the minimum wage should not be the purpose of migration. So she opened a small retail shop:

> That shop, I was very inexperienced at that time, it was not a very good location. The business was very bad. I had to rely on myself and work on it slowly. My husband didn't like the idea of opening a shop. I felt really tired. Besides, the public security was terrible. There were thieves and robberies. The police came but didn't care. I felt quite sad.

I asked her if there was racism. Cathy said, yes, of course. She continued:

> The police came. Even when the thief was caught with the loot, I said he was the thief. Police said, pointing his finger to my nose: "Stop screaming", then he said: "Whether he is the thief or not, whether he has stolen anything, you can't say that. I can't say that either. Only the judge can decide." At that time, I made up my mind to go back to China. There is racism. But, well, when I was in the hospital (giving birth), all the doctors and nurses were very nice. I had been treated very well. But the police here were terrible.

Even though the participants had talked about difficulties entering New Zealand mainstream society, none of them had attributed this to the mainstream society's deliberate exclusion. So I asked Cathy if she perceived the police's action as exclusion based on race. Cathy said yes but quickly countered her own statement by mentioning the friendly treatment she had received in the hospital. I inferred that Cathy wanted to believe that New Zealand was an egalitarian country. Despite their own experiences, the participants believed their children would have better opportunities being accepted into the mainstream society.

All other participants believed their children would have better opportunities than their parents in New Zealand, even though moving to New Zealand might not be the best choice for the adults. Alison said:

> It's good for my daughter and my son as well. But for us, it seems like a sudden change in a chain. The DNA was originally adapted to that environment, then (has to change) to adapt to this environment. It is a setback to the body. No matter biologically or psychologically, it is stressful. It is not good for the first generation of migrants. It is better for the second and third generations. I didn't have hay fever before, now I have hay fever, and rheumatism, and maybe a mild depression as well.

Alison thought that parents' experiences would impact on the next generation:

> His father had encountered some setbacks when looking for jobs, and his mother, had a very good profession, and then had to gradually give up something, he (Alison's son) knew about the sacrifice. Adults would talk about this. We never talked to him about this. But he would have overheard the conversations. He might feel the pain of his previous generation. (That is why) he always wants to be better than others. In this respect, we would have given him some stress. Other than this, his life is pretty carefree.

Nevertheless, Cathy and her husband decided to go back to China. Although returning to her birth country, Cathy said things would not be that easy. So she sent her husband back to China first:

> I wanted him (her husband) to go back first, because he can make arrangements for our daily living, and find a stable job. Then we can have a stable life. Otherwise, we have to pay for everything from the saving. It can be more difficult. Migrating once again back to (where we were from). Maybe, this time is more difficult than the first time.

The participants believed that transnationalism provided them with new opportunities and possibilities, particularly a "better" future for the next generation. Transnationalism also brought about constraints and dilemmas. Although modern telecommunication and air travel are so advanced that they make the physical distance look much shorter than it actually is, the physical boundaries are still very acute in these participants' lives. The Pacific Ocean still divides their birth country and the adopted country where they want to bring up their young families. Within different borders, there are different ways of living. The participants could not always bring these two ways of living together.

5.5 Summary

For the new migrant families, leaving their home meant leaving their established social network behind. New migrants' social circles were homogenous because of the invisible ethnic divide. Their social network was further restricted due to the small Chinese community and the lack of time to associate when new migrants were busying re-establishing their lives through working and studying. For those who stayed home, the social network was further restricted because there were fewer channels to meet and make friends. For grandparents, the situation was worse because they were less mobile and the cultural and language barriers were more severe. This situation seemed very objective and common as described by the age-old saying that "birds of a feather flock together". The migrant mothers also noticed

the family influence on their children's socialising patterns and social circles. The participants all understood that a seemingly harmless and "natural" "birds-of-a feather" phenomenon meant that their children would not able to gain access to the cultural field of the mainstream and consequently denied access to the cultural and social capital that would be vital for a better future in New Zealand. The participants cited socialising and learning English and the Kiwi culture as one of the most important reasons for sending their children to mainstream early childhood centres in New Zealand. For some participants, even though grandparents were available to help with childcare, early childhood centres offered a social and learning environment that home could not provide. The next chapter discusses these issues in more detail.

Chapter 6 The Silent Partners?

6.1 Introduction

Pence and Goelman (1987) used the term "silent partners" to describe the lack of parents' voices in research literature. Reay (1999) used the phrase "a silent majority" to describe the silence of gendered parenting in the literature. She iterated that while mothers were the primary caregivers who were responsible for their young children's day-to-day lives, the gender role and the mothers' contributions were silenced by the gender-neutral term "parents". This chapter aims to make visible the migrant mothers' work in relation to their children's early childhood education. In the current project, the participants were generally quiet in their direct contacts with mainstream childcare centres. Although they did not try to have their voice heard in mainstream education, the migrant mothers deployed a range of strategies to provide what they perceived as the best education and care for their children. Underneath the "silence", the migrant mothers were nevertheless proactively involved with their children's education outside of home. This chapter presents detailed information in four main areas in order to understand the migrant mothers' experiences of mainstream early childhood services in New Zealand: 1) "Our choices: diversity, accessibility, affordability and quality" describes the mothers' decisions to use a particular early childhood service; 2) "Daily communication and dealing with concerns" recounts the daily communication patterns between home and centre; 3)"The Portfolio: a critique" presents participants' critiques of their children's portfolios; and 4)"Are they playing or learning?" reports the participants' views on play as a medium of teaching and learning in mainstream early childhood education.

6.2 Our Choices: Diversity, Accessibility, Affordability and Quality

Early childhood education in New Zealand is a complex of non-compulsory services integrating care and education for children from birth to five years old. It comprises a range of services including kindergartens, crèches, playgroups, playcentres, home-based services, full day and sectional early childhood centres. There are Kohanga Reo and Pasifika language nests to promote Maori and Pasifika languages and cultures. Early childhood services are operated by communities or by individuals as a private business. All chartered early childhood services, whether privately owned, public, or community-based, are entitled to government subsidies. Diversity and

quality were stated as two of the main goals in the Government's 10-year strategic plan for early childhood education (Ministry of Education, 2002). Diversity refers to a diverse array of services aiming to cater for various family and community needs. The array of choices in the early childhood market is also aimed at ensuring families have equitable access to quality early childhood care and education. This section examines migrant mothers' experiences in terms of choices and quality.

6.2.1 "Connecting links" between home and the centre

In *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 15), under the strand of "Belonging", one of the goals is stated as "connecting links with the family and the wider world are confirmed and extended". Early childhood care used to belong in the private domain (May, 1997). With the split of home and work, home gradually lost the function to educate and provide work apprenticeship for its young members. Education and work moved out of the home (Prost, 1991). From the 1970s in the West, more women were in the paid labour force. In the meantime traditional childcare support from extended families/kinship diminished. The rise and growth of the childcare industry came from this broad socio-economic context as discussed in chapter three. In New Zealand, early childhood education started as a liberal advocate for children and women. For the past 15 years, early childhood education has been increasingly regulated and institutionalised (Farquhar, 2008).

In the last chapter, the migrant mothers recounted their difficulties in entering the mainstream society. According to Bourdieu's theory, this situation meant that the families would not have access to the cultural capital that would be vital to provide a "better future" for the migrants' children as their parents expected. When I asked the participants why they sent their children to mainstream early childhood centres, learning English and the "Kiwi culture" was a leading goal. Fang said that despite having her mother helping with childcare, her older son went to full day centre at the age of three and half, and her daughter started childcare at the age of two and half:

> I wanted him to have contact with the outside world, have contact with the Kiwi way of living 'cos at home, our (English) language is not very good. In childcare centre, I think, (he can) learn (the language), and get in touch with the

Kiwis[38]. It will benefit the children later when they start school … It was not like we were in China. (The children) need to integrate into the local way of living. They will go to school anyway, I think, the earlier the better.

I asked Fang: "If you were in China, then you wouldn't be in hurry to send him to a childcare centre?" Fang paused for a few seconds and said that even in China the family would have sent them to a childcare centre anyway. I asked her why. Fang explained that in the past grandparents looked after their grandchildren at home, but it did not work that way anymore:

> Now, (people send their children) to childcare centres. Formal education is better. Staying at home, grandparents would spoil the children. That is not very good. (Staying at home), you can't train the children. They would be quite bold at home but timid when they go outside.

From the excerpts, it is clear that Fang observed the divides between home and "the outside world", and understood the importance of having contact with the local community so the children would be accepted into local society. Even if the family were in China, the traditional way of raising young children at home by the grandparents was no longer considered desirable. This is a global trend that has affected people's daily lives. However, for ethnic minorities, the need of sending their children to mainstream childcare would be essential because home could not provide their children the access to mainstream cultural capital.

Smith (1999) argued that in the postmodern world, the social order should be understood in people's everyday activities. It is through these activities that the social ruling is organised. As Campbell and Greor (2002) explained, "people's own decisions and actions and how they are coordinated with outside events are part of social relations" (p. 27). That is to say, people's ordinary activities are constructed by and at the same time construct the social relations. The social structure is embedded in people's daily practices. The home had lost the value of being an institution to provide education for its young members (Prost, 1991). In everyday vocabulary this

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[38] "Kiwis" was the original word in the interview. Fang used this term in English while the rest of the words were in Chinese. The participants sometimes used Kiwi and *Yang Ren* interchangeably in the interviews.

structural change was described as "formal education is better", and grandparents "spoil" the children[39]. The traditional way of raising children would not enable the children to adapt into the mainstream society. For the participants, the divide between home and early childhood centres was objective and real. The "feel for the game" was objectified (Bourdieu, 1990). Fang explained that compared with the centre environment, home is smaller and more restricted:

> In the centre, children can play more freely. There are more toys, books, and facilities are more and better than those at home.

Emma talked about the limitation when grandparents took care of grandchildren at home:

> (Her paternal) grandma had said many times that if the child was too young, she could easily get sick (if attending a childcare centre). But I said, taking care of (the granddaughter) on her own was hard work. She was tired and running out of tricks (to entertain the granddaughter). In 2004, my parents stayed here for three months, they helped with childcare. She (the granddaughter) was growing. When she was about two, it was harder (for her grandma) to keep an eye on her.

I asked: "Is it because she started running around?"

> Yes. Because, the house we used to live in was smaller than this one, not much room. She was just running around at home all the time, didn't know what to do, and her grandma was running out tricks (to play with her).

The above excerpt described the home environment as more physically restricted and socially isolated in comparison to a centre. As discussed in the previous chapter, Chinese migrant grandparents were more isolated from the mainstream world. Their ability to look after the grandchildren was further limited by their physical abilities due to aging. In contrast with the home environment, the early childhood centre was of more value. The migrant mothers' accounts demonstrated their understanding of "the feel for the game". Their words justified the rules of the game, that a centre would provide a "better" learning environment, as objective. This was just the broad rule of the game. To participate in the game, the migrant mothers had to comprehend other clauses and conditions of the grand rules.

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[39] I will further illustrate this argument in the section "Two generations" in Chapter 8.

6.2.2 It is more than affordability

Bourdieu (1986) argued that different forms of capital were convertible. In the migrants' daily lives, the value of attending a mainstream centre was to provide the child with access to the mainstream cultural capital, and it was manifested in monetary value.

Fang said the childcare centre was not cheap, for example:

> This centre is quite expensive. The fee increased from (NZ)$190 (a week) to (NZ)$220 (a week). But I always feel that the home environment is not as good as the centre. (The children would) have more contacts with *Yang Ren* (in the centre), so it won't be too hard when the children go to school.

According to Fang, despite a steep increase of a more than 15 percent in the already expensive fees, it was worth it for the children's smooth transition to school in the near future. In Bourdieu's (1986) term, the cultural capital and economic capital was convertible with a concrete market price, NZ$220 a week.

Fang did not visit any centres other than the two in the neighbourhood. This was because a centre had to be within walking distance of home. This was because if she decided to go back to work outside the home, her mother, who did not drive, could help picking up and dropping off the children. Fang let her three and a half year old son choose one of the two centres, and the boy chose a "bigger one". His reason was the other one was "too small". Fang said the family went to the bigger centre and had a look:

> We all went there and had a look. We thought it was quite good. There were different rooms. Children were divided into different rooms according to their age.

The decision was made and her son stayed in that centre until he started school. Fang's daughter later joined her older brother in the centre when she was two and a half. She was still attending the same centre at the time of interview.

For Cathy, assessing the value of a childcare centre for her son was less straightforward. Cathy's son started attending a full day care when he was 18 months. At that time, Cathy was working full time and her husband studying:

> I was just thinking that I had to go to work. So I looked at it (early childhood centre) as a childcare, not an education. Do you know what I mean? At the beginning, I was only looking for a place that was open a bit longer, a more responsible, cleaner and safer environment for our child. Just to look after him. Because he was still young, couldn't teach him much anyway.

Cathy said it was a cultural shock when her husband and she searched for an early childhood centre for their son. Cathy was from Shanghai, where, she said, many early childhood centres were on a big scale; the facilities were new and flash[40]. But here, Cathy said, many centres looked old and worn. Feeling unsure about early childhood services in Auckland, Cathy did an intensive search. She had been to at least ten centres before making a decision.

Finally, Cathy found one, the Little Forest centre[41]. But it was slightly more expensive than other options. Cathy said although their budget was tight, she and her husband still decided to send their son to the best available centre:

> The Little Forest is better. But we did consider the cost. The other one was (NZ)$150 (a week). Little Forest was $190 (a week). Now it has increased to more than (NZ)$200. The difference was not huge. But for us it was not a small amount of money. My salary was very low, and my husband only had a little bit of student allowance. (We just had to) save whatever we could.

Cathy was happy about the Little Forest. Her son stayed there for about a year until Cathy's parents-in-law came to Auckland for a visit. The grandparents suggested she move her son to a sessional centre close to where they lived; the grandson would attend the centre in the morning and they could look after him in the afternoon. In this way they could save money and the little boy would still have some education during the day. Cathy thought this suggestion was logical so she changed her son to sessional daycare, the Red Apple centre[42] close to home. The majority of children in that centre were *Yang Ren*.

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[40] Cathy belonged to the middle class professional group in Shanghai. The "new and flash" childcare centres were referred to those in up-market residential areas where middle class professionals like Cathy lived. She mentioned in her interview "There was one just on the complex where our apartment was".

[41] pseudonym

[42] pseudonym

Within half a year of her son attending the Red Apple, Cathy noticed that her son learned a lot of "bad behaviour", "throwing things and hitting people". Cathy did not know what happened in the centre because usually the grandparents dropped off and fetched him. Cathy was running a small retail shop at that time. She said business was not making a profit anyway, so she closed down the shop and took care of her son:

> I sent him to and picked him up from the centre every day. Within a week, I felt it was not right. All those parents, including the *Yang Ren* parents, they were like, maybe, they have never worked for all their lives. They were all housewives. I felt the parents had problems with their own education, so the children had problem with education. Compared with the Little Forest, I am not saying that more expensive means better (quality), but if it is expensive, it also means that the parents had certain income. Parents of the Little Forest, they all have work and stable income. I felt that those children were better educated (than those at the Red Apple). When I dropped off and picked up my son (from the Red Apple), I saw some parents, for example, were bare foot, that didn't matter for them. And when parents were waiting for the children, they talked (with each other) very loudly.

Finally Cathy sent her son back to the Little Forest.

Cathy's accounts indicated a desirable cultural practice was not just pertinent to ethnicity but also to social class. Cathy's analysis was meticulous. She understood that different fees for different services would separate people from different social groups. Different early childhood centres catered for different clientele markets. From Cathy's observations, the families of the Red Apple were those who had lower income because they were not in the fulltime paid workforce. This social status contributed to the children's behaviours that Cathy deemed unacceptable. Cathy's words implied that one's employment status implies one's income, education, and skills. In academic research, similar criteria were often used to classify social status in social studies as discussed in Chapter 2.

Interestingly, according to the conventional criteria, Cathy and her husband would not belong to the middle class in terms of their current income and occupation; and yet Cathy's words did not show any hesitation in identifying herself with the professional middle class clientele of the Little Forest. Bourdieu (1986) contended that cultural capital had different forms. Cultural in the embodied state refers to "long-lasting dispositions of mind and body" (p. 243). One's social status conditions dispositions known as habitus. Habitus is ingrained with the cultural field in one's

childhood and past experiences. Although skilled migrants from China experienced downward occupational mobility in some Western countries (Lee et al, 2002; Ho, 2004; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Statistics New Zealand, 2004a), their habitus could still lead them to identify themselves as middle class. Cathy's words illustrated the argument that habitus could last long after people have left the field.

In Reay's (1997) case study, "Christine" a middle class professional who grew up in a working class family felt uncertain about her current social status. She identified herself as "classless". She did not have the typical middle class sense of legitimacy and certainty when dealing with her child's school. Reay argued, "Christine's material resources do not make up for her lack of psychological and social resources" (p. 229). In a related vein, in Li's (2007) study of Chinese migrants in Canada, the two intellectual families despite their lack of material capital were able to provide opportunities for their children to acquire English language, the linguistic capital that would be important for the children's future in Canada. On the other hand, the two business families, although they had the monetary capital, were unable to convert the material assets to access to the acquisition of English language. In the present study, in Cathy's case, the lack of monetary resources did not prevent her from choosing what she considered as a more expensive but better service. In fact, because of the habitus, she was willing to cut the family budget in other areas to pay the extra NZ$40 a week for her son's education.

Bourdieu (1986) described the relation between habitus and field as dialectic. Habitus provides people with a perspective to make sense of their social world. Cathy's case illustrated this side of the argument. On the other side, social reality shaped people's habitus. In reality, there were many constraints when parents tried to locate the best suitable service for their children. Money was an important factor, particularly when, as Anna put it, "you don't have money". Anna was a sole mother of two. Her older one, a daughter was 13 years old and her son was four and a half years old at the time of interview. Without relatives or families in New Zealand, and working three full days as well as studying part time, Anna said she was only looking for an early childhood centre that was open long enough to accommodate her working hours and was close to home for easy pick-ups and drop-offs. Anna said the centre her son was attending was certainly not the best choice. She explained an

indicator of a not-so-good centre was a "frequent staff turnover". But Anna could not afford to move because that centre was affordable and close to home. Even with a similarly priced or a cheaper centre, as a sole mother of two children, Anna did not have the time to drive an extra 20 or 30 minutes to deliver and collect her son. So she stayed with the centre as long as her son was happy.

The New Zealand Labour Government promoted diverse choices of early childhood services to meet families' diverse needs (Ministry of Education, 2002). Despite the Labour Government's "Working for Families" package to ease financial burdens on working parents with young children, social inequality was not erased (Duncan, 2007). In reality, couched in the name of diversity could be the neoliberalism that viewed early childhood education as a free market with free choices that were equitably accessible for all families. Acquisition of capital requires investment of time and material resources (Bourdieu, 1986). When the parents have limited time and financial resources, their abilities to provide their children access to cultural capital of hard currency can be restrained.

This was true for Gillian and her husband. Gillian's husband took care of their daughter since she turned one when Gillian was working full time during the day. Her husband took the daughter to Plunket playgroup and playcentre. He was usually the only man among the mothers[43].

Gillian's husband also took their daughter to a playcentre briefly. Gillian said her husband couldn't continue because he could not make a commitment to regular attendance, which was required. Again, he was the only father among the mothers. Her husband was not very interested in providing programmes and activities like those mothers. The girl was attending a public kindergarten at the time of interview. Gillian said her daughter was quite shy with non-family members, and did not seem to make friends with other children in the kindergarten. She thought perhaps they should try a private full day early childhood centre so the girl would have longer contact with the outside world. But this option was out of the question because they could not afford it. Gillian said:

[43] The gender issue will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.

> It was impossible financially. If you do the maths, it is not possible financially. The cost of a private full day care is about the total amount of your salary. Cost so much money, it would be better off living on benefit. If you don't work, you are entitled to some benefit. This policy is not right.

Gillian and her husband did not consider other early childhood services possible other than the local kindergarten, an affordable service they were eligible for because of the zoning system[44]. However, Gillian told me that the family moved house once when her son started high school so that her son was able to enroll in a "better school"; the old school had too many students who did not want to study at all. She would do the same for her daughter's education in the future if necessary. So "moving house" was an affordable choice. The relocation strategy used by the mother of Mencius is still relevant today.

6.2.3   The meanings of quality

In the previous chapter, the migrant mothers talked about the invisible and yet invincible ethnic divide in their lives. Therefore, the mothers were worried that their children would have difficulties integrating into the mainstream. To overcome the ethnic divide and mingle with the mainstream was cited as one of the main reasons for sending their children to mainstream childcare centres. Nonetheless, the ethnic divide still existed. Alison told me her story.

Since her daughter started crawling, Alison had taken her to various playgroups. When her daughter was two, Alison decided to look for a job. She had the job but no childcare centre was open long enough to accommodate her working hours. So she chose home-based care for her daughter because of its flexible hours. However, her daughter became more and more unsettled, crying all the time and pulling her own hair,

> By the end, I gave up. That caregiver didn't want to have her either. She couldn't handle her. She said that (having my daughter) affected her taking care of other children.

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[44] In New Zealand, public education, including public kindergarten education, adopts a rigid zoning rule. Only children whose families are currently residing within the zone are eligible to enrol in the school or kindergarten.

After three months, Alison stopped working to take care of her daughter. She said it was just an office job without any potential anyway. Later she took her daughter to a playcentre. After a year and a half in the playcentre, Alison decided to send her daughter to a kindergarten. This move was because she felt that her daughter couldn't make friends with other children:

> She (my daughter) was always stuck with me like a sticker, as if I were the only lifeline. Although on Fridays, I could sneak away[45], that was only a very short period of time. Besides, playcentre was like … this community did not suit her. Other children[46] were very close friends. They played very well (together). Their mothers were very good friends. Because the mothers were friends, the children were also good friends. Every day after playcentre, they would talk about coming to my place, going to your place. But she (my daughter) had been quite isolated from this circle. If (they are) in a kindergarten, children would be about the same age. They would be more innocent. There would be no parents there all the time. She would make friends by herself.

