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**A Study of Chinese Family Musical Involvement  
(FMI) and Musical Identities**



THE UNIVERSITY  
*of* EDINBURGH

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## **Abstract**

Individuals' musical identities are closely related to and manifested in their musical behaviours. How people conceive of their music and themselves, and how they make use of music can reflect their own distinctive values, attitudes and views of the world, which is an important process in their identity construction. Previous studies have highlighted the significance of family factors (such as parental musical behaviour and preferences) in one's construction of musical identities, and suggest that family musical activities are positively correlated with family cohesion and emotional well-being. Despite the significance of both family and music in individuals' lives, few studies have focused on the function of music within the family unit, and even fewer consider families in the very different context of Chinese society.

This study aims to address the gap in the literature relating to Chinese family musical involvement (FMI) and musical identities. The research questions investigated in this study are: 1) What is FMI and how can it be assessed? 2) What is the relationship between FMI and musical identities? 3) What is the relationship between FMI and interpersonal interactions and family communication?

Participants were recruited from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. Six Chinese families with 16 people in total participated in the investigation, and each individual family member was interviewed separately. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis of the participants' narratives identified three overarching themes, namely: 'Describing FMI', 'Developing identities in FMI', and 'Outcomes of FMI'.

'Describing FMI' presents information about participating families' musical activities, musical resources, their attitudes towards music, and their motivation for FMI. In general, FMI in the participating Chinese families was highly child-centred, as parents placed great importance on their children's musical development, regardless of their own level of interest in musical activities.

Mothers and children had stronger musical identities than fathers. The extracurricular music class was considered to be an important resource for organising family musical activities.

‘Developing identities in FMI’ shows that the participants’ roles and identities are dynamic in their interaction with FMI. The roles of family members are interchangeable in many situations depending on parental and child ages. Engaging in music with family members could bring about transformations in individuals’ musical identities. Most participants experienced a positive change in their musical identities when engaging in FMI. However, unpleasant musical experiences, such as listening to dispreferred music in the interaction of FMI could harm the development of musical identities and even family relationships if unresolved.

‘Outcomes of FMI’ examines participants’ experiences of FMI, and the influence of FMI on family communication and relationships. FMI can have both positive and negative influence on couple relationships and parent-child relationships. FMI can play a significant role in the development of close family bonds. However when family members’ preferences are not facilitated and balanced, FMI might also be less interesting and enjoyable for the family members involved, and hence an unpleasant musical experience might damage musical identities and adversely affect family relationships. From a positive perspective, negative experiences in FMI proved short-term such that family members often self-adjust their own negative feelings; for example, they might maximise the positive aspect of their experiences or put negative experiences aside.

The findings of the study suggest that simply pulling family members together might not achieve the goal of ‘families that play together, stay together’; instead, it can adversely affect individuals’ interests and motivation in FMI, as well as their communication and relationships with family members. Perhaps music educators, music therapists, and community workers could devise strategies to help families see any problems as something other families come across, and how they can overcome these or get more positive time from their musical interaction. The study also highlights gender bias in FMI and music culture in Chinese

context. The absence of fathers in both FMI and family affairs should garner more attention from all segments of society. Family activity organisers could inform parents of both maternal and paternal involvement in family/musical activities.

## Lay Summary

Individuals' musical identities are closely related to and manifested in their musical behaviours. How people conceive of their music and themselves, and how they make use of music can reflect their own distinctive values, attitudes and views of the world, which is an important process in their identity construction. Previous studies have highlighted the significance of family factors (such as parental musical behaviour and preferences) in one's construction of musical identities, and suggest that family musical activities are positively correlated with family cohesion and emotional well-being. Despite the significance of both family and music in individuals' lives, few studies have focused on the function of music within the family unit, and even fewer consider families in the very different context of Chinese society.

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Significant findings revealed that FMI in the participating Chinese families was highly child-centred, as parents placed great importance on their children's musical development, regardless of their own level of interest in musical activities. There might be a reciprocal relationship between FMI and musical identities, and between FMI and family relationships: findings associated with participants'

musical identities, attitudes and roles in FMI imply their self-defined and perceived musical ability, confidence and identities strongly influence their behaviour, interest and motivation. Moreover, FMI can have both positive and negative influence on participants' musical identities and family relationships. The majority of participants experienced a positive change on their musical identities when engaging in FMI. However, when family members' preferences are not facilitated and balanced, FMI might also be less interesting and enjoyable for the family members involved. Unpleasant musical experiences, such as listening to dispreferred music in the interaction of FMI could be harmful to the development of musical identities and even family relationships if unresolved. From a positive perspective, negative experiences in FMI proved short-term such that family members often self-adjust their own negative feelings; for example, they might maximise the positive aspect of their experiences or put negative experiences aside.

The findings of the study suggest that simply pulling family members together might not achieve the goal of 'families that play together, stay together'; instead, it can adversely affect individuals' interests and motivation in FMI, as well as their communication and relationships with family members. Perhaps music educators, music therapists, and community workers could devise strategies to help families see any problems as something other families come across, and how they can overcome these or get more positive time from their musical interaction. The study also highlights gender bias in FMI and music culture in Chinese context. The absence of fathers in both FMI and family affairs should garner more attention from all segments of society. Family activity organisers could inform parents of both maternal and paternal involvement in family/musical activities.



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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **1.1 Overview**

This chapter introduces this thesis, the primary motivation of which is to investigate Chinese families' musical involvement and musical identities. I begin by presenting my personal background and the current social context as influences shaping the research direction. I then define the term family musical involvement (FMI) before presenting the research objectives, research questions and methodology selected. The final section of this chapter outlines the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Origin of the Study**

### **1.2.1 Personal Background**

I am a female music teacher from China and I was born in the 1990s. In the 1990s, China was experiencing a series of socio-economic reforms. One of the most influential and important of these reforms was the state enterprise reform. This reform aimed to improve the efficiency and standards of enterprise management, resulting in the state closing down many insolvent enterprises (Huang & Chiu, 2003; Won, 2004). One consequence of this was worker layoffs on a massive scale. Unfortunately, my mother was laid off at this time, resulting in my family falling into a severe financial crisis. My mother told me that at that time we only had 300 yuan (about 30 pounds) per month to live on. This was around the time that I started primary school. My school provided many extracurricular courses, including music (e.g., singing, flute, electronic organ, and accordion), painting, sports, chess, and dance and so on. When I went home and asked my mother to help me fill in the form we had been given for course selection, she wrote down 'electronic organ'. Shortly afterwards, my mother borrowed money from her relatives and friends to buy me a piano. However, she was also subject to

condemnation by her relatives, friends, and even former colleagues, because none of them understood why she wished me to learn the piano when the family was in such a disadvantaged economic situation. Since I was growing up in a less developed city, Yaan in Sichuan province, it was difficult to find me a professional piano teacher, resulting in some of my mother's relatives and former colleagues mocking her for buying a pile of scrap iron. In retrospect, their misunderstanding and unsupportive attitudes with regard to my music education were understandable. Indeed, when day-to-day living is a problem, music appears to be a luxury. However, despite the negativity from outside my home, I started my music journey.

