

‘The New Generation: Chinese Childhoods’

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Abstract

Based on a data set of 72 semi-structured interviews, undertaken with 12 British Chinese families, this PhD sets out to explore the nature of the childhood experience within contemporary British Chinese households. By speaking to parents and children of each family using repeat interviews over a nine-month period, accounts of family life and their relationships with one another can be revealed from both generational perspectives.

From this research, there appears to be a similarity between the practices of past and contemporary British Chinese households, which also coincides with accounts from pre-existing academic literature. Research findings suggest that Chinese parents (regardless of backgrounds and length of UK residency), not only identify themselves as being Chinese, but also hold strong attachments to 'traditional' Chinese values and norms. For some British Chinese families this causes domestic issues and problems between parents and their more Westernised offspring.

However in comparison to the past, some parents alter and modify their Chinese cultural beliefs which then affect their child-rearing methods, intimacy levels and opportunities for the child's agency. Reasons for this include the parent's own childhood experience, parent's exposure and acceptance of Western practices, as well as empathy for their child's experience of being a British Chinese citizen. External circumstances such as the social setting and surroundings, the actions of the child as well as the parent-child relationship itself also influence household relations and operations.

As such, cultural factors alone are not sufficient in explaining and investigating British Chinese families. Instead contemporary British Chinese parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy levels and children's agency should be seen as an interactive and reciprocal process, that are created by and contingent upon practices within and outside of the home. By highlighting the many levels to which British Chinese families play out their lives and how members make sense of their relationships and behaviours, this study expands on the current literature that portrays cultural norms as the main explanatory factor for British Chinese household functioning.

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Abbreviations

DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
ECM	Every Child Matters
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMG	Her Majesty’s Government
HO	Home Office
HK	Hong Kong
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
RE	Religious Education
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WW	World War

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‘Introduction’

Rationale

Over recent centuries, there has been an incremental movement of people out of Greater China to overseas countries. This migration has led to the development of multi-generational Chinese communities all over the world. Towards the end of the twentieth century, an estimated 33 million Chinese people were suggested to be living in other countries (Skeldon, 2004). North America, Western Europe and Australasia appear to be the most popular receiving countries, but there are also movements to less obvious places, such as Eastern Europe, Siberia, Central Asia and Africa (Jacobs, 2004). Due to the widespread dispersal of Chinese migration, a global network of Chinese communities has now resulted (Ma, 2003).

With regards to the United Kingdom (UK), Chinese settlement and relocation can be traced back to the 1840s (Au and P’ng, 1997) since when, Chinese migration flows into Britain has been occurring at a steady and uninterrupted rate (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Today the Chinese population represents the third largest UK ethnic community group (Baxter and Raw, 2002). Although there has been a reasonably long history of British settlement, research interest and political focus with the British Chinese community does not reflect their long-standing presence.

Questioning Existing Literature: Chinese Homogeneity

Within the available research, the Chinese community is often portrayed as being culturally homogenous (Schneider et al., 2000), with traditional values and practices remaining influential (Chau and Yu, 2001). It is these Chinese cultural norms that are used to explain British Chinese people’s educational achievements and occupational success stories. Existing literature further depicts Confucian and collectivist principles as remaining strong within the British Chinese family, which inevitably affects parenting approaches, parent-child relationships and childhood experiences. Due to the Confucian importance of filial piety and hierarchy for example, Chinese parents are typically viewed as authoritarian in nature. Such norms not only lead to distant parent-child attachments, but also to the assumption of Chinese children’s subservient nature. Arguably such viewpoints conceive British Chinese individuals as cultural dopes (Baker, 2004), who adhere blindly to Chinese cultural values and are wholly bound by them. By viewing the individual as being heavily influenced by fixed and static cultural norms, it presents a non-realistic portrayal and explanation of British Chinese people’s lives and interactions. As opposed to viewing culture as a one-dimensional concept, this study supports arguments which see culture as fluid and malleable to change, where cultural identities can be diverse and varied. In recognising cultural diversity and difference, the concept of diaspora, which is linked to globalisation and migration, illuminates the possibilities of hyphenated cultural identifications for migrants and their descendants (Mavroudi, 2007). The issues concerning culture, origin, settlement and hybridity are discussed within chapters 1 and 2, to help illustrate the many levels of heterogeneity within the Chinese diaspora. Here we see that in contrast to the majority of studies which view Chinese people as a homogenous ethnic group, it should be recognised that migration histories, settlement patterns, life trajectories, as well as cultural identities, can also affect individual’s life experiences and decisions.

When rethinking the nature of culture and cultural identities for Chinese individuals, a series of unanswered questions arise from the current literature. For example: If individuals are capable of multiple cultural identities, what is the true extent of Chinese and Western cultural norms within the contemporary British Chinese household? How do hybrid cultural practices, by both parents and children, shape British Chinese family life? What other influences, aside from culture, can be seen to impact upon British Chinese childhoods? Contemporarily, research with ethnic family groups are still heavily reliant upon cultural explanations and the importance and overlap between contextual features, structural variables and individual differences are still not accounted for (Phoenix and Husain, 2007). In such a context, this thesis hopes to address some of the unanswered questions with regards to UK Chinese families. As most of the research concerning Chinese households, migrant or otherwise, comes from Greater China, America and Canada, a specific focus with British Chinese families warrants further attention.

Where Are Chinese Children's Voices?

Another concern within the existing studies of Chinese families is the lack of Chinese children's perspectives. In the limited studies where Chinese children are included, they are not seen as influential beings; rather they are viewed as objects of adult concern and judged on their future potential worth. When exploring Chinese childhoods it is vital that children's own accounts and perspectives are sought after and highlighted. As argued within the 'new sociology of childhood', children should be seen as social actors who not only influence their own lives but the lives of others. In support, various research studies have found that children play an important role in the household and the dynamics within (e.g. Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). However popular discourses within a Western and Eastern context typically portray children as dependent beings who are wholly reliant upon parents and adults. Such childhood constructions consequently conceal the agency of children within different domains and relationships. In chapters 3 and 4, theories such as the 'new sociology of childhood', 'generationing' and the 'life course perspective' reveal how our understanding of children's incapacities have arisen from particular historical, social and cultural discourses, as opposed to any supposed 'naturalness'. Still, the social construction of childhood and the implications of such constructions are not acknowledged within the existing studies of Chinese families. Instead British Chinese children are viewed as being submissive to adult authority due to Confucian ethics. When questioning Chinese children's passivity, the following questions emerge: What is the extent of British Chinese children's agency? What examples of their agency and influence can be seen? What roles do children play in household functioning and the relationships within? By utilising the writings of the new sociology of childhood, this will help raise the voices of Chinese children, whilst bringing about a fuller understanding of Chinese family life. This is not only important on a theoretical level, but helps to raise the profile of UK Chinese children more generally, which is advocated by NSPCC (2005).

When deconstructing childhood itself, chapter 3 explores how the construction of 'the family' has helped to create, sustain and reinforce societal assumptions of children's vulnerability and dependency. 'The family' is often defined as the nuclear ideal, where each family member has prescribed roles and responsibilities in accordance to their age and gender. Parents are seen as independent individuals who are the

providers for their offspring, whereas children are seen as dependant upon their parents. This can be observed within a Western and Eastern framework. However, writers of late modernity such as Giddens (1992), Beck (1992) and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) have suggested that societal changes, such as detraditionalisation, has created a climate in which personal relationships are no longer tied to the traditional values of heterosexuality and familial obligation; instead, individuals are free to choose and create the types of relationships they want. The importance of people's own biographies and attachment choices then creates a divergence of relationship possibilities and family formats. However, writings of family diversity are not highlighted within the current literature of Chinese families, as the nuclear or corporate (extended family) model is concentrated upon. Consequently, there is limited representation of different Chinese living arrangements and its influence upon children's lives. Chinese families who do not conform to the nuclear or corporate ideal undoubtedly need to have a voice within research.

When reviewing the literature, the following observations become strikingly apparent: Firstly, despite calls for more insights and knowledge of ethnic minority families within the UK, British Chinese households are currently under researched. Secondly, current studies are over reliant upon Chinese cultural norms for explaining individual's behaviours and relationships, regardless of the writings of cultural hybridity and diaspora. Thirdly, Chinese children are not seen as social actors or agents within research, which then conceals the voices of children themselves. Lastly, research with Chinese families concentrates upon the nuclear or corporate model, albeit the suggestion of family diversity and difference. Clearly there is a need for more extensive research with British Chinese families, which acknowledges the fluidity of culture, Chinese children's agency and family heterogeneity. Such issues have subsequently formed the backdrop of this research piece. As current research predominantly focuses upon Chinese parenting methods and the lack of parent-child intimacy, this provides two interesting points of research focus. Furthermore the lack of recognition of Chinese children's agency presents another valuable direction for this study. Essentially:

1. What are the parenting approaches of Chinese parents in Britain and what influences their child-rearing methods and decisions?
2. What levels of parent-child intimacy and closeness can be seen within modern British Chinese families?
3. How are Chinese children social actors and how does their agency impact upon the contemporary British Chinese household?

Past and Present Chinese Childhoods: Key Findings

In examining Chinese parenting approaches, Chinese children's agency and parent-child intimacy levels, a total of 72 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 12 British Chinese families to explore parents and children's accounts of family life and their relationships. Each parent and child participated in multiple interviews to allow the accumulation of in-depth qualitative data. Such an approach also provided respondents with the opportunity to elaborate and clarify upon their accounts. In

chapter 5, a more detailed discussion about the nature of the repeat interviews and of the research methodology is examined.

The research findings suggest that Chinese parents (regardless of backgrounds and length of UK residency), not only identify themselves as being Chinese, but also hold strong attachments to 'traditional' Chinese values and norms. For some British Chinese families this causes domestic issues and problems between parents and their more Westernised offspring. Specifically, the continued endorsement of filial piety, patriarchy and the use of corporal punishment appear to affect the functioning of the Chinese household and the relationships within. For example, authoritarian Chinese parents who are seen as strict and non-approachable, tend to have poor or non-intimate relationships with their children. A parent's Confucian and collectivist belief system also affected the agency of the child, as children did not believe that they could negotiate or enforce their levels of independence within or outside of the home.

Despite some similarities between previous and contemporary Chinese childhoods, there were also differences in terms of parenting approaches, agency of the child and parent-child intimacy levels within past and present Chinese families. In comparison to the existing literature and parent's own childhood accounts, contemporary British Chinese parents encouraged and welcomed Chinese and Western cultural ideals in their parenting approaches and outlooks. Dual cultural parenting or culturally hybrid parenting, led to differences in how parents treated their child, what was expected from children and the overall parent-child relationship. For example, despite the importance attached to Confucian principles, many contemporary parents supported their child's increasing levels of agency and independence. For example, parents were more willing to allow conflicts within the home, as it allowed the child to demonstrate and practice their skills of independent thinking and expression. Contemporary parents also suggested that they wanted more intimate relationships with their children, which were not only perceived as friendly but included open lines of communication. In order to gain intimacy with their children, parents were flexible in their endorsement of Chinese values (e.g. absolute adult authority) and made their parenting choices based on what was important to them. In other words, although British Chinese parents stated that Chinese principles and values were important, there was a general belief that parent-child intimacy and children's agency were more crucial; which led to more open and reciprocal relationships within the home.

Interestingly as a result of parent's negative childhood experiences, less hierarchal and authoritarian family set-ups were seen in the majority of contemporary British Chinese families. This not only included closer and more intimate relationships with children and the encouragement of child agency, but the acceptance of children's Westernisation. This finding is in stark contrast to previous research studies and parent's own childhood recollections, where parents of the previous generation displayed strong anti-Western attitudes and feelings. Another reason for accepting Western ideals and their child's Westernisation, was partly because contemporary parents wanted to support their child in growing up as a British Chinese citizen, and as such, they were happy to incorporate both cultures in their parenting and child-rearing methods. Many parents had already been subjected to various British cultural norms, either through UK schooling or due to their country of origin (such as Hong Kong), and parents wanted to help and support their child in growing up with both cultures, instead of alienating them from one culture or another.

This study also demonstrated that parenting approaches, the levels of child agency granted and parent-child intimacy levels often worked in a reciprocal nature with the child's own actions. For instance, positive parent-child relationships and the agency granted to children were largely dependent upon the child's maturity levels and trusting behaviours. If children did not reciprocate the parental conditions and expectations, then parents would become stricter and enforce punishments as a result. Such findings highlight the bi-directional nature of parenting approaches, children's agency and the closeness between parents and children.

Overall this study suggests that British Chinese family lives are a diverse and flexible experience, which is not guided by Chinese cultural norms alone. Instead, it is argued that parenting approaches and subsequent family interactions (i.e. agency of the child and closeness between the parent-child dyad) are reliant upon personal factors of parents and children, the quality of the parent-child relationship and the impact of wider society. Furthermore, the parent's own childhood experience was a significant feature for determining parenting behaviours within the home. By considering individual factors, family diversity and the influence of children's agency within the thesis, a more holistic account of Chinese family lives was gained. Such findings not only provide new insights into British Chinese childhoods, but help to challenge the homogenous findings of Chinese households from the past.

Chapter 1

‘Chinese Migration Patterns’

1.1 Introduction

According to statistics produced by the United Nations (2004), 175 million persons live outside of their country of birth. This means that there are more migrants in the world today than at any other time in history. Some are short-term migrants, some longer term, but most are permanent (Robinson, 2006). The decision by an individual or family to leave their country of origin often has strong motives behind it, driven by personal or political reasons, the desire to improve their economic position, or simply to be reunited with family members who have previously migrated.

The process of migration by Chinese individuals and families from China (and other countries) to outside nations is not a new phenomenon. Although there is no consensus as to the start of international migration, the earliest records can be traced back to the Qin period (221-206 B.C; Guohong, 2006). In recent times, Skeldon (2003) suggested that the international diaspora of Chinese peoples has resulted in a ‘scattering’ of Chinese communities all over the world. The exact size and nature of these communities is uncertain, since obtaining reliable figures in relation to this ‘scattering’ is a difficult matter, due to difficulties of definition (i.e. who constitutes the ‘overseas Chinese’) and the variability of statistical analysis within host nations (Ma, 2003). Nevertheless, contemporarily it is asserted that most people of Chinese heritage living outside of China were neither born in Mainland China nor have official Chinese citizenship status (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

In chapter 1, the emergence, settlement and diaspora of the Chinese community abroad will be explored, including the experience of British Chinese settlement. The long and complex history of Chinese migration helps to overshadow the lay prejudicial view of Chinese people as being part of a homogenised and uniform group. Furthermore, the readings concerning diaspora, hybridity and transnationalism suggests that cultural identity can be fluid, malleable and multiple. As such, Chinese individuals and those with Chinese ancestral roots cannot be lumped into a single social category, nor can they be assumed to have the same features and characteristics as a result of a single common heritage.

1.2 International Migration Patterns

The migration of Chinese individuals to overseas countries is not a standardised process and therefore is difficult and complex to succinctly define. There are no available dates accounting for its beginning and there are various contextual backdrops for the individuals involved. Migration has been taking place over many centuries, but in the context of recent times, two general patterns of Chinese migration can be observed: One before and one after the 1960s (Ma, 2003). Before the 1960s, the migration of Chinese individuals was quite uniform in terms of departure points, destination countries and the migrants’ backgrounds. Migrants were mainly young males who were poor and uneducated peasants from the South of China, namely the Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces (although a small minority of migration

occurred from the northern and western areas of China also; Cartier, 2003). The Americas and the coastal urban centres of Southeast Asia were popular destination countries, and there were strong patterns of movement between the send-off region and the new area of settlement. For example, most of the Chinese population in the Philippines were from Fujian (the Hokkien region) and the majority of the Chinese in California were from Guangdong (specifically the Taishan area; Ma, 2003). Migrants to Southeast Asia were attracted by the entrepreneurial opportunities amidst developing trade and industry, whereas migrants to the Americas often took up work as farmers or labourers in mines, plantations and rail construction (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

With regards to the country of departure, emigration still continues from various parts of China (including the provinces of Fujian, Guangdong and Zhejiang), however, Taiwan, Hong Kong and other Southeast Asian countries have also become dominant sources of migration. Since the 1960s, Taiwan's fears of military invasion from China and the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, created an environment of political uncertainty and instability, which encouraged a large proportion of outward migration at the time. Similarly, there was Chinese remigration from Southeast Asian nations, due to the rise of negative socio-political conditions towards the Chinese in certain countries (e.g. overt discrimination and hostility against the Chinese population in Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam). Those who remigrate can also be classified as being 'twice migrants' (Benton and Gomez, 2008) and their ethnic origins are often unknown (Skeldon, 2003). Many Chinese individuals who decided to remigrate moved back to China or headed towards the West. Popular Western destinations included the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand due to the relaxation of immigration policies during the 1960s (for the U.K., United States and Canada) and 1980s (for Australia and New Zealand). Migration from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other Southeast Asian countries often involved well-educated and well-off business people and professionals, as such, the socio-economic backgrounds of Chinese migrants prior to and after the 1960s can be seen to be in sharp contrast (for a more detailed discussion see Ma, 2003 and Skeldon, 2003). In comparison to their predecessors, Chinese migrants after the 1960s enjoyed improved legal statuses in the new country due to their more diverse economic and educational backgrounds (Ma, 2003).

External migration patterns since the 1980s have seen a substantial increase in the number of Chinese emigrants, mainly due to China's decision in 1978 to relax its restriction laws on its citizens moving overseas (Fang, 2000). The attempts to modernise China after 1978, and as a reaction to the country's 'brain drain' problem (from the strict communist period), led to increased governmental support for Chinese students to study overseas. Many of these have become permanent residents in their host countries (Benton and Gomez, 2008). The recent evolutions of movements are not just from China but also from the peripheral areas of Hong Kong and Taiwan (countries which are a part of Greater China; Skeldon, 1996).

The movement of illegal Chinese migrants has been another trend since the 1960s. Some illegal immigrants have left China without the government's permission; others have gained unlawful entry into the host country, some simply overstay in the destination country or fail to observe conditions of visitation (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Contemporarily, illegal Chinese immigrants have been attracting news

headlines and reports, due to the inhumane methods of transportation and the unethical and illegal procedures by those who assist with the migration, including the unrealistic monetary demands and fees placed upon the migrants.

North America, Western Europe and Australasia continue to be the most popular receiving countries for new migrants; however there have also been movements to less obvious places, such as Eastern Europe, Siberia, Central Asia and Africa (Jacobs, 2004). The diversity of the chosen destination countries has resulted in a global network of Chinese ‘communities’ (Ma, 2003). In addition to the array of resettlement choices and the migrant’s country of origin post 1960s, the division of language, class, political persuasion and legal status, adds to the heterogeneous nature of the Chinese communities who reside overseas (Benton and Pieke, 1998). Arguably, new ethnicities and identities are also being manufactured within this heterogeneity (Kwong, 1997).

1.3 Chinese Diaspora

The notion of diaspora in conventional mode is related to the Greek gardening tradition (as is hybridity), referring simply to the scattering of seeds and implying some description of dispersal (Karla et al., 2005). Most early discussions of diaspora were firmly rooted in a conceptual homeland (Brubaker, 2005) and are most characteristically linked to Jewish dispersion among Gentiles after captivity. It has also been generalised to other populations who have settled outside their homeland (Fenton, 1999) and as a social construct, the term has shifted its meaning and coverage over time. The movement of people within a diaspora can now encompass an array of groups, such as political refugees, guest workers, immigrants, expellees, and overseas communities, as well as ethnic and racial minorities (Shuval, 2000, p. 42). In addition to politically motivated uprooting and voluntary migration, diaspora can also reflect global communications and transport.

There are two main ways in which diaspora has been theorised, though the concern with boundaries is evident in both cases (Mavroudi, 2007). Firstly, diaspora with traditional definitions centered on the creation of boundaries in terms of identity, community and the nation-state, and the focus on roots and soil (Mavroudi, 2007). This concept of diaspora includes dispersed people who retain a sense of their uniqueness and an interest in their homeland, and implies a real or imagined relationship among scattered peoples via some form of contact or communications (Naficy, 1999).

“What links people together is a common interest in their location of origin and a foundational identity that is rooted in that place which defines an in-group, in spite of the fact that people may or may not have ever personally interacted with one another in real time and space” (Hiller and Franz, 2004, p. 733).

This sense of connection resists forgetting, assimilating or distancing from the homeland and its cultures, thus retaining a sense of national and cultural identity (Shuval, 2000).

In contrast, the second theorisation of diaspora is related to the growth of new identities and experiences, based on ideas of fluidity, movement, routes and the destabilisation of (potentially) homogenising boundaries of identity, community and the nation-state (Mavroudi, 2007). Authors such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy have been highly influential in this area, and have used the concept of diaspora to challenge fixed and essentialist conceptions of culture, thus emphasising cultural identity as neither determined by place or nationality (Karla et al., 2005).

“Diaspora is a concept that problematises the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location, and consciousness” (Gilroy 2000, p.123).

The idea of diaspora allows a more refined and more wordly sense of culture and the fluidity of cultural identity and “provides a framework for understanding some of these identities which are not located in one ‘home’ and cannot be traced back simply to one source” (Gilroy, 1997, p.17). Hence:

“Cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to a continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. . . Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall, 1993, p.394).

Authors writing on diaspora very often engage with the mixed notion of hybridity (Mavroudi, 2007). The term ‘hybrid’ is a slippery category, meaning all sorts of things to do with mixing and combination in the moment of cultural exchange (Hutnyk, 2005). Though, in relation to diaspora:

“The most conventional accounts assert hybridity as the process of cultural mixing where the diasporic arrivals adopt aspects of the host culture and rework, reform and reconfigure this in production of a new hybrid culture or ‘hybrid identities’” (Chambers 1994, p. 50).

Despite the different genealogies of the concepts of hybridity and diaspora, both embody the globalising principle of transnationalism (Anthias, 2001). Often, the terms diaspora and transnationalism (or transnational communities) are connected (Hutnyk, 2005).

“Diaspora discourse reflects a sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes a homeland. It is characterised by a sense of living in one place while simultaneously remembering and/or desiring and yearning for another place. This is because of the multiplicity of relations not only between diaspora communities and their homeland in a binary context but because of the ongoing, lateral relations among diaspora communities located in different sites within nation states and in different states” (Shuval, 2000, p. 44).

Vertovec (1999b) believes that the dispersed diasporas of the past are becoming today's transnational communities, sustained by a range of modes of social organisation, mobility and communication. Similarly, in an attempt to clarify the two concepts of diasporas and transnationalism (or transnational communities), Levitt (2001) suggested diaspora has begun to be used more broadly to define "individuals who have been exiled or displaced to a number of different nation states by a variety of economic, political and social forces. Transnational communities are building blocks of potential diasporas that may or may not take shape" (p. 202).

Transnational social networks are often implicated in the process of migration, which links families and communities across long distances. Transnational communities then actively contribute towards and influence transnational migration (Glick, Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1992). When transnational ties and ethnic links are created, new social formations emerge and are created, thus diverting attention away from cultural obligations to the nation state (Karla et al., 2005) and challenges the view of immigrant assimilation or incorporation to gain a sense of belonging (Gilroy, 1997).

"Such people [involved in transnationalism] have multiple identities and transcultural competencies. Many hold two or more citizenships, even if governments try to prevent this. Cultural interchange and cross-cultural marriages add to the hybridity of consciousness" (Castles, 2000, p. 131).

International movement is increasingly facilitated by the ease and declining costs of transportation and communication (Schuerkens, 2005), the knowledge of successful migration stories and the availability of media images of overseas living makes the process appear both attractive and achievable (Sun 2002). That said, there are many theories regarding the reasons behind migrant's decisions to relocate elsewhere. Unfortunately, discussing each of these theories is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, as opposed to a singular and grand account of migration, we should instead see the process as a result of a complex interplay of various economic, social, cultural and political factors on the part of the individual, as well as the country of origin and the destination site (see Castles, 2000, Brettell and Hollifield, 2000, Portes and DeWind, 2007 for example). This may involve the macro and micro-structures of the sending and receiving countries, and the links between the two. Macro-structures often refer to large-scale institutional factors, such as economic and political affairs, as well as the laws and practices of the sending and receiving countries (Castles, 2000). In contrast, micro-structures may include personal relationships and support networks within the family home and society, which may then encourage ethnic community formation and transnational ties (Castles, 2000).

1.4 Chinese Migration to the UK

The United Kingdom is an area of increasing ethnic and religious diversity (Connolly and White, 2006), with the Chinese population having a relatively long history of settlement (Au and P'ng, 1997). Early recordings of Chinese people in Britain showed a small handful of Chinese intellectuals, as part of the spirit of intellectual exchange and mutual respect with China, during the seventeenth and nineteenth century (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Similarly the first evidence of plebeian Chinese people in Britain was around 1782 and consisted mainly of Chinese seamen, who could be found in the ports of London and Liverpool. Due to the increased

competition and expansion of trade with Asia, Chinese seamen were regularly employed as cheap and convenient labour (Taylor, 1987).

The recruited sea crew were exclusively male Chinese nationals from the Mainland. The majority were from the Guangdong area in the southeast coast of China. Chinese people of Siyinese descent were also found amongst the seafaring crews. Siyi is in Guangdong's Pearl River Delta region and includes the four counties of Taihan, Xinhui, Kaiping and Enping. In addition, many of the seafarers could be traced back to the Fujian province which borders Guangdong. Initially the Chinese seafaring community was highly mobile and only served as a pool of labour in Britain, rather than being would be sojourners or immigrants (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Over time however, some of the seafarers were laid off, or they deserted their ships, and took up land-based occupations such as laundry work and running chop suey houses. Many also took British wives or common-law wives (a marriage without a civil or religious ceremony) and were clustered around port cities (Benton and Pieke, 1998). As a result the early Chinese seafaring community became a much more settled group in the UK (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Benton and Gomez (2008) suggested that many of the early Chinese settlers (including the seaman) had ended up in Britain by accident, rather than as a result of long term planning. For instance, during the 1870s there was a strong anti-Chinese movement in California due to the economic depression. The hostile and volatile environment led many Chinese (who were mainly Siyinese) to remigrate to other countries, including the UK. Another example of the haphazard nature of early British settlement was as a result of the First World War (WW) (1914-1918). During this time many thousands of Chinese had joined the British merchant fleets, only to find themselves stranded at British ports when the war ended in 1918. After the First World War however, the British Chinese community found themselves to be dwindling in numbers. Many decided to return to their homelands or remigrated elsewhere as a result of the economic downturn at the time. Matters were made worse by the xenophobic government curbs and public harassment towards the Chinese community, which followed the depression (Benton and Gomez, 2008). However, with the ending of the Second World War (1939-1945), there was a substantial increase in the Chinese population. This can be mainly attributed to political, social and economic factors in the Far East as well as in Britain, and the contemporary surge of Chinese overseas students and illegal immigrants into the UK.

1.4.1 Contemporary Migration Patterns

Most of the emigration to the UK occurred from Hong Kong between the 1950s and 1960s. Hong Kong is made up of three areas, Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories. All three are located below the Guangdong province on the south coast of China. During the 1950s and 1960s economic and social changes in the New Territories became a major trigger for migration into Britain. The New Territories is the most rural part of Hong Kong and consisted mainly of the Hakkanese people. The Hakka people originally descended from the Mainland and, as such, were seen as 'guests' in Hong Kong. Traditionally, the Hakkanese were agriculturally based. The farming of rice and vegetables thrived around this region until the 1950s, when the Hong Kong government bought up the majority of the farmland to cope with Hong Kong's rapid urbanisation. Farming in the

New Territories was further undermined by the 'vegetable revolution' at the time. The British colonial government wanted to end Hong Kong's dependence on China and started to import rice cheaply from other countries such as Thailand, as well as encouraging farmers to switch to vegetable production (Benton and Gomez, 2008). With farming becoming a less lucrative business, the Hakka people had to turn to alternative occupations. Finding new lines of work was highly problematic though, as there was a large influx of Chinese refugees from the Mainland (due to the communist revolution), who were also competing for jobs in Hong Kong (Parker, 1999). To try to relieve the problem of rural unemployment, the colonial government encouraged emigration to the United Kingdom. A majority of those who emigrated were poor Hakkanese, but they were also followed by less fortunate Punti Chinese residents (who are considered as the local and indigenous people of Hong Kong). In addition, wealthier Hong Kong individuals moved to Britain when they realized there were advantages of working in voluntary exile (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Once they had arrived in Britain, many of the Hong Kong migrants had to rely upon work within the Chinese restaurants. The Mainland Chinese owned the majority of the restaurants (as they were the first Chinese settlers) and they welcomed the newcomers, as they were unable to recruit staff from their own communities (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Over time, those from Hong Kong started up their own businesses within the catering trade, mainly in the form of Chinese take-away shops.

As servicemen returned from various parts of the Empire, there was a development and demand for new cuisines in Britain after the Second World War (Benton and Pieke, 1998). The rebuilding of the country, the development of suburban lifestyles, and the rise in the number of female workers also boosted the practice of 'eating out' (Parker, 1994). As a result the catering trade began to flourish and the Chinese community found a niche market in a business that was labour-intensive and required little English (Benton and Pieke, 1998). From the 1950s onward, the number of Chinese eating establishments grew swiftly in Britain (Parker, 1995).

In the early 1960s, the impending 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act removed the automatic right to British citizenship from its Commonwealth citizens. Subsequently, there was a spurt of migration from Hong Kong in 1961 and 1962 to beat the ban (Benton and Pieke, 1998). Furthermore, the 1962 Act required prospective entrants from the Commonwealth (other than the highly-skilled) to have an employment voucher for a specific job, which had to be obtained by a prospective employer (Parker, 1995). This requirement of having a job in advance furthered the concentration of Chinese settlers in the catering trade through family, kin and village connections (Watson, 1975). From the late 1960s onwards, family labour also grew increasingly important as a means of allowing Chinese caterers to react to new competition from American fast-food chains in Britain (Benton and Pike, 1998). A few decades later, the growth of Hong Kong migrants to Britain can be attributed to Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 and the feelings of unease and uncertainty of the country's future stability. Before the official handover, 50,000 families were granted British citizenship (Chan, Cole and Bowpitt, 2007). However, there is no available data of the proportion of those who actually settled in Britain or their age and social composition (Chau and Yu, 2001).

As a result of the Vietnam War in the late 1970s and early 1980s, nearly 20,000 Vietnamese refugees were admitted to Britain under an international resettlement scheme. The figure then rose to 22,000 by 1990 (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Many of the refugees were from North Vietnam and were either twice migrants from China (those who had migrated and settled in Vietnam, then remigrated to Britain) or had a Chinese ancestral background. A smaller amount of the refugees were Vietnamese nationals from the South of Vietnam, though there were also a small proportion of Chinese people from this area also (Ng, 1968). Those from Vietnam were mainly farmers, fishermen or craftsmen with little or no schooling. With a lack of qualifications and inexperience of mainstream work, many of the Vietnamese found themselves to be unemployed in Britain during the mid 1980s. Those who were more fortunate found work in Chinese restaurants as kitchen assistants, or set up their own take-aways or clothing workshops (Shang, 1984).

Chinese people from other Southeast Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, also migrated to Britain in relatively large numbers towards the end of the twentieth century. Many were born in Southeast Asia, or were the descendants of Chinese immigrants, as opposed to being twice migrants (Benton and Gomez, 2008). They tended to be highly qualified and were more likely to work in the legal, accountancy and medical professions (Taylor, 1987). Being more educated and having a higher standard of English, they had little in common with the Mainland or Hong Kong migrants from earlier periods of UK migration (Taylor, 1987).

With regards to education, the influx of Chinese students has contributed towards the overall growth of the UK Chinese population. Historically there has always been a presence of Chinese students in Britain. This can be dated back to 1875 when Chinese scholars were sent to Britain and France as part of China's Self Strengthening Movement of 1861-1895, to help modernise the country. On the eve of the First World War, more than 350 Chinese students were recorded in Britain. The majority was self-financed and the rest had received funding from the Chinese government (Benton and Gomez, 2008). After the Second World War many self-supporting Chinese students came to Britain from Southeast Asia as well as Hong Kong. Chinese students who were from British colonies were free to settle in Britain after their graduation and many decided to settle. Those who remained on British soil tended to set up their own businesses, provided services to the Chinese community or to the general economy itself (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Contemporarily, the Chinese student population in Britain has been estimated to increase to 49,100 in 2010 (Nania and Green, 2004). Most of the modern students are from the Mainland. The Chinese government has encouraged students to study overseas as part of the country's economic and modernisation reforms. Similar to previous times, many of the Chinese students have become permanent residents in the UK and have no intention of returning to Asia.

In the 1990s and early 2000s there has been a large number of Fujianese Chinese appearing and settling in the UK (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Most are suggested to be illegal immigrants and are from quite disadvantaged backgrounds. Due to their lack of skills and qualifications, many find themselves working outside of the mainstream. The majority of the Fujianese tend to work for the Chinese who are already established in Britain (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Due to their illegal status,

this group is more likely to be open to exploitation by those who assist with the trafficking process. In addition, many of the illegal immigrants are socially excluded as a result of their illegal standing as citizens. Due to their social exclusion and the lack of decent work, many illegal Chinese immigrants have been said to turn to a life of crime in order to survive and to pay off their debts to traffickers (Benton and Pieke, 1998).

In 2001 the Chinese population in Great Britain was almost a quarter of a million people (243,000) and it is expected to grow substantially in the coming years (Connolly and White, 2006). Overall, the largest group of British Chinese settlers come from Hong Kong, who arrived between the late 1950s and the late 1960s. Those from Hong Kong represent about a third of the UK Chinese population and includes British born Chinese who are also descendants of Hong Kong migrants (Chau and Yu, 2001). About a quarter of the UK Chinese population were born in Britain and the rest are mainly from Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Mainland (Storkey and Lewis, 1996).

Whilst it is possible to provide such an outline of the stages of Chinese immigration to the UK, their composition, time and means of arrival, as well as differences in their settlement location, are inadequately and unsystematically documented and therefore make analysis difficult (Taylor, 1987). When investigating and exploring the British Chinese diaspora, the diversity within the Chinese population itself needs to be recognised and acknowledged.

1.5 Diversity of the UK Chinese Population

With the earliest stages of Chinese migration and settlement in the seventeenth century there was already a mixture of Chinese residents from the Mainland. The majority were Chinese seafarers from the Southeastern coast of China (namely the Guangdong and Fujian provinces). At the same time there was a small minority of Chinese intellectuals from the aristocracy who required a Western education. Both groups had ended up in the UK for different reasons and were from completely different socio-economic backgrounds. Similarly in present times, there are varying degrees of wealth and resources available to Chinese residents in Britain. For example, when the large influx of Chinese people arrived after the Second World War, Braody (1952) noted five mutually exclusive and segregated Chinese groups within the Liverpool Chinese community. These groups were divided by occupation and financial means and included Chinese laundrymen, shopkeepers in Chinatown, onshore workers and seaman and then the wealthier Chinese restaurateurs and boarding masters.

Those who had migrated after the Second World War were mainly from Hong Kong. However Hong Kong Chinese individuals can be sub-grouped into (i) the Cantonese Punti (native), who are generally thought to be descendants of pioneering northerners who gained control of southern China centuries ago; (ii) the Hakka (guest), who arrived much later and are scattered in the poorer, hilly areas of the New Territories; and (iii) the fishermen, who spend most of their lives aboard the junks and boats in Hong Kong's many harbours (Watson, 1977). When they arrived in Britain, most of the migrants went into the catering trade, as they were poorly qualified and uneducated. In recent times, migration flows from Hong Kong are predominantly

from the urban areas and involves professionals and capitalists. These urban Hong Kong migrants are therefore richer and better qualified and educated in comparison to their rural predecessors (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Some of the British Chinese migrants come from Southeast Asian nations such as Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. Most of these migrants also arrived after the Second World War, but in comparison to the early migrants from Hong Kong and the Mainland, they were more educated and more likely to be in professional occupations. In the early 1980s there were also a number of Vietnamese refugees in Britain as a result of political and social unease (McGregor and Wei, 1991). Those from Vietnam can also be divided by their social and educational standing, with the southerners tending to be better educated than the northern majority (House of Commons, 1985). In Britain, the Vietnamese were often on bad terms with the Hong Kong Chinese on a business and cultural level. Firstly, the Vietnamese arrivals were seen as potential and actual rivalry within the Chinese catering trade. Secondly, the Hong Kong migrants saw the Vietnamese as culturally corrupt, even though the Vietnamese considered themselves as Chinese also (Benton and Gomez, 2008). The small arrival of Chinese immigrants from other former British colonies in the last one hundred years further complicates the diverse nature of Chinese migrant's origins. These countries included remigrants from India, Burma, Mauritius, Guyana, Jamaica and Nauru amongst others (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Most of the Chinese settlers in Britain speak some form of Chinese as their mother tongue, however there are many different speaking different dialects such as Cantonese, Hakka, Mandarin and Vietnamese (Chau and Yu, 2001). There is also a ranking between these languages, with most Chinese overseas agreeing that Mandarin has the highest status, even within countries where Cantonese dominates, such as Britain and Europe (Christensen, 1997). As such, language is said to be a group marker for Chinese people (McGregor and Wei, 1991).

Another social marker includes occupational choices. Whilst the earliest Chinese migrants were mainly confined within manual occupations in one or two niches (such as the laundry houses and the catering industry), there is now a much more diverse spread of career paths taken by the British Chinese community (Benton and Gomez, 2008). For example, many British born and new immigrant Chinese have entered white-collar and middle-class jobs and common professions include business services, the health industry and the education sector (Chau and Yu, 2001).

Contemporary Chinese migrants into Britain, aside from the illegal immigrants, tend to come overseas for a university education. The new migrants are similar to the Southeast Asian migrants in that they come from a much more privileged background (in terms of educational qualifications and socio-economic backgrounds) in comparison to the early Mainland and Hong Kong migrants. In theory, the Chinese students who arrive in Britain are only here on a temporary basis. However, after graduation many remain and enter the British economy. The settlement and economic contribution of Chinese students in the UK can be viewed as a new wave of highly skilled migration into Britain (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Overall Wah, Avari, and Buckley (1996) summarised Britain's Chinese migrant groups in the following way: (i) Immigrants from Hong Kong, the New Territories

and in particular the rural parts of mainland China; (ii) Educational transients, who comprise mainly students from urban Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Mainland Chinese cities and Taiwan; and lastly (iii) Southeast Asian Chinese, who are mostly middle-class, with a Western-style education and who are professionally trained.

Owing to the significance of such distinctions, it is mistaken to consider the Chinese in Britain (and in general) as a homogeneous group (Francis and Archer, 2005c). It is also important to bear in mind that diversity exists in terms of disabilities and sexualities amongst the Chinese community. However there appears to be a general reluctance to speak openly about sex, sexuality and disability, due to common ideas in Chinese culture regarding prejudice, shame, punishment and stigma (Zhang and Beck, 1999, Scadding Court Community Centre, 2005). As the original Chinese communities in Britain age, they are said to give way to new institutions and identities (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Furthermore as the old and established community has laid down roots, there has been an increasing amount of British born Chinese people within the UK. For example, between 1995 and 2002, there has been a rise from 8.9 percent of UK born Chinese to 17.3 percent (aged between 19-59; Lindley et al., 2004). There also appears to be segregation within the British-born and British-raised generation, much of which depends on the individual's career paths and their upward mobility within British society (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Such considerations lead to the conclusion that the Chinese overseas are increasingly heterogeneous (Benton and Pieke, 1998).

On the whole the exploration of diversity within the Chinese overseas community from chapter 1 appears to suggest that 'Chinese' and 'Chineseness' are not fixed and pre-given categories (Ang, 2002). Instead the concept of being Chinese is malleable and has a subjective existence outside the control of the scholar who wants to conceptualise it (Christensen, 1997). It is also important to note that defining and making reference to minority communities is a contentious matter, since the very process of naming involves drawing boundaries around and 'freezing' the diversity which exists within all social groupings (Burlet and Reid, 1998). Stuart Hall has been a vocal critic of this position, arguing that 'identities' are the products of exclusion, because they are constructed through difference and in relation to the 'other' (Hall, 1996). As such, race and ethnic groupings are not objectively defined (Song, 2003).

The differences in terms of migration histories, nationalities (and regions), languages, educational levels and social-economic backgrounds for Chinese migrant groups coming into the UK clearly show that the term 'Chinese' tends to mask such diversity within and between the Chinese themselves (Archer and Francis, 2006a). By highlighting the individual trajectories of Chinese migrants and their descendants a critical eye can be cast over existing research studies, which tend to lump Chinese people into a single category (Ong, 2003).

1.6 A Note on Terminology

The question of what to call people of Chinese descent living outside of China has led to a debate in ethnic and Chinese studies (Benton and Gomez, 2008). 'Overseas Chinese', is often used as the English equivalent of sojourners (migrants who are residing, or sojourning away, from their country of residents on a temporary basis). However, using this term is controversial as most 'overseas Chinese' have no

intention of returning to their country of origin and it implies nationalistic feelings and allegiances (Wang, 1991). The term is also inappropriate for those who are neither sojourners nor Chinese settlers, but of Chinese ancestry (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

For Chinese people who have migrated, settled or were born in Southeast Asia, the term 'ethnic Chinese' has come into popularity, as well as using national identifiers or classifications, such as being Thai, Indonesian, Malaysian, and so on. However, using 'ethnic Chinese' may be problematic when Chinese ethnic identification is more complex and varied, especially in other countries of settlement, such as Europe (Benton and Gomez, 2008). Like 'overseas Chinese', 'ethnic Chinese' may imply a static cultural or national identity that is fixed to the individual. Recent research on diaspora however, suggests that cultural identities are not fixed for migrants (and their descendants), but are instead poised and in transition, and are able to acquire specific meanings in a given context (Brah, 2005, p.142). The possibilities of hyphenated and hybrid cultural identifications allow many immigrants to have feelings of belonging in their country of residence and to their country of origin (Castles, 2000) and help to dispel the notion of a unitary identity. Since no existing term covers the range of Chinese identities that are abroad, this thesis will use a range of terminology depending on the context. When a general term is necessary, Chinese overseas (Gungwu, 2004), Chinese abroad or Chinese diaspora may be used. When referring to Chinese individuals in specific countries, such as Britain or America, British Chinese or American Chinese will be used.

1.7 Conclusion

The international migration and remigration of Chinese individual has been occurring for centuries and general observations can be made before and after the 1960s. Prior to the 1960s, Chinese migration was suggested to be more uniform in terms of departure and resettlement points and in regards to the migrant's backgrounds. However post 1960, Chinese migration is seen to be more complex and diverse, as migrants have settled in a variety of locations, are from a range of countries of origin and have different socio-economic, political and cultural backgrounds.

In a British context for example, it was only after the Second War World when the British Chinese population became a much more established community and increased significantly in number. This can be attributed to social, economic and political factors within the sending countries (such as Mainland China, Hong Kong and Southeast Asian countries), as well as Britain's permissive immigration laws during this period. In addition, the popularity and growing demand for Chinese food in post-war Britain left a labour shortage within the catering trade. This demand for labour and the prospect of a better life attracted many (Hong Kong) Chinese migrants' attention and encouraged their decisions to migrate to the UK. The Chinese catering trade then formed the lifeline for the majority of the immigrant community in the 1950s and 1960s. In the following period, there were a number of Southeast Asian Chinese who started to arrive in Britain (namely from Malaysia and Singapore). Most of this migration group were professionally trained and were better educated in comparison to the earlier Chinese arrivals. In the 1980s, individuals from Taiwan and urban Hong Kong formed the third phase of Chinese migration into Britain. Again, like the Southeast Asian group, this cohort tended to hold better qualifications and had

better financial resources. Contemporarily, the UK Chinese population continues to increase as a result of natural growth, the rising number of Chinese students and the presence of illegal Chinese immigrants.

The emergence and settlement of the Chinese community, such as those in Britain, clearly has a long and complex history. In addition to this, the disparity within the Chinese diaspora is vast. As well as variations in terms of migration histories and their place of origin, Chinese populations are also divided by class, education and social status, as well as differences in language, sexualities and disabilities. However, the empirical reality of the varied and heterogeneous composition of the Chinese overseas and of 'Chineseness' is often glossed over or completely ignored by researchers and lay people alike (Wong, 2004). Generalities and cultural stereotypes of behaviours, actions and beliefs are often seen within the existing studies of Chinese people. In the next chapter, a discussion of the existing research regarding British Chinese individual's lifestyle choices; work occupations and family patterns in relation to assumed cultural patterns will be critically examined. By using the concept of diaspora, it highlights the possibilities of multiple identities and citizenships, and challenges the notion of assimilation and the migrant's loyalty and identity to one nation state (Shuval, 2000). As such, individuals cannot simply be seen as being wholly culturally bound to their country of origin (Anthias, 2001).

Chapter 2

‘Issues with Culture and Resettlement: Work and Home Lives’

2.1 Introduction

The Chinese population represent the third largest ethnic community group in Britain and have a long history of settlement. But despite being one of the UK’s longest standing minority groups, little is known about British Chinese people, as they rarely attract attention from politicians or researchers (Benton and Pieke, 1998, Baxter and Raw, 2002). With available research and literature, the Chinese in Britain are generally regarded as a non-troublesome, high-achieving group, consistently as ‘square’, conformist, and uncreative (Parker, 1995). When exploring the behaviours and belief systems of Chinese people overseas, existing research has mainly focused upon the assumption that such populations are ‘held together’ by a shared Confucian ideology. Studies also suggest that Confucian values are strongly upheld and applied by Chinese individuals. This can be seen within the success stories of Chinese businesses, the running of family life, the rights and expectations of Chinese children and integration into wider society itself. However the use of culture as the sole explanation for patterns of behaviour is questionable, especially when the theories surrounding diaspora, transnationalism and globalisation are more deeply explored.

In order to demonstrate the misleading perception that Chinese culture is all pervasive within Chinese people’s lives, this chapter will draw upon a number of studies which uses cultural generalisations to explain Chinese immigrant’s work lives, family relationships and childhood experiences within Western contexts (with a particular focus on the UK). By drawing upon the diversity of the Chinese diaspora and the porous nature of cultural identities from chapter 1, chapter 2 highlights the need to critically assess the validity of cultural explanations in the existing studies, especially in relation to Chinese parenting and childhoods.

2.2 Research Themes: Social Group and Occupations

One prevalent research finding of Chinese people in the UK is their portrayal as a successful ethnic minority group (Cheng, 1996). Statistical evidence suggests that the Chinese community has achieved economic and educational success as well as upward social mobility within a relatively short time of arriving in Britain (Modood et al., 1997). This is largely through the exploitation of self-employment retail opportunities and their subsequent earning potential. Chinese people are considered as one of the top earning groups in the UK (Modood et al., 1997). Against these backgrounds, secondary sources suggest that Chinese people are no longer considered to be a disadvantaged group (Modood et al., 1997).

In explaining the upward social mobility of Chinese individuals, primary research has identified Confucian ethics as an important factor in the economic success of Chinese businesses, especially those that are family-run. Confucian ethics such as familism, obedience (including the avoidance of conflicts and loyalty to authority),

perseverance and thrift are said to be the key factors for commercial achievements and an explanatory factor to how Chinese business people make their decisions. Patriarchal authority and power has also been central in explaining how Chinese women's and children's labours may be 'incorporated' into family economies (Derphy and Leonard, 1992). However the use of cultural explanations (i.e. Confucianism) is too generalised in explaining the successes of Chinese businesses (Clegg, 1990). Benton (2005) argued that there is a "need to 'de-essentialise Chinese capital' – to challenge the idea that all Chinese businesses follow a common path of development or possess unique characteristics that facilitate their growth" (p.9). In support, Tong (2005) suggested, there is also a 'dark side' to Chinese businesses. The very factors that can help create success within a Chinese family firm, such as personalism (where personal relationships are considered within decision making) and paternalism (where those in authority possess highly centralized control), could actually lead to the eventual dissolution and disintegration of the business if they are not resolved. Furthermore, the ways of working within the Chinese business can be seen as a result of circumstance, as opposed to Chinese cultural values. For instance, when Chinese migrants first arrive in the host country they may need to utilize family strategies to secure start up capital, as opposed to any Confucian morals (Benton and Gomez, 2008). In addition, family cohesiveness within the business can reduce the hiring of labour. As such, cultural explanations for the development and success of Chinese businesses are limited, as well as having a tendency to depict Chinese people as being part of a homogenous group (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Self-employment and independent entrepreneurship have always been prioritised and aimed for within the Chinese immigrant community, suggested Owen (1994). This can be seen in the start-up of Chinese restaurants and take-aways, but also within other trades such as Chinese grocery shops/supermarkets, and the retail sale of other goods and services, as well as illegal ventures such as gambling schemes and incidences of smuggling (see Benton and Gomez, 2008 for more details). However the necessity of maintaining economic survival in the private market undermines their attachment to their own community group (Chau and Yu, 2001). Chinese individuals may identify themselves as members of the same community in that they share the same heritage, culture and languages whilst occasionally coming together to celebrate cultural festivals (Leung, 1987 cited in Chau and Yu, 2001), but the ability of these elements to bind community cohesion is restricted and undermined by the competitiveness between Chinese trades (the catering trade in particular; Chau and Yu, 2001). Moreover, as the Chinese community is mainly composed of numerous single-family units scattered across Britain, the physical distance between each family undermines their chances of interaction and contact (Chau and Yu, 2001). The differences and distinctions between the UK Chinese population, with regards to migration history, place of origin, language, class, education, period of settlement and social status and so forth also affects the feeling of community and bonds.

Despite the suggestion of 'success' in terms of business enterprise and upward social mobility, Chinese people still remain at the margins of British society (Song, 2004). For example, work within the Chinese take-away trade is often associated with racism, harassment and discrimination by customers and the general public. The discrepancy between the power of the providers and the customer of Chinese food is seen as conducive to this unequal social relationship. Drawing on his interviews with British Chinese catering workers, Parker (1994, 1995) explained that since the

purchase of Chinese food is the main chance for other members of society to have contact with Chinese people, the customer's understanding and perception of the Chinese food trade then affects their relationship with Chinese individuals in general. Chau and Yu (2001) further elaborated upon this point:

“First, they [mainly White British customers] pay more attention to the differences of the Chinese from mainstream society than to the similarities. The differences are further exaggerated by irresponsible speculation on the content of Chinese foods- such as that they are mixed with cat bones and dog meat. Second, the image of the Chinese perceived in the Chinese restaurants and take-aways is applied to the rest of the Chinese in society . . . Third, since Chinese food is not an essential part of a normal British diet, the contribution of Chinese people to British society is seen only as a highly dispensable commodity” (Chau and Yu, 2001, p. 118).

Suspicion and mockery of Chinese workers from the take-away experience then affects the integration and status of Chinese people within British society (Chau and Yu, 2001).