Playcentre is a parent-led early childhood education provider. It values parents' involvement in their children's education. On the official website of Playcentre (New Zealand Playcentre Federation, 2009), it is stated that it offers children "friendships" and "enhanced self-esteem". Ironically, Alison believed that she, the mother, had become the very obstacle that prevented her daughter from having friendship and enhanced self-esteem. Social and cultural capital is field-specific (Lareau and Weininger, 2003). As discussed in the previous chapter, the participants were obviously aware of the importance of gaining access to the mainstream social and cultural capital. Because of their ethnic minority status, the mothers perceived that home cultures were not valued on the mainstream market. Alison believed not all of her influence was beneficial for her daughter. Therefore, she had to change the service type and send her daughter to a kindergarten.

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[45] In a playcentre, there is usually a section for four-year-olds when their parents are absent and they are looked after by other parents as a transition enabling the young children to be independent from their attached caregivers. In Alison's playcentre, Friday was the time she left her daughter with other parents at the centre.

[46] The majority of the children in the playcentre were Pakehas.

There were two public kindergartens within the zone where Alison's family lived. One was called the Blue Whale, the other the Sea Stars[47]. Alison's daughter went to the Blue Whale.

> I went there (the Blue Whale) and had a look. It has a very good reputation by word of mouth. So I let her go to this one, of course. We could have gone to the Sea Stars. They had a shorter waiting list. The Sea Stars took children from three. But (to attend) this one (Blue Whale, children) had to wait until (they were) three years and eight months. So it took us extra eight months. But this one has a very good reputation. I feel it is very good. … All teachers are *Yang Ren*, and the majority children are *Yang Ren*. But they (the teachers) know how to look after those children who are learning English as a second language.

While Alison relied on acquiring information by word of mouth, Emma said she used her intuitions when looking for a centre. She said if she was looking for a centre, the first thing was the teachers' personalities:

> I will first look at the teachers. If the teachers are rude or indifferent, I will definitely not be going there. If the teachers are very patient … at least they should be willing to talk to the Chinese parents.

I asked Emma what she thought of the teachers' qualifications. Emma said:

> With a qualification, at least she would have the professional knowledge and ethics. Qualification is sure better than no qualification. But, it still depends on the individuals. Say, some people are more patient; some are not. It is hard to say (how the individuals) interact with the children …

The accounts from Alison and Emma showed that the mothers did have some ideas about what quality early childhood service they were looking for. Parents "do not 'choose' from experts' menu of 'high quality child outcome' programs but rather define quality within the context of the family and its particular circumstances and the options available to them" (Ceglowski, 2004, p. 109). This was because "high quality" was specific to the interplay of ethnicity and class, and people's specific situations. Parents' choices about their children's education should be understood in their contexts (Reay, 1996). There is indeed an array of early childhood services in New Zealand in terms of different types and philosophies. However, the choices are not for free. Diverse choices in the childcare market do not automatically result in

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[47] Pseudonyms

parents' equitable access to quality early childhood education and information about quality education

The participants did not cite any experts' opinions about quality childcare in their accounts. The participants interpreted the early childhood market and the choices that were available to them according to their own personal situation. Their decisions were nevertheless inevitably entangled with wider socio-political and economic issues. Proximity was one of the major concerns, and was about convenience. Masked under convenience was the social divide. Along with school zones, there are school deciles. The Ministry of Education (2009b) defined decile as "A school's decile indicates the extent to which it draws its students from low socio-economic communities". Decile 1 schools tend to be schools within the lowest socio-economic "zone" whilst decile 10 schools are within the higher socio-economic "zone". Although zoning and deciles are associated with schools, early childhood centres are not immune to this structural system. As Cathy analysed that although expensive childcare centres did not necessarily mean good quality, the fees did separate clienteles of different social groups. In addition, "good quality" education, and acceptable or desirable behaviours were often associated with those of dominant social class upbringings (Lareau, 2003). Hence convenience implies "zoning" and "decile" which is associated with social class and "quality" of education.

"Educational choices take place in specific socially and economically structured contexts" (Reay, 1996, p. 581). The participants' accounts showed that the social and power relations remain hidden in people's daily practicalities and in the lay language. In a broader context, the participants stressed the importance for their children to learn English and Kiwi culture, the advantage and "better environment' of the centre compared to home. Their statements illustrated Bourdieu's (1986) theory in lay language that social and cultural capital with hard currency held the key to people's upward social mobility. The migrant mothers' statements suggested the *illusio*, accepting the rule as fair and objective. The participants were aware of the constraints. However, they did not succumb to their designated social positions. Neither did they totally accept what the professionals and experts said about best education and care for their children. The mothers strategically rejected and selected

dominant cultural norms. This is further discussed throughout subsequent sections and chapters.

The participants did not always confront the centre when they were not happy about some of the practices there. Occasionally they did, mostly they did not and sometimes quietly withdrew their child from the centre. The next section discusses how exactly the migrant mothers communicate with the centre and deal with concerns and different practices or beliefs between home and the centre.

6.3 Daily Communication and Dealing with Concerns

In New Zealand early childhood education, daily communications between teachers and parents are an integral part of teachers' daily practice (Ministry of Education, 1998). Early childhood teachers are required to work in partnership with parents (Ministry of Education, 1996). According to government regulations and requirements, daily communication should be established on an equitable parent-teacher relationship. Researchers (e.g. Lareau, 1987; 1989; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1998a; 1999) who studied encounters between home and school concluded that educational institutions tended to accept parents from dominant social groups while dismissing families from non-dominant groups. This section presents the migrant mothers' accounts in relation to parent-teacher relationships and daily communication. The migrant mothers' narratives show that "communication" and "partnership" need to be examined within a wilder socio-political context and power relationship.

6.3.1 No special treatment

The migrant mothers said, in some situations, although they were worried about or did not agree with what the centre was doing, they did not want "special treatment". They dealt with the issues quietly at home, sought compromise or some middle ground rather than asking the centre to change. For example, both Fang and her mother were worried about the children playing with real hammers and nails in the centre:

> I remembered dropping off my son to the centre, and I saw them (the children) playing with (real) nails. I felt it was quite scary. Children were very little, and were hammering real nails. My mum said it was not right. I tried to persuade my mum (by saying): Everybody else does it. Everybody else thinks it is all right. So why does your child need special protection?

I asked Fang if she was worried. She said, "Yes, a little bit." I asked her if she talked to the centre about her concerns and asked why they allowed the children to play with real hammers and nails. Fang did not talk to the centre. Instead she tried to understand the purpose of this practice:

> They, perhaps, want to train the children for their hands-on abilities. The children are quite happy playing with these. You can't really interfere too much. Actually, the children, the children are the most important. If they are happy, that's fine.

Fang said the children were freer in the centre. For example, at home normally the children were not allowed to play with water because it was too cold. But in the centre they played with water even in the winter, and got wet. I asked Fang's opinions on this practice:

I   :   Do you think this is good ?

Fang :   I don't really think that is particularly good. But anyway they have their
            way of teaching. They must have their own reasons. So it is not very
            suitable for me to interfere too much.

I   :   Do you know their reasons?

Fang :   No… (laugh)

I   : Have you asked them?

Fang :   No…(laugh)

I   : But you believed they have their reasons.

Fang: (Laugh) I thought the teachers were graduates from formal training
            schools.

Fang explained why she did not interfere with the centre's way of teaching:

> The teachers are all professionals. They have their own way of teaching. Maybe the parents shouldn't interfere too much, otherwise why don't you just take care of your own children then? (laugh) Anyway, they have different ways of teaching. If you want the children to integrate into (local) society, you have to learn in their way.

Fang implied that "their way" is "different" from the family's way. Although she did not always agree with "their way", she was quite clear that this would be the way "if you want the children to integrate into (local) society". In Bourdieu's concepts (1986), "their way" was the cultural capital that held the key to gaining access to the dominant cultural field. Fang's statement, "you have to learn in their way", reiterated

this argument in plain everyday language. Fang's acceptance of "their way" seemed reluctant to me, as in her words "I don't really think that is particularly good". But Fang did try to justify "their way" as reasonable. She assumed there must be some sound reasons behind "their way" of teaching and learning. If other children were fine with those teaching practices she should not ask for special treatment for her children. In addition, the teachers were professionals. The word "professionals" indicated certain authorities and people who know what should be the best in the field. All the reasons seamlessly justified that "you have to learn in their way". Fang convinced herself it was a fair game, a game that would bring better outcomes for her children.

6.3.2   Maybe it was the "language barrier"

The migrant mothers cited "language barriers", or more precisely, their lack of English proficiency, as a cause of the infrequent daily communication with their children's centre. I asked Fang if the centre had ever explained what they were teaching and why they were teaching in particular ways. Fang said,

> No. But maybe that was because of the language (barrier). Our (English) language is not very good so we seldom asked them.

Emma said language could be a barrier in the daily teacher-parent communication:

> If your (English) language is better, you will be more confident. Besides, when I was studying, I only mixed with Chinese. With the lecturers, sometimes I did want to have a chat with them. But first, I was a bit afraid; second I didn't really know what to talk about.

Later when she was working and her social circle expanded, Emma gained more confidence talking to people of different ethnicities at work. She said that the work experience helped her to gain confidence when talking to teachers in the centre. She normally had a chat with the teachers every day when picking up her daughter.

The "language issue" can be analysed at different levels. At the interpersonal level, it was suggested that the "language barrier" hindered interpersonal communications. Fang did not demand explanation from the centre because she perceived her (English) language "not very good". Emma's accounts demonstrated that "language barrier" also meant lack of confidence, and not knowing "what to talk about". In other words, rather than the language itself, it was the lack of certainty and legitimacy that became

a barrier (Bourdieu, 1996). Language is linguistic capital. Its values depend on the social situation and its speakers as demonstrated in Reay's (1999) study. It is about who should say what and who will be heard and who will be dismissed (Reay, 1999).

Anna's accounts, however, illustrated a different site of communication. Anna said her daily communication with the teachers was minimal because she did not see anything she said would bring any positive changes in that centre. She said she seldom talked to the teachers unless her son had an accident and she needed to sign the accident book. Then she would ask what happened. Sometimes, if her son woke up very grumpy or he had an oral ulcer, she would tell the teachers so they would keep an eye on him during the day. Other than that, there was not much to talk about and not much time for talking either. In Bourdieu's (1990) terms, Anna did not see it as a game worth investing in; any communication would not change anything in the centre. Although Anna's interpretation of the feel for the game was slightly different from those of Fang and Emma, all the migrant mothers' accounts nevertheless illustrated the embeddedness of social and structural factors in daily linguistic exchanges (Bourdieu, 1992).

6.3.3 But it is about the "Dos" and "Don'ts"

Polly and Cathy's accounts showed that the mothers had very clear rules about what should be talked about and what should not be discussed with the centre. Polly said sometimes she talked to the teachers requesting changes, and sometimes she did not. Polly's older son first attended the centre Apricot[48]. In the centre, children were offered tap water at lunchtime. Polly said,

> Drinking cold water, particularly in winter is different from the Chinese way of living. The Chinese granny's tale is that drinking water at mealtime dilutes your gastric juice.

In traditional Chinese medical practice, it was believed that health is preserved through taking nutrition from the daily diet (Zhang, 2004). Traditional Chinese philosophy and culture emphasises the harmony of *Yin* and *Yang* as a desirable goal.

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[48] Pseudonym.

Chinese medicine reflects this idea that health is maintained by balancing *Yin* and *Yang*. "In Chinese astrology, geography and human affairs are considered to be parts of a whole" (Zhang, 2004, p. 234). The internal balance within one's body and external harmony with one's social and natural environment was considered important. For example, "adapting to the change of seasons and climate" was an important principle (p. 235). This philosophy became daily practice for many Chinese over generations, and was ingrained in individuals' habitus, as manifested in Polly's words:

> You gain more nutrition by drinking soup[49] with meals. Cold water tends to irritate the stomach particularly in winter.

Polly's son later had diarrhoea for some time. Polly said she did not ask the centre to change the practice for her son because she was not sure the diarrhoea was due to the cold tap water. Moreover, Polly continued:

> Other children were like that (drinking the tap water). I don't want to have special treatment … he (her son) has to adapt into this social environment sooner or later. Other children do this; you have to follow.

Polly's son left the Apricot because the family moved house. Polly did not blame the practice of drinking cold water for her son's illness. She said that her son was not in the best condition at that time.

Polly did make one request that she thought necessary. Polly told me her son once vomited after lunch. She found out after checking the soiled clothes he brought home. She asked him why, he said: "Too much". The next day, Polly talked to the teacher about this incident:

> Then, I went to talk to the teacher the next day. The teacher said how could it be "too much? He only had two pieces of sushi and a bite of potato." I said it was too much. I said he got up quite late, just had breakfast (before lunch at the centre). Had quite a big breakfast at home. He ate a piece of buttered bread, and lots of fruits; then, a cup of (Chinese) herbal medicine. We went there (the centre) at half past ten. Haven't really digested much, then they had lunch at about eleven. I explained this to them. They said they would get the boy not to eat too much at lunch and eat more at afternoon teatime. …I explained to the

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[49] The concept of soup is different from that of Western soup. Soup is normally much more watery than Western soup. You literally drink the liquid of the soup.

teacher that he usually stays up late at night. The two boys wait until I come home[50] then they go to bed. Bedtime is usually half past ten, and they won't get up until nine o'clock.

Polly classified the "cold-tap-water" incident as a cultural practice in New Zealand. It was a cultural practice "you have to follow" if her son was to adapt into the mainstream society. It was apparent to me that Polly viewed the second incident as a more general practice where she could make a request that would be accepted according to "the feel for the game".

Likewise, Cathy also had very clear ideas concerning when and what the centre should be told to make changes and in what circumstances the family should adapt to the environment or change to another centre. As discussed earlier, Cathy withdrew her son from the sessional centre because she noticed her boy's disruptive behaviour. I asked Cathy if she talked to the teachers to find out the problem and seek changes. She said no because it was not the teachers' fault:

> That was not the teachers' problem. The teachers all had qualifications. The teachers were very nice. I quite like those teachers. But those children had problems. I don't mean to discriminate other people. That was not my intention. It is just my personal preference. I don't like my child to grow up in that environment. I don't like (my son to mix with) children from that kind of family.

To Cathy, it was a culture of the particular clientele of the centre and could not be changed just by a few "nice" individuals. Cathy was also very clear about when there was a problem that the centre needed to fix. Cathy said that she did not usually talk to the teachers. But when it was necessary, she would make her message very clear when talking to the centre:

> Because the teachers were very busy, it was not possible to chat with you every day. Besides, our English was not particularly good. If there was nothing particularly, I didn't know what to chat about…
>
> (My son) often had scratches on the face[51]. Can't blame the teachers, because those little children, they were quite swift, it was not possible (to keep an eye on them all the time). There was an accident book for the parents to sign for every

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[50] Polly was studying at evening class at the time of interview.

[51] The incident happened in the Little Forest centre.

accident …But I realised that my son was bitten, three accidents in a row within two weeks. I said, it can't be, I must go and talk to the manager. This way, the accidents were too frequent.

So Cathy went to talk to the centre manager. She said:

If accidents happened occasionally, I can understand. But not at this frequency. During that period of time, they were short of teachers. Specially, accidents normally happened in the afternoon around two o'clock. (It was the time when) teachers of the morning shift had left, and there were fewer teachers during that time, and accidents normally happened during this time. So I pointed out to them that it was not the teachers' problem, it was the management's problem. There were not enough teachers. I told the manager: "The purpose of talking to you today is to say that you must do something. If you don't have enough staff, you need to hire extras. If those teachers are not enough, you need to have some part-time staff. You can't allow accidents to happen to the children because you don't have enough staff".

Cathy said that there were no more accidents after her talk with the centre manager. I assumed that Cathy must have made her message understood very clearly. She mentioned that small accidents, like scratches, were inevitable. Cathy presented herself as a considerate and reasonable parent. This image further justified her demand for change regarding the biting incidents. Despite her "not-particularly-good" English, she was articulate, assertive and eloquent when talking to the centre management. Her speech clearly exhibited the dominant middle class parents' sense of legitimacy and certainty (Lareau, 1987, 2003, Lareau & Horvat, 1999, Reay, 1998).

The findings of this section illustrated that daily communication between parents and teachers is about far more than just linguistic and communication skills. It is the "feel for the game" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66) that governs what should be said, what should not, who says what and how to say it (Bourdieu, 1992). The following section describes the migrant mothers' experiences in relation to written communications with the centre, through their children's portfolio and other written correspondence or assessment of their children.

6.4   The Portfolio: A Critique

"Documentation, in the forms of observation of children and extensive recording keeping" has long been a traditional practice in early childhood education (Katz & Chard, 1996, p. 1). In a New Zealand early childhood centre, the children's portfolio

is a collection of document and assessment of the children's experiences. Many centres in New Zealand have adopted "learning stories" (Carr, 2001), a narrative approach to assess children's learning and development. In practice, a typical learning story is a narrative documentation describing the child's learning, a teacher's review of the learning and the setting of objectives for the next step. Learning stories often include photos and works of the children where the learning is happening. "Parents Voice" and "Children's Voice" refers to parents and children contributing their own learning stories, their review of the learning and setting goals for the next step. Subsequently, portfolio has become a tool for teachers to assess children's learning and reflect their own teaching. Involving the voice of children and parents in portfolios was meant to encourage children's autonomy, respect their family background, and strengthen the connection between home and centre. It is commonly agreed in early childhood education that documentation contributes to quality education (Katz & Chard, 1996). It is also a means of providing evidence for the purpose of accountability (Ministry of Education, 2009). This section examines what their children's portfolios meant for the migrant mothers.

The migrant mothers viewed the portfolio as a memoir of their children's experiences outside of home; for some, a great deal of time outside of home away from their parents. From this personal perspective, they drew their own standard of "good" and "quality" practice. The migrant mothers' accounts also showed resistance to "professionalism" and critiqued the centre's practice concerning their children's portfolios.

Portfolio is a way to facilitate home and centre communication. Parents are often invited to write comments and feedbacks about their children or the centre practice or any other concerns and issues. For Emma, writing comments in her daughter's portfolio, just like the oral communication with the centre, was a process of acquiring the appropriate cultural capital. Emma told me:

> At the beginning I didn't know what to write. The first time (when the centre asked for comments), I returned the portfolio without writing anything. Later, some comments from *Yang Ren* parents were put on the wall (for display). So I looked at what other parents wrote about. Because the culture is different, I didn't know what to write. I looked at other parents' comments. For example, a parent wrote about a child having nightmares, about the reaction from the child and the reaction from the parents, actually, just some personal experiences. I see, oh, you could actually write about this stuff. So next time, when I was writing

comments, I would choose one or two points to write about. It wouldn't be difficult to find something to write about. You only need to write about the ideas. Whether the sentences are perfect or not it is about the language skills.

When Lan showed me her daughter's portfolio, I found at least three pages of A4 paper full of Lan's neatly written comments in English. I was trying to look for follow-ups or feedback from the centre. But there was none. I asked Lan if the centre had ever discussed her comments with her. Lan said:

> I did write some comments sometimes. But they (the teachers) didn't have any response. I think that's the way it is.

While the migrant mothers were quick to attribute to their inadequate oral English skills the infrequent daily face-to-face interactions with their children's centre, they saw themselves less responsible for the quality of their children's portfolios. Apart from Emma who made an effort to learn how to write comments, other mothers were more relaxed about this. The participants considered written correspondence from the centre an important channel to know more about what their children were doing in the centre. Cathy said that her son's portfolio brought home from the centre provided valuable information for her to understand what happened there:

> Portfolio, it was very good. So often, when we first sent our child to the centre, I really wanted to have a video monitor that (I could) look at him every single moment, really wanted to know what he was doing in the centre. This portfolio functioned like a monitor. Our son used to be quite afraid of animals. When he was a little bit more than three, he brought home the portfolio. (In one of the photos), he was holding a cat. A child brought the cat to the centre from home. I was quite surprised. I couldn't have known about this without the portfolio.

Like Cathy, Fang enjoyed looking at the portfolio with her children and her children would describe in Chinese what they did in the centre. I asked Fang what she normally paid attention to in her daughter's portfolio. She said, "Usually photos, written comments, that stuff that the teachers wrote about them."

The front page of the portfolio normally introduced *Te Whaairki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, and most written comments in the portfolio were linked to the strands and goals from the curriculum. I asked Lan if those strands and goals made sense for her. She said: "If I read carefully, it should be understandable. But I haven't read too carefully yet." Fang was not aware of the *Te Whaariki* in her children's portfolios. Polly did not pay much attention to the curriculum, and neither

did Emma. Alison had been through the Playcentre training. So she knew about the curriculum document. Although the mothers in playcentre were required to use the document, Alison said she never used the document to guide her practice as a mother.

What concerned the mothers was what actually happened to their children, and what it genuinely meant for their children. Lan liked learning stories that described in detail the whole process of learning. But she had reservations about how teachers made conclusions about the learning outcomes:

> This (learning stories) is actual and real stuff. Learning outcomes … During spring, I have seen them grew a lot of stuff, doing something anyway … there were lots of things on the table. But whether every child was doing exactly what they (the teachers) said, (whether every child) did in the way that the teachers had planned for them, I really don't think so. Different children absorb different things, but (children's learning) is not always exactly as we adults think, that the child would understand how a tree grows, every process of the growing circle. But I think (the children) did absorb some stuff, although it was not as good as they (the teachers) had described.