Learning about music brought about many changes in my life, informing how I observed the world around me. Despite being too young to understand my mother's decision, I realised that music was important and that it was indispensable to me, to my mother, and to my family. I did not decide then what I wanted to do in the future, but I knew that music would be something intertwined with my life's journey. While undertaking my weekly music training, I also met many families similar to mine. Not all the children who were learning to play the piano were from secure socioeconomic backgrounds. However, all the parents paid considerable attention to their children's musical achievements, and were willing to devote both money and energy to music training. As time went on, it became apparent that more and more children were taking extracurricular music training. To this day, I can still clearly remember that every summer when my mother took me to Chengdu for the Standard Grade Examinations in Music, I saw thousands of parents and children gathered together at the front door of Sichuan Conservatory of Music, waiting for classes or exams. At that time, I could not fully understand why so many Chinese families appeared to be obsessed with music, but this social phenomenon attracted my attention.

Over ten years later I majored in Music Education for my undergraduate degree, as I planned to become a music teacher. My personal experience of learning music and my career plan led me to pay more attention to the field of music education in China. I was particularly interested in the uptake of extracurricular music training,

musical children and their parents, because of my personal experience. When pursuing my Master's Degree in Edinburgh during 2012 and 2013, I encountered the term 'musical identities' for the first time. The phrase struck me, because throughout my personal experience of taking music training for over ten years, I had been considering how music can change people and their lives, but I had not associated this phenomenon with 'identity'. The Chinese translation of the term 'identity' is controversial, because scholars have not reached agreement about how this term can be precisely translated. It could be translated as 身份、认同 or 同一性 (Lan, 2017), and may change according to different research area. I later searched this term in the most important online databases for academic journals in mainland China called National Knowledge Infrastructure (known as CNKI) by entering the Chinese phrases '*yinyue rentong*'(音乐认同) and '*yinyue shenfen*' (音乐身份), and the English term 'musical identities'. However, I found the term 'musical identities' was a new concept for the academic community in China. Although many articles contained the words 'music' (音乐) and 'identity'(身份 or 认同), they focused principally on research into ethnographic music or cultural studies, rather than music psychology and sociology. The definition and research scope of 'musical identities' varied from those in Western academia. Since academic communication between China and Western countries has expanded in recent years, and since I have a previous interest in, and experience with extracurricular music education, I carried out a research project for my Master's degree examining the influence of extracurricular music education on young Chinese people's musical identities, highlighting the importance of family context on music learning.

During my PhD studies, I started my own family and became a mother. This change of identity has influenced many aspects of my daily life. I began to pay much more attention to things that I had previously had little interest in, including marriage happiness, the relationship between couples, parent-child relationship, family construct, and children's development. I became more active and passionate about running various activities for my family, such as outdoor physical activities and musical activities. As an only child in my family, I was



well taken care of and protected by my parents. I readily took their love, protection, and dedication for granted. I even complained frequently about their excessive attention towards me, and used to say that I would never make any decisions for my future child that would interfere with the course of his or her life. However, after I had a baby, I found to my surprise that it was in fact very challenging to keep myself entirely out of my child's life. Like many of the Chinese parents I read about in news reports, I make plans for him and think about his future development. I often ask myself: what musical instrument will he learn? Where might I find a teacher for him? Should I play the piano more often when I am at home — because if I play more often, I could provide him with a good home environment as a basis for a music related education? Although I attempt to remind myself constantly not to be a manipulative mother, I create blueprints for my family's and my child's future development. Obviously, many artistic activities are included in my plans for him due to my own personal background. This has led me to develop an even greater interest in the influence of various family activities, specifically musical activities.

Moreover, because of my personal experience and background, many of my friends are music professionals and music lovers. They often share photographs and images of their families' musical activities on social media; for example, going to the theatre, listening to classical music concerts, and so on. Pictures displayed online include those of couples interacting musically; for example, playing the piano together, or singing together. These people seem to be very happy producing various kinds of music with their family members. I find it interesting that they seem to have a happier family life, and stronger relationships with family members, through participating in musical activities together.

For all the above reasons, I have been struck by the social importance of music in family settings. These observations prompted several questions, as follows: Can participating in musical activities with a partner or family members strengthen mutual affection and people's ability to communicate? Can making music together enhance the satisfaction of couples? Does musical involvement improve the relationship between parents and children? Does musical involvement create a

happier family life? What is the role of music in building a happier home life? The motivation for pursuing this research project arose as a result of asking these questions. Since understanding the research context is important to a study and reflexivity is a key feature throughout this qualitative study, in the following section I will introduce the social background (including some noteworthy issues and phenomena) applicable the current research.

## **1.2.2 Chinese Context**

### **The Growing Cultural Consumption**

It has been 40 years since the commencement of the Reform and Opening-up Policy set out in 1978. During those 40 years, China has achieved excellent growth and development economically, culturally and socially. The living standards of Chinese people have also generally improved (Cui, 2014), although not everyone's lives will have changed in the same way or to the same extent.

Chinese people are no longer satisfied merely with pursuing material needs, they are also placing much more importance on the pursuit of their spiritual well-being. Therefore, cultural and leisure consumption has steadily increased. In 2011, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) announced a plan to promote cultural industry as a pillar industry (China Daily, 2017; China News, 2011). The role of cultural consumption in promoting economic growth is becoming increasingly apparent. In 2015, the CPC Central Committee approved a proposal for the thirteenth Five-Year Plan, demonstrating China's development blueprint for 2016 to 2020, stipulating a plan for 'guiding and expanding cultural consumption' (China News, 2011). During 2005-2014, the added value of the cultural industries increased from 104.32 billion yuan to 427.45 billion yuan, corresponding to an annual growth rate of 21.3 percent (Courty & Zhang, 2018; Li, Q., 2018, p5). Important forms of cultural consumption include expenditure on educational training and spending on entertainment, including taking music training or participating in musical activities (Li, Y. 2017). With support from national policy directives and due to changes in individuals' ideas and concepts about life, people have become increasingly interested in cultural products and

activities.