Chinese women are said to carry the double roles of looking after family members whilst running the take-away business, as such they are thought to bear the brunt of the social and economic marginality such a living imposes (Parker, 1995, Baxter and Raw, 2002). Research also suggests that Chinese men and women within the catering trade rarely use social services and do not receive sufficient support from the Chinese community. The heavy workload together with the lack of support from mainstream society and their own community can leave many take-away workers with strong feelings of anxiety and insecurity (as found by Chau and Yu, 2001). From the take-away example, it is clear that although the Chinese community has been praised for their high levels of business ownership and self-employment rates, their achievements and successes may be exaggerated and their problems underestimated as a result (Chan et al., 2004).

2.3 Immigrant Parenting and Cultural Differences

Another dominant area of investigation has been the idea of ‘culture shocks’ and ‘culture clashes’ for Chinese immigrants. For example, Wu and Chao (2004) are amongst many other researchers who have suggested that Chinese families encounter a ‘culture shock’, when adapting to non-Chinese contexts (see also Sung, 1985, Chan and Leong 1994, Uba 1994, Ying 1999, Qin, 2006). Culture shock is described as the contrast and incompatibility of cultures between migrated individuals and the host society. In Western countries, the traditional Chinese cultural backdrop that has been shaped by Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism and for some Communism, is then replaced with Liberal-Democratic, Christian-Capitalist ethics and practices. Facing such a barrage of unfamiliarity, many migrants are suggested to maintain the security of their native customs and practices. The migration process itself has been suggested to entrench traditional regimes further, as parents try to preserve and maintain their ethnic practices overseas, even though many of these values are rarely practiced in their country of origin (Wong, 1998). Of these, Confucianism has been argued to be the main influence upon Chinese norms and as such is still preserved by many Chinese immigrant communities (Wu and Singh, 2004).

The maintenance of Confucian ideals for immigrant parents has been a key focus for the majority of Chinese overseas studies. For families who migrate to Western societies, cultural differences are pinpointed to the disparity between Confucian values (seen as traditional Chinese norms) and individualism (seen as typical Western practices). Confucianism is often described as a group focused and collectivist philosophy, where social order and harmony of the group (such as the family, society or nation) is emphasised over the needs, desires and goals of the individual. In order to promote and achieve the best interests and welfare of the collective whole, conformity to norms, emotional self-control and humility are expected. In contrast, individualism is seen to stress the importance of the individual, whose personal rights, independence and autonomy are valued and privileged. As such, Chinese immigrant parents are often viewed as maintaining ethnic traditions that are at odds with children's experiences in the new culture (Kwak, 2003).

Confucianism not only influences Chinese parenting styles, but the rights and obligations of the child and what is culturally expected (and required) from children within the immigrant household. In maintaining group unity and harmonious interpersonal relationships, obedience to authority, self-control and compliance seem to be expected in a more consistent and absolute manner by Chinese parents, as illustrated by Chao's (1995) research. In support, Ho's study (1986) found that many Chinese parents placed greater emphasis on obedience, proper conduct, moral training and the acceptance of social obligations, as opposed to the development of children's independence, assertiveness and creativity (as seen within the majority of Western parenting styles). Primary sources also suggest that the entrenchment of Chinese traditions by parents then leads to problematic household relations and reduced societal integration for both parents and children. This can be seen in both past and modern studies, such as Chiu (1987), Chan and Leong (1994), Chen, Dong and Zhou (1997) and more recently Fung, Lieber and Leung (2003). Specifically, if young people prefer the norms of the dominant culture, whilst parents espouse the values of their country of origin, confusion and frustration may be caused on the part of the child (Feldman, Mont-Reynaud and Rosenthal, 1992). Furthermore, differences in opinions regarding appropriate parenting methods and approaches may cause conflict between Chinese immigrant parents and their children. If conflicts occur, this may have a more pronounced and negative impact within Chinese families as it violates Chinese cultural norms of respect and obedience to authority, as well as the emphasis placed upon family harmony (Phinney and Ong, 2002).

With regards to the rights of the child, primary and secondary evidence suggest that Chinese parents (immigrants or otherwise) appear to be more tolerant and active in their use of corporal punishment. Within Chinese culture and writings, physical child-rearing approaches are seen to encourage and discipline the integrity of the child rather than as a punishment (Siu-Ming and Tam, 2005). Harsh scolding and physical punishment also correlates with the Chinese emphasis of compliance to authority from a very early age (Chen et al., 2003). With the general acceptance of corporal punishment amongst Chinese societies, child neglect and the possible psychological abuse caused are not recognised in the same way as Western societies, which may cause problems for immigrant Chinese households (Wong, 2004). However, differing levels of cultural acculturation of Chinese immigrant parents may affect their views on corporal punishment (Siu-Ming and Tam, 2005). Those who are new arrivals in

America for example, have been shown to rely upon traditional methods of disciplining their children, as a response to the anxiety and adjustment problems associated with migration. Corporal punishment has also been viewed by parents as an effective way of protecting their children from undesirable influences in the new country (United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society, 1999). In contrast, Chiu's (1987) interviews demonstrated that many Chinese-American mothers who have lived in the United States for a long period of time, (e.g. 15 years or more), appear to be more influenced by Western child-rearing practices and were less authoritarian and controlling with children, as well as relying less upon strict physical disciplinary methods. Such findings illustrate the need to consider other explanatory factors, aside from culture, in understanding Chinese families and their practices.

Other research observations within Chinese child-rearing practices include parent's responsibilities and social obligations to train the child to be sensitive to moral and social rules and the complex meaningfulness of shame (Xu et al., 2005). The larger goal of this cultural child-rearing practice is to produce an adult who is sensitive to shame and hence to other people's opinions, evaluations and judgements (Fung, 1999, p. 183-184). Being aware and considerate to others, or to 'give face' is an important concept in traditional Chinese social structure, especially in a one-to-one relationship, and is heavily featured within Confucianism (Taylor, 1987). Reciprocal expectation has been suggested to be another key aspect of traditional Chinese values and child-rearing practices. Accordingly, Xu et al. (2005) found that "parents expect children to be obedient and respectful and parents are expected to be responsible and experienced instructors who pass along cultural norms, values, and life experiences" (p. 525). A most 'abusive' parent in society and Confucian writings is one who does not discipline/train their child, "drowning the child with love" (Wu, 1981, p. 141). In turn, Chinese children are expected to demonstrate the virtue of filial piety in Confucianism. By being filial, children should obey and be subservient to parents (as well as to elders and those in authority). Filial piety has been suggested to be the major goal that guides the socialisation of children in the traditional Chinese family. The emphasis upon obedience and respect for authority figures within Chinese child-rearing methods is said to be pervasive across the school environment, public gatherings and other social contexts. This observation has been highlighted amongst the works of Sham and Woodrow, 1998, Woodrow and Sham, 2001, Fung et al., 2003 and Francis and Archer (2005a/b/c) for example.

Chinese parents who strongly adhere to Chinese values are likely to maintain a distance associated with the traditional status hierarchy when interacting with their children. This demeanour, to some extent, is conveyed in an authoritarian or controlling parenting style, particularly when children misbehave (Xu et al., 2005). In support, Wu and Chao's (2005) research has found that Chinese immigrant parenting tends to be more authoritarian and less authoritative than their Western counterparts. Authoritative parenting often entails parental warmth, which is responsive and assertive (but not restrictive) with children. In contrast, authoritarian parenting involves parental dominance that is seen to be restrictive and cold towards young people (for a discussion of parenting models see Baumrind, 1971). However, traditional Chinese values not only emphasise child obedience and parental strictness, which are attributes of an authoritarian parenting style, but also promote parental acceptance and responsiveness, which are characteristics of an authoritative parenting style (Chao, 2000). Within Chao's (1994, 1995, 2000) parental studies, she discussed

how Chinese parents' child-rearing responsibilities are fulfilled in the process of *guan*, which means to 'govern' as well as to love. Generally, Chinese parents are immensely devoted to their children; they sacrifice much to meet their children's needs and they provide ample affection and warmth, two characteristics of an authoritative parenting style. Thus, authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles are intertwined with the Chinese value system and both will be expressed in varying degrees (Xu et al., 2005). Furthermore Chao (2001) argued that the concept of authoritarian parenting is somewhat ethnocentric, as Chinese parenting is often described in contrast to Western ideals which are modelled upon European/American middle-class families. As such, the dichotomy of either authoritative or authoritarian styles does not appear to capture the range and variation of parenting within Chinese culture. Despite Chao's (1994, 1995, 2000, 2001) illustration of the problematic nature of applying Western labels upon Chinese parenting approaches, the existing studies are still heavily reliant upon cultural explanations themselves for understanding Chinese child-rearing techniques and subsequent parent-child relationships. Although every culture defines a particular set of rules and values regarding children's upbringing, parenting styles can differ among various cultures as well as within families (Chen and Kennedy, 2004). In chapter 1, the diversity of the Chinese diaspora in terms of migration histories, place of origin, ethnic identity, language use and social backgrounds were highlighted, arguably such factors, individually or collectively, can also affect the nature and adherence to Chinese norms, including an individual's approach to parenting.

More significantly, the emphasis upon cultural factors in existing research neglects other areas of influence upon parenting decisions and techniques, such as contextual and environmental aspects, parent-child relationships and the influence of children themselves. Consequently a more holistic understanding of Chinese parenting is missing from the existing literature. In developing our knowledge of Chinese parenting methods and the attachments between Chinese parents and their offspring, this thesis will attempt to explore the broader issues surrounding contemporary Chinese child-rearing, whilst considering the impact of individual difference and diversity. Such issues will be further discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Until this is remedied, our knowledge of Chinese parenting and parent-child interactions will continue to be limited.

2.4 Home and School: Children's Experiences

The assumption that Chinese culture is an all-encompassing factor within the lives of Chinese people is not only portrayed within the research with Chinese adults, but also with Chinese children. This can be seen in the investigations of 'culture clashes' and 'gaps', as well as cultural acculturation debates between Chinese parents and their children (e.g. see Sue and Sue, 1971, Ho, 1989, Chau and Landreth, 1997). For instance, children of Chinese immigrants are often seen as being stranded between two cultures, the culture of Western society and the culture of the Chinese household. A number of empirical work, published mainly during the 1970s and 1980s, then problematised the idea of being 'between two cultures' and implied a resulting 'culture gap' or 'culture clash' (Song, 1997). On the one hand, the authoritarian and old-fashioned culture of Chinese parents was deemed as a preventative factor in the Chinese child's social integration (Parker, 1995). On the other, Chinese offspring who showed unwillingness to conform to the wishes of Chinese parents, the needs of the

family or Chinese culture, tended to be positioned as Westernised and labelled as 'bananas'- "to be white on the inside, yellow only on the outside" (Parker, 1995, p.191). In this 'between two cultures' perspective, second generation individuals are seen to be struggling with the two incommensurable cultural value systems. In reconciling such differences, research suggests that one cultural standpoint for the child is replaced with another (Parker, 1995).

When dissimilar levels of cultural acculturation occur between parents and children, it has been suggested to intensify the challenges of the resettlement process, as well as affecting the child's developmental processes (Costigan and Dokis, 2006). For example, Wu and Chao (2005) found that psychological stress and adjustment problems could result for Chinese children undergoing such circumstances. Levels of depression, anxiety and somatic problems have also been reported (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Cultural misunderstandings with parents may then affect parent-child relationships, and the amount of emotional support available to the young person (Wu and Chao, 2005). Complicating issues further, is the level of cultural difference between the immigrant home and the norms of the Western school. For example, the contrast of individualist and collectivist cultural norms may affect the child's schooling transition and their subsequent educational success. As children who experience similar environments and expectations at home and school are more likely to find the transition and experience of schooling a much easier process (Morrison et al., 1997), and tend to exhibit higher levels of social competence and academic achievement (Early et al., 1999).

Chinese immigrant parents may also exhibit unfamiliarity and unrelatedness to the schooling context due to conflicts between parent's personal and family lives with the priorities of the school environment. For example, in Australia, many migrated Chinese parents were busy running small businesses in order to look after their families. Due to heavy workloads and commitments, many Chinese parents did not have the time to learn the 'multicultural' values of Australia, and instead maintained their own cultural identities. Consequently, this created:

"A situation where their children lived in a hybrid world. . . [Where] the school promulgates conflicting 'white Australian' and 'cosmopolitan Australian' identities, while family life is geared to economic survival and extended, transnational community networks" (Wu and Singh, 2004, p. 41).

Similar research findings concerning cultural dissimilarities between the home and school have been observed in other countries, such as America, Canada and Britain (e.g. Stevenson et al., 1985, Stevenson, Lee and Stigler, 1986, Chao, 1996). The differences between the expectations of the family and school may then affect the child's and parent's 'connection' to the school community and could cause difficulties, confusion and anxiety for the children of immigrant households (Dockett and Perry, 2005). The establishment and maintenance of positive home-school relationships, and a sense of belonging to the school, has been suggested to be vitally important, as they both contribute towards children's successful performance and adjustment to school life (Dockett and Perry, 2005). Chinese children may also find schooling more difficult due to the different emphasis placed upon respect and obedience between the home and school. Whereas Chinese parents tend to prioritise filial piety within the home and other environments, Chinese children often find that

authority can be questioned and challenged within the school context (Verma et al., 1999).

Interestingly however, it has been suggested that the dominance of Confucian principles is actually a contributory factor for Chinese children's academic achievements. Confucian ethics stress the importance of education, not only as a means of civilizing individuals, who would subsequently contribute towards a harmonious and peaceful society, but also as a means to achieve and attain upward social mobility (and family reputation) through self-merit and hard work. In the UK, British Chinese pupils generally produce an extremely high level of achievement and attainment (Francis and Archer, 2005b). British Chinese and British Indian pupils also outperform children from other ethnic groups in compulsory education (DfEE, 2001). Furthermore, British Chinese students are more likely than any other ethnic group in Britain to enter higher education (HESA, 2005). This latter achievement represents a rapid change from the situation in the 1980s, where Taylor (1987) found that progression to higher education was relatively rare among the British Chinese community. Moreover, while concerns about boys' underachievement remain an ongoing theme in the academic and popular press, figures show that British Chinese boys continue to match the educational performance of their female counterparts (DfES, 2004). British Chinese pupils are therefore suggested to be particularly educationally oriented, due to the high currency placed on the value of education, as specific to their Chinese identities (Francis and Archer, 2005a).

The value placed upon education appears to be an important concept to all Chinese social classes in Britain and is deeply ingrained (see studies by Djao, 2003, Francis and Archer, 2005c for example). Sham and Woodrow's (1998) case studies revealed how Chinese parents had high expectations of their children as a result, where:

“Doing one's best is paramount. Perseverance, obedience, duty and loyalty are the essential qualities of a good son or daughter” (Sham and Woodrow, 1998, p.204).

As such, Chinese parents have been criticised for encouraging a conformist attitude in their children, which is seen to impede the child's growth within the educational setting (Sham and Woodrow, 1998, Woodrow and Sham, 2001).

“From a Western liberal perspective, then, and certainly from a Eurocentric child development perspective, the Chinese practices regarding education are problematic and even pathological, meaning that their ‘cultural currency’ is not valued equally in the West” (Francis and Archer, 2005c, p. 106).

The high emphasis on educational achievement and the constant need to re-achieve and re-perform has various costs for the children involved (Francis and Archer, 2005b). Common complaints by Chinese children include additional stresses and pressure placed upon them by parents. Some pupils, particularly Chinese girls, have been found to doubt their abilities and have feelings that they were ‘never good enough’, despite being high achievers (Francis and Archer, 2005c).

It cannot be assumed however that there is uniformity amongst Chinese families regarding the priority of education. From Watson's (1975) interviews, there appeared

to be socio-economic differences within parental attitudes of Chinese migrants. For example, rural immigrant families from the New Territories were suggested to be sceptical about the connection between schooling and material success, and poor parents from urban Hong Kong were less likely than rich parents to value education (Watson, 1975). Some Chinese parents may value education as a means to a different way of life, as a method to further career opportunities (Taylor, 1987) and upward social mobility (Benton and Gomez, 2008). As Cheng (1994) suggested, the significance of education should not be seen as a distinctive cultural value in its own right amongst Chinese people and will instead be espoused according to the perceptions, realities and experiences of the individuals concerned. By following arguments which suggest that culture is not a set form of practices and beliefs, the value of education should not be seen as static and non-evolving. Additionally, the parent-child relationship itself, as well as social, historical and political contexts, needs to be considered when exploring the value of education within Chinese families. Such insights are limited and there is a lack of research with Chinese children's underperformance or non-engagement within the schooling environment. Consequently alternative viewpoints about the importance of education for immigrant Chinese families are concealed. Although the topic of education is not one of the thesis's focuses, the prevalent cultural accounts of Chinese children's academic successes within the literature, helps to demonstrate the dominance of using Confucian values as an explanatory factor for Chinese people's daily lives and childhood experiences.

2.5 Adolescence and Agency Concerns

Returning to the concept of cultural differences within the Chinese household, it has been suggested that cultural conflict between Chinese immigrant parents and their children may be more problematic during the time of adolescence. During this time, children begin to engage with environments that are not selected and do not involve their parents. As a result, children may become more aware of the cultural discrepancies between their home and wider social networks. The adolescent's increased awareness and differing cultural expectations may increase the likelihood of parent-child conflict around family rules, discipline methods and friendship choices (Costigan and Dokis, 2006). The level of independence that should be granted to young people appears to be a particular issue during this time. Due to the cultural emphasis of parental control and later age expectations of children's behavioural autonomy in Chinese culture, adolescent Chinese children may not be granted the freedoms and choices they expect outside of a Chinese context (as found by Lee and Zhan, 1998). Interestingly, as opposed to Western literature which suggests that the period of adolescence is a time of increasing independence for young people, Chinese adolescents are often portrayed as being passive and conformist to parental authority due to Confucian principles. Furthermore contemporary Western studies have demonstrated family diversity in terms of their relationships, activities and functioning, with children playing an active role in the household (e.g. Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001), but such thinking is not applied to Chinese households. Despite a more complex picture of how individuals and Western families live their lives, this has not been applied to Chinese families in the UK and such issues need to be addressed. In chapter 3, the theories of detraditionalisation and individualisation are discussed and how these writings can be incorporated into the studies of UK Chinese households. Arguably such understandings would help to challenge the homogenising

accounts of Confucian values dictating the lives of Chinese parents and children and offer new insights into household functioning.

2.6 Rethinking Cultural Explanations

Although culture does play a significant part in the individual's belief systems and interactions, the notion of culture itself is problematic. Conceptually, culture refers to many different aspects of human behaviour and ways of being, as well as denoting a set of cultural attributes, artefacts, symbols and practices (Matsumoto, 2006). Culture is also underpinned by factors such as gender, class and religion, as well as regional and linguistic differences (Brah, 2005). As such, culture is a complex and multifaceted construct, which can be interpreted and represented in many different ways. Nevertheless within assimilation arguments, the migrant's cultural transformation is seen as uni-directional, where the Chinese individual loses their original cultural identity as they acquire a new cultural identity of the host country (Sam, 2006). Here the two cultures in contact are seen as mutually exclusive, and it is therefore difficult for the individual to maintain both cultures involved (Sung, 1985). Despite criticisms of the uni-directional perspective for conveying imperialist notions and a bias towards the dominant groups culture (Sam and Berry, 2006), this is rarely acknowledged within immigrant Chinese studies. Moreover, when considering cultural choices and identities, the active role of the individual is ignored. Migrant parents may not necessarily endorse their ethnic traditions and not all immigrant children will adopt the traditions of the host culture (Dockett and Perry, 2005). Indeed, recent research suggests that culture clashes are not inevitable. Many young people who were either born or raised in Britain tend to see themselves as being informed by both Chinese and British cultures (as demonstrated by Song, 1997) and in this way being the owners of a rich cultural capital upon which they can draw. The construction of cultural identities by British Chinese individuals can therefore be seen as a diverse and complex process, which often demonstrates cultural multilingualism as much as it may form culture clashes or gaps (see Song, 1997 and Parker, 1996). Such thinking accords with the bi-directional perspective of acculturation, which suggests that both the individuals and groups who are in contact can change, but not necessarily towards a neutral or a mid-point; influence can also be a mutual or a reciprocal process.

“[Cultural] change can take place along two independent dimensions, one dimension being the maintenance or loss of the original culture and the other being participation in, or adoption of aspects of, the new culture. It is therefore possible for an individual to have more or less of the two cultures in question” (Sam and Berry, 2006, p.17-18).

As opposed to total assimilation to mainstream society and a loss of original identities, migrants can hold onto their own particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories whilst still incorporating the values of the wider host culture (Hall, 1992). This may result in a new diaspora where “cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (Hall, 1993, p.394). Related to this concept of diaspora is the notion of hybridity (Mavroudi, 2007), where hybrid identities or cultures are formed from the cultural mixing process (Chambers, 1994). Culture in this way, is not seen as fixed or determined by place or nationality (Karla et al., 2005), and so perhaps should not be used to categorize and define individuals (Fenton,

1999). Therefore, studies that suggest settlement problems for Chinese families due to commonly held Chinese customs and values could be criticised for viewing culture as a fixed and one-dimensional entity.

Arguments concerning diaspora and hybridity highlight how cultures and cultural values can evolve and change over time, and in various manners. Furthermore changes in cultural values, shifts in cultural identities and the opportunities to be culturally diverse can result from globalisation and due to the immigration process itself, including the development of multicultural policies in host countries.

Globalisation is closely associated with the acceleration of migration and the changing of cultural identities (Gilroy, 1997). Although there is no uniform conceptualisation of globalisation, its causal dynamics and its structural consequences, there is a general consensus that globalisation involves an intensification of global interconnectedness, with an increase of flows and linkages between nations (Hall, 1992). In contrast to acculturation theories, globalisation looks at how several societies and cultures become more alike or harmonized (as opposed to the changes occurring between two specific individuals and cultures; Sam, 2006). Globalisation can be seen as:

“Operating on a scale, which cuts across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organisations in new space-time combinations, making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected” (Hall, 1992, p. 299).

Moreover, as a result of globalisation (though a contested issue), international mobility and advanced technology have resulted, thus allowing more frequent travel and contact for immigrants between the host country and their country of origin (Jacobs, 2004). The combination of which is argued to provide opportunities for the Chinese family to communicate with ‘people back home’, whilst simultaneously encouraging the preservation of Chinese culture, and an attachment to the native land as an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983, cited in Huang and Pieke, 2003). As a result of globalised networks and advancements in communicative technology, not only do children of immigrant households engage in transnational attachments (or transnationalism), but at the same time, are able to “develop ethnic identities that would have little meaning in the parental country of origin, and indeed, to their parents” (Louie, 2006, p.364).

Transnationalism may help young Chinese people to understand and to appreciate their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. According to Glick, Basch and Szanton Blanc (1992, p.7), immigrants “forge and sustain multi-stranded relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, rather than experience a rupture in their attachments.” The emergent literature shows that similar to the first generation, second and third generation Chinese individuals can experience transnationalism at the level of practice, that is, back-and-forth movement, remittances, business interests, and political involvement (Itzigsohn, Cabral and Medina, 1999). Due to technological advancement, the spread of capitalism and political developments in a global context (Portes, 2003), contemporary transnational practices tend to be more regular, routine, and occurring in larger numbers than in the past (Louie, 2006). Transnationalism arguably enables Chinese migrant parents and their children to make more political,

social, economic and emotional connections to their country of origin than previously before (Basch et al., 1994). The concept of transnationalism therefore challenges the assumption that immigrants are incorporated and then assimilated into a new national context once they leave their homeland behind (Gordon 1964).

International migration has been suggested to be part of a transnational revolution in reshaping societies and politics around the globe, including cultural transformations, transference of knowledge, fashion, communication and the like (Castles and Miller, 1993, Skeldon, 1994). Migration can therefore impact upon the cultural identities of both the country of origin and the country of destination (Gilroy, 1997). Within communities of origin, emigration and globalisation can impact upon traditional economic and social structures (e.g. the family and local community) as well as influencing the existing values and belief systems there (e.g. gender and social relations). Similarly in countries of immigration, immigrant settlement not only affects the national economy, but can also transform social and cultural values 'back home' (Castles, 2000). Multicultural policies may also result from international migration. Government policies of multiculturalism are said to encourage multicultural identities and a toleration of diversity within host societies. Additionally, Lu (2001) suggested that multicultural policies can aid cultural understandings between immigrant parents and their children, or the descendants of immigrants (Lu, 2001). Multicultural policies hope to generate a return to roots and leads to a strengthening of ethnic identities, whilst seeking to give oppressed minorities a voice (Siu-Ming and Tam, 2005).

“Multiculturalism attempts to subvert cultural homogenisation by acknowledging the coexistence and equal representation of different cultures and peoples within a nation-state” (Siu-Ming and Tam, 2005, p.153).

Such strategies create a more favourable climate to ethnic immigrants and their descendants compared to previous eras (Lu, 2001), as in the past, the assimilation of immigrants had been advocated by the larger society, so that immigrants and their descendants were pressured to abandon their own cultures and languages (Alba and Nee, 2003). Arguably as a result of multicultural policies, the preservation of culture and the development of bicultural orientation should be in place for new immigrants and their attached ethnic groups (Lu, 2001). However, critics of multiculturalism suggest that policies do not necessarily empower minority groups or necessarily redistribute power or resources (Hoon, 2006). One of the main issues with multiculturalism is its representation of minority groups and cultures as homogeneous utopian entities (Lu, 2001). By overlooking diversity within the same culture, “this does not allow space for differences of interest and power within the minority collectivity” (Hoon, 2006, p.156). Consequently, a particular version of Chinese culture and ethnicity is displayed as representative of all Chinese and ‘Chineseness’ within the framework of multiculturalism (Hoon, 2006). The shallow idea of multiculturalism is exemplified in the UK context, with the food provided by Chinese take-aways hailed as contributing to a harmonious multicultural society (Parker, 2000). As multiculturalism tends to essentialise cultural boundaries as fixed, static and monolithic, with no space for growth and change (Yuval-Davis, 1997), the reproduction of the subordination of ‘others’ to the dominant culture and people emerges and racism occurs (Hoon, 2006). As Hall (1996, p. 445) has argued, racism:

“Operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories . . . [so that race] constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness”.

As a result of homogenising cultures through multiculturalism, recognition of individual cultural ‘voices’ are not acknowledged, nor is the real diversity of the nation (Hoon, 2006).

“Multiculturalism remains as rhetoric, since it is in fact ‘monocultural’, in that it often does not allow for the recognition that an individual member of society may have more than one ‘identity’ at work within her/himself. In the context of multiculturalism, each individual possesses only one discrete cultural identity. In this sense, ironically, by unwittingly setting clear boundaries and delineations between cultures, multiculturalism has defeated its own purpose of avoiding the monocultural nation through an assimilation policy. People who do not fit into any of those defined cultural categories will be left with no choice but to ‘assimilate’ into the only officially ‘prescribed’ cultures that are available” (Hoon, 2006, p.11).

Interestingly, the acceptance of the Chinese people overseas may be changing as a result of China’s growing significance. Currently, China’s global influence may be impacting upon immigrant Chinese parents and children’s cultural understandings, whilst simultaneously impacting upon people’s knowledge of China and Chinese culture in general. Within Spain’s foreign policy, for example, China has assumed a greater importance in contemporary times (Nieto, 2003). In expanding its economic relations with Asia, the Spanish government wishes to reinforce linguistic and cultural ties with China, the Philippines, and Vietnam in order to expand its development and levels of cooperation. As such, in 2002 the Asia-Pacific Framework Plan and the Casa Asia (House of Asia) was established in Barcelona “in order to promote the knowledge of the region among Spaniards, and to foster political, economic, and cultural relations with Asia” (Nieto, 2003, p.215).

Within the UK, there have been new government proposals to introduce Mandarin to the secondary school curriculum, to enable students to adapt to the changing global economy (Warner, 2007). This can be seen in the UK’s DfES Languages for All Strategy (2002), which called for a huge cultural change in relation to the country’s attitudes to teaching and the learning of languages to help develop intercultural understanding (Clegg, 2003). Although the teaching of Mandarin is beginning to take off in UK schools, much more needs to be done to ensure that the momentum is maintained and that new developments are placed on a sustainable basis suggested Clegg (2003). Ultimately, the acceptance of Chinese people in their host countries relies upon the hegemonic group(s) or power holders (Hoon, 2006).

2.7 Conclusion

When looking at the existing research regarding Chinese people overseas, there is a tendency for theorists to focus upon Confucian ethics as a means of explanation for both individual and group behaviour. For Chinese households, research tends to suggest that Confucian ethics not only provide a philosophical basis and structure for Chinese parenting, but they impact upon parent-child interactions and family relations

(Xu et al., 2005). Examples of Chinese parenting styles and expected child behaviours include the importance of filial piety (respecting and adhering to the authority of parents and elders), distance between parents and children (due to the importance placed upon age hierarchy and emotional self-restraint), the use of shaming to achieve child socialisation goals and the high value placed upon education.

Although cultural traditions and values are pervasive influences, culture itself is a problematic concept, as it refers to many different aspects of human behaviour and ways of being. More specifically, culture is dependent upon the degree of internalisation by the individual, which is consequently affected by gender, age, class and socio-economic environments. External factors such as globalisation, transnationalism and technological and communicative advances are also said to influence cultural identities and understandings amongst societies. From chapter 2 it becomes apparent that cultural explanations cannot offer a complete picture of Chinese people's lives, particularly family and childhood experiences. Complicating our understanding of Chinese family lives further is the dominant perception of 'childhood' and 'the family' within academic and lay thinking. Such issues will be addressed in chapters 3 and 4, by looking at how childhood in a Western and Chinese context can vary according to social, economic, political and cultural factors and how such discourses can then impact upon research with Chinese children and consequently the research findings themselves.

Chapter 3

‘The Social Construction of Childhood’

3.1 Introduction

Childhood is often thought of as an inevitable part of the human life cycle. Commonly associated with the ‘growing up’ process, childhood is also conceived as a natural phase of development. Childhood may even be differentiated into different parts, such as infancy, early, middle, late childhood and adolescence. However these stages and the ages at which childhood begins and ends are not clear-cut. Even within a particular society, there may be variations in what is meant by and understood as a child. Within the UK for example there is no single law that defines the age of children (Walters, 2008). Even between UK nations there are differences in guidelines and classifications. However within most of Britain’s legislation a child is someone who is under the age of eighteen. This can be seen in the British government’s safeguarding children policies, where a child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday. Similarly, by ratifying to the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), a child is defined as someone who is under the age of eighteen in the UK. At the same time however, the UK’s Sexual Offences Act (2003) states that sixteen is the age for sexual consent (Home Office, 2004). Whilst the age of criminal responsibility in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is ten years of age, whereas in Scotland a child can be held criminally responsible at the age of eight. The flexibility concerning the beginning and ending of childhood, often leads to ambiguities over the nature of childhood itself. On the one hand, children can be viewed as innocent, naive and vulnerable. On the other, children can also be seen as inherently evil and immoral (Goldson, 1997). The paradox over the condition of childhood appears to be a reoccurring theme within Chinese and Western history and societies.

In this chapter, it is argued that the images and the contrasting notions of childhood have developed through social, political, economical and cultural factors over time. The historical overview of the construction of childhood in accordance with social change, state policy and intervention is not the intention here. Instead, the chapter tries to reflect that our understandings of children are heavily reliant upon historical periods, the societal status of the child and general family attitudes (Stearns, 2006). The dominant ideology of the family is also discussed within this chapter in explaining how childhood has become synonymous with dependency and vulnerability. It is important to bear in mind that the different views of childhood are by no means mutually exclusive, nor are they legitimate frameworks in reflecting the true nature, or the reality of children’s lives (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). As Jenks (1982) noted, particular theories about childhood are often in sharp contrast to the actuality of children’s lives. Nevertheless by exploring how childhood is conceived differently across time, it will hopefully highlight the issue that childhood is defined through the world of adults and that childhood is not a standardised life experience for the children themselves. Childhoods then, either Chinese or British, cannot be seen as uniform nor static, but should be viewed as complex and various (Kinney, 1995a).

3.2 Constructions of Childhood

In Britain today, the idea of childhood seems to be in some ways eroding, due to significant technological, social and economic changes (Seaford, 2001). However, Jenks (1996) notes, we have yet to reach any consensus on the nature of childhood, as beliefs are held by particular theorists rather than any 'higher' truth about children themselves. Consequently, concepts of childhood will often stand in sharp contrast to children's lives (Jensen and McKee, 2003).

Contrasting images of childhood have been a long and recurring theme throughout history. In Western contemporary society, the juxtaposition of children being seen as both inherently evil whilst also innocent still exists (Goldson, 1997), reflecting a deep-seated paradox about the true condition of childhood and of children themselves (James and James, 2004). Similarly, within popular discourse, childhood is often conceived as 'routine' and 'natural', yet the memory of it can also be a site of adult anxiety and mobilizes extraordinary symbolic purchase (Jenks, 1996). In contemporary Western society there appears to be four dominant, but conflicting perceptions of children: 'Embryonic children', 'little devils', 'savages' and 'little angels'. As we will discuss, in Chinese society similar depictions of children are also evident.

3.2.1 The Child as an Embryo

In exploring the various constructions of childhood, we begin with the embryonic child. The embryonic model is based upon early child development theories in Western psychology (Jenks, 1982). Within such thinking the child's growth and maturity is seen as a linear process, where biology and social development are intertwined. Children progress through a succession of developmental stages, which are dependant upon their cognitive and emotional abilities (seen as biologically determined), in order to reach their apex in adulthood (Fawcett, Featherstone and Goddard, 2004). This can be seen in Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Kohlberg's theory of moral development for example. The assumption of biologically determined capabilities of children helps to solidify the viewpoint that childhood is a natural stage of life.

As adulthood is seen as the final endpoint for children, childhood is merely a preparatory stage before full rationality and maturity can be obtained (Schor, 2004). Not only does this imply that childhood is an emergent state, but it is also seen as inferior to adulthood. Although it would be absurd not to recognise that a child's competency may differ with age (Fawcett, Featherstone and Goddard, 2004), children here are defined in terms of 'potentials' as adults rather than as beings or persons in the here and now. By lacking recognition as individuals, children are left on the margins of social life (Cockburn, 1998). Nevertheless, the perception of children as emergent or developing through biological capacities has influenced popular thinking within contemporary society. The focus on children's stages of development and their capabilities according to age can be seen within educational settings, welfare practices as well as common sense understanding of children (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001).

Similar to psychological child development theories, sociology has tended to downplay or neglect children's agency in their development. This is exemplified

within socialisation theory from the 1970s onwards. Socialisation theory emphasises the reproduction of the adult social order and how adults indoctrinate children into the social world (Prout and James, 1997). Socialisation of children is thought to be through the key institutions that children encounter, such as the community, educational institutions and the family (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). Children within socialisation theories are seen as projects who need to be socialised and guided by adults.

Parallel to child development and socialisation theories in the Western world, Confucian thought within Chinese culture also views childhood as a phase of human development with no merits of its own (Kinney, 1995a). Confucianism views the child as an incomplete being who is in need of education and culture to become fully human. Childhood training is therefore crucial to the development of an accomplished and moral adult (Kinney, 2004). By conceiving the child as not being 'fully human', Confucianism places little value upon childhood itself. Instead the role of adults are emphasised within childhoods, as they are the trainers and teachers of children (as seen within socialisation theory).

Development and socialisation theories within Western literature and Confucian thoughts provide uniform accounts of children's growth and maturity. Little is given to the significance or variation in children's social lives. For instance, neither the individuality of the child or their surrounding environments are considered (James and James, 2004). Furthermore, children are not seen as social agents. Instead as embryonic persons and projects, children are different and inferior to adults (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). Such views are deeply adult-centric and the voices of children are subsequently marginalized (Schor, 2004). Adults are presumed to be able to speak on the behalf of children, grounded in the notion of the child's 'best interest'. In support, Hood-Williams (1990) argued that children are systematically excluded from the spheres of social, economic and political interests. As a consequence, children become invisible in academic and policy debates about their well-being and needs (Wyness, 2000, Fawcett, Featherstone and Goddard, 2004).

3.2.2 The Child as a Devil

Similar to development and socialisation models, the image of children as little devils focuses on the child's internal characteristics. The perception of children as devils assumes that they are beset by original sin. In this viewpoint, children are inherently evil and lacking in morality (Fawcett, Featherstone and Goddard, 2004). This is sometimes labelled the Puritan discourse of childhood. The Puritans (Protestants) saw children as infant sinners, who needed strict methods of control and discipline in order to achieve enlightenment. In other words, adult intervention was deemed necessary in order to civilise children and to develop their morality (Stainton-Rogers, 2003). Accordingly, the introduction of harsh child-rearing methods was formalized during the sixteenth and seventeenth century in Puritan Europe. In Britain, the Puritans were also credited as being the first to develop literature for children (Cunningham, 2006). The Puritans believed that children could learn about their sinful natures and the need to control their wrongdoings through books as well as through adult disciplining (Kramarae and Spender, 2000).

Similar conceptualisations of children being 'evil' can be seen in the debates concerning human nature in early Chinese history. During the Han times (206 B.C. - 220A.D.), the debates regarding humanity led thinkers to consider childhood and birth as the starting point for the human temperament. Some scholars further argued that some (but not all) children were born evil (Kinney, 1995b). To distinguish children who were born with innately malevolent qualities, the techniques of calendrics (if children were born on certain dates of the calendar they were more likely to have evil tendency) and physiognomy (where facial features are used as an indication of character) were often used (Kinney, 2004). Most people at the time believed that pure evilness was extremely rare however. Similar to the Puritans, it was a popular Han belief that various forms of instruction could transform the child's nature back to goodness. Education was suggested to help children in achieving their morality. Chinese parents living in the Han times were also advised to control their child's moral constitution by being alert and aware of any signs of emergent wickedness (Kinney, 2004).

3.2.3 The Child as a Savage

A variation on the theme of children as 'little devils' is the imagery of the child savage or barbarian. During the sixteenth and seventeenth century in Britain, there was raising concern about the visibility of children on the streets. Children were often seen begging due to poverty levels and unemployment rates at the time. The public unease of the street child was compounded by the perception that such children were left free to roam, were too independent and even wild in nature, leading to the conceptualisation of the child as savage (Hwang, Lamb and Sigel, 1996).

The savage description of children was also seen in recapitulation theories, which were popular within lay and academic thinking until the early 1900s. In classic recapitulation theory, a child is seen to re-enact the evolutionary climb from primitive/savage groups to civilised society. The savage child was therefore seen as an irrational and a simple being. Consequently the conceptualisation of the savage child accorded childhood with a very low status (Sigel et al., 1996). Parallels were then made between child savages and the wider social beliefs of primitive savages in far away places. The relationship between civilised man and his primitive counterpart was seen in much the same way as the hierarchal relationship between adults and primordial children.

Images of child savages implied that they were innately unsocialised and decadent (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001), who needed adult guidance and discipline for their own best interests (Hwang, Lamb and Sigel, 1996). Similarly, the use of corporal punishment within Chinese culture is seen as a method of child training, which develops the child's manners, integrity and morality. In Western societies, adult's authority and power over children remains to be a dominant organisational form, which is believed to be intrinsic to the natural order (Goldson, 1997). Past and present, there is Chinese societal acceptance for the use of corporal punishment. Spoilt children who are indulged by parents, in terms of lax forms of disciplining, were feared to grow up as selfish individuals. Individualistic attitudes would then undermine the important values of collectivity, selflessness and comradeship within Chinese culture (Das and Gupta, 1995). As such, Chinese parents are encouraged to use harsh forms of disciplining in order to raise a child with integrity. Accordingly,

Chinese society is said to deem parents as successful if their child has a high moral character (Stevenson, Chen and Lee, 1992). In addition, the strong insistence of child obedience within Confucian ethics correlates with the use of corporal punishment to achieve parental authority.

3.2.4 The Child as an Innocent

During the Victorian era in Britain (1837-1901), the Romantic discourse of childhood became more prevalent within popular and professional thinking as well as within children's literature. The influence and rise of the romantic discourse has been attributed to the work of two seminal writers, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

In the eighteenth century, the writings of the English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) helped to transform the Puritan discourse of childhood (Hockey and James, 1995). In contrast to viewing the child's nature as bad or sinful, Locke argued that the child was innately good. Locke further argued that the mind of the newborn child was a *tabula rasa* (a blank sheet upon which sensations were imprinted), and the child had the capacity to learn and to reason to different degrees (Stainton-Rogers, 2001). This led Locke to postulate the importance of social and moral education for children to reach their potential. The child is seen as an apprentice to the teacher or deliberate cultivator (Archard, 2004). Locke's ideas of the child's potential for learning, the importance of early education and the individual differences of children represented a new way of conceiving children and his legacy remains within contemporary educational settings (see Krough and Slentz, 2001).

Like Locke, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was also influential within pedagogy and saw the natural goodness of children. Viewing children as naturally pure and innocent, or as 'little angels' can be traced back to Rousseau's famous and influential book "Emile" (1762). For Rousseau, it was society which was to blame for any departure of the child from its natural state of innocence. As such it was through contact with the 'natural', rather than the social world, that children's nature could be best protected (Seaford, 2001). Rousseau prescribed a highly structured form of education, where children needed teachers and guidance in much the same vein within Locke's writings. Although contrasts and similarities can be drawn between Locke's and Rousseau's writings, it was Rousseau's argument that children should be valued as children, not merely as adults in the making, that has been widely credited with the pioneering view of modern childhood (Stainton-Rogers, 2003).

Similarly, within Chinese Taoist philosophy, the natural purity of the child is also stressed (Kinney, 2004). Within Taoism the goal for individuals is to return or to be reunited with the Tao (known as 'the way'), the force behind all things and the source of all creation. According to Taoism, things that are natural are in keeping with the Tao and as such have both inherent goodness and natural balance. Infants and children are conceived as being closer to the Tao than adults, as they have not been influenced by knowledge that can lead them astray from 'the way'. Children therefore represent an unadulterated natural reality, which adults can learn from. It is the obligation and duty of a Taoist parent to avoid action and guidance that may interrupt the child's innate goodness and understanding of the Tao.

Similar ideas of preserving and protecting goodness in children can be observed in the writings of other Western thinkers from the Romantic period, who engaged with Rousseau and Locke's ideas about children's lives and the nature of childhood itself (Stroup, 2004). There was a diverse representation of childhoods within the Romantic literature (see Plotz, 2001, Stroup, 2004, Cunningham, 2006) that helped to produce the readily absorbed view that children are to be protected, dependent and happy (Platz, 2001). As such the awakening to the preciousness of childhood is often ascribed to the Victorian period (Kline, 1993).

The Romantic period was also a key milestone in the modern attitudes towards the education of children, parent-child relationships and the individuality of the child (Stroup, 2004). One example would be the introduction and extension of compulsory schooling from the 1870s onwards in Britain. Compulsory school attendance meant that children were excluded from the formal employment that they had once engaged in. School attendance also created adult-child divisions and notable differences. As a result of compulsory education and the prevention of labour participation, economic dependence upon parents became a feature (and a boundary) of childhood itself (Hockey and James, 1993). Furthermore the image of the (patriarchal) nuclear family, which consisted of two parental figureheads and of dependant and needy children, become popular as a result. The Victorian government policies in Britain can be seen to reinforce the notions of children's innocence, vulnerability and their reliance upon adults, particularly parents (Stainton-Rogers and Stainton-Rogers, 1992).

Within the late Qing and Early Republican periods in Chinese history (1895-1919), the image of the weak and dependent child was also seen within child-rearing methods. Children's vulnerability stemmed from the perception that children needed protection from themselves and from the environment (such as death, disease and general undesirable influences). Specifically adult intervention was needed in order to protect and guide children. Within Confucian thinking, childhood is often divided into two periods. The first phase is from birth to six years of age, followed by the second period that is between the ages of six to fourteen. From birth to six, also known as the 'age of innocence', children are viewed as lacking in competence and understanding. As such, children are unable to understand certain kinds of behaviour, concepts, or morality. During this phase, Chinese parents often bypass their children's misbehaviour and they are spared from harsh forms of disciplining. From the age of six onwards however, children are given strict instruction into the ways of life, as they are conceived as having the ability to understand and reason. Additionally, to prevent the child's potential corruption, Confucianism suggested that parents needed to control the milieu of children whilst shielding them from the dangers and temptations of the outer world (Saari, 1990). Consequently, children are believed to be reliant upon adults for their protection and development. Dependency upon adults by children can therefore be seen within a Western and Chinese context.

3.3 Rethinking Childhood: The New Sociology of Childhood

From Jean-Jacques Rousseau's earlier work and writings, childhood was given some status as a phase in its own right, not only as a preparatory stage for adulthood (Smidt, 2006). Childhood was not only perceived in a positive light, but children's innate qualities were recognised. As a result, Rousseau's ideas have help feed into the new

styles of sociological thinking towards the construction of childhood, which also accords children their personhood (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998).

Within the 'new sociology of childhood', it is argued that childhood is a social construct, not a natural or universal state arising from biology. Childhood is instead viewed as a product of history, society and culture. Seeing childhood as a social construct has been derived from the work of the French historian Philippe Ariès. Although Ariès's work has been criticised with regards to his data validity and reliability, his work has still been credited as being definitive in the subject of childhood constructions. Ariès (1962) scrutinised letters, diaries, pictures and other documents to lay claim that the concept of childhood in Western Europe only started to emerge after the Middle Ages, around the end of the fifteenth century (Goldson, 2001). In Britain for example, the idea of childhood being a specific phase coincided with industrial developments (such as removing children from formal employment and introducing compulsory schooling) and the dominance of the nuclear family ideal. By the sixteenth and seventeenth century, ideas that childhood was separate and distinct from adulthood gained and culminated in what Ariès saw as the sentimentalisation of childhood and the 'child-centred family' (Montgomery, 2003). In China, it was during the Han times (206 B.C. - 220A.D.) when childhood was 'discovered'. During this period, the consideration of childhood within intellectual, historical and educational writings started to emerge (see Kinney, 1995a, 1995b, 2004 for a full account). The Han's concern over the rise and fall of Chinese dynasties led thinkers to consider the importance of children and of education. Educating child royal heirs was seen as necessary in producing wise, benevolent and long-lasting sovereigns (Kinney, 1995b). Such thoughts coincided with Confucian thinking at the time, where children needed education at the earliest time possible to become an accomplished and moral adult. The Han's concerns over their dynasties combined with the influence of Confucian philosophy led to the extension of public education (largely for elite boys), under the premise that education for all would lead to an era of peace and high civilization (Kinney, 1995b). The establishment of the public schooling system also coincided with the Han government's implementation of the civil service. As the civil service was based on merit, it was in line with Han Confucian thinking of upward social mobility, where "a boy's future social worth depended not upon pedigree alone, but on the gradual accumulation of virtue and learning as well" (Kinney, 1995b, p.28).

Both in China and in the UK, in the past and in the present, the ways in which childhood is construed determines how we make sense of children themselves and informs and reflects social and economic policies towards young people (Stainton-Rogers, 2003). Nowadays, sociologists are seeing children as active and serious practitioners of social life, which in turn, has prompted a fundamental shift in thinking about their intellectual and emotional status (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). Sociology's discovery of children as actors and agents is part of the process in the individualisation of childhood, parallel with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Greene and Hill, 2006). The focus has therefore shifted away from what children cannot do towards what they can do and are doing, with the child being transformed from a 'project' to a 'person' (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). This process of enabling children (particularly from multicultural backgrounds) can only come about through greater understanding of their situation. By understanding what multicultural perceptions of childhood exist and how they

have evolved, we can attempt to appreciate the complex variety of experiences that can be found between child-to-child, family-to-family and culture-to-culture. These experiences become further complicated when cultures, families and children mix, and since Britain is becoming more and more culturally diverse and culturally aware, the important role of the new sociology of childhood increases.

Seeing children as individuals in their own right allows a greater understanding of their lives and experiences. By rethinking the nature and contents of childhood, questions concerning children's agency within families and other adult dominated institutions are also raised (Jones, Tepperman and Wilson, 1995). In support, Alanen (1988) argued that 'the family' has to be deconstructed, in order to understand children's assumed vulnerability and their dependency upon the family and other adults in general.

3.4 Rethinking 'The Family'

'The family' often evokes ideas of a biological and natural phenomenon, which has a personal and symbolic significance for individuals within Western and Chinese society. The family is also tied up with the notion of childhood, as being an important part of children's lives. However, as Fox (1967) argued, just because the family is assumed to be a predominant unit, it is not necessarily a 'natural' or a 'basic' one. Neither should the family be believed to have set and prescriptive roles for its family members (Coontz, 2000). Instead, the family is argued to be a social construct rather than a natural concept, which can vary according to historical, social and cultural circumstances, in much the same way as childhood is now being recognised (Jones, Tepperman and Wilson, 1995).

3.4.1 The Traditional View of the Family

Within the dominant family ideology in Western societies, the nuclear unit is held as the ideal and this can be traced back to early theories and writings (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). For example, functionalists view the family as a complementary nuclear conjugal unit consisting of a breadwinning husband, a home-making wife and socialised children (Edwards, 2004). The structures, roles and behaviours for each family member are associated with their age and gender, as well as the wider dimensions of power, authority and deference in the household (Gittins, 1993). Here, the family is seen as:

“An economic unit that provides shelter, food and care, regulating stable adult (hetero) sexual relationships, producing the next generation and socialising it into a set of common social values” (Edwards, 2004, p. 5).

Similarly in pre-modern China, the corporate model (or joint family model) was a dominant approach to studying Chinese families in the past. The Chinese family was believed to have a number of generations living together in one setting, “as one unit, sharing one common purse and one common stove and under one family head” (Baker, 1979, p.1). Within the corporate model, family members were confined to fixed norms and rules based upon the structural formation of the family (Yungxian, 2003). However the corporate family model was actually quite rare in the past. Large families were mainly confined to the upper classes, as the poor could not maintain and

support such a unit (Knapp, 2005). Instead many Chinese individuals in pre-modern and contemporary China belong to the Western description of the nuclear family (Baker, 1979). However the importance attached to patriarchy, adult authority and child obedience within Chinese culture still prescribes roles and certain expectations of certain family members according to their status, gender and age.

By applying fixed positions and responsibilities to individuals in the functionalist, nuclear or corporate model, diverse identities and interests of individual family members are subsequently concealed (Makrinioti, 1994). Children for example are often depicted as the responsibility of their parents and are wholly dependent upon them (Edwards, 2002). This can lead to the influential but problematic view of parents being the owners of the children they produce (Archard, 2003). In methodological as well as theoretical terms, this means that rather than speaking for themselves, others have spoken on children's behalf. For instance, parents and other adults often act as children's chief spokespersons (Oakley, 1994). Children become marginalized within the family, and then become fused with their parents into an idealized, inseparable family unit (Smart, Neale and Wade 2001). Concepts such as 'the family', socialisation and childhood are therefore seen as inseparable (Alanen, 1992). This tendency to submerge children in their families has been called the 'familialization of childhood' (Alanen, 1992).

“Children are on the receiving end of family values. They are objectified as the rationale for the (adult) ‘doing’ of family life, rather than seen as ‘doers’ of family life in their own right” (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001, p.9).

The functionalist and corporate models arguably offer a static vision of family life (Gittins, 1993). Emphasis is on the limits rather than the potentials of family experience and functioning, whilst also implying that family roles are fixed and inevitable.