Polly's son had been to three centres. She said the first two had portfolios for her son. She compared the two portfolios from the two centres. The first, the Apricot, produced a much better portfolio than the second one, the Blueberry centre. Polly said that the teachers at Blueberry wrote a lot of very general information about group activities. There was a lack of individual descriptions about what her son had been doing. When there was information about her son, it was often very vague and not accurate:

> I thought she (the teacher) just wrote this down randomly. Really, look at this; it was a false claim. Songs Mike [52] enjoyed, "Cat and Mouse". I had never heard him singing this song. I didn't know what song that was. She didn't really know which song Mike likes the most. Then look at this (pointing to the column under "what food Mike likes"), I don't think he likes sandwiches, or spaghetti, orange. For him, if you wrote "sausage' I would have believed it (laugh). Sandwich unless with fillings. I feel that they didn't have anything to write about, there were lots of things they didn't know, so just wrote randomly. Look at this routine, I had already known about this. They didn't need to put it here (in the portfolio). They'd got nothing else so they put this stuff here.

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[52] Pseudonym

Polly said that in the Apricot centre's portfolio the learning stories offered more detail. They usually provided several (consecutive) photos with the stories. Reviews of the stories were also clear:

> Then I could know what was going on. And it was mainly developing in three areas [53], what was evident, what to look at next time. This is much better than the other centre (the Blueberry centre).

Polly went back to comment on the Blueberry portfolio:

> It was always very sketchy. These photos, you know, were posed. They were taken for the sake of having some photos. This photo[54], (the teacher) told him to carry the backpack and took the photo. You had this feeling because they need something for the portfolio so they took the photo … I knew it. That was end of the day, and we were going home. She (the teacher) said they had to take a photo (of my son), asked me to tell him (to pose for the photo) because he didn't like to pose for photos. So (they asked me) to make him pose for the photo (laugh).

Polly said that the Apricot centre's practice was better. The centre assigned each teacher to follow a number of children to write up stories, and the roster changed every two weeks. That is, every two weeks, there would be a different teacher to write up a child's learning stories. Polly believed in this way, every child was covered and different teachers would provide information from different and fresh angles about her son's learning and development. Polly and Lan's comments raised an issue: the tension between professional practice, government regulations and requirements, and parents' and children's interests. Polly and Lan's words pointed out some teachers put the requirements and regulations ahead of the concerns of children and parents.

Early childhood scholars, researchers and practitioners have agreed that documentation is an important tool that contributes to quality education concerning children's assessment, parent involvement, and teachers' professional development (i.e. Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2005; Carr, 2001; Fleer, 2006;

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[53] "Three areas" referred to the three dispositions out of five that were usually used to review the learning story.

[54] In the photo Polly's son was carrying his backpack at the entrance of the centre.

Gilkerson & Hanson, 2000; Katz & Chard, 1996; Kline, 2008). But how these goals are delivered relies on the teachers' skills, knowledge and attitudes. For the centre, documentation is also a government requirement. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2009a) requires centres to keep documentation as evidence of compliance. Centres are required to provide evidence of planning, implementing and evaluating programmes within a curriculum framework accepted by Ministry of Education. Licensed centres in New Zealand normally adopted *Te Whaariki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). This explained why centres usually placed a statement of the curriculum at the front page of every child's portfolio. Its intent to provide evidence of compliance was obvious. However, from the migrant mothers' viewpoints, those strands and goals of *Te Whaariki* were of no relevance unless it was clearly evident that all those were meaningful for their children's learning; and moreover, they should be evidently delivered to the individual child.

Centres were required to show evidence of involving parents in their children's learning (Ministry of Education, 2009a). Thus it was a common practice for centres to invite parents' written comments in their children's portfolio. In theory, quality education should also be congruent with the parents' expectations for their children. Nevertheless, for some centres, the compliance seemed to have become a goal itself. Farquhar (2008) argued that "the teacher (through policy and curriculum practices) is increasingly dominated by regulatory requirements that have significant implications" while the child becomes "a second-order consumer" (p. 47). As shown in Lan's case, parents' comments did not always result in genuine actions from the centre. Polly put it very openly that some records in her son's portfolio were without any substance—the information was displayed for the sake of it. Lan made a general statement that although theories and intentions were always good, but it was hard to tell how the theories and intentions were realised in reality. The migrant mothers were able to critique and evaluate whether the cultural capital was of any value to their personal lives.

The migrant mothers all considered it was important for their children to learn "their way", the dominant cultural norms, because the children have to adapt into the mainstream society. "Their way", according to Bourdieu (1986) was the cultural capital that could be converted to other benefits later in the children's lives, or a

better future. However, accepting "their way" did not stop the migrant mothers from critiquing the centre's practices. This finding echoed McKeever and Miller's (2004) study in Canada with mothers who looked after their children with disabilities. Because of their children's disabilities, the mothers realised they had to rely on a range of professional services. However, those mothers' practices were strategic, and they showed both resistance to and acceptance of the dominant discourse of "body normativeness and development" (McKeever & Miller, 2004, p. 1189). They pointed out that the mothers in their study were "white, Canadian-born and spoke English as first language". Thus those mothers would more likely "brought into the parent-professional interaction more cultural capital than would most ethnic or racial minority or immigrant mothers" (p. 1188). McKeever and Miller explained that other studies (Fazil, Bywaters, Ali, Wallace, & Signh, 2002) noted that ethnic minority and immigrant families with disabilities were more likely to face double discrimination because of their lack of dominant cultural capital.

In the current study, although the migrant mothers believed that as ethnic minority the family did not possess dominant cultural capital, the mothers were defiant in the face of professional jargon. The migrant mothers in general conceded they did not have the linguistic capital in the face-to-face encounters with their children's centres. However, when they were dealing with the written words, instead of blaming their own lack of ability to understand the jargon or superficial information in their children's portfolios, the migrant mothers dismissed it as irrelevant to their children's actual learning and growth. Polly and Lan went further to provide detailed evaluation and critiques of the centre's practices concerning their children's portfolios. While Lareau (2003) described how working class parents were silenced or intimidated by jargons in face-to-face encounters with the school because they lacked the cultural capital to comprehend them, the current research portrayed a different picture about these migrant mothers: their statements showed a sense of confidence that were associated with dominant middle class parents in other studies (Lareau, 1987; 2003;Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1995,1998) even though they did not approach the centre directly. Of course, when reading their children's portfolio, the mothers were not in a face-to-face interaction with the writers, and they were able to use their linguistic capital, their native tongue, to articulate their ideas and critiques which

might not be possible if they had to speak in their second language and in face-to-face contacts with the teachers.

Portfolios are supposed to record and assess the children's learning and development. If the mothers were critical of some practices concerning the centre's way of documentation, how did the mothers otherwise evaluate their children's learning experiences in the centre? The next section focuses on this issue.

6.5 Are They Playing or Learning?

In New Zealand mainstream early childhood education, play is regarded as a learning medium for young children. Although play has been talked about "as though it were a single entity, play has been defined and theorised in many different ways" (Fleer, 2009, p. 2). Young children across different cultures play spontaneously. But validating children's play as a legitimate medium of learning originated from the Enlightenment. Froebel's idea of play as education for children laid the foundation of the Western modern early childhood education. After the Second World War, free play, a new progressive educational approach in early childhood, was promoted as a break from the old structure of the Victorian times (May, 2001). The idea of play was further supported by various modern psychological theories (Fleer, 2009).

In Chinese, play has two meanings. One is "wan" (玩) as free play, the other is "youxi" (游戏) as play or game following certain rules and structures (Rao & Li, 2009, p. 100). The Chinese traditional way of teaching emphasises efforts. Children's spontaneous play seemed to be effortless so it did not fit into the category of learning. Moreover, while free play in the Western concept reflects the value of free exploration (May, 2001), in Chinese tradition, skills and techniques are considered important elements to enhance exploration (Biggs, 2005). In China traditionally, formal learning did not usually start until six or seven years (Wu, 1996). In this sense young children's spontaneous play was accepted as a norm in early childhood.

From the 1980s, Chinese early childhood education has gradually introduced the western idea of play as a medium of learning (Ebbeck & Gao, 1996; Liu & Feng, 2005). The New Zealand and Chinese ways of teaching young children came from different historical, socio-cultural and political contexts. So how did the participants,

who grew up in the Chinese educational system, evaluate play as a way of learning and teaching in New Zealand mainstream early childhood centres?

6.5.1   Learn through play, but where is the learning?

The migrant mothers appreciated the value of play in their children's lives. Cathy said that there are many benefits of sending her son to the centre:

> An early childhood centre is a small society. He would learn in this small society. Say, learning how to socialise with others. When he was little; (he had to learn) when other children were biting, how to protect yourself, (learning to) share (with other children). You can't just go and bite other children if they take your toys away. When my son started going to the centre, he was just over one year old. Before that, all the toys at home were his. Then he went to the centre, he had to fight for his toys. One of his first few English words was "mine". He went "mine" all day, and everything was "mine".

Cathy noticed the social learning during the children's spontaneous play and interaction. To Cathy, the centre provided a social environment, "a small society" for her son to acquire social skills. But her son had learned more than just social skills. Cathy said that her son had just started school. Looking back at those years that he spent in the early childhood centre, she realised her son had learned a lot more than she had thought and New Zealand early childhood education was better than what she had expected:

> I should thank the Little Forest centre. My son had learned a lot in the centre. One day, to my surprise, he came and asked me: "Mummy, do you know which planet is the furthest away from the Sun?" I knew in Chinese it was "冥王星", but I don't know the name in English. He said to me, "Do you know, Mummy, it is Pluto."

Cathy said that the teachers sometimes took the children to the museum and there were other activities. She did not know exactly how the child learned about the most distant planet from the Sun. But children did learn some serious knowledge.

In general, participants were not against the idea of play but rather they had quite a mixed feeling towards this way of teaching and learning. Gillian thought children in New Zealand were more relaxed and would enjoyed learning more than those in China. Gillian was also worried that the system could be too free and too relaxed:

I quite appreciate their way of learning. For example, learn through play. But the learning is a bit slow. It looks like kindergarten hasn't taught anything except for telling some stories and singing some songs.

Gillian said her husband told her what happened in the kindergarten:

The teachers just set up those activities. For example, children do painting. They just help themselves with the paper, and do it themselves. That's it. There are not much help (from the teachers).

The above description looked like a Piagetian approach to play where teachers set up the environment and the children explore by themselves. Piaget's (1952; 1954) theory suggests that through hands-on activities, trial and error, and interacting with peers, children's cognitive development would go from one stage to another. The teachers' task is to set up the environment, to observe and to find out what stages the children's development is at. The Piagetian look-a-like approach is not obvious to those who do not know about or believe in the theory. Moreover, Piaget's theory is just one of the many theories about play as a learning medium for children. Play is not a unitary term (Fleer, 2009). According to Vygotsky's (1978; 1987) theory, children's learning through play should be emphasised in the socio-cultural context and interactions with adults and more mature peers. In Chinese terms, play refers to free play (*wan*), play following rules (*youxi*) as well as "eduplay" (Rao & Li, 2009).

Lan gave a more detailed analysis of the concept of play in practice. For example, in water play:

It is a kind of learning. It is not just water, maybe there are other equipments, like sponge, etc. (Children) can learn about, like what substances would absorb water, what items would sink, what items would float. But whether the teachers actually organise the activities to realise these goals, I am not so clear. I think the teachers do want to achieve the goals. But whether every child learns about this knowledge, it is another story. It depends on the individual child.

Lan explained that different ways of learning in New Zealand and China have different focuses in learning content:

Sometimes, I feel that the teachers did teach her something. Say, going to the toilet, she said Daddy had to lift up the toilet seat. She would tell us something like that. She said that teacher said so. I think that maybe what they teach here is different from those in China. (In China), you can see (the result) very

quickly, like teaching a child to read a poem, or to recognise a few words. Here they teach children some common knowledge in everyday life. I think that is fine, yeah, teaching something.

Alison had been a "playcentre mum". She went through the playcentre training and accepted the theories underlying play. She said her daughter played with sand, water, and had done all the messy play:

> At the beginning I was a bit uneasy about this. But later, I thought that it is good for her to explore her natural abilities. So she would dare to explore. Here, people stress exploration.

But she, too, had some mixed feelings about free play:

Alison   : She (her daughter) likes drawing but is not very good at drawing (laugh).

I   : What do you mean by "not very good at drawing"? According to the Chinese standard? (laugh)

Alison   : No, I mean using a pen with dexterity. In our playcentre training, they asked us to take off our socks, and then use the feet to hold a pen, and draw. (It showed us how difficult it was for a child to draw), so you can't force a child to draw, let them draw in their own way. But I have seen other children could draw with better dexterity. They could draw very fine lines. But those children have been to drawing classes.

Polly made it very clear that free play was good, but children also needed to be taught. She said she listened to a Chinese radio programme in which an educator from Taiwan said: "Excellence is taught". Polly said:

> They say learning through play. I think their way of teaching, and it has its strengths. That kind of teaching enables you to have imagination. (Children) develop better in some areas, such as hands-on abilities. (They) will be better in these areas. Like our generation, I don't have imagination, really. My creativity is appalling. Look at those children, who are under this way of teaching, they can all paint very well. But it still needs (adult) teaching. If he has too much spare time, I won't just let him play.

6.5.2   Teaching and learning through play

Although the participants applauded the idea of free play they also pointed out that in early childhood centres adult-child interactions and adult teaching were not as

frequent as they would like. Gillian said that her daughter would soon start school and she did not notice any formal teaching of the alphabet in kindergarten, although that was not particularly important. But she did wonder how children learn the alphabet only through free play. Gillian cited her husband's observation to explain why formal teaching was not possible in a public kindergarten. She reckoned that in a session, there are children of different ages and the children keep leaving and coming[55].

Alison said the teacher-child ratio in public kindergartens made it hard for substantial adult-teacher interactions for every single child:

> Three teachers in total, one indoor, one outdoor, one in and out. Just to guarantee the children's safety is already a job well done… The teachers are really busy. After saying hello to you they have to hurry away to look after other children. Actually, they are under great pressure. Can't say the teachers are not good. They are very nice. There is a long waiting list. Many people from far away, they want to squeeze (their children) into the kindy. The three teachers have very good names, and are particularly caring, professional, and organised. But they can't split themselves into different parts.

Compared with public kindergartens, Alison believed that the adult-child ratio of playcentres better facilitates children's leaning:

> In a playcentre, there are so many adults. Every day, every parent would accompany her children. There are 25 children in a section. There are at least 10 adults. Most parents would be there, unless on some special occasion, they would ask other parents to look after their children. That is, for 25 children, there are 10 to 15 parents. We usually had 19 parents. Information came from different sources. Parents would teach children different things. The parents would work very hard to learn something at home and then bring it back to the centre.

Alison said, "If I had continued with playcentre, I think (my daughter) would definitely have learned more than in kindy." Lan was so worried that the "learn through play" approach of the public educational system was just free play without much learning that she contemplated sending both of her daughters to a Christian school. Lan explained that normally Christian schools were private schools and could be quite expensive. But there was one very close to home, and it was a "state

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[55] There is a rolling enrolment system in the New Zealand public school system. Children start school whenever they turn five. Once the five-year olds leave kindergarten, new admissions to the kindergarten are made.

integrated school" (State-subsided) so it was affordable. Although Lan was not religious, she thought a Christian school would be more rigorous about students' learning than average public schools. Lan said she received the introduction pack from the school, and all the curricular areas, learning outcomes and how the learning outcomes were achieved were stated with much more detail than in the introduction packs from public schools.

In general the participants all agreed with the notion that children learn through play. The participants understood the strength of this way of teaching and the benefits for their children. However, they were also concerned about how individual children learned throughout play. They were not so sure if free play alone offered the best opportunities to develop their children's full potential. Ideally there would be more explicit teaching during the play. The migrant parents expressed mixed feeling towards play. The participants' ambiguous attitudes towards play were not just intuitions or instinct reactions. They offered detailed critical analysis about some practical issues. The participants found that centres with a low adult-child ratio plus a diversity of children's age and abilities, it was difficult for the teachers to ensure every child had an equitable opportunity to learn and be taught. Moreover, the participants questioned what evidence was available to assess that children's learning actually happened through free play. In their experience, the information provided by the centre about how exactly their children learned through play was in general either not convincing or insufficient. In addition, the participants quoted traditional Chinese teaching practices, such as "excellence is taught", as a cultural resource to criticise the *laissez-faire* attitude in the name of "learn through play". These mothers' comments are in agreement with some scholars' arguments that emphasis on interest-based learning process can be integrated with knowledge-based learning outcomes (Hedges & Cullen, 2005; Hedges & Nuttall, 2008).

6.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the participants' experiences in relation to their children's early childhood centre in four areas: 1) how they chose the early childhood centre for their children; 2) their daily encounters with their children's centres; 3) their viewpoints about their children's portfolios; and 4) their ideas concerning play as a medium of learning in mainstream early childhood education.

One of the major reasons for sending their children to mainstream early childhood centres was for the children to gain access to the cultural capital. However, the participants found that ethnic and social divides persisted despite their efforts to mingle with the mainstream. The participants' decisions in choosing a centre were mainly based on practicalities which were intertwined with wilder socio-political issues such as ethnicity and social class. The New Zealand childcare market was diverse but choices were not without constraints. This demonstrated Bourdieu's (1986) theory that access to dominant social and cultural capital was never equitable. Findings from the current study illustrated that inequality was often couched in seemingly neutral words such as proximity, affordability, cultural and language barriers. On the other hand, the migrant families did not always accept their disadvantaged social positions. In order to maximise benefits for their children, the migrant mothers deployed various strategies to deal with different situations in different fields. These strategies ranged from willingly embracing to reluctantly following and from rejecting to utilising different dominant cultural and social norms in different situations.

When they did not always agree with the centres' philosophies, approaches and practices, the participants did not intend to try to change them. In this sense, the participants, although critical of the mainstream teaching, did not display the sense of legitimacy and certainty that characteristically belong to dominant middle class parents in other studies (Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1997; 1998; 1999). Instead, the participants tried to resolve the issue by themselves. All participants taught their children at home to various extents, particularly in the areas they believed were missing from the centre. The next chapter describes the migrant mothers' work at home with their children.

Chapter 7   The Mothering Work

7.1   Introduction

Feminist researchers have argued that women's work at home is serious unpaid work (e.g. Griffith & Smith, 2005; Oakley, 1985; Smith, 1987; 1990a; 1990b). Mothering work demands time and energy. A purpose of this chapter is to present the Chinese migrant mothers' work at home. According to Bourdieu (1996), women in the family are particularly responsible for carrying out work that generates social and cultural reproduction. Previous studies (i.e. Lareau, 2003; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Reay, 1998a; 1998b) showed that compared to working class women, middle class mothers had more available resources and capital to enhance their children's educational capital. Another purpose of this chapter is to analyse how migrant mothers' work, both practical and symbolic, generates cultural and social capital for their children. This chapter focuses on three areas of the mothers' work at home. The first is concerned with the way the mothers taught their children at home. It can be summarised in three words: reinforcing, extending, and bridging. Learning languages has been a recurring theme in the interview accounts. For these migrant mothers, learning English was considered as important as learning Chinese for their children albeit with different emphasis. So the second section is about language and learning languages. The last section presents the mothers' arrangements for children's extracurricular activities.

7.2   Reinforcing, Extending and Bridging

Reay (1998a) summarised mothers' roles in relation to their children's primary schooling as "complementors, compensators and modifiers" (p. 66). All mothers supported their school curriculum at home as complementors. Middle class mothers in general felt more easy and confident with this role and went further to also play the roles of compensators and modifiers. Black mothers of both working and middle class sent their children to Saturday schools to compensate for the cultural elements that were missing from the school programme. But middle class mothers were more likely to have the financial resources to pay for their children's private tutoring to compensate for what the school was not able to achieve for the children. While middle class mothers in general demonstrated feelings of confidence and entitlement when acting as modifiers intervening with schools in their children's favour, working

class mothers encountered more difficulties and dissatisfaction. Overall, all mothers deployed a range of strategies, resources and capital in order to generate capital for their children (Reay, 1998a).

As shown in the previous chapter the Chinese migrant mothers seldom intervened with the mainstream early childhood centre where their children were attending. Much of the work the participants did at home was to reinforce what the child learned in the centre. This role was similar to "the complementor" and "compensator" (Reay, 1998a, p. 66). In addition to complementing and compensating, the migrant mothers talked about their efforts to bridge the gaps between home and the centre.

Lan said she "could find something for the girls to do" at home. For example, she bought some seeds so that the girls could grow tomatoes in the garden and observe the plants growing:

> We grew plants when we were little. I think that it is good to let the children grow some plants…because they would know about the life cycle. Plants are lives too. Schools have these activities too.

Gardening was a way of home learning in other families too. Fang said that once her daughter brought back a chunk of carrot from the centre. The children were growing carrots and every child brought home a piece of carrot to grow. Fang helped her daughter to plant the carrot in the garden. She showed me a photo of her daughter sitting in a chair in the family's backyard waiting for her carrot to grow although nothing ultimately came out of the ground.

Emma showed me a photo of her daughter holding two pieces of chayote harvested from the family garden. Emma said:

> We grew spring onions any way. She (her daughter) also grew carrots by herself. We let her grow stuff. The centre does this stuff too. And, in the previous centre at North Shore, they grew caterpillars (on the plants) as well.

In the above "gardening learning" accounts, Lan, Fang and Emma observed particular activities in the centre and arranged similar activities at home to reinforce the learning. The mothers described themselves as supportive of the centre

curriculum, in such ways the mothers, particularly the middle class mothers, would act to generate cultural capital (Griffith & Smith, 2005; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1998).

Apart from complementing what their children learned in the centre, the migrant mothers extended what the children learned. For example, Lan further extended her daughters' interest in gardening and living plants through everyday observations:

> These two days, there grew quite a lot of mushrooms on the pine tree in front of our house. The mushrooms were growing every day, because of the rain. Alicia[56] observed and said: "Look, the mushrooms have grown so big". I said I wanted to try them, and see if they were edible. They all said: "You can't eat those. They have colours. They are yellow".

Lan explained that the girls knew that some mushrooms were not safe to eat because they had read the story while in China. In the story, a little rabbit collected all the colourful mushrooms and the mother rabbit had to throw them out because those mushrooms were poisonous.