### **The ‘Fever’ of Taking Extracurricular Music Training**

For thousands of years, the role of music in educating people and building social harmony was emphasised citing the works of the Chinese ideologist Confucius. He pointed out that nothing transforms lives more fully than social traditions, and suggested that governments can build harmonious societies through offering music education (移风易俗莫善于乐) (Confucius, 2013). Throughout Chinese history, music has been regarded not just as a means of entertainment, but also as an educational tool. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), the number of theoretical subjects in schools decreased, but music education still received considerable attention, with the proportion of music in the curriculum increasing significantly as political songs could be used to advocate revolution (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008, p.13). Since the Cultural Revolution, music education has gradually shifted to become a more aesthetic form of education (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008). During the last thirty years, a fever for taking extracurricular music education has gradually spread across the country. Some reasons behind this phenomenon are educational reforms and an enthusiasm to learn about music. I begin by introducing the education reform in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the late 1980s, education policy makers coined the slogan ‘education for quality’ (*suzhi jiaoyu* 素质教育), and formally introduced the policy of *suzhi jiaoyu* in the late 1990s (Kipnis, 2006, p.297, 300). The term *suzhi* is often translated as ‘quality’, but no single English term can fully explain the nuances of *suzhi* (Kipnis, 2006). It can be used to refer to both the inborn characteristics of a person and the embodied characteristics that derive from one’s environment (Kipnis, 2006). The educational reform ‘education for quality’ attempted to focus on the all-round development of Chinese students, including their ability to learn the elements of the exam curriculum (Bregnbæk, 2011). Since then, schools and parents have attached increasing importance to children’s part-time studies, encouraging children to participate in various extracurricular artistic programmes

and activities, such as music training. These activities can contribute to children's creativity, which are an important aspect of children's 'quality' or '*suzhi*' (Woronov, 2008). In addition, the introduction of music grade examinations from the UK has significantly promoted the development of extracurricular music education in China. In 1987, the Piano Association in Guangdong province held the first piano grade exams. Later, many of the country's institutions and conservatories started to organise a large variety of music exams. Parents are keen to encourage their children to get a high grade in these music exams for utilitarian motives (e.g., to advance in the entrance exams for secondary school or college).

The educational system in China is heavily examination oriented (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008; Dello-Iacovo, 2009). Although the state has advocated for 'education for quality', aiming to change the examination-oriented educational mode and thereby reduce the burden on young students, schools and parents also place high importance on children's results. Despite the fact that learning about music can take up a lot of spare time, parents nevertheless encourage it, because the mastery of a musical instrument or other musical skills can bring the children tangible benefits. For many young students, if not most, perhaps the most important benefit is that they might have a greater possibility of entering a better secondary school or college. The educational environment for Chinese students (even for primary school students) is highly pressurised and competitive (Hesketh et al., 2009). Students have to take various exams in order to gain entrance to a good secondary school or college. However, many schools and colleges have schemes lowering the academic attainment threshold for students who have special talents or display excellence in art, sports or music. These students can receive additional points on their school/college entrance examinations if they receive a high grade in some music exams. This leads many parents to encourage or even force their children to learn a musical instrument in order to be able to attend a good school or college in the future. One potential consequence of this phenomenon is that many families' lifestyles may change because of their children's music learning, as parents must devote additional money and attention to music lessons and examinations.

Taken together, my personal experience and the social phenomenon of the enthusiasm for taking part in musical activities/music training motivated me to conduct the current research. Although existing literature on musical identities in English has predominantly observed families in Anglophone societies in the West, it is valuable to explore the relationship between Chinese families' musical identities and their musical involvement. In the following section I will elucidate what I mean by the term FMI.

### **1.3 Understanding Family Musical Involvement**

It is helpful to identify here what is meant exactly by the term FMI, before moving on to develop the research scope and direction. FMI is a new term I have introduced to describe a type of family activity that relates to music. Unlike my own personal experiences of music, FMI must include two or more family members as active subjects, able to participate in various musical activities that fit into the time frame they have available, while also meeting their needs and interests. From a perspective of social psychology, FMI is an objectively existing social and cultural activity, in which the basic unit of action is the family. FMI could be regarded as contributing to the lifestyle of the family. Based on this understanding, the following definition of FMI is proposed: the experience of time spent together by family members engaged in all kinds of family-based musical activities, which can be carried out at any indoor or outdoor venue (including home, the place of entertainment, public places and communities and so forth) in a family's spare time. These activities can be, for example, family members singing together, going to music concerts, or playing musical instruments together.

As families comprise individual family members, FMI considers each family member's personal musical experience and involvement. As a family event, FMI also involves couple/spouse relationships and the parent-child relationship. The interactions and relationships between family members as part of their musical engagement have a significant impact on the mechanism of FMI, and this impact is reciprocal. Thus, family members need to communicate and cooperate with one

another to ensure a smooth process as part of family activity. On the other hand, family musical activities might subtly exert an influence on family members' emotions, quality of communication and relationships. It is important to note the potential for FMI to be either positive or negative. Making music together might not be an entirely cheerful activity for all family members; instead, it might deter some people from musical engagement, or lead to friction among family members. Thus, the study of FMI aims to explore the relationship between family's relationships and FMI.

#### **1.4 Research Aims and Research Questions**

The main purpose of this research is to fill the gap in the literature relating to Chinese family musical involvement (FMI) and musical identities. The concept of musical identity has been well-researched in Western academia; however, such studies, especially ones focusing on the relationship between musical identities and FMI, are non-existent in China. Therefore, the exploration of Chinese families' musical involvement and identities is important. To fulfil the main aim of the study, three key research questions were addressed as outlined below:

1. What is FMI and how can it be assessed?
2. What is the relationship between FMI and musical identities?
3. What is the relationship between FMI and interpersonal interactions and family communication?

#### **1.5 Research Methods**

The current study employed a qualitative approach, gathering rich data from a small sample to develop theory around FMI and identities. Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. Six Chinese families with 16 people in total participated in the investigation, and each individual family member was interviewed separately. The participants were recruited from Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. The recruitment of the

participants, ethical considerations and how data were collected and analysed are described in detail in Chapter 4.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter one serves as an introduction providing key information about this research, including the social and cultural context and an account of my own experience as a motivation for conducting this study. Research purpose, objectives, questions and research methods were also briefly introduced.

Chapters two and three provide a literature review focusing on the topics of family studies and musical studies. Chapter two provides an overview of key concepts in family studies, as well as the characteristics of traditional Chinese family cultures and changes in modern Chinese families. In Chapter three, research on musical identities and musical involvement in home and child-care settings are discussed. The lack of literature concentrating on Chinese families' musical involvement and musical identities is highlighted in the literature review.