In contrast, the new sociology of childhood sees children as social agents who can influence their own experiences as well as the nature of the family itself (Alanen and Mayall, 2001). For instance, research has shown that children can influence their parents in terms of child-rearing strategies and have 'pester power'. Children can be seen as helping out and being relied upon domestically, emotionally as well as financially within the family. Children's agency can also be seen within the diverse set of family circumstances that are now occurring. Contemporarily, children are more likely to experience a transition from one family type to another than in earlier decades (Jensen and McKee, 2002). Under such circumstances, children are seen to develop strategies, which help them to negotiate and move between different contexts and to construct their own lives accordingly (Brannen, 1999). In support, Smart, Neale and Wade (2001) suggested some children are in the process of, or have acquired a range of emotional and practical skills in adapting to new family structures.

3.4.2 Family Diversity

At the beginning of the twenty-first century in Western societies, most people no longer follow rigid set paths of living and diverse family types have been argued to be the new norm (Silva and Smart, 1999). As such, families are seen to be highly complex and in a constant state of flux (Gittins, 1993). A variety of family structures

can be seen within the life course, including divorce, separation, repartnering as well as the increase of blended families, single parenthood, joint custody, fostering, cohabitation, two-career families and gay and lesbian partnerships/parenthoods and so forth (Chambers, 2001). In contrast to the previous models of nuclear family life, definitions and thinking about the family have become more inclusive of multiple variations and the importance of emotional bonds (Giddens, 1992). In capturing the fluidity, variety and complexity of family functioning and relationships, the work of Giddens (1992), Beck (1992) and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) has been important.

Within this new global era, Anthony Giddens (1992) theorises intimate relationships and the resulting new forms of families through the process of 'de-traditionalisation'. Within a post-traditional society, men, women and children are progressively freed from definitive gender and generational relationships and obligations (Edwards, 2004). In the absence of old certainties and binding values, there is a divergent scope of intimate relationships (Lupton, 1999). The choices and sexual freedoms people now possess then change the nature of other types of relationships, such as marriage (Roseneil and Budgeon, 2004). In Giddens's account, the intimate relationship that was at the heart of the traditional nuclear (or extended) family has now become less significant. People are now searching for the 'pure relationships' (relationships which last for its own sake), which are no longer anchored in the criteria of kinship, social duty or traditional obligation (Giddens, 1992). As such, relationships in the contemporary age are seen as key to social changes.

Similar to the work of Giddens, Ulrich Beck (1992) viewed individuals as being set free from the constraints of industrial society and traditions. Factors such as mass education, improvements in living standards, the second-wave feminist movement and changes in the labour market are seen to transform previously accepted gender and social roles (Beck, 1992). For instance compared to previous generations, changes in female control over fertility, women's increased labour and social market participation as well as alternative sources of income (such as state benefits) allow women to be feel less trapped in the traditional domestic division of labour (Allan and Crowe, 2001). In the absence of fixed, obligatory and traditional norms, people are producing their own biographies in achieving a more rewarding life (Lesthaeghe, 1995, Elliot, 2002). More egalitarian, autonomous and fulfilling associations are also possible as a result of different dynamics within intimate relations (Edwards, 2004). This leads to the reformulation and redefinition of the self and ideas concerning 'the family' (Chambers, 2001). Biologistic discourses, elements of heterosexuality, conventional divisions of labour or ethnocentric notions of family structure that once legitimised the nuclear family ideal are therefore weakened (Chambers, 2001). Individuals are now conceived as active participants in defining their own families (Sweeting and Seaman, 2005).

However, the pursuit of individually based adult relationships emerges as a source of instability for family-based practices (Morgan, 1999). Marital instability, family breakdown and high levels of anxiety and insecurity are argued to be salient as a result (Morgan, 1999). Ironically as relationships become more fragile and vulnerable, people look more to relationships for fulfilment. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) claim that the dangers of individualisation are counteracted by the ideology of love. In "The Normal Chaos of Love" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) it is argued that the enduring parent-child bond becomes more significant in a time of increasing

individualisation and instability. With the changing notions of marriage and the family as well as the perception that adult relationships are waning, children become the last object of unconditional love for both women and men. The rise of autonomous motherhood (in which a woman has a child without a relationship with a man), alongside committed fatherhood and divorce battles by both parents over the custody of their children, are seen as evidence of this (Chambers, 2001). Children are argued to be the key to greater fulfilment in the contemporary age.

In the work of Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, the emphasis is upon the idea of 'de-traditionalisation' and individualisation, but both concepts are argued to provide a partial perspective on social transformations and are therefore unproductive as a general account of change (Hacker, 2005). For instance Budgeon (2006) offers another viewpoint, where selfhood is suggested to be constituted through the condition of relationality. Within relationality, people's connectedness, attachments to others and self-determination is seen to inform the active creation of the individual's self-biographies, identities and their meaning making (Roseneil, 2004). The concept of relationality then runs counter to the assumption of unconnected and seemingly autonomous individuals within individualisation theories (Irwin, 2005).

David Morgan (1996) focuses specifically on the family rather than a theory of modernity and individuality as Giddens (1992), Beck (1992) and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) have. Instead of defining the family and whether the family is in decline or not, Morgan (1999) looks at how families are 'what we do', rather than 'what we are'. Accordingly, the family should be seen as a noun rather than as an adjective (Morgan, 1996). Morgan explains that family practices are seen to occur on a regular, rehearsed and repetitive level and can include family relationships, care and responsibility for one another, household activities, daily life as well as the mundane within the household. Families and family life can then be analysed through their practices and this approach has some explanatory power for the different forms of living arrangements we see today.

Family practices in general, are seen to overlap and be always continuous with other practices relating to gender, generation, social class, ethnicity and so on (Edwards, 2004). In other words, family life is continuous with other areas of existence. The concept of external influences upon family practices then helps to de-institutionalise the family, by blurring the boundaries between the assumed private world of the family with the public and social spheres (Silva and Smart, 1999). Overall, the point that Morgan (1999) emphasises is that families are not static and concrete structures or forms, but are instead constantly subjected to negotiation and redefinition. Within the work of Morgan (1996), Giddens (1992), Beck (1992), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), it helps to identify the family as being highly variable and flexible in a postmodern context (Gittins, 1993) and the emergence of new family forms are further evidence of this.

The concept of *bricolage* by Claude Lévi-Strauss may be applied, when speaking of the unique way British Chinese individuals may construct forms of family diversity. The term *bricoleur* has no obvious English translation, but "refers broadly to the kinds of activities performed by 'handy' men and women who carry out their work using 'odds and ends', things that are already available but which can be put to a variety of possible uses" (Russell and Tyler, 2005, p. 222). When applied to the creation of

family diversity, it could be seen that the *bricoleur* (Chinese individuals living in the UK), link their own traditions to the material practices and artefacts available in the surrounding culture (Jenlink, 2006), which inevitably informs and creates a unique blend of family and cultural practices. Consisting of new family elements, the original significance of family is irrevocably altered (Russell and Tyler, 2005). By examining families as a cultural form, in that they draw on the rituals, practices, and expectations that are made and/or blended with what is available in their surroundings and cultural tool kit, insights into the varied and unique ways that families construct, understand and define themselves are enabled (Daly, 2003). This can be seen within Chinese transnational family arrangements for instance.

3.4.3 Transnational Families

One of the simplest reasons for migration is the bettering of lives and life chances for the individual. However, studies of Asian migration have suggested that the majority of migration decisions are to maximize the long-term opportunities and well being of families and communities, rather than the short-term gain of individuals (Castles, 2000). This is exemplified by contemporary observations of the Chinese ‘astronaut’ family (Skeldon, 1996). The term astronaut family is used to describe the pattern of settlement, where the Chinese male immigrant (astronaut) commutes regularly and returns to Asia to work, whilst leaving his wife and children behind in the new country of settlement (for an indefinite period of time; Waters, 2005). The rationality behind these family living arrangements is to spread economic risk and to maximize social benefits for the entire family unit (Huang and Yeoh, 2005). For the family and children who remain in the host country, social, cultural and educational facilities can be utilized and exploited. At the same time, the husband and breadwinner can capitalize upon the economic capital to be sought in Asia (Waters, 2002, 2003). Regular commutes by the astronauts give substance to the Chinese diaspora as being a transnational community suggested Skeldon (2003).

The astronaut family strategy is often inextricably linked to the pursuit of a Western education among Chinese families (Huang and Yeoh, 2005). Previously, the importance of overseas education was commonly associated with astronaut families who were more elite or skilled from well-off economies (Chee, 2003). However, in the last two to three decades, overseas education for the child has also become a ‘major project’ and a significant objective for many middle-class Chinese families (for further discussion, see Waters, 2002, 2005), especially those from Hong Kong (Skeldon, 1996). It appears that migrants from Mainland China are not engaging in this transnational familial process (Skeldon, 1996). Instead, they appear to be engaging in a new phenomenon known as the ‘study mothers’. Like the astronaut wives, study mothers leave their partners and families behind, to accompany their offspring overseas for the sake of the child’s education (during part or the entire course of the child’s study; Huang and Yeoh, 2005). This movement has been observed in the migration patterns from China to Singapore.

Within transnational family arrangements, familial relations, living arrangements and family networks are inevitably altered, reworked and recreated (Lam et al., 2002). For instance, due to the father’s absence in the child’s life, problems and distance may be created within the father-child relationship. Children may feel resentful of the semi-permanent or non-existent father figure in their lives, who also may not adopt their

paternal roles according to the child's new social environment (Parreñas, 2008). Chinese fathers who do not reside with their families may experience feelings of loneliness and face additional pressures of having to be the sole breadwinner, as well as being a parent from a distance. There have also been reports of increased conflict, divorce and extra-marital affairs due to the physical and emotional distance between spouses (Chee, 2003). However, improved spousal relationships in terms of increased appreciation and stronger emotional ties may also occur as a result of transnational family arrangements (Chee, 2003).

With regards to astronaut wives or study mothers, not only do they encounter problems as a newly arrived migrant, but also with transformations in their roles as career women, as wives and as mothers. In relation to careers, the migrated mothers may have to sacrifice their own working careers in the home country, in order to accompany their children overseas (Huang and Yeoh, 2005). As well as giving up their careers, the migrated women tend to care for their children full-time, subsequently focusing their roles as mothers in the new country of arrival (Huang and Yeoh, 2005). In this way, Chinese women who live in a transnational family arrangement may also suffer from an increased domestic workload as part of their parental responsibilities.

“In valorizing everyday physical proximity with their children in fulfilling their roles as ‘ideal mothers’, these women play a diametrically opposite parenting role to that of their husbands who provide materially for their children while being absent in their everyday worlds” (Huang and Yeoh, 2005, p. 384).

As such, astronaut wives and study mothers are seen as privileging ‘motherhood’ over ‘wifhood’ and ‘selfhood’ as they juggle, and even suspend their identities as career women and wives (Chee, 2003). However, not all astronaut and study mothers have the same sacrificial motivations. Instead, some Chinese transnational mothers have exploited their positions in order to improve their own lives and life chances rather than those of their children (Huang and Yeoh, 2005). For example by living without their husbands, some astronaut wives and study mothers may experience a degree of freedom from traditional patriarchal constraints found in the home country (Waters, 2002). In addition, the initial problems with migration and resettlement are seen to lessen over time, as Chinese women within transnational family arrangements adapt to their new surroundings and gain new friends and language skills (Waters, 2002).

Another transnational family variant known as the ‘satellite or parachute kid’ phenomenon also exists (Waters, 2003). Here, the adult members of the family return to their country of origin, whilst leaving the children to reside at the destination country, either on their own or at a ‘homestay’ family (Waters, 2005). This detachment between parents and children is considered to be in everyone’s interest allowing the parents to maintain their lifestyles while providing the child with the best education. This process has a long pedigree among wealthy East-Asian families who would often send their children abroad to boarding school. Again this is an example of how families are increasingly able to define both their nature and structure within a postmodern context.

By looking at families as consisting of new family elements and practices, the original significance of the family and of childhood itself is irrevocably altered (Russell and Tyler, 2005). In a postmodern context, young people are arguably less constrained by ascribed roles and socio-economic determinants of life paths. Children also have a greater scope for influencing the many aspects of their own upbringing and lives (Du Bois-Reymond et al., 1993). The creation of young people's individual biographies again questions the concept of childhood as being vulnerable and dependent, evil and immoral or in need of adult guidance and instruction.

3.5 Conclusion

Throughout history in a Western and Chinese context, children have been represented in a variety of ways. Transglobal childhood images can be contrasting as well as complementary. On the one side, children can be seen as innocent and vulnerable beings who are in need of adult protection and care. Coinciding such a view is the belief that children should be happy and carefree, with a right to an untroubled childhood. Oppositely, children can also be seen as evil and immoral beings who are wild and in need of adult control. Here, adults are deemed as the civilisers of children. By looking at the different conceptualisations of childhood, it is arguable under the new sociology of childhood that the images of childhood are constructed socially and perceptions vary according to time, history and context. Constructions of childhood are also influenced by family ideologies in the East and West. The previous (but still dominant) family ideal of the nuclear family in Chinese and Western societies portrays family member's activities and functioning according to their age, gender and power within the household. Within such models the family is seen as hierarchal and patriarchal, with children dependent upon parents for their socialisation, growth and material resources. The dependent state of children arguably conceals their roles and identities within the family. New theoretical models and ways of understanding family difference have instead highlighted the diversity of family member's lives and experiences, including the role and importance of children.

In combination, the theories of family diversity and difference, alongside the new sociology of childhood help to abandon adult-centric viewpoints of the child. By seeing children as social actors it creates a wider understanding of children themselves and helps to reveal the complexities associated with their personal and familial trajectories. Such thinking not only recognises children as individuals in their own right, but also acknowledges their abilities, capabilities and sense of agency. However, the viewpoint of children as being dependent and vulnerable is still enmeshed within common thinking and within past research itself. One influential factor is arguably the dominant notion of age and aging within society. For instance, Alanen (2001) argued that age hierarchies are derived from the hegemony of the adult generation and how adults like to conceptualise the world. Consequently, while there are differences among children at different ages, age should be seen as a social rather than a natural variable in research (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). By looking at how the concept of age affects the lives of children it further underlines the importance of viewing childhood as a social phenomenon. It is to the question of age and generational categories that we now turn.

Chapter 4

‘Childhood: Generation and the Life Course Perspective’

4.1 Introduction

During the last few decades, the concept of generation has been introduced within the new sociology of childhood and the term ‘generationing’ has been used to explain how childhood is constructed in relation to our understanding of adulthood. The relational processes between the two generations of children and adults then inform childhood images (Alanen, 2001). In more detail, people’s perceptions of age are not only created through action and the interactions between people but also through reciprocal processes with multi lifeline trajectories and environments. The ‘life course’ perspective argues that age-graded sequences of events and social roles are embedded within social structures and history, and as such chronology is not the only way of defining age. Similar to the new sociology of childhood, the life course perspective also highlights the historical, social and cultural contexts that affect the perception of aging and the concept of specific life phases, such as childhood.

Chapter 4 aims to explore the concept of generationing and the life course perspective to provide further evidence of the social construction of childhoods. By looking at how childhoods are constructed through the new sociology of childhood, generationing and the life course perspective, it will demonstrate the diversity and plurality of childhoods. Furthermore, the divergences of childhood experiences highlight the child as a social actor and the many constraints and opportunities upon children’s agency. However, research regarding Chinese children has rarely explored the agency of children. Instead, Chinese children are often depicted as submissive to parents and to Chinese cultural values. By revisiting the key points from previous chapters regarding the heterogeneous nature of cultures (and of Chinese people), childhoods and families, other significant questions materialize in relation to contemporary Chinese childhoods. The exploration of such questions provides the foundation of the research in exploring British Chinese children’s experiences and family lives.

4.2 ‘Generation’

Before the concept of generationing is explored, it would be worthwhile to consider what is meant by ‘generation’ itself. The term may seem unambiguous at first glance. However with closer inspection, there appears to be many definitions and meanings associated with its use either inside or outside of academia. For instance, generation may refer to time. This could include chronological phases within a historical period, social changes and people’s use of the past to signify their contemporary identities or collective memories (Vincent, 2005). More commonly, line of descent and procreation is associated with the term. Here generation is taken to mean the interval between the birth of parents and the births of their children. Parents and children then constitute distinct generations (Laslett, 2005).

Generation can also refer to a set of people who were born at the same period of time (irrespective of date of birth) who are non-kin related. Under such descriptions, the

term cohort is used as analogous to generation. Cohorts not only have similarities in terms of their birth periods, but they pass through particular life experiences at roughly the same time. One example is the beginning and progression of educational institutions, where birth cohorts are organised into academic years (Vincent, 2005). It appears that generation can have multiple meanings and can refer to several different phenomena, such as kinship relations, cohorts, life phases and historical periods (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Not only can generation have various connotations, but it can also be seen as a social construct. This is reflected within the influential work of Karl Mannheim.

4.2.1 The Social Construction of Generation

Karl Mannheim's work is regarded as the most systematic and developed treatment of generations from a sociological standpoint. When "The Problem of Generations" was first published in 1928, Mannheim (1952) distinguishes the three terms with which generation can be explained. These are generation location, generation as an actuality and generational units. Generational location (or site) refers to people who were born into a common historical time period and exposed to similar experiences and events. Here, generation is a biological marker and can be viewed in the same way as a cohort. Shared bonds are thought to arise from the generation site's collective experiences of the surrounding circumstances (such as social, economic, political and cultural factors). When people actively participate and share in the issues and conditions of their time, they can be classed as forming a generation in actuality (Mannion and I'anson, 2004). The sharing of these experiences then forms the persona of that particular generation, and influences members' thoughts, feelings and actions (Donnison, 2007). However, members of an actual generation may not respond to their common historical and social stimulus in a unanimous manner. This creates subsets of people called generational units. Differences in responses may be due to factors such as race, ethnicity, education, gender and so forth. An example would be the various youth groups within the 1960s, such as 'Rockers' and 'Hippies' (Corsten, 1999). Generational units are argued to mobilize more than actual generations, as they share a concrete rather than a general bond. As such, generation units have the most potential for creating social and political change (Mannheim, 1952).

Mannheim does not account for how a generational unit can bring about change within society itself (Laslett, 2005). Nevertheless, the generational unit can account for the heterogeneity of a generation, whilst explaining the differences and conflicts within a generation. From Mannheim's writings, the emphasis is upon generations as a social creation, not just a biological given (Scott, 2000). Additionally, the notion of generation is used as an analogy with the concept of social class (in the Weberian sense; Corsten, 1999). Under the premise that social class acts as a constraint within society, Mannheim argued that people who are located within a generation are also limited to a particular range of experiences, which can predispose individuals to a characteristic mode of feelings, thoughts and actions (Scott, 2000). However, Tucker (2003) argued that the depiction of class, like generation, appears to be fixed and permanent in Mannheim's accounts, which offers no movement for individuals in either constructs.

4.2.2 The Generationing of Childhood

In Mannheim's writings, he suggested that the transition into adulthood could create generations. As the period of youth was seen as a time of reactions and formations of wider socio-cultural identities and values (Vincent, 2005), he saw 'youth' rather than childhood, as the key period for the formation of generations. Nevertheless Alanen (2001) argued that childhood is also a significant period in forming generational consciousness. According to Alanen (2001), children are defined externally based on their observable similarities or common attributes, such as age. Here, she refers to Qvortrup's (1994) assumption of childhood being a structural form in society (Mannion and I'anson, 2004).

As a structural form, childhood is also interlinked with other structural categories such as social class, gender and age groups (Qvortrup, 1994). As the structural arrangements of these categories change, it also affects the nature of childhood (DeLamater, 2003). Whilst utilizing Qvortrup's (1994) structural analysis of childhood, Alanen (2001) further argued that childhood and children's power resources are constructed and determined by the relation between children and adults (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Children themselves are agents in producing and reproducing their own identities and roles within generationally structured relations, in what Alanen (2001) termed 'childing'.

“Like adults, children are acutely aware of the normalizing discourses that operate in society and actively regulate and police their own behaviours and those of others according to these social norms” (Robinson and Diaz, 2006, p.171).

Childing was then contrasted to 'generationing', where children are located in relation to adults in everyday practices. In other words, childhood is constructed vis-à-vis adulthoods. Alanen (2001) postulated that the process of generationing occurred through the public level (society's understanding of children) and the private level (the home and family).

On a public level throughout history, viewing children as a special category with specific and special needs has reinforced discriminatory social attitudes and practices towards children (Hockey and James, 1993). For instance British policies surrounding childhood have helped to reinforce the notion of children's dependency, vulnerability and innocence (Stainton-Rogers and Stainton-Rogers, 1992). In a British context from the 1830s onwards, social reforms were also based on the perception of children as vulnerably dependent. This prompted the introduction of mass legislation to forbid the employment of children within the factory system (Hockey and James, 1993). The introduction and extension of compulsory education from the 1870s then consolidated the exclusion of children from formal employment and from adulthood. Similarly, China's Compulsory Education Law (1986) made schooling compulsory for all children from the age of six. Although the educational focus in China was due to economic and modern reforms, the effect of mandatory education still creates divisions between adults and children. As Hendrick (1990) suggested, the extension of compulsory education entrenched a notion of childhood as a singular and uniform pattern of dependence and as separate to adulthood. In contemporary Western and Chinese societies, policy developments continue the viewpoint of children being in

need of protection, on the premise of age and other perceived vulnerabilities. The exclusion of children from the world of adults and adult responsibilities then contributes to the generational order of society (Alanen, 2001).

The exclusion and marginalisation of children from adult centres of power and control consequently affects the dependency of the child upon the family (Hockey and James, 1993). In nineteenth century Britain, the introduction of compulsory schooling combined with the family wage system reinforced children's dependency within the household. The family wage system was a patriarchal mechanism that raised men's wages, whilst lowering women's pay packets (Cobble, 2004). This system affected employment patterns and gave rise to a new vision of nuclear family life, which consisted of a male 'provider' and female homemaker (Rose, 1992, Irwin, 2003). Furthermore within this idea of family, family members were either 'dependent' (such as children and the elderly) or 'independent' (specifically adults; Hockey and James, 1993). Consequently family members could only take on certain responsibilities in accordance to their family status, role and age (Lorenz-Meyer and Grotheer, 2000). For instance children were not expected to undertake 'adult' functions such as sexual activity, financial provision, emotional labour, major physical care taking or resolving marital problems (Mckie and Cunningham-Burley, 2005). Such thinking creates stronger generational boundaries between adults and children.

Chinese (Confucian) conceptualisations of the family are similarly based upon a patriarchal family unit, which is strictly hierarchal. Like the nuclear ideal, family members are also perceived to have their own roles and responsibilities in accordance to their gender, age and power status. Parents (and elders) are in authority and have the responsibility of the household, including the appropriate rearing of children. In turn children are expected to obey parents, to be respectful and to be submissive.

“In traditional formulations of social roles within the family, individuals are positioned within a static framework of familial identities, with associated roles and expectations being defined primarily in and through their positional relationships vis-à-vis one another” (Daly, 2003, p.161).

Again the roles of adults and children are clearly defined in the Chinese and Western ideology of the family, with similar assumptions that parents are responsible for children, whilst children need adult care. The familial generational structure then produces the generational positions of childhood via the position of parents and children (Alanen, 2001). In support Hockey and James (1993) argued that the dependency enforced upon children in the private and nuclear family serves to cut children off from the rest of society.

Similarities between the generationally structured construct of childhood and Mannheim's (1952) construction of generations can be seen here. Mannheim (1952) used the term 'generation' as an analogy for social class, both of which are seen to provide or constrain certain life chances for individuals on the basis of social position. Similarly, Alanen (2003) argued that the generational order creates difference, division and inequalities within children's lives. In addition, children are perceived to take on board notions of shared experiences as a result of their social location of childhood (Mayall, 2002).

Children's agency is determined by the social organisation of the relation between children and adults. As adult-child relations are often unequal, children have to negotiate more than adults to assert their power over their own lives (Punch, 2007). As such, Alanen (2001) highlighted the importance of understanding children's agency within different domains. Overall, Alanen (2001) suggested that it would be fruitful to bring the concept of generation into childhood studies. Accordingly, recent literature has used the generationing concept and generation as a tool to explore and describe childhoods. Within such approaches, childhood is emphasised as a social position, which is understood and defined in relation to the position of parents and adults (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Additionally the focus on generational structures can provide answers to the creation or deprivation of children's agency and powers (Watson, 2009). However there have been criticisms raised with regards to Alanen's (2001) work. Viewing children as the dominated category whilst adults are the dominating force implies a stability of inter-generational relationships (Prout, 2005). Such assumptions weaken Alanen's (2001) claim of an open-ended process of generationing by adults and children (Prout, 2005). In addition, the focus upon inter-generational relations fails to acknowledge the diversity of children's intra-generational relationships (Prout, 2005). External factors, such as new technologies and consumption practices, are also sidelined due to the emphasis upon relational processes between adults and children in the construction of childhoods (Prout, 2005).

The appliance and extension of Mannheim's concept of generation in Alanen's (2001) writings has come under criticism (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). In Mannheim's (1952) original writings, generation formation was reliant upon a collective group's actions that shared an awareness, involvement and participation with specific social circumstances, as a result of their shared generation location (either in adolescence or by birth cohort). The appliance of generation formation in the Mannheimian sense means that generation is difficult to apply to very young children within Alanen's writings (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Additionally, children around the world do not share the same experiences nor do they face the same historical and social circumstances to enable them to act as an integrated group. Children may not even be in a position to act as a collective whole (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Although Alanen's (2001) work is beneficial to our understanding of the construction of childhoods and of children's agency, the 'life course perspective' has been suggested to provide a better understanding of the structural concept of childhood, children's subordination and inequalities as well as the underestimation of their contributions within society.

4.3 Children, Age and the Life Course Perspective

In the life cycle model, human ageing and development appears to be an organic process, with the set stages of infancy, adulthood and old age occurring at fixed and relatively standardised points in time (Daly, 2003). Increasing autonomy and responsibility is assigned to the individual as they mature, until the later years when dependency is assumed to return with old age (Corsten, 1998). This cyclical pattern is assumed to be unvaried across the generations. Not only that, but certain life experiences are expected (and predicted) to occur within a specific life stage. In other words the life cycle and people's life experiences are based upon biological and chronological age (Marsh and Keating, 2006). Consequently, individuals and their capacities are defined by their age and current life phase (Daly, 2003). The

construction of life stages which are in accordance with age, arguably limits an individual's opportunities within a given time period (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Within Western and Chinese cultures, children are one example of a social group who are excluded from certain social arenas and institutions on the basis of their age (Hockey and James, 1993). Categories such as 'children' then gloss over the diversity of life experiences that a person may encounter within a given age group. The category of childhood then homogenises children's social experiences as a result (Hockey and James, 1993).

As opposed to viewing age hierarchies and life stage experiences as static and fixed, the life course perspective suggests that the categories within the lifespan are contingent and vary over time and space (Daly, 2003). The life course perspective is not a unified theory of the life course itself and spreads across many disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, history and biology. However with regards to the social and behavioural sciences, the life course perspective has had a major impact in the social understanding of aging (Silverman, 1987). The life course perspective does not suggest that biological and chronological aging does not occur, but it postulates that age-graded sequences of events and social roles are embedded within social structures and history. In other words, there is a move away from the assumption that life is divided into a series of transitional phases, which shape the emergent individual (Gabb, 2008). The life course perspective also attempts to understand the dynamics of life span trajectories and transitions across the whole of the lifespan, as opposed to viewing them as separated incidences.

Elder (1994) summarised the four central themes within the life course perspective as the timing of lives, human agency, linked lives (over the life span) and the interplay of human lives and historical times. The timing of lives refers to the social meanings that are attributed to age and how social roles, life course pathways and transitions are based upon particular age norms. For example, the institutionalisation and standardisation of life stages has been largely produced via government regulations. Government legislation and policies define age specific rules, such as legal adulthood, the age of sexual consent and the age at which one enters and leaves education and career occupations. Cultural perceptions also set age expectations and conventions within society (Corsten, 1999). These age norms are subject to change according to time, geography and culture, as well as by social location, age, gender, race, social class and so on (Hutchinson, 2003). As such, 'age' and the associated meanings of age will vary historically and in different societies, including our understanding of childhood (Hockey and James, 1993). The timing of lives also refers to the particular events of the life course (such as turning points and transitions for individuals and families), which has an immediate and enduring effect on the individual's life (Elder, 1994).

Within the life course perspective, humans are seen as having the agency to direct their own lives. Although Elder (1994) acknowledged that there are social constraints which act upon the individual, such as the family and society, they can nevertheless choose the roles, relationships and environments which appeal to them and are consistent with their self-concepts. Such agency can then affect the individual's life course trajectories. For instance, radical changes in the formulations of adult relationships, divorce, remarriage, childlessness and the shift to later life single-hood

(after the mid-forties; Daly, 2003) have shifted the boundaries of life phases according to chronological age.

Linked lives refer to the reactions and reciprocal influences arising from the links between social and individual experiences (Mitchell, 2006). This can be on a wide level, including familial, non-kin and work relationships, and they can support or constrain an individual's behaviours and beliefs associated with the lifespan (amongst other things). The intersection of multiple lifeline trajectories such as education, family and work can also create new meanings and understandings of life phases for individuals, whilst blurring the assumed distinctions between life stages (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). For example, the return to the parental home, divorce and childbearing in later life will modify the 'normal' pattern of the life course. As a result, there can be many variations and continuities for people's social statuses and positions as they mature (Hockey and James, 1993).

The interplay of human lives and historical time highlights the need to understand how social and historical experiences interject with personal biographies (Bengtson et al., 2006). For instance, changes in work and education patterns can impact upon the 'traditional' age at which an individual decides to marry, form a household and whether or not to have children. Therefore taken for granted assumptions of the ageing process cannot be seen as clear-cut as once thought.

The life course perspective also makes linkages between earlier and later life course trajectories in order to understand a particular life phase such as childhood (Elder, 1994). By relating childhood to the lifespan as a whole, the life course perspective offers more than the concept of generationing, which merely looks at children in relation to adults (Hockey and James, 1993). As such, the life course perspective can offer a richer analysis of how the category of age and childhood comes to define and divide individuals, which also considers individual actions and relationships within the context of the environment and the lifespan as a whole.

The life course perspective can be seen to compliment the theories of postmodern lives, intimate relationships as well as the blurring of age-defined categories. For example Anthony Giddens argued that during the late twentieth century, social changes and 'de-traditionalisation' has allowed people to become makers of their own self-narratives. Individuals are seen to independently and continuously engage in a project of self-construction across the life course, in their attempts to develop and promote particular versions of who they think they are, or would like to become (Jamieson, 1998). Individuals then, are characterised as *becoming* rather than *being* and age defining categories such as childhood, adulthood and old age cannot be easily identified as fixed times and spaces (Daly, 2003). Age then becomes heterogeneous within the family and generational boundaries become less distinct, and "the precise ways in which such power and authority are, in practice, enabled and experienced in everyday interactions between adults and children becomes much less clear" (Daly, 2003, p.16). The simplistic ideas of dependence and independence within the categories of 'children' and 'adults' within families are then questioned (Daly, 2003). Therefore a uni-directional flow of power authority from adult to child cannot be easily assumed (Hockey and James, 1993).

In summary, when looking at the new sociology of childhood (chapter 3), generationing and the life course perspective the concept of childhood must be understood as rich and varied, where children's experiences cannot be seen as homogenous and static. However, the diversity of children's lives and their agency appears to be underrepresented within the literature concerning Chinese children. Chinese childhoods are instead depicted as heavily governed by Chinese cultural norms and parental authority. This then questions the validity of what we know about Chinese children's lives and experiences. Furthermore chapters 1 and 2 questioned the homogenous and fixed accounts of Chinese culture and of Chinese people in previous studies. In conjunction, issues relating to the static accounts of Chinese individuals, Chinese culture, childhoods and of Chinese family life not only problematises what we do know about Chinese childhoods, but also raises a series of questions of what we do not know about Chinese children's lives.

4.4 Rethinking Diversity: Implications for Research

4.4.1 The Fluidity of Culture in Chinese Families

In chapter 1, the diversity of the Chinese population was discussed. Differences in terms of place of origin, destination choices, reasons for migration, settlement period and individual backgrounds were looked at to exemplify the diversity of the Chinese overseas. Individual factors such as socio-economic backgrounds, social class, educational status, political views, language use and the lack of community within the British Chinese population also highlights the problematic nature of generalising Chinese individuals and of 'Chineseness' itself. Within much of the existing research upon Chinese communities recognition of such difference is limited. Instead of recognising diversity, Chinese people tend to homogenised into one single social category, be it on the account of ethnicity, race or cultural beliefs, and no account is given to their individual trajectories. Furthermore, Chinese families are often portrayed as being chained to Chinese cultural norms and beliefs, which are unchanging. Traditional Chinese values, gender roles and patriarchy appear to be the main explanatory factors when discussing parental roles and children's behaviours. For instance, authoritarian parenting methods (seen as strict and cold towards the child) are attributed to the important Confucian values of filial piety, respecting elders and child obedience. In turn, Confucian values are seen as explanatory factors in Chinese children's conformist behaviours and collectivist values. Such studies not only depict culture as static, but they also conceive the individual as being 'stuck' with their cultural beliefs, which are not subject to modification or transformation. In contrast, the literature reviewed in chapter 1 suggested that culture cannot be seen as a fixed 'thing' that consists of permanent elements and characteristics. Instead culture, which can refer to knowledge, norms, rules, symbols, language attitudes, and motivations can be fluid and subject to change. It has been suggested that the impact of globalisation, migration flows, transnationalism and of diasporas have blurred the boundaries between countries and cultures as the transfer of people, objects and information grow across the world (Orbuch and Fine, 2003). As such there can be diversity in cultural norms both within and between societies (Smidt, 2006). Thus some Chinese families will lead lives that are not completely dictated by Chinese culture as such. As a result, hierarchal relationships and cultural factors may be overstated in the literature concerning Chinese families. Clearly some Chinese households may adhere to some aspects of traditional ideals, however it must be

recognised that the adherence to cultural norms may not be as strong as previously suggested within the established research. In addition, when referring to Chinese diaspora and the behaviours of Chinese individuals, Coontz (2000) observed that immigrant groups are selective in drawing from their cultural resources and often create new traditions when they are adapting to (or resisting) changing economic or political constraints and opportunities.

In questioning the nature and the role of culture, are Chinese families in Britain still hugely influenced and guided by Chinese values and norms? In addition, the suggestion that culture is dynamic in nature raises the interesting issue of what role culture has to play in modern day British Chinese families? Arguably, by viewing culture as a flexible and changing system of meanings and symbols, it provides a means for examining the diversity of family experiences, including the experiences of children (Daly, 2003).

4.4.2 Children as Social Actors in Research

Within chapter 3 it was argued that childhood is not a fixed or natural state. Instead the images and perceptions of childhoods were constructed socially through historical, social, political and cultural factors. Within chapter 4 the concept of generationing and the life course perspective emphasised how age hierarchies are also socially constructed. Within generationing, Alanen (2001) suggested that the generational order of society, where children are marginalized and adulthood is prioritised, was as a result of our understandings of children vis-à-vis adulthood. The life course perspective not only highlighted how the category of age comes to define and divide individuals, but it also illuminated how age is socially created through individual action, the interactions between individuals and their environment, as well as the wider historical, social and cultural contexts that one faces (Lerner, 2002). The predominance of age then exerts a powerful and constraining force on the daily activities of children (Prout and James, 1997), and children are further separated from the world of adults. Adulthood retains its profile as an exclusive embodiment of concepts such as independence and autonomy (Chau and Yu, 2001). By understanding how different conceptualisations of childhood have evolved and persisted, we can attempt to appreciate the complex variety of childhood experiences that can be found from child-to-child, family-to-family and from culture-to-culture. These experiences become further complicated when cultures, families and children mix. Since Britain is becoming more culturally diverse, the importance of understanding how childhoods are constructed and the implications this has upon children themselves is relevant.

Within the writings of the new sociology of childhood, generationing and the life course perspective, the active and complex role that children play in their own lives and the lives of others was highlighted. Arguably, when children are seen as social actors, it is easier to understand the complexities of their worlds and family experiences. However Chinese children are not depicted as having the resources or the power to influence their own lives, or their surroundings, due to Chinese cultural values and parental authority. In other words, Chinese norms and beliefs are seen to prevent Chinese children's agency and autonomy. Consequently, it is worth questioning the validity of research studies which ignore or fail to appreciate the role of children. However there are exceptions, such as the work of Miri Song (1996,

1997). Song (1996, 1997) found that Chinese children were typically expected to 'help out' in the take-away business and their participation was seen as crucial for the family's economic survival. These children not only helped their parents in the family business, but also in other adult-orientated affairs such as dealings with the doctors and bank companies, as their parents had limited English skills (Song, 1996). Unfortunately the rest of the literature concerning British Chinese children as social actors appears to be non-existent. This promotes the question, to what extent are Chinese children agents in their lives? How is agency demonstrated? What constraints and opportunities do Chinese children have in being social actors? Furthermore what impact does Chinese children's agency and resources have upon the family and the relationships within?

By emphasising the child as a social actor within the new sociology of childhood, generationing and the life course perspective, it means that research must enquire about the child's life from the child's point of view and not assume that adults or parents can speak on the behalf of children. As such, to learn about Chinese childhoods it is essential that Chinese children themselves are involved within research. Moreover the life course perspective highlights that childhood should be understood in relation to earlier and later life phases within the lifespan. The implication for research then, is the consideration of the child's current social environment and circumstances, as well as the importance of children's past and futures.

4.4.3 Acknowledging Family Difference

Chapter 3 discussed the traditional ideology of the nuclear family, as being the dominant ideal of family living and of child development and socialisation processes. This model was argued to offer a static and fixed account of family life, where family members are assigned roles and responsibilities on the basis of their status, age and gender within the household. If the family is conceived as a static and unchanging structure there are tendencies to assume that family members may think, feel or act in the same way. Additionally, family members' interests and identities are at risk of being merged within an inseparable or tightly integrated unit (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). Such thinking then limits the unravelling of the complexities of family life and the importance of children themselves in the household. By highlighting family diversity and of family practices (what families do, rather than what they are; Morgan, 1996), the complex nature of adults and children's lives can be exposed.

The diversity of family and living arrangements within contemporary society has been argued to be the new norm in twenty first century Britain. However, the flexibility in family and kinship ties amongst British Chinese households is not reflected in the literature. In the context of the United Kingdom, academic research does not appear to document the changes in Chinese family patterns and lifestyles to the same extent as Chinese families in China itself. In China for example, the transformation of the Chinese family from pre-modern to contemporary times has been recognised. The picture of family life has been argued to have radically changed in contemporary China since the implementation of a variety of reforms in the nineteenth and twentieth century. For example, China's open door policy, economic reforms and the one child policy have promoted the rise of the private family (Santos, 2006). Within the private family, the traditional and hierarchical view of family life has now shifted to an

emphasis on child-centred socialisation with more relaxed and lenient parenting behaviours, in comparison to previously endorsed authoritarian methods (Shek, 2006). In terms of British Chinese diaspora, the plurality of Chinese family forms does not appear to be fully addressed in the literature. Waters (2005) speaks of astronaut families and satellite children that have come to epitomize Chinese transnational households in the West. Astronaut families are described as when the Chinese immigrant parent ('astronaut') returns to Asia to work, leaving their partner and children behind in the host country for an indefinite period of time. Children left alone, following the return of both parents to Asia are described as 'satellite kids' (Waters, 2005). However, more work is needed on other Chinese family formats, such as extended family systems, interracial marriages, divorce, separation, lone-parenthood, co-residence and so forth. What family arrangements and set-ups can be seen within contemporary British Chinese families and what impact does this have upon family life itself?

The literature of the new sociology of childhood, family diversity, generationing, the life course perspective and of family diversity will help provide a starting point for uncovering the complex lives of British Chinese families and the experiences of British Chinese children.

4.5 Conclusion

The concept of age is seen to exert a powerful and constraining force on the daily activities of childhood (Prout and James, 1997). Children are subsequently a 'muted' group in society and denied a representative voice, since they are positioned on the margins of the adult world (Hockey and James, 1993). However, age hierarchies and standardised life phase experiences such as childhood, are not as natural as they may first appear. Status and personhood on the basis of age have been argued to be social constructs. For instance, Jenks (1996) argued that the child is only understood in relation to the concept of the adult. Through relational practices then, Alanen (2001) argued that childhood is an essentially generational phenomenon, where the two generational categories of children and adults are recurrently reproduced. The use of generations to describe children as a structural form has been complementary to the arguments of the new sociology of childhood, within which different images of children in a given society are argued to be as a result of various social, political, economical and cultural factors and changes.

The life course perspective provides additional evidence of the lifespan containing flexible and ever-changing life phase experiences, which are not susceptible to fixed or sequential stages (Daly, 2003). Within this approach, individual lives, interactions and reciprocal influences with other individuals and the environment, as well as the wider social, political, historical and cultural contexts, are all taken into account when explaining the social construction of age and its assumed life stage experiences. In other words, the life course perspective suggests that the social context gives meaning to the concept of age and the associations with certain age categories, such as childhood (Marsh and Keating, 2006). Additionally, the life course perspective emphasises the importance of studying individuals' opportunities and experiences in a given life phase in relation to the lifespan as a whole (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Childhood then should not only be seen as a social construct, but should be researched in relation to other life phases, and not just referred to as a category on its own.

Research with children should not only consider the current social context and environment a child faces, but also the importance of their past and futures.

By using the new sociology of childhood, the concept of generationing and the life course perspective, the categories of childhood are linked to social, economic and cultural contexts, including the relational processes between adults and children, rather than biological age and stages. Accordingly, attention is brought to the ways in which childhoods are construed differently over time, contexts and cultures.

“Concepts of childhood and their attendant practices, beliefs and expectations about children are shown to be neither timeless nor universal but, instead, rooted in the past and reshaped in the present” (Prout and James, 2003, p. 232).

Childhood then is not simply a descriptively neutral term for the early years of life, but is a way of conceptually ordering and classifying (Hockey and James, 1993). As such, the concept of childhood needs to be critically assessed and accounted for within research. In recognising the variability associated with children’s lives, the use of childhoods rather than ‘childhood’ is therefore promoted (Mayall, 1994).

Within the new sociology of childhood, generationing and the life course perspective, children and young people are also seen as actors who can influence, interpret, reflect and create meaning in their worlds (Närvänen and Näsman, 2004). Viewing children as social participators and as individuals recognises the importance of children’s voices within research and the agency they have within their lives. Although this may be constrained by adult influences, this can be looked at from the viewpoint of childhood and ageing discourses, as opposed to the presumption that children are naturally incapable. As James and Prout (1990) suggested, although biological immaturity in childhood is a fact of life, the way immaturity is understood is a fact of cultural and social circumstances.

Overall, the new sociology of childhood, generationing and the life course perspective are fruitful in the exploration of British Chinese families and childhoods. By recognising and understanding childhood and age hierarchies as social constructions, they not only challenge our assumptions related to certain life phases and the experiences within it, but also questions the validity of the current literature of Chinese childhoods, which sees Chinese children as passive, submissive and vulnerable beings. When questioning the homogenous and fixed account of culture, Chinese people, childhood and ‘the family’ from previous chapters, this also raises a number of questions over what we presently know about Chinese childhoods. For instance, what family arrangements and set-ups can be seen within contemporary British Chinese families and what influences does this have upon the household? Are Chinese families in Britain still hugely influenced and guided by Chinese values and norms? Does contemporary British Chinese family life replicate previous studies in terms of parenting behaviours, parent-child relationships and so forth? For example, can we assume that parent-child relations are cold and restrictive due to Chinese cultural values? Can culture alone explain the household functioning and relationships within a British Chinese household? To what extent do Chinese children have agency in their lives? What role do Chinese children play in the lives of their parents and the family? Essentially how do British Chinese families operate, in terms

of relationships, intimacy and functionality when cultural and family diversity, as well as children's agency are considered? This is what the research study aims to understand.

Chapter 5

‘Research Methodology’

5.1 Introduction: Research Background

When looking at the literature concerning British Chinese families, a series of unanswered questions are raised. In chapter 1 the heterogeneous nature of Chinese people overseas was discussed, with particular reference to the British Chinese diaspora. In looking at the diverse nature of Chinese people's backgrounds, migration histories and life trajectories, it was suggested that current research has a tendency to overlook the complex experiences of Chinese people. Furthermore available research and literature is arguably based on stereotypical constructions of Chinese individuals as being collectivist and conformist, in accordance to traditional values and practices. Cultural practices (either explicit or implicit) are said to then affect and guide individuals' belief systems, behaviour and ways of interacting with others.

One of the main themes in the literature concerning Chinese households is the assumption that parenting methods are wholly guided by Chinese values and norms (typically Confucian principles). However, culture does not provide a precise template for behaviours nor does it guarantee exact transmission from one generation to another (Peterson, Steinmetz and Wilson, 2005b). In addition, culture itself is not static or a fixed set of rules, regulations, norms and values. Instead, culture is flexible in nature and can be affected, influenced and transformed by a variety of processes, such as globalisation, migration flows, transnationalism and diasporas, even within relationships themselves.

“Culture is most accurately portrayed as a phenomenon ‘in process,’ with people acting to perpetuate and create their cultural life-ways as they socialise each other” (Peterson, Steinmetz and Wilson, 2005a, p.13).

So if culture is varied and malleable, are Chinese families in Britain truly influenced and guided by Chinese traditions alone? Should other factors be taken into account when explaining British Chinese child-rearing methods? Differences in terms of individual's migration histories, socio-economic backgrounds, political views and so forth may be significant. What influence do Chinese individuals' life trajectories and experiences have on family life itself?

In order to avoid a one-dimensional viewpoint of British Chinese parenting practices in research, it is important to consider and incorporate individual differences within the Chinese diaspora. Chinese families in Britain cannot be assumed to follow the dominant ideal of the nuclear family or the extended family, and the prescriptive roles within it. Clearly, family diversity should be considered when attempting to enhance our understandings of contemporary British Chinese households. From such lines of enquiry the key questions emerge- *what parenting approaches can be seen within contemporary British Chinese families and what factors influence parenting decisions and behaviours?*

In addition to exploring contemporary parenting practices, it would be interesting to investigate the impact that parenting methods have upon the household, especially with regards to the parent-child relationship. Current research suggests that Chinese parents are not only authoritarian but also distant with their children as a result of Confucian values. For instance, inhibition and self-restraint are considered to be the indices of accomplishment, mastery and maturity within Confucian philosophy (King and Bond, 1985). As a result, Chinese parents are said to be less physically and emotionally expressive with their children. Instead, love is demonstrated by successfully meeting the child's needs (Uba, 1994), especially through instrumental support and sacrifice (Chao and Tseng, 2002). When rethinking the motionless concept of culture and when considering individual and family differences within Chinese households, can we still assume that Chinese parents are less intimate with their children as a result of Confucian ideals? If parents do adhere to such ethics would it be problematic for Chinese children who live in an individualistic society, such as Britain? Individualistic cultures are suggested to hold different viewpoints on how parents should demonstrate their love, such as physical and open signs of affection, which is in contrast to Confucian doctrine. Essentially *what levels of parent-child intimacy can be seen within modern Chinese families and what influences the extent of closeness within the parent-child relationship?* Arguably, intimacy levels between parents and children may have an impact on other areas of Chinese family life. By exploring parent-child intimacy, a deeper understanding of the day-to-day lives and functioning of contemporary British Chinese families may be revealed.

From the perspective of the new sociology of childhood and the theories of postmodern family life, the role and actions of children have been emphasised as being important and influential within the household and within family relationships. However British Chinese children are not depicted in the literature as having the resources or the power to influence their own lives, or the lives of others, due to Chinese cultural values. This leads to the question: *How are British Chinese children social actors and what impact does their agency have upon contemporary Chinese families?*

Such questions highlight the limitations and gaps in our current understanding and knowledge of British Chinese families and childhoods. Essentially:

4. What are the parenting approaches of Chinese parents in Britain and what influences their child-rearing methods and decisions?
5. What levels of parent-child intimacy and closeness can be seen within modern British Chinese families?
6. How are Chinese children social actors and how does their agency impact upon the contemporary British Chinese household?

Such issues are the concern of this thesis and chapter 5 discusses the use of qualitative repeat interviews with parents and children in answering such questions. In addition, by asking parents to recollect upon their own childhood experiences, it may provide insights into some of the contemporary attitudes towards parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy levels and children's agency within the household.

5.2 Research Strategy: The Relationship with Social Theory

In exploring contemporary Chinese childhoods, it was paramount that British Chinese children themselves are involved in expressing their views. This reflects the belief that children are important in generating knowledge and recognises the child's rights of expression (UNCRC, 1989). Parallel to the participation rights promulgated by the UNCRC (United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) are the writings from the new sociology of childhood, which views children as actors and agents (Greene and Hill, 2006). Historically many investigators have excluded children from their studies. Predominant emphasis had been on children as objects of research rather than subjects, as children were assumed to be incompetent speakers of their own lives and experiences (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001). In contrast the 'new social studies of childhood' or 'new childhood studies', highlights children's competency in dealing with complex social worlds (Greene and Hill, 2006), with the power to influence their own and others' lives around them (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001).

The 'new social studies of childhood' starts from a broadly social constructionist premise (Alanen, 2000). Social constructionism is a wide umbrella term, which includes multiple conceptual perceptions of meanings and of the role of social construction (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Nevertheless, social constructionism commonly suggests that our taken for granted understandings of the world are produced and understood in relation to the social context that surrounds and pervades us (see Burr, 2003 for a more detailed discussion).

“Social reality is not separate from us, but that social realities and ourselves are intimately interwoven as each shapes and is shaped by the other in everyday interactions” (Cunliffe, 2008, p.124).

Rather than a natural or biological phenomenon childhood can be seen as a social invention as a result of history, society and culture, which is structured by adult norms and aims (Jenks, 1996). The rethinking of childhood reveals how children's lives and experiences are organised 'under the eye of adults' and questions the nature of childhood, the boundaries between adulthood and childhood, as well as children's autonomy within families and other adult dominated institutions. By rethinking and reconceptualising childhood it enables the transformation of children from 'project' to 'persons' in research projects (Smart, Neale and Wade, 2001).

Social constructionism is related to the epistemological position of interpretivism. This includes the intellectual heritage of Weber's notion of *Versteheir*, the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition and symbolic interactionism (Bryman, 2004). The growth of the interpretive perspectives in the social sciences (especially symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology) can be seen as the impetus towards the new directions in the sociological study of childhood (Prout and James, 2003).

Interpretivism is an approach that emphasises the subjective meaning of social action. Accordingly, the interpretative position is concerned with drawing out the rich and unique experiences of individuals, and how their social worlds are interpreted, understood and produced (in this case Chinese children and their parents). Qualitative

research is seen as complementary to the interpretative tradition, as methods are suggested to help describe and illuminate the participant's social world (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Furthermore qualitative methods help to contextualise an individual's account, as such; they can help illustrate not only the narrative itself but also the contours of the story by Chinese parents and children.