The migrant mothers also taught their children other subject knowledge. Emma said that in order to teach her daughter maths, she bought a set of mathematic puzzles to do one-digit subtractions and additions at home. She talked to a teacher in the centre about this:

> I told her (the teacher) that I bought a (maths) puzzle game. I taught her (what she could do with the puzzle) so and so add so and so, three apples plus two apples make five. I let her (her daughter) put the puzzle pieces together and teach her subtractions and additions. The teacher said: "You don't need to. I know you Chinese parents are very concerned about this kind of thing. You don't need to teach her. She's got enough. She will learn it naturally once she goes to school. You don't need to teach her anything extra." But I said, she (her daughter) was quite happy when I taught her.

Emma said she did not confront the teacher directly. But she stressed that when she taught her daughter at home it was not pushing. Emma's proof was that her daughter "was quite happy" to learn. Emma continued:

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[56] Pseudonym. Alicia is Lan's younger daughter.

> Not just Chinese parents wanted their children to succeed academically. Otherwise why were there so many advertisements for maths home tutoring and they were advertised in English?

Emma gave more examples of how she reinforced and extended her daughter's learning at home with a child-centred approach. Emma said that sometimes she saw the children playing shopping games in the centre. Emma said it was probably from the shopping game that her daughter started to understand the concept of money. Emma let her daughter keep her lucky money[57] to learn money management. Emma explained:

> Now she can tell the differences between the notes, say, $10, $20, and $5 dollar notes. She has money in her piggy bank…She'd got a certificate award from the school. So I decided to give her a prize and I let her to choose a toy… She bought a 28 dollar toy from K-Mart the other day. I told her she needed to pay me back with her own money. When we came back home, I asked her for the money. She got a $20 dollar note from her piggy bank. I said: "That is not enough. You have to give me 30 dollars. Do you have another 10 dollars?" She went and got a $10 note. I said, "You gave me 30 dollars, so I would give you 2 dollars change". I gave her a two-dollar coin.

Emma noticed that her daughter understood the social values of money. For example, the little girl asked to be paid for her work. Emma said her husband once asked her daughter to help him putting papers and pamphlets into envelopes:

> They (her Dad's company) needed to send out the catalogues. You only need to tell her once, for example, pick up those three items and put them into an envelope, and then put it aside. Just need to tell her once, she would finish all the work. But then...she learned to ask for pay.

Emma's husband paid their daughter five dollars for the work. The family also let the little girl to do some housework if she was happy to. Emma made it quite clear that she was not getting paid for doing housework. In this way, Emma was extending her daughter's knowledge of the face values of the notes to learn about the social value of the money.

Previous studies (i.e. Lareau, 2003; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Reay, 1998a) have reported that mothers, particularly middle class mothers, deployed different

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[57] It is a Chinese custom to give children lucky money for the lunar New Year. Money is normally given to children in a small red envelope.

strategies to reinforce and extend their children's learning at home, including using paid private tutoring. Those studies were carried out in a primary school context in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the New Zealand mainstream early childhood context where play was considered as the most appropriate medium of learning, Emma seemed to feel the need to explain that her work at home complemented the authorised educational approach. This was evidence of "feel for the game". Emma's account showed that she accepted the rules of the game. Yet, it was not straightforward *illusio* as Bourdieu (1990) suggested. Emma presented her own definition of learning through play. She bluntly rejected the teacher's suggestion that all Chinese parents tend to push their children and she insisted that her daughter was happy to learn. Emma was able to define the rule to make the game suit her role as a migrant mother who also believed "excellence is taught".[58]

Likewise, Polly said that her teaching started from her son's interest. Polly said children needed to be taught. She taught her son how to do puzzles and now he could complete puzzles very quickly. She had to teach him at home because she had never seen him doing puzzles in the centre:

> At the beginning, his favourite animal is the elephant. So we did this (the elephant puzzle) first. After doing the elephant puzzles, he started doing other puzzles and soon he could do the puzzles very quickly….If you choose his favourite puzzle he would be interested. If he doesn't like it, no matter what you do, he is not going to pay any attention. Very tiring. But if he is interested, you just need to give him some hints, and he will follow very quickly. It is much easier.

Polly believed that "excellence is taught". She was trying to illustrate the point that Emma has made: adult-initiated teaching can also be child-centred as well as facilitating learning through play.

In a related vein, Lan said she sought "teachable moments" to teach her two daughters. She defined a teachable moment as:

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[58] Like Polly, Emma also listened to the Chinese radio programme in which a Taiwanese educator said "excellence is taught". Both Polly and Emma cited this statement to justify their mothering work.

> That is, see what she is interested in. So (to seize the opportunity) and explain to them what it is like in what aspect, something like that. Didn't teach them very formally. Didn't have the time either.

Lan gave an example of this kind of teachable moment:

> The other day, I was teaching her older sister maths. She (the younger daughter) answered. She was faster in English but quite slow in Chinese … If you say "what comes after eight?" (She would answer) "Nine." But if you say it in Chinese, she didn't quite understand. She had to think quite a while. I think the teachers must have taught her in the centre. I saw her use the old calendar … the teacher would say a number then she would circle that number (on the calendar). So I asked her to answer the questions in Chinese and explained to her what it meant in Chinese. You need to repeat these things to children. If you keep telling her, she would remember. She seems to have a very good memory.

A theme constantly appeared in the interview excerpts in this section: the participants described their parenting in a way not much different from the mainstream early childhood pedagogy that learning should be fun; children learn through play; and learning should be related to real life situations. Emma openly rejected the notion that Chinese parents often push their children to succeed academically, a stereotyping image of Chinese parents that has been reported in many studies overseas (e.g. Li, 2001). According to the participants' descriptions, they were happily and willingly pursuing a child-centred approach albeit with their personal interpretations and innovations.

I asked the participants where they learned or acquired information relating to parenting skills. Lan said she read some parenting books while in China. She thought information about positive guidance was very useful. When her two girls had a fight, she would try to encourage them to figure out a solution rather than rush to police them, a strategy she has learned from reading. Polly said she listened to both English and Chinese radio stations where there were some parenting programmes. She also watched TV programmes such as "Super Nanny". Like Polly, Emma listened to Chinese radio programmes on parenting. But often, she talked to the teachers in the centre about parenting skills. Emma said different teachers offered different ways and perspectives to work with children. The mothers' accounts showed that they understood the modern discourse of "good" parenting, and they actively pursued and acquired these "good" parenting skills from sources that were of certain authority or expertise.

In the existing literature on parenting style (Baumrind, 1991), Chinese parenting style has been frequently described as authoritarian and restrictive (Chao, 1994). The child-centred parenting style in the participants' self-portraits was different from the stereotyping images of Chinese parenting. This difference might be due to the change of time, different characteristics of the participants, the research context, and research methods. First, the media and experts in mainland China have recently advocated a more equal and open parent-child relationship, a departure from the traditional image of an authoritarian and restrictive parenting style. "Respecting children" has become an important element in China's kindergarten education of the last 20 years (Liu & Feng, 2005, p. 94). Second, I have focused on mothers' accounts in this research. Mothers and fathers might have different parenting styles. The Chinese saying describes a traditional parenting norm of "restrictive father and caring mother" (严父慈母). Third, parenting style changed according to children's characteristics, such as their behaviours, gender and age (Carter & Welch, 1981). Although the participants in this research talked about their school children, the focus remained their preschool children. The younger the children, the less restrictive the parents would be. In traditional China, young children were often pampered and seldom disciplined (Wu, 1996). Fourth, it might be due to the New Zealand context. The parents believed that the children would have a better future than their parents. Alison said:

> In New Zealand this society, really, everyone could have an opportunity to develop well. As long as you have confidence, and you are optimistic, your future will be bright … not possible to have a life style like a billionaire but it won't be too difficult to have a simple and happy life. It could be hard for us. We have the language or communication barriers. But for them (the next generation) it won't be a problem.

Research findings in North America (Li, 2001; Pieke, 1991; Siu, 1994) showed ethnic Chinese parents believed that their children have to work harder to overcome racism and the disadvantageous position of being a visible ethnic minority. In the current research, it seemed that the participants were reluctant to label any disadvantages or discriminations they and their children had encountered as racism. This difference might be due to the different socio-political and economic contexts of North America and New Zealand. A popular image about New Zealand is of an egalitarian and relaxed country. The economy boom in the past ten years has

continuously seen a very low unemployment rate[59]. This might have reinforced people's perceptions of the popular New Zealand image. Viewing a more laid back style as the norm, the participants might find it at odds with a more restrictive parenting style. The migrant mothers in the current research carefully pointed out that they were not pushing their children. To put it differently, the migrant mothers might have a different "feel of the game" because of the different field.

Another possible factor attributing to the different findings between the current research and existing literature could be the different research methods applied. In the current research, participants were allowed to select material and information to account for their daily experiences. That is, the participants largely chose to describe their activities rather than answering set interview questions. This method encouraged autonomy as how the participants wanted to represent themselves as mothers. Interviewees' statements were narrations that the speakers used to present themselves as a certain person in relation to the interview topic. In general people want to present themselves favourably (Goffman, 1971; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000 Mazeland & ten Have, 1996). "Favourably" denotes a certain legitimate standard. The specific interview context is situated in a broader social arena (Silverman, 1993). In New Zealand, child-centre approach is the most preferred method in the mainstream field of professional teaching and childrearing. The participants' accounts showed their endorsement of this legitimate norm in New Zealand. The participants said that they acquired parenting skills from books, the media and teachers (professionals). They did not mention learning from the previous generation who might have offered more traditional ways of childrearing. The above four reasons also demonstrated that designating certain parenting styles to a cultural group without carefully examining the context can be overgeneralising at the best and misleading at the worst.

Nevertheless, some traditional values and attitudes lingered. As Bourdieu (1977a) argued, habitus persists long after people have left the field where they acquired the

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[59] The data collection was carried in 2007 before the global economic turndown in 2008. Statistics New Zealand's (2008b) December 2007 quarter recorded the highest employment since records started in 1986.

habitus. All the participants were aware of the different ways of teaching and learning in New Zealand and in China. Parents had to patch over the differences at home. Polly, for example, did not agree with the mainstream practice of giving children cold tap water at mealtimes. But she accepted that it was the culture in New Zealand that her son had to adapt to. So at home she gave her son lukewarm water instead:

> Not that he (her son) can't drink (cold) water; at dinner, I gave him a sip (of lukewarm water). If it is the afternoon and a bit hot, drinking cold water is fine.

At home, Polly did not want her son to drink cold water at mealtimes. She said: "

the stomach should keep warm. A glass of cold water is not good". Although Polly believed that a healthier habit of Chinese tradition was to drink soup at mealtimes, she did not force her son to follow this practice either. She said:

> I only add a few spoonfuls of soup in his rice, and feed him. He only tries chicken soup, so he might try a mouthful (of chicken soup). He didn't drink any other meat soup.

The efforts of participants trying to bridge the differences between the home and centre/school were mostly evident when they taught their children to learn English and Chinese. Although the participants all wished their children to master both languages, most of the time compromises had to be made. The next section describes this dilemma in more detail.

7.3 Language and Learning Languages

Language and learning languages at home followed a similar pattern of reinforcing, extending and bridging. Nevertheless, the process of acquiring a language or languages, "linguistic capital", a special form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1992) has its unique characteristics. The participants wanted to integrate the strengths of both Western learning and the Chinese way of learning. For example, they wanted to combine the strength of play as a medium of learning with the strengths of more adult guidance, emphasising the process as well as the product of learning. However, the participants realised that different languages could not simply be mixed together. For instance, speaking Chinese using English grammar or mingling both Chinese and English words together would not be accepted in either linguistic field, thus would be

of no capital value. The participants used a range of strategies from seeking middle ground, and making compromises, to requiring additional resources to ensure their children's maximum linguistic benefits.

7.3.1 Bilingualism: A compromise

Yu's (2005) study in New Zealand showed that even though Chinese migrant families were able to provide an environment for their children to acquire Chinese language, home language maintenance would not be easy. His study illustrated that children's daily conversation in their native tongue was gradually reduced and taken over by the English language, a phenomenon called code-switching. In the current project, the participants wanted their children to be bilingual but obviously regarded English learning as a priority because of its high market value in New Zealand. English was a tool to make and keep contact with mainstream society and access other benefits. Yu contended that Chinese migrant parents have a lot of hard work to do in everyday practice to maintain their home language. However, the findings of the current research suggested that the participants were clearly aware of this issue. The migrant mothers made compromises because of various perceived constraints and limitations in real life situations. The mothers assessed their real life situations to decide what was worth investing in as Bourdieu (1990) argued.

All participants wanted their children to master both English and Chinese. In reality they had to make compromises. For those who believed they would not return to China, learning English became a top priority for their children. Although they wanted their children to learn Chinese, the adults realised there were many constraints, and it was an uphill battle if they expected their children to be fluent in Chinese in all aspects of listening, speaking, writing and reading. So some participants insisted only that their children be fluent in speaking and listening. Because the Chinese language as a cultural capital functions to maintain family ties, speaking and listening are the most important elements in family relationships. These views echoed Chinese migrant parents' perceptions in Canada (Zhang et al., 1998).

Anna said that she spoke only Mandarin with her children at home. In this way, at least her son would be able to speak and understand Mandarin. Thus Anna could at least communicate with their children in her native tongue. Whether her son could read or write in Chinese was beyond her control. But Anna noticed that her daughter,

who came to New Zealand at the age of seven, now a teenager, was using Chinese less and less frequently. She used Chinese for simple conversations, but would find it difficult to explain deeper or more complex meanings in Chinese. The two children were speaking English to each other at home. Anna said:

> That's why now I have to train the older one to speak Chinese. But she's used to it (speaking English). Whenever she opens her mouth, it is English. Now I have to train her (to speak Chinese). As to the younger one, I am not too worried. 'Cos he knows that he must speak Chinese with me. He is not like the older one. He is not used to thinking in English yet.

Anna said that sometimes her son was quite confused, and seemed to speak Chinese using English grammar. While speaking only Mandarin to her son, Anna spent time cultivating her son's interest in reading English. Anna said she didn't think the centre had provided enough learning opportunities for her son so she tried to compensate for what was missing from the centre during the weekend:

> He spends more than eight hours a day in the centre. So it really depends on the teacher, doesn't it? If they give them more inputs, more training, the outcome will be different. If early childhood centre doesn't have that many programmes, the outcome will be different…To be honest, I don't really know what he does in the centre. Sorry. We go to the library almost every Saturday morning. I don't mind how much he has read, I only want to teach him a concept, and a habit (to read)…Sometimes we get some very good books and he would be very happy. He can recite it. Now it is this *Chameleon Chameleon*[60]. I don't know if you have read it. This book is really good. Sometimes (sitting) in the car, he would recite (part of the book). Or he would turn over the pages. He didn't really understand the English words, but he would recite it to me as he turned the pages. Sometimes, if I got it wrong, he would correct me (saying) it should be such and such.

Anna's work with her son demonstrated her role as a compensator (Reay, 1998a). She spoke only Chinese to her son, but read English with him. Her work illustrated her intent: to maintain her son's oral Chinese so as to communicate with him in her native language; reading English was to compensate for what should be taught in the centre.

Fang's story was slightly different because of the different family situation. Fang said because her mother who did not understand English at all was living with them,

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[60] This is a children's book in English written by Joy Cowley with photographs by Nic Bishop

the family watched up-to-date Chinese TV programmes through satellite. The family also read Chinese newspapers. Their children's Chinese was fine because the family spoke only Chinese at home. But she noticed that when Chinese children were together they talked only in English. Fang considered learning English important at the moment. But she was worried that as the children grew older home would have less and less influence on their language learning. Then learning Chinese would be a problem. Fang said every day she would ask what the children did in the centre and school. They could tell her their experiences in Chinese. Occasionally, there would be a few words they did know how to translate into Chinese. Sometimes, Fang's mother would teach the children some Chinese. That happened only when the children were interested. They did not push the children to learn. Fang said:

> If they are going to live here, of course English is important. But if they can speak Chinese fluently that is enough. Chinese is not easy to write. Maybe it is difficult (to require children) to write Chinese well. Parents may also lower their expectations. (They) only require the child to speak Chinese, because they are going to live here after all. …if we were in China, Chinese would be important. If we went back to China, it is also useful that they can speak English…It is a dilemma. There are also pros and cons. You just can't have the cake and eat it too.

The family is a field, a site for social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1996). Within the family, the children would have Chinese linguistic and cultural influence. However, these influences were confined within the family. The participants predicted and accepted that the home influences would diminish as the children grew older. Because they observed constraints on maintaining Chinese in their adopted country, the migrant mothers were prepared to make a compromise. This compromise seemed to offer a pragmatic solution to maintaining the home language while acquiring the dominant language. After all, the mothers accepted it was not realistic to expect their children to master both languages to perfection. Trying to achieve perfection in both languages would more likely put the children at risk of learning neither well, or would be too costly to achieve perfection in both languages in terms of time, energy and financial costs. So ironically, accepting the compromise position was to ensure that children would acquire English to provide access to other benefits and be competent in their home language to maintain the family ties—a realistic strategy for the migrant mothers to maximise linguistic capital gain for their children in a

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particular situation, or a field where their minority cultural and linguistic capital value is not on an equal footing with the dominant capital value.

All the mothers said that their preschool children had not had any formal learning in Chinese yet. They would wait until the children were five or older, and then might send them to Chinese school to learn how to write and read. Fang explained that her son's school once invited Lin Shuang [61] to do a presentation for Chinese parents:

> Lin Shuang said that if you taught the children Chinese too early, they would confuse Chinese with English. If they learned *Pinyin* [62], it would clash with English, 'cos Chinese *Pinyin* is similar to English letters. It is better to wait until they (the children) are a bit older to learn (*Pinyin*). She (Lin Shuang) said it was better to wait until (the children) have consolidated their English. Otherwise, they would be confused.

Which language needs to be consolidated first, again depends on one's personal situation. Lan sent her older daughter, at the age of five, to a Chinese school to learn Chinese once a week. Her older daughter had been in China attending a preschool for almost two years before she turned five and came back to New Zealand for primary school. Lan said:

> The older one went (to Chinese class). Because she has already learned a lot of Chinese words at the preschool (so I sent her to learn Chinese). (In China there wasn't) really formal teaching, but there was a book, called "*Listening and Reading Exercise*", it was like reading some rhymes. She read a lot, and then recognised quite a few words. I think it is better to let her continue (learning Chinese) once she was back (in New Zealand). Otherwise, she would forget all about (the Chinese words).

For Lan, the priority was to continue teaching her older daughter Chinese because the girl had learned Chinese in China. Lan said the younger one did not go to a Chinese school yet [63]. But if the older daughter read Chinese, the younger could copy

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[61] A Chinese migrant from Hong Kong. She has written books in Chinese introducing New Zealand educational systems and Maori culture. 林爽 is also known as Lun Song as pronounced in Cantonese. Because the interview was conducted in Mandarin so it is pronounced Lin Shuang as in the pinyin system.

[62] The Chinese phonetic system. (see Chapter 3 and Xinhua News Agency, 2008a).

[63] Most Chinese Sunday schools in Auckland only enrol children at the age of five and above.

and read. Lan's two daughters normally listen to Chinese stories on audiocassettes before going to bed:

> Then they listen to the tape we brought from China, Chinese stories. I just let them listen, before they go to sleep. Finishing listening, they will go to sleep.

Lan said although her husband wanted to send the girls back to China for education, with two children it was not that easy to return to China. Besides, the girls could still learn Chinese in New Zealand:

> Their (the two girls') Chinese might not be as good as those children in China. But we speak Chinese here (at home), don't we? They don't know the words, we can teach them. But if we go back to China, and want them to learn English, our English is not that good. No matter how you learn, it won't go very far. Here, they can learn English, and learn some Chinese as well.

Lan's words implied a compromise. Moving back to China would mean losing access to "authentic" English learning. Staying in New Zealand might result in learning "not-as-good" Chinese. Because she was able to teach the children Chinese and there were Chinese Sunday schools in Auckland, Lan reckoned that staying in Auckland would eventually maximise the opportunities for her daughters to learn both languages. Again, a compromise ironically served as the best realistic solution.

The strategies that the participants used depended on the linguistic field where they were. Deliberately teaching or not teaching English were two different strategies depending on where they were. Gillian's son came to New Zealand at the age of eight years without knowing a single word of English. Gillian explained:

> We didn't want to teach him English (before we came to New Zealand), because we were afraid that the accent in China would influence the way he spoke English.

Gillian added:

> I think those teachers and classmates were very nice. He seemed to adapt very quickly.

Her son mastered the language very quickly. In fact, his English was too advanced now for his parents to offer him any more help with English homework. Gillian said sometimes when the family watched English movies on TV her son would help to

translate for them. Recently, he had full marks for his English speech in the class. Gillian said: "Of course we were very pleased (about this result)."

However, his Chinese did not improve any further. Gillian said that the other day her husband was helping her son with his social science homework and explained it in Chinese. The son said he didn't quite understand what his father said, and asked if he could explain it in English. Gillian used to teach him Chinese at home. She gave up eventually because it was too difficult to achieve any results. Whatever she taught him, it went "one ear in, the other ear out":

> In the first few years (after arriving in New Zealand), I taught him Chinese. I taught him a lot from the primary school textbooks. But it was always one ear in and the other ear out (laugh). It is hard to push him to learn. It looks like that he can't just keep the knowledge.

I asked Gillian as well as Fang during the interviews if it would be any help if school and early childhood centres offered bilingual education, teaching English and Chinese. Fang said that might be helpful, but:

> It is not possible because this society is an English (speaking) society. If you want to learn other languages, you have to do it yourself because there is no such educational system.

Gillian's thoughts were similar to Fang's. She did not think bilingual education was possible. Even when school offered some Chinese language classes, it might not help either. Gillian said:

> My husband always said that language learning relies on the environment, even he has learned the language but he is not using it, it is of no use.