Chapter four addresses the research methods adopted in the study, and contains the rationale for using qualitative research methods and semi-structured interviews, the sample design, recruitment selection, ethical consideration, pilot study, data collection and data analysis method. This chapter also provides a reflexive account of my personal influences at the stages of participant recruitment, data collection and data analysis to enhance the validity and reliability of the current research.

Chapters five, six, and seven detail and discuss the findings of this study. Chapter five provides details of the participating families' musical practices and their musical environment. Chapter six explores the relationship between musical identities and FMI. Each individual family member's roles in FMI, and the influence of FMI on their musical identities, is discussed. Chapter seven presents the outcomes of FMI, including participants' negative and positive experiences with FMI, and the role of these experiences in their relationships with family

members.

Chapter eight discusses the key findings and limitations of the study. Implications and recommendations for future research on family studies and music education are also presented.



## **Chapter Two: Family, Identity, and the Chinese Family**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature review is divided into two parts. The first part (chapter two) outlines key concepts pertaining to family studies and identity literature, and affords an overview of socio-cultural traditions and developments in traditional and modern Chinese families. The second segment of the literature review (chapter three) focuses on key findings in previous studies on musical interactions in home settings.

### **2.2 Understanding Family: Reviews on Family Studies**

#### **2.2.1 Defining Family**

The notion of family as we understand it originated around 2.1 million years ago, although how and where it developed remains unknown (Gough, 1971). Most people might conceive of ‘family’ as an obvious grouping, but scholars and researchers from different regions have attempted to define family precisely (Burgess & Locke, 1960; Engels, 1972; Gough, 1971; Levin, 1999), because ‘what is family’ remains in dispute (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999). ‘What family means’ can be considered in reference to a variety of criteria (Levin, 1999). Historically, the term ‘family’ has been linked to three distinctive perspectives: a structural definition, a transactional definition and a psychosocial task definition (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004). The structural perspective focuses on the presence or absence of certain family members, for example, two parents with their biological children can comprise a family. This kind of definition makes sense of who is part of a family, but not the role and function of families and how they are enacted. Family can also be defined from a transactional perspective, which focuses on whether groups of people generate a sense of family identity based on strong emotional ties (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). The psychosocial task perspective emphasises whether certain tasks associated with family life can be

accomplished by groups of people coming together (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004, p.177). The psychosocial task definition is usually concerned with describing the function of family (Fitzpatrick & Caughlin, 2002, p.747). Both the transactional and psychosocial task definitions focus on the fulfilment of certain functions rather than structural intactness, whereas the structural definition is based on group membership and does not correspond to specific functions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2004, p.178). Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2004) suggest that in practice families are often defined from all three theoretical perspectives simultaneously, although it is theoretically possible to define a family from only one perspective. According to Gubrium and Holstein (1990), scholars should distinguish between the term 'the family' and the term 'family': the former being a definite form whereas the latter indefinite and mutable depending on perspective (see also, Levin & Trost, 1992). Since individuals might have a variety of perceptions and conceptualisations of family (Gavriel-Fried et al., 2014; Levin & Trost, 1992), some scholars also advocate that it is not useful to define family (Bernardes, 1999); despite this, efforts to do so continue.

Regardless of disputes about the value of defining the family, it is still meaningful to ask 'what does family mean?' and 'what makes a family?' in this research project. The concept of family is arguably especially important to research taking place in a Chinese context, because the importance of family (from both structural and functional perspectives) has always been emphasised in Chinese culture. A number of cultural differences can also affect people's definitions of family. The Chinese sociologists Sun Benwen (Xiong, 2016) and Fei Xiaotong (Shi, 2013) refer to the family as a social group comprising parents, children and other relatives. Zheng (2010) states that the concept of family can be divided into a broad sense and a narrow sense: in the narrow sense, family refers to each individual household containing a wife and a husband; in the broad sense, it refers to different household forms in different phases of the human life cycle (however he does not specify what these household forms are). Jiang & Mei (1991, p.102) define family as a basic social unit involving people who are related by marriage, blood or adoption, or engaged in other forms of permanent relationship. Family is

a process of life sharing, and family members grow up and take on roles that fit into the family life cycle (FLC). Combining the different ideas mentioned above, the essence of family has both innate attributes and social attributes. That is, family is a social grouping, but is also about affinity or kinship among members. The concept of family in Chinese culture currently emphasises heteronormativity, marriage and child rearing.

### **2.2.2 The Structure of the Family**

The structure of a family refers to the individuals it consists of (Ilesanmi, 2015). It is a continuum made up of both generational relationships and a population structure (Deng & Xu, 2006). The most common family types in China are nuclear families, stem families, and joint families (Shi, 2013). A nuclear family is a form of family where parents and unmarried children live together; typically, once the children marry they then leave the family home (Duranton et al., 2009; Ruggles, 2010). In contrast to a nuclear family, a stem family includes at least two generations of married couples, with each generation having only one married couple. In a stem family, if one of the children marries, he or she (usually the eldest son) does not leave the parental home (Deng & Xu, 2006; Duranton et al., 2009; Ruggles, 2010). In a joint family, one of the generations has two or more couples; for example, a joint family consists of grandparents, parents, children and children's spouses and offspring living together in one household (Deng & Xu, 2006; Zheng, 2010). Resource sharing is key in a joint family, because every member is expected to share common rights, household property, common funds, and so on with the whole family (Roy, 2013).

In traditional Chinese family norms, the ideal family is a large, extended household with more than two generations living together (Lin, 2018). In contemporary China, the most common family type is the nuclear family (Hu & Peng, 2015; Zheng, 2010). In 2010, one-generation and two-generation households accounted for over 80 per cent of total households, while nuclear households (both standard and impaired nuclear families) accounted for over 80 per cent of two-generation households (Hu & Peng, 2015). Chinese sociologists

have predicted that by the middle of the 21st century, the nuclear family will account for over 70 per cent of all families in the country (Zheng, 2010).

However, studies have recognised that the structure of family is not static (Magnuson & Berger, 2009; Wu & Martinson, 1993); for example, many families do not make it through the first couple of stages without a change in parents (e.g. parental separation or divorce). In Western literature, family theories and studies have taken account of widespread changes in family composition through breakup and repartnering (cf. Schimmele & Wu, 2016; Wu & Schimmele, 2005; Wu et al., 2015). Meanwhile, other types of non-traditional families, such as cohabitation and homosexual/LGBT families have also attracted attention from academia (cf. Bouchard & Lachance-Grzela, 2016; Mezey, 2015). However, these nontraditional families are not the overwhelming experience of most Chinese families, and do not reflect the literature on Chinese society. As discussed above, nuclear households are the most prevalent family type in contemporary China (Hu & Peng, 2015). Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the musical practices and musical identities of both parents and their child, it has focused on nuclear/intact families that do not experience parental separation or divorce.