5.3 Sampling Number and Technique

In accordance with the qualitative element of this study, the sample size was kept small to acquire an in-depth and rich account of Chinese individual's lives and experiences. As Silverman (2005) suggested qualitative researchers are generally prepared to sacrifice scope for detail. Moreover, as statements about incidence or prevalence are not the concern of qualitative research, there was no requirement to ensure that the sample was of sufficient scale to provide estimates, or to determine statistically significant discriminatory variables (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The research sample for this study comprised twelve British Chinese families, and one child and one parent from each family was interviewed. By using a small sample, it was hoped that more meaningful relationships and data collection would result (Taylor, 1999).

The thesis is predominantly interested in three research issues: (1) parenting approaches of contemporary Chinese parents in Britain, (2) intimacy levels within Chinese parents and children's relationship and (3) Chinese children as social actors and how each of these issues could be compared to parent's own childhood experiences. As this research has specific research questions concerning Chinese families and childhoods, with issues of diversity in mind (on an individual and family basis), a purposive sampling strategy was followed. Qualitative research often uses purposive sampling techniques, when the researcher deliberately handpicks the sample that is relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2004).

As the study recognised and acknowledged the significance of children's voices, children themselves were asked to participate within the research. The involvement of Chinese parents was also essential to investigate parenting approaches and parent-child relationships. Additionally by speaking to parents, recollections of their own childhoods and family life would offer a generational perspective (and accounts of change or similarities) upon current day childhoods and the parent's own upbringing. Parents were defined as the child's legal guardian and children were defined as under the age of 18 (UNCRC, 1989). By speaking to both children and parents, not only could more data be gained on the research issues, but their accounts could also be compared to one another for further analysis.

From the previous chapters it was emphasised that diversity within the Chinese diaspora and diversity within the Chinese family was rarely acknowledged in the existing research. As such, the involvement of Chinese families with different backgrounds and family patterns were prioritised in the study. This included family set-up and living arrangements. For instance, in addition to a number of Chinese nuclear families who participated in the study, there was also a lone-parent household, a blended family and an astronaut family. As indicated in chapter 3 an astronaut family is a term to describe a transnational family living arrangement, where the mother and children will migrate and reside in the new country, whilst the male

'astronaut' remains in the country of origin (often for work reasons), and regularly commutes or 'flies' to visit his wife and children.

Family backgrounds were also varied in relation to migration histories and length of residency in the UK. Some parents were British born; other parents had recently migrated or had lived in England for over 15-20 years (either as a result of childhood migration or individual migration as an adult). All the parents had Chinese ancestry, however the place of origin also differed within the sample. This included Mainland China, Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Territories and Malaysia for example. Parental backgrounds were wide-ranging in terms of education levels (from no qualifications up to doctorate level), careers (such as retirement, the catering trade, housewives, students, computing and health industries), and also in age (parents were in their forties, fifties and sixties). With regards to parental involvement, 3 fathers and 9 mothers took part in the study.

Children in the sample were aged between 11-15 and in the year bands of 7, 8 and 9 within secondary schooling. Children of this age group were specifically chosen due to their current and shared life experiences of the onset and early stages of adolescence and secondary schooling. Both adolescence and the movement to secondary school have been suggested to be a time of change and reflection for young people and their parents. Such factors were thought to have a possible impact or influence upon parenting strategies, parent-child relationships and children's agency and action.

In total, 4 boys and 8 girls participated in the study. Although the children were similar in age, individual differences were apparent. For example, some were the only child in the family; other children had one or more siblings. Birth order of children was also different in each family; some children were the youngest, middle born or the eldest in the household. Children also attended different types of secondary schools (from comprehensive to language specialist schools), and lived in various neighbourhoods and environments.

Seven families were invited to take part in the study through Chinese organisations, such as Chinese language supplementary schools and community groups. The other 5 families were snowballed from the initially recruited sample. All twelve Chinese families were from the North of England, including Leeds (5 families), Manchester (4 families), Huddersfield (2 families) and York (1 family). Whilst it is worth noting that seven families were recruited through Chinese organisations, and that their community involvement would possibly indicate a conscious awareness and probable concern over the maintenance of Chinese traditions, the remaining families in the study did not participate within such organisations. However, the sampling technique is still acknowledged and recognised when analysing the data of contemporary British Chinese childhoods and family life.

5.4 Data Generation: Interviews

Repeat qualitative interviewing was chosen as the most appropriate method to investigate Chinese childhood experiences. Interpretivism emphasises the subjective meaning of social action, and gives priority to seeing the world through the eyes of those who are being researched (Bryman, 1988). Qualitative interviews have been

suggested to be well suited to interpretivist research. Firstly, qualitative research emphasises notions of situated knowledge and subjective understanding (Heath et al., 2009). Secondly, qualitative interviewing methods can elicit and generate data that is concerned with the individuals' interpretations of knowledge and meaning. Qualitative interviews also allow participants to tell their stories, on their own terms and in their own words. By allowing participants to give their own individualised accounts, qualitative interviews have been argued to be particularly young-person friendly (Heath et al., 2009). Furthermore, interviews are seen as powerful tools in giving young people a voice, which is especially important when societal attitudes often marginalize children and their viewpoints (as argued within the new sociology of childhood).

With regards to consecutive interviews, each parent and child from one family was asked to participate in 3 individual interviews over a nine-month period. Each interview wave was concerned with one of the three research issues, which were (1) parenting approaches, (2) parent-child intimacy and (3) children's agency. There were other reasons for using a repeat interviewing strategy. For instance, the success of qualitative research is highly dependent upon the formation and maintenance of personal relationships with the interviewees, as well as establishing feelings of trust and rapport. Arguably, such a relationship would have been hard to create from a one-off interview. One-off interviews have also been criticised for creating a limited 'snapshot' of data collection. Whereas a series of interviews have been suggested to be better suited in capturing participant's thoughts and reflections (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). By returning to parents and children over a period of time, interviewees may also feel more relaxed within the interviewing process itself. In support, Greene and Hill (2006) suggested that contact over time is necessary in research for children and adults, so that participants can relax enough with the researcher to reveal their thoughts, feelings and concerns. Repeat interviews allow interviewees to get to know the researcher better. As such, more of a reciprocal relationship can be formed between the researcher and respondent. The establishment of trust and reciprocity was hoped to elicit higher levels of disclosures from the interviewees.

Repeat interviews enable research participants to reflect back on what they might have said in their previous interviews (Heath et al., 2009). Such an approach bodes well with Beck's (1992) view that young people and adults are constructors of their own biographies. Moreover the process of returning to informants provides interviewee's the chance to confirm the accuracy and validity of the researcher's analysis (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Critical engagement by participants and researchers alike allows a reflexive approach from both parties (Gabb, 2008).

The use of the repeat interviewing format allows for an engagement with change as it unfolds over time (Heath et al., 2009). Within the fieldwork any changes which may have occurred during the nine-month period, with regards to parenting strategies, parent-child intimacy levels and children's agency could have been picked up upon during the consecutive interviews. Also by asking parents to reflect upon their own childhoods as well as their experiences as parents now, through a series of interviews, it allowed a deeper investigation of generational differences of the research themes. As Neale and Flowerdew (2003) suggest, texture could be added to people's accounts by looking through and across time.

The use of 3 repetitive interviews with British Chinese families does not appear to have been used within previous research, where methods have predominantly been one-off interviews and questionnaire surveys. The study's temporal orientation, in terms of using repeat interviews over a period of time, was hoped to build upon and enable an exploration of past events and interactions, which would further contribute towards an understanding of contemporary Chinese families and childhoods.

To help maintain participant's continuance with the repeat interviewing format, interviews were conducted at a convenient location for the interviewees. The home setting was the most common choice. A small minority of interviews also took place at Chinese schools and the researcher's office on one occasion. To show appreciation of participant's research involvement and for any inconveniences caused, each parent and child was given money as compensation for their time and as a token of thanks at the end of the fieldwork. However there have been recognised problems with research conducted at the interviewee's homes and also with the use of incentives. Both issues will be discussed separately in the 'interview issues' section (section 5.4ii) and the 'ethics' section (section 5.6).

5.4.1 Interview Structure

The semi-structured approach was chosen as the most appropriate interview format for investigating contemporary Chinese childhoods. Semi-structured interviews are well suited to research that has a clear focus (Heath et al., 2009). In this case it was the exploration of Chinese parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy level and the extent of Chinese children's agency. Semi-structured interviews also allow research themes to be compared across the sample of research participants (the twelve families individually), as well as patterns and trends within a particular family unit (the parent and child's accounts) (Heath et al., 2009). Structured interviews were considered inappropriate due to their quantitative and positivist approaches (Denscombe, 2003). As the research had a structure and a purpose to the data generation process, accounts could not have been collected through the use of unstructured interviews (Mason, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews are loosely structured around an interview guide. The interview guide maps out the broad research areas and may contain a number of key questions (Arksey and Knight, 1998). However, interview topics are not necessarily explored through the use of a direct questioning format during the interview, a respondent might be asked to simply reflect on their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Heath et al., 2009). The use of non-directive questioning has been said to avoid participant's perceptions of giving a 'right' or a 'wrong' answer during an interview. Giving the 'correct' answer may be a particular issue for research with young people, who are often in environments of 'officialdom' where adults are in authority (Heath et al., 2009).

Non-directive and open ended questions are suggested to provide participants, particularly young people, more of an opportunity to bring in the topics and modes of discourse that are familiar to them (Eder and Fingerson, 2003). As semi-structured interviewing allows participants to answer on their own terms, it allows insights and understandings from the eyes of the participants, which is in line with the study's interpretivist position.

“By encouraging children to use their own vocabulary, their own ways of communicating, and then asking them for clarification, their meanings are ascertained above any (preconceived) ideas of the researcher” (Gabb, 2008, p.51).

Furthermore the flexibility of the semi-structured interview not only explores the information volunteered by participants, but they enable opportunities for further explanations and clarification, without interrupting the subject’s train of thought (Millwood and Heath, 2002).

The one-to-one interview format was used in the research and it is also the most common form of semi-structured interviewing. The one-to-one interview involves a meeting between one researcher and one informant. They are relatively easy to arrange and to control, as well as being straightforward for the researcher to locate specific ideas with the interviewee (Denscombe, 2003). The language and explanation of questions can also be made appropriate to the individual respondent (Millwood and Heath, 2000). This is advantageous as every person is different and will have different needs and preferences for their interview encounter. By using a one-to-one interviewing technique, the researcher was able to engage and adapt the interview process in accordance with the respondent’s requirements, despite the language differences. For example, with some interviews an interpreter was hired to translate the questions and answers between English and Cantonese.

Although face-to-face interviews were the primary research method used, there was one family who had a number of their interviews conducted over the telephone on a one-to-one basis. This particular family had 2 interviews conducted in person, and 4 interviews over the telephone. The telephone interviews were used for convenience to fit in with the family’s lifestyles and commitments. The use of an additional data collection method reflected the qualitative aspect of the research, where “thinking qualitatively means rejecting the idea of a research design as a single document that can and should only be made at the beginning of the research process” (Mason, 2002, p.24). Interestingly, telephone interviews have been suggested to provide more honest accounts in comparison to face-to-face interviews, as they increase participants’ perceptions of anonymity (Thomas and Purdon, 1994). However face-to-face interviews were still chosen as the principal research method, as they allow observations of the respondent’s feelings, moods, their levels of understanding and of any potential distractions, which may have influenced the interviewing process or the interviewee’s accounts. The valuable role of observation during an interview is not to be underestimated, as Tjora (2006) suggested, “the interview provides leads for the researcher’s observations, while observations suggest probes for interviews”.

In summary, qualitative research has been argued to have the potential to further our understanding of Chinese family life and childhoods by highlighting and illuminating the participant’s world and viewpoints. Semi-structured interviews are considered as flexible and participant-friendly research tools that can help interviewees tell their own stories, in their own words and in their own time. Such an approach is advantageous when there is a diverse sample. By having repeat interviews the process of building rapport and trust was anticipated to contribute towards a relaxed atmosphere of discussion and a feeling of reciprocity between the researcher and respondent. Repeat interviews allowed participants to reflect, clarify or extend their statements from their previous interviews. At the same time, by having prolonged

contact with the sample, the researcher could follow up on any vague, confusing, or even contradictory information given by parents and children.

5.4.2 Interview Issues and Limitations

In comparison to questionnaires, observations and experiments, there is a more personal element to the interview method, where meanings and communication are jointly constructed through conversation (Lapadat, 1994). People may also enjoy the (rather rare) chance to talk about their ideas at length to a person, whose purpose it is to listen and to note down ideas, without being critical. Denscombe (2003) further suggested that interviewees may benefit or be personally empowered as a result of the interviewing process. However, some writers have argued that research interviews are not a social dialogue, and instead have the possibility of making respondents feel that they are being personally interrogated (Denscombe, 2003). Language itself can be problematic within the interview encounter. For instance, in a small number of cases, a Cantonese interpreter was hired to conduct the interviews alongside the researcher. When hiring an interpreter, personal cultural perspectives or bias may arise (Kapborg and Berterö, 2002). Although the researcher had a basic comprehension of Cantonese, there are still subtle differences in the meanings of words, which may not be fully understood or translated appropriately. Translation is not a straightforward process and some words may not be translated into English because of cultural differences, or because there are no equivalent words (Kapborg and Berterö, 2002).

Language use is seen to create and express different realities, and as a way of organizing the world (Patton, 1990). As such Mason (2002) argues that researchers need to engage with the 'politics of talk'. Within the politics of talk, researchers should recognise what counts as language, its nature, who uses it, and what language can mean and do, as words are not merely part of a neutral and given reality, but can be products of power relations and struggles.

“Each word, each language act has a symbolic value and will be used or interpreted differently by different people . . . [Therefore] it is very important to contextualise people’s terminology and instruments of knowledge” (Katerin, 2004, p.78).

The spoken word will always have a residue of ambiguity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Subsequently, if mutual understanding is not established, then the data analysis stands to be flawed by unperceived misunderstandings or misinterpretations between the interviewer and the interviewee (Arksey and Knight, 1999).

Interviews have been argued to be unrepresentative, as they are just local, here and now occurrences, which only offer a literal description of the respondent’s reality (Hester and Francis, 1997, Miller and Dingwall, 1997). To resolve the simplistic treatment of interviewee as informant, and the reading of their accounts as straightforward descriptions of social experiences, Mason (2002) suggested that researchers should treat the interviews as a site of knowledge construction, where the interviewer and interviewee are co-participants in this process. With regards to the interviewing process then, the realities and various roles taken on by individuals should be seen as jointly created by the researcher and the respondents (Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg, 2005).

The power relations and dynamics between the researcher and the participant must be recognised, including the implications of the interview location. With regards to the interview site, “physical space is rarely neutral, but instead has the potential to confer advantage on one or the other party of the interview to the disadvantage of the other” (Heath et al., 2009, p.93). The majority of the interviews were conducted within the interviewee’s home, and the researcher is seen as a guest within the interview setting. In principle this should maximise the parent’s and young person’s control of the research situation and possibly minimise any potential discomfort (Heath et al., 2009). However, as individuals can choose, whether consciously or otherwise, to present a certain aspect of their individual and social identities in particular spatial contexts (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984), children and parents may have tried to preserve or even exaggerate their own, or their family’s, reputation during the household interviews. Children in the sample were asked where they would liked to be interviewed, again the home setting was preferred due to its convenience in location and the lack of travel required on the child’s part. Heath and colleagues (2009) noted that it should not be naturally assumed that children would want their interviews to be conducted elsewhere, since children may not want adult researchers to invade their private spaces, such as youth and sporting clubs and parks.

Not only can the interview sites affect the power relations between the interviewer and interviewee, but it can also affect the respondent’s responses and engagement in the interview (Denscombe, 2003). For example, the possibility of being overheard within the household (either by the child or parent), may have affected the respondent’s willingness to discuss or to engage in certain topics within the dialogue. Unfortunately, the family’s home was the most convenient place for parents and children to be interviewed, as the families did not have to travel or spend money on expenses. Additionally, interviews within the respondent’s homes provided limited distractions from family life itself, as parents and children could continue with their daily household routines before and after their scheduled interviews. The use of the interviewee’s home was therefore a practical difficulty that could not be overcome within the research, nevertheless, the limitations of interviewing respondents at home was still fully considered and recognised during the interviewing and analysis process.

Within the interviews, the respondent’s statements can be affected by the identity of the researcher (Denscombe, 2003). Herod (1993) suggested:

“The social characteristics of an interviewer and a respondent, such as age, race and sex, are significant during their brief encounter: different pairings have different meanings and evoke different cultural norms and stereotypes that influence the opinions and feelings expressed by respondents” (p.308).

With regards to age, Fine and Sandstrom (1988) noted that researchers must be aware of the possible exploitative nature of the age and power differences between adults and children. Although it is important to be aware of age differences between the interviewer and interviewee, Heath and colleagues (2009) suggested that the focus should be on the quality of the research encounter, where the art of listening is more important than the age of the researcher. As Pattman and Kehily (2004) suggested, young people appear to respond well to researchers who are perceived as genuinely listening to their accounts in a non-judgmental manner. Another effective strategy is

to follow young people's guidelines and structure the interview encounter to be friend-like (Punch, 2002a).

The researcher in this study is from a similar background to the researched. However Parker (1995) argued that this does not automatically secure more extended accounts. Instead it can make probing further difficult, as the researcher is more sensitive to the respondent's silence. Francis and Archer (2005c) argued that the notion of 'matching' the researcher and respondent's gender, ethnicity or other variables could also evoke a problematic perception of a fixed and two-dimensional identity. However, by sharing related experiences and common understandings with the respondents, it was hoped that it would promote and encourage the interviewees to open-up and to provide richer and fuller accounts. Fay (1996) suggested such thinking is part of the 'you have to be one to know one' positioning. The premise is that those who have insider status, or positioning are in a privileged position in understanding a particular group, which can lead to the joint creation of knowledge through shared experiences (Heath et al., 2009). When the researcher understands and identifies with the interviewee's situation, the better the data is likely to be (Gabb, 2008).

“The adult researchers' knowledge of the cultural milieu and social capital of those whom they intend to research can be invaluable and far more useful than any formal interview technique” (Gabb, 2008, p. 21).

Personal feelings and experiences of the researcher can also have had an influence within research studies (Lamb and Huttlinger, 1989). As such, researchers should acknowledge how they influence research and how their interactions with participants may lead to a renegotiation of meanings, understanding and practices (Edwards, 2001). Mason (2002) argues that researchers need to do more than 'listening beyond' (to retain a critical awareness of what is being said), but also need to 'understand beyond'. That is, being aware of how the social and cultural factors, which both parties bring to the encounter, can affect what happens in the interview and thereafter (Allan and Skinner, 1991). As such, the encouragement of reflexivity or being self-reflective is common within qualitative research approaches. Such thinking is in accordance with the study's social constructionist position, where people's perceptions and understandings are not only influenced by the prevailing culture at a particular time, but are also constructed through relationships and encounters with other individuals. Researchers should therefore be reflexive in their own studies and acknowledge that knowledge is generated and shaped through the interactions between those who are involved within the research process.

Clearly conducting research and the use of interview methods are highly complex and cannot be conceived as a simple or straightforward procedure. Despite the limitations of interviews, they should still be considered as legitimate and compelling methods in research, as they are based on participant's real worlds and experiences (Gabb, 2008). Reflexivity and awareness of the variables that could have influenced the research process is essential at all times. Prior to the fieldwork, research training and a pilot study was conducted, as “‘giving a voice' means more than providing the researched with an opportunity to speak, it involves creating the appropriate means and communication context for the research participants” (Seymour, 2001, p. 159).

5.5 Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed immediately after each of the three interview waves. The researcher decided to personally transcribe the interview accounts, as it allowed for a deeper level of familiarity and intimacy with the data sets for the analysis process. Altogether there were 72 interviews for this study. Due to the limited time-scale for the project, combined with the long length of time it takes for transcriptions, full interview transcripts were not deemed as viable. Instead the interviews were selectively transcribed, where data that was relevant and exceptional to the study's theoretical and research concerns were recorded. Each transcript also included contextual information, as well as any additional notes or reflections that were taken during and after the interviewing process (such as people walking into the room, emotional state of the interviewees and of the dialogue itself).

Meaningful data from the transcripts was then organised by themes (and further subcategories) according to the broad research topics identified (parenting approaches, children's agency and parent-child intimacy levels); research questions within the interview guides, as well as links to pre-existing theories and research. The job of indexing, or slicing the data set, was done manually with the aid of computer programs on 'Microsoft Office'. The combination of personally transcribing the interview accounts, with the manual procedure of indexing, allowed a more thorough examination of what the interviewees had said and permitted repeated examinations of the interviewees' accounts (Heritage, 1984). The categorisation of data also allowed easier searches and comparisons of the data, the identification of patterns and a greater sense of the scope and coverage of the data set, which then aided conceptual, analytical and theoretical thinking (Mason, 2002).

A conceptual map was subsequently developed to interpret the data, to search for common themes, and for any relationships between data categories and established research and theories. Data that did not 'fit in' with established patterns was also recorded. Analysis from the conceptual map fed into the next stages of investigation and data collection for the following interview waves. The repetitive interplay between theory, data collection and the analysis of data was completed in an iterative manner, also known as an abductive process (Blaikie, 2000).

“Abduction is a process by means of which the researcher assembles lay accounts of the phenomenon in question, with all their gaps and deficiencies, and, in an iterative manner, begins to construct their own account. The central characteristic of this process is that it is iterative; it involves the researcher in alternating periods of immersion in the relevant social world, and periods of withdrawal for reflection and analysis” (Blaikie, 2000, p. 181).

The abductive research strategy is associated with the interpretive tradition, where the starting point of the investigation is the social actor's construction of reality, their way of conceptualising and of giving meaning to their social world, as well as their own tacit knowledge (Blaikie, 2000). The abductive research strategy also views people's realities and understandings as socially constructed. The role of the social researcher is to enter the everyday social world in order to grasp these socially constructed meanings (Blaikie, 2000). The abductive approach is therefore in accordance with this

study's epistemological and ontological position, which emphasises the subjective meaning of social action and realities that are both believed to be socially and mutually constructed.

Accordingly, transcriptions and interview accounts were not seen as an objective record of the interviews (Mason, 2002). Instead the interview stories and recollections were seen as 'topics', where the data collected is a reality or artefact, which is jointly constructed and produced by the interviewee and interviewer (Dingwall, 1997). By analysing interviews as topics, as opposed to viewing interview data as 'resource' (where data reflects the interviewees' reality outside of the interview; Seale et al., 2004), this aligns with the study's epistemological standpoint that researchers need to be reflexive and critical of interviewees' accounts and perceptions, as well as considering the impact of the researcher's personal characteristics and beliefs upon the research process. In other words, an interpretive and reflexive reading of the interview accounts was involved.

“An interpretive reading will involve you in constructing or documenting a version of what you think the data means or represents, or what you think you can infer from them. . . A reflexive reading will locate you as part of the data you have generated, and will seek to explore your role and perspective in the process of generation and interpretation of data” (Mason, 2000, p. 149).

As Seale and colleagues (2004) suggested, researchers should analyse how “interactions produce that trajectory of talk and how specific versions of reality are co-constructed” (p.20). Alongside the process of transcribing and analysis, the continual re-reading of the data, the field notes and the literature helped to stimulate critical thinking and reflexivity.

The alternating process of moving between everyday concepts and meanings, lay accounts and social science explanations means that theory (an explanation of observed regularities; Bryman, 2004) is generated as an intimate part of the research process (Blaikie, 2000).

“It is in the process of moving from lay descriptions of social life to technical descriptions of that social life that the notion of abduction is applied. In other words, the abductive strategy involves constructing theory that is grounded in two stages: describing these activities and meanings; and deriving categories and concepts that can form the basis of an understanding or an explanation of the problem at hand” (Blaikie, 2000, p. 117).

As opposed to developing theoretical propositions to be tested further, the emerging data categories and theories in this research were seen as 'thick descriptions', where there was an interpretive focus on the meaning and intentions of the interviewee's behaviours. 'Thick' descriptions also include the context of the action, and the processes through which social action and interaction are sustained or changed (Denzin, 1978).

5.6 Ethical Issues

For the researched, it is essential that they are not exploited in any way and child participants should be guided by similar research ethics as those for adults suggested Hill (2006). Ethical considerations within this project included respecting and protecting the rights, dignity and safety of those who are participating in the research project (Denscombe, 2003). For instance, informed written and verbal consent was obtained from both parents and children before the fieldwork began (Oates, 2006). Legal definitions suggest that the child's legal guardian can give consent on behalf of the child, as children themselves cannot give full consent (Hill, 2006). However, in keeping with the UNCRC (1989), children were asked to give consent, or 'assent' as it is known in these circumstances (Coady, 2001). This was achieved by using a cartoon that described the identity of the researcher and the research itself, to allow children to understand what was being asked of them and to make an informed decision about their participation (Fawcett, Featherstone and Goddard, 2004). It was not assumed that the respondent's initial consent at the beginning of the fieldwork equated to ongoing consent throughout all three of the study's interviews. Research interviewees were informed that they had the right to withdraw their participation at any point and that their consent at the beginning of the fieldwork did not obligate their participation to all the research interviews. Interviewees were reminded of such points before their interviews began and before any arrangements for the next interview were made.

Parents and children were not only made aware of the nature of the research project, but were given the choice to agree to how their accounts could be implicated within the PhD itself, within possible publications and within the 'Timescapes' archive. 'Timescapes' is an ESRC funded longitudinal study on personal and family relationships, which is based at the University of Leeds. Timescapes aims to bring together a consortium of university researchers to combine expertise and research, and to create an extended longitudinal data archive on personal lives, relationships and identity. As an affiliate to the Timescapes project, the data collected from this study was deposited within the Timescapes archive, where researchers can place their empirical data to help share, reuse and generate further data. With the exception of one family, the remaining families were highly supportive of their involvement within Timescapes. Participants were given full information on the Timescapes project, what the archive entailed and assurances of confidentiality within the research and archiving process. Confidentiality often refers to the promise of not passing specific details pertaining to a person's life onto others. However within social research, confidentiality is more akin to the promise of anonymity (Heath et al., 2009). Anonymity refers to the protection of the specific identities of individuals involved within the research process. In other words, participants who agreed to the reporting of their lives and experiences through the research process knew that specific details relating to them would not be compromised. Pseudonyms were used as a substitute for real names to provide participants with anonymity. Where certain words or phrases might have compromised a participant's identity, a more generic term was used to preserve an individual's anonymity. Data was also kept secure in recognising the data protection act and its principles (Denscombe, 2003). Good practice included the use of a locked filing cabinet to store hard copies of documents and audiotapes from the interviews. Computer files, such as word processor documents and backup copies were also password protected.

When interviewing multiple family members within a household there may be issues of disclosure. As both parents and children were interviewed separately regarding family life, participants are not only revealing their own thoughts and expressions but also possibly discussing other family member's secrets or private moments. Interviewees were therefore assured of the privacy of their accounts. Perhaps more importantly was the reassurance that the child or parent's accounts would not be disclosed to the other partner during the research. Additionally, the researcher did not want to appear to be interrogating the child about their family experiences on behalf of the parents. By outlining from the start of the fieldwork that the interview accounts were confidential, it was also hoped that this would enable children to provide a true reflection of their childhoods without fear that parents would punish or be angry with them.

With regards to participants, the in-depth approach of qualitative interviewing may have the risk of being too intrusive in people's lives and could cause anxiousness or trauma when asked to recount and discuss certain experiences and memories. As such, the researcher was highly aware of the participants' emotional states and their well-being. The researcher was also respectful of the silences of interviewees as well as the respondent's right to withdraw from the study. At all times, the researcher was conscious of the possible exploitative nature of the age and power differences between the interviewer and interviewee. Age considerations of the young participants, and sensitivity to all interviewees were always at the forefront. For instance within the interview encounter, all respondents were enabled to express their perceptions freely without any imposition from the researcher (Punch, 2002b). It was also important that the sample felt valued as their voices and their contributions were significant and essential for the study. Interestingly a majority of the sample, especially the parents, were highly aware of the lack of research and political representation of the British Chinese community, as such they actively expressed their support for the study and the representation of their voices within the research.

Incentives were used to show appreciation of the participants' time and efforts within the research. However, Brensen and Marshall (2000) warned that the relationship between incentives and research could be problematic in terms of ethics and research integrity. With regards to ethics, Dickert and Grady (1999) suggested that vulnerable people may be more at risk, as they are more likely to succumb to the goods or services offered by researchers. Children are arguably a high-risk group in this regard, due to their vulnerable positions in relation to more powerful adults (Rice and Broome, 2004). The use of incentives could also be at risk of invalidating aspects of the research, as participants may feel obliged to give data which is more socially desirable, or in keeping with the research agenda (Rice and Broome, 2004). In minimising the possibility of receiving socially desirable answers, participants in the study were asked to discuss their general experiences of family life and childhoods and not informed of the three specific research themes under investigation (parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy levels and children as social actors). To help counter research bias and participant obligation, incentives were made proportionate to the amount of time, effort, and commitments required by participants and were only given at the end of the research (Rice and Broome, 2004).

Once the study had finished, feedback and questions were invited from the participants so that could learn something from the research and feel that their contributions were valuable and important (Oates, 2006). The researcher and participants parted on good terms out of respect for the participants and the relationships that were built during the nine-month period. Furthermore, the possibilities of having to return to interviewees for further data or for research in the future further emphasised the necessity to leave the field in positive conditions (Taylor, 1999).

An issue of power has been acknowledged with specific regards to the control of editorship (Letherby, 2000) and the possibilities of conflicting interests between the researcher and their subjects (Homen, 1995). It has been argued that researchers through their analyses and reports define the meaning of responses and findings, whereas respondents have no opportunity to comment upon interpretations of their words and intentions. This way of doing research takes away from respondents their right to 'name' their world (Letherby, 2000). Researchers may also use the material in ways that may conflict with the interviewees' own perceptions and values (Allan and Skinner, 1991). Thus, as an ethical researcher, the data was recorded and presented accurately and fully.

“This means not keeping quiet about data that does not support your case, or not manipulating data to present the picture you want. You should be open and honest about how you conducted your research and the results you obtained, without any falsification or fabrication” (Oates, 2006, p. 61).

Researchers have a responsibility to produce good quality research argued Mason (2002) and this is a “responsibility to yourself, your participants, your funders or sponsors, your institution and colleagues, the reputation of qualitative research the advancement general, and so on” (p. 202). Research findings should be used ethically to ensure that no harm is caused to participants. Accordingly, care has been taken in the general presentation of research findings for this study and within any future writings (Oates, 2006). With regards to research publications, there is the risk that published research may produce and/or increase shame, stigma and disadvantage for the participants involved (Alderson, 2004). Risk of harm may apply not only to research participants, but also to people affected by the research findings. As a result researchers have been urged to take control of dissemination and this has been taken into full consideration. Oates (2006) also argued that researchers should make it clear who has sponsored the research, so that readers can be aware of possible influences on the way the research was conducted and presented.

Ethical issues are clearly very important within any research study and should be fully considered at all points of the research process. As Mac Naughton, Rolfe and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) suggested, what needs to be borne in mind is that quality research is always ethical, purposeful, well-designed, transparent, conceptualised, credible, careful, imaginative and equitable.

5.7 Summary of Research and Research Objectives

Largely as a result of the lack of empirical research and understandings with British Chinese families and childhoods, this study set out to explore contemporary Chinese

childhoods and family life. Specifically the study wished to investigate parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy and the agency of Chinese children. The use of qualitative and repeat interviews was used to help uncover Chinese childhood experiences. Qualitative interviews were chosen as they have been argued to provide researchers with a richer account of events, and are useful for producing data, which deals with topics in-depth and in detail (Herod, 1993, May, 2002).

12 British Chinese families participated within this study. The families were from the North of England and came from different backgrounds and family set-ups. Diversity within the sample was important, as existing literature tends to assume that Chinese people are homogenous in nature and in their personal backgrounds. Family differences in terms of living arrangements were also essential, as current research tends to focus on the nuclear or extended family type.

In each family, one parent and one child was interviewed either face-to-face or over the telephone. Each parent and child was invited to take part in three interviews each. Each round of interviews looked at the research questions concerning parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy and children's agency within the British Chinese household. Repeat interviews with families were also used in order to gain richer accounts in comparison to a one-off interview. Moreover, prolonged contact with the sample was hoped to encourage trust and the development of reciprocal relationships between the researcher and respondents to help encourage deeper exploration of the research issues. There were 72 interviews in total for this study.

Interviews have been suggested to be unnatural tools of data collection, which can only produce contextually based results (Dingwall, 1997). Nevertheless the advantages of using qualitative interviews, such as the joint exploration of experiences and insights of informants, the personal nature of the interview encounter and by allowing interviewees to speak on their own terms in their own time, was seen to outweigh the limitations of interview strategies for data collection. However, problems inherent within the use of interviews, such as power dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee and language issues were still fully considered within the data collection process and within the analysis stages.

Arguably, the nature of any child's (or adult's) experience is always in part inaccessible to an outsider (Greene and Hill, 2006). Nonetheless as Grover (2004) argued, the relevance and strength of the research process will continue to suffer if children are objects of study rather than the collaborators in telling their own stories of their lived experience. By giving thorough consideration to ontological and epistemological positions, research strategies, methods, analysis and ethics, as well as the limitations of each, this has hopefully contributed towards the careful design of this research to investigate the experiences of contemporary British Chinese childhoods. The following chapters will discuss each of the research themes in detail, with parenting approaches in chapter 6, children as social actors in chapter 7, followed by a discussion of parent-child intimacy levels in chapter 8. Before the analytical chapters are explored, the last section of chapter 5 will give an account of the participating parents and children. An outline of the difference and diversity amongst the sample will not only help contextualise the findings, but will help illustrate the heterogeneous nature of the Chinese diaspora also.

5.8 Family Difference and Diversity with the Sample

To help emphasize the diversity of the British Chinese population, individual and family differences were highlighted within this study. To help illustrate the dissimilarities between the households, this section will outline some of their key differences.

Table 1: Examples of Family Difference

Background differences	Examples
Family types	Nuclear families, blended family, astronaut family, lone parent family
Place of origin	HK, Kowloon, New Territories, Mainland China, Malaysia, Britain
Decade of UK arrival (if applicable)	1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000 onwards
Migration history	The majority of the parental sample migrated to the UK as children with their own parents. Some parents migrated to Britain as adults (with or without their current partners and children) and only one parent was born in the UK
Age of parents	Late-thirties up to early-sixties
Educational levels	Primary schooling in country of origin up to UK higher/further education levels
Occupations	White collar work, take away trade, housewifery and retirement
Cultural identity	11 parents classified themselves as 'Chinese' 1 parent described themselves as 'British Chinese'
Number of children in family	1-4 children per family

9 mothers and 3 fathers participated in this study. With regards to family set-ups, 8 of the 12 families can be classified as a nuclear household. Within this group there was a remarried Chinese man who had then fathered children at a later age. The sample also had one blended household where previously separated parents remarry and combine families. The last two families in the sample included a lone parent household and one astronaut family type.

Though the majority of the families were the nuclear model, each household varied in terms of their place of origin and their UK settlement period. Nine of the twelve parents in the sample were from Hong Kong. Of these nine, one parent was specifically from the Kowloon peninsula and another from the New Territories region. There was one parent from Mainland China and one who was from Malaysia. Of the 12 Chinese parents only one was British born.

Aside from the one parent who was British born, the rest of the parental sample had lived in the UK for varying lengths of time. Specifically 4 families had emigrated in the 1970s, 1 family at the start of the 1980s, 3 families in the 1990s, and lastly 3 families arrived between 2000 and 2004. As most of the parents have been living in

Britain for a period of time, 7 of the children in the sample were British born. The other 5 children had migrated to the UK with their parents.

For most of the parents who had migrated to Britain during the 1970s, they had come to the UK with their own parents as young children. There was one exception within this group, where the eldest parent and father within the sample had arrived as a young adult to start a new life for himself in Britain. Parents who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s also came as adults who left their country of origin due to education or work reasons. These families subsequently stayed on in Britain and started their own families. The remaining parents who arrived from the year 2000 onwards came with their children (either individually or with their partners). A better quality of life and increased opportunities for their children's future was stressed for these households. When asked about their cultural identity, all but one parent classified themselves as 'Chinese' in the research. Only one parent who was born in Britain described themselves as 'British Chinese'.

To further elaborate upon parental backgrounds, parents also had varied educational achievements and occupations. 7 parents had achieved further or higher UK education qualifications. Two parents had completed UK secondary schooling and another had finished HK secondary schooling. Two of the remaining parents did not pursue education past HK primary level. During the time of the study, one parent was studying for an NVQ.

Parents were involved in a number of work occupations. 5 parents were housewives and of these, one parent was studying for their NVQ. 4 parents were in white collar trades, such as computing and education (including an astronaut parent who worked part-time). 2 parents owned and ran their own take-ways and one lone parent was involved in a variety of jobs which included the catering trade and local council work. One parent was retired in the sample.

Ages of parents were also different. One parent was approaching their late thirties. 6 parents in the sample were either in their early (3), mid (1) or late forties (2). 3 parents were in the early fifties with one parent was in his mid- fifties. Finally one parent was in their sixties. Parents also differed in terms of the number of children they had. Most parents had two children (6 families), three parents had 3 children, two parents had one child, and lastly, one parent had four children.

From the parental descriptions, it is clear that Chinese people cannot be seen as being part of a homogenous cultural group, as there are individual differences that need to be considered in terms of family histories, household arrangements as well as living styles. Although the majority of the parents identified themselves as being Chinese in this sample, parents originated from different countries and within different regions of the same country. Parents also had various socio-economic and demographic backgrounds as well as having different migration histories and periods of settlement. Furthermore family set-ups did not all conform to the nuclear ideal. Various individual differences such as age, education level, occupations and number of children must also be accounted for within families. Arguably such diversity not only influences the trajectories of the parents but those of their children. Family practices within and outside of the household will arguably affect family functioning and relationships within (see Morgan, 1996 and chapter 3 for example). Such arguments

will be more deeply explored in chapters 6, 7 and 8 with regards to parenting approaches, children's agency and parent-child intimacy levels. Before we move onto the analytical chapters, it would be worthwhile to present a more detailed description of the families who participated in the study (the fieldwork was first conducted in late 2008 for a period of nine months).

5.9 Participating Families

1. Sandra and Casey: Sandra is a lone female parent in her late-forties. Sandra is from the New Territories and migrated to the UK in 2001. Sandra's daughter, Casey (twelve years old), migrated with her mother after Sandra's marital divorce. Sandra's eldest son decided to stay in the New Territories with his father. Sandra has immediate family in the UK and is involved in several lines of work.
2. Louise and Ben: Louise first came to England in the 1980s to study. After her doctoral studies, she met her Chinese husband in Britain and now works within the education sector. Louise is in her late-forties and has two children in their early teens. Ben (fourteen years old) is the eldest and was born in the UK. Louise and her husband are both from HK and have no immediate family in the UK.
3. Heather and Charlotte: Heather is from HK and migrated to Britain in the early 1970s, aged twelve. Now in her early-forties with a successful food business, Heather decided to become a full time housewife a few years ago. Heather has two children and Charlotte is the youngest daughter (fourteen years old) who is British born.
4. Hing and Ling: Hing is a retired father in his sixties. He came to England in his twenties to "improve his life and future". Originally from Mainland China, Hing had migrated to HK as a young boy with his family. Hing then moved to the UK during the 1970s to start a new life for himself as a young adult. Hing has been married twice and from his second marriage, he has fathered two children later in life. His eldest daughter, Ling, is British born and is twelve years old. Hing's wife does not speak any English and communicates with the children in Chinese only.
5. Annabel and Grace: Annabel is in her early-fifties and is from Kowloon. She migrated to the UK with both her children in 2004, whilst her husband remained in Kowloon to work. This family format is known as an astronaut family. Annabel used to work long hours when her children were young in Kowloon, but now finds herself working part-time whilst being a housewife in England. Lucy is the youngest child and came to England with her mother aged twelve. Lucy is now fourteen.
6. Abigail and Olivia: Abigail owns her own take away shop which she runs with her husband, who is from HK. Abigail is from Malaysia and migrated to the UK in the 1990s to further her educational qualifications. Abigail is in her late-thirties and has two children. Olivia is the eldest child (twelve years old) and is British born.

7. Ting and Wayne: Originally from Hong Kong, Ting migrated to Britain as a young child with his family in the late 1970s. After his degree, Ting started a career in the computing business and married soon after (his wife is also from HK). Ting is in his early-forties and has one child, Wayne, who is thirteen years old and British born.
8. Ava and Carly: Ava migrated to the UK in the 1970s with her parents as a young child. Ava is in her mid-forties and is from Hong Kong. Ava runs a busy take-away business and has three children. Carly (thirteen years old) is the youngest child and is British born.
9. Chloe and Sophie: Chloe is from Hong Kong and originally came to Britain in the mid 1990s, with her daughter Sophie who was a toddler at the time. Chloe remarried in Britain whilst her daughter was a young child. Chloe and Sophie are part of what is known as a blended family. Chloe is in her early-fifties and her daughter, Sophie, is fourteen years old.
10. Mia and Adam: Mia is in her early-fifties and has been in the UK since 2002. Mia migrated to the UK with her husband and two children, whilst leaving her adult daughter in HK. Of the two children who migrated with Mia, Adam is the youngest and is twelve years old. Although Mia used to work as a traffic officer in HK, she is now a full time housewife, whilst her husband works as a full-time chef.
11. Nicole and Ken: Nicole is from HK and in her early-forties. Nicole and her husband moved to the UK in 1998 and she is currently studying for her NVQ. Nicole has three children. Ken is Nicole's eldest son and migrated with his parents when he was one years old. Ken is now eleven years old has two younger siblings who are British born.
12. Edmund and Alexandra: Edmund was born in the UK and is in his mid-fifties. Edmund works in the area of religion and his wife is from Singapore. Edmund has four children, of which, Alexandra is the youngest daughter. Alexandra is fourteen years old.

Chapter 6

‘Chinese Parenting: Past and Present’

6.1 Introduction

Confucianism has been said to be the most influential philosophy upon Chinese culture and the functioning of family life itself. Confucian ethics not only convey appropriate child-rearing expectations and effective child-rearing techniques, but also what are regarded as valuable qualities in children. The focus upon the family, the responsibility of parenthood and the duty to raise well-adjusted children is highly prioritised within Confucianism (Wu et al., 2002). However in this research, contemporary parents use of culture and their cultural knowledge was not based on a ‘pure culture’ of their homelands (as argued by Cowen, 2002) and neither did parents remain wholeheartedly attached to traditional Confucian values. Instead parents utilized components of the surrounding culture, as well as selecting which Chinese traditions would be best appropriate for their child’s upbringing and individual family life. As Brah (2005) argued, cultural identities are not fixed, but poised, in transition, and acquire specific meanings in a given context. Unlike Chinese parenting of the past where Chinese traditions were influential and prioritised (as argued in previous literature and seen within parental memories of their childhoods), contemporary parenting appeared to combine elements of Chinese traditions and mainstream culture. This is in accordance to Serrano and Hou’s (1996) suggestion that culture reflects the way in which people process and makes sense of their experiences, thereby affecting and influencing behaviour and decision-making. This chapter along with chapters 1 and 2 therefore highlights and supports the arguments that culture and cultural identity are diverse and not a static entity. Consequently, how culture affects parenting approaches must also be seen as flexible and fluid. Other factors such as the parent’s childhood experiences, valuing children’s rights and opinions, as well as an awareness and acceptance of Westernisation also contributed towards parent’s child-rearing decisions.

Although it is appreciated that culture is an evolving entity for individuals and has many different meanings and behaviours, it is still important to look at Confucian values in exploring the appliance or non-appliance of certain traditional parenting regimes within contemporary British Chinese families. The section below shall explore some of the basic Confucian principles to appreciate contemporary parenting methods and decisions.

6.2 Confucianism

During the social unrest of China’s Warring States period (the era of 475-221 B.C. in ancient Chinese history), moral guidance provided by Confucian teaching began to take root as a means to achieve social harmony, with its emphasis on leading a good ethical life. The pursuit of the five basic virtues- *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *chih* and *hsin* were seen as necessary in living a moral life. Virtues were seen as an inborn capability and a goal to be fulfilled through cultivation (Lee, 1999a). Confucius indicated that his philosophical ideas were held together by the concept of *ren*. The other four virtues support and complete *ren*. As such, the five virtues have often been depicted

diagrammatically as parts of a tree. *Ren* being the root, *yi* the trunk, *li* the branches, *chih* the flower and *hsin* the fruit.

Ren (仁) is commonly translated as benevolence, known either as an ethical ideal or an affective concern for all living things. As an ideal, *ren* is seen as the highest virtue an individual can attain and the mark of a truly human person. *Ren* also refers to the affectionate concern and value of others despite ranking and class (Cua, 2000). *Ren* is seen to promote righteous and honest conduct. Social morals and responsibilities were the ultimate focus and goal of education for Confucius.

The beginning and cultivation of *ren* is first accomplished through the development of *hsiao*-filial piety, which is learnt within the family. Although the concept of filial piety has varied widely, depending on local cultures, interpretations, time and place, Confucius suggested that filial piety involves the child serving their parents unconditionally, revering them and willingly sacrificing oneself for one's parents' well-being (Chin and Loh, 2008). Through the development of filial piety, the individual learns how to act and behave accordingly within the household, such as the appreciation of hierarchy, the importance of respect and the value of education. Learnt behaviours within the home were expected to extend into the social domain. An orderly personal and family life was seen to contribute towards an orderly state. "Personal achievement is directly related to the harmony of family and nation, extending ultimately to world peace" (Lee, 1999a, p.416). Hence within Confucian thinking, the family is seen as the basic unit of all humanity and the foundation for sustaining the community and the state (Tien and Olsen, 2003).

One of the primary ways to exhibit *ren* is by conforming to the rules of propriety –*li* (禮). The ultimate goal of *li* is to maintain social and moral order (McGreal, 1995). *Li* represents social norms and concerns the correct conduct and manner (identity, duty, and responsibility) for one's social position within societal relationships. Confucius suggested that peace and harmony would result if every person were to uphold their responsibilities for their societal status. "*Li* is a broader concept than etiquette. It encompasses not only proper behaviour in the social sense but also ritual propriety, social order, effective modes of action, modes of education, and self cultivation" (Park and Chesla, 2007, p.301).

Since there is not a single *li* for all relations and occasions, there must be a higher principle governing the adoption of *li*. This higher principle is called *yi* (義), which means a sense of rightness, proper character and the moral disposition to do good. *Yi* may be broken down into *zhong* (loyalty and cultivated feeling toward one's superiors or one's own country) and *shù* (reciprocity and consideration for others; McGreal, 1995). One example would be showing respect to parents as it is morally right to do so. *Yi* is also the right way to act in accordance to *ren* (Park and Chesla, 2007).

Hsin (信) can be described as honesty and trustworthiness. *Hsin* is interpreted as the state of mind that is without deception or lies (Zhang, 2002). "In one's social life, if one is to have a meaningful relationship with others, one should be trustworthy, without cheating or lying. If a person treats others with shallow friendship or pretentious etiquette, the person is not trustworthy nor *li*" (Park and Chesla, 2007, p.303).

The virtue of *chih* (智) was added to Confucianism by Mencius (Confucius' student) and can be referred to as wisdom or the ability to recognise and differentiate between good and not-good, or being on the side of the right (Zhang, 2002). Such wisdom is seen to develop in accordance to the other four virtues Confucius spoke of, by living through life itself.

The five virtues of *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *chih* and *hsin* have become the criteria in evaluating human behaviour; as such any violation would be seen as the most shameful within Confucian culture (Lee, 1999b). *Ren*, *yi*, *li*, *chih* and *hsin* are also seen to contribute towards the spiritual development of the self or self-cultivation (Wang and Ollendick, 2001). In Confucian thinking the self is at the centre of relationships, especially with significant others (Morris, 1994). Self-cultivation is achieved and defined through appropriate interactions and relationships within the family and society. The upholding and harmony of such relationships would then enable social and political order. Confucianism defined five basic relationships, each of which had differing virtues. These were (1) righteousness between ruler and subject (or government and citizen), (2) love between parent and child, (3) distinction between husband and wife, (4) order between older sibling and younger sibling and (5) trust between friend and friend. As three of the five relationships are familial, this again highlights the importance of the family within Confucian thought. Relationships within the family are seen to extend into society, for individuals who do not do well within family relationships cannot do well in society (Park and Chesla, 2007, p.305).

In the fieldwork, the five virtues were not directly investigated and parents did not speak specifically of *ren*, *yi*, *li*, *chih* and *hsin*, however by having an understanding of the virtues, we appreciate the traditions that parents did speak of, such as filial piety and the importance of morality and being a "good person". Parents also highlighted patriarchy as an important Chinese tradition to be upheld. As we will see below, patriarchal beliefs were originally derived from (misinterpretations of) Confucianism.

6.3 Respect and Authority: Family Practices

Within Confucianism, one's duty toward others is fair and reciprocal (mutual respect between two parties). Obedience in relationships was contingent upon the senior members observing their duty to be benevolent and caring (Zhang, 2002). For instance, the husband and wife relationship was based on a principle of mutuality, where there should be a division of labour, not male dominance. Children were not expected to submit entirely to their parents, and elders were to treat the younger generation with affection (being strict but not cruel). Older siblings are expected to be a role model for their younger siblings and would usually act as the surrogate of parents in their absence. In turn, younger ones are to respect their older siblings (Park and Chesla, 2007). Such thinking can be seen within Edmund's (mid-fifties, Chinese father) comments about the role of his youngest daughter:

"In the traditional Chinese set up, Alexandra is the youngest, so she is protected by her older siblings and her parents, and she is supposed to enjoy that affection. In turn she offers obedience and respect and we teach that to her and her sisters. She is the youngest so she needs to be protected and at the same time she has to do as her sisters ask".

However, the original concept of mutual equality gradually weakened over time and the five relationships have become a rigid justification of social hierarchy, which favoured the stronger party over the weaker, who had to accept seniority (Lee, 1999b). The re-writing of Confucian principles then led to the emphasis upon filial piety, which is described as respect and deference to those in authority. Individuals who were disrespectful and disobedient to seniors were seen as morally corrupt. Such behaviours were not only deemed as unacceptable, but were shameful for the individual's family. As Lee (1996b) commented:

“Disloyalty to the king, lack of filial piety toward parents, disobedience to husband and disrespect to the elderly came to be regarded as the worst immoral behaviour and the most shameful acts in social life” (p.186).

Contemporary parents suggested that the importance and adherence of Chinese values, such as filial piety, often stood in sharp contrast to the norms of wider society. Consequently parents often had to remind children about “right way to act” or “the right way to be” within Chinese culture.