Gillian and Fang's words might indicate their acceptance of the *doxa*—that they accepted that the Chinese language has no place in the dominant society and mainstream education. Their words might also signify a more philosophical understanding that until Chinese language has genuine value in the linguistic market of New Zealand, other changes could just be superficial rather than fundamental.

I asked Gillian how to provide the right environment to learn Chinese language. She said:

It seems we might not have tried very hard to provide him with the environment. For example, if we can afford, (we would) go back to China for a few years (to learn Chinese), and live here for a few years, so (the children won't) forget English. But we can't afford it. Not affordable in terms of time and cost.

Gillian said although she and her husband thought that learning Chinese was important for their son, in reality their expectation was restricted by limited energy, human and material resources. Parents could only try to do whatever they could. Although the participants were worried the children's Chinese language ability would eventually go downhill, learning English was of immediate concern for their preschool children. Gillian was teaching her daughter the English alphabet and some simple words because she was starting school soon. Gillian said although her daughter's English improved after attending the kindergarten, the kindergarten did not teach formal writing:

If her English gradually improves in the future and her Chinese worsens, I will teach her Chinese at home. ...I have a whole set of primary school Chinese textbooks. Brought them from China when we first arrived. Bought them for my son originally.

But remembering that the couple's older son did not start learning English until he was eight years old, why did Gillian take all the trouble to teach their daughter English letters and words before she started school? Gillian said that her daughter was born in New Zealand. She had direct contacts with the English-speaking world, and she wanted to learn the language. In addition, teaching her daughter English was a way to improve her own English as well. In short, because the family was now in a different field, Gillian believed she had to teach her daughter the alphabet and some simple words. English was important, not for just her daughter, but for Gillian too. Because the family was in New Zealand, English linguistic capital had high value. Gillian explained her daughter wanted to learn English to "communicate with others". Even a four year old might have realised the importance of learning English. Both adults and children seemed to understand the "feel for the game".

Gillian showed me a book "*My First 50 Words*". She said she just started teaching her daughter some simple words. There were pictures matching the words in the book as well as simple sentences containing those words. Gillian opened the book; there was a picture of a cow and the word "cow" next to the picture. She said:

(When I teach her) first I said "cow", then I said it in Chinese, in Mandarin[64]. (She) would guess about the word according to the picture. I don't know if she actually recognises the words or not.

Gillian noticed that their daughter recognised the same words in other books. They concluded that she was indeed able to recognise some simple words such as "cat", "dog" and "cow".

Capital acquisition required resources and time (Bourdieu, 1986). Because they perceived resources and time to be limited, the participants were prepared to make a compromise about their children's bilingual learning. The children were expected to master English language in all aspects because the linguistic capital would be vital for their children's future in New Zealand. The participants required their children to be able to speak and understand oral Chinese so the children can communicate with the family in their native tongue. The participants pointed out that language learning relies on an authentic linguistic environment: Chinese will be learned in China and English in an English-speaking environment. The participants' explanation echoed Bourdieu's theory that access to linguistic capital required access to the specific linguistic field. The participants' accounts illustrated that the borders between the linguistic fields are more rigid than those of other fields. The values of linguistic capital are also more specific to the particular field. In Chapter 5, the participants talked about the divides between the two cultural fields of China and New Zealand. The divides made it harder for the migrant mothers to bridge the gaps in their daily lives for their children to truly achieve bilingualism.

The participants were able to teach their children Chinese language. However, the teaching was restricted by the social and structural reality where English is the dominant language with more relevant market value. Even though the mothers realised the uphill battles they could face to maintain their children's home language once they grew older and the home influence lessened, the parents saw mastering English language as more important for their children's future. Since English was the

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[64] Gillian and her husband were from Hunan province of China, so at home they spoke Hunanese, the dialect of the area. Their daughter also spoke Hunanese at home and was able to speak some Mandarin as well.

second language for them, some participants realised they needed extra resources and efforts to teach their children English at home.

7.3.2 "English is our second language."

Lareau (2003) suggested that non-dominant class families could not provide their children dominant cultural capital because they did not have the resources. In this project, the participants' perceived lack of resources heightened the priority level of learning English. The participants utilised various available resources in an attempt to compensate for the resources that were not available. For example, Emma talked about incorporating traditional Chinese values to help her daughter learn English. Learning languages was not just about learning various linguistic skills and vocabularies. It entailed different ways of learning as well. Emma's words summarised the cultural differences between China and New Zealand in childrearing and education:

> Is it perhaps, *Yang Ren* let the children develop more freely, for example? But Chinese parenting still needs to "*guan*"(管) a little bit, govern a little bit. Or managing a bit. Still have to think of a model for the child to follow.

I asked Emma what it meant in practice. For example, when she was teaching her daughter writing and reading, did it mean that she would have a very clear goal to achieve? Emma said:

> Yes, yes, yes, yes. For example, (in the centre) she used to write "s" in the opposite way[65]. I didn't mind at that time. But now I would tell her that no, you have to write it this way.

Emma's interpretation of "*guan*" highlighted the importance of both the process and the product in Chinese traditional learning and teaching. Emma said because her daughter had just started school so the learning should be more serious. She would add some extra homework for her daughter. Nevertheless Emma was quite aware of the different ways of teaching between school and home, she would just add "a little bit extra":

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[65] The mirror image.

I won't force her to write every single word a hundred times[66]. It would only happen if she were willing to. For example, she is happy to copy once the words I have written. That is all. But I know that in China, they (children) have to copy a word many times.

Emma moderated the traditional way of teaching to bridge the home and school practice. She described how she added just "a little bit" extra:

(Her daughter's home work) was a piece of A4 paper, (children were required to learn) four (English) words. (She was required to) stick a picture or draw a picture under each word on that piece of paper. But I told her that, for example, if you drew an apple, and you knew how to draw an apple, but you also need to write the word "apple". Of course she didn't know how to write it. So I wrote "apple" on a piece of paper and asked her to copy the word (onto the A4 paper for her home work).

Emma noticed that when her daughter was reading she was looking at the pictures for cues rather than recognising the words. Emma said she did not expect her daughter to recognise the whole book overnight. But she thought at least the girl should try to recognise the words:

I would cover the picture and see if she recognises the words. If not, then I would let her look at the picture and try again. I think I would only try and see if she can (recognise the words).

Emma showed me a poem typed on an A4 paper. She said that her husband typed and printed out the poem from her daughter's book of reading. So after their daughter read the poem with the picture, they also encouraged her to read it without the picture. This example demonstrated how the end product, the skills and techniques, were emphasised in learning and teaching. Emma's daughter was around during the interview. She overheard what we were talking about, came over and started reading. The little girl read the poem with very little help from her mother. Emma explained:

English is our second language so (my daughter's) writing and reading might be little worse than others. (This is) because we cannot provide this (language) environment at home. But I look at my friends' children, they are not much

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[66] In China, when children start learning Chinese words, they are normally required to copy a new word a few times to memorise the word. This practice is due to the structure of Chinese characters: words cannot just be spelt. Repetitively writing the words helps children to learn and memorise them.

worse. There is one (child), even better (than children whose native language is English).

Bourdieu (1984; 1986) argued that children from the dominant class were privileged because they had access to valuable cultural capital and various resources. To Emma, because the family could not provide a "natural" environment for her daughter to acquire English language "naturally", more conscious efforts, "little bit extra" and more formal teaching were required to overcome the disadvantage. Chinese tradition emphasised the importance of efforts and endurance in learning (Salili, 1996). Studies (i.e. Hau & Salili, 1991; 1996; Salili, Hwang & Choi, 1989) showed that compared to Westerners, Chinese parents and students were more likely to contribute "effort" to school performance. Effort was considered more important than ability and material resources to succeed. In this sense, "effort" seemed to serve as a perfect antidote to the lack of linguistic capital and resources in Chinese migrant families.

Earlier in this chapter, Emma had stressed she taught her daughter mathematics through play. Emma appeared to be less apologetic about adding "little bit extra" in her daughter's English learning. "Little bit extra" efforts were needed to redress the possibly disadvantageous "English-is-our-second-language" situation. Emma pointed out very carefully that it was just "a little bit extra" not like what the children were doing in China. Earlier, Emma rejected the stereotyping image about traditional Chinese parenting. This time, she cited the Chinese tradition "*guan*" to support her mothering work. "Guan" (管) means "govern" and "discipline". It also denotes "care for" and "training" (Chao, 1994). Emma suggested "*guan*" meant a more definite learning outcome was expected. In this sense, Chinese tradition was modified and became a valid cultural resource to acquire English as second language, the linguistic capital that would be important for the children's future in New Zealand.

Language is not just about skills and techniques (Bourdieu, 1977b). Linguistic capital indicates one's entitlement to a certain social status. Because English is their second language, some parents were concerned about their accent. To acquire the "correct" accent required something more than just effort. Gillian told me about a kiddie laptop:

> There is a kiddie laptop (to learn English words). When there is a picture (pops up), it will read "cow", and (you can) enter the letters c-o-w for cow, and you

press enter. The computer will tell you if (the spelling) is right. She would do it herself. I get off work at 4 o'clock, and will be home by about 5. Very busy, it will over 8 o'clock after we finish dinner and everything. Then it is time for shower and bed. If you give her something like the kiddie laptop, she would do it by herself. If there is anything she doesn't understand she will come and ask.

Gillian explained that the little girl's listening comprehension was much better than the adults'. While sometimes he couldn't understand the words pronounced from the laptop, his daughter could. In addition, an advantage of the kiddie laptop was that it provided more "correct" pronunciations than the parents could. That is, the kiddie laptop compensated for the limited linguistic capital the parents could provide for their daughter. Apart from teaching her daughter, Gillian had a household to run. Teaching required time so did housework. The kiddie laptop, apart from providing more "correct" pronunciations for her daughter, enabled Gillian to balance mothering work and housework.

Alison told me a story similar to Gillian's. Alison said she was teaching her daughter English because her daughter needed the language to socialise with other children. Alison and Gillian both understood the linguistic capital was important for their daughters in gaining other capital, for example, socialising with others. Every Tuesday afternoon, Alison took her daughter to the public library and let her choose the books she liked:

> She is learning English. She wants to learn because she really wants to communicate with others. (We usually borrow) up to 10 books at a time. Back at home, I would let her choose some stories she liked and told her the stories, from the first book to the tenth. After we had finished, she would tell me the stories.

Like Gillian, Alison said she taught her daughter English because the four year old wanted to learn. But there were dilemmas. Alison did not want to influence her daughter's English with her accent. So sometimes she asked her son to read to her daughter because of his more "authentic" Kiwi accent.

There were other dilemmas. Alison had gone through the playcentre training and accepted the tenet of learning through play. Alison thought her daughter might not need to be taught so many things:

> I also think that at this age, it should be like this. Don't require too much. Like my son, in those days, was learning speed memorising, and Chinese. He could

read Chinese at the age of four or five. On the contrary, we didn't let him study English. Because we were coming here anyway…

Alison looked back at her own experiences, and commented on the more relaxed educational system in New Zealand:

> My husband and I both went through a very strict educational system. Sometimes, I really think that a lot of what we have learned is of not much use. So we don't want to spoon-feed her too much.

However, Alison was not sure if play only would be sufficient for her daughter to acquire the second language. Like Gillian's son, Alison's son came to Auckland at the age of five years without knowing a single word of English and mastered the language within two years of arrival. Alison's son's early childhood was spent in China and her daughter's in New Zealand. Alison said that her son and daughter had different ways of learning:

> I would encourage her (her daughter), no matter what she drew; no matter what she wrote; I would accept it. Never try to change it, and don't require perfection. Before, I would (require perfection). For example, when I taught my son, I would hold his hand to write the words stroke by stroke[67]. But I wouldn't do this to my daughter … (If my son was drawing) I would give him a model to copy; telling a story, there would be an outline to follow: *The Three Piglets*, the first one, the second one, and so on. But I won't make any requirement when my daughter was telling a story.

Alison also noticed some different results between her son and daughter:

> She (her daughter) would write something on a piece of paper, and show me. She wrote some letters and put them together randomly, then told me one by one. I feel that her language ability has not developed very well yet. Maybe like what I said earlier (multilingual children's) language development could be a bit slow. She talks about things not in a very organised way, not very clear. Not like her older brother, who when he was about her age, was already able to speak very clearly, and could tell some very complicated stories.

Alison was from Guangzhou, so she spoke Cantonese. Cantonese was her daughter's first language. Among the family's friends, Mandarin was spoken, which the little girl also understood. Earlier in the interview, Alison said that her daughter's language development seemed a bit slow. She talked to some friends who had

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[67] Chinese words comprise strokes instead of letters.

multilingual children, and they also noticed something similar in their children. A friend with multilingual children told Alison that although multilingual children seemed to be a bit "slow", eventually, after they turned five, they would become fluent in multiple languages. Alison felt that in her daughter's case, it might also be due to other reasons; for example, children were different individuals and developed and grew at different paces. It might also be due to the different teaching approaches between China and the West:

> Sometimes I feel that it is too relaxed here. I feel that it would be better if the two can be combined together…Now, after kindergarten I teach her how to write letters. Then I also teach her some words. This should be taught in the kindergarten. But I have to teach her these because kindy does not teach this stuff at all.

Unlike Emma and Gillian who resolved on more formal teaching and making more conscious efforts in learning English, Alison was uncertain which way was the best for her daughter to acquire both English and Chinese. Dilemmas and ambiguity were reported in other studies (Bentley, 1987; Reay, 1997) when people moved into different fields, changes forced habitus to readjust. Alison had doubts about the educational system that she and her husband had gone through. The doubt was raised because what she and her husband learned was no longer valid in a new field. This is because the value of capital depends on its field (Bourdieu, 1986). Nonetheless, Alison was not certain that the mainstream educational approach worked for her daughter's particular situation.

The participants were aware that the family could not provide a "natural" environment for their children to learn English spontaneously, thus some deliberate and formal teachings were needed. This perception might have strengthened the participants' belief, as stated in previous section, that free play should be combined with intentional teaching to enable learning. Traditionally, Chinese children were often engaged in formal teaching and learning. Research in North America and Western Europe showed that because of the harsh social, economic and political environment, many Chinese regarded hard work and academic excellence as a pathway to battle racism and ensure social upward mobility (Li, 2001, Pieke, 1991; Siu, 1994). This condition of a field might have reinforced the Chinese migrants' habitus to adhere to formal learning. In other words, Chinese migrants utilised

Chinese tradition as a form of (non-dominant) cultural capital to maximise their capital gain in their adopted countries. Often, this kind of consistency was regarded as evidence of the cultural influence on Chinese migrants (e.g. Li, 2001, also see Guo, 2006 for a review of the literature). However, applying the concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital, the meaning of "cultural influence" has a dialectical turn. On the one hand, the "cultural influences" referred to the habitus that conditioned how people perceived their situation. On the other hand, the Chinese migrant parents carefully analysed their field and selectively used the "cultural influences" as cultural resources and capital to achieve social upward mobility for the next generation.

Nonetheless, the participants all understood the market value of learning English language. Their accounts implied the *illusio*, an acceptance of the rule: the value of the dominant language. Paradoxically, because of their minority social position and personal situation, they rejected the mainstream educational approach that language acquisition would happen 'naturally' during interactions. To acquire a second language, the migrant families needed different resources and focused efforts to teach their children English. The following section reports Polly's story, a special case of linguistic complexity. However, it further supports the parents' intuition that second language acquisition might need extra effort and attention.

7.3.3 Polly's Story: Too many languages?

Language learning in Polly's story was more complicated than other stories told in the current research project. Polly was from Shanghai, so she spoke Shanghainese. This was also her son's first language. Polly's husband grew up in Shanghai, but his family were migrants from Guangzhou during the World War II, and thus the family spoke Cantonese. So her husband spoke Shanghainese and Cantonese. Mandarin is the official language and taught in school, and it is also a common language for people from different provinces with different dialects. Therefore, with Chinese friends, Polly said, they often spoke Mandarin. Polly noted that at the age of four and a half, her son still couldn't utter a complete sentence to describe his experiences although he said a lot of words and some phrases. Polly was worried that her son did not seem to be able to translate the words in different languages although he could speak some Shanghainese, English and some Mandarin, and understood Cantonese.

What Polly wanted her son to learn at the centre was to interact and socialise with other children and participate in the group. This was something the family could not provide at home. She showed me photos of her son in the centre's group activities and outings. In every photo, her son was sitting at the very edge of the crowd of children and adults, turning away from the stage where actions were going on, or playing with his own fingers, ignoring what was going on around him. Polly told a teacher about her concern that her son was not involved with group activities. The teacher asked what she wanted the centre to do. Polly said: "I told her, if he was not paying attention, please call his name." Polly believed that not every child could automatically grasp skills through free play. Many skills need to be taught. But Polly was frustrated about finding a way to teach her son.

Polly was worried that because of exposure to too many languages, her son was confused and refused to listen or learn. That might be the reason why he turned away from the group activities. Polly said that teachers at the centre did not really know how to deal with the situation:

> They (the teachers) did not go through this kind of training. They thought there were only two languages at the most. They didn't know there were so many ethnicities and so many languages in China … When I told them (about this), they were very surprised and said, "Oh, so many languages, no wonder your son speaks a bit slowly".

Adding to this perplexity, Polly said that professionals and experts often had different ideas, or had no ideas. Polly talked to a teacher in the early childhood centre about her concern and the "maybe-too-many-languages" situation. The teacher suggested maybe she should speak only English to her son at home. She talked to a Plunket nurse about her son's situation; the nurse said not to worry too much, eventually the child would become multilingual. Polly once listened to an English radio programme where an expert happened to be talking about this topic, and the expert's opinion was that a child was better to learn and consolidate one language first.

Nonetheless, Polly had been teaching her son at home mainly using Shanghainese, Mandarin and English. Polly showed me two evaluations from the current centre: evaluations on her son's abilities in areas such as social skills, knowledge about colours and numbers. Polly said:

You've looked at that evaluation, (it says he) didn't know about the colours, didn't know counting (numbers). Now I have taught him. I taught him and he knew the colours, and counting (numbers). Actually it is quite difficult, because I need to teach him in three languages. Counting, in English, one, two, three, four … then Shanghainese and Mandarin. So, for him, there is a lot of pressure to learn. Not like other children. Look at those *Yang Ren* children, they didn't have such much stuff to confuse their brains. Look at the hand gestures for numbers, foreigners goes like this 1,2,3,4 … (with two hands) we only use one hand (to show all the number from one to ten). I have to teach him two sets of hand gestures. Sometimes he has to think about it, and it takes a longer time to learn.

Polly said that her son refused to learn more than one language for a word:

Although he is bilingual, half Shanghainese and half English, it is not really bilingual. For example, he only knows "apple" (in English) but doesn't know "苹果" (apple). Turtle, he only knows "turtle" in English, and doesn't know "乌龟" (turtle). Although I would teach him both languages, it would depend which one he likes. I taught him turtle in Shanghainese, but he couldn't pronounce it. I taught him turtle in English, he accepted it right away. So he only knows turtle in English. (He is still) labelling one thing with only one language. ...Then, (the word) "猪"(pig), at the beginning, I taught him Chinese. He could say it, so I didn't teach him English. So he only knew "猪" (pig). If you say "pig" (in English), he won't understand.

Polly said even two languages combined (both English and Shanghainese), her son still couldn't describe one event completely. Her son was almost five at the time of interview. I asked Polly if she thought that her son was still young and his language ability would develop later. Polly said:

He is not too young. In China, even two year olds can speak very well and three year olds would have chatted non-stop … (My son's) language development also slows down his learning in other areas. If you teach him, he refuses to learn (because of the language development).

I said to Polly that if she was really worried she should bring her son to a language therapist, and gave her some contacts in Auckland. She wondered if language therapists understood the situation with so many different languages. Her words indicated her doubts about whether the mainstream professionals truly understood her particular situation and if their expertise would be relevant to her and her son's lives. I could not answer her question. I felt sorry that it was the only suggestion I could offer.

More than a year after the last interview, I heard from Polly that after more than six months waiting, she finally had an assessment from a language therapist. At that time, her son was already in school. Polly wrote to me in an email (in English):

> Last week a speech language therapist did an assessment for my boy, she said that 100 points was the average score children have got at my boy's age, but my boy only got 77. Really bad, isn't it? She said I referred my boy too late and hopes school can do something for him. Also, she suggested I refer my younger boy now. Nothing I can do for my elder boy at the moment, still waiting for her second assessment this week.

Polly explained that "too late" means that the language therapist was only responsible for preschool children. Since Polly's older son had already started school, he would be referred to another therapist who worked with school children. Polly wrote, "Yes, she (the therapist) did say that's due to too many languages."

Like Gillian and Alison, Polly understood the importance of linguistic capital—it was only through language that her son had better opportunities to socialise with others. Polly thought socialising with others was an important way for her son to learn. In other words, linguistic capital was the key to other potential capital gains. To achieve this goal, Polly had been playing the role as complementor as well as compensator (Reay, 1998a) at home. She had worked hard to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps between home and the centre. But she did not demand the centre changed the way of teaching to suit her son's particular situation and experience. When she did raise concerns with the centre teachers and other professionals and experts, she was offered advice that was of no use. The dominant way does not always work for people from non-dominant groups because of their different social situations.

7.4 "It's just for them to have some fun."

The mothers' work was not just limited to teaching at home. The work included taking their children to various paid and organised extracurricular activities. Unlike language learning and teaching activities at home that were often riddled with a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity, the participants were more relaxed with the children's extracurricular activities. Although extracurricular activities are part of the wider field and are embedded with the social divide and class inequality (e.g. Bourdieu, 1978; Griffith & Smith, 2005; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1996), the migrant

mothers did not seem to be worried. They all stressed that extracurricular activities were more about the process rather the result.