### **2.2.3 Family Life Cycle**

The family life cycle (FLC) reflects a family's process of formation, development and disintegration. The prototype of the FLC was first proposed by Rowntree in 1903 (cited in Murphy & Staple, 1979). He used the concept to explain how poverty comes into being, and used it to clarify the connection between poverty and families' different development stages (see also, Tian, 2011). Murphy and Staples (1979) classify the development of the theory of FLC into three stages, namely foundation era (Kirkpatrick et al., 1934; Loomis, 1936; Sorokin et al., 1931), expansion era (Bigelow, 1942; Glick, 1947), and refinement era (Duvall, 1971; Rodgers, 1962; Wells & Gubar, 1966).

At the first stage, the foundation era, the concept of FLC began to be seriously studied by several scholars simultaneously, including Sorokin et al. (1931), Kirkpatrick et al. (1934) and Loomis (1936) (see also, Murphy & Staples, 1979).

Sorokin et al. (1931) identified a four-stage schema for families, namely: married couples, couples with one or more children, couples with one or more adult children, and couples growing old. Kirkpatrick et al.'s (1934) four-stage model of FLC was based on the children's position in the educational system, namely: preschool family, grade school family, high school family and all adult family (see also, Murphy & Staples, 1979). Loomis's (1936) four-stage cycle focused on the children's age range, namely: childless couple, eldest child under 14, eldest child over 14 and under 36, and old families.

At the expansion stage, Bigelow (1942) identified a seven-stage model of FLC according to children's and parents' ages; including 1) establishment, 2) child-bearing and pre-school period, 3) elementary school period, 4) high school period, 5) college, 6) recovery period, and 7) retirement period (see also, Backer, 2012, p.158; Murphy & Staples, 1979, p.13). Glick (1947, p.165) then set out a relatively more complete model of FLC: he again categorised the development of a family into seven stages; namely 1) first marriage, 2) birth of first child, 3) birth of last child, 4) marriage of first child, 5) marriage of last child, 6) death of one of the spouses, and 7) death of the last spouse (see also, Murphy & Staples, 1979, p.13). In 1948, Duvall and Hill (1948, cited in Murphy & Staple, 1979, p.13) identified FLC stages using another seven stage model: 1) childless, 2) expanding (from the birth of the first to the last child), 3) school age, 4) stable (birth of last child), 5) contracting (first born to last born), 6) aging companions (no children), and 7) one of the partners deceased. However, these two models are based on two assumptions: the stability of marital relationships and fertility, and no premature death of parent or child.

In a third stage, additional research and theories emerged to improve upon and develop the theory and model of FLC (Collver, 1963; Feldman & Feldman, 1975; First-Dilić, 1974; Glick, 1989; Morioka, 1967; Nock, 1979; Norton, 1983; Rodgers & Witney, 1981; Uhlenber, 1974). The stages of FLC were expanded to between six and ten stages by different researchers posing various criteria (Murphy & Staple, 1979, p.13). Meanwhile, the terms 'full nest' and 'empty nest' were introduced by Wells and Gubar (1966); these terms have remained popular

and are drawn upon in a variety of fields including marketing, sociology, and tourism (Backer, 2012).

Since the concept of FLC was developed, it has been widely adapted and applied in various research fields, with researchers often classifying stages of FLC according to their own research interests and purposes (Backer, 2012). For instance, in the area of family economy, FLC includes the bachelor stage, the formation stage, development/growth stage, maturation stage, and retirement stage (Zhang & Li, 2008); in medical science, it is composed of the stages of newly-married, birth of child, child being in education, child being in adolescence, child reaching adulthood and leaving home, and parents in old age (Cui, 2013). In addition, the concept of FLC is also used extensively in other research areas, such as consumer studies (Hong et al., 2005; Lansing & Morgan, 1955; Murphy & Staples, 1979; Manzano, 2001; Well & Gubar, 1966) and leisure studies (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975; Friedenber, 1976; Giele et al., 1976; Veal, 2015), and has been developed to fit different models and approaches.

On the other hand, since the origination of the concept of FLC, it has been criticised for failure to account for various family types (Kumar, 2017). Nevertheless, it remains valuable because it assumes that the family is a developmental and dynamic system, and that in each stage of the family's development, family members must take on and accomplish a number of different tasks and responsibilities (Medalie, 1979).

#### **2.2.4 The Function of Family**

Family function is an important component of family environment that influences individuals' physical, social and mental health (Zhao & Guo, 2018). In previous studies, researchers have set out different definitions to inform family function. Epstein et al. (1983) and Skinner et al. (2000) maintain that the basic function of a family is to provide members with certain environmental conditions that are suited to their physical, mental, and social development (see also, Dai & Wang, 2015). Miller et al. (2000, p.170) cite problem-solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and behavioural control as the six

main dimensions that need to be evaluated to fully understand the success of a family's functioning. Olson et al. (1979) consider family cohesion and adaptability as the two dimensions of a family's function (see also, Vincent, 1966). More precisely, family cohesion involves variables such as decision-making, emotional bonding, coalitions, independence, boundaries, time, and recreation (Olson et al., 1979, p.4), while family adaptability refers to a family's ability to alter its role relationships, relationship rules and power structures in response to both developmental and situational stress (Olson et al., 1979, p.8).

Research in the Chinese context by Liu (2014, pp.8-9) identifies nine main functions of a family: financial support, fertility, education, sex, child and elderly support, affective interaction, relaxation and recreation, religious communication, and political function. Zheng (2010, p.27) maintains that in terms of Chinese families, affective interaction and fertility function are most important; moreover, that one of the functions of affective interaction is to improve physical and mental health through participating in entertainment and leisure activities as a family.

Overall, assessment of family function could involve evaluation of a family's operation, family members' relationships, and the family environment. The family provides its members with the physical, psychological and social conditions to support their personal development and the development of the family itself. In turn, family members' behaviour and activities can also affect how a family functions. Understanding how the family functions could be expanded by studying family musical involvement (FMI), as FMI can be a family event or activity that can affect or contribute to the family environment.

Having reviewed the literature defining family in terms of family structure, FLC, and family function, it is now understood that the family is a social group, and there are a variety of family types with each family's life process relating to both universality and specificity in society. Every family member's personal behaviour contributes to the family's group behaviour and is crucial to the family's life cycle and its function.