“The English ways and culture are completely different from ours. Western parents are more outspoken, softer with their children, they let their children do whatever they want to do, you know more free. They give them more free time and they are free to do whatever, that's how I see it. I think with my children, I don't allow too much of that. I am Chinese and I want my children to be good and proper, to behave and to be more respectful. Over dinner my kids will talk about their friends, what they have done or the TV, and I will say to them, ‘Chinese people don't do that! Do you know what Chinese people are supposed to do? Or this is the way Chinese people are meant to act’. So the kids get that from me. I am telling them, but I don't know if it sticks in their mind?” (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Compliance with and respect for authority, especially of elders and male authority figures, has also become an integral part of the early socialisation process for Chinese children (Wang and Phinney, 1998). This is due to the widespread belief that Confucianism emphasises patriarchal power, which was supported by Mencius's teachings of the ‘Three Subordinations’. Within the ‘Three Subordinations’, it was taught that a woman was to be subordinate to her father in youth, her husband in maturity, and her son in old age, which is also known as the ‘Three Bonds’ or ‘Three Obediences’. Although the three bonds were meant to be understood within the context of the five relationships Confucius spoke of, during the Han period (206-220 B.C), scholars transformed the three bonds as a method of social control to assert state power over society, which further solidified the concept of patriarchy.

“The centrality of the father-son relationship in providing the basic justification for the three bonds has the advantage of giving added persuasive power to the political authority of the ruler and the husband. In a hierarchal and patriarchal society it must seem convincing that the ruler or husband, should be the interpreter, the executor, and the judge of the moral code, for he assumes full responsibility for the stability and harmony of society . . . If the inferior challenges the superior, or the wife dominates the husband, which is

analogous to the son defying the father, the moral fabric of society will be damaged” (Chan, 2007, p.122-123).

The significance of the male within the Chinese belief system has led to the father being the principle disciplinarian of the child. Consequently, Chinese fathers are seen as stricter than mothers in terms of parental control (Shek, 2008). Similarly, parents recalled their fathers as being the authority figure and punisher of violations. As a result, fathers in the past were feared and revered during the parent’s childhoods. As Heather (mid-forties) commented, “my dad was really strict, you didn’t back-chat”. Hing (early-sixties, Chinese father) further remarked, “back then, when you saw your dad’s face, you’d be scared. They wouldn’t give you the opportunity to discuss your opinions, they just told you what to do”. In comparison to the past, contemporary fathers suggested that they were less strict and more affectionate towards their own children now. Such issues will be explored within the parent-child intimacy chapter (chapter 8).

Parents in the sample also recalled that their mothers were strict, but they were perceived as being gentler, kinder and more conversational. As Ting (early-forties, Chinese father) mentioned, “if I needed advice and help, I would turn to my mum, as my father was a distant figure of authority”. Such views coincide with Chinese cultural outlooks, where mothers are often perceived as primarily responsible for their children’s needs, leading to more responsive and concerning attributes than fathers (Wu et al., 2002). Chinese women are also more encouraged to express their emotions in comparison to men, seen in the popular Chinese saying, “a man should drop blood but not tears” (Shek, 2008). Parental memories of the paternal role being disciplinarian and the maternal role as nurturing, coincides with the notion of ‘strict father, warm mother’, which has been found in previous Chinese family studies.

Interestingly gender still played a significant role for contemporary Chinese households, as parents placed importance upon patriarchy in their own family lives.

“My understanding of authority in the family is very Chinese and traditional. Very paternalistic basically, so I expect to be obeyed essentially. I expect to influence and have an influence in the decisions my children make. This is counter to wider [Western] culture. This is the clearest example of how I think my Chinese heritage still plays an important role in the way I think. It does affect the way I understand how relationships work” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

Chinese mothers in the research also encouraged, and expected, their husbands to “take the lead” in the family. As Ho (1986) suggested, as men are seen as the superior within Chinese culture, fathers are held responsible for the family’s welfare and decision-making within the household. This gender divide occurred in most families, whether they had recently migrated or had lived in Britain for a long period of time, even amongst those who considered themselves as Westernised. However mothers in the sample did suggest that their marriages were more egalitarian in comparison to the past, where wives were not completely subordinate to their husbands. Instead mothers felt they “had a say” in the household, especially with regards to their children. As Mia (early-fifties, Chinese mother) commented:

“Whenever I disallow our son to go here or there, my husband will ask me why and I will have to explain to him like I do to my son! Sometimes he will agree with my viewpoint and he will tell our son to listen to me. But if my husband disagrees, I will have to tell him off!”

6.4 Experience and Attitudes towards Corporal Punishment

Patriarchy and filial piety has been found to contribute towards the use of corporal punishment towards children within Asian families (Chang et al., 2004). Despite Confucius’s original suggestion that the relations between parents and children should be reciprocal, more often than not, the concept of filial piety is used to justify absolute parental authority over children (Wang and Ollendick, 2001). Many parents remembered the use of physical punishment as a form of disciplining in their childhoods.

“Back then, our parents would not have treated us as friends, because of their attitudes and thinking. It was strict how they brought us up and taught us, you couldn’t laugh if they shouted at you or if they told you off. You had to listen attentively or you would be hit” (Mia, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

As many of the parents moved to the UK as children, the migration process may have had an effect on their parent’s disciplining decisions. Research has shown that migrant parents tend to believe that physical disciplining methods are an effective way of protecting their children from undesirable influences in the new country (United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society, 1999). In support, Tang (1998) found that corporal punishment is generally permitted and considered necessary by less ‘acculturated’ Chinese parents as a way of disciplining children. Despite the criticisms of acculturation theories (seen within chapter 1), contemporary parents in this sample did feel that their parents were less accepting of British mainstream culture and its customs, including the negative views of corporal punishment.

“In the past, traditional practices were often in conflict to Western approaches, like using a *tang twi* [a feather duster used to discipline children with] and things like that. But that was how my parents and their generation were. They were very old fashioned and they stuck to their ways” (Heather, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

As research suggests that parents who strongly adhere to Chinese traditions are likely to rely more upon physical disciplinary methods, one would expect that parents who classified themselves as Westernised to be against this form of disciplining. However this was not the case. Parents such as Edmund and Nicole who described themselves as incorporating Western views and norms still emphasised the continuation of Chinese traditions, such as corporal punishment. One explanation may be the long held Chinese belief that corporal punishment is an effective method to train-up the discipline and integrity of the child’s character, rather than as a punishment and a deterrent as in Western culture (Lau, Liu and Wong, 1999).

“In the past, the way our parents raised us was like everyone else those days. I mean, everyone smacked their kids and they were strict. It was hard to take in

and live through at the time, but I think if we follow some of their ways then children nowadays will be more obedient and better behaved. So they will be more responsible when they work and do things. Be a good person in their day-to-day lives” (Nicole, early-forties, Chinese mother).

Some parents who used physical methods of disciplining when their child was younger, no longer used such strategies, due to the British legality issues concerning corporal punishment, in terms of what can be classed as ‘reasonable chastisement’. There was also a reluctance to use physical disciplining methods, due to unfavourably societal attitudes. Although UK law does not prohibit corporal punishment within the family, recent debates regarding children’s human rights are arguably influencing contemporary parenting practices.

“The way that parents treated their children in those days [past generation], was to beat them. But now you can’t do that any more, as children will just sue you in England!” (Sandra, late-forties, Chinese mother).

Parents also suggested that this style of punishment might scar their child now that they were older. With age, parents such as Abigail saw their child as more of their own person and respected their feelings more. As a result, parents did not want to violate their child’s rights or their self-worth by using physical measures with their children.

“[Interviewer: *Why don’t you use corporal punishment anymore?*] Firstly it’s looked down upon more these days. Secondly she is older now and has her own thinking and should know what she has done wrong. So I try to explain to her instead of smacking her. As I say, I’m getting to my forties now and I still remember my father and mother hitting me. It affects you for the rest of your life. So, if I hit my daughter now when she’s in her teens she’ll remember it when she’s in her forties too. It’s not a nice memory to have. I’ve been through it so I don’t want the next generation to be the same” (Abigail, late thirties, Chinese mother).

Some parents like Louise, were against corporal punishment all together, based on their own negative childhood memories and viewed it as an uncivilised and barbaric act in the twenty-first century. Corporal punishment towards the child at secondary school age was also seen as preventing and interfering with parent-child relationships, especially feelings of closeness. As Heather explains:

“I don’t want to smack her [daughter] and for her to think that I am an evil mum. Even now when she does something wrong I will only shout at her. . . If I don’t tell her and explain to her, she will automatically have secrets and she won’t tell you things. They think, I won’t tell my mum she can’t help, she will only shout and hit me. I don’t want them to feel like that and think like that” (Heather, early-forties, Chinese mother).

In summary, parenting practices such as filial piety, patriarchy and corporal punishment were evident in the parenting of today and of the past. The continuation of filial piety, patriarchy, defined gender roles and corporal punishment has been influenced by a long history of Confucian folklore and (mis)interpretations. Despite

the persistence of such Chinese values, contemporary families suggested some differences from their own upbringing. Firstly, spousal relationships and family life were described as being more egalitarian than in previous times. Compared to the past, mothers and fathers were seen as more equal in their family standings and responsibilities. Secondly, fathers suggested that they were more affectionate towards their children compared to their own fathers. Friendlier paternal care by contemporary fathers was due to the negative experiences of having strict fathers themselves. Lastly, corporal punishment was not used or had fallen out of favour as a disciplinary method. Reasons for parenting changes included external factors (societal opinions and attitudes) as well as personal experiences, such as parent's childhood. Parental changes subsequently led to a more open approach towards children, which was also different to the past. This will be discussed in the next section.

6.5 Lessons Learned: Changes in Contemporary Parenting Approaches

Parents in the past were described as highly authoritarian, seen within the practices of filial piety, absolute parental authority and high psychological control. Such characteristics fit the criteria of authoritarian parenting within Diana Baumrind's widely used parenting typology. Baumrind (1971) classified authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting styles according to levels of parental demandingness and responsiveness. Demandingness includes elements of parental control, supervision and demands for children to behave maturely. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents display affective warmth, acceptance, and involvement towards their children (Neumeister and Finch, 2006). Maccoby and Martin (1983) advanced the typology by dividing the permissive approach to create a fourth style of parenting, labelled as neglectful. Authoritative parenting combines high levels of democracy, warmth, and flexibility with demandingness from children. In contrast, authoritarian parenting lacks warmth and is high in parental control. Permissive parenting is seen as high in warmth but lacking in control and discipline. Lastly, low levels of demandingness and responsiveness characterise neglectful parenting (Maccoby and Martin, 1983).

Contemporary parental accounts of childhoods and upbringing support the existing literature where Chinese parents are seen as authoritarian. Parents suggested that their controlling and restrictive upbringing had a negative impact upon their feelings of agency; closeness with parents and the lack of integration with peers in general. As a result, parents in this research suggested that such experiences had led them to become less authoritarian with their own children now.

“Guidance was always from one way, always let your parents decide, and I was very obedient. Sometimes there could be too much authority on family issues, which could cause conflict. I don't want to go into that danger of ruining a choice for the family, so I make sure my son has his own say as well. We are providing a lot of openness for him to learn. I always demand from him to give reasons for his own decisions, try to make my son independent as he grows older and more mature” (Ting, early forties, Chinese father).

“It's important that my daughter is allowed freedoms and to go out, otherwise she will feel like an outsider with her friends. She's not going to be happy because her friends won't get her involved next time, thinking she never joins

our gang, every time we ask her she's the odd one out, so forget her. She'll feel that. The more and more she's going to be the outsider, the fewer friends she is going to have. It's going to be difficult for her to have a relationship with her friends. So far none of her friends have done it, they are still her friends so every so often she can join in, or go out with them sometime or for somebody's birthday party. So that's fine, I want her to be happy that way. Same again I am going back to when I was a kid, and I've been there. In the end they give up [and say], 'oh forget asking her she can never come!' 'Oh weekends have come, she's helping her parents in the shop, don't bother'. So in the end nobody bothered asking me! You think oh god! They were my friends but I couldn't get close to them. They weren't my close friends. I had a handful of friends, I had one or two that I could have called best friends but everybody had a best friend, there were always two of them, and I was always the odd one out, I was in a gang of three. Those two were best friends and they were my friends but them two without me they were best friends. I feel for my daughter, I am thinking, is she going to be like that? I don't want her to be like that, I want her to have a best friend! I keep asking her who's your best friends and she says they are all my best friends and I'm thinking 'oh'. So I think it's that, that's why I allow her more freedoms, I want her to be happy and not be an outcast in a way, like I was as a kid, because I could never join in" (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Parents suggested that it was not desirable to parent in the same way that their parents had, not only because it was too strict, but also because of the changes in society and societal outlooks. The teachings of the past could no longer be valid for contemporary living or children of the modern age.

"I'm doing my own teaching. I'm not applying what I have learnt from my father. The way he taught us was quite different to the way I teach my son because of the generation gap, the culture has changed and the way my son behaves. We allow him to get involved from a young age, to make decisions, and he has a lot of privileges and he's gaining our trust so we haven't seen any potential problems" (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

Strict and hierarchal parent-child relationships within the family structure were the cause of distance between family members in the past, and parents wanted to overcome this with their own children. Many parents also grew up believing that there was little interest shown in their day-to-day lives by their parents. For example, Ava, and Heather recounted that their parents were too busy setting up a new life and establishing a family business in the UK to be able to offer them sufficient time and support.

"I suppose that's the difference between my parents and me, they didn't have the time to think. They couldn't think for you too much because they were busy working all the time" (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Parent-child closeness in the past was also affected by the limits of the topics of conversation in the family, either because certain topics were "out of bounds" (such as going out, drinking and having more freedoms) or because parents could not

understand children on a cultural level, as parents were seen as naïve and alienated from Western society.

“As children we never brought up issues that challenged our parent’s views of things. At the same time, there were things that we simply didn’t bring up; because we didn’t think they would understand” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

One topic of conversation that was not raised by parents when growing up was the resentment and frustration of the lack of cultural diversity displayed by their own parents. In line with previous literature, the first generation Chinese held onto their own cultures whilst discouraging Western traits. Western traits and behaviours may have been discouraged as migrant parents may have regarded such behaviours as signs of disobedience and disloyalty to their own traditions (Lee and Chen, 2000). The majority of parents described anti-Western feelings from their parents whilst growing up.

“My parents didn’t want me to be Westernised. It’s typical Chinese you see, they don’t like you to play with the English people too much, because you might get [badly] influenced cause they’re naughty” (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

There was one exception within the sample, where Edmund commented that his parents were willing and accepting of his Westernisation when growing up. This may have been influenced by the fact that they were the only Chinese family in the area and there were very limited opportunities to mix and interact with other Chinese people at the time.

“Growing up, there weren’t many Chinese families about or even a Chinese community there, so my parents accepted that we would mingle in with the English people” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

Despite the literature’s suggestion that the high levels of cultural difference between parents and children may lead to more elevated and intense levels of parent-adolescent conflict (Tardif and Geva, 2006), parents suggested that arguments and disagreements were rare in their childhood due to Confucian teachings. Knowing one’s place and the appropriate behaviour in the presence of others, accords to the virtue of *ren* (仁).

“Our Chinese heritage forbids us, inhabits us, from behaving in a way that could be confrontational in relationships, so we tend to avoid confrontation” (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

Non-compliance and deference to parents was seen as a serious violation of filial piety (Chen et al., 2002). Parents themselves admitted to giving in to parents when growing up, as parents had the overriding authority.

“In my childhood I wouldn’t argue back to my parents, because of their generation, if you say something back they would still think you were wrong. So despite everything, even though I may have been wronged or not happy, I

would not say anything back, even though I thought I was right, I wouldn't say that to my parents" (Abigail, late-thirties, Chinese mother).

In contrast to the past, parents in this sample encouraged their children to be more communicative, to negotiate and to assert their choices as part of their parenting strategies. As Louise (late-forties), commented, "they should make their own decisions instead of being told all the time. I think it's dangerous if you grow up being told what to do". Consequently, parents were aware or were already experiencing conflicts with their children as a result of encouraging children's expressions and thoughts.

"I do try to encourage my daughter to show her feelings and talk more. I think it is important to express yourself. So nowadays she's more likely to let me know what she wants, what she prefers, and what she doesn't. Sometimes it can lead to disagreements but most of the time we try to work it out" (Annabel, early fifties, Chinese mother).

Despite parental suggestions of the importance of patriarchy and filial piety, they were nevertheless accepting of potential and actual arguments with their children.

"When you raise and encourage your children to question things, you expect some things to become part of their personality, like their criticalness, their attitudes, their questions and their outlook on life" (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

The recognition of conflicts and disagreements by contemporary parents is in sharp contrast to their own childhoods, where Chinese ideology suggests that harmony must be maintained between oneself and others (Pang, Roberts and Sutton, 1998).

"Parents back then were stricter, children had to listen to their parents, they were always right. Now you learn more you know it's not the case that parents are always right, society has changed and times have moved on, maybe they [children] have learnt more and know more, so you being wrong as a parent is not unlikely. [Interviewer: *So do you find it easier to admit that you are wrong then?*] Yes, when I know my daughter's opinions are right I have to accept that" (Chloe, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

6.5.1 Parent's Encouragement of Children's Independence

Within this sample, many parents seemed keen for their children to become more independent and self-reliant. Such characteristics are again at odds with the generalization of Chinese parenting being simply authoritarian, which restricts children's independence. Some parents actively encouraged their children to travel to places on their own and to participate in extra curricular activities. Parents hoped that such activities would boost their child's self-esteem and to expand their social skills and circle.

"Because our son is an only child, we [parents] encouraged a more active way of life for him in terms of socialising. At primary school, for example, we enrolled him on a few activities organised by the school, so he learnt how to

work as an individual and as part of a team. I think that as long as you are socialising, you can build up your characteristics as a young person. I'm sure Wayne has that. I deliberately wanted him to mix with other children for those reasons" (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

Children were also asked to help out with housework. Using household chores to train children to be more responsible for themselves, for their family and to become more independent coincides with both individualist (Western) and collectivist (Chinese) values (Bowes et al., 2004).

"The kids were asked to help out around the house since they were eight or nine. After all, they are all a part of this family and Ben has a role to play. He has to know this sort of thing and it'll help him to become more independent" (Louise, late-forties, Chinese mother).

As Ho and Chiu (1994) pointed out, both collectivist and individualist orientations coexist in Chinese culture, despite them being described as wholly collectivistic. However within the existing research, labels such as authoritative versus authoritarian parenting and differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures are predominantly used in explaining the distinguishing features of Chinese parenting practices (as argued in chapter 2). The current literature also omits the viewpoints of Chinese parents when considering parenting approaches. Certainly in this study, parents suggested that they were not wholly authoritarian or collectivist in their parenting methods, as they thought it would be detrimental to the child's mind-set, abilities and individuality.

"We're not as strict as they were back then [previous generation]. You can't be too strict in this day and age or the children will snap [mentally]. It's like a piece of wood, you have to bend children bit by bit, and if you are too hard they will break. In the past, you had to work hard, study hard or whatever it was. But us, as parents now, we only hope that our kids will try their best at school. It's not like the pressures we had as children. What is the point, it won't be any good for them to have that sort of pressure" (Hing, early-sixties, Chinese father).

Seeing the child as more mature also affected parental decisions and methods.

"She [daughter] has changed since high school and her thinking has improved. She irons her own school uniform on the weekends and her brother's too. She doesn't always ask for daddy's help and she goes to the library to do her own homework. So in my eyes she is taking responsibility for herself and becoming more independent" (Hing, early-sixties, Chinese father).

One mother mentioned how the interviewing experience had led her to think of her daughter as being more capable and mature than previously appreciated.

"Compared to our last interview I will speak to my daughter more about household things, what's going on and saving money. I give her a £1 a week and she will ask me what she can buy and tells me what she wants to buy like a comic magazine" (Abigail, late-thirties, Chinese mother).

When parents did appear to be strict and controlling towards their children, this was not entirely due to cultural reasons. Taking the child's socialising opportunities as an example, for recently migrated parents, the lack of neighbourhood integration and local knowledge of the location of places and bus routes, were factors when denying children social time outside of the house. Parents who lacked English language skills tended to communicate or know less about their child's peer groups and school life, as such, were less willing to allow children any socialising time (if any) as they did not know the character of their child's friends or their backgrounds.

“No I won't let him [son] out much. When he gets invited to friend's activities I won't let him go because I have told him that I worry. I know he thinks he is grown up, but I still see him as young. It may be because I can't communicate with others, but I am very protective. Each year that passes I say another time another time before I will let him out. [Interviewer: *Does he try to persuade you otherwise?*] Yeah he'll beg and say 'it's nearby' or 'I'll come back early', but I say 'it might be near but your mum hasn't got a car, and there's no one to give you a lift back. If you catch a bus I will worry. Maybe when you are older. Plus you don't know these people that well yet, you've only been in high school short while. Maybe in a few years'” (Mia, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

Arguably then, the use of authoritarian and authoritative parenting and the cultural descriptions of collectivist and individualistic values do not provide a full account of contemporary Chinese parenting approaches. Especially when other factors such as parents own childhood experiences, their place of origin, immigrant status and child's maturity levels should be taken into consideration. By pigeonholing parents to parenting typologies or cultural explanations, it runs the risk of implying non-change and static notions of family life. In contrast to this viewpoint, parents in this sample suggested that their parenting would, or has already, changed as their child grows up and enters their teens.

“If my daughter changes I will have to change with her. If she asks for more freedom, I will have to give her a little bit more freedom. I tend not to worry about it too much, when it comes, it comes” (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

6.6 Contemporary Parents Acceptance of Westernisation

Unlike previous research with earlier generations, the majority of parents in this sample accepted that they and their children would follow certain Western customs and accepted such culture differences. As Ava (mid-forties, Chinese mother) commented:

“I've learnt to accept the fact that the children will become Westernised, or I would get angry with the kids. So I've got to the point where I accept it now. They can't help the fact that they're in England, that they were brought up here, with lots of English friends, so of course they will mingle in with English culture”.

Westernisation was not an issue as it had been for parents when they were young. Being culturally open and accepting of mainstream values was seen as being fair to

the child and the family, as well as helping their child's social integration. Inevitably this affected contemporary parenting decisions and outlooks.

“Wherever you live you have to follow that society's way of life and how it is, how the families act, so you follow that. Like in England here, it is more free and children speak more openly and decide more on their own lives so you have to relax more and allow that” (Chloe, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

Even though in current day there are more opportunities and places to meet with other Chinese individuals, such as Chinese organisations and community centres, contemporary parents still viewed their child's Westernisation as normal and even inevitable.

“It's a normal phenomenon for them to become Westernised. In a way I don't feel sad, but in a way I feel it's a fact. If I say I am moving here but I don't interact with the local life, why should I move here? It's something I expect” (Annabel, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

“I already expect my own daughter to become Westernised because she was born here, raised here and exposed to this country's culture and society. If she does become Westernised it doesn't matter” (Abigail, late-thirties, Chinese mother).

Those parents who were originally from Hong Kong felt that they had an added advantage of accepting and understanding British customs and values, as Hong Kong used to be a British colony (up until the year 2000). Hong Kong is seen as modernised and Westernised despite the preservation of traditional Chinese values.

“Hong Kong was a British colony for so long and this influences you. . . The way our parents taught us was with completely Chinese traditions, but with our generation we had English to learn at school and Western learning so our mind was more open. We were already used to a Westernised type of lifestyle, I don't know about other people, but with me I found it easy to accept a Western approach of living” (Hing, early-sixties, Chinese father).

As Dragga (1999) commented, during an era of mass cultural and economic transformations, people become part of a global village and are more interrelated with one another. “It is thus impossible to promise that a specific individual within a particular situation will be chiefly motivated by a specific ethical perspective” (Dragga, 1999, p.367). The contemporary parents' exposure and acceptance of diverse cultural norms was suggested to bridge any potential social gaps with their children.

“I was born and raised here in the UK so I share the kid's perspective more and because of that we [father and child] are possibly closer” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

Although many families were Westernised to varying extents, contemporary parents still retained elements of Chinese traditions in their family patterns and functioning. For example, parents agreed that their parenting should still incorporate Chinese cultures regardless of their immigrant status and length of residency in the UK.

Examples included speaking Chinese, eating Chinese food, the use of chopsticks, Chinese etiquette and being involved with Chinese organisations such as Chinese church, youth groups or centres (either parents or children).

“Our son has always been brought up with a Chinese background and we go back to Hong Kong quite regularly, so we are not discontinuing with our traditions, we are carrying on. He is also socialising with a lot of Chinese friends as we go to a Chinese church. Plus he goes to Chinese school. He has a lot of English friends as well, so you can say he has the best of both worlds. You should not abandon something you already have [Chinese culture] unless it’s really causing a problem” (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

“I think my parenting is half and half [Western and Chinese approaches]. Whatever happens in your child’s life, you decide which side you need to use. Like in everyday life, we eat with chopsticks and Chinese bowls. At the same time, you can’t use some of the Chinese traditions from the generation before, because no one knows about those practices and no one may listen to this. I guess you learn to adapt to where you live” (Chloe, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

Chinese customs and festivals were also regarded highly upon by parents and with happy memories. Parents attempted to celebrate and preserve as much Chinese traditions as possible for their children. However they were realistic about the extent to which this was not always achievable due to the lack of resources, heavy work schedules and limited family time. Following Western festivals was easier for parents and preferred by their children.

“I have lovely memories of celebrating Chinese festivals when I was a child. You would see your family and visit people you hadn’t seen for a long time, so it was nice to catch up and spend time with one another. But my children, they don’t see it as being important. When it’s Chinese New Year, they can’t be bothered, it’s that attitude now. The younger generation are like ‘so what?’ They are more bothered about their birthday and Christmas presents” (Hing, early-sixties, Chinese father)

Losing parts of Chinese heritage and culture was seen as a shame, though inevitable due to the circumstances of living in Britain and the impact of British culture.

“Chinese culture is nice to learn as well. It’s nice if you can keep both together, but if one has to take over the other, I think it should be the British culture that has to take over as you are living in Britain so it gets Chinese culture diluted more and more. [Interviewer: *Why?*] Because we are living in Britain, living here, you have to be integrated into the society and live and work like the others” (Louise, late-forties, Chinese mother).

Parents who were more Westernised tended to have more knowledge of the host culture and felt more capable of supporting and facilitating their child’s mixed cultural lives, which is in sympathy with Lee and Chen’s (2000) findings. Additionally, more Westernised parents who had grown up in Britain or experienced the majority of their education in the UK, felt they had more of an understanding and

an awareness of what their child must be going through as a British-Chinese individual. Such parents were happy to support their children in whichever culture they chose or felt happiest in.

“I’m thinking it is best for the children to have the best of both worlds [culturally]. Sometimes I watch documentaries on TV and read about Chinese children growing up in Britain, and they feel really different as they get older. A lot of the kids feel that they don’t fit in either; they feel that they don’t fit in the Chinese community because they don’t speak the language so they feel left out. Then when they are with English people they feel left out there too because they think I’m not British, well I’m British but not English. I just don’t want the kids to feel a bit funny, that little bit of divide. They shouldn’t feel any different really; they should feel proud to be Chinese, but British Chinese. I think if they keep that going, having that in them, sort of say ‘I don’t feel any different-so what if I’m Chinese? I still can mingle with English people, I can be as English as I want, and I can be as Chinese as I want’, then they are happy about it. I just want them to have that kind of upbringing, to mingle in, but be both and be happy in being both. Be happy with their Chinese friends, be happy if they’ve got their English friends and keep both cultures going” (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Parental comments accord with the arguments, which reject the notion of assimilation, where immigrants lose their cultural distinctiveness and blend into the majority culture (Lim and Wieling, 2004).

“I would always class myself as British Chinese. [Interviewer: *Why?*] Why do I see myself as British? Well this is my country and my culture in many respects. Obviously I am not identical to the majority of the population. I have aspects, cultural aspects that are not shared by the wider majority. But then there is my emotional commitment to this country. I share this culture, I share this history and its life history and so in that respect I feel very much British. [Interviewer: *What parts of British culture do you feel that you share?*] Oh, the general ones, the history, the language, the artistic culture, the intellectual perspectives, the way my moral perspectives are shaped, these are undoubtedly very much part of this country’s culture. [Interviewer: *What about Chinese culture?*] This is very much to do with personal aspects of life, my understanding of interpersonal relationships and how these should work. This is where the Chinese parts of my upbringing are most evident, such as my understanding of the family and my instinctive reflexives of the family. My relationships are formed much more strongly by the Chinese culture and I do feel that I do have a heritage in Chinese culture in these sorts of things” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

As Weinberg (2003) argued, whilst groups of individuals come from different cultures, they also create their own culture. They become products of new diaspora as a result of migration (Hall, 1992), where their past cultures, traditions, languages and histories are still held important and will continue to shape individuals in new settlements. As a result, migrants and their descendants come to terms with the new cultures they inhabit, not simply assimilating to them and losing their original identities completely (Hall, 1992). Parents in this sample can be seen as “bicultural”

individuals who are oriented to both host and native cultures (Tsai, Ying and Lee, 2000).

6.7 Language Use in the Home

Another example of the acceptance of British culture within the home was the use of English language as the main communication method. This finding is different to previous research, which highlighted the importance of Chinese language use to retain Chinese culture (as parents themselves had experienced). As Heather (mid-forties, Chinese mother) commented, “my parents would make us speak Cantonese. They didn’t want us to lose it because they thought you would lose your culture or forget how important it is”.

Parent’s language decisions were influenced by the fact that they were more understanding of their child’s difficulties of speaking predominately Chinese when surrounded by Western society and schooling.

“We won’t have a problem if our son decides to use English as his main language of choice. In fact I am quite open. I’m sure if he wants to switch [to English] he can do. When we are at social functions at the mainstream school, we respect that our son wants to speak English. We have to consider other people near us as well. We won’t segregate ourselves as a single group of Chinese people there. We will defiantly integrate with the school and use the appropriate language. So as a family, we will use English in certain contexts” (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

In sympathy with other research studies, contemporary parents in the sample suggested that it was difficult to maintain their child’s abilities and interests in two languages. The onset of formal schooling was seen as the significant period when the child switched from Chinese language use to English. In support, Li (2006) suggested that the start of school for children often increases the child’s exposure and expectancy to use the society’s main language.

“When Alexandra started going to school, she just started speaking English all the time. Well they all did [children in the family]. The girls would all speak English together, then they spoke to us in English and we spoke English back. In the end, we just found it easier to speak English for ease and convenience. We could have persisted in speaking in Chinese but we didn’t” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

As suggested earlier, most of the contemporary parents wished for an open and communicative relationship with their children, and parents were often too busy to teach their children Chinese or to take them to Chinese schools. As Louise (late-forties) commented, “I don’t have much time, so I don’t want to spend time arguing about it, to get the children to answer back in Chinese”. Standards within Chinese schools were also criticised as being poor by both parents and children. Unfortunately national statistics regarding British Chinese children’s attendance of Chinese language schools do not exist in the UK (past nor present). If such information was available, it could provide further insights into the decline of Chinese language use within and outside of the British Chinese home. Not speaking Chinese was only seen

as an issue for relatives back home or when relatives visited, rather than for the parents themselves.

“I’m talking English to the kids because they have forgotten their Chinese. So when grandma comes it’s ‘how do you say this, I’ve forgotten how to say this to grandma’, I feel ashamed, I should have been more strict with them. When we go to Hong Kong, they’re like, ‘why can’t your kids speak Chinese?’ Although I can’t read and write Chinese, my husband can, [and] I can speak it. I say to the kids you don’t have to read and write it, but to speak it is good. When you go for a job, your boss might need somebody to speak another language, so why not keep it up? But it’s too late now because they are speaking less and less of it. But then I look at it and think what the hell! You can’t have everything. I’m not going to get too stressed over things like that. I just let them be” (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Regardless of preferred language use in the home, all parents did recognise the benefits of retaining Chinese language in terms of understanding Chinese culture, but the main reason for children to retain their mother tongue was related to future career prospects, especially with China’s growing global position.

“If the kids speak Chinese they have the chance to go back to Hong Kong or China and get a job. People here have to learn German, French or whatever, so they have an additional language for a job. But for them [the children], they are born with that language and it’s a shame for them to lose Chinese because it will benefit them in a job someday. Whatever they do, they’ve got an advantage if they are bilingual. Especially now, as there are more companies in China and more work opportunities” (Annabel, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

In line with the life course perspective (chapter 4), which attempts to understand the dynamics of life trajectories across the whole of the lifespan (as opposed to viewing them as separated incidences), contemporary Chinese parenthood appears to be affected by the parents own childhood experiences as well as future considerations for their children.

A minority of parents still sent their children to Chinese school. For those children who were forced to attend Chinese language lessons, there were mixed opinions as to how much pressure parents should apply to children. Some parents felt that it was a great opportunity for their children to learn about a new language and to further their future outlooks.

“If my wife didn’t force the kids to go to Chinese school, they wouldn’t know Chinese or even how to write their names. From last year they also started to learn Mandarin. Every week the children have to learn Chinese and revise. It’s important, because like my wife says, we are Chinese people and ultimately in the future if you want to go back to work in China, you won’t understand and lose out. It’s not like in the past, society has changed, you have to learn a few languages nowadays” (Hing, early-sixties, Chinese father).

Other parents were more relaxed about Chinese school and were happy for their children to “learn some Chinese” and maybe aspects of Chinese culture.

“Yes I do encourage the children to lean Chinese. Last year my daughter didn’t manage to pass her Chinese tests to move up to the next class [classes are separated by ability not age groups in Chinese schools]. But I won’t give her more pressure or tell her off, as long as she continues learning and learns more Chinese. I hope other parents are like me and don’t worry too much about their child’s exam results, just let them learn more Chinese” (Abigail, late-thirties, Chinese other)

Despite differences in parental viewpoints of the importance of Chinese schooling, all parents understood how difficult it was for their children to learn Chinese.

6.8 Conclusion

Within Chinese culture, Confucianism is regarded as one of the great traditions, which has influenced the behaviour patterns and structures of the individual, family and society (Park and Cho, 1995). Growing up as children, parent’s descriptions of their childhood and upbringing coincided with established research findings, where the parents of the previous generation were authoritarian and adhered strongly to Confucian values within the family. The importance of Chinese traditions and values were still evident amongst contemporary family life, despite the differences of parent’s background and life histories, socio-economic class, age and educational status. Cultural values that were revered by contemporary parents, albeit less stringently applied than parents of the past, included clearly defined gender roles, responsibilities and obligations of the individual within the family, children’s deference to parental authority, reverence and respect for fathers as well as the importance of Chinese education.

However, not all parents subscribed to the collectivist values stated within Confucianism. Parents of today also drew upon other Western ideals and outlooks in their parenting, which were associated with the typology of authoritarian parenting. Examples included parental warmth, open communication, verbal reasoning from children and encouraging the child’s decision making. Passiveness and absolute acceptance of authority were not deemed as an attractive trait for their children who were growing up in the twenty-first century. Parents recognised that the world was a competitive place, which required resilience and independence.

There was also a new parenting practice by contemporary parents where there was acceptance and support of the child’s Westernisation. Modern parents, in comparison to their own parent’s attitudes, were happy for English language use in the home and understood the difficulties of maintaining and speaking Chinese when surrounded by British culture, schooling and English speaking friends and peers. Parents own experience of the difficulties and awkwardness of speaking two languages in different environments contributed to parent’s language use decisions. Contemporary parents recognised the benefits of retaining Chinese language use, but reasons for this were also different from the past. Whereas parents of the past advocated Chinese language use to learn about Chinese culture, contemporary parents saw the importance of

retaining Chinese language for future careers, especially in the wake of China's global position.

Parents were also happy to downplay or accept that Chinese culture was not the child's priority or at the forefront of their interests. Interestingly, despite acceptance of the decline of Chinese culture and values within the home, parents agreed that retaining both Chinese and British culture was desirable. Some of the ways of keeping Chinese culture alive within the home was through the celebration of Chinese festivals, children's participation in Chinese schools and encouraging children's understanding of Chinese etiquette in day-to-day lives. Parents hoped that this would enable a continuation of Chinese cultural knowledge for their children and for their future grandchildren.

From this chapter it is clear that the different uses of culture and what aspects of which culture are chosen and used by parents to teach and guide their children cannot be pinpointed as being traditionally Chinese (i.e. Confucian/collectivist) or Western. Instead, as previous writers have suggested, cultural identities are non-fixed entities, which are situational and relational, and this is reflected in the parenting choices and practices of contemporary Chinese parents also. Having explored parenting styles and the extent to which they are influenced by (and are the products of) culture, life experiences, personal relationships and external circumstance, we now turn to examine the other side of the parent-child relationship, the agency of British Chinese children.

Chapter 7

‘Agency and Action of Chinese Children’

7.1 Introduction

Within different cultures, there will be variations in the norms and beliefs of power relationships between adults and children and consequently the rights of children. In Western cultures, the concept of individualism is generally prioritised, where independence, individual achievement, personal growth and the right of the individual is emphasised. The role of parents then, is to help children acquire self-sufficiency, self-direction, and decision-making abilities (Shek, 2002). Consequently, Western parents are seen as encouraging and favouring children’s autonomy and agency, as opposed to expecting strict obedience and conformity (Alwin, 1996). In acknowledging the importance of children and their rights, Western parents seem to be particularly responsive to the influence of their offspring (Kuczynski, 2003).

Non-Western cultures that have different historical, religious, and philosophical origins can be seen as having different ideas about children’s rights, child agency and parent-child relationships (Kuczynski, Lollis, and Koguchi, 2003). Chinese culture for example holds different definitions of the self, the family and of human relationships (Lam, 1997). Within Confucian tradition, the individual is never conceived of as an isolated and separate entity, but instead is part of a social network with specific roles in relation to others. As such, the group takes precedence over the individual and the emphasis is upon interpersonal cooperation and harmonious relationships (Shek, 2002).

“Chinese individuals are trained to pay greater attention to the maintenance of a stable social order and relations, and less attention to the pursuit of personal needs and rights, such as freedom, democracy and individual accomplishment” (Lam, 1997, p.101).

Confucian group values are arguably divergent to Western culture and may affect children’s agency. For instance, Chinese parents who value Confucian ethics would ensure that their child-rearing efforts are conducive to the development of compliance and cooperation, such as the respect for authority, responsibilities to the group and the importance of relationships and social duties (Shek, 2002). Arguably, the dominant theme of developing an ‘autonomous self’ in Western culture would be alien to the Chinese cultural system (Lam, 1997). Certainly, the assumption that Chinese children are passive beings with little or no agency in their lives is a dominant theme within the literature. Such suggestions shall be critically explored in chapter 7 by focusing upon the children’s commentary of family life and of their childhood experiences.

7.2 Agency, Autonomy and Independence: Definitions

Before discussing the agency of children and the effects that culture may play upon it, it is important to note that agency is a multifaceted construct with various definitions (Bandura, 2001, Kuczynski, Harach and Beraardini, 1999). Within sociology, agency

tends to be taken to mean ‘the capacity to act’ (Morrow, 2003). Furthermore, agency has been referred to as:

“The human capacity for initiating purposeful behaviour to influence the other, and the ability to interpret and construct meanings out of relational experiences” (De Mol and Buysse, 2008a, p.164).

Similarly, Giddens (1984) emphasises the capacity of individuals to express agency behaviourally through action, irrespective of their social power and suggested:

“Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things, but to their capability of doing those things, in the first place” (p. 9).

However, Giddens’s formulation is a theoretical construction, which is not empirically grounded or supported by research (Davis, 1991). Morrow (2003) also argued that Giddens’s formulation views agency as the property of adults not children, as with most mainstream social theorists. For instance, before the new sociology of childhood, children within sociology and other disciplines tend to be depicted as incomplete human beings, with the interest focused upon what the child will become rather than the here and now. But as Morrow (2003) suggested there is no reason why we should not use Giddens’s notion of agency to include children. Overall we can understand agency as individuals having the capacity to act, to interact, to make choices, to influence and shape one’s life (especially in matters which concern the individual) and the lives of others (Neale, 2002). The attainment of personal control over environmental outcomes is considered to be important for enhancing an individual’s feelings of competence and well-being (Kuczynski, 2003). Definitions of autonomy and agency are often seen to overlap with the concept of independence. Within this discussion however, independence is defined as the circumstance of not relying on others for support, help or supplies (Chirkov et al., 2003), whereas autonomy is defined as an individual’s ability to make his or her own life choices and to follow their own pursuits in a given environment. In a separate but connected sense, the definition of agency is concerned with interpersonal discourse, discussion, and negotiation that is reliant upon the agentic individual having a voice that will be heard.

7.3 Chinese Children’s Agency in Action

In most cultures, parent-child relations have arisen as hierarchical and parents are expected to exercise authority over children as part of their social responsibility (Maccoby, 2003). As discussed within chapters 3 and 4, images of children and their need for adult guidance and authority are arguably constructed from the social and cultural conditions that prevail at any given time. Consequently within the parent-child relationship, parents are seen to influence children but not vice versa (Hacking, 1999). Parents are said to ‘teach’, ‘transmit’, ‘discipline’ and ‘control’ their children. Children in turn ‘receive’, ‘obey’ and ‘learn from’ parents (Kuczynski, Lollis, and Koguchi, 2003). Terms such as ‘disobedience’, ‘non-compliance’ and ‘misbehaviour’ legitimise the unilateral power of parents (Kuczynski, 2003). Equally within Confucian ethics, common sayings related to filial piety, such as “a child must be good and dutiful no matter what the parents are like” and “imagine how sad you would be to find your parents gone when you finally desire to fulfil your filial piety to

them”, promotes the hierarchy of parent-child relations and the ‘correct’ behaviours expected from children towards parents (Kuczynski, Lollis, and Koguchi, 2003).

When parents exercise autocratic power, it would seem natural that children’s agency is constrained, especially as parents are perceived to have expertise over their children, be goal-directed (towards the socialisation of their child; Maccoby, 2003) and have greater coercive potential (Kuczynski, 2003). However, despite power differences between parents and children, parent-child relationships are seldom as hierarchical as they might seem (Maccoby, 2003). For instance, research has found that children have the ability to influence their own socialisation by influencing parental strategies, such as parents’ monitoring and educational efforts (Grusec and Goodnow, 1994). With regards to education, some children in the sample tried to “outsmart” their parents by saying that they knew best when it came to what homework should be done and to what standard.

“My mum hasn’t been to school in England, so I just tell her that it’s different here and not to worry because I know what I’m doing. She does nag at me to do my homework which is annoying, but at the end of the day, I know how it should be done and I just remind her of that!” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Children would also claim that they knew the school system and the teachers better, as such, they should take charge of schoolwork not parents. As Grace (fourteen years old) commented, “I’m in the lessons with the teachers, not them [parents].” Other children whose parents had limited English language skills had to rely on themselves when it came to the completion of schoolwork, as their parents could not understand the homework tasks.

“My parents can’t give me the answers to my homework like other people’s parents, because their English isn’t great. So I have to work with a friend during lunch time at school, or go to the library to get lots of work done that way” (Ken, eleven years old).

The lack of parental help was seen as both as a blessing and a burden. On the one hand, children were happy to make their own decisions and to take control of their schoolwork, but at the same time, they felt resentful about the lack of help their parents could provide them.

“It is nice being in high school. Like, in primary school all you do is sit there, but in high school you move around and stuff and do more of your own things, rather than relying on the teachers or your parents. Like organising your own stuff and finding out where your next lessons are. With homework, you plan it yourself and do it yourself. I don’t need my parents to interfere because they don’t understand. Well, they understand a little but not a lot. Usually I get my older sister to help me out, but if she can’t, I have to figure it all out by myself” (Adam, twelve years old).

“When it comes to homework, I have to survive on my own or ask the dictionary” (Grace, fourteen years old).

With regards to parental monitoring, some children were actively “being good” in trying to convince their parents to watch over them less. “Being good” meant acting responsibly by not breaking curfews and being considerate and respectful towards parents.

“My parents know that I listen to them. So if they set me a curfew or a time to come back, I will come back at that time. I will tell them where I am going, like if it’s the city centre, shopping or something. I think that way, its natural that you gain trust from your parents and they let you grow up a bit more” (Ben fourteen years old).

Some children behaved maturely in other ways to gain agency, autonomy and independence from parents. Examples included getting on with homework and housework without parental requests, using pocket money wisely and reassuring parents that education was the priority whilst growing up.

“I think my mum just trusts me, that’s why she lets me out. Like in school and assessments, I’m quite in control of it, so she probably trusts me from that” (Grace, fourteen years old).

Several children tried to make their parents feel sympathetic towards them, if they thought that parents were being too restrictive with their monitoring levels. With regards to increasing socialising opportunities, some children would drop hints that their friends had stopped asking them to join-in on activities or that they were at risk of having no friends at all.

“Sometimes I mention to them [parents], that if I’m never allowed out my friends will stop asking me to join in, or they’ll forget about me, but I don’t think they understand” (Olivia, twelve years old).

There were also negotiations with parents over socialising opportunities. Children such as Alexandra and Sophie (both fourteen) attempted to increase their socialising time by suggesting that it was important for young people’s self-esteem and independence skills.

“During your teens, it is the time to socialise and stuff and you learn a lot of skills that you use as an adult. I tell my mum that it’s the time [adolescence] when confidence is a really important thing. When you’re a teenager it’s the time to get this confidence, so when you are an adult it’ll be easier, as you’ll already have the confidence from being a teenager” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

The different ways that children exemplified their agency in relation to their school and social lives, is in accordance with James and Prout’s suggestion (1995), that the ways in which children learn about appropriate strategies or forms of agency are dependent upon the child’s skills and abilities, whereas other children may be less skilled in employing their agency within different context.

7.3.1 Advice and Parental Disciplining

Children have also been found to drive the interaction with their parents (De Mol and Buysse, 2008b). It is often assumed that parents are the ones who advise children without considering the fact that children are often the ones who bring up the topics to be discussed and choose what advice to accept and to put into action from parents (Park et al., 2003). Examples in this study included children's subject choices for their GCSE examinations, friendship worries and romantic relationships.

“The more I grow up there are some things that I talk more about with my mum. Things like, when I have a boyfriend, I didn't use to tell her but now I do because you're older and they've been through it all and you can talk about it and maybe learn from their experiences” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Children can also interpret and evaluate the appropriateness of the way in which parental advice is communicated (Grusec and Goodnow, 1994). For example, Grace (fourteen years old) suggested that her mother's advice regarding her GCSE subject choices was unhelpful due to her mother's bias opinions.

“My mum didn't want me to take R.E for GCSE, she thinks it's just about Christianity, but its not, its about learning morals and it trains you to think and helps you to live. I think it's useful so I'm going to take it, but she sees it as learning religion and that's it. Because she went to a catholic school, she's worried that you'll get converted”.

By selectively attending to, or ignoring parental advice attempts, children have the ability to shape their own socialisation experiences (Park et al., 2003). As Maccoby and Martin (1983) argued:

“The emphasis on interaction has led us away from viewing parental behaviour as something that is done to children or for children toward the view that it is done with children” (p. 78).

In securing children's compliance or cooperation with parental agendas, parents often use methods such as requests, commands, prohibitions, threats, and punishment to influence children's behaviour (Eisenberg, 1992). Some parents who encouraged their children to be communicative and expressive with their opinions, understood that children's refusal of parental commands would be inevitable as a result (as discussed within chapter 6). Negotiations by children were also a side product from parent's encouragement of children's reasoning and questioning abilities. Within this sample, fourteen-year-old Sophie was often involved with negotiations with her parents regarding the places she was allowed to go out to. Successful negotiations were dependent on her abilities to be persuasive, as well as her parent's general feelings at the times. As Sophie remarked, “sometimes it's easy, it just depends. Sometimes you have to go on their mood and you just have to use the right words”. Being patient and persistent was another factor in her persuasion tactics.

“My mother has started to let me go out further away, normally she'd only let me go to town where I live, but I've been going to the next city on my own with friends and then this weekend I'm going away to the seaside with my

friends without any adults and stuff. It took quite a lot of persuading for this seaside trip. [Interviewer: *Why did it take a while to persuade your mum?*] At first there were parents going and I spoke to my step-dad about it and he was fine, but my mum was like ‘oh my god, all the way there’! But my step-dad was saying parents are going so that's fine. But when I told them there were no adults going, I told my mum first and she said no straight away, then I talked to my dad. It was easier to persuade him than my mum. [Interviewer: *Is it nice that your mum is letting you go now?*] Yeah but she still wants me to ring her loads. I think she is getting better with protectiveness and stuff, it did take a while to persuade her and she said yes, so she trusts me more” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Kuczynski and colleagues (1987) found that negotiation is more likely among children whose parents used indirect and persuasive parenting strategies, whereas children whose parents use directly controlling strategies are more likely to engage in direct defiance. However, this was not necessarily the case within this research, where most children were not rebellious against their parent’s direct control strategies. Olivia (twelve years old) and Ken (eleven years old) suggested this was due to it being a “waste of time” and it was “pointless to try” to alter parent’s behaviour or viewpoints. Similarly Adam (twelve years old) commented, “whilst you live under their roof, your parent will have the final judgement and say”.

In contrast, some children in the sample did attempt to use their own coercive strategies to evade or sidetrack the parent’s ability to enforce compliance and to intimidate parents into avoiding future confrontations (as found by Patterson, 1982). For instance, a minority of children in the sample would be facially or verbally expressive in their dislike of their parent’s disciplining choices, in the hope that it would make them change their minds.

“Sometimes if I think the punishments are unfair, I tell them, like shout it out” (Alexandra, fourteen years old).

Some would “mope around the house” and give parents “the evil eye” in trying to make parents feel guilty for punishing them.

“If my mum tries to ground me or tells me that I can’t go out, I’ll just give her the ‘evils’ [staring hard], or I’ll just shut myself in my room until she feels guilty!” (Charlotte, fourteen years old).

Grace and Charlotte (both fourteen) mentioned in the interviews that they had threatened their parents with leaving home as soon as they turned sixteen (the accepted legal age of leaving home), due to their perceived levels of strictness within the household. This appeared to be quite an effective strategy, as their mothers mentioned that they were worried about the possible threat of their child flying the nest too soon, which made them reluctant to be overly constraining and forceful upon their child.

7.4 Adolescence

By the time adolescence approaches, there are many more opportunities for children to demonstrate their agency especially as changes within the parent-child dyad continue. Parental supervision is likely to become more indirect and less intrusive during this time. Differing levels of child competence and maturity helps shape the form and frequency of parental supervisory behaviour (Park et al., 2003). From middle childhood onwards, children begin to exercise moment-to-moment self-regulation and many parents allow their children more responsibility. Parents start to adopt a more general supervisory role as opposed to immediate control over aspects of their children's lives (Maccoby, 1984). Children themselves had recognised such parental changes towards them since leaving primary school and becoming an adolescent.

“My parents, they've started to treat me differently, more grown up, different to how they treat my younger sister. Like, they let me be more conscious of my own money, but they still regulate it. But it's just the way they act, it's hard to describe” (Ben, fourteen years old).