In this project, the mothers emphasised that all these activities aimed to have some fun, to cultivate their children's interest and to encourage them to socialise with other children. Fang's son was learning drawing and daughter dancing on Saturdays. These lessons were taught in a Chinese community. Fang said most of the children were Chinese ethnics, and the teachers were Chinese but spoke both English and Chinese in the class. Fang noticed that all the children spoke English with each other. Fang's two children were also learning ice-skating on Sunday. She said that the children chose what to learn:

> I asked them (if they wanted to learn), I said let's go and have a look. If you like it then I will sign you up. They liked it.

Our conversation moved to young children training in gymnastics in China. This was before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and the New Zealand mainstream media had reported that in China children as young as two years old started hours of gymnastic drills and their parents were pushing it. Fang commented:

> That is too harsh. We won't do this (to our children). I only want to cultivate their interest, (to learn) a little bit here and a little bit there. Don't need to be too serious. Only a few people (could succeed). So many people do (gymnastic), how many of them could achieve anything? … Why make the children suffer? At the beginning, it seems only those whose families are poor would push their children to learn gymnastics.

Fang said that when the children were six, they might also learn to play the piano and perhaps Chinese as well. But she said she would not arrange too many activities for the weekend because the children needed some free time and not be worn out by too many organised programmes.

Fang stressed the extracurricular activities were just to "cultivate the children's interest". She distanced herself from the "harsh" parenting practice which pushes children to succeed at the cost of their enjoyment and wellbeing. She labelled this kind of parenting as belonging to parents of lower social and economic status. Fang had obviously identified herself with the middle class when she criticised the "harsh" parenting of the "poor". "Harsh" parenting was associated with lower social class who would choose that particularly path, while other paths are limited or restricted, a

very competitive and difficult way for their children to "achieve anything". Fang's statement was consistent with findings in other research (e.g. Ramo-Zaya, 2004). Ramo-Zaya studied the Puerto Rican migrant community in Chicago. Her findings showed that more recent middle class migrants differentiated themselves from working class migrants by rejecting the historical image of poor and less educated Puerto Rican migrants. The finding demonstrated the interplay of social class and ethnicity.

Parents of different social class had different parenting styles. Kohn (1963) said the different parenting styles were due to the parents' values and their occupational habits. Kohn speculated that middle class parents believed in self-direction and working class tended to conform to instructions. These different values were consistent respectively with the parents' different occupational requirements. Another explanation, as discussed in Chapter 2, would be that, when they perceived they had limited access to opportunities and resources, parents were more likely to require their children to conform. This was because they could take "no chance" (Siu, 1994). All investments must guarantee a return or a result. Members of lower social and economic classes usually have fewer resources and opportunities compared to upper-middle class. For that reason, they cannot afford to waste investments without any return. On the contrary, members of the middle and upper middle class who have more resources can afford to pursue pleasure or merely cultivate the children's interest.

In Lareau's study (2003), it was a feature of white middle class behaviour in the United States that children frequently had extracurricular activities typically organised by their mothers. This was a norm for middle class families with young children. Extracurricular activities often required mothers' time and financial costs that working class, particularly sole parent families, could not afford (Griffith & Smith, 2005).

In the current study, Anna, a solo mother who was working and studying, only had time for her children during the weekends. She took them and their friends to swim in the public pool. But she did not enroll her son for any swimming lessons. Polly contemplated taking her older son for swimming lessons in the summer. She said it

was vital to learn swimming in Auckland because water was everywhere. But there were other reasons:

> After all, there are *Yang Ren* teachers. In *Yang Ren* classes there will be another environment for him to socialise. Apart from the early childhood centre, he would explore another environment, more opportunities to have contacts with the society.

Children's extracurricular activities served as an important way for the parents, particularly dominant class parents, to establish a network, or gain social capital. Through organised extracurricular activities, children's and parents' friendships were formed and further maintained out of school (Lareau, 1987; 2003). Polly's words showed she understood the phenomenon in a similar way to Lareau's conclusion. As discussed in chapter 5, the migrant families could not provide those social circles that enabled their children to acquire the dominant cultural capital, and Polly wanted to break through the ethnic divide through organised extracurricular activities.

Gillian said that the couple tried to sign up their daughter for dancing classes but the little girl said she did not want to go because she was a boy. It was not clear why their daughter identified herself as a boy but her statement indicated her understanding that sport activities were gendered, and might have used this statement as a reason for not having dancing lessons. However, the couple did not push their daughter into dancing, and they did not seem worried about her statement either.

Gillian noticed that in New Zealand parent-child sport activities were popular at the weekends. Her son would sometimes participate in school sports during the weekends, such as table tennis and basketball. Rugby was a popular sport in New Zealand. Gillian said that her husband told her how young Kiwi boys playing rugby in the rain and mud and said it was good but physically it was not possible for Chinese. Gillian said that was just Chinese (different) attitude. Whether it was due to physical or attitude differences, Gillian's son did not play rugby. Alison also said that her son commented that rugby was too aggressive. Rugby is part of the New Zealand cultural identity traced back to its colonial roots (Belich, 2001) and Chinese ethnics were never included in the New Zealand dream (Ip, 2003), hence Chinese were mentally and physically excluded from this game. Although not all Pakeha or Maori/Pacific children play rugby, rugby is more a foreign concept for new Chinese migrants. What Gillian said in plain language reflected the socio-political and

historical context of rugby in New Zealand. The exclusion was not executed just by the dominant class to the subordinated. The Chinese migrants believed that rugby is simply not for Chinese, mentally or physically. "The feel for the game" was agreed upon, and the social ruling was seamlessly coordinated. People "participate in the ruling" (Smith, 1990a, p. 14).

The social and ethnic divide, whether genuine or perceived, still existed in the field of extracurricular activities. Nonetheless, the participants did not seem to worry about this like they did in some other fields. They allowed the children total freedom to choose what they wanted to do or if they wanted to participate in any organised activities at all. It seemed that the participants embraced the idea that extracurricular activities were for fun and it was about the process, an investment purely for the children's wellbeing and happiness. A luxury that "poor" families could not afford as Fang explained.

The participants' relaxed attitude about extracurricular activities might be due to the New Zealand context, the field, as showed in Lan's case. Lan's older daughter was in the first year of primary school at the time of interview. Every Monday after school Lan took the older daughter to have piano lessons at the teacher's home. The teacher was a Chinese ethnic who spoke both Mandarin and English during the piano lessons. Lan stayed with her daughter during the lesson so she could understand the requirements to supervise the daughter's practice after lessons. The older daughter also had dancing and Chinese lessons on Saturdays. Lan kept Sunday free for the girls. The younger daughter had wanted to learn what the older sister had been learning. So the younger one started learning dance as soon as she turned three, the minimum age required for the class. Lan encouraged the older daughter to have piano lessons because her daughter had a very good feel for music. As to dancing, Lan said that was just learning some very basic postures:

> I think that (the lessons were) mainly to cultivate their interest. Then it is a very basic training of standing, sitting. It is just basic posture training. Not like in China. In China it is intensive training. It is not usual here.

Lan said if she were still in China maybe it would be hard not to push her children too early. She explained that everybody was doing it, and if you didn't you might disadvantage your child.

Lan's accounts suggested that habitus and the value of cultural capital depended on the field. Lan observed the different norms of the two fields (China and New Zealand) when she stated that the activities "here" were apparently less "intensive" than those in China. Lan's words indicated that if she were in China, she might have to follow the norm. Deviating from the norm would "disadvantage" her child. Moving away from the field implied a possibility of adopting another way of living. Yet habitus not was completely bound by the field. In other learning areas, particularly language, the participants had talked about taking more proactive measures to ensure their children acquire the linguistic capital. This demonstrated a dialectical relation between habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1977a; 1989a).

7.5 Summary

This chapter has presented the Chinese participants' mothering work at home with their children. This work was examined in three main areas: general teaching and learning, language and learning languages, and extracurricular activities. The mothers played different roles to reinforce and extend what their children learned in the centre. While the mothers showed the confidence of typical dominant class mothers in teaching their children at home and were able to compensate for what they thought was missing from the mainstream education, they did not demonstrate the legitimacy and certainty to intervene with their children's centres or schools as do typical dominant class mothers reported in the literature. A similar theme was observed in the previous chapter. This might due to the New Zealand educational context is different from the UK and USA. This "mixed" sense of certainty and ambiguity could also be due to Chinese skilled migrants' situation: these migrants were accustomed to belonging to the middle class professionals in China and had internalised the sense of certainty as members of the dominant class. This sense of certainty and legitimacy prevailed even though the migrant families experienced social downward mobility to varying extents after migration. Conversely, in New Zealand, the "once-middle class" professionals were also in a less privileged social position as members of an ethnic minority who did not possess all the valuable cultural and social capital needed when dealing with the institutions. Thus they also had a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. The migrant mothers were able to reject and criticise the professionals but at the same time incorporated and accepted the dominant discourse.

A distinctive theme that emerged through the participants' narratives was combining the strengths of both mainstream and home cultural practices. The migrant mothers deployed various strategies to achieve this goal. Their strategies varied according to different fields and the relations among different fields. The migrant mothers all said they valued the dominant concept of learning through play. Their work at home with their children showed a spectrum of acceptance: from total embracing to rejecting; from selectively utilising to compromising.

Apart from capital and other resources, the mothering work at home required time and energy. Except for Gillian, who shared the childcare equally with her husband, and Emma, who often talked about her husband's involvement during the interviews, other mothers seemed to be mostly doing it alone, managing and arranging various experiences and activities for their children either at home or outside of home. So this observation raises a question: what support did the mothers have from other family members? The next chapter investigates this issue.

Chapter 8   "The Family"

8.1 Introduction

In his article *On the Family as a Realised Category*, Bourdieu (1996) argued that the family is an important site to generate social and cultural production and reproduction. In Chinese tradition, extended families were involved in childcare and childrearing. Grandparents' involvement in daily childcare was common and is still common in China. However, in chapter 6, the participants talked about extended family support as either unavailable or inadequate to them in New Zealand compared to what they could have had in China. Ho (2004) reported that Chinese female migrants in Australia experienced heavier domestic workloads coupled with career downward motilities. As a result, the women played a more traditional role as mothers and wives after the migration. She called this phenomenon "feminisation". The migrant mothers in the current study experienced similar "feminisation". So how did the women deal with the changes within the family during the process of social and cultural production and reproduction? This chapter examines this issue by focusing on three areas. First, "two generations" investigates the extended family support for childcare. Second, "gendered parenthood" examines the gendered roles that fathers and mothers played in childcare and childrearing. Third, "mothering and paid work" describes the mothers' daily juggling of household work, childrearing/childcare, and paid work.

8.2 Two Generations

Because of the high infant mortality rate in the past, traditionally Chinese people considered young children as "vulnerable and dependent" (Saari, 1990, p. 8). Extra care and protection were emphasised in the early years (Wu, 1996). Consistent with this image of the child, traditional Chinese childrearing practice promoted interdependence between the child and the caregiver (Wang et al, 2008). Traditional China was a feudal society and agriculture was the main production means. The economy had been "characterized primarily by small peasant producers" (Lieberthal, 1995, p. 16). Interdependence among family members and kinship suited this agrarian economy well. "The family in the wider sense must live together for economic reasons" (Fung, 1976, p. 21). A core tenet of Confucianism was the requirement of obligations and interdependence among family members. Thus,

Confucianism reinforced the interdependent and reciprocal relationships among families.

After 1949, the Communist Party undertook radical measures to replace the feudal ideology with Marxism and Mao's thought. In urban areas in Mao's China, it was common for married adult children to live with their parents due to a housing shortage, widespread paid employment of women, inadequate quality childcare, and no public service for the elderly (Logan, Bian & Bian, 1998). Co-residence validated the traditional ideology of family interdependence—the elderly take care of young children while both parents are working and, in turn, the ailing elderly are taken care of by the family.

In a feudal society, the family shouldered the responsibilities of taking care of the young and the elderly. Along with industrialisation and urbanisation, the family lost this function (Prost, 1991). Modern capitalism requires independent and autonomous workers. Socialising children to become independent individuals is a goal of childrearing practice in Western capitalist countries. The two norms, independent and interdependent child, came from two different socio-economic and political contexts, and had different material and symbolic values. The interdependent child became less valuable in a new era of industrialisation. This structural change was embedded in people's daily practicalities. Although traditionally the grandparents were involved in childcare in China, as Fang explained in chapter 6, it "did not work" anymore because "formal education" is better. The invalidation of such a tradition was objectified in people's ordinary lives. Interdependence was named as "spoiling" and was considered less desirable for children's development.

For example, Fang said her mother often rushed to help the children when in fact the children were supposed to learn to do all those things by themselves:

> When they (the children) were younger, I said let them feed themselves. She (my mom) said: "Oh, so young how can they feed themselves?" I thought they gradually would learn. The children just needed to get used to (feeding themselves). If they were hungry they would eat by themselves. Nobody was born with all the skills. They would learn gradually, but for children the earlier to learn, the better.

"Spoiling" was perceived as more of a problem as the child grew older. Emma said that her mother-in-law always fed her daughter even after she had turned five. When

her mother-in-law returned to China for a visit, Emma would let her daughter feed herself. Even when her daughter was a toddler; the little girl was able to feed herself if her grandmother was not around.

Cathy told me a similar story. Cathy's father-in-law would dress her son. When Cathy was with her son she would encourage him to get dressed by himself:

> I would put the clothes ready for him, (tell him) this side is the front and that is the back. Children understand adults' requirements. When he is with me, he would dress himself; when he is with her grandpa, he would let grandpa dress him. At mealtime, when I am with him, he feeds himself. If he doesn't want to eat, then it is fine. But his grandpa (could say): "Don't want to eat? It can't be." So he would feed him. Afterwards, he (the grandfather) would say: "Look, don't want to eat, don't want to eat. I fed him and he emptied the whole bowl."

The evidence that the traditional practice was no longer valuable looked very objective. The participants all pointed out that children were able to acquire skills such as feeding and dressing themselves while the grandparents rushed to offer help. Polly said that she sent her older son to her parents-in-law in China. Five months later when she brought her son back, he had acquired some bad habits:

> I sent him back (to China) when he was five months. They (the parents-in-law) took care of him for another five months. He acquired a lot of bad habits. Mealtimes, he would watch TV and play with toys while eating.

Cathy, too, said that she and her father-in-law had different ways of childcare. She said she tried to provide opportunities for her son to take care of himself:

> (My son) can't tie shoelaces yet. But I try to get him to put his shoes on by himself. In China, (children) have everything done by adults.

Cathy thought that the older generation was far too protective. She said:

> I knew they did it for the child's own good. But I can't agree with them in many aspects. They would think that we are doing it for your child's own good and you are not satisfied. So the conflicts just escalated.

Cathy said she had learned a lot and matured after being a mother:

> In the past, I didn't know much about education, didn't know much about how to deal with the family conflicts. Moreover, I was quite dependent. No wonder the child was very dependent. I was quite dependent on my family. Always hoped that someone from the family would come and help me. But actually,

there was nothing impossible. If no one helped me, even though (I have) much more work, I could still raise my son.

Cathy looked back at her own growth and learning after being a mother:

> Actually, at that time before giving birth, I was thinking, oh, if you don't come over, what can I do? I don't know (about taking care of a baby). If I have another child, I definitely won't ask for any help. At that time, I was still in my 20s, now (I am) more than 30. Psychologically, I wasn't very mature (at that time). I wasn't fully psychologically prepared to be a mother. Besides, in China, all parents help with taking care of the children. For some, once after giving birth, they give their children to their parents, grandparents do the whole thing of care.

Cathy's statement described the change of habitus. Cathy had wanted the extended family to come and help her because it was common in China that young parents had their parents' help to raise their children. It was a long lasting disposition and perception of what should be. She also realised that she was quite "dependent". It was a common childrearing practice in the Chinese tradition to cultivate interdependence between two generations. What Cathy did not say explicitly but could be implied was that the traditional values of interdependence was of less positive value.

Other participants managed childcare without extended families' help. However, they did it with compromises, different strategies or other supports. Lan had to work as a contractor because that gave her flexible working hours to take care of her two daughters. Alison had to give up paid work and became a full time mother. Anna could not move her son to another childcare centre because of her situation. Gillian was able to work full time only because her husband was able to take care of their young daughter during the day. In addition, Gillian's parents who did not live with the family but were able to babysit if Gillian had to work overtime.

Traditionally, for Chinese mothers, extended families provided valuable support in terms of childcare. In China, it is still common for extended families to be involved in childcare or act as a primary caregiver of the grandchild. Additionally, hired domestic help is available and affordable for urban professionals in Asia (Ho, 2004). Gillian's older son was born in China and had been cared for by her late mother-in-law before he started kindergarten at the age of three. Alison's older son was also

born in China and had been cared for by Alison's mother and nannies while Alison was working full time.

But for some participants, the support from extended family was not available in New Zealand. Alison's parents-in-law had been in Auckland but returned to China after less than a month because they felt very lonely and isolated. Alison said her widowed mother would feel lonely living in Auckland so she did not ask her mother to come. Lan and Anna's mothers came to Auckland at their grandchildren's birth. But they returned to China after a few months because they were not used to living in Auckland.

Even when the extended family's support is available, the traditional cultural support in a different field does not have high market value anymore[68] as it used to, and thus becomes less adequate according to these migrant mothers. Because of the diminishing traditional extended familial support in childcare and childrearing, the migrant mothers had to seek alternative resources for support. How about the fathers of the children? The next section presents the different roles that the migrant mothers and fathers play in childcare and childrearing.

8.3 Gendered Parenthood

Cultural capital was transmitted from the parents to their children. During this process the inequality of the parents' social status were also passed on to the next generation (see Lareau, 2003). Men's and women's contributions to housework and parenting were not equitable (Doucet, 1995; Oakley, 1985; Reay, 1999). In her classic work, *The Sociology of Housework*, Oakley (1974) reported that fathers tended to choose the fun jobs such as playing with children while mothers normally took up more tedious routine care. The issue of gender in parental involvement was often neutralised by use of the term "parents" (Reay, 1995). Reay (1998) related the gender parenting to gendered social reproduction. O'Brien (2008) argued that

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[68] This might be viewed as generation gap that also happened in China (see China Daily, 2008). However for the migrant families, grandparents as social resources in terms of childcare could not simply be explained in terms of generation gap: the migrant families were more isolated than they would be in China and grandparents lost their networks and communities which contributed to the depreciation of the value of extended families.

women's work with their children was gendered capital. This section investigates how mothers' work generated gendered capital in their children's care and education.

In the current study, among all the eight participants, Gillian was the only mother who was sharing daily childcare with her husband "half-half". Working night shift, Gillian's husband was able to take care of their daughter during the day. Nonetheless the mother and father played different roles in their daughter's upbringing. Despite sharing half of the childcare with her husband, Gillian still considered herself the primary caregiver and educator in her daughter's life:

> When I am home doing housework, he (Gillian's husband) would take her to play outside. All outdoors activities, like playing in a playground, is dad's job. But teaching her writing and maths is mum's job.

Gillian said her husband did not talk to the teachers in the kindergarten often because he was really keen on this kind of stuff. Gillian said her daughter was introvert and was particularly shy with non-family members. Gillian thought she would have provided more opportunities for her daughter to socialise with other children if she, instead of her husband, looked after their daughter during the day. Gillian said: "Men are different with this thing (taking care of children)". The reality that other children were taken care of by the mothers might have strengthened this belief.

Gillian also played the role of educator. Regardless of different subject and different field, the mothers still played the same game: Gillian said she was teaching her daughter the English alphabet, and she used to teach her son Chinese. Likewise, Emma said:

> I take care of her schooling. Her dad pays more attention to her social skills. Hm, dad is about kicking a ball, playing the (computer) games—they are all dad's job.

Emma said her mother-in-law normally did the cooking and cleaning. The mother-in-law's help enabled Emma to better juggling paid work and mothering. Every day after work without having to worrying about housework, the first thing she did was to supervise her daughter's homework and talk to her about her school days. Emma said a main part of her parenting was to supervise her daughter's homework. The gendered parenting role might explain why parents' educational background is usually linked to children's academic success, but the strongest indicator is the

mothers' education (Pearce & Lin, 2007). This phenomenon could be understood, as gendered social reproduction as Reay (1998) described.

Griffith and Smith (2005) argued that all mothers' work not only contributed to the individual child but the functioning of the school. For example, women's work ensured the pupils arrived at school on time, participated in various after-school activities and completed their homework. In general, middle class mothers had more social, cultural and material resources to ensure the smooth operation of their children's schooling. In the current study, the migrant mothers' daily routines were organised around their children's needs and their husbands' work schedules. The mothers' work contributed to their children's care and education as well as their husbands' full time work. The mothers used different strategies and deployed various resources to ensure the best care and education for their children.

Fang and Alison both said that their husbands worked long hours. So the only time the fathers spent time with the children was at the weekend, particularly for some outings. Fang said the family would often go to Mission Bay or Western Springs. Alison said if the family had a long weekend trip out of Auckland, usually with other families, her husband would join them. During the week, Fang sent the children to school and early childhood centre and picked them up. Fang would pick up her son from school at 3 o'clock. She would supervise him to do homework. Fang said that her son had just started school so every day he brought home a book of reading. At 5 o'clock she would pick up her daughter from the centre. In summer, when the day was long, Fang would take the children to the playground in the neighbourhood before heading home for dinner[69].

Lan said her husband was seldom involved with the children's daily care, not even during the weekend, when he would sit at the computer or go fishing. He did take the older daughter fishing once or twice:

> The older one would say she wanted to go fishing. But if she went, he (her father) couldn't do any fishing. The younger one likes to stay with me most of the time. The older one is more extrovert, likes all sorts of activities.

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[69] Fang's mother lived with the family and helped with cooking and other housework.

Lan said she took care of the children, cooked, and did cleaning and gardening. Her husband mowed the lawn though.

> Lan : There are many things to do in the house. All the housework, I do it by
>   myself.
> I   : Do you do all the housework?
> Lan : Of course.
> I   : Gardening as well?
> Lan : Apart from the lawn over the pond, he will mown the lawn, and that is
>   all. I trim the flowers and do the weeding.