## **2.3 Identity and Family Identities**

### **2.3.1 Understanding Identity**

The concept of 'identity' or 'identification' mainly derives from psychological theory. The psychologist Erikson focused on individuals' personal development, and mentioned 'identity' (Erikson, 1959) and 'identity crisis' (Erikson, 1968) in the 1950s (Fearon, 1999). According to Freudianism (Wang, 2002, p.8), identity refers to the convergence whereby individuals adapt to other people, groups and people they mimic. It is the initial manifestation of an individual's emotional connection with another person. Erikson was heavily influenced by Freud, and developed the concept of 'self-identity' to mean a person's self-evaluation and self-positioning in terms of his or her career, political views, religion and value (Lei & Chen, 2005, p.170). Later on, Erikson's theory of self-identity was extended to various studies on group identities, such as corporate identity and national identity (Wang, 2008, p.9).

When researching identity, the concept of identity has been developed and widened. Fearon (1999) defines 'identity' as, 1) a social category that can be determined by the rules of membership, expected behaviours or claimed characteristics, or 2) socially distinct features that encourage one to take a special point of view or sense of pride in as unchangeable but socially consequential occurrence. Fearon also suggests the term 'identity', as used today should include both personal and social identity, and that these two meanings are distinct but intertwined. According to Oyserman et al. (2012, p.69), identities are those features and characteristics, social status, relations, groups, and roles that can describe who we are. Identities can focus on one's past (what was true), present (what is true now), and future (what a person expects or expects not to become). They also argue that a person's traits and identity characteristics develop and form his or her self-concept (see also, Neisser, 1993; Stets & Burke, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 2004), beliefs (Baumeister, 1999), and theory of personality (see also, Markus & Cross, 1990).



As such, the definition of 'identity' has expanded beyond its original meaning in psychological research. To date, research on identities has focused principally on personal identities and group identities (Wang, 2002). Personal identities describe individual properties such as intelligence or personality, while group identities describe how individuals align themselves relative to others, such as whether they are democrats, communists or family members (Swann et al., 2009). Moreover, the research into group identity falls into two categories, research on relational groups and on collective groups. While the relational category studies groups in which members are closely related to one another, the collective category focuses on groups in which individuals are unfamiliar with each other and in some cases have no relationship with each other. Therefore, family members belong to a relational group, while countries, nationalities and communities belong to a collective group (Cui et al., 2013, p.69).

### **2.3.2 Understanding Family Identities**

Family identity is generally regarded as one of the most important forms of group identity for individuals (Yu et al., 2015). In Western academia, studies on family identity to date have covered a wide variety of topics; i.e., marketing and consumer studies (Belk, 1988; Moisio et al., 2004), psychology (Fiese et al., 2006), sociology (Bielby & Bielby, 1989), family studies (Blinn, 1988; Fletcher, 2002; Whiteside, 1989; Wolin & Bennett, 1984), and communication studies (Braithwaite et al., 1998; Galvin, 2003).

According to Bennett et al. (1988, p.212) family identity can be defined as 'the family's subjective sense of its own continuity over time, its present situation, and its character. It is the gestalt of qualities and attributes that make it a particular family and that differentiate it from other families'. Meanwhile, Epp and Price (2008, p. 52) point out that family identity should ideally be mutually constructed, 'both internally among family members and externally in relation to the perceptions of outsiders based on observable family behaviour', so it is then contingent upon the interplay between family members.

In evidence presented in previous studies, family rituals have been strongly linked

to the formation of family identity (Bossard & Boll, 1950; Wollin & Bennett, 1984; Yu et al., 2015). Family rituals consist of family celebrations (such as such as weddings, funerals annual religious celebrations), family traditions (such as birthday and anniversary customs, and family reunions), and family interactions (such as leisure activities on weekends or evenings) (Wollin & Bennett, 1984). These ritual practices can be affected by changes that occur throughout the different stages of a FLC, for instance, changes in residence or family membership, such as birth and death, can be helpful in maintaining and clarifying family relationships and family members' roles (Yu et al., 2015). Through these commonplace activities, families can establish their own routine ritual behaviours, since they have established family traditions and celebrations. All these activities provide opportunities for family members to express their shared beliefs or common identity (Wollin & Bennett, 1984). If we consider family music involvement (FMI) as a family activity, it is plausible to suppose that it might also be connected to the creation and regeneration of family identity, which is then a meaningful dimension to explore.

The notions of 'identity' and 'family' as we now use them may be more elusive than people generally think of them. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that family identity is based on its members' understanding of family: how they think about what family means to them and who their family is. However, it might not simply involve only these questions, because even the same person can have different explanations of family when referencing different contexts and situations, and therefore different groups, cultures and social backgrounds can frame different versions of family identity (Tillman & Nam, 2008). One important factor that can influence the formation of family identity is the engagement in various family ritual or leisure activities. Family members develop shared beliefs and memories as a consequence of their daily interactions common to family life. This opens up an opportunity to research and explore the relationship between FMI and families' identities.

## **2.4 The Chinese Family**

### 2.4.1 Overview of the Traditional Chinese Family

Traditional Chinese families comprise a social unit based on blood lineage and marriage. In traditional families, all family members live together and share common property, and individuals have to negotiate an intricate network of personal relationships within the family. Thus, the family structure and relationships are complex. These structures developed in the agricultural era, when it was difficult for small-sized families to withstand natural hazards due to the underdevelopment of technology and economy (Wang, 2014). Moreover, traditional ideology also affected the mainstream structure and size of families. According to Chen Chaoyong (2009), paternalism and a culture of filial piety also exerts an influence on family function and social control. Paternalism means property rights belong to parents (especially the father). Owning property means that parents can determine how their own and their children's money, resources, and economic goods can be used and allocated (Chen, C., 2009). Filial piety has been a central value in traditional Chinese culture for thousands of years. It is one based on strict principles of hierarchy and obligation, and requires children to support and to be obedient to their parents. This means that when children (usually the son) grow up and get married, they continue to live with and take care of their parents (Chen, C., 2009). Thus, traditional families are usually joint-families, stem families or extended families, and such families are large in number, with three, four and even five generations living together (Wang, 2014).