Specifically, Maccoby (1984) proposed that the transition from parental regulation of the child's behaviour to the child's self-regulation involves a three-phase developmental process: (1) Parental regulation, (2) co-regulation and (3) self-regulation. During the co-regulation period, parents retain general supervisory control but expect children to exercise increasingly extensive responsibilities for moment-to-moment self-regulation (which helps lay the groundwork for greater agency, autonomy and independence in adolescence and young adulthood; Maccoby, 1984). However, this process is a bilateral one:

“First, parents must stay informed about events occurring outside their presence and coordinate agendas that link the daily activities of parents and child. Second, they must effectively use the times when direct contact does occur for teaching and feedback. Third, they must foster the development of abilities that will allow children to monitor their own behaviour, to adopt acceptable standards of good and bad behaviour, to avoid undue risks, and to know when they need parental support or guidance. Children, for their part, must be willing to inform parents of their whereabouts, activities, and problems so that parents can mediate and guide when necessary” (Collins and Madsen, 2003, p. 53).

Indeed, those children who were allowed more freedoms compared to other child participants, had the task of keeping their parents well informed. This included parental knowledge of the child's whereabouts, which friends they were going out with, agreed times to return home and certain forms of communication when the child was out. Trust between parent and child was a key issue in allowing children to go out and in the conditions set.

“My mum's rules are quite general really, like no drinking or smoking which is reasonable. Just stick to them and there'll be no problems [when out socialising] because she knows she can trust me. But don't cross them or she'll get angry and cross!” (Grace, fourteen years old).

One child complained that their mother was too excessive in her conditions when she was out with friends.

“I have to ring my parents a lot when I’m out and they [friends] don’t. I say my parents are over-protective and annoying and my parents say its protective and caring and stuff. [Interviewer: *When do you have to ring?*] Its not like everyone else, if I went to town or something, when I got on the bus I would ring my mum when I got to town I’d ring her and when I’m coming back home, just before I got on the bus I’d ring her, something like that, tell her where I am and stuff. [Interviewer: *How does it feel having to be on the phone?*] Sometimes it’s OK, if its just ‘I’m coming home now’, but saying when I’m in town now blah, blah, blah I don’t think that is necessary. I think saying that I am coming home now is OK but everything else, saying where I am and what I am doing, I don’t like other people pestering me and stuff” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

The lack of the child’s social life (including where children were allowed to go, when and with who) was a regularly occurring subject within the research. Feelings of dissatisfaction by children were magnified by the fact that children had entered adolescence and the perception that the teenage years were meant to be a time of fun and independence away from parents and adults.

“It just gets boring. I haven’t been playing out since I was ten and I’m getting sick of it. . . At times you just want to do something that you don’t want your parents to know. Or you just want to hang around with your friend and talk about stuff that you don’t want your parents to hear and stuff like that” (Olivia, twelve years old).

Olivia also commented that her parents adherence to Chinese cultural norms were restrictive factors upon her freedoms.

“My parents are traditionally Chinese [strict] and it just gets annoying because they treat me like a Chinese person, but we are living in England! You’re not living in a Chinese country; you are living in England so do what all the other [English] parents do, just let me play out or something” (Olivia, twelve years old).

Such parental behaviours may be due to the Chinese cultural expectation that parents are to ensure a safe environment for children whilst protecting them from exposure to bad examples (Wu, 1985). In order to ‘protect’ children, Chinese parents often encourage their children to stay physically close to and be dependent on them, as well as restricting children’s activities to the home (Ho, 1986). Other children commented that their parents had racist attitudes towards Western people which affected their opportunities to socialise. Charlotte was particularly upset by her mother’s negative viewpoints of her peers based on their skin colour.

“My mum thinks they are a bit of a bad influence because they are *gweilows* [racist term for White people]. [Interviewer: *What do you say in reply?*] I just say, just because they are *gweilows* it doesn’t mean they are all nasty . . . She

worries about me going out with *gweilows* but I don't like thinking that because I'm surrounded by them!" (Charlotte, fourteen years old).

Interestingly aside from parental restrictions; children had their own reasons for not socialising outside of the house, such as homework completion and feelings of fear from negative news reports.

"My friend's have more free time than me. I'm always busy, I have loads of homework going on and I just do it till I finish. Because I get caught up with my homework, I don't have much time to see my friends" (Casey, twelve years old).

"I get a bit worried about getting attacked when I'm out, because on the news there are always people stabbing and shooting other people. Sometimes I stop myself from going out to places because I am worried about getting hurt" (Ken, eleven years old).

Similarly, Wayne (thirteen years old) had recently stopped travelling by himself on the bus, due to intimidating youths in the local area.

"I used to go on the bus quite often, but now I don't want to because when you walk there, there are loads of people, like loads of older kids in the area and they keep messing around, kicking the walls and climbing them and I don't want to walk into them. So I get my mum and dad to pick me up and we just drive past them".

With regards to any patterning between children's gender and their socialising opportunities, there was no distinction within the sample. Although the existing literature suggests that Chinese boys enjoy more freedoms in comparison to Chinese girls (due to the emphasis upon chastity of girls in traditional Chinese beliefs; Shek and Lai, 2000), this research found that children's own agentic behaviors, outlooks and concerns, as well as the parent-child relationship itself, were influential factors for Chinese children's agency levels.

7.5 Secondary School

The transition to high school had made a noticeable difference upon children's behaviour and maturity levels. Children themselves suggested that the move to secondary schooling had an impact and influence upon their development.

"At primary school you have the same teacher and you get used to them. But with high school you have the opportunity to make new friends and meet new people. You have to be more independent, look after yourself, get to lessons on time and try not to get into detentions" (Ling, twelve years old).

Older children in the later secondary school years (14-15 year olds in years 9 and 10) also suggested that becoming older and feeling more mature influenced their agency and the autonomy granted to them by parents.

“I think I am becoming more mature and responsible. I’ve been in high school a few years now and I’ve changed a lot, so my mum can let me get on with things without hassling me” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Allowing children to make decisions on their own shows parents’ recognition of children as individuals rather than their possessions suggested Xia and colleagues (2005). However some children complained that their parents still treated them like “babies” and were too controlling in their lives, despite the recognition of children’s growing maturity levels.

“My mum thinks I’m really babyish but I’m not. She treats me like a baby and keeps doing things for me. Its like, I’m fourteen, I have the ability and capability to do it. Like telling me to do my homework, yes I know I need to do my homework!” (Grace, fourteen years old).

This was frustrating for children who felt mature and responsible, especially with regards to schoolwork and resisting peer pressure to smoke, take drugs and drink alcohol. Parental perceptions of the child being irresponsible and immature had created children’s ill feelings towards their parents.

“My parents still say to me ‘you’re still a kid’ and whatever, but I feel that I am mature for my age, especially compared to other people. [*Interviewer: How?*] I’ve got school friends who smoke, drink and play around, but I’m not like that. So when my parents say that I’m still a kid, I get really angry and say I’m not, I’m grown up!” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Generally though, children credited their parents as being good or fair parents. Children also understood the importance of being guided and monitored by parents, as they were not fully mature yet. Guidelines by parents were seen as necessary in protecting them. As one child suggested:

“If parents let children do whatever they want, they would have a lot of freedoms when they are young. But in a bad way they might, at a very young age, have contact with drugs and smoking and bad things” (Ling, twelve years old).

Other studies have also suggested that adolescents agree that parents should retain authority and the right to exert discipline over moral issues and, to a lesser extent, over conventional issues (Smetana and Asquith, 1994). But being too strict was seen to interfere with the child’s maturing process and the opportunity for self-discovery. Children saw responsibilities as vital preparation for adulthood.

“Since you’re growing up you need more space to be by yourself and to do things by yourself and to experience things. . . You need to learn things by yourself, to see what you can and cannot achieve. But if parents are there, they’d be telling you what to do” (Casey, twelve years old).

7.6 Conflicts

As children's developmental concerns with autonomy tend to peak in early and middle adolescence, it often results in an increase in conflicts with parents over the everyday details of family life (Laursen, Coy, and Collins, 1998). With differing ages, the topics of conflicts change, however, across the span of adolescence, issues are generally related to routine, commonplace activities such as chores and academic matters (Cummings and Schermerhorn, 2003).

With regards to chores, the area of housework is often used as an opportunity to develop children's responsibilities for themselves and in relation to others (Bowes, Flanagan, and Taylor, 2000), whilst encouraging a sense of social responsibility to their family (Bowes et al., 2004). Some parents who had taken on familial responsibilities as children, such as housework, child-care (of younger siblings), helping the family business and paid work, also attempted to encourage their children's autonomy and independence in the same ways now. Parents felt that such opportunities were not only productive for their child's home life, but also for the competitive society in which they now lived (see chapter 6). For those children who helped out, many enjoyed the maturity and the sense of responsibility it gave them, which added to their sense of agency. In demonstrating their capabilities in housework tasks, parents were also happier to grant children more freedoms. As Morrow (2003) suggested, by contributing towards housework, children are not only taking on significant responsibilities and in some cases providing support for parents, but reciprocity is achieved within the processes and practices of everyday life.

“I've sort of learnt it by myself [housework], because when I'm older you'll have to do these things anyway, so it's probably better to start at a young age. I think it's my responsibility to do these things around the house. My parents see me doing all these things and they appreciate it, and they think I'm more capable” (Ling, twelve years old).

Contemporary parental encouragement of Chinese children's agency and independence may be seen in opposition to the group orientated values of Confucianism. However, Confucianism does promote agency within individuals despite its emphasis upon social purposes. In developing one's sense of self (from a Confucian perspective), autonomy and relatedness are necessary for the development of social, moral, and intellectual attainments (Wang and Li, 2003). For instance, the concept of *ren* (part of the Confucian five virtues) encourages a lifelong striving for a person to become the most genuine, sincere and humane person he or she can become. The process of becoming *ren* is also called self-perfection (Wang and Li, 2003). To achieve self-perfection or *ren*, self-cultivation is necessary (Lam, 1997). The emphasis upon collectivist principles as impeding children's agency may therefore be overstated in the existing literature.

In contrast, parents who differentiated the roles and responsibilities of children and adults, based on their preconceived (Western and Eastern) notions of what children should and should not do, granted less agency to their children in general. As Adam (twelve years old) commented:

“They [parents] just see me as a kid, who can’t do this, can’t do that. But I could, I know I could, but they just never give me the chance”.

As discussed in chapter 3, adults constructions of childhood will impact upon the opportunities and capabilities afforded to children themselves. By perceiving children as vulnerable, naïve and dependent upon adults, some parents not only limited children’s independence and autonomy within the home, but outside of it also.

Apart from the mundane, other areas of possible conflicts for adolescents with parents include socialising opportunities as well as peer and friendship groups. Parents are often managers, organisers, facilitators and gatekeepers of their children’s social lives, in their choices of schools, neighbourhoods and formal and informal activities in which their children can participate (Park et al., 2003). Parents can also promote, discourage and monitor their children’s peer relationships and activities. One parent in the sample, Ava (mid-forties), actively encouraged her daughter’s friendship with other local Chinese children, reasoning that they would understand her daughter more than her English school friends, as well as helping her daughter’s sense of identity. However it was ultimately up to Carly if she wanted to initiate or continue the friendships with other Chinese children her mother had introduced (another example of children demonstrating their autonomy). Overall, Carly was appreciative of her mother’s incentives and actions.

“I’ve met more Chinese friends, I see them every week and we have the same backgrounds. They know where you come from and what sort of background you have and we talk about things we can’t talk about with English people. [Interviewer: *Is that nice?*] Yeah because you’d say I used to watch this when I was little and they would say yeah I used to watch that when I was little [Interviewer: *Anything else?*] Like having a take-away and what that’s all about. Like normally, most Chinese parents work in take-aways or help out so they know what we’ve been through and all that stuff. [Interviewer: *How would you feel about not having your Chinese friends there?*] I wouldn’t be that bothered but it’s good to have Chinese friends, as they are the same origins as you. I think we are quite similar” (Carly, thirteen years old).

Children can clearly play an active role as shapers and negotiators of their own social lives, with many decisions influenced by their needs, wishes and decisions. Children can also resist formal social activities that are arranged by parents, as demonstrated by Carly’s behaviours. From the examples of conflicts and negations within the home regarding housework, schooling and socialising opportunities, Chinese adolescents in the sample did not necessarily accept parental control and authority in a passive manner as suggested by previous research.

“I am a typical teenager but more mature. I don’t think I am rebellious as I have never rebelled against my parents or anything, but I can! Like, if I want something I will fight for it!” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Chinese parents’ suggested acceptance of conflicts and disagreements with their children stands in contrast to traditional Chinese norms of child obedience and the importance of respecting and obeying parents and elders (as explored in chapter 6). However, most children did not raise their differences in opinions with parents. This

was primarily because children thought that their parents would not listen to them or they did not want to be punished (similar to the finding of Yau and Smetana, 2003).

“My mum will always have to win the argument. She has to prove that she is right when she is wrong. She tries to twist the truth sometimes. [Interviewer: *How does that make you feel?*] Strange, you just don’t know what to say, its like, erm, you were wrong. But she will go really scary and start shouting, I just leave it” (Grace, fourteen years old).

The children’s comments stood in contrast to the parent’s view of themselves that they were less authoritarian and not necessarily right all the time.

“In a Chinese family the parents already have respect and they expect it. . . I just don’t feel it is fair, not given as much choice on stuff, if they tell me to do something I just have to do it. You have to do whatever they say” (Adam, twelve years old).

7.7 Changes in Parents

In addition to children exercising agency within the family, children can alter their parents’ behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes (Palkovitz, 2002). For example, children can profoundly affect the lives of parents (Ambert, 2001) in terms of promoting the parents’ maturity (Kuczynski, 2003), providing years of training opportunities for parents (Frankel, 1991) and stimulating adults’ openness to new learning and coping strategies (Newman and Newman, 1988). Indeed in chapter 6, parents suggested that their attitudes and child-rearing methods had modified and altered as a result of their children’s personalities, changing maturity levels and the parent-child relationship itself. However, the level of influence that children played upon parent’s personal development was viewed as unintentional on the children’s part and the majority of children felt that they had little or no influence upon their parent’s behaviours or belief systems. As Adam (twelve years old) suggested, “they [parents] don’t listen to me, they just tell me off and what to do.” One explanation for the lack of voiced influence upon parents by children, or parent’s recognition of children’s agentic (intentional) influence, may be as a result of the socially constructed nature of the parent-child relationship. As suggested in chapter 3 and 4, children are often construed to be the passive recipients of adult power and their dependent status has been legitimised within popular discourses. The children’s comments were also in accordance to dominant childhood ideology.

“When I am eighteen, I will become more independent because I want to and I have to, so I will. I think I will be more vocal about my opinions because to be honest no one really takes you seriously until you are eighteen. Like the government election, you can’t vote till you’re eighteen. No one takes you seriously in life unless you are really talented or a really special, gifted child, otherwise they [adults] just ignore you” (Charlotte, fourteen years old).

Acknowledging and recognising the influence of children stands in contrast to common sense notions and cultural discourses (Kuczynski, 2003). Consequently, parents and children within this research may not be fully appreciative of the level of influence that children play in parent’s lives.

As well as personal changes within parents, children provide parents with opportunities for community participation. Children who are cultural brokers for their immigrant parents are one example. Often as a result of children learning the language and becoming more linguistically competent in the language of the host society than their parents, children often translate for parents, and the child becomes very involved in the worries and concerns of the family, such as hassles with landlords, arranging for medical care, and dealing with the legal system (Olsen and Chen, 1988, p. 31).

“My mum always asks me to translate things for her, especially if my older sister is out. . . It’s really difficult sometimes, especially when I don’t even know what I’m translating about [*Interviewer*: Like what?] Like, banks and stuff to do with hospitals” (Adam, twelve years old).

In being cultural brokers, traditional intergenerational authority relationships change within the household. One child commented that it was embarrassing that his parents needed his transnational assistance.

“Sometimes they [both parents] get embarrassing, because their English isn’t that good and sometimes I get embarrassed, so I would like them to improve in their English. At times I feel upset, because my mum has the capability of doing it, but she hasn’t learnt English at all” (Ken, eleven years old).

Despite helping and in some cases teaching their parents about the new culture or language, children still have to demonstrate deference to their parents, which research suggests can create a form of role strain, leading to possible anxiety as well as lowering of children’s general well-being (Park et al., 2003). On the other hand, child cultural brokers tend to develop an insight and sensitivity towards their parents and the affective bond between parent and child is likely to be strengthened (Park et al., 2003). As Casey (twelve years old) suggested, “I like to help my mum, it’s nice that I can help her”. The role of children as cultural brokers also demonstrates the agency that children may have.

7.8 Conclusion

In Chinese parenting, cooperation, accommodation, and relatedness are regarded as indicators for social competence and the maturity of the child (Trommsdorff and Kornadt, 2003), as Confucianism views the self not as a separate entity but includes a wide variety of significant others (Lam, 1997). As a result, research suggests that Chinese parents are less encouraging of children’s acts of agency and autonomy, in comparison to their Western counterparts (Chao, 1994). However in this research, children’s own initiative and agency has been demonstrated and their autonomy is increasingly valued and encouraged by Chinese parents, especially by those who understand the competitiveness of today’s society and the need to be independent and assertive. With children’s actions and parental encouragement of children’s agency, these results appear to contradict the existing literature, which suggests that Chinese children are not only passive, but are also compounded by Confucian cultural values of collectivism and filial piety. Chapter 7 also highlighted that Confucianism does actually promote the development of the self in terms of autonomy and agency, as self-reflection and self-perfection are a key part of Confucian philosophy, despite endorsing collectivist notions also. Thus, both agency and connectedness are

important developmental goals in most cultures (Kuczynski, 2003), although levels of which may differ from one society to another (Wang and Li, 2003) and from one individual to the next. Nevertheless, existing studies tend to overstate the collectivist notions of Confucianism when describing Chinese children's agency levels.

Many examples of children's agency and autonomy have been discussed in this chapter, such as socialising times, friendship groups, housework, negotiations and conflicts. As children grow older, their abilities and levels of independence and autonomy (granted by parents and pushed for by children) generally increase, with adolescence representing the main period to increase their levels of agency. Many parents in this sample acknowledged and were happy to encourage their child's agency within reason. Rules and conditions were still set by parents in order to guide children who were not seen as fully mature. Only a minority of children complained that their parents were too strict or over-protective. Unfortunately for those who felt repressed, there were complaints of frustration, which were not aired to parents. Some children also expressed a loss of friendship opportunities and interaction with peers.

By uncovering the perspectives of contemporary Chinese parents and children from chapters 6 and 7, contradictions to previous literature and research, in terms of parenting practices and child agency have appeared. In addition, we see forms of 'hybrid' parenting which reflects the fluid identities and values of the parents themselves, as opposed to the assumption that Chinese parents are purely authoritarian in nature. Although culture does have an influence upon parenting approaches and children's agency, the relationship of the parent-child dyad must also be considered. As De Mol and Buysse (2008) suggested:

“Parents and children cannot be understood as discrete individuals. Instead, the relationship context (in which parents and children know each other intimately and have their influences intertwined in an interdependent long-term relationship with a past and a future) makes parents and children receptive as well as vulnerable to each other's influence and both facilitates and constrains each other's exercise of agency and power” (p.165).

The intimacy of parent-child relationships is where we will turn to in the next chapter, which will also help expand upon the analysis sections of the previous chapters.

Chapter 8

‘Parent-Child Intimacy’

8.1 Introduction

In chapter 6, it emerged that parents in modern day British society selectively choose, and more readily combine, various elements of Chinese and Western customs in their parenting methods. This finding appears to be in stark contrast to the majority of the existing literature, which suggests that Chinese households (especially the earlier generations) are dominated by ‘traditional’ Chinese culture in their child-rearing methods (i.e. Confucian and collectivist values).

Levels of agency and autonomy among Chinese children were discussed in chapter 7. Interestingly, findings from chapter 6 suggested that many of the parents accepted and were happy to encourage their child’s agency, whilst also adhering to and incorporating some Confucian cultural values and beliefs (which is believed to be restrictive of the individual). The parent’s justification for supporting their child’s agency was due to their own childhood experiences and understanding the need to be agentic in the modern age. Similar to the conclusion concerning parenting approaches in chapter 6, chapter 7 suggested that, children’s lack of agency cannot be explained by Confucian traditions alone. Chapter 8 forms the last of the three analytical themes discussed within the research and concerns parent-child intimacy.

The pursuit of human relationships and connecting with others is arguably a universal and common human experience. Seen as one of the most important features of life, relationships have been described as “the raw materials by and through which personal biography; family and social structure are framed and constructed” (Cooney, 2000, p.13). The establishment and maintenance of attachments has been suggested to be a fundamental human motivation that cuts across cultures (Sheldon et al., 2001). Involvement within an intimate relationship tends to be valuable (on many levels) for the individuals involved. In the first instance, intimacy appears to provide feelings of acceptance, warmth and sensitivity, as well as an appreciation of self (Prager, 1995). Intimate relations also have a positive impact upon people’s health and well-being (Epstein, 1994). For example, the capacity to form intimate bonds with others, contributes towards effective personality development, is a key marker of mental health (Bowlby, 1988), and seems to provide a buffer from the effects of stress (Collins and Feeney, 2004). Reis and Shaver (1988) added that intimacy within a relationship appears to exert a direct and positive impact upon the relationship functioning because of its own reward value.

By exploring parent-child intimacy, deeper understanding of the day-to-day lives and functioning of contemporary Chinese households are revealed. Additionally, as parent-child intimacy appears to be interlinked with other aspects of family relationships and agendas, a clearer picture of the influences and conditions upon child agency and parenting approaches can be gained within the British Chinese household. This chapter will discuss the intimacy literature, notions of parent-child intimacy and the effects and impacts upon closeness, as well as providing examples of intimacy within the sample.

8.2 Intimate Relationships

A relationship can take on many guises, in terms of its nature (i.e. kin or non-kin relations), functionality, duration and the cost and benefits involved. The presence and degree of intimacy between two individuals is also a defining feature. Intimacy in a relationship is most frequently associated with sex and sexuality. This can be attributed to early analytical work, where the focus was upon the emotional functioning of heterosexual relationships, often within the context of marriage, where “the coupling of intimacy with sexuality and sexual/sensual relationships was not unpicked” (Gabb, 2008, p. 67). However within the broader understanding, intimacy is also commonly related to displays of love, affection, trust and cohesiveness between friends, family and other close associates. If we are to take the available definitions and conceptualisations of intimate relations as involving various aspects of positive interaction and experience between two people (such as the display of love, cohesion, attachment and connectedness), then intimacy is arguably found within various relationship types, including the parent-child attachment.

Within the literature, definitions of intimacy include a sense of connectedness, shared understandings, mutual responsiveness and intersubjectivity (Prager, 1995). For example, Prager (1995) suggested that intimacy could be divided into two basic concepts, intimate interactions and intimate relationships. Intimate interactions are described as dialogues between individuals, where partners share personal and private material, feel positively about each other and themselves, and perceive a sense of mutual understanding between them (Prager, 1995, p.22). Intimate relationships were defined as involving (1) sustained affection (or love) between the partners, (2) mutual trust and (3) partner cohesiveness (Prager, 1995). Each relationship characteristic is seen as a by-product of intimate interaction. Past intimate acts are also likely to influence future relations (Hinde, 1981). Intimate relationships are seen to involve multiple dialogues and intimate interactions over time (Prager, 1995). Similarly, Jamieson (1998) characterised intimacy as practices of close association, familiarity as well as privileged knowledge that involves strong positive emotional attachments and high levels of trust.

Reis and Shaver (1988) suggested that intimacy is an interpersonal and transactional process, with involves two principal components: Self-disclosure and partner responsiveness. The formation and maintenance of intimacy involves one person’s self-disclosure (the communication of personally relevant information, thoughts and feelings) being met with appropriate responsiveness from the corresponding partner (e.g. understanding, validation and care; Reis and Patrick, 1996). Intimacy levels are therefore dependant upon the quality of the relationship, the people involved and specific interactions. The development and presence of intimacy between two people can be viewed as a dynamic and interactive process, which consists of repeated (intimate) interactions throughout the lifespan (Laurenceau et al., 2004).

8.2.1 Mutual Disclosure

The emphasis upon mutual disclosure as a formative site for constructions of intimacy can be seen within the work of Anthony Giddens (1992) and Lynn Jamieson (1998). Based on contemporary therapeutic ideologies, Giddens suggested that people have

become self-reflexive and self-conscious of whom they are, and the types of personal relationships they want. Individual fulfilment and 'growth' within relationships are now prioritised. Other shifts such as 'de-traditionalisation' have also been attributed towards the development of a more responsive and creative form of sexuality, which Giddens called 'plastic sexuality'. A distinctive feature of plastic sexuality is the separation of sex and sexuality from reproduction. This separation has led to a revolution in female autonomy and liberates their dependence on men (Giddens, 1992). Men are also seen as being liberated in their fulfilment of relationships, which do not adhere to preconceived notions of 'appropriateness'. Accordingly, sexuality has become decentred so that individuals set up their own relationship rules, forging intimate associations that meet their own personal needs (Budgeon and Roseneil 2004), and are creative in how they constitute kin networks (Stacey 2004).

Plastic sexuality is said to give rise to the 'pure relationship', which Giddens argues has replaced familial ties of obligation. Within the pure relationship, it is the quality of a relationship that is significant, not its functional purpose. Partners are seen as equals, and the relationship only exists for whatever rewards it can deliver. Giddens also suggested that there is a restructuring of intimacy within the pure relationship. Rather than more practical forms of caring, knowing and understanding (disclosing intimacy) is emphasised instead. Relations between parents and children, among friends, and within couples are suggested to be converging towards the pure relationship. Implicit within a pure relationship then, is equality, disclosure and mutual satisfaction of the relationship by both parties. Although Giddens recognised the distinct nature of the parent-child relationship, due to their biological connections and power imbalances, he believes that they are still permeated and maintained by an ethos of negotiation and disclosing intimacy.

"Hence, it is suggested that the obligatory, rather than voluntary, and hierarchical, rather than equal, character of the parent-child and husband-wife bond has dissolved. It is quite possible to demonstrate a greater emphasis on being 'pals'" (Jamieson, 1998, p.161).

A successful pure relationship recreates psychological stability by resonating with the basic trust developed in childhood (derived from the faith that children place in their caretakers) and from ontological security suggested Giddens (1991).

"The close bonds established between parents and children are formed in a context of infantile dependency, but they are also the psychological nexus within which the young child develops capacities to initiate intimate ties in later life" (Giddens, 1991, p.98).

Jamieson (1998) highlighted the historical shift of parent-child relating, where listening, discussing and expressing thoughts as well as understanding the child only emerged as the ideal over the late twentieth century. During the first decades of the twentieth century, in Britain and other industrialized nations. Jamieson (1998) noted that parent-child relationships were not characterised as being emotionally intense nor were parents striving for friend-like relationships with their children. It was only in the 1950s that mothers emerged as carrying the responsibility for the psychological well-being of their children, rather than simply caring through good housewifery. Sociologists also contributed to the ideology of 'the good mother'. For instance Emile

Durkheim (1858-1917) believed that social development and changes led to more elaborate sexual divisions of labour, where the roles of women and men became more specialised. Men were seen as leaders and providers of the family, whereas women should concentrate on reproductive, familial and domestic functions and duties. Durkheim saw the separation of the sexes as representing evolution from a primitive past to a civilised society.

In the 1940s-1960s, Talcott Parsons followed Durkheim's suggestions and proposed that male and female roles were a consequence of biological compatibility. Men were 'designed' to provide sustenance, working away from the home as necessary, and women to stay at home to fulfil their biological role as the carer of children (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Parsons suggested that the nuclear family was a necessary institution in the socialisation of children. Effective child-rearing depended on specialised skills, which only women possessed. Parsons further argued that a mother used the emotionally intense bond between herself and the child to psychologically manipulate their offspring into a socialised human being (Jamieson, 1998). Socialisation of the child would also require a context which provided warmth, security and mutual support (Parsons, 1964).

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, John Bowlby was the first psychologist to produce a detailed explanation of infants' attachments and intimacy behaviours with their caregivers. Bowlby's work is often cited as the main conceptual framework, which stresses the importance of relationships with others (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1969), and more specifically the importance of intimacy within an attachment (Kuczynski and Haracha, 2005). An attachment is seen as an affectional tie or bond that an individual (in this case, the infant) forms between them and another specific individual (i.e. the parent or caregiver; Ainsworth, 1972). In explaining the child's distinctive emotional tie to the main caregiver, Bowlby integrated work from various perspectives, such as evolutionary theory, cognitive psychology, control systems theory and ethology (Yarrow, 1972). Bowlby (1969) considered attachments between mothers and infants as a dyadic and reciprocal relationship, where the infant and mother (later extended to include any primary caregiver) are equally motivated to remain within close proximity of one another. In the event where the child experiences a threat to the self, or to their primary attachment relationship, their attachment behavioural system will be activated (Collins and Feeney, 2004). Bowlby suggested that infant attachment behaviours, such as crying and clinginess to the carer were regulated by an innate behavioural system (based upon the principles of evolutionary theory). Attachment behaviours not only maintained the child's proximity to a nurturing caretaker, but promoted their safety and survival. In turn, caregivers monitor their infant's whereabouts, remain alert to the infant's signs of distress and are sensitive and responsive to the child's expressed needs and attachment behaviours (such as holding, soothing and reassuring the infant; Collins and Feeney, 2004). For the attachment bonds to function effectively then, the attachment behaviour of a child must be coordinated with the behaviour of their attachment figure and vice versa (Ainsworth, 1972).

As the child matures and their cognitive system becomes increasingly sophisticated, the goal of the attachment system is to maintain a psychological sense of security with their caregiver, as well as close physical proximity (Mashek and Aron, 2004). A feeling of security provided by an attachment figure has been suggested to provide the

child with a secure base to explore their social and physical world (Kazan and Zeifman, 1999). Children with a secure base are able to explore their surroundings whilst developing appropriate emotional responses (Kobak and Sceery, 1988), such as trust and secure expectations regarding dependence (Rusbult, 2004). When separated from a caregiver, the ways in which the child copes with the distress (and regulates their feelings of security) will differ from one infant to the next. Bowlby (1973) suggested that the differences in infant responses to carer separation was due to their previous history with an attachment figure, and whether the carer is perceived as being emotionally available and responsive when needed (Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy, 1985). Thus, early child-caregiver interactions provided a critical context in which the child bases their emotional experience, develops internal working models of attachment, and learns how to regulate their attachment needs (Collins and Feeney, 2004). Differences in attachment styles have been argued to play a critical role in the shaping and quality of an individual's intimate interactions, and the subjective perceptions of those interactions within future relationships (Collins and Feeney, 2004).

The viewpoint that mothers are responsible for the construction of their child's character remains as a dominant assumption within modern child-rearing efforts today. Although the predominant emphasis has been upon the mother within the parent-child dyad, the importance of the 'sensitive father' is also in circulation within the contemporary era (Jamieson, 1998). Accordingly, the centrality of the parent-child relationship is now seen to involve deep commitment and stability like no other human bond (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Similarly, Hazan and Zeifman (1999) suggested that parent-child attachments appear to be the closest and most intimate relationship, due to profound psychological and physical interdependency, which is not found in other social connections. By the late twentieth century, the view that children benefited from intimate relations with mothers and fathers that involved mutual, affective and communicative disclosures (characterised by deep knowing and understanding) was commonplace within public policy and debate (Gabb, 2008). Jamieson's (1998) historical illustration of how mutual disclosure became part of intimate relating between parents and children is similar to Giddens work on the pure relationship. Unlike Giddens however, Jamieson (1998) observed the gendered and generational power differences within a family when trying to reach the egalitarian ideal within the (pure) relationship. As Gabb (2008) suggested, Jamieson "notes that the new and much-heralded ethos of mutuality among partners and families has been observed to be a smokescreen that masks the traditional imposition of parental control through socially sanctioned authority" (p.75).

In addition to mutual disclosure as an aspect of intimacy between parents and children, bodily intimacy is also suggested to play a role (Jamieson, 1998). Intimate bodily encounters are commonly part of everyday family routine and can communicate and exchange various positive and negative emotions and feelings to one another in the household (Gabb, 2008). Embodied emotional exchanges are also suggested to reflect and reinforce broader structures of power and control within wider society. For example, the amount and nature of physical contact between adults and children can signify the generational hierarchy of adult-child relations (Jackson 1982), as children are denied any concept of 'bodily autonomy' (Kitzinger, 1988). Acts of physical intimacy within the home can also produce gendered hierarchies that exist between 'husband' and 'wife' (Gabb, 2008).

The review of the intimacy literature indicates that the experience of intimacy is positively correlated with positive developments for the individuals involved, as well as the relationship process itself. Within the literature review, intimacy is a broad and overlapping concept, which relates to notions such as closeness, affection, security and attachment (to name but a few). The multitudes of definitions and theoretical overlaps have been argued to be confusing and unhelpful in the study of intimacy and intimate relations. As such, Berry (1969) recommended that intimacy should be seen in its broadest terms and advises against an imposed definition. Accordingly, this research explored notions of parent-child intimacy within a variety of behaviours, interactions and experiences, which the parents and children themselves spoke of. As the children in the sample were experiencing adolescence, a discussion of this period would be a fruitful starting point when exploring the child's intimacy with their parents and vice versa.

8.3 Intimacy: Adolescence and Independence

Despite the lack of consensus regarding the start and endpoint of adolescence, many see it as beginning with the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty, and as a time for growing up and becoming an adult (Noller and Callan, 1991). As such, the term 'adolescence' typically refers to the time between one's childhood and adulthood. Adolescence is also commonly conceived as an ever-changing context for parents and young people alike, where responsibilities, rights and privileges for the adolescent may be unclear (for both parents and children; Noller and Callan, 1991). Consequently the young adult may feel that their options and gratifications are restricted (Pearl, 1981). Adolescent's feelings of autonomy and agency are often characterised by their independence from parental authority and greater cooperation and mutuality within the parent-child relationship (Buhl, 2008). Accordingly, terms such as 'breaking away' or 'breaking free' are often used to describe the changes in the adolescent's relationship with their parents (Noller and Callan, 1991). Regulating one's activities, promotion of self-reliance, or the freedom to make decisions about matters that affect one's life, seem important to adolescents and in establishing oneself (Hill and Holmbeck, 1986).

'Breaking free' from parents is often conceived within the adolescent's move towards independence and individualism (making own decisions and going their own way more). Methods to gain independence, autonomy and agency may be exemplified in many ways. For example, Steinberg and Silverberg (1986) suggested that independence might include behavioural autonomy, which is the ability to make decisions about daily routines and personal preferences. Value autonomy involves thinking through values and making decisions about what is important (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). When establishing oneself as an individual, young people tend to realise that they are separate beings from their parents, therefore reducing their dependence upon them (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). In addition, realising that parents are distinct, imperfect or infallible may lead to conflict between adolescents and parents (Noller and Callan, 1991).

Parental resistance of adolescent independence and attempts to maintain total control is likely to result in high levels of conflict, adolescent frustration and a complete

breakdown of the parent-adolescent relationship (Noller and Callan, 1991), thus affecting intimacy between the parent-child dyad. As Smith (1980) suggested:

“In order for interpersonal relationships to be satisfying, those involved must feel free to state their own needs and work actively to have them satisfied. Individuals must feel they have the power to successfully influence their own development and avoid destructive interference by others” (p.194).

Furthermore, Smith (1980) argued that the adolescent’s perceived lack of parental recognition as a person, who has an influence within the parent-child relationship, would negatively affect the intimacy levels within the parent-child dyad. In frustrating or poor family climates and relationships, adolescents may rebel against what they perceive to be the unreasonableness of their parents, and may even leave home (Noller and Callan, 1991).

Conflicts may be further problematic with the onset of early and middle adolescence, as young people tend to reject the views of their parents more and are more explorative regarding rules and expectations. As such, peer pressure may become more prominent (Noller and Callan, 1991). Coincidentally, adolescents who feel a need to gain independence from their parents may attach more value and importance in belonging to their peer group. Many parents in the sample spoke of their worries regarding their child’s friendship groups and the effects of peer pressure. In particular, the parents were worried about the pressure to get involved in the use of alcohol or drugs or to engage in anti-social behaviours generally. Parental worries not only prevented the child’s efforts to achieve independence out of the home (e.g. socialising with friends), but also contributed to the child’s sense of frustration, especially for those who perceived themselves as mature.

“My parents always say ‘stop being naughty’ at home, but at school, I’m really well-behaved, but because they are not there they don’t see that. People at school smoke and bunk off lessons, but I don’t do that, so I’m not as naughty as they [parents] think. So sometimes I get really annoyed” (Olivia, twelve years old).

Parents may be right to feel anxious about ‘letting go’ and allowing their children too much freedom with regards to socialising and peer groups, as research has shown that becoming too independent from parents, too early, may make adolescents more at risk of engaging in deviant behaviours (Noller and Callan, 1991). At the same time, there is evidence that adolescents who have parents who are too controlling are also at risk (Noller and Callan, 1991). Being overly controlling and strict can also affect the intimacy between parents and children, as children feel “trapped”, “not in control” and “not respected”.

When parents accept and encourage their adolescent’s independence, minimal conflict is likely. Additionally, children who admire and respect their parents are much more likely to cooperate with them, thus lessening the influence of possible peers and peer groups (Noller and Callan, 1991). The encouragement of independence and agency by parents appears to encourage healthy adolescent development, a smooth transition into adulthood and intimate parent-child relationships. Disagreements and conflicts may also enhance the level of intimacy between parents and children, as it provides

the context for exploring each other's feelings and opinions as well as encouraging mutual understanding. As one Chinese father suggested, "we [son and father] have the occasional arguments which have helped us understand each other more" (Ting, early-forties).

In establishing independence, agency and self-reliance, distance may be created within the parent-adolescent relationship (Prager, 1995), where a 'comfortable zone' is formed between the parent-child dyad (Nøvik and Solem, 2003). Within conventional approaches to adolescent development, it is often assumed that "the adolescent develops as an individual precisely by moving outside the relation with parents" (Youniss, 1983, p. 95). Indeed, many parents in the sample suggested that their child's process of distancing themselves from them had an impact upon their closeness and intimacy.

"When our son starts arguing I find it upsetting but you can't let them have their way. I find it upsetting because to us [as parents], we have a certain standard, but to him, if his standards are different to ours or if he isn't convinced that our standards are better, than it is very difficult for us to relate and that's quite sad" (Louise, late-forties, Chinese mother).

Despite parental suggestions that accord to conventional models of adolescent development, such theories have been criticised for emphasising the adolescent's separation/individualisation process from parents in an extremely autonomous fashion (Cooney, 2000). Such theories also view individualism of the adolescent as a personal characteristic of the young person, rather than the involvement or modifications of the parent-child bond (Cooney, 2000). In contrast to conventional models, contextual theories suggest that adolescent individualism may be initiated (and directed) by alterations in the behaviour and thinking of both parents and adolescents. Contextual theories therefore see adolescent individualism within a bi-directional parent-child relationship, where parents and adolescents work together to form a more mutual and equal connection (Cooney, 2000). The adolescent does not necessarily leave or break away from their relationship with parents, instead both the parents and adolescents negotiate and renegotiate new roles in the family (Noller and Callan, 1991). In other words, parent-child relations are merely transformed during the transition to adulthood and thereafter, rather than being totally eliminated.

Similar to other research findings, young people in this sample neither resented nor resisted parental control, instead seeing it as essential to good parenting and welcomed the boundaries set as fair and necessary. Nevertheless children still suggested that their parents could be over-protective and too controlling at times. This consequently affected adolescent's development of agency, independence and the levels of intimacy between the parent and child. One example was the negative effects strict parenting had upon the levels of communication and self-disclosure between children and parents (see section 8.6.1).

"I'm actually scared of my dad. He's stricter, so I like to keep a distance . . . I don't know about my mum [regarding feelings of closeness], but I don't start a conversation with my parents, I just keep my mouth shut when they're in. I don't like talking to them at times. I just don't feel like talking to them, it's better keeping it to myself" (Olivia, twelve years old).

When considering such comments, Noller and Callan (1991) cautioned that adolescents tend to want their families to be extremely flexible, where they can do what they please with the support of their parents. Although complete freedom for adolescents was not considered as advantageous by parents and children (nor would the parents and children want this), adaptability and parental flexibility with adolescents appears to very important to family functioning and parent-child intimacy (Noller and Callan, 1991).

8.4 Intimacy Levels and Individual Factors

How well the adolescent negotiates their relationship and intimacy with their parents depends on the individual characteristics and developmental changes of the adolescent and parent (Noller and Callan, 1991). With regards to the individual, there may be differences within the parent or adolescent regarding the engagement of intimate behaviours (Cantor and Malley, 1991). For instance, the strength and importance attached to intimacy may differ for parents and children, consequently affecting the level of intimacy between them (Prager, 1995). Differences in the parent or adolescent's personality traits, attitudes and beliefs will also impact upon the value placed upon intimate relating (Prager, 1995). Other factors include the parent or child's satisfaction with the relationship, the stability of the relationship, and the degree of harmony or destructive conflict within the bond (Prager, 1995). Arguably closeness and intimacy processes within the parent-adolescent relationship will be shaped by the needs, expectations, and behavioural tendencies of each member of the relationship (Collins and Feeney, 2004).

Regarding individual development, pubertal changes within the child may elicit changes in the parent-child attachment. Prager (1995) suggested that the increasingly adult-like appearance of post-pubertal adolescents might prompt parents to think of their children as older and more responsible. The parent's altering perception of the child may then initiate a new level of egalitarianism in the adolescents' relationships with parents (Prager, 1995). As one mother commented:

“Although it has only been a few months since we last spoke there have been changes. She [daughter] has grown up physically and is becoming a young woman. She has started her periods and knows how to look after herself on that front and she knows she is a bigger girl now. So she is becoming more mature and responsible” (Abigail, late-thirties, Chinese mother).

However, some parents in the sample suggested that their adolescent child still looked “young”, were still “their babies” and “not grown up yet”, as such, treated them as immature, much to the child's disgruntlement.

“I guess they think I am the same person as when I was younger. But ever since I was ten I started changing and I act differently. . . . At times I just want to tell my parents ‘don't worry about me so much’ and ‘just leave me alone’. But I don't feel like telling them. They still treat me like a kid that's the main problem” (Olivia, twelve years old).

Alongside pubertal changes, the adolescent's abilities to understand at a (supposedly) higher-level, and their new conceptions of the world and self, means that parents may

expect changes within the parent-child contract (Elkind, 1980). Parents may expect more of their children and make more demands (Douván and Adelson, 1966). A certain amount of loyalty and commitment may be expected from children, in return for the parent's time, energy, effort and expense. In terms of loyalty, parents may expect young people to be dedicated to their beliefs and values, to the parents themselves and to family symbols and moral values (Elkind, 1980). This may be problematic, if the adolescent does not feel prepared or ready for such a shift in dynamics. For instance, one female adolescent complained that she did not have the emotional maturity to be her mother's emotional crutch, and to remain loyal to her mother's (biased) opinions, regarding family problems and issues.

“When it comes to my mum's moaning, I'm not mature enough to listen to both sides and to still have a neutral feeling which doesn't affect what I think about each of them. I mean you can't just moan about my grandma to me when I'm really close to my grandma, course I'm gonna go with my grandma more than you mum. But she doesn't get it. It's hard not to take sides, I'm not calm enough to deal with those things” (Grace, fourteen years old).

The majority of the parents however generally did not use their children as confidantes and support systems, which is similar to other research (Gabb, 2008). Parental decisions to avoid mutual disclosure to children may stem from the viewpoint that children need protecting from adult worries and burdens. As suggested in chapters 3 and 4, the ways in which children are perceived within society will have an impact upon the boundaries between adulthood and childhood, and what children should and should not do, including their exposure to 'adult' issues. By seeing the child as unequal in terms of support and advice, this can arguably affect the direction of intimacy between the parent and child, where the mutual disclosure is expected from the young person but not from parent to child.

8.5 Intimacy Levels and Family Factors

Family factors such as family size, birth order of children and the age difference between parents and children may be of relevance when considering intimacy levels within the parent-child dyad. With family size, parents with multiple children may be less focused on one particular child, and may maintain more obvious parent-child boundaries (Chen, 2007). With fewer children then, there may be greater potential for parent-child contact and therefore intimacy (Falion and Bowles, 1997). A larger family may also face heavier demands and responsibilities in comparison to smaller sized families. As such, parents may have little time and opportunity to spend with children, in terms of day-to-day activities, as well as establishing and maintaining intimate relations. For example, money may be problematic for larger families; thus, parents may have to participate in additional opportunities for paid employment. Children may also be expected to contribute towards the family income. Additional employment and the experience of exhausting jobs may limit the opportunities for shared activities, cohesion and intimacy between the parent-child dyad. However being an only child may also be problematic, as parental efforts are focused entirely

on one particular child and this may affect intimacy levels between the parent-child dyad.

“Mum says things over and over again which is annoying, probably because I am an only child to be honest. If I had a brother and sister, it’d be different and I wish I did have a brother and sister then she could spend more time looking after him or her and leave me alone for a bit” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

Regarding birth order, research has shown that parents (despite suggesting otherwise) tend to differentiate their children in terms of closeness, support, and control (Suitor et al., 2008). For instance, first borns tend to have more expected of them from parents and are confronted and controlled more than later borns (Falion and Bowles, 1997). In particular, Rossi and Rossi (1990) suggested that older females from large families are prone to report high levels of intimacy with their mothers. This may be due to the additional help needed or offered to mothers whilst growing up, for instance, being the mother’s confidante and the sharing of household duties. Regarding middle or the youngest children, once they have reached adolescence, parents have already experienced the adolescent years with previous children and in some ways know what to expect. As a result, parents may be less controlling or strict with their younger adolescent children (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Parents may also tolerate more independent thinking and disagreement, in comparison to their earlier experiences of bringing up a child through adolescence (Prager, 1995). In this research, this was not necessarily the case. For instance, Alexandra is the youngest sister of four girls within her family and she suggested that her parents were both more lenient and stricter with her in comparison to her three elder siblings.

“I think with the oldest, they [parents] were really strict with her growing up. Then the middle two they were more lenient, then with the last one- me, they realised I’m the last one and so I seem more young. Like letting me go out, because I am the youngest, so it seems a bigger deal. But with make-up and clothes and dying hair, it’s just normal to them, as my sisters have already done it” (Alexandra, fourteen years old).

Studies have suggested that parents and children who are close in age tend to report higher levels of intimacy (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). This may be due to similarities in the shared interests and activities between the parent and child and less of a generational gap. As one parent who had her daughter at a young age suggested:

“My relationship with my daughter is like friends, because my heart is young, so we think of the same things and do the same. For example, we watch ‘Bring It On’ together; it’s a film about dancing. Of course I don’t wear the same things as her though! (Sandra, late-forties, Chinese mother).

However, children in the sample did not single out age as an influential factor in closeness and intimacy with their parents. Instead cultural differences, language barriers and relatedness with other family members and friends were seen as affecting the feelings of closeness between the parent-child dyad.

8.6 Cohesion and Family Activities

Intimacy within parent-child relationships often requires cohesiveness. Cohesiveness is described as togetherness and the sharing of time and activities within a relationship (Prager, 1995). Cohesive activities, such as sharing a meal, completing a task together (agentic cohesiveness) or watching sports game together (communal cohesiveness) may not necessarily involve intimate engagement, but often serves as a backdrop for intimate interactions (Prager, 1995). Many parents emphasised the importance of cohesiveness through “family time” and tried to encourage shared activities with children to increase or maintain bonds, as well as helping children to “grow up appropriately”. As one parent commented,

“Home life is very important to me. I think family is very much the foundation of society. You learn what’s right and wrong and about law-abiding relationships, so it is important. It is important that I believe that we spend enough time together as a family” (Edmund, mid-fifties, Chinese father).

Eating at least one meal together in the day was one example of family time in the contemporary British Chinese household. Despite the differences in family lifestyles and commitments, family meals were repeatedly highlighted and prioritised by the parents in the research as a way of maintaining contact and closeness within the family.

“The main thing is to have dinner together, it’s the time to talk about what’s happened in the day and to communicate. I think it is important to sit down and have a proper meal that is why I am cooking almost every night. Except on Saturdays when we might go out somewhere, the children enjoy it more when we go out and sit in a restaurant and talk, it is an easier atmosphere, its good I think” (Mia, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

Such views are in line with Gabb’s (2008) study, where sharing food provided time and space for intimacy. Food has also been suggested to perform “a symbolic purpose in the process of creating and maintaining relationships and has an affective exchange value” (Gabb, 2008, p.121). In addition to regular meals together, parents and children engaged in shared interests and activities, such as sports, hobbies and television programs. Family holidays and trips away were also mentioned. Sanderson (2004) suggested that any attempt to create and maintain intimacy within a relationship is a worthwhile venture, as intimacy levels play an important role in predicting relationship satisfaction and helps maintain attachments over time.

Many parents and children suggested that there was a reduction in cohesive activities since adolescence. This was mainly due to parent’s workload, which was especially problematic for parents who worked in the take-away trade and for one lone parent family. Children of such families suggested that they lacked quality time (and thus bonds) with their parents and would like to improve relationships generally, as well as spending more time together.

“Sometimes my mum is busy at work, so I don’t see her much. I miss communicating with her. Maybe if she spent more time with me I would speak to her more” (Casey, twelve years old).

Some children understood their parent's work situation and the lack of family time as a result. As one child commented:

“I know they [parents] are working very hard, and they are doing it so they can keep us in good schools and stuff like that, so I don't think it is appropriate to say to them that I think they should spend more free time with us” (Ben, fourteen years old).

The majority of the older children in the sample commented that the lack of time spent with parents was not a major issue for them. This was possibly because of the value attached to independence and the importance of socialising with peers, rather than parents during adolescence. Some parents complained that their children did not want to spend time with them now they were older and had their own social lives.

“Of course you want to spend more time together but when they grow older they have their own friends. They won't say ‘oh lets go there’, you have to ask them the night before, if they say yes then it's no problem. If they say ‘I'm meeting someone’, I say we only go out once or twice a week, why can't you meet your friends later? But my husband says if they don't want to go, then leave them” (Heather, early-forties, Chinese mother).

Reduced opportunities to spend time together with parents may not necessarily have a detrimental impact upon the parent-child relationship (and intimacy levels), as quality time is not dependant upon quantity. As Falion and Bowles (1997) suggested, quality time “is dependent on having opportunities to interact with someone with whom there is a trusting or intimate type of relationship” (p. 30).

8.6.1 Intimacy levels: Communication and Self-Disclosure

Interpersonal relationships in the modern age have been argued to change in terms of intimate relating and functioning. In comparison to the past, some writers such as Giddens (1992) have argued that the process of ‘de-traditionalisation’ has freed men, women and children from definitive gender and generational relationships and obligations. The degree to which the ‘transformations of intimacy’ are materialised in everyday family lives remains contested (Gabb, 2008), nevertheless, intimate networks such as the parent-child relationship have been suggested to be characterised by free and open dialogue in comparison to the past. Communication is a crucial aspect of family life, affecting the quality of the parent-child relationship (and general family relations), the healthy functioning of individual family members and the family as a whole (Noller and Callan, 1991). Even children in the research highlighted the importance of dialogue within the home. As Carly (thirteen years old) suggested, “good parents should help children when they need help, do favours and talk to each other”. Available evidence suggests that parents continue to be the adolescent's most frequent conversation partners and they serve as an important source of companionship (Buhrmester and Furman, 1987). Parents are also seen as important consultants, especially regarding certain kinds of decisions, such as educational and career choices (Prager, 1995). Some adolescents may even try to narrow the communication and relationship gap with parents by initiating conversations on topics where parents are seen as having expertise (Polson, 1980).