Lan accepted her role as the primary caregiver for her two daughters. But she delegated jobs to her husband so she could arrange her time more efficiently for her daughters. Lan's husband normally dropped off and picked up the younger daughter at the early childhood centre on the way to and from work. In the morning, the girls got up after 6 o'clock. Lan would cook breakfast and get the girls ready for school. Her husband and the younger daughter would leave at about eight. The older daughter's school was very close to home, and school did not start until 9 o'clock. So Lan would use that time to teach the older daughter Chinese, or supervise her daughter practising the piano. In the afternoon, the older daughter came home after 3 o'clock. Lan would supervise her homework, and normally gave her some extra maths work. Lan bought some maths exercise books and her daughter could work from the books then Lan checked the answers. She would prepare dinner during that time, before her husband picked up the younger daughter after five.

Polly also negotiated sharing childcare with her husband. Polly said that her husband was involved with childcare when their first son was born. But then he seemed to lose the enthusiasm. At the time of interview, Polly was studying. Her mother was in Auckland and helping her by taking care of the children, mainly the younger son. So Polly asked her husband to take care of the children while she was having evening class:

> He said to me "I only promise you to do these things. Feed him, feed the older
> one and bathe the older one. I am not responsible for anything else. I only work
> at these two things, then mission completed."

Polly said that because she was studying sometimes she told her husband to pick up the older son from the centre. Polly described how her husband did the work:

> Because I have class so my husband does the picking up. Oh, my husband, he is not good at it. He doesn't talk to them (the teachers), picks up (the son) then goes. A couple of times, he came home without (my son's) backpack. Just grabbed the son and ran (laugh). Then, (I asked) "Why didn't you bring the backpack?" (He answered) "There is nothing much in the backpack. Only some clothes. Why bother to bring it home?" In fact, he just forgot about it. He didn't pay attention to these details at all (laugh).

Both Lan and Polly seemed to willingly assume the primary caregiver's role. Harrington (2002) interviewed Pakeha mothers in New Zealand. Her participants believed that men were different from women and were unable to notice the needs of young children or the requirement of housework as women did. She argued that women did not passively react to the "patriarchal ideology". But it had "become programmed into" the women's "bodily rhythms" (p.5). In Bourdieu's term, it was a habitus, or as Reay (2004) described it was a gendered habitus. Polly's description implied that her husband was not capable of some simple jobs such as picking up her son. Earlier, Gillian's words also suggested that a mother suits the job better than a father. The mothers' accounts demonstrated how gendered roles had 'become programmed' into their thinking and expectations. Gendered parenting was objectified. In Bourdieu's term (1990) the migrant mothers accepted the gender role as a *doxa*.

In the current project, this gender division in parenting was evident. Lan explained that when her husband took her older daughter fishing, he could not really do any fishing. The younger daughter, Lan explained, wanted to stay with her anyway. This narrative justified why the father did not take the girls out at weekends and it looked objective. When Polly delegated the childcare to her husband, he made it very clear that he would feed and bathe the older son only. I inferred that Polly assumed her role to be the main carer of her sons. If she was not available, it was her obligation to assign someone else to do the job. By way of contrast, her husband had choices in what he wanted to do.

Anna was a sole mother of two children. Since the birth of her son, the father was absent in the children's lives both physically and financially. Anna used slightly different strategies to maximise her time and benefit for her children. At the time of

interview, she was working three days a week and was studying towards a graduate diploma in Business Studies, with a major in personal financial planning. Anna told me, every day, the family followed a strict routine. From Monday to Friday, every morning, the family woke up early, got ready and rushed out of the door, the children went to school or the centre and Anna went to work. After work Anna would cook and the family had dinner. Dinner started at 6 o'clock and finished at 6:30. After dinner, the older daughter tidied up and washed the dishes while Anna spent time with her son. Anna said from 6:30 to 7:30 in the evening was her time with her son. They usually did some drawing, playing, or reading. Shortly after 7:30, it was bedtime for the younger one. Anna said after the younger one went to bed and until 9 o'clock was her time with her daughter:

> I would spend time with the older one first. I would be with her until almost 9 o'clock. I study after they both go to bed.

Anna would let her daughter know that "I am available for you" during that period of time. She did not give her daughter any extra assignments but wanted to make sure at least she would finish her homework on time. Anna said her weekends belonged to the family. Saturday, she would take the children to the public library, playground, and swimming. Sunday morning, they would go to church. In the afternoon, they would visit friends or just stay home for some family time.

This section has described how the migrant mothers perceived the family support available for them. Regardless of what the mothers were doing, or whether they had any support, they considered themselves to be primary caregivers of their children, particularly responsible for their children's daily care and academic studies. The division of gendered parenting looked obviously objective when the women took up the primary caregivers' role willingly whether they had other family support or not. This was due to the gendered habitus as proposed by Reay (2004).

All the migrant mothers had full time paid employment before coming to New Zealand. Women's paid work presents specific challenges in relation to gendered roles as mothers or primary caregivers of their families. The next section presents the migrant mothers' experiences of mothering and paid work in New Zealand.

8.4 Mothering and Paid Work

Traditionally, Confucianism had designated women to be subordinated to men. From 1949, the Chinese Government had taken a series of measures to achieve gender equality. Two prominent measures were to encourage women to participate in education and in the paid labour force. This was because educational achievement was often linked to one's social status as well as employment (Bauer, Wang, Riley, & Zhao, 1992, Zheng, 2000). So through education, women were able to have better employment opportunities and thus to achieve a more equal social status with men. Despite educational attainment and paid employment women in Mao's China did not achieve genuine equality. But unemployed women were usually associated with low educational attainment and low social status (Bauer et al, 1992). In chapter 6, when Cathy withdrew her son from the sessional childcare centre, she realised that money served as a bar to separate parents who had income and parents who stayed home. Consequently those "housewives" "who had never worked in their lives" as Cathy put it, was inevitably associated with lower social class.

Paid employment had become "an indispensable part of womanhood for contemporary mainland Chinese" (Zhou, 2000, p. 449). The participants regarded paid work as very important. The participants' mothers were all in full time paid employment during the 1950s-1970s. This was the time when paid work was universal in urban China (Bauer et al, 1992; Zheng, 2000). In other words, not only had the skilled migrant women been working outside of home before their migration but they were also raised in families where their mothers had full time paid employment (Zhou, 2000). As Reay (2004) argued, habitus was not just about the body in the structure but the structure in the body. Paid employment and its socio-economic consequences have become a habitus particularly to skilled migrant women from China.

For Chinese skilled migrants, gender equality between husbands and wives often declined after migration. Salaff & Greeve (2003) contended that migrant couples usually held jobs of the same status before emigration from China. After immigration to Canada, although overall all Chinese skilled migrants experienced some unemployment, the decline in job status and wages, and downward mobility were worse for women than for men. Ho's (2004) study showed that Chinese female

migrants often placed their husbands' careers and children's needs before their own career after they immigrated to Australia. The migrant mothers in the current research were in a similar situation. But while some mothers managed to work full time, some had to give up paid work totally, some resolved upon part time work, and some went through retaining in hope of obtaining a better full time employment.

When Gillian was pregnant with her second child, her parents were not particularly pleased. Gillian said:

> Don't really know what was in their mind. Maybe the burden of a young child means I can't go to work.

Gillian's parents thought paid work was very important because "people have to labour and have to work, and can't stay at home all the time", Gillian said. Gillian's father was a teacher and her mother a nurse. Her mother had two daughters, Gillian and her older sister, and had worked all the time including night shifts while raising the children with help from her late mother-in-law.

Participants in this project showed a sense of entitlement when they talked about their paid employment and education. Emma had worked in China as an accountant and had a relevant Chinese degree. Shortly after giving birth to her first daughter, she went to a New Zealand university to study finance. A local qualification did not immediately yield a job. Emma said that was before the summer holiday when she completed her study. There were no jobs available and her student allowance stopped. Emma had to pay for the rent, so had to make a living. So she applied for a temporary job on an assembly line of a factory:

> I had never worked in a factory before. I was thinking at that time my hands were quite dexterous, because our team leader kept asking me if I wanted to work permanently. I was thinking, are you kidding me (laugh)? I have studied for three years just to get a job like this in a factory?

The temporary work ended a few days before Christmas because no extra workers were needed when the Christmas order was finished. Emma said:

> I really felt that the world was very cold and merciless. Hired you in a second when you were needed, dismissed in a second when you were no longer needed. You were not needed meant you were not needed.

Getting paid work was not just to make a living. Emma said obtaining a job that recognised her three years study in New Zealand meant that she was accepted by the local society. She finally acquired a permanent job in the financial department of a big international firm in Auckland. Emma said the job meant a more stable life for the family. Paid employment signified that the cultural capital (the qualification) was converted into economic gains and upward social mobility, which would enable the family to make a decent living in New Zealand.

Emma told me how she landed the job. A friend had told her that a recruitment agency had many work opportunities in accounting and finance. It was a *Yang Ren* agency, which had job opportunities to work for mainstream companies. So she signed up with the agency. Her first job in accounting through the agent was five days' work. Emma said, after the five days, the agency told her that she had very good feedback from the employer. The next temporary job was initially for three weeks. Then she signed a two-month contract with the same company. The company was willing to try three months first, then would renew for another three months depending on her job performance. After working less than three months, Emma was offered a permanent job and was promoted to a higher position after a year. I asked her if she was at the management level. She said there were mainly *Yang Ren* in management. For Chinese ethnics:

> You at least need to be the second generation, so there won't be much language and cultural barriers. If you (a new Chinese migrant) want to be at the middle or higher management level, I think, you have to work at least another 10 to 20 years.

Emma's account illustrated the "feel for the game" that only *Yang Ren* had access to the social capital. For Chinese skilled migrants, upward social mobility relied on breaking into the *Yang Ren* social networks, in Emma's case the *Yang Ren* recruitment agency that had direct connections with all the major mainstream employers. Emma also accepted that career opportunities were limited for the first generation of Chinese migrants while she implied that for the second generation it would be more equitable opportunities.

Emma said that as a mother, working outside of home benefits her daughter more than just staying home with the daughter. She explained:

> You have to socialise in the society. My mum always told me that women staying home breeds trouble (laugh). Breeding trouble refers to the frame of mind. I don't deny the value of housewives. Overall, there are many factors that influence someone who can't go out and work. I don't mean it is no good to be a housewife. But for me, even though I have money, I choose to go out and have contact with the society. The influence will be different for my child. She would watch what I do (rather than just listening to what I say), and I would watch her; she would look at how people are doing things. I would tell her how I worked in the factory.

Emma hoped her experience would help her daughter to understand that it was important to have a goal and to work towards that goal despite all the difficulties and temporary hiccups.

Uttal (1996) identified three strategies that working mothers normally used to accommodate their paid work and mothering. The first was to identify themselves as primary caregivers despite their prolonged physical absence in their children's lives; second was to regard themselves as sharing mothering with their children's caregivers, and the third was to view the caregivers as the surrogate mothers. None of these strategies could make sense of how mothers' paid work contributed directly to mothering. However, asserted that her paid work experiences generated cultural capital for her daughter, an asset that she expected her daughter would inherit just as she had inherited the gendered habitus from her mother as a working mother. Emma's story provides a fourth strategy for working mothers to identify their processes as being indeed a form of mothering.

In the current research project, however, even when they had to give up paid employment, the mothers still maintained their sense of entitlement to paid work. For example, Alison regarded her paid work an integral part of mothering. Alison had tried to have a full time job but because she could not arrange suitable and reliable care for her daughter, she resigned from the job and started working as a playcentre mother. In her son's early childhood, Alison was working full time, and her mother and nannies helped to take care of her son during the day. Talking about the different forms of motherhood, Alison said:

> I don't know, every mother may have a very high expectation of herself. No matter what you have done, you don't feel you have done the best. So it is always self-blaming. Always feel that I could have let my daughter speak more fluently; I could have let her make more friends; I could have made her everyday life more fulfilling. …But as to my son, I carried the tasks very well. I

fulfilled my role very well. My mother and nannies took the rest of the responsibilities. The tasks were divided very clearly. Their job was to take care of him. My role was to earn the money, do my work…I only played the role in the evening (after coming back from work). The part in the evening was easier. It was not very long. I would spend time with him and tell him stories. I provided my son a very good environment. He would feel that people around respected his mother. I provided him a very good environment for development. I sent him to the best early childhood centre, or took him to travel from a very young age. I fulfilled this part of the mother's role, and it was done very well.

In New Zealand, Alison said, she had to be a different kind of mother:

I have to take care of them (at home). This maybe, it is just the culture here. It is a different concept.

Alison talked about the two different norms of motherhood and womanhood in China and New Zealand. The Western ideology had been of the domestic mother. Mothers' place was at home with their children. For the past 10 years, the New Zealand Labour Government had aimed to support families' choices of living, working and caring (Clark, 2006). Although the New Zealand Government claimed to encourage women to participate in paid work and achieve work-life balance (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004), Alison saw through the political rhetoric. Alison's argument was supported by research. Kahu and Morgan (2007) examined government policies in New Zealand and concluded that despite the political rhetoric, the New Zealand government valued paid work above mothering work at home. They argued that although gender equality was stated as the goal of government policy, the policy was "driven by capitalist goals of increased productivity and economic growth rather than the women's needs" (Kahu & Morgan, 2007, p. 134). The values of the norm were based on the means of productivity of the society. With the split of private and public spheres, work in the public domain yielded material profit while work at home lost its material values. According to Bourdieu's theory, the value of capital depends on the field. In this case, mothering as unpaid work was not deemed to be valuable capital. So masked in a social face, the Government's intent was economic productivity (Codd, 2008). But in Alison's case, government policy did not fully support mothers to participate in paid employment either. This showed that New Zealand neoliberalism was not carefully planned.

Although domestic motherhood was the dominant discourse of motherhood in industrial Western countries, after Word War II more and more women were

employed out of the home either due to financial necessity or to break social isolation. So the employed motherhood discourse appeared. It described how woman as "supermom" who can juggle paid work and childrearing at the same time (Uttal, 1996). Uttal (1996) interviewed employed mothers in America about their perception of childcare in relation to the mother's role. Uttal (1996) argued that instead of submitting to the dominant discourse, employed mothers reinvented the meaning of childcare and motherhood according to their real life situations.

While the employed mothers in Uttal's study had to justify their paid work, Alison plainly rejected domestic motherhood: "it is just a culture here" and "a different concept". Alison said she "had to" take the role of the domestic mother, but she did not feel that in doing so she provided the best for her daughter. Whereas for her son, her role as a mother was as breadwinner to provide him with all the best possible opportunities. The working mother was entitled to domestic help. The different cultural norm in China did not cause conflict, but gave Alison strength to reject both domestic motherhood and the "supermom" discourse that designates women to single-handedly juggle paid work and mothering.

Paid employment and education had been an integral part of mainland Chinese women's lives (Zhou, 2000). The participants grew up seeing other women including their own mothers participating in paid employment. It is a habitus, or a gendered habitus (Reay, 2004) that was distinctive of educated women in the People's Republic of China. However, why did the participants defend this habitus with such legitimacy and certainty while they did not defend all the other forms of habitus brought from their native country and their upbringing?

The norms used for exclusion and inclusion were arbitrary. Lareau (2003) argued that working and poor families had childrearing practices and values that were different from those of the middle class. However, only the middle class values gained reward from the institutions and their agencies. Bourdieu (1984) elaborated the arbitrariness of highbrow culture. The norms by themselves were arbitrary because their values were not eternal. However, the values of certain norms or cultural capital had some material basis within a particular context. For example, as discussed earlier, that paid work had more value than non-paid work such as childcare at home was based on the capitalist means of production. But the non-paid

work of childcare was a primary job in women's lives (Kahu & Morgan, 2007) thus gender equality was hard to achieve when women's non-paid contribution was deprived of material value. In other words, the feel for the game, although unspoken, indicated quite clearly that domestic motherhood was less valuable in a capitalist society. The participants in this project seemed to understand this unspoken rule. Adhering to employed motherhood enabled the participants to resist both domestic motherhood that rendered them worthless and the "supermom" image that rendered them impossible. The cultural norm that Chinese women should pursue education and paid employment offered an alternative and practical solution for the migrant mothers.

Polly regarded a paid job as important. She said that when in China, she had a better-paid job than her husband. She had the freedom to use her own salary. She felt very uneasy that she had to be financially dependent on her husband in New Zealand because she was not working. At the time of interview, she was studying full time towards a MBA. She said she hoped that if she had to take her sons back to China for a year or two to consolidate their Mandarin and Shanghainese, her MBA would give her better opportunities to get a job there. More than a year after the interview, I heard from Polly who said her mother was in Auckland and helped with the childcare and housework, and she had been working full time in a souvenir shop while studying part time.

Paid work was an important source of income for the parents to provide for themselves and their children. Single parent families were financially disadvantaged compared to two parent families (Statistics New Zealand, 1999). Moreover, being a member of an ethnic minority, a new immigrant was further disadvantaged because Asian skilled migrants in Western countries were less likely to obtain paid employment that matched their pre-migration qualifications and experiences (e.g. Ho, 2004; Kazemipur & Halli, 2001: Salaff & Creve, 2003; Statistics New Zealand, 2004; Zhou, 2000). Anna was apparently aware of her situation as a sole mother and a new skilled migrant in New Zealand. She had resolved on further education and paid employment for upward social mobility for herself and her children. Anna had a maters' degree in economics from a Chinese university and was studying towards a local qualification at the time of interview. She hoped with the local qualification,

she would have better career opportunities and provide a better future for her children. More than a year after the interview, I heard from Anna. She told me she had finally finished the study. She wrote in an email:

> Yes, I've finished my study and am thinking of my career as a financial planner. I've not decided whether to be an employee or self-employed. As a solo mum, it's hard to compromise between career and family.

The participants realised the constraint of the field, a relatively objective social condition that the habitus alone cannot change (Bourdieu, 1989a). Alison had to play a different role as mother because of the "different concept". Alison said she would like to go back to work since her daughter had started kindergarten. But she could only work part time, the best way to balance paid work and taking care of the family. Alison said she could not imagine how she could work full time again. Fang also mentioned going to work after her third child was born. She said maybe she would send the child to a childcare centre at around seven months so she could go back to work or study[70], it would only be part time. So she would still take care of the children, still have time to send them to and from school.

Lan was working as a contract interpreter. She said the working hours were flexible for her to take care of the family. Sometimes she had to leave at 7 o'clock in the morning so she asked her husband to send the girls to school. Sometimes there was work in the weekends. But she could choose not to go if she had planned something with their two daughters. Lan said apart from working, cleaning and housework, all her spare time was spent with her daughters:

> If I have some spare time it is all with them. Myself, how can I have time for myself? No, there is none.

However, Lan had a plan for herself in the future, when her daughters were older and when she would have time for herself. She did not tell me her full plan until I kept on asking quite a few questions:

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[70] I called Fang when her young baby was nine months. She was still taking care of the baby at home. She thought the baby was still too young to go to the centre. Nonetheless her statement that she was going to work or study still implied the education and paid employment for women as the norm.

Lan: I don't have any plan right now. Sometimes I want to go back to study. Maybe it is very difficult, I think.

I   : Are you thinking of changing jobs?

Lan : Go to study or change an environment. Wait and see. I think study might be unlikely. It is only wishful thinking (laugh).

I   : What kind of job, you are looking for a change?

Lan: Hm, what kind of job for a change. Anyway, my work is in the hospital. I've looked at all sorts of jobs (in the hospital). Anyway, I think there are some jobs I could try.

I   : For example?

Lan: I think (being a) nutritionist is very good (laugh). But to be a nutritionist you need to study (for) a degree.

All the participants perceived paid work as important. This perception existed no matter whether they were working full time or part time or not working outside of home, and no matter what type of paid work they had. A paid job was important because it offered financial security. It was important because it had impact on a person's "frame of mind" as Emma put it. It was a sign for these participants that they would be recognised and accepted by the local society. All participants had paid work before migration. All but one participant changed their occupation after they arrived in New Zealand. Only Emma worked in finance as she used to after gaining a local qualification. Their situations were further complicated when they had young children in New Zealand. All participants had tried to balance mothering and paid work with different strategies according to their different personal situations.

8.5 Summary

This chapter investigated the skilled migrant mothers' strategies to generate social and cultural capital for their children within the family. Again, the mothers' strategies ranged from rejection of to accommodation with various dominant norms about childrearing, childcare and mothering. In Chinese tradition, extended families are social resources in childcare for working mothers. For the migrant mothers, extended family supports became less available or adequate in New Zealand. Without the traditional extended family's support, migrant mothers had to generate other resources, such as paid childcare, delegating work to other family members, and giving up or reducing paid employment. Paradoxes and contradictions were also

observed in the migrants' maternal practices. On the one hand, the migrant mothers assumed their gendered roles out of their gendered habitus (Reay, 2004), putting their children's needs and their husband's career ahead of their own careers—a finding consistent with Ho's (2004) study of Chinese migrant women in Australia. On the other hand, the skilled migrant mothers rejected the domestic motherhood image and resisted the supermom discourse.

Chapter 9   Conclusion

Mencuis's mother relocated three times to a proper environment to bring up Mencuis. A few thousand years later, the Chinese migrant mothers moved across the Pacific Ocean to provide a "better education" for their children. However, in the postmodern world, what constitutes a proper environment or better education is much more complex and ambiguous than in Mencuis's time. The findings of the current thesis portray such a picture of complexity and ambiguity.

9.1   "Whose Culture has Capital?"

"Whose culture has capital?" The findings in this project provided some intricate answers to this question. The participants deployed a range of strategies from embracing to rejecting, from selectively utilising to carefully critiquing various dominant evaluative norms of New Zealand mainstream society. The participants also proactively promoted and criticised Chinese traditional values. The migrant mothers were forging a new culture by selectively combining the two.

To answer the first research question:

1) What did the mothers perceive as the most valuable form(s) of capital to acquire, accumulate, convert and transfer to their children?