### 2.4.2 Relationships in Traditional Families

Traditional Chinese families have a complex family relationship system as evident from their family trees (Siqueira et al., 2016). For instance, *fuqi* 夫妻 (husband and wife), *poxi* 婆媳 (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law), *shuzhi* 叔侄 (uncle and nephew, particularly refer to the relationship between a man and his brother's son), *jiusheng* 舅甥 (uncle and nephew, refer only to the relationship between a man and his sister's son), *yishen* 姨甥 (aunt and nephew, particularly refer to the relationship between a woman and her sister's son), *guzhi* 姑侄 (aunt and nephew, particularly refer to the relationship between a woman and her

brother's son), *zhouli* 妯娌 (sisters-in-law, refers only to the relationship between the wives of brothers), *lianjin* 连襟 (brothers-in-law, refers only to the relationship between the husbands of sisters), *gusao* 姑嫂 (the relationship between a wife and her husband's sister) and *langjiu* 郎舅 (the relationship between a husband and his wife's brother). All these complex relationships are reflected in the words used to describe each family member. For example, *jiujiu* 舅舅 refers to uncles on one's mother's side; *jiuma* 舅妈 is *jiujiu*'s wife; *shushu* 叔叔 refers to the father's younger brother; *shenshen* 婶婶 is used to refer to *shushu*'s wife; *bobo* 伯伯 or *bofu* 伯父 means father's elder brother; *bomu* 伯母 is *bobo*'s wife; *gugu* 姑姑 or *guma* 姑妈 refers to father's sister(s); *yima* 姨妈 refers to mother's sister(s); *gege* 哥哥 means elder brothers, *jiejie* 姐姐 refers to elder sisters; *didi* 弟弟 means younger brothers; *meimei* 妹妹 refers to younger sisters; *biaodi* 表弟 means younger male cousin who is the son of *yima*, and *tangdi* 堂弟 means a younger male cousin who is the son of *gugu*. These addresses for family members provide a large amount of complex information (Qian & Piao, 2009), such as, whether this is a relative by marriage or by birth, whether or not this is an aunt or uncle on the mother's side or the father's side, whether the uncle is younger or older than one's father, or whether a cousin is a male or female, younger or elder, and if male, whether he is the son of *gugu* or *yima*. All of this complex information is given spontaneously when someone uses the title of his/her family member or relative.

**Parent-child relationship.** Due to the complexity of family relationships, there are also many traditional norms and values that guide each family member's behaviour, and responsibility to maintain order within the family. Typical conceptions of parent-child relationships include *fuci zixiao* 父慈子孝 (kind father and filial son) and *yanfu cimu* 严父慈母 (strict father and kind mother) (Luk-Fong, 2005, p.113). These concepts depict the role of parents in a family. Furthermore, classical moral guidance *sangang wuchang* 三纲五常 ('the three bonds and the five moral relationships' or 'three cardinal guides and five constant virtues') (Cui, 2007, p.519; Li, 2007, p.490) also teaches people how to handle relationships between ruler and subject, father and son, and husband and wife.

'Father guides son' (父为子纲) is one of the cardinal guides that also reveals the situation in the parent-child relationship.

Moreover, filial piety (*xiao* 孝) is central to the traditional parent-child relationship. Confucianism, as the most influential philosophy in ancient China, placed great emphasis on moral education highlighting this relationship. In Confucian teaching, the foundation of all virtues is filial piety (Wang, 2004, p.432). As figure 2.4.2 shows, in Chinese bronze inscriptions (a form of Chinese written characters), the word *xiao* 孝 is an associative-compound character: the upper part derived from the character *lao* 老 (old), which depicts an old hunchback man; the lower part of the character is *zi* 子 (offspring), which depicts a child supporting the old man (Han, 2009, p.125). Filial piety requires children to serve their parents well, and parental care and filial piety are interconnected in the initial stage of parent-child relations (Zhang, 2007, p.329). Children must always respect, obey and love their parents (Wang, 2014).

Figure 2.4.2 Chinese character '孝'



Filial piety also affects children's marriage choices. The aim and foundation of a marriage is not love but fertility and reproduction. According to Mencius, the classical Confucian scholar, three vices can violate the tenet of filial piety, and not having an offspring or heir (usually referring to male offspring) is the worst (*buxiao yousan, wuhou weida* 不孝有三无后为大) (Lee et al., 2009, p.139). These traditional moral principles imply that the purpose of starting a family is to *chuanzong jiedai* 传宗接代, which means to continue the family line by producing offspring (Shih, 2007, p.49; Stafford, 2013, p.269). These traditional values not only reflect the importance Chinese people place on their offspring, but also indicate that Chinese parents expect to have the power to determine the

important events in their children's lives.

**Husband-wife relationship.** In terms of the principles of the husband-wife relationship, one cardinal guide in *Sangang Wuchang* (三纲五常, 'the three bonds and the five moral relationships') implies that the husband guides the wife (Li, 2007, p.490). According to Confucian thought, men are believed superior to women, and thus women owe obedience to men (Xie, 1994). Likewise, in Taoism, men are metaphorised as heaven, while women are metaphorised as earth (Meng et al., 2007). One guideline of wifely virtues is *Sancong side* (三从四德, 'three types of obedience and four virtues'). The three types of obedience require women to obey their father before marriage, their husband when married, and their son in widowhood (usually the eldest son); the four virtues refers to morality (*fude* 妇德), proper speech (*fuyan* 妇言), modest manner (*furong* 妇容), and diligent work (*fugong* 妇功) (Li & Wang, 2015). Thus, traditional values emphasise men's superiority and status, and weaken women's social and family status. However, there is also a husbandly guideline (*fuyi qishun* 夫义妻顺) that requires a man to treat his wife well. A husband's role is to raise the family, while the wife should take charge of the family (男主外, 女主内, *nánzhǔwài, nǚzhǔnèi*) (Kharlay, 2018, p.212; Li & Lamb, 2015, p.275; Luk-Fong, 2005, p.113; Shek, 1998; Wu, 2015, p.364). Thus, in a traditional Chinese family, the father/husband is said to be more authoritative than the mother/wife.

**Overarching guideline for family relationships.** Traditional Chinese culture emphasises the importance of harmony as a social standard (*yihe weigui* 以和为贵) (Ginsberg, 1975), and particularly demands harmony between family members to ensure prosperity (*jiahe wanshi xing* 家和万事兴) (Ma & Liu, 2014, p.1132). The overarching guideline 'harmony is precious' is helpful when dealing with intricate relationships in a family, and can also be applied to other kinds of social interaction.

### 2.4.3 Changes in Modern Chinese Families

The People's Republic of China was formally established on 1st October 1949. The leaders of the new China were committed to preventing China from reverting

to a pre-1949 semi-colonial and semi-feudal society (Yong, 2009). Moreover, China experienced social and economic transformation, and Chinese families also underwent a series of changes.