Good communication is likely to mean that the adolescent will confide in their parents and look to them as a source of information and guidance (Prager, 1995). As a result, adolescents tend to rely less upon their peer group for emotional support and assistance and are less likely to engage in risky behaviours (Afifi, Joseph and Aldeis, 2008). Additionally, effective communication in the family provides models of social competence, identity development and skills training for the adolescent (such as self-disclosure and problem solving). The positive impacts associated with good communication and subsequent individual development, arguably affects the adolescent's ability to be initiate and sustain intimacy within the parent-child relationship (and other significant attachments; Noller and Callan, 1991). In support, Barnes and Olson (1985) found that families with better parent-adolescent communication are more loving and close.

Solomon and colleagues (2002) suggested that conversations about growing up are highly significant, as they indicate emotional closeness and a convergence on friendship relations between parents and adolescents. Feelings of connectedness within conversations, allow parents and adolescents to learn more about each other and each other's viewpoints, as well as coming to a better understanding when disagreements or conflicts arise. Connectedness is positively correlated with intimacy levels within the parent-child relationship and the individuality of the adolescent (Buhl, 2008). Higher levels of parental acceptance of adolescent independence may lead to less conflict concerning the child's agency and autonomy, thus better parent-child relations generally.

Regarding conversations and connectedness, adolescents generally cite mothers as being more positive, open, understanding, and better negotiators than fathers (which supports the majority of existing studies). Mothers seem more readily available to discuss a wider range of topics in comparison to fathers (Rossi and Rossi, 1990). Topics more easily discussed with mothers in the sample, included sex, alcohol, drugs, friendship choices and day-to-day decisions (e.g. clothing and make-up). However, some adolescents (daughters and sons) reported that their mothers were "old fashioned" and "strict", therefore less accepting than fathers (who in some cases were viewed as more relaxed and modern). As a result, mothers were less likely, or perceived to be less likely, to accept or understand certain issues raised by some adolescents. Mismatches in opinions and viewpoints between mothers and adolescents may lead to disagreements and conflicts, as well as reduced levels of intimacy between the parent-child dyad.

"I don't bother telling my mum about my friends or lads . . . I think I would be closer to my mum if she understood my personal life more. Just about my friends, like I said about *gweilows* [racist term for White people] being mature, the things I tell her about my friends she always thinks on the wrong side [negative influences]. Lads as well" (Charlotte, fourteen years old).

As opposed to mothers, fathers in both Western and Chinese societies are generally viewed as being more likely to impose their authority on children (Yee, 2005), especially with daughters during adolescence (e.g. attempting to delay sexual activities; Regnerus, 2006). As a result, adolescents tend to limit their communication with fathers, and are more defensive and guarded towards them, therefore creating distance within the parent-child relationship (Prager, 1995). Current research

however, suggests an alternative picture to the father-child relationship. For instance, Finn and Henwood's (2008) work shows that modern day fathers assimilate traditional and modern styles of parenting. 'New fathers' are seen to be less emotionally absent and authoritarian in their approach with children, and instead are more caring and nurturing than previous generations (Finn and Henwood, 2008). Indeed, fathers within this sample wanted to be more emotionally available, be more involved and be more attentive to their children compared to their own fathers. The contemporary fathers' estimation of their own advisory role and friendly approach corresponded with the children's perspectives of the father-child relationship. Even when physical distance separated households, some children still felt closet to their fathers. One child whose father lived separately from the rest of the family commented:

"Even though I don't see him much, he does understand me. He understands me more than my mum. He's more like a friend than a dad really . . . He doesn't know me in detail, in what I like or stuff cause he used to work loads while I was young as well, and now I see him even less but he understands me" (Grace, fourteen years old).

Chinese fathers' emotional openness and availability to children and the view of mothers as being strict and less open, contrasts the traditional Chinese doctrine, where fathers should be stern, whose duty it is to raise the family, whereas the mother's role is to be an affectionate caretaker (Parke et al., 2005). Interestingly some children felt equally close to both their mother and father.

"With my friends, sometimes they can't tell their parent anything cause they're not that kind of person, they are not 'soft' if you know what I mean, but with my parents I can tell them anything" (Carly, thirteen years old).

Whether it is with the mother or father, adolescents appear to cope much better when they feel accepted by their parents and are able to talk about their problems and issues (Noller and Callan, 1991). Similarly children highlighted the importance of "being understood" in relation to feelings of closeness and intimacy with parents. Children's comments were in line with contemporary understanding of what intimate relations between parents and children should consist of (such as deep knowing and understanding of the child; Jamieson, 1999). The experience of being understood and accepted by someone, in a positive manner, seems to capture what is important and rewarding about intimate experiences and tends to elicit trust between the relationship partners (Prager, 1995). Trust correlates with the increased likelihood of the adolescent divulging information to parents, in turn, the act of engaging and involving parents may increase the levels of trust within the adolescent by the parent. Trust not only contributes towards feelings of intimacy between the parent and child (such as partner responsiveness, emotional availability and self-disclosure), but the level of agency that the parent is willing to permit the adolescent whilst growing up. In turn, adolescents are more likely to engage in verbally intimate interactions with their parents, if parents support their efforts to become independent (Spencer, 1994). This can affect the quality and intimacy of the child-parent relationship (Noack and Buhl, 2004). In support, Spencer (1994) found that parents who "were willing to set aside their own prejudgments long enough to listen to the adolescent's explanations and

attributions were most likely to elicit frequent and intimate self disclosures from their adolescents” (p. 84).

Theoretical suggestions of democracy and open communication within the parent-child relationship and the realities of which, may be vastly different however. For example Olivia (twelve years old) bitterly complained that whenever there was some form of communication between herself and her parents, this mainly consisted of unfair and unnecessary criticisms regarding her appearance, behaviour and attitudes.

“I think they have a bad image of me in their minds [*Interviewer*: Why do you think that?] Because my mum is always telling me to dress like a girl, sit like a girl and stop being boyish. They want me to be a good girl, but I don’t feel like it [acting the way parents want]. [*Interviewer*: How does that make you feel?] I’ve got more aggressive and more moody and tend to want to be alone.”

When parent-adolescent communication consists mainly of criticisms, adolescents tend to develop a negative self-image, which leads to more negative behaviours of the adolescent and the likelihood of increased disapproval and rejection from parents (Noller and Callan, 1991). Some research has also found that adolescents may limit their disclosure and confidences to parents, in order to protect themselves from unwanted parental supervision and authority (Solomon et al., 2002), as well as avoiding parental reprimands, constraints and conflicts (Prager, 1995). As a result parents may not, or no longer, be the adolescent’s primary confidants.

“There are certain things that you don’t tend to mention [to parents], or want to mention . . . Things that I shouldn’t have done, misbehaving at school, girls, I mean why would you want to?” (Ben, fourteen years old).

Solomon and colleagues (2002) suggested that the withholding of information allows privacy, power and identity for the adolescent, but it is at the expense of parent-child intimacy, as the revelation of personal and private information about the self (i.e. self-disclosure) seems to be a central component of intimacy (Prager, 1995). However, Noller and Callan (1991) suggested that adolescents may be distancing themselves from parents, but they still want their love and support. It is important to bear in mind that the lack of disclosure between parents and children does not necessarily equate to less intimacy within the relationship. As Jamieson (1999) suggested, “a sense of unconditional love, trust and acceptance may be sustained with caring actions and relatively few words” (p. 489).

In summary, relationships between the adolescent and their parents are not always stressful, and most adolescents do not completely break away from their parents, as many separation-individualisation theories would suggest (Noller and Callan, 1991). Instead, parent-adolescent attachments can be viewed as being reciprocal, where both parties work toward the development of a more equal and positive relationship, with varying degrees of success and levels of intimacy. A balance between closeness to parents and a sense of individuality by the young person seems to be important for healthy adolescent development and intimate parent-child relations. Specifically, the degree of control desired by parents, the amount of conflict within the household and the levels of intimacy shown, in terms of closeness, love, and support as well as

shared activities and disclosures, are important factors when exploring intimate relating between parents and adolescents.

8.7 Intimacy and Culture

Within many societies, only certain expressions of intimacy are promoted and accepted across public and private domains (such as the display of love and affection; Berlant, 2000). In support, Berlant (2000) found that within Western cultures, both men and women share similar concepts and understandings of the meaning of intimacy (Fletcher, 2002). However, similar to arguments that suggest that 'childhood' and 'the family' are social constructions, writers have also argued that 'intimacy' is a constructed experience. Patterns of closeness and intimacy are not 'just natural', but instead grounded in particular cultural worlds (Adams, Anderson and Adonu, 2004). As Boym (2000) argued:

“Intimacy is not solely a private matter; it may be protected, manipulated, or besieged by the state, framed by art, embellished by memory, or estranged by critique” (p. 228).

Views of intimacy are seen to differ across cultures, and may not be universally shared or understood as a result (Broude, 1987). Alongside such views, it would be possible to argue that the differing perspectives within Chinese and Western culture may influence the intimacy levels between parents and children in this sample. For instance, within Western or individualist societies, intimacy reflects particular constructions of the self and social reality (Adams, Anderson and Adonu, 2004). The rise of individualism is seen to contribute towards the importance placed upon closeness and intimacy. The construction of self as a separate and autonomous being coincides with the values placed upon the exploration and expression of individual feelings. However, the values placed upon intimacy and intimate relating within individualist societies may not be applicable to other cultures. For example, individualist societies are said to place greater emphasis upon self-disclosure for enhancing intimacy than collectivistic cultures (Adams, Anderson and Adonu, 2004).

The collectivist orientation of Chinese culture has been widely documented. Both within traditional and contemporary Chinese societies, the well-being and harmony of the group (e.g. the family, society and the state) have been observed to take precedence over the individual. Achieving and maintaining social order and interpersonal harmony are key within such societies (Chen et al., 1999). In this context, Chinese values are based on a willingness to put one's own agentic strivings aside and to foster the well being of the larger community. The fulfilment of an individual's needs for intimacy may be viewed as self-indulgent and a source of shame therefore (Prager, 1995).

Within Confucian philosophy (which heavily influences Chinese culture), inhibition and self-restraint are considered to be the indices of accomplishment, mastery and maturity (King and Bond, 1985). As a result, Chinese parents are said to be less physically and emotionally expressive with their children. Instead, love is demonstrated by successfully meeting the child's needs (Uba, 1994), especially through instrumental support and sacrifice (Chao and Tseng, 2002). As one parent commented:

“Whilst we were growing up, my parents priorities were making sure that we were all well fed, had enough, and had all the necessities needed to go through our childhood and the standard education system” (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

Confucian doctrine also stresses that one’s good intentions are conveyed through actions more than words (Wu and Chao, 2005). In contrast to individualistic societies, intimacy within the parent-child relationship in a collectivist culture may be better predicted by parent’s perceptions that they are correctly anticipating their child’s needs and that they are fulfilling their role as parents in the relationship (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Within the parent-child relationship Confucian ethics suggests that relatedness and responsiveness could be encouraged by the child’s adherence to authority (Rothbaum et al., 2000). Filial behaviours (e.g. being grateful and submissive to parents) are suggested to foster family harmony by lessening family conflict and increasing feelings of mutual obligation (Marshall, 2008). In practice however, expected filial behaviours negatively affected the possibility of intimacy and the levels of intimate relating between Chinese parents and children. This was expressed by parents themselves whilst recalling their past relationships with parents.

“My mother did love us, but it’s not like now where you are physically affectionate towards your children. It just didn’t happen. They just told you off regularly, but back then, telling off was to teach” (Mia, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

Similar views were expressed by Olivia and Adam (both twelve years old), who felt that their parents were “too traditional” in their expectations and child-rearing methods. Children suggested that their parent’s expectation of filial piety was in contrast to Western norms and interests, consequently, parents were viewed as being unwilling to understand and accept the adolescent’s needs with regards to personal freedoms, rights of expressions and intimate relating. As such, adolescents did not enjoy talking or opening up to their parents. Children also felt resentful that their feelings were not taken into account or that their wishes were ignored.

“I don’t see my parents as friends, they are serious, so you don’t have a joke with them, and you just do as they say” (Adam, twelve years old).

In line with Sung’s (1985) study, Chinese children may not recognise parent’s love for them when they live in mainstream Western cultures, as Chinese parenting styles that are distant and formal stand in sharp contrast to the warmth and affection overtly expressed in individualistic societies. A related note to cultural differences was language use within the home. Some children commented that language barriers resulted in less self-disclosure to parents which affected intimacy levels.

“I speak Chinese to my mum but then it’s hard for me to speak Chinese to her, because obviously my English is better . . . My Chinese is OK but there are still some things I don’t know how to say. I think if she was better at English we would be closer” (Sophie, fourteen years old).

As a result of cultural differences and language difficulties, some children suggested that they were closer to other family relatives (such as aunts and cousins) and friends as they shared similar experiences or have a better understanding of the child and their circumstance. Children regularly mentioned relationships with younger and older siblings as being important and intimate.

“I feel closer to my sister because we both share the same thoughts and because she is younger so her childhood is nearer to mine, and she can speak English as well” (Adam, twelve years old).

“I’d rather talk to my brother about things like school, friends and arguments about friends. I would tell my brother about it and ask him what to do? He’s fallen out with his friends before as well, so he’s better at giving advice [than parents] . . . When he comes home from school, we can just talk about things openly about what’s happened at school. [*Interviewer*: How is he easy to talk to?] I think it’s because we like the same things, the same songs and things like that so we can talk about things openly. He goes to the same primary school that I was in, so we can talk about things that happen, so he knows what I am talking about” (Ling, twelve years old).

Interestingly, Olivia (twelve years old) blamed the arrival of her younger brother as the reason for the lack of closeness between herself and parents.

“I was about six years old when my brother was born and lots of things kind of changed when I was about eight. My parents seemed to pay more attention to my brother and what I want is lots of attention and stuff, I’m just that kind of person.”

Although the majority of research portrays the positives of sibling relationships in terms of help, assistance and support (Weaver, Coleman and Ganong, 2003), clearly not all sibling attachments can be read as positive and may even be seen as a threat to the closeness and bonds of the parent-child relationship. Olivia’s comments also demonstrate the effects that family size, birth order and parenting methods can have upon intimacy levels between parents and children.

In relation to culture and intimacy levels between parents and children, is the issue of migration and the relationship between parents and children prior to, and after migration. For example, one mother suggested that her relationship with her son had improved since moving to the UK (from Hong Kong), because of the cultural differences for intimate relating. As suggested earlier, Western understandings of warmth and care often incorporate physical and emotional demonstration, whereas collectivist understandings may be based on support through involvement and investment (Lim and Lim, 2005).

“After coming to the UK, I feel closer to my son because of the differences in culture. Like, the manner is different here and we can be more affectionate, do things like cuddling and talking more intimately. I feel that this will prolong our relationship also” (Mia, early-fifties, Chinese mother).

The relationship before migration must also be considered when exploring levels of intimacy between the parent and child. For instance, one mother and daughter dyad had a strained and distant relationship before moving to the UK and this has continued ever since. Before migrating to Britain, Grace (the daughter) explained that she was mainly cared for by the housekeeper and her grandmother in Hong Kong, as both her parents were busy working. As a result, Grace did not feel close to her parents whilst growing up in Hong Kong. When moving to England in her early adolescence with her mother, the lack of intimacy continued in the mother-child relationship and the distance between them was suggested to remain.

“When we were in Hong Kong, I wasn’t really close to our parents anyway because the maid and my grandma used to look after us, so we have just stayed in trend here . . . So we’re [Grace and her mother] not very close, we don’t understand each other that much. I don’t talk to her that much, or know what she thinks. [*Interviewer*: Do you think it will change in a few years?] Yeah, but then I think no it won’t change with mum as there’s only four years till I am eighteen and then I will live on my own and be more independent” (Grace, fourteen years old).

During the fieldwork, it also became apparent that Grace’s mother had heavy work commitments and Grace herself had an ever-increasing social life. Both factors further contributed towards the lack of intimacy between this particular parent-child dyad.

8.8 Intimacy, Culture and Current Parent-Child Relationships

Unlike in their own childhood experiences, the majority of contemporary parents were able to transform ‘traditional’ Chinese norms (e.g. distance between adults and children) in ways that fit their own lives and values, as well as from their childhood experiences, when establishing and maintaining intimacy with children. As such, parents encouraged and welcomed intimacy between themselves and their children through direct contact, physical affection and “being like friends”.

In contrast to traditional Chinese approaches to parent-child relationships (e.g. lack of parental warmth, emotional expression and intimacy), the majority of contemporary parents were more direct or expressive with children. Bodily encounters in families can express many different feelings such as love, gratitude, compassion and remorse and adds a physical dimension to intimacy levels between parents and children (Gabb, 2008). Parents demonstrated their open display of love and affection through hugging and kissing, as well as praising children more generally.

“I think Chinese people feel embarrassed to show their emotions, especially the older generation, like my mum and dad, they never did that. You see. Chinese people always like to keep things inside; they never show their feelings. But I want to show my children affection and how I am feeling. I think body language and affection are really important” (Heather, early-forties, Chinese mother).

However, some adolescents suggested that some forms of bodily contact such as hugging and holding hands were embarrassing or unnecessary as they were older.

Adolescents mentioned that they preferred other forms of intimacy as expression of care, such as talking to parents and sharing time together. Similarly, contemporary parents mentioned the importance of spending time together, which differed from their own childhood experiences. For parents who migrated to Britain as children, they experienced less contact and intimacy with parents, as their parents were preoccupied with setting up a new life or faced difficulties in adapting to the UK. Due to economical difficulties for example, financing the household became the main focus for parents of the previous generation, which lessened the opportunities for family time and intimate relating for parents when they were children.

“I never saw my parents growing up, especially my dad as he was trying to earn money to improve the family and to provide a better living. When all the family came over to the UK, yeah the family was reunited but my parents still had to work hard, to save more money up and to pay for things ”(Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Contemporary Chinese parents also wanted to be seen as a friend to their children, in contrast to their own relationship with parents.

“I feel as though my daughter will be able to confront me with her problems more than I did with my parents, because my parents were not as open. I love them to bits though, don’t get me wrong, especially my mum, she was the softer one. My dad however was stubborn, a stubborn and typical Chinese man! But still, because I was growing up in the UK and became more Westernised, I figured that the Chinese are not as open, but I am more Westernised than my parents were. So I can talk to my children more and they can talk to me and confide in me, so it’s a lot easier than the relationship I had with my parents. Because of that, I find it comforting, because the children do talk to me a lot about everyday life, what their friends are like, what their school is like, things like that. If they have any problems or worries they will talk to me about it” (Ava, mid-forties, Chinese mother).

Parents also invested heavily in their relationships with children, which accords to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (1995) suggestion that parents are turning to their children for lifelong commitment and love in a time of individualism and emotional uncertainty (as discussed within chapter 3).

“I like to offer myself as a friend to my son, as he gets older I don’t want him to just treat me as a parent who only issues authority and demands things. I want him to be able to trust me and to tell me problems, ask for assistance whenever he has problems with his work or schoolwork. I want him to know I’m there for him as a friend, to play with or to play games with. We are basically there to support each other. So our relationship is growing all the time, hopefully to be a stronger bond” (Ting, early-forties, Chinese father).

Physical affection, commitment and more open and reciprocal parent-child relationships were seen as active efforts by contemporary parents to encourage and maintain intimacy with their children, in comparison to their own childhoods. However, despite the emphasis placed upon “being like friends”, parents still expected children to respect and obey them. For instance, the Chinese value of filial

piety was still seen as important in the functioning of the family and for children's socialisation. Unbeknown to parents, children suggested that the existence and continued emphasis of filial piety was a direct cause of distance within the parent-child relationship, despite parental efforts to encourage parent-child intimacy levels.

With regards to culture, contemporary Chinese parents can be seen as demonstrating their own blend of West and Eastern hybridity, in the establishment and maintenance of intimate relations with children (as well as in their general parenting methods and levels of agency granted to children). Hybridisation refers to "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in practices" (Rowe and Schelling, 1991, p.231). However some parents did feel caught between the traditional Chinese ideals (such as Confucianism and authority), and the modern (Westernised) notions of equality and intimacy (similar to Yee's, 2005, research findings of Hong Kong children and parents). Some parents struggled with the level of intimacy required and personal requests (either culturally or from their children). For example, some parents in the sample, like their own parents, found it difficult to be self-disclosing and did not support the idea of equality within the parent-child relationship due to Chinese cultural values (e.g. the importance of inhibiting emotions and adult authority). Children with parents who held greater control and dominance within the relationship felt they had a less intimate relationship.

As Giddens (2001, p.18) suggested, family is often a site for the struggles between tradition and modernity. Not only can culture prescribe certain values and beliefs of intimate practices, but generational differences may also add further distance between individuals' belief systems regarding appropriate parent-child closeness. As suggested earlier, mutual disclosure between parents and children was suggested to emerge as an ideal from the 1950s onwards (Jamieson, 1998), as time progresses then, other societal values concerning intimate acts may also vary and change, consequently affecting the ways of intergenerational relating and understanding between parents and children. One example of a cultural and generational mismatch between parent and adolescent's views (and the subsequent levels of intimacy) was seen within the use and parental threat of corporal punishment. Children and parents disagreed over the appropriateness of such child-rearing methods. Whereas some parents justified the use of physical punishment with the 'traditional' Chinese view, that it was one method to raise a child appropriately, adolescents were understandably less supportive of corporal punishment. Their views and feelings were consistent with existing research and popular discourses that see physical punishment as an invasion of privacy and as affecting one's self-esteem and self-worth. Differences in views either created conflicts or feelings of resentment from the adolescent, in some cases both. These differences can then affect the levels of intimacy between the parent-child relationships.

When considering parent-child intimacy and cultural factors, it is important to bear in mind that it is too simplistic to assume that individualism and collectivism can be the sole explanation (Marshall, 2008). It is also one-dimensional to assume that individualism and communal values have set notions of intimacy and intimate relating (Prager, 1995). Cultural explanations of intimate relating may mask the heterogeneity in social actions among members of the same culture as a result (Rothbaum et al., 2000). Just as intense intimacy and democracy cannot be assumed in every Western

household (Jamieson, 1998), neither can the lack of intimacy be assumed within collectivist-orientated families. Cultures also constitute dynamic systems that develop and change over historical time (Greenfield, 2004). For instance, although Chinese families are strongly shaped by Confucian ideology research indicates that the values are not only changing in immigrant settings, but in their country of origin as well (Lim and Lim, 2005).

Aside from cultural issues that need to be considered when understanding intimacy within the parent-child relationship (and intimacy more generally), there are inherent problems in the study of intimate relations itself. Conceptually, intimacy is often assumed to be a natural concept, referring to persons, interactions and relationships (Laurenceau et al., 2004), making it difficult to specify the characteristics of intimacy. In relation, it is difficult to make clear distinctions between the features of intimate relationships and other kinds of relationships. As a result, research perspectives and theories of intimate relationships will vary greatly, depending upon the aspects of intimacy being studied (Laurenceau et al., 2004). Aside from cultural factors, the importance attached to spending time together and of building relationships with children (and intimacy) in this sample also appeared to be dependent upon the parent's priorities, the opportunities available for family time and parent-child relationships themselves.

8.9 Conclusion

The importance of interpersonal relationships and how people organise their personal lives, in terms of love and care (or intimacy) has been the subject of much research and debate. When considering intimate relationships, most conceptions of intimacy include various positive behaviours, experiences and interactions, such as love, cohesion, connectedness and support. Under such conceptualisations, intimacy can be seen within a variety of relationship types, including the parent-child attachment. Parent-child relationships are often portrayed as the most intimate and significant attachment, due to profound psychological and social bonds. For example, attachment theory postulates that the parent-child relationship is the starting point for the individual's experience of intimacy, as well as laying the foundations for all intimate relating and understanding (Bowlby, 1969).

Aside from early childhood experiences of intimacy, other life stages of the child may impact upon the closeness of the parent-child dyad. As children in the sample were undergoing adolescence, it seemed appropriate to discuss the issues related to adolescence and parent-child intimacy. Issues that affected the intimacy between parents and children included the individualism and independence of the young person. Indeed, many parents in the sample suggested that the child's process of individualism (and the distance and conflicts created) had an impact upon their closeness and intimacy. On the other hand, some parents suggested that intimacy levels had improved since adolescence, due to the child's growing degrees of maturity and the improved levels of relatedness and communication between the parent and child. Arguably parent-child relationships are merely transformed during adolescence, not completely eliminated, as some writers would suggest (Cooney, 2002). In support, research has also shown that parents often remain as close confidants, consultants and advisors to adolescents, as well as providing general levels of companionship.

Contemporary Chinese parent-child relationships and intimacy appear to be mediated and influenced by cultural values. As culture not only affects the individual's perceptions of intimacy and intimate relating, but the values placed upon intimacy itself. The differences between intimacy constructs between Western and Chinese cultural norms appear to influence the intimacy levels between parents and children in the sample.

For some children (and for the majority of parents whilst growing up), there was a strong adherence to Chinese values by parents, which inhibited and discouraged certain levels of intimacy between the parent-child dyad. Parents viewed as 'traditional' (i.e. strict and authoritarian) were suggested to lack warmth and emotional expressiveness. As such, children (and parents in their childhoods) felt a lack of intimacy with parents and did not bother to initiate or encourage intimacy with 'traditional' parents (e.g. talking to parents about showing more affection or emotions, and spending more time together). Generally, low levels of intimacy correlated with relationship dissatisfaction with parents and less self-disclosure. Fewer disclosures often meant that conflicts and disagreements were rare, as children did not attempt to change their parent's viewpoints on intimacy (or other matters in general). Although current children in the study suggested relationship dissatisfaction with parents and the low levels of intimacy between them, this was not seen as particularly problematic. This was possibly because of the importance children now attached to peers and one's own development and individuality.

For the most part, families with high levels of intimacy were correlated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Parent-child intimacy was seen to be especially important for a majority of parents. Reasons included the lack of affection and intimacy parents had themselves as children, and because of their parenting outlooks (e.g. being authoritative rather than authoritarian like their own parents were). In terms of encouraging and maintaining intimacy with their child, a majority of the parents were able to assimilate and accommodate their traditional Chinese values in a variety of ways, which related to their own childhood experience and the wider cultural goals and norms. For example, parents were friendly and open with children (prioritised within Western conceptualisations of intimacy) whilst emphasising parental respect and authority (within Confucian ethics).

Similar to the conclusions of chapter 6 and chapter 7, intimacy appears to be encouraged and sustained within the parent-child relationship according to parent's own Chinese and Western cultural preferences, thus depicting a culturally hybrid approach to parent-child intimacy. However, some parents (who classified themselves as traditionally Chinese) struggled with the conflicting notions of intimacy within individualist and collectivist ideals. Specifically, parents appeared to fulfil their traditional responsibilities as authority figures and socialising agents (as deemed appropriate within collectivist values), whilst struggling to maintain an overall relationship that included overt displays of love, companionship and mutual enjoyment (as seen within individualist or Westernised ideologies).

Similar to the concept of culture, the parent-child relationship is arguably a fluid and evolving entity rather than being solely fixed or static in nature (Yee, 2005). As such, intimate parent-child relationships should be viewed as an interactive and reciprocal process, where intimacy levels can fluctuate, and are dependent upon the partners and

interactions involved (Prager, 1995). In other words, both parents and children contribute towards their relationship and levels of intimacy. Such views are consistent with the bi-directional perspectives of parent-child relationships.

The next and concluding chapter brings together the links between cultural hybridity and bi-directional relationships in relation to contemporary Chinese parenting approaches, Chinese children's agency and intimacy within the parent-child attachment.

Chapter 9

‘Conclusion’

9.1 The Importance of Chinese Childhood Research: Revisited

Research with Chinese individuals often assumes that patterns of behaviour and interactions are based upon ethnic or cultural factors. With Chinese families who have migrated to the UK, family members are suggested to be torn between two cultural belief systems, those of collectivism (seen as traditional Chinese norms) and that of individualism (seen as typical Western practices). Current research argues that collectivist values dominate Chinese parenting styles, the rights and obligations of the child and what is culturally expected (and required) from children within the immigrant household. The emphasis upon Chinese norms then creates a multitude of negative household experiences and relationship patterns. Examples include culture clashes and gaps, as well as the rising incidence of conflicts between parents and children. Chinese children are said to experience feelings of alienation from their parents as a result. However by discussing the writings of diaspora, globalisation and transnationalism, the existing studies of Chinese families are criticised for being heavily reliant upon cultural generalisations. Although ethnicity and culture may have a certain element to play, there are inherent problems with the terms conceptually, as well as their overall explanatory powers. Furthermore, various differences in terms of an individual’s background, place of origin, ethnic identity, language use and social environment, also contribute towards Chinese diversity and subsequent behaviours and belief systems. Nevertheless, there are still stereotypes of ‘the Chinese’, which fail to recognise the changes or the varied experiences of the diasporic Chinese within research (Sinn, 1998).

Research with other family groups has found that families are very diverse in their relationships and activities, with children playing an active role in the household. As such, hierarchal relationships and household functioning based solely upon Chinese cultural traditions may be overstated in the literature. Another factor to consider is the construction of ‘childhood’ and ‘the family’, as common perceptions of children and what constitutes ‘childhood’ and ‘the family’, impacts upon the way we research Chinese childhoods and what the studies can reveal.

To avoid reproducing cultural stereotypes and generalisations of Chinese individuals, a detailed exploration and analysis of British Chinese households was argued for. This is coupled by the fact that there is a lack of research with British Chinese families and an absence of literature concerning the fluidity of Chinese family formats and Chinese children’s agency. Due to the lack of current knowledge of contemporary British Chinese families, this thesis set out to explore Chinese parenting approaches, children’s agency and parent-child intimacy levels within UK Chinese households.

In exploring contemporary British Chinese parenting approaches, the agency and autonomy of the child, as well as the presence of parent-child intimacy levels, a total of 12 British Chinese families participated in the study, who were all based in the North of England. Families were diverse in terms of family type (e.g. nuclear, lone parent family, astronaut family, blended family types), family backgrounds (such as education levels, careers, migration history), length of residency in the UK (some parents were British born, other parents had recently migrated or had lived in England for over 15-20 years), as well as ethnic origins (countries of origin included Mainland China, Hong Kong and Malaysia for example).

Within each family, one parent and one child from each household were individually interviewed. By speaking to the parent and child, contemporary accounts of parenting approaches, agency of the child and parent-child intimacy can be revealed from both perspectives. Additionally by speaking to parents about their own childhood memories, their recollections of family life can offer insights into their own behaviours and belief systems as parents now.

A total of three qualitatively based interviews were conducted with each parent and child, which were either face-to-face or conducted via the telephone. A mixture of mothers and fathers participated in the research, and children were aged between 11-15. Children within this age range were specifically chosen due to the array of personal and social changes that the initial onset of adolescence and the transition to secondary schooling may bring. Particularly, the study was interested in what impacts such life changes may have upon the parenting approaches and the levels of child agency and intimacy within the home. It was important to include children within the study to highlight their voices and in acknowledging their role as active and influential agents (as argued within the new sociology of childhood).

The empirical data revealed interesting similarities and differences in terms of parenting approaches, agency of the child and parent-child intimacy levels within past and present British Chinese households. Such findings not only challenge and contradict the existing literature, but offer new insights into the patterns and practices of modern British Chinese families, and more importantly, the experiences of Chinese children. The key empirical findings will be discussed in the sections below.

9.2 Research Findings: Parenting Approaches

With regards to contemporary parenting approaches (chapter 6), there appears to be small similarities between Chinese child-rearing methods of today and those of the past. This included the importance of patriarchy, filial piety and corporal punishment. Patriarchy can generally be described as men taking the prime responsibility within the home and domestic relations. Although filial piety can be interpreted in many ways, it is largely understood as being respectful and subservient to parents (and elders). The value placed upon patriarchy and filial piety appears to come from Confucian and collectivist philosophies, which were incorporated into contemporary parenting methods due to the parent's expressed Chinese cultural identity. Indeed, Confucianism has been suggested to play a significant role in Chinese culture and within past and current Chinese societies.

Despite the importance placed upon Confucianism by parents, it was apparent from the literature review that Confucian principles have been historically modified over time, leading to misinterpretations of Confucius's original writings. For instance, Confucius originally suggested that relationships within society should be mutually obliging and respectful, which included the parent-child relationship. In his teachings, Confucius spoke of five basic relations; these were (1) ruler and subject, (2) parent and child, (3) husband and wife, (4) older and younger siblings and (5) friend and friend. The concept of mutual equality within the five relationships gradually weakened over time and became a rigid justification of social hierarchy, which favoured the stronger party over the weaker (Lee, 1999b). Therefore, despite Confucius's original teachings that children were not expected to submit entirely to parents, the concept of filial piety was often used to justify absolute parental authority over children (Wang and Ollendick, 2001). This was seen by past and present parental attitudes towards children and the perceived rights of parents. It included parent's having a large degree of say in the child's life and parents being intolerant of disrespectful and non-complaint behaviours.

Related to filial piety was the use of corporal punishment. Again, contemporary Chinese parents had used or were willing to use such methods, as their own parents had done with them whilst growing up. The use of corporal punishment in the past and present may be due to the Chinese belief that it is a necessary and effective method in 'training' a child to be a morally correct and decent human being (self-perfection is regarded as the highest virtue within Confucianism). Current parents who did not use physical disciplinary approaches suggested that it was inappropriate due to the legislative issues regarding corporal punishment within the UK. More importantly, these parents believed that chastisement was unacceptable and inhumane due to the child's maturing age and evolving identity and feelings. This arguably reflects a more contemporary approach to parenting by some parents.

Patriarchal family set-ups were common amongst the modern Chinese families and this coincided with the parent's own childhood experiences. Chinese fathers were expected to be the head of the household, to take responsibility of the family's welfare and to be the main disciplinarian. Such outlooks were expressed, despite parental suggestions that their marriages were more egalitarian in comparison to their own parents. Contemporarily, the strength of patriarchy was actually encouraged by the mothers themselves, who referred to (and expected) fathers to be the punisher of any major child violations. Adhering to patriarchal beliefs can be traced back to Confucian teachings. However, similar to the concept of filial piety, patriarchy was not actually endorsed by Confucius. Mutuality of relationships meant that the husband and wife relationship was based upon a principle of support, where there should be a division of labour, not male dominance. However, this concept of reciprocity was lost during Chinese history, when the five relationships (as discussed earlier) were used to justify hierarchy and obedience within relations (i.e. wife to husband and child to parent), thus the continuation of patriarchy within Chinese societies, families and parenting methods (Sham and Woodrow, 1998).

However, there were strong differences between modern day Chinese parenting and the parenting of previous generations. Specifically, most contemporary parents promoted and encouraged less authoritarian family set-ups and relationships. This was partly because of the parent's own strict upbringing and the problems and issues that

this caused. For example, parents experienced distant relationships with their own parents and encountered feelings of loneliness, due to a lack of support and communication with their own mothers and fathers. As contemporary parents did not want the same childhood experience for their own children, they tried to create a more relaxed and informal atmosphere within the home. However, some of the children's comments stood in contrast to the parent's view of themselves that they were less authoritarian and not necessary right all the time (chapter 7).

Parents also tried to create positive relationships with their children, by encouraging open lines of communication by being more conversational and friend-like. Such findings resonate with Chao's (1994) research work, which suggests that Chinese parenting cannot be wholly described as authoritarian (e.g. being strict and expecting child obedience) as it can incorporate authoritative elements (e.g. parental acceptance and responsiveness). Chao (1994, 2001) also argued, the concept of authoritarian parenting is somewhat ethnocentric, as Chinese parenting is often described in contrast to Western ideals which are modelled upon European/American middle-class families. Whereas Chao's work suggested that differences in Chinese parenting styles were due to the (at times misleading) categorisation of authoritative and authoritarian child-rearing methods, this study instead emphasises parent's own childhood experiences and upbringing as the reason for change in contemporary Chinese parenting approaches.

Bonds with children were seen as very important by contemporary parents. Good relations with children were especially emphasised during the onset and transition to adolescence. Parents wanted to remain close to children, in order for them to know what was happening in their child's life and to be aware of any problems or issues that their child may be currently facing (such as physical and emotional changes). Interestingly, despite some of the parent's hopes to be more friendly and approachable than their own parents, modern Chinese parents still prioritised the importance of filial piety within the home (as mentioned earlier). The more emphasis placed upon filial piety by contemporary parents, the more it affected and hindered the bonding experience for those particular parent-child dyads. Whereas parents who upheld the value of filial piety, but were more willing to accommodate a degree of flexibility in their belief systems (e.g. allowing their child to have independent thinking and speech as well as maintaining respect for parents) had better bonds with their children as a result (see section 9.4).

Another change from parenting approaches of the past was the acceptance of children's Westernisation by contemporary Chinese parents. This finding is in contrast with existing research studies and presents a new viewpoint within the literature of British Chinese families. In previous studies, parents of previous generations were reported as demonstrating strong anti-Western feelings. Instead of encouraging and incorporating Western values within the home, Chinese culture and traditions were heavily promoted within the household. This could be seen with the insistence of Chinese language use and children having Chinese friendship groups instead of Western peers. Such findings were supported by parent's recollections of their own childhood experiences within this study. Today's parents however were not as prejudiced as their own parents and were happy for their children to have Western friends and romantic partners. The majority of contemporary parents were also more accepting of English language use within the home. Although Chinese language was

still seen as important (and many parents still sent their children to Chinese language schools), the value placed upon Chinese language use was based more upon the advantages of being bilingual in a highly competitive society, in terms of education and career opportunities.

Many parents in the sample mentioned the economic advantages of children speaking Chinese, due to the increasing need for Chinese speaking workers (due to China's growing world position), and the possibility of their child returning to China or Hong Kong for work. Though contemporary parents agreed with their own parents that the retention of Chinese language would help children to learn about Chinese culture, this was not the main reason for its use as it had been for the previous generation. The finding that contemporary parents viewed the advantages of retaining Chinese language as a means of giving their child a "step up" in the education and career sector differs from previous studies concerning Chinese families, where continued Chinese language use was prioritised as the main transmitter of Chinese culture to children. Contemporary parent's awareness of China's global position and the competitive world of work and education also highlight the importance of acknowledging the social, political and cultural changes and conditions that may impact upon British Chinese family functioning.

Many parents were more accepting of their child's Westernisation due to their own childhood experiences and upbringing. Contemporary parents suggested that the anti-Western feelings and non-acceptance of Westernisation in their parent's household made it difficult for them to partake and feel included by friends and other institutions, such as school. In having first hand experience of a non-supportive environment from parents to incorporate Western ideas and behaviours into the home, parents did not want their children to feel alienated and rejected like they had been. Children with such parents were appreciative of their parent's outlooks and were aware of how their childhood experiences were different in comparison to other "more traditional" Chinese families.

A willingness to accept Western cultural customs was also due to the parent's exposure to Western society and thoughts. Exposure either came from the parent's experience of the British education system or the fact that many of the parents were from Hong Kong. Hong Kong used to be a British colony and parents suggested that they had already been subjected to various British influences as a result. However a minority of contemporary Chinese households were not as accepting of Western customs and outlooks within the home, as parents did not partake or show an interest towards the wider cultural norms within British society. The children of such households complained that their parents were "old fashioned" and "out of touch", which consequently affected the parent-child relationship and agency of the child to a certain degree.

Overall, the analysis of contemporary Chinese parenting approaches appears to suggest that the majority of parents in the sample were able to incorporate both Western and Chinese cultural values into their parenting methods, to differing degrees. For parents who accommodated and assimilated both Chinese and Western cultural norms, this was mainly due to the parent's own negative childhood experiences. By experiencing an upbringing that only prioritised Chinese values in the home, contemporary parents experienced first hand the difficulties that this could

bring. In order to support their child in growing up to be a British and Chinese citizen, parents more readily understood the need to be flexible in their cultural beliefs and parenting approaches. Parents who were more culturally flexible and diverse were also more aware of the realities of being Chinese and living in the UK. For example, by accepting that their child's Westernisation and a loss of Chinese culture and traditions would be inevitable (due to living in Britain and being exposed to British customs), parents happily encouraged and incorporated both Chinese and Western norms and values within the home.

9.3 Agency and Action of Chinese Children

In chapter 7, agency and action of contemporary Chinese children was discussed, with agency being understood as individuals having the capacity to act, to interact, to influence and to shape one's life and the lives of others (Neale, 2002). Although the chapter was primarily concerned with children's commentaries, by incorporating the viewpoints of parents from chapter 6, a more in-depth understanding of Chinese children's agency can be summarised here.

Children in the sample were able to demonstrate their agency to various degrees within the home, and one area of influence was upon parent's monitoring levels and their educational supervision. With regards to education, some children in the sample tried to "outsmart" their parents by saying that they knew best when it came to what homework should be done and to what standard. Children would also claim that they knew the school system and the teachers better, as such; they should take charge of schoolwork not parents. With regards to parental monitoring, some children were actively "being good" in trying to convince parents to watch over them less. "Being good", meant acting responsibly by not breaking curfews and being considerate and respectful towards parents. Some children acted responsibly in other ways to gain agency, autonomy and independence from parents, such as getting on with homework or housework without parental requests, using pocket money wisely and reassuring parents that education was the priority whilst growing up (regardless if this was the child's true feelings or not). Children can also drive the interaction with their parents (De Mol and Buysse, 2008b). It is often assumed that parents are the ones who advise children without considering the fact that children are often the ones who bring up the topics to be discussed and choose what advice to accept and put into action from parents (Park et al., 2003). Examples in this study included children's subject choices for their GCSE examinations, friendship worries and romantic relationships.

Research has shown that parents are often willing to accept their child's attempts to be agentic in order to encourage their independence and autonomy. For example within this research, a majority of contemporary Chinese parents appeared to accept conflicts and disagreements with children, despite the importance placed upon filial piety (as discussed in chapter 6). Conflicts were thought to be part-and-parcel of adolescence and their incidences might be due to the fact that parents had encouraged their child to be expressive and independent thinkers. Negotiations by children were also a side product from parent's encouragement of children's reasoning and questioning abilities. Parents in the sample commented that independence and autonomy were important ideals for children. Not only because agency, autonomy and independence would help the child developmentally, but also due to the fact that their children were growing up in a very competitive world of work and educational opportunities.

Similar to most of the parental comments, all the children in the sample suggested that individual self-drive, self-reliance and decision-making were important and necessary skills to have and obtain (especially during the adolescent years).

Contemporary parents appeared to encourage their child's agency and independence in various ways; examples included the inclusion of children within housework (which was seen to transmit ideas about self responsibilities and responsibilities to others), involving children with household affairs and decision-making and asking children to help out in the family-run business. Although some children complained about the level of help expected from them by parents (especially with regards to household chores), the majority of children commented that their parent's encouragements of agency heightened their sense of maturity and feelings of independence. Other children who were more willing to help their parent's and to partake within household affairs without parental insistence added to the reciprocal nature of the parent-child relationship. Demonstration of the child's maturity enabled the parent to trust their child more, which ultimately affected the levels of agency granted to children. Feelings of trust towards the child, the child's demonstration of maturity and the amount of agency granted to children, can be seen to work in an interactive process which was affected by the actions of both parents and children.

Contemporary Chinese parents also mentioned that being overly strict with children was unrealistic. This was in contrast to the parent's childhoods, where a strict upbringing was seen as essential and appropriate due to certain Chinese principles, such as filial piety, maintaining family and self-reputation whilst upholding harmonious relationships. Parents suggested that being too restrictive was detrimental to the child's mindset and overall abilities, as well as impinging upon the parent-child relationship. As previously suggested in chapters 6 and 8, parents felt that bonds with children were important for their own sake, but also in order to maintain and encourage positive parent-child relations. As a result, a degree of child leniency was allowed within the home. Similarly, previous Western research has suggested that parents are willing to concede power to children in order to develop mutual and reciprocal relationships with their children. The evidence of reciprocal Chinese parent-child relationships and the interactive process of agency, trust and child maturity does not appear in the existing literature with Chinese families and childhoods. Clearly, British Chinese children are not as meek and conformist as most of the research would suggest. Parental encouragement of bonds with children and a lenient parenting approach towards child agency and autonomy again challenges the dominant literature, which suggests that British Chinese parents are purely authoritarian in nature.

Parents in the sample not only mentioned the disadvantages of having a childhood that expected high degrees of child obedience and conformity, but spoke of the limited freedoms experienced as a result. Parents themselves experienced restrictions in their expression of thoughts and opinions, as well as upon their social lives and opportunities during their upbringing. Consequently, many parents recalled feelings of loneliness with their parents and peers as well as a lack of integration within friendship groups. Contemporary parents who had an authoritarian upbringing knew how it felt to be constrained by parents and to have limited freedoms and independence, which led to parent's decisions in allowing their child more agency and social freedoms in current times.

In contrast, some of the parents experienced a very free and independent childhood. This was mainly due to familial circumstance when growing up. For instance, many parents migrated to Britain as children and their parents were busy setting up a new life and business in the UK. As a result, some contemporary parents were left to their own devices whilst growing up and made various life decisions without the help and guidance of their parents (such as educational and career choices). Parental accounts of agency and autonomy during their childhood, also contrasts the dominant literature, which sees Chinese children as passive recipients of the parent's authority, and as having a lack of influence and independence.

Parents who had a liberated childhood spoke of the benefits of being independent, having the ability to think for themselves and having the maturity that came with such responsibilities. Contemporary parents then wanted the same personal and developmental characteristics instilled within their own children. However, parents who allowed children more leniency and agency still set conditions upon their children, especially with regards to socialising. This included knowing the child's whereabouts, who the child was going out with, agreed times to return home and agreed forms of communication with parents when the child was out. Most of the parents felt that these rules were fair and not overly restrictive. Some children complained that these conditions were "over the top" and too intrusive, but on the whole, children agreed that the conditions set were necessary and deemed them as appropriate parenting. Children in the sample demonstrated their agency by negotiating with parents over the extent of the conditions set, which was met with varying degrees of success.

There were some children who had less lenient parents with regards to socialising opportunities and the degree of child independence and agency granted. These parents were more protective or strict, predominantly for two reasons: First, the majority of the more restrictive parents had recently migrated to the UK, as such knew little about the local area and the locale of children's activity centres or the friend's houses. Added to the parent's limited knowledge, was the concern about general dangers (such as strangers and road traffic), as well as the news reports of child abductions and gang and knife culture in Britain. Secondly, some parents who had recently migrated, as well as parents who had lived in Britain for a long period of time, lacked English language skills. A lack of parental English language use tended to correlate with a lack of communication with their child, who often preferred to express themselves in English. Communication mismatches and limited discussions meant that parents knew very little about their child's life, such as school and friendship networks. As a result, parents were wary of their child's friends and were especially concerned about peer pressure. Such results again highlight the fact that authoritarian parenting cannot be solely explained by Chinese cultural norms. Instead, parental worries and parent-child relationships must be taken into account when looking at parenting approaches and child agency. The combination of having restrictive parents and limited social opportunities meant that children felt frustrated and saddened by their lack of social support and participation. For children who had parents who were limited in their English skills also, they not only lacked peer support but parental help, guidance and closeness.

In summary, chapter 7 indicated that Chinese children do have a certain degree of power, influence and agency within the home and in their own lives. This was exemplified by children's behaviours and actions, such as negotiations over housework, schoolwork and social lives, as well as the presence of conflicts and disagreements with parents. Some parents recalled complete freedom of choice and independence whilst growing up as a result of the migration process in chapter 6. As children, their parents were too busy setting up a new life and business in the UK, which allowed a more liberal childhood. The agency and autonomy of Chinese children past and present then questions the validity of previous research claims, which sees Chinese children as having little agency and autonomy. Similar to findings concerning contemporary parenting approaches, the majority of Chinese parents encouraged and supported their child's agency due to their own childhood experiences. Regardless if contemporary parent's upbringing was strict or freer, agency and independence was valued in terms of the child's development and future career skills. However some parents were more cautious in granting their child agency, especially in relation to social opportunities, as they were concerned about their child's level of maturity, friendship groups and the neighbourhood surroundings. Parental concerns were compounded by their lack of English skills and thereby the lack of communication and knowledge of children's lives and independence abilities. Children who experienced limited social interactions expressed a loss of friendship opportunities and emotional support from peers. In addition, the lack of English use within the home meant that children suffered a lack of support from parents also.

Another point raised within chapter 7, was the use of Chinese principles as the sole explanation for Chinese children's lack of agency and autonomy. Collectivist ideals within Chinese culture are often seen as preventing the independence and agency of children. Confucianism largely influences collectivism where group-oriented ideals are promoted, as opposed to an individualistic and autonomous self. As such, Chinese children are socialised to be conformist for the sake of the group and in achieving harmonious interpersonal relationships. However, similar to arguments in chapter 6, the general understanding that collectivism impedes the agency of the Chinese individual appears to be misinterpreted within popular thinking and research alike. As mentioned earlier, Confucius did not prescribe that children should follow their parents blindly (seen within the misinterpretations of filial piety) and agency of the individual is actually endorsed by Confucius. For example, Confucius spoke of self-perfection as the ultimate goal for humankind. In order to achieve self-perfection, the individual must be self-cultivating and therefore agentic in order to achieve such a virtue. This can be seen within the ideals and values of learning within Confucianism, where self-motivation, preservation and hard work are essential ingredients in becoming a successful learner (Wang and Li, 2003).

It is also important to note the difficulties with comparing individualistic and collectivist cultures when explaining the agency of children. Firstly the notion of 'self' differs within Western and Eastern cultures, so a straight comparison and discussion of agency and the 'self' is a contentious matter. Most studies of children's agency are also conducted within Western settings, which emphasise individualism and the appropriate ages that certain levels of autonomy and agency should be granted (Lam, 1997). Western studies of child agency also promote the ideals of Whiteness and middle-class norms. Western conceptualisations of agency may not be applicable to other cultures and behaviours and attitudes outside of a Western context are often

portrayed as alien and deviant (Coll, 1992). The study's findings also suggests that other factors aside from culture must be taken into consideration when explaining the lack of Chinese children's agency, such as the migration history of parents, worries and concerns of the child's well-being and language use within the home.

9.4 Parent-Child Intimacy Levels

In chapter 8, intimacy levels between parents and children were discussed. As the term 'intimacy' can be expressed and reciprocated in many forms of behaviour and action, such as love, affection, trust, cohesiveness and mutual disclosures, the parent and children's own definitions of intimacy and closeness were used in the research.