Family's values and beliefs are supposed to have a place in early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996). But early childhood education is still part of the wilder arena of power struggles. The migrant mothers were all aware of the market value of the dominant forms of social and cultural capital for their children's future in New Zealand. They were particularly concerned that because the family could not provide access to these forms of capital, their children would be disadvantaged. One of the reasons given for sending their children to mainstream early childhood centres was to gain access to the dominant social and cultural capital. Although the norm is unspoken, the "feel for the game" is evident but in a much more complicated form than Bourdieu (1990) described. The migrant mothers recounted a range of strategies from readily embracing and keenly pursuing to rejecting; from reluctantly following or selectively adopting to utilising; from praising to critiquing the various mainstream norms of early childhood care and education.

To answer the second research question:

2) How did the mothers relate to their children's early childhood centres?

The mothers' ways of dealing with their children's early childhood centres were also strategic. The migrant mothers carefully analysed their situation in dealing with their children's centres before employing different strategies to resolve disagreements according to different situations. They only picked a battle if they perceived a chance for them to win. The migrant mothers would avoid any confrontations with their children's centres if the issues in question were considered beyond their control: issues such as cultural practices they had to follow, or issues due to a particular centre's culture or clientele. When the issue was concerned more with general practices related to their children's wellbeing, the mothers demanded changes from the centre. In these incidents, although very few in the interview data, the migrant mothers displayed the certainty and sense of legitimacy that were often associated with parents from a dominant social group (Crozier, 1997; Lareau, 1987; 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Reay, 1997).

To answer the third research question:

3) How did the mothers deploy different forms of capital to provide their children the best care and education in the early years?

The migrant mothers realised there were gaps between home and the mainstream institutions. Instead of asking the centre to change, the migrant mothers more often tried to mend the gap. At home, the mothering work reinforced and extended what the children learned at the mainstream centre. The mothers also bridged the differences between the two cultural practices by seeking a middle ground and incorporating Chinese values and cultural practices. During this process, the migrant mothers displayed a range of approaches from preserving and strengthening to promoting; from rejecting to selectively utilising various traditional Chinese cultural resources. The migrant mothers' strategies of critiquing and integrating both New Zealand and Chinese cultural norms should be understood as forging a new culture (Ang, 2001).

9.2 Gendered Migration: Mothers and Workers

Chinese skilled migrants usually experienced social and occupation downward mobility in Western countries. Apart from the structural and cultural barriers, compared to their male counterparts female migrants faced gendered obstacles in obtaining paid employment and/or furthering their careers (Ho, 2004; Lee et al, 2002; Raghuarm & Kofman, 2004; Salaff & Greve, 2003; Zhou, 2000). In the current research, although they all had full time paid employment before emigrating from China, the migrant mothers had either reduced paid work and/or sought part time work due to the heavier domestic workload after they came to New Zealand. This was not surprising given the fact they had children or more children after migration. The participants experienced the loss of support for childcare and housework from extended families or affordable hired domestic help (Ho, 2004). Moreover, when these women were in the paid workforce, they were either in "deskilled" or "unskilled" employment (Raghuarm & Kofman, 2004) compared to their work status before migration. Most of these migrant mothers[71] went through various forms of retraining to gain local qualifications. Therefore, these women had to juggle work, study, childcare and housework during their resettlement process. All the migrant mothers assumed the primary caregiver role for their preschool children regardless of their paid work status. New Zealand early childhood education is intended to offer parents and families a variety of choices and to enable women to participate in paid employment.

To answer the fourth research question:

4) Did New Zealand early childhood education help the Chinese skilled mothers achieve greater work-life balance?

The migrant mothers' accounts suggested that early childhood centres did ease some of their domestic workload and met some needs of the Chinese migrant families Apart from providing care and education for their children to ease the mothers' workload, early childhood centres became almost the only way for the migrants'

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[71] Alison did not attend any local university retraining apart from her Play Centre training. Cathy originally planned to go to a local university once her husband graduated. Fang had attended some English courses. All others /were undertaking/had gone through a local degree (or training)) course.

children to have direct access to gain mainstream cultural and social capital. In this sense, early childhood education services played an important role in supporting migrant families during the settlement process.

But I could not answer the question of whether early childhood education services helped the migrant mothers to achieve life and work balance. Early childhood services enabled the mothers to participate in the paid workforce. However, these women tended to have "deskilled" or reduced paid work while at the same time paying expensive childcare fees as Dahlberg and Moss (2005) argued. They pointed out that early childhood service by itself did not improve the quality of women's life.

The diverse choices of early childhood services were not free of constraints: they still required parents' time, money, knowledge of the mainstream educational system and other resources. For example, Alison could not find suitable care for her daughter and she had to give up paid work. Gillian and her husband wanted to consider a private early childhood centre for her daughter. But that was not possible because of the high cost of private centres. In addition, migrant families had different needs that mainstream early childhood education could not meet. Alison believed that the playcentre was the best way for children's early education. But playcentre did not suit her and her daughter because they could not enter the existing Pakeha social groups.

The findings of the current thesis describe the enormous work that mothers undertook to raise their young children. Because of their ethnic minority situation, the migrant mothers had to do extra work at home to fill various gaps between home and mainstream education. So all the work the migrant mothers did at home, was it counted as "life" or "work"? What did "balance" mean when I could not separate the two concepts? Feminist researchers (Brown, Lumley, Small & Astbury, 1994; Gilding, 1994; Grace, 1998; Oakley, 1985; Wolcott & Glezer, 1995) insisted childcare and childrearing was serious unpaid work. The findings of the current thesis confirmed Ho's (2004) argument that migrant women's work contributed to their husbands' paid work and the family's smooth transition and integration into the mainstream society. So does the phrase "life-work balance" actually mean, "paid work and unpaid work balance"? The data from the current project again challenge the conventional notion of "life" and "work" in the migrant mothers' lives.

Kahu and Morgan (2007; 2008) argued that despite the political rhetoric, New Zealand policies did not really address women's needs and genuine gender equality. This was due to the capitalist structure that values "economic growth rather than the women's needs" (p. 134). In other words, in a capitalist society, productivity is measured by its market value. Women's unpaid work and their needs do not directly generate monetary values, so they are never genuinely valued. This argument is congruent with Bourdieu's (1977a) notion of reproduction that is "a system of objective relations which impart their relational properties to individuals whom they pre-exist and survive" (p. 487). Without fundamentally changing the social political structure, achieving life and work balance in women's lives would remain only political rhetoric.

9.3 Contributions to the Existing Research Literature

McLeod (2005) observed that in the 1980s "Bourdieu's work was strongly associated in education with analyses of social and cultural reproduction". She argued that a more productive way for feminist researchers applying Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field is to simultaneously study the both reproduction and transformation of gender relations and identities. Although McLeod made this observation from a feminist perspective on gender; a similar notion is also applicable to examine class and ethnicity. The findings of the current study clearly demonstrate the instability and continuity of gender as well as class, and ethnicity, and reiterate my statement made earlier that social reality is blurred, subtle and ambiguous.

Complicating the Notion of Capital

Traditional interpretation of social and cultural capital generally limits itself only to dominant forms of capital. There has been a tendency in the existing research review to define dominant and non-dominant capital as relatively independent to each other and the boundaries between them are more or less clear (e.g. Lareau, 2002). The current research findings, however, complicate such a notion. In the current study, the participants belonged to the dominant middle class in their birth country but experienced social downward mobility and became members of a visible ethnic minority group. Previous studies that applied Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital have been mainly focused on social class. Social class has been routinely defined according to income, occupation and education. The data from the current project

challenge this definition. Holding on to their pre-migration middle class status, the participants did not let present social situation as visible ethnic minority members prevent them from identifying themselves as members of the educated middle class while on the other hand they were uncertain and ambiguous about their social position and their ability to provide for their children access to the dominant social and cultural capital. The research evidence was parallel to Reay's (1997) argument that social class was about more than material resources. It was a "habitus". Other researchers (e.g. Bentley, 1978; Ramos-Zayas, 2004) used habitus to analyse the complex interplay of ethnicity and social class. In Bourdieu's (1984, p. 372) words:

> Social class is not defined solely by a position in the relations of production, but by the class habitus which is "normally" (i.e., with a high statistical probability) associated with that position.

In this way, the concepts of dominant and non-dominant are redefined beyond a more fixed understanding of ethnicity and class. The findings of the current study demonstrate the complexity, ambiguity and fluidity of ethnicity and class.

I adopted and extended Lareau and Weininger's (2003) definition of capital to include non-dominant as well as dominant evaluative norms as capital to present a more dynamic picture of how Chinese migrant mothers used different strategies to maximise benefits for their children. In the current project, the Chinese skilled migrant mothers, viewing themselves lacking the dominant cultural and social capital, actively and strategically provided and created more favourable conditions for their children. The findings of this research complicates previous research conclusions (i.e. Lareau, 1987, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) that non-dominant families are disadvantaged simply because the families could not provide their children access to the dominant social and cultural capital. The thesis challenges the notion that social and cultural reproduction is linear, and thus supplements other researchers' work (i.e. McKeever & Miller, 2004; Reay, 1997; Young, 1999) that the process of social and cultural reproduction is complex and dynamic.

"Ontological Complicity": Field and Habitus

"Bourdieu describes the relationship between habitus and field as one of 'ontological complicity'" and this statement suggests "a process akin to insinuation – less a cause–effect relation" (McLeod, 2005, p.14). Bourdieu (1989a, p.43) explained that

"when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself 'as fish in water,' it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted". For this group of women, the social world is not something that can be taken for granted. They left the field where they were brought up, where their habitus was the product. The women had to learn how to "swim" in a different kind of "water"—to grasp the dominant cultural and linguistic habitus that they were not familiar with. Away from their native home, leaving the field where they acquired their "old" habitus, the women were also forced to rethink or sometimes unlearn what they have had to acquire. This is particularly the case for the mothers who have to provide the best for their children – acquiring the "new' habitus sometimes became vital for their children's "better" future in their adoptive land, New Zealand. Nevertheless, the process is not without uncertainty and anxiety. The "new" is not simply replaced by the "old" when people move from one field to the other.

McLeod (2005, p.14) argued that

> 'Ontological complicity' also invokes the significance of embodiment. Habitus is not simply a mental schemata, but a way of bodily being in the world, the way one occupies and moves in space and across and within fields (McLeod, 2000).

The findings of the current research depicted the complexity and ambiguity of the interactions between social fields and habitus. For example, the mothers realised that since the families were in New Zealand, learning English, the dominant linguistic capital, would be more imminent than maintaining the home language. This indicates the "objective" relations between the field and habitus – the habitus is constrained and conditioned by the perceived social reality. However, the field is not an "'external object' acting upon the 'subject'" ((McLeod, 2005, p.14). The migrant mothers still tried to maintain their children's home language by making a compromise (insisting on the child learning Chinese orally rather than on all-round mastery of the language). While teaching their children English, some mother resorted to more Chinese traditional teaching methods to overcome their lack of English linguistic capital. Although the mothers realised that in New Zealand, Chinese migrants need to follow the mainstream ways of living so their children would not be "disadvantaged", their attitude towards mainstream education was ambiguous and complex. It covered the full spectrum from willing embracing, reluctantly following, selectively utilising to rejecting. While these mothers were

away from their birth country, their habitus were still intricately related and linked to China, in the past as well as at the present. Traditional Chinese values and practices were not accepted or rejected as a whole. The mothers simultaneously promoted, criticised, and rejected various traditional practices and beliefs in order to maximise benefits for their children. The concepts of field and habitus, and particularly "ontological complicity" between the field and habitus enable me to describe and analyse the complexity of how ethnicity is reshaped among this group of women.

9.4 Implications and Suggestions

Drawn from the data, there were several implications and suggestions for early childhood education policy.

1) "Articulating relationships"

A challenge for early childhood teachers is to "clearly and defensibly articulate the relationship between their educational theories and philosophies, their pedagogical practices and children's learning" (Hedges and Nuttall, 2008, p. 83). The findings of the current thesis demonstrate that the migrant mothers requested evidence of such articulation. They questioned if the teachers were aware of what they were teaching as well as what was delivered and how it was delivered. Polly and Lan's detailed critiques of the teachers' practices in children's portfolios illustrated a perception that while the teachers were pressured to provide evidence of their teaching (articulation), some did it to fulfil the requirement of accountability rather than showing a genuine interest in the children's learning by providing evidence of authentic learning experiences. These examples illustrate what Ball (2003) described: teachers merely performed certain policy without being able to internalise or reject it. So what counts as the best practice to articulate relationships or to teach educators to articulate these relationships? This is a challenge for early childhood practitioners as well as teacher education providers.

One possible solution arising from the findings of the current project is to invite parents' critiques. The migrant mothers' critiques and questions would have provided valuable insights to challenge the teachers to critically analyse their own practices. To achieve such a goal, a genuine partnership between parents and

teachers is required. This means that teachers need to truly appreciate the parents' inputs and knowledge as valuable cultural capital.

2) Teachers' subject knowledge: Working with a linguistic and cultural diversity of children and families

The participants' accounts suggested that early childhood teachers did not always understand the Chinese migrant children's multilinguistic development and the cultural and linguistic differences among Chinese ethnics. In Polly's case, none of the teachers had noticed Polly's son might have experienced some linguistic difficulties. Even when Polly raised her concerns, the centre was not able to offer any constructive advice or referral to external professional support. This raises a question whether the teachers have sufficient subject knowledge concerning language acquisition. The finding also suggested teachers need to acquire special knowledge and skills to assess children's learning and development. To make use of such knowledge teachers should be able to refer children to the appropriate specialised service. Teachers should be aware of and clear about a range of "ECE and other education, health and social services for young children their parents and Whanau" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 8).

3) Working with Chinese Migrant Families

Although there were only a small number of participants in this project, the Chinese skilled migrant mothers still had a range of various strategies to provide the best education and care for their children. The data highlighted the importance for early childhood teachers of understanding individual families and children from ethnic minorities. Although all Chinese families would have brought with them their cultural influences, the data demonstrate that people are not passively influenced by their culture. It is always important to have a general knowledge about a certain culture. But forming stereotypes based on that general information that tends to homogenise ethnic minority groups can only be harmful in teaching practice.

The findings demonstrate that cultural values and practices emerged from their historical, sociopolitical and economic context. It is important to acknowledge the different cultural values within such contexts and that the cultural values are subject to changes and are constantly reconstructed (Robin & Dĭaz, 2006). "Differences" are socially and politically constructed. Therefore, apart from knowing what different expectations and beliefs the migrant families have, it is important to understand why such differences occurred. There are different discourse and theoretical concepts underpinning diversity (Vandenbroeck, 2007). Therefore, practitioners should go beyond superficial toleration to truly question what understandings exactly are underneath the practices.

The findings have portrayed a positive image about these migrant mothers. They are able, and they are strategically and actively engaged in their children's education although they might be less vocal than dominant middle class mothers as described in other studies (Lareau, 1987; 2003; Reay, 1995; 1997) during their daily encounters with their children's centres. The findings also provided a contradictory and inconsistent picture of these mothers. They happily embraced and accepted some of the dominant ideas of early childhood education but meanwhile rejected or selectively utilised mainstream educational ideas; they showed trust in the professionals and they also criticised teachers' practices. This complex depiction intends to de-homogenise this sub-cultural groups and to blur the divide of "us" and "others".

The description of such complexity implied that when working with families and migrant families in particular, the teachers should deconstruct their assumptions and move out of their comfort zone of knowing. Any longstanding and cherished forms of knowledge and beliefs should be subject to re-examination and critical analysis. As Grieshaber (2008, p. 505) advocated, teachers should "push the boundaries of their theoretical and practical knowledge by making way for contradictions and inconsistencies that accompany all forms of diversity and difference, taking risks, and disrupting the status quo".

9.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

This research is situated in a particular epistemological stance and a particular theoretical framework. It offers only one perspective on recent Chinese migrant mothers' lives. If it were situated in another epistemological stance and a different theoretical framework, different conclusions could have been made even with the same data.

I have adopted the approach of institutional ethnography (Smith, 1999). According to this approach, interviews were talks that were open ended and allowed participants more autonomy to present themselves rather than merely answering set interview questions or being passively observed. The data in this project complicate findings of previous studies (i.e. Lareau, 1987, 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) about transmission of parental cultural capital in non-dominant social groups. Although the migrant mothers had limited access to the dominant cultural and social capital, they actively and strategically provided their children with access to various forms of cultural and social capital. Meanwhile, they used their non-dominant cultural resources to reject, criticise and selectively utilise various forms of dominant cultural practices.

In terms of the data collection, I recruited only those who were willing to talk and who were willing to devote substantial time free of charge to participate in this research although I did try to achieve a diversity of the participants. The samples are not "representative" and the current study intends to generate insights to migrant mothers' experiences and to avoid producing generalisation of new Chinese migrants.

The current thesis canvasses a range of issues and different areas in the migrant mothers' daily lives. While its breadth is a strength, it is also a potential limitation: each issue and area could itself become a topic that is worth a more in-depth study. For example, Lareau and colleague (Lareau & Horvat, 1999) focused only on the interactions between the home and school to examine how families are included or excluded. Reay (1997) focused on how linguistic capital in relation to gender affected mothers' involvement with their children's school. However, opting for breadth was a deliberate decision in this current project. The aim was to capture the complexity of the migrant mothers' daily experiences and to examine how migrant mothers used different strategies in different fields. If the mothers' face-to-face

encounters with the centre were the only sources, it would not have been possible to appreciate the mothers' different strategies in other areas such as at home, and within the family, to compensate for what they could not have done in relation to their children's early childhood centres. The findings have shown that the migrant mothers' daily lives comprised many different fields that were not always reconcilable such as two different cultural practices, mothers and workers, and the family's interest and their personal pursuit. To reconcile the irreconcilable characterised the migrant mothers' daily practices. Because of the breadth my approach, I was able to depict such a picture of complexity.

9.6 Recommendations for Future Research

1) Focusing on children

Although not a major focus of the current research project, the participants' accounts revealed that small children understood the "feel of the game". It would be useful to conduct studies on Chinese migrant children, particularly observations of the children's interactions with adults in their families and early childhood centres, to understand how exactly children decode the unspoken rules in their early years.

2) Grandparents as valuable resources

Goodfellow (2003) interviewed grandparents who provided regular care for their grandchildren in Australia. She concluded that grandparents as regular care providers were "unrecognised, under-valued and under-resourced" (p. 7). The issue of grandparents as care providers was also under-researched. It was a Chinese tradition that grandparents provided regular care for their grandchildren. Chinese grandparents who did not speak English would help their grandchildren in New Zealand to maintain their home language (Yu, 2005). The current study did not interview the grandparents. But the interview data revealed that grandparents were still playing an important part in migrant families' daily lives, although the role might have differed from a traditional one if they were in China, or might be undermined to some extent in the new context. Studies with Chinese migrant grandparents would gain insights as to how the Chinese

traditional family roles and structures change or/and persist in New Zealand, and the grandparents' role in maintaining traditional Chinese culture in the family.

3) Women as mothers and workers

Early childhood education used to be excluded from the mainstream of education. From the 1940s to 2000s, with society's changing attitude towards children as well as women, early childhood teachers' social status rose from childminders, to childcare workers to teachers. Early childhood has been established as a professional discipline in the new millennium in New Zealand and other Western countries. In contrast to this professionalisation of early childhood education and care, mothers' work at home is never fully recognised (Kahu & Morgan, 2007; 2008). The history of early childhood education in New Zealand has been intertwined with the quest for women's liberation and equal rights (May, 1993). But why when early childhood care and education received intense attention from the government, media, as well as business corporates, has the situation for women as mothers remained relatively unchanged? The answer is clear that the early childhood profession belongs to the public domain that generates productivity and monetary profits. The mothers' work remains in the private domain, and thus is not regarded as productive. As long as women's unpaid work in the private sphere is not recognised, gender equality cannot be achieved (see Dalton, Draper, Weeks, & Wiseman, 1996). Grace (1998) pointed out that while women are expected to care for their children, they are "denied economic rights" (p. 410). Women with preschool children particularly disadvantaged because of the high demands the intensive care necessary for young children made on mothers' time and energy.

If women with young children are in general disadvantaged, new skilled migrant mothers of young children are doubly disadvantaged. Chinese migrant mothers faced downward social mobility because of the devaluation of their past qualifications and experiences in New Zealand. Their career opportunities were further reduced because of increased domestic demands due to new births and loss of traditional family support in New Zealand. In addition, there is an unspoken rule that new immigrants should be self-sufficient. Most benefits in New Zealand are available only to those who have been continuously in the

country for two years (see Work and Income New Zealand, 2009). This suggests that during the first two years of the settlement process, which could be the most crucial period of time, migrants are not entitled to many benefits. However, the participants' accounts showed that it was not the monetary support that is most needed; it was a general lack of social support and recognition of their mothering work that was the most disappointing. I call for more research and debates on the issue of gender inequality in migration and parenting. I hope further research and debate will lead to fairer economic opportunities for women with young children, regardless of their socio-economic status and ethnicities, to fulfill the vision for New Zealand women as promised by government: "Aotearoa/New Zealand will be an equitable, inclusive and sustainable society where all women can achieve their aspirations" (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2004, p. 3).

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Appendix 1
Participants' Information Summary

Names	Years in New Zealand	Highest Academic Qualification Obtained in China	Children	Work Status	Husband's work status
Fang	More than 7 years	Diploma	3	Full time mother	Full time paid work
Emma	6 years	Bachelor of Commerce	2	Full time paid work	Self-employed
Alison	7 years	Master of Science	2	Full time mother	Full time paid work
Lan	More than 7 years	Bachelor of science	2	Part time paid work	Full time paid work
Anna	7 years	Master of Commerce	2	Part time paid work Full time study	Sole mother
Gillian	7 years	Bachelor of Science	2	Full time paid work	Full time paid work
Polly	4 years	Bachelor of Commerce	2	Full time study	Full time paid work
Cathy	6 years	Bachelor of Commerce	1	Full time paid work	Full time study