When discussing intimacy levels, parents and children in the sample suggested various degrees of closeness in their relationships that were affected by many factors. For example, many parents had suggested that the onset and duration of adolescence had prevented or impaired the levels of intimacy within the parent-child dyad. Specifically, the increase and continuation of conflicts and disagreements caused during adolescence (which were usually related to the levels of child agency and autonomy), appeared to unsettle both parents and children alike. Conflicts and disagreements were suggested to create negative household relations and interactions, which then affected the closeness of the parent-child dyad. Such findings correlated to conventional viewpoints of adolescent development, where young people are seen to 'break free' from parents in their efforts to gain independence and agency. Children's increased preference and orientation towards peers during adolescence also appeared to affect the closeness between parents and children. As the adolescent's valued social time as much as family time, family activities and time spent with parents, as well as intimacy levels had decreased as a result. Partly in response to the reduced feelings of intimacy, family time was highly prioritised by contemporary parents, as it enabled parents to "catch up" and to be involved in children's lives. The importance placed on "family time", meant that some parents insisted that children spent some time together as a family. Family time included shared activities, such as eating meals together, watching television and films as well as participation in hobbies and sports. Shared activities are said to promote the feelings of cohesion, which contributes towards feelings of intimacy. However, parental insistence and encouragement of family time was met with varying degrees of success, as some children would refuse or negotiate with parents as to how much time was spent within the home (again demonstrating the child's agency).

There were some parental and child reports that their intimacy levels had actually improved or increased since the child became an adolescent. This was mainly because the child had become more mature and more understanding in general, which resulted in fewer conflicts and disagreements, as well as an increase of mutual understanding between parents and children. Furthermore since adolescence, a minority of children had tried to become more responsible and helpful within the family (e.g. doing household chores without being asked), which promoted parental appreciation of the child, reciprocity within the parent-child relationship and feelings of closeness. Such findings are in contrast to the conventional models of adolescent development, where the adolescent is portrayed as breaking free from parents. The suggestion that parent-child relationships merely transform during the time of adolescence, accords with

contextual theories of adolescent growth that stress the bi-directional nature of the parent-child dyad in the context of adolescent's efforts to be independent.

In contrast to the parent's childhood experiences, the majority of contemporary Chinese parents were more intimate with their children. This was evidenced in a variety of activities and behaviours. For example, parents were more physically affectionate with children (e.g. hugging and kissing), and this included fathers as well as mothers. Although there were only three Chinese fathers in the sample, their accounts suggest that they were not only emotionally expressive but they tried to make themselves emotionally available to children. For example, these fathers tried to be more approachable in terms of communication and self-disclosures to young people. This not only contrasts contemporary father's experiences with their own fathers whilst growing up, but questions the notion of 'strict fathers, warm mothers' in terms of Chinese parenting within the existing literature. This evidence corresponds with other findings, such as Shek's (2008) research, which suggested that the authoritarian and disciplinarian role of Chinese fathers has generally weakened over time, whereas Chinese mothers have taken on more of a strict role.

The display of emotional expressions by fathers (and to some extent mothers) in the research also seems to counter the long held Confucian view that self-restraint of emotions is a desirable characteristic, as it is seen as a mastery over the self. Despite contemporary parent's general subscription to Chinese Confucian values, a majority of parents decided that openness of expression was more desirable, in terms of building close parent-child relationships and learning about the child. Parents also felt that affectionate behaviours were an effective method in communicating their love and concern for their children. Again, this contrasts the Confucian doctrine that love can be shown to children by fulfilling the child's needs, as opposed to open expressions of affection. In other words, actions speak louder than words. Parents had also mentioned that they had lacked emotional responsiveness with their own parents whilst growing up and this encouraged the display of affection with their own children now.

Most of the contemporary parents tried to promote friend-like relations with their children. By being a friend to their child, parents hoped that children would see them in an advisory and supportive role, "not just as parents". Being the child's confidant was important to the parents, as they could learn about their child's world, thoughts and feelings, as well as "keeping a tab" on the child. Knowing the child's inner thoughts and feelings had become more predominant for the parents since the onset of their child's adolescence, as parents were worried about the impacts and effects that the teenage years may have on their child (e.g. physical changes and the possibility of peer pressure). Some children were aware of the monitoring and intrusive aspects of their parent's communication motives and would not disclose all their feelings and thoughts as a result. Whilst some research would suggest that the withholding of information allows privacy, power and identity for the adolescent, at the expense of parent-child intimacy levels, other studies argued that it does not necessarily equate to less intimacy within the relationship. Instead a 'comfortable zone' of distance is formed between the parent-child dyad (Nøvik and Solem, 2003).

One way of encouraging friendship like qualities within the parent-child relationship was by having open lines of communication within the home. Being able to discuss

matters with parents was deemed as important, as parents themselves had difficulties expressing their dilemmas and emotions to their own parents whilst growing up. Non-open lines of communication were due to the strict adult-child relationship in parent's childhoods. Adult authority and hierarchy tended to be implicit within the home due to the Confucian value of filial piety. In promoting children's disclosures to parents, feelings of connectedness, mutual understanding and intimacy were hoped to result and be maintained within the parent-child relationship. Parental accounts were in line with writers such as Giddens (1992) who argued that parent-child relationships have transformed in comparison to the past in terms of intimacy levels and relating, where an emphasis now is upon free and open dialogue as well as mutual disclosures between both parties.

Divulgence to parents tends to elicit feelings of trust with the child, which not only relates to intimacy but a greater likelihood of parents permitting their child agency and independence as a result of trusting relations. Parental encouragement of independence and individuality during adolescence is correlated with better parent-child relations and intimacy, possibly due to less conflicts and the child's feeling of support in their strive to be independent.

Regarding communication and self-disclosures, research has often cited mothers as being the most approachable parent, who is seen as more open to a range of conversation topics and more understanding in comparison to fathers. Although this seemed to be the case for most of the children in the sample, a few children had mentioned that they were closer to fathers or equally close to their mothers and fathers. Such comments support the contemporary Chinese father's accounts that they were trying to be less strict and authoritarian, but instead wished to be seen as a friend and playmate who could be trusted. Some children suggested that it was their mothers (not fathers) who were stricter and old fashioned, as such, did not turn to mothers for help and advice (as most research would suggest). Such results again question the research notion of 'strict fathers, kind mothers' within the existing literature of Chinese family life. Other lifestyle changes in terms of divorce and parental separation also appear to have an impact upon the father-child relationship. Changes in familial circumstance appeared to lead to fresh evaluations and transformations of the parent-child attachment. Regardless if children were closer to their mothers or fathers (even both in some cases), children highlighted the importance of "being understood" in relation to feelings of closeness and intimacy with parents. Such comments are in line with contemporary understandings of what intimate relations between parents and children should consist of (such as deep knowing and understanding of the child; Jamieson, 1999).

Some children in the sample encountered difficulties in speaking to their parents, (either mothers or fathers, or both), about their concerns, worries or general feelings of disgruntlement, especially if they were with the parent themselves (e.g. in relation to permitted socialising times). Children felt discouraged in communicating with parents, as parents were seen as authoritarian, who believed that they should not be questioned. Child obedience and the lack of communication with parents left children feeling frustrated with their lack of recognition as a person, as well as the lack of consideration of their personal feelings, wishes and needs. A lack of intimacy within parent-child relationships was reported by children, as a result of unsatisfactory interactions and a lack of perceived respect towards the child.

Contemporary British Chinese parents who were viewed as less approachable tended to be those who endorsed higher levels of Confucian values and were less willing to adapt their cultural viewpoints in comparison to the rest of the parental sample. The particular Chinese value, which tended to constrain the levels of intimacy within the parent-child relationship, was the endorsement of filial piety (respecting of parents and expectations of child obedience). Although Confucius suggested that filial piety would contribute towards family harmony as a result of harmonious interpersonal relationships, the encouragement of filial behaviours actually constrained relations between parents and children, as parents were viewed as being authoritarian and less approachable. Lack of perceived parental approachability by children, then restricted opportunities for intimacy or the establishment of intimacy itself. The majority of contemporary parents also recalled such distant relationships with their own parents whilst growing up, due to the emphasis placed upon adult authority and child compliance.

Another cultural factor, which appeared to constrain the intimacy levels between parents and children, is the Confucian suggestion that inhibition and self-restraint of emotions is a sign of accomplishment and maturity. Parents who strongly endorsed such an ethic were less affectionate with children and did not encourage self-disclosure either (on the part of the parent or child). A lack of self-disclosure and communication is problematic for intimate relating, as self-disclosure typically correlates with levels of intimacy. Due to their appliance and insistence of Chinese values within the home, some contemporary parents struggled to meet their child's ideals of closeness and intimacy from the norms of wider society. The parent's unacceptance of individualistic ideals regarding closeness and intimate relationships within wider society (such as the display of intimacy through physical affection and self-disclosures) then impacted the general levels of closeness and intimacy between parents and children.

A related note to cultural differences was language use within the home, which impacted upon parent-child relationships. Some children commented that language barriers resulted in less communication and self-disclosures to parents, which hindered feelings of intimacy. As a result of cultural differences and language difficulties, some children suggested that they were closer to other family relatives (such as siblings, cousins and aunties) and friends, as they were believed to share similar experiences or have a better understanding of the child and their circumstances.

In general, it seems that contemporary parents who were more able to accommodate and adapt their parenting behaviours in accordance to both Chinese and Western values were more able to promote and sustain intimate relationships with their children. For example, some parents were friendly and open with children (prioritised within Western conceptualisations of intimacy) whilst emphasising parental respect and authority (which is seen within Confucian ethics). Although the parents were able to demonstrate cultural hybridity within their parenting approaches to promote and encourage parent-child closeness, this was met with varying degrees of success, as intimacy is also dependent upon individual factors of the child and parent: factors such as personality and developmental issues, current relationship functioning, histories and pasts (e.g. the level of conflicts, relationship satisfaction, communication

levels and disclosures etc), family factors (such as family size, birth order of children and age difference between parents and children), as well as the importance and value placed upon intimacy itself. Parental value and endorsements are also related to their own childhood experiences. Most contemporary parents experienced a lack of intimacy with their own parents and so they then strove to overcome this with their own children. However, some contemporary children still experienced a lack of intimacy with their parents as a result of their parent's continued adherence to certain Chinese values, such as filial piety and emotional self-restraint. Compounding issues further was the parent's inability to accommodate their child's feelings and needs of intimate relating and the values of closeness seen within wider society (e.g. reciprocal relationships and self disclosures). Because children viewed such parents as "being strict" and authoritarian, this prevented any discussions regarding the child's feelings and further discouraged any development of intimacy between the parent-child dyad.

9.5 Research Implications: Future Studies

From the research findings, the contrasts and similarities with the existing literature contributes toward a better understanding of British Chinese families and childhoods, which also recognises the fluidity of British Chinese family formats and the agency of children. From an academic perspective, the study of British Chinese families and childhood is presently limited and as such, this study has contributed towards an empirical increase in the knowledge and understanding of British Chinese family life. As the research results challenges previous assumptions that British Chinese individual's behaviours are wholly guided by Chinese traditions and values, the study hopes to open up much needed debate regarding British Chinese families and functioning.

The research indicates that considerations of individual backgrounds, upbringings and life experiences, relationships and connectedness with others as well as family practices within and outside the home should not be ignored when looking at British Chinese families and childhoods. Future research could look at each of these issues separately or collectively when exploring different aspects of British Chinese life. Applying a more holistic approach to research with British Chinese children would also help to uncover the complicated nature of childhoods themselves.

This study dealt with the broad areas of parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy levels and children's agency and action, and the findings have highlighted other areas of possible research interest for the future. With regards to parenting approaches, Confucian principles were still held important by many parents in the sample. As suggested earlier, many of Confucius's writings have been rewritten (re-interpreted) over time to suit the prevailing societal and historical conditions (such as emphasising social hierarchy in order to legitimise state control within Chinese societies). It would be interesting therefore to speak to parents about their knowledge of Confucian principles and its interpretations and misinterpretations, as well as the factors which may influence Confucian ethics (such as place of origin, upbringing, and familial factors) in understanding Chinese cultural effects on parenting behaviours.

With children's agency, a number of factors were highlighted as influencing the independence, autonomy and agency granted to children. This included cultural values, parent-child relationships, characteristics of the child and parental worries and

concerns. As the children in the research were in the early stages of adolescence (aged between 11-15), what factors and opportunities for children's agency can be seen in the later stages of adolescence? Comparisons and possible differences of the various stages of children's formative years could also highlight parenting changes and alterations to the parent-child relationship within such times. Researching children's agency before the onset of adolescence may also prove fruitful for a more detailed analysis of Chinese children's agency. Besides from different ages as a focus of children's agency, gender issues may also be of relevant interest.

Intimacy levels between parents and children were dependant upon cultural factors, parent's upbringing, parent's experiences, children's relationships with parents, as well as individual family factors such as work schedules, birth order of children and number of siblings in the household. Interestingly, a number of children suggested that cultural differences and language difficulties often meant that they were closer to other family relatives or friends as opposed to parents. Further research into the children's closeness with significant others, aside from parents, would provide a greater understanding of Chinese children's support networks and attachment figures and how this influences their home lives.

Alternatively, the original findings from this study could be pursued more in-depth through further research. The inclusion of more fathers would also contribute to a fuller account of family lives, as there were only three Chinese fathers involved in the study. Involving other family members such as siblings could provide alternative accounts and voices of British Chinese household functioning. Relatives such as grandparents, cousins, aunties and uncles may also shed light on particular family dimensions, especially if children feel closer to these particular family members (as suggested within the parent-child intimacy section). Methodologically a qualitative longitudinal approach may be beneficial to any future research. As a rich amount of data on relational processes and practices, as well as multidimensional family and childhood experiences across the life course can arguably be obtained (Gabb, 2008). Longitudinal research can therefore offer an important method of understanding and comparing everyday family lives and childhoods in the present, past and future.

“Family interaction draws from an accumulation of interpersonal history, and the significance of this shared experience increases through time. The interaction observed during any specified time interval is a cross-sectional slice; it is not independent of previous exchanges and may not be fully interpretable without knowledge of actions that occurred in the past” (Hess, 1981, p.209).

One way of proceeding with further research would be via the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The ESRC provides various funding and academic and training opportunities for early stage researchers to consolidate their previous research findings. Examples include the ESRC research fellowship and postdoctoral research schemes.

9.6 Professional Organisations

Aside from the academic circle, individuals and groups who may be interested and would benefit from the research results include social and health care professionals.

parenting and children organisations, the British Chinese community and current Government agendas. An understanding of contemporary Chinese families and childhood would be beneficial to social and health care professionals, as the lack of information, guidance and advice regarding Chinese families has been noted. For instance, the NSPCC (2005) recommended that the profile of Chinese children must be raised in the UK. Specifically that social care providers need to find effective ways of engaging and ensuring the voice of Chinese children are heard. For instance, a minority of children commented that the authoritarian child-rearing approaches by their parents meant that they felt a lack of understanding and intimacy with their parents and also a feeling of isolation from other external support networks, as parents were restrictive of their behaviours outside of the home. This resulted in feelings of sadness and frustration for the children involved, but such issues were not voiced to parents as they were seen as strict and “always right”. Consequently, children spoke of feelings of helplessness, being alone and feeling upset. Social work and health care practitioners should also be aware that certain Chinese cultural values attached to maintaining the reputation of the family (and the shame that can be brought through disgracing the family), may prevent British Chinese children in discussing such matters or other family issues or difficulties. Although it is recognised by this study that cultural explanations are not sufficient factors in themselves for explaining individual behaviours, cultural attitudes are still worth highlighting as culture still has an impact and influence upon contemporary British Chinese households to varying degrees.

The provision of family services in Britain has been criticised for the absence of its culturally appropriateness and cultural sensitivity for UK families (Henricson et al., 2001). In order to develop improved services, additional research regarding family life is necessary, as existing research has been suggested to be patchy in its coverage, out-of-date and lacking in its emphasis upon ethnicity or culture in contemporary parenting (Butt and Box, 1998). Large-scale survey studies (such as Modood, et al., 1997) have provided information on family formation and structure in ethnic minority families but fail to capture family life at the normative levels. Research that uncovers the processes of day-to-day life for families is therefore needed. As this study explored contemporary British Chinese families and childhoods on the micro-level, it is hoped that the results of this study, or the possibilities of further research from the study, may contribute towards such developments.

At present, there is a lack of parental and family support for Chinese individuals. In support, Lau (1997) noted that British professionals tend to have a limited understanding of Chinese family values resulting in inadequate provisions and services for Chinese families. By organising collaborative workshops and seminars with healthcare and social professionals, Chinese community organisations (such as those in London, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool etc.), and parenting and children organisations (such as The Parenting Organisation, National Children’s Bureau and The National Children’s Agency), collaborators and invited Chinese audiences would be informed of the experiences and issues relating to modern British Chinese childhoods and parenting, such as difficulties regarding language, culture, parenting, and parent-child attachments. The sharing of the research findings through collaborative workshops and seminars may then help professionals and parents alike to become more aware of Chinese children’s concerns and potential damaging forces towards the parent-child relationship. For example, children who are cultural brokers

for their parents felt that their parents were too reliant upon their translation skills, and also felt embarrassed and upset about their parent's shallow efforts to improve their own English language skills and their lack of interest towards mainstream culture. This resulted in parents being seen as distant and unhelpful in the child's own personal lives. Many children also mentioned that they had closer relationships with other family members and peers, due to the authoritarian nature of parenting approaches and the lack of understanding between parents and children. The research finding of the importance that British Chinese children attached to friends and peers could help highlight the importance of interacting and socialising with others for emotional support and advice towards Chinese parents who are restrictive of their children's behaviours outside of the home. Parents who are hesitant in allowing their children out of their sight without adult supervision, may feel reassured that the majority of the children in this research felt more mature than their parents gave them credit for. Moreover children also held similar negative views as their parents with regards to anti-social acts and behaviours (such as drinking alcohol underage, the use of recreational drugs and smoking).

The research results could be fed back into the younger British Chinese community also. This could take the form of workshops and seminars for Chinese schools and youth groups. In organising such events, the whole British Chinese family can be informed of some of the issues relating to contemporary British Chinese childhoods and the process of growing up. For example, some children who have parents who adhere more to Chinese cultural norms, may not fully recognise and appreciate their parent's love for them, as Chinese parenting styles are often distant and formal in sharp contrast to the warmth and overt affection displayed in mainstream Western cultures. Workshops and seminars may be used as an opportunity to inform Chinese children and parents of the various parenting methods and cultural values within wider society that British Chinese children are exposed to, and to some extent, appreciate and value. As such, parents are empowered to reach common understandings and goals with their own children and discussion may be encouraged within the British Chinese family home. This is especially important, as research has shown the distress (and potential maladjusted behaviours) that parent-child conflict, cultural or otherwise, may cause within young people. Bi-cultural skills have been suggested as a solution for ameliorating adjustment problems for young persons (Szapocznik and Kurtines, 1993), where parents need to be encouraged to understand their children's difficulties and pressures in fitting in with the mainstream society. Equally, children should be encouraged to understand and appreciate the norms of their ethnic cultures, and this could also be part of the workshop agenda when disseminating the research results for the Chinese community. As the study found that all the children agreed with the importance of retaining Chinese culture, this may be beneficial for parents to hear, especially for those who are worried about their children becoming too Westernised or losing their sense of Chineseness.

Perhaps of equal importance to the message of the seminars, is the opportunity that organised events can provide for advisory and support agencies to contact, and be of help to Chinese families. This is worthwhile as Chinese individuals are known as the 'invisible minority' when it comes to access and use of health and service provisions. The British Chinese community have been noted for their lack of political activity, engagement and community unity, and so furthermore, organising informative events

for the British Chinese community, can provide individuals with a common agenda in coming together to explore the different aspects of British Chinese family life.

Research findings could be beneficial in helping current Government agendas. Within the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) campaign there are five aims for the children of Britain. These are (1) be healthy, (2) stay safe, (3) enjoy and achieve, (4) make a positive contribution and (5) achieve economic well-being (HM Government, 2004). The research indications are that certain Chinese children are currently experiencing poor parent-child relationships due to cultural conflicts, language barriers and lack of support, consequently, the Government's aims to 'enjoy and achieve' and to 'make a positive contribution' may not be obtainable for British Chinese children who are undergoing such difficulties. By raising general interest by disseminating research findings and the possibility of further research on a larger scale, a clearer idea on how to help Chinese children to achieve the Government's ECM aims will be more obtainable. In addition, Government initiatives such as 'Connexions', which provides services aimed directly at children (and bypasses parents), distinctly lack the voice of British Chinese children. If providers and its services are to be effective and successful in its delivery for children, then children from different ethnic groups need to be heard, including British Chinese children.

Insights and research with British Chinese children and families will hopefully help practitioners, professionals and community workers within their own institutions and organisations. In addition, if the research findings and the professional expertise of individual agencies can be used collaboratively between professional groups, this may contribute towards the current Government's objectives, agendas and future proposals for children and families in Britain. By knowing how British Chinese families and childhoods operate and function, local authorities, government groups and professional organisations can determine the best plan of action when reaching out to British Chinese families and children and in providing appropriate support and advice. As Britain diversifies, an understanding of family practices among different populations becomes more important than ever (Becher, 2008).

Although it is recognised that this research was on a small scale and that there are limitations inherent within the research itself, such as the use of qualitative research approaches, interviewing techniques and the ethnical issues concerning research with children and ethnic minority groups (see chapter 5 for further details), it is hoped that the increase of knowledge and understanding of contemporary British Chinese households will not only contribute towards the existing literature, but also contribute to improving the lives of the British Chinese family itself, whether it is through professional and governmental bodies or via workshops and information geared towards the British Chinese community.

9.7 Final Conclusion

Research findings suggested that British Chinese parents (regardless of backgrounds and length of UK residency), not only identified themselves as being Chinese, but also held strong attachments to 'traditional' Chinese values and norms. For some British Chinese families this caused issues and problems within the parent-child relationship (in terms of intimacy levels and relationship satisfaction) and also negatively affected the agency of the child. Although contemporary parents

themselves experienced similar issues in their own childhood, the adherence to Chinese values was still seen as important in raising their child successfully and appropriately.

However contrary to the assertions of existing literature, this study found that the majority of contemporary parents were able to relate to both Chinese and Western cultural customs in their (i) parenting approaches, (ii) the levels of agency granted to their child and the (iii) levels of intimacy within the parent child relationship. This fluidity and variability of parent's cultural values supports arguments, which suggest that culture is an evolving (rather than static) entity and is neither fixed in itself, nor fixed within the individual. Parental adjustments and adaptability reflected a form of culturally hybrid parenting, where parents 'mixed and matched' the cultural values they preferred for their child.

The concept of culture then (the sharing of knowledge, norms, rules, symbols, language, attitudes, values, habits and motivations), whether it is Chinese or Western, does still play an important role in the lives of Chinese parents and family life. Partly due to their demonstration of culturally hybrid forms of parenting, contemporary parents enjoyed better relationships with their children and encouraged children's agency and independence as a result. However parent's own childhood experience, their exposure and acceptance of Western practices, as well as empathy for their child's experience of being a British Chinese citizen, also influenced the interactions within the contemporary Chinese household.

Parenting methods, the levels of child agency and parent-child intimacy also worked in a reciprocal nature with the child's own actions. Consequently, British Chinese children played an active and participative role, to varying degrees, in their parent's child-rearing efforts. The agency and autonomy of children can be seen to contradict the current available literature, which views Chinese children as passive and meek with little or no influence on their parents due to Confucian values of filial piety. Furthermore parenting approaches, agency of the child and closeness between the parent-child dyad were reliant upon personal factors of the parents and children, the quality of the parent-child relationship and the impact of external circumstances upon the household. Such findings coincide with the work of David Morgan (1996), who looked at how families are created and lived through their family practices. In this study, structural variables (e.g. ethnicity and generation), and social changes such as China's growing global position, as well as parental worries of society, were seen to work in a continuous and interrelated manner with internal household affairs. Family life and its social practices should therefore be seen as fluid and diverse according to the individuals involved, reciprocity within relations, changes over time and societal factors. Accordingly, families are argued to be 'what we do', rather than 'what we are' (Morgan, 1996).

From the findings, it appears that the use of cultural stereotypes in explaining and investigating contemporary British Chinese families are no longer sufficient. Such explanations can be misleading as individuals are no longer bound by cultural traditions, but are free to form their own identities and values in the modern world. The agency of individuals to construct their own cultural identities, either through the notion of diaspora, globalisation, transnationalism or even personal experiences, then impacts upon the belief system and behaviours of British Chinese parents. The

viewpoint that individuals are free to create their own identities and self-narratives, accords with the individualisation theories of Giddens (1991, 1992) and Beck (1992). However, Chinese parents also tried to connect with their children through their everyday exchanges and parenting decisions. Such behaviours relate to the concept of 'relationality', where people's connectedness, attachments to others and self-determination informs the active creation of their self-biographies, identities and meaning making (Roseneil, 2004). Such processes indicate the complex nature of Chinese parenting practices and the nature of the parent-child relationship itself. Indeed, contemporary British Chinese parenting approaches, parent-child intimacy levels and children's agency should be seen as an interactive process, where individual and family experiences are created and contingent through family practices within and outside of the home. By incorporating a more holistic viewpoint of British Chinese households, we are able to appreciate the nuances of family life and individual childhoods. As the voices of British Chinese children have had a low profile in Britain, this research has contributed to the limited research available and provided a platform to air their perspectives. In a context of a multicultural and rapidly changing Britain, it is no longer acceptable that British Chinese families remain a muted group in society. As such the views of British Chinese family members, of all ages, need to be heard, acknowledged and recognised. Under such conditions, it is hoped that this thesis has helped raised awareness and understanding of Chinese households whilst contributing towards the necessary future studies to come.

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APPENDIX 1

‘The New Generation: Chinese Childhoods’: Key Terms

Childhood: Childhood is often thought of as an inevitable part of the human life cycle. Commonly associated with the ‘growing up’ process, childhood is also conceived as a natural phase of development. As opposed to viewing childhood as a standardised life phase for young people, childhood in this thesis is taken to mean children’s experiences. Children in this study are defined as under the age of eighteen, which is in line with the majority of Britain’s legislation and policies. The young people involved were aged between 11-15 and at the early stages of adolescence. They too identified themselves as ‘children’, due to their treatment and the wider opportunities available to them. A fuller discussion of childhood is explored within chapter 3.

Generation: Children are described as a generation since not only were they born within a similar time period, but they also face the same external constraints and regulations on the basis of their age. This includes formal sanctions and policies, such as compulsory school attendance as well as limited opportunities to partake in certain activities, such as formal employment, sexual activities, political voting and so forth. Children who participated in the study are also exposed to the same social, historical and political contexts. As such the term ‘generation’ is used to denote the birth cohort of the children and their collective experiences, on the basis of shared opportunities and constraints, as well as the social circumstances that surround them.

Generation is also used to refer to the differences of contemporary childhoods and the experiences of parent’s upbringings. Within the title of the thesis, the term ‘new’ is used in reference to childhoods which are being experienced in the here and now. ‘New’ is also used in relation to the research focus. In contrast to the previous literature which sees Chinese people, Chinese cultural values, childhoods and family life as fixed and unchanging structures, this study views the children as social actors and considers the fluidity of culture and family practices, as well as considering individual differences within families.

Chinese: Within the context of this research title, the term ‘Chinese’ is used to refer to anyone who identifies themselves as Chinese and whose ethnic identity or ancestry heralds from Greater China. However it is important to note that this use of the word ‘Chinese’ can become confusing in providing the exact identification of someone’s origin or diasporic path. For a more detailed explanation of the different ways in which Chinese people are referred to and classified among theorists and authors, and subsequently in this study, see ‘a note on terminology’ in chapter 1.

APPENDIX 2

Interview 1 Guide

Table 2: Interview 1 Structure and Themes

Interview No.	Parents	Children
1	Introduction to research	Introduction to research
	Warm up questions - Background information (age, occupation etc)	Warm up questions - Background information (age, school etc)
	Family background	Family background
	Family set-up and organisation Family practices	Family set-up and organisation Family practices
	Cultural values / identity	Cultural values/ identity
	Are certain values/ traditions and practices more important than others?	What other commitments does the child have (e.g. Chinese school, private tuition) - Does this impact upon children's agency
	Did parent's parents follow the same family set-up? - What was parent's childhood like?	

Interview 1: Parental Questions

Word of thanks and introduction to study.

Warm up questions

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself (e.g. name, age, socio-economic questions)? How long have you lived here? What do you do? Did you study here?
- How many children do you have? Boys or girls? How old were you when you had your child? How old are your children? Which school year are your children in? Which school do your children attend?

Family background

- Who lives in your household? Do parents or children work/ study etc?
- Where are your family from originally?
- Do you have many relatives near by? Do you see your family often?

Family practices: Food

- Do you eat Chinese food at home? Do you eat at Chinese restaurants often? Do you use chopsticks? Can your children use chopsticks?
- Do you eat other types of food also? Why? What food do your children prefer to eat? Who does the cooking (probe for roles of other family members)? Is this the same as your childhood?

Festivals and traditions

- Do you celebrate Chinese festivals at home (e.g. Mid Autumn festival, Chinese New Year)? Do your children like to celebrate these festivals? Did you celebrate these festivals as a child?
- How important is it for your family to celebrate Chinese festivals?
- Do you think it is hard to learn about Chinese festivals? Why? How do you teach your children?
- Do you teach your children about other Chinese beliefs and values? Do you think it is important for your children to learn about Chinese traditions/practices/values? Are these the same values as what you were taught? Do you follow any other Chinese traditions? Why?

- Do you follow any English traditions or celebrations? Is it equally as important for your children to learn Western ways of living and cultural understanding?
- What traditions did your parents follow when you were as a child? When you were growing up, who taught you about Chinese and English traditions/festivals/values?
- Did your parents find Western traditions important or was the emphasis on Chinese values?

Language in the home

- Do you speak Chinese or English at home? Can your children speak Chinese? What would you prefer to be speaking with your children? Why? How do you and children communicate with other family members (e.g. English or Chinese)?
- Do language differences cause any problems in the family, any misunderstandings (e.g. generational differences between grandparents and children with language choice)?
- Do you think it would be easier to communicate in a different language between your children and yourself/ other family members?
- As a child did your parents speak Chinese or English to you? Did you like this or would you have preferred to speak in another language? Why?

Chinese school

- Do your children go to Chinese school? Do you feel that this is important/helpful? Why? Do you help them with Chinese homework?
- Did you go to Chinese school as a child? Did you like going? How far did you get (i.e. did you gain a qualification?) Did you enjoy it? Are you glad you went?
- Do your children attend any other Chinese class or supplementary classes? Are you happy to support your children in doing this? Is it important to you? Why? Did you attend other classes as a child? Did you enjoy it? Are you glad you went?

Cultural identity

- How would you describe yourself, British, British-Chinese, Chinese or other? Why? What do you do that makes you feel like x, y or z?
- How do you think your children would describe themselves and why?
- How do you think your parent would have described himself or herself as and why?
- If different/ similar, probe why?
- Do you feel part of British society? In what ways? Does this influence your parenting?
- Do you think you are similar to your parents in the way you are bringing up your children? Why? Do you have any memorable childhood experiences?

Differences and similarities in childhood

- How do you think your childhood compares to your child? Is there anything that your child can/ cannot do compared to your childhood?
- What similarities and differences do you see? What advantages/ disadvantages are there? Whose childhood do you prefer, why?
- Do you think your age/ cultural identity/ own upbringing influences your parenting?

Interview 1: Children's Questions

Word of thanks and introduction to study.

Warm up questions

- What is your name? How old are you? What school do you go to? What year are you in? Have you always lived in the UK? How long have you lived here? Do you like it here?

Family background

- Who else in your family lives in the UK? Do you have any brothers or sisters? Do you have many relatives near by? Where are your family from originally?

Family's practices: Food

- What is your favourite food?
- Do you eat Chinese food at home? Do you like Chinese food? Who cooks Chinese food mostly? Can you cook Chinese food? Do you eat at Chinese restaurants often? Do you use chopsticks?
- Do you eat Western food? Who makes it? Which food do you prefer to eat? Why?

Language in the home

- Do you speak Chinese or English at home? Is this the same as when you were younger? Would you have preferred to speak in another language? Why?
- How do you communicate with other family members (e.g. in English or in Chinese)? Do you think it would be easier to communicate in a different language? Why?
- Does someone teach you Chinese at home (probe for other Chinese teachings by family)?
- Are you proud of being able/ not being able to speak Chinese? Do you think it is important?
- Do you speak Chinese in front of your friends? Do you have any friends who speak Chinese/ are bilingual?

Festivals

- Do you celebrate Chinese festivals at home (e.g. Mid Autumn festival, Chinese New Year)? Do you like to celebrate these festivals?
- Do you know much about Chinese festivals? Who teaches you? Do you like to celebrate Chinese festivals?
- Are you taught about Chinese festivals at secondary school?
- Do you follow any English traditions or celebrations? Who teaches you these (e.g. parents, school)?
- Do you celebrate Western festivals (e.g. Christmas, Easter)? Which festivals do you prefer and why?

Chinese school

- Do you go to Chinese school? How long have you gone for? What class are you in?
- Why do you go to Chinese school? Do your parents make you go to any other classes/ tuitions? Do you enjoy it? Why do you think your parents make you go? Would you prefer not to go?
- Do you find Chinese school easy or hard? Why? Do you like it? Do you need help with your Chinese homework?
- Are you taught about Chinese festivals at Chinese school?
- How does going to Chinese school compare to English school?
- Do your parents expect you to gain a Chinese GCSE?
- Do your classes interfere with your school work/ social life etc?

Cultural identity

- How would you describe yourself, British, British-Chinese, Chinese or other? Why? What do you do that makes you feel like x, y or z?
- Would your parents and friends agree? Do you feel part of British society? If so, in what ways? Do your parents feel part of British society?
- Would your parents/relatives describe themselves as x also? Why? If different, do these differences cause any difficulties/ problems/ upsets for you?

Childhood

- Do you remember much about your primary school days? What memories do you have? Do you think your life has changed since high school? In what ways?
- Do your parents treat you differently since going to high school? In what ways?
- What are you allowed to do now, that you could not do in primary school (going out, chores etc)?

APPENDIX 3

Interview 2 Guide

Table 3: Interview 2 Structure and Themes

Interview No.	Parents	Children
2	Family Rules	Family Rules
	Role of parents	Role of parents
	Role of children How are children perceived Impact of school	Role of children How children perceive themselves How children perceive their parents views of them How children would like to be perceived/ treated Impact of school
	Parent and child relationship	Parent and child relationship
	Are there any disagreements and conflicts over household rules?	Are there any disagreements and conflicts over household rules?
	What was parent's childhood like <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How were they perceived as children - What roles were they given as children etc 	

Interview 2: Parental Questions

Family life

- How is your household organised? Who does what, when and why?
- Do you think your family set-up can be problematic in any way? For yourself, the children, the business etc?
- Do you feel that your family is different to other families (Western and Chinese)? What benefits/ disadvantages does this bring? Would you like to change it in anyway, why?
- Can you describe your day-to-day life; a typical week would consist of what?
- Do you spend a lot of time together as a family? Spend enough time together?
- Do you go out a lot as a family? Do you always eat together? Watch TV together? Do homework together? Play games etc.
- Is home life important? Why?
- Do you tell your child much about your own childhood? Why?
- Is there any way your family life now differs/ is similar from your family life as a child?

Parent and child relationship

- How old were you when you had your child? Do you feel your age influences your relationship with them? Is gender a factor?
- Do you know a lot about your child's interests and hobbies? Do you know all their friends? How well do you know their friends?
- Is it easy to tell when your child is upset? If your child had a problem do you think they would feel able to turn to you?
- Would you say you were close to your child? Are you or your partner closest to your child? Is your child close to other family relatives?
- Have there been any conflicts/disagreements between you and your child?
- Did you have a similar relationship with your parents as a child? Did you have a lot of family time as a child?
- Were you close to your parents? Do you think you are closer to your child than you were with your parents?

Role of parents and role of children

- Who does most of the household chores in the house (cooking, cleaning etc)? Do your children help you? Do you and your child agree over the amount of housework to be done?
- Do children help you freely or is part of pocket money? Do you give your children pocket money? Do they have to earn their pocket money? Do children help out in any other way (e.g. at parent's workplace)? Is this similar to your childhood?
- Is there certain pocket money for certain jobs? Have you ever cut off their pocket money or reduced it (probe for disciplining tactics)?

Perception of children: Child's maturity

- Do you feel that your child is quite mature/ immature for their age? Do you feel they understand a lot? Do you trust your child?
- Are your children aware of family matters like money/ problems/ deaths etc?
- Do you talk openly about topics that may be deemed as 'adult' issues? How did your parents treat you with regards to 'adult issues', were you involved or not?

Freedoms and social life

- Do you like your child's friends? Does your child like to go out now with their friends? Does your child go out after school and/or on the weekends to socialise?
- Are there any of your child's friends who you consider to be a bad influence?
- How much freedom do you give your children? What influences this (e.g. past childhood)?
- What are your children allowed to do/not do? Why?
- Do you think your child has more freedom than you had as a child?

Going to school

- Is your child allowed to do more since going to secondary school/ since the last interview?
- Have there been any changes in the home since high school? E.g. giving pocket money? Going to supplementary classes? Part time work etc
- What differences can you see in your child (if any) since attending secondary school? Are they more mature/ demanding etc? What impact has this had in the household? Have you given your child more responsibilities since high school?
- Have other family relations altered since your child attended high school (e.g. siblings, grandparents etc)? Between yourself and your child?
- Have there been more differences in opinions over household rules between yourself and your child since going to secondary school? For example, socialising times? Why do you think this is?

Family Rules

- Do you always eat together as a family?
- Do the children go to bed at a certain time?
- Do children have to switch off the TV at a certain time?
- How long can children play computer games/ use the telephone for etc?
- Do you help with your child's homework? When do you expect homework to be completed?
- Do you feel that you have to nag your children to do these things or do they do things on their own accord?
- What happens if children do not do their work? Does your partner agree with this?
- What times are they allowed out/do they have to come home for? What happens if they are late?
- Do you and your child have differing opinions over these issues or other household rules?
- Are the rules ever broken by your child? Do the rules cause any problems between you and your child or in the home?

- Did you have the same rules whilst growing up? Do you think your upbringing influences your rules?
- What similarities and difference do you see between your parenting and your parents (e.g. being British born, British educated)?

Disciplining

- Have you ever grounded your children? What behaviours would they be grounded for? Why?
- Is there anything else your children are not allowed to do? Why do you feel that this is inappropriate for your child? Would you let them do x, y, z with age?
- Who does most of the disciplining in the house?
- Did your parents use the same methods with you?

Interview 2: Children's Questions

Family life

- How is your household organised? Who does what, when and why?
- Do you think your family set-up can be problematic in any way? For yourself, school-life, your social life etc?
- Do you feel that your family is different to other families (Western and Chinese)? What benefits/ disadvantages does this bring? Would you like it to change it in anyway, why?

Day to day life

- Can you describe your day-to-day life; a typical week would consist of what?
- Is there any way your family life differs from your friends/other families?
- How would you like your family set-up to be like? Why?

Parent and child relationship

- Do you spend a lot of time together as a family? Do you go out a lot as a family? Do you always eat together? Watch TV together? Do homework together? Play games etc
- Do your parents know a lot about your friends, interests and hobbies?
- Do you know much about your parents? Your parent's hobbies, interests and childhood?
- How often do you talk to your parents? Do you discuss everything with your parents? Are you close to your mum or dad/both/ neither?
- Would you always turn to your parents if you needed help? Or would you turn to friends/ siblings/ relatives?
- What influences closeness/non closeness in your relationships with others? Age, gender, shared experiences etc?

Role of parents and role of children

- Who does most of the household chores in the house (cooking, cleaning etc)?
- Do your parents expect certain behaviours from you? Expectations for the future, from school etc?

Pocket money

- Do you help out in the family? Do you help out freely or is it a part of pocket money?
- Do you get pocket money? Do you have to earn it or is it just given? Do you help/get paid to help your parents in any other way (e.g. at parent's workplace)?
- Is there certain pocket money for certain jobs? Have you ever had it cut off or reduced?
- Do you have any part time work? How long have you done x for? What does it involve? Do you like it? What do your parent's think of your job?

Maturity

- Do you like being X years old?
- Would you prefer to be younger or older?
- Do you think you are more mature/ less mature than your friends?
- Is there an ideal age you would like to be and why?
- Have you noticed a difference in the way people treat you since high school/puberty? Do your parents give you more chores to do? Given you more responsibility? Trust you more etc (probe for parental differences)?

Secondary school

- Do you like secondary school? Do you feel more grown up since starting school? Are you allowed to do more since going to secondary school/ last interview - at school and home?
- Do your parents treat you differently to when you were at primary school? For example, do you go to bed later? Play computer games longer? Go out with friends more etc?
- Do you feel quite mature for your age? Do you feel that your parents treat you fairly? Do you feel like they treat you like a grown up? Do they involve you in things that are important to you (e.g. family discussions)?

Friends

- What are your friends like? Do you have many Chinese friends? Do your parents get on with your friends?
- Are you allowed to do similar things to your friends? Is there anything your friends are allowed to do, but not you? Why do you think this is? How does it make you feel?
- Are your friend's parents strict? Do your parents treat you differently compared to your friend's parents? Why do you think this is? Do you think your age is a factor?
- How do you think your relationship compares to your friend's relationships with parents?
- How would you like your parents to treat you?

Household Rules

- Are there any household rules you have to obey? Time to go to bed/ playing computer games/ doing homework and housework/ helping out etc?
- What do you think to these rules? Do you feel that these rules are fair? Do you always abide by these rules? Do your friends have the same rules?
- Who imposes these rules? Why do you think these rules are important for your parents? Do you think the rules are fair?
- Do you have any family relatives who are the same age? How do their parents treat them? How does this compare to your parents?
- What happens if rules are broken? Have you ever been grounded, had pocket money taken away etc? Would this happen for any other behaviour?
- How would you like your parents to act/ treat you instead?

Disciplining

- Have you ever been grounded? What behaviours would you be grounded for? Why?
- How are you punished?
- How do these methods affect you?
- Who does most of the disciplining in the house?

APPENDIX 4

Interview 3 Guide

Table 4: Interview 3 Structure and Themes

Interview No.	Parents	Children
3	Changes since the beginning of fieldwork/ last interview	Changes since the beginning of fieldwork/ last interview
	Child growing up	Child growing up
	Perspective on childhood/ adulthood	Perspective on childhood/ adulthood
	Social integration	Social integration
	Future	Future

Interview 3: Parental Questions

Changes

- Since the last time we spoke, have there been any more responsibilities given to your child?
- Have you noticed any changes in x since our last interview? Since the interviews began in November? E.g. more grown up more/mature, given more freedoms, more argumentative etc?
- Have there been any/ any more conflicts and disagreements?
- Is your child more confident?
- Have rules changed? If so, why?
- Have you noticed any changes within yourself? Why?

Growing up

- Are you prepared for the teenage years?
- Is there anything you worry about now that your child is a teen/in high school/ growing up? Why?
- How do you think your relationship with your child will change over the next few years?
- Why do you think that the teenage years will be difficult/ not difficult?
- Do you think you will be able to accept the changes in your child? That your child may have secrets and/or not wish to share aspects of their life with you?
- Do you think your children will challenge you more? How will you deal with this? Is it OK for your child to challenge you?
- Do you think your parenting will change during the teen years? Do you think parenting will become more difficult? Why?
- Did your parents have difficulties with you as a teen?
- How were your teenage years? What similarities and differences do you see between your teens and your child's?

Perspective on childhood

- What is different between the childhood/ primary years and teenage years? Was this the same for you as a child?
- How do you view your child? E.g. a young adult, unruly teen etc? Why?
- Has your outlook on your child changed since they became a teenager? How did you see them as a child?
- What does being a child/teen mean to you?
- How do you view childhood itself? What images do you have? Why?
- Does this image correspond to your childhood? Your child's childhood?

Case studies

- What do you make of news reports on the Bulger case? American shootings in schools? Child killers? Did stories like this appear when you were growing up?
- How should children behave? Would your expectations be different if you still lived in HK?
- Do you think children have rights? What rights do they have?
- What freedoms do you think children should have? Why?
- Do you think children are more grown up than adult's think? More intelligent? More able?
- What is the right and wrong way for children to behave? Are there any exceptions? E.g. is it OK for children to care for their parents? Is it OK for children to work from an early age in sweatshops?
- How do you view adults? What is the right and wrong way for adults to behave? Are there any exceptions?
- What is your role as an adult? Your role as a parent?
- How should children be treated? How do you show your child love/ respect?
- How do you view your child? How do you view your relationship with them?

- Do you allow your child enough independence/ responsibilities, decision making etc? How much control do you have over your child's life? In what areas?
- Do you think children have a better childhood here or elsewhere (e.g. parent's country of origin)?
- Growing up, did your parents differentiate between different age phases?
- How do you think your parent's viewed you when you were a child? Is this how you view your children?

Social integration

- How does it feel being British Chinese?
- How does it feel to be Chinese living in Britain? Do you feel different from your neighbours, other family members, friends etc?
- How do you think your child feels?
- Do you like living in your neighbourhood/ city? Why?
- What comments do you have about British society? Positive or negative? Improvements?
- Do you feel that being Chinese stops you from doing anything you want to do? Why? Does it affect your parenting or what you allow your child to do?
- Are you happy with the racial climate in Britain? Do you worry about your children? How could it be improved?
- Do you feel that this is an inclusive society?
- Do you think schools or organisations (e.g. Chinese school) help you and your family feel included in society?
- What roles do Chinese school/ church play in your life and your child's life? Is it nice meeting other people who are similar to you? Is it nice to relate to other people similar to you? Do you dislike it?
- Do you have friends who have similar concerns about being a British-Chinese citizen? What problems and issues are present for contemporary Chinese families if any and why?
- Do you feel Westernised? Do you still have Chinese traditions in the household or not?

- The way you view society- does this impact the family? Impact upon what you allow your child to do?
- Do you think Chinese families have moved with the times and become less traditional? Do Chinese families in Britain need to change in any way? How do you view your own family?
- Has China's world position altered/ improved your feelings of belonging? Made you proud to be Chinese?
- What impact does China's world position have on your parenting and your child? Does this heighten the importance of learning Chinese for the sake of your child's future? Would you consider moving back to your country of origin?
- Has inclusion for Chinese individuals improved/ worsened since parent's childhood?

Future

- How are you preparing for your child's future (e.g. child's enrolled activities)?
- Do you worry about your child's future? Why? Do you think your parents were worried about your future? What concerns did your parents have for you growing up?
- As a parent do you feel that your child has additional pressures being Chinese and living in Britain? Does this affect what you allow your child to do now?
- Do you think that your child will face any difficulties/ barriers in their future (e.g. racism)? Have you spoken about racism with your child? Have you or your child encountered racism? Would it be better to move back to your country of origin?
- How confident are parents in their child's success for the future?

Interview 3: Children's Questions

Changes

- Since the last time we spoke, you helped around the house, with _____? Have any more responsibilities been given to you?
- Have you noticed any changes since our last interview? Since the interviews began in November? E.g. grown up more, given more freedoms, more argumentative etc?
- Have there been any more conflicts and disagreements with your parents/ other family members?
- Have you noticed any changes within yourself? Why?

Perspective on childhood

- How would your friends describe you? How would your parents describe you? How would you describe yourself?
- How do you see yourself? Child or teen? Why?
- How do you think your mother and father view you? Why?
- Do you feel that your parents treat you as a young adult? As an individual/ own person? Why?
- How does your outlook on the teenage years compare to your outlook on childhood?
- What is important to you right now? What will become more important/ less important?

Case studies

- How do you view childhood itself? What images do you have? Why?
- What do you make of news reports on the Bulger case? American shootings in schools? Child killers?
- How should children behave? Do you think children have rights? What rights do they have?
- What freedoms do you think children should have? Why?
- What is the right and wrong way for children to behave? Are there any exceptions? E.g. is it OK for children to care for their parents? Is it OK for children to work from an early age in sweatshops? Why?

- How do you view adults? What is the right and wrong way for adults to behave? Are there any exceptions?
- What role do parents/ adults play? How do parents show you love/ respect etc?

Growing up

- What is different between the childhood/ primary years and teenage years?
- What does being a teenager mean to you?
- What images do you have of a teenager? How do you think teens behave? Is this how you behave? What would your parent's say/ make of this?
- Do you think your parents should give you more freedoms? Responsibilities? Is this what has happened? Do you feel you have enough independence/ responsibilities, decision-making etc?
- How does your age affect your life? Are you restricted in any way?
- Do you feel like you are your own person, able to make the decisions and choices you want to make? In your decisions do your parents/ friends have a big part to play? Would like them to play less of a part?
- How do you feel about your parent's attitudes and treatment towards you? E.g. do you feel overprotected by your parents? Why?
- Do you think that your teenage years will/ has caused any problems in the family? Strain relationships?
- Do you think your parents will be able to accept the changes in you? That you may have secrets or do not wish to share aspects of their life with parents? Why would you hide/ share things? Do you think your parents will understand what you are going through?
- How do you think your relationship with your parents will change over the next few years? Is it already changing?
- Many children with limited social hours rely on the Internet to keep in touch with friends, such as MSN. How important is it to keep in touch with friends? Why? How important is it to have access to the Internet/ phone to contact friends? Is this a substitute for not seeing your friends as often as you like? How else would you contact your friends?

Social integration

- Do you like the school you go to? Do you think the curriculum involves Chinese culture enough?
- How does it feel being Chinese? Do you feel like everyone else or different? Why?
- How does it feel to be Chinese living in Britain? Do you feel different from your neighbours, other family members, friends etc?
- How do you think your parents feel?
- Do you like living in your neighbourhood/ city? Why?
- What comments do you have about British society? Positive or negative? Improvements?

Racism

- Does society or people within society constrain/impact your choices and actions in life? Why?
- Are you happy with the racial climate in Britain? Do you worry about your parents? How could it be improved? Do you feel that this is an inclusive society?
- Do you think schools or organisations (e.g. Chinese school) help you and your family feel included in society?
- What roles do Chinese school/ church play in your life? Is it nice meeting other people who are similar to you? Is it nice to relate to other people similar to you? Do you dislike it?
- Do you have friends who have similar concerns? What problems and issues are present for contemporary Chinese families if any and why?
- Should Chinese people be Westernised? What problems can Westernisation or being traditionally Chinese bring? Why? Personal experience?
- The way you view society, does this impact upon your choices and decisions? The way your family views society, does this impact upon what you are allowed to do?
- Do you think Chinese families have moved with the times and become less traditional? Need to change at all? How do you view your own family?

- Has China's world position altered/ improved your feelings of belonging? Made you proud to be Chinese?

Future

- Do you think about your future? What would you like to do? What are your dreams and ambitions?
- How are you preparing for your future (e.g. child's enrolled activities)?
- Do you worry about your future? Why?
- Do you feel any additional pressures being Chinese and living in Britain? Do you think your parents would agree/ disagree?
- Do you think that you will face any difficulties/barriers in the future (e.g. racism)? Have you spoken about racism with your parents/ friends? Have you encountered racism?