### **Change in the Structure and Size of Families**

The structure of families has been simplified over time, due to changes in both ideological trends and the social economic situation. On the one hand, the value of traditional moral education has been shaken. For example, the movement of *posijiu* (破四旧, destroying the old four, including old thoughts, old culture, old customs and old ideologies) in the 1960s (Whitehand & Gu, 2007, p.647) began to weaken the power of traditional ideology, although the Cultural Revolution was also beginning (1966-1976). Traditional family cohesion and identities began to disintegrate, and the number of traditional extended families began to decrease. Later, the Reform and Opening-up Policy in 1978 accelerated economic growth in China, enabling China to average 9.4% annual GDP growth by 2005 (one of the highest growth rates in the world) (Zheng, 2005, p.18). Currently, China is the world's second largest economy (Zhang et al., 2016), enabling its people to enjoy economic independence, managing their own property and lives, no longer relying on support from the extended family (Ma et al., 2013, p.167). As a consequence, more people leave the 'big family' to pursue work and education (Ma et al., 2013, p.167). With the changes to the economic structure of society the size and structure of families has also shifted, and the number of nuclear families has increased.

### **Changes in Family Relationships**

In modern China, the axis of the family relationship has changed. In traditional families, the parent-child relationship (particularly emphasising the father-son relationship) was at the core of family relationships, and this was reflected in Chinese filial piety culture. However, with the introduction of western ideology, especially after the Reform and Opening-up Policy, western concepts such as freedom, democracy, and equality pushed the development of modern families in a new direction. Initially, the axis of the family relationship shifted from being the

parent-child relationship, as the importance of the husband-wife relationship was taken more seriously by families (Wang, 2003, p.28; Wang, 2012, p.20).

### **Change of Wife's Status**

Due to efforts to promote gender equality, the status of women has significantly improved since 1949 (Jie & Kanji, 2003, p.25). Traditional moral guidelines giving weight to patriarchal authority and purporting men's superiority, such as *Sangang wuchang*, are being criticised, and women now go out to work and have a higher status in family and society and equal power with their husband when dealing with the family (Wang, 2003, p.34).

### **Change of Parent-child/Cross-generational Relationships**

In the modern Chinese family (particularly the one-child family), the status of children has improved, while parental authority has experienced a decline (Yan, 2003, 2009). Parents equally share power and remain in charge but the family operates in a more democratic way. Thus, children's opinions are considered when settling family affairs, and parents' opinions have gradually lost status and power, as children can make decisions about their own education, career, and marriage (Wang, 2003, p.31). The younger generation has recognised the importance of emotional bonds in marriage, and has made use of language to express their affection (Zhong & Ho, 2014, p.157). Moreover, Chinese parents are now willing to have both verbal and emotional communication with their children (Evans, 2010), and allow them to pursue their independence (Logan & Bian, 1999). Ageing parents hope to retain a close emotional connection with their children, but also expect to have a relatively private personal life (Zhong & Ho, 2014, p.156).

Traditional cross-generational relationships focus on respecting and supporting the elderly. However, the support for younger generations (both spiritual and financial) has become the focus of modern families. For example, Evans (2010) found that some middle-aged mothers strive to build communicative intimacy with their children, rather than demanding their obedience (see also, Zhong & Ho,



2014, p.157). Moreover, many parents of relatively wealthy Chinese families have bought at least one house for their children (Li & Zheng, 2007; Li & Shin, 2013). As such, Chinese family intimacy remains intertwined with material benefits and emotional sustenance (Zhong & Ho, 2014).

The shift in parent-child/cross-generational relationships became particularly obvious after 1980. This was when the ‘one family, one child’ policy was introduced in China. From 1949 to 1979, China experienced a population explosion, rising from 540 million to 969 million. To control population growth, the central government adopted a series of measures, such as the encouragement of late marriage, late birth, birth control family-planning programs, and the one-child policy in 1979 (Wu, 1981). The one-child policy only allows an individual family to have one child (Goodkind, 2004; Hesketh et al., 2005; Park & Han, 1990). This policy lasted nearly 40 years, and has had a great impact on the mechanics within Chinese families. In response to this policy, the status of the child in a family was the subject of extensive attention and discussion by academics and wider society. Since a family could only have one child, that child was often seen as the ‘only hope’ (Fong, 2004, p.107) or the ‘little emperor’ (Cameron et al., 2013) of the family.

### **Change in Family Education**

Moral education no longer plays an important role in modern family education, and intellectual education has become the new focus. Parents have high expectations for their children’s level of knowledge rather than emphasising their morality, and stress the value of excelling in school (Zhao, 2016). During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China cancelled the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NCEE) but it was restored in 1977. Over the following several decades, higher education in China experienced considerable expansion (He & Maia, 2015) and marketisation (Xiong, 2012). Thus, NCEE has now become the most important way to recruit and cultivate talent, and going to college has become an essential step for most young Chinese before they enter society. For this reason, parents are paying more attention than ever to their

children's performance at school and their academic achievements, thereby underestimating other aspects that are not related to academic record, such as P.E., moral education, and practical skills. Anything that may prove beneficial to the improvement of academic achievement and exam results is being highly valued by parents and children. However, the lack of moral education (Gong, 2007; Zhao, 2016), overvaluing improved intelligence and overlooking the importance of practical skills have become problematic for the modern family (Hu & West, 2015).

Section 2.4 has provided an overview of the changing socio-cultural context of China. Traditional Chinese family culture is patriarchal and male-dominated. Nevertheless, along with the process of modernisation in society, especially after the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Chinese families have experienced a series of rapid changes. Some traditional values have been criticised, but this does not mean traditional ethics and moral principles do not function effectively. In reality, in the long progress of history, traditional values have always been deeply rooted in the social and cultural development of China. However, due to the change in socio-economic context, people's values and viewpoints might have changed somewhat. As such, understanding both traditional culture and its influence on modern society is important to any research pertaining to Chinese family identities, and when thinking about how Western ideas of identities or family music-making might translate to the context of Chinese families.

## **2.5 Summary**

Although 'family' is a familiar concept, it is important to re-frame it in an academic manner. The understanding of structure, function and the FLC is essential for any quality research touching on family studies and specific family activities. Different family structures have influenced the function of the family, and the development of each individual also affects the FLC. Although FLC is an idea developed early in the twentieth century, and is limited because it does not account for a wide diversity of family forms, it remains valuable to family studies

(Kumar, 2017). Understanding the concept of FLC can be helpful for understanding family development and can improve awareness of the distinct needs of the family (Golijani-Moghaddam, 2014; Kumar, 2017).

In addition, this chapter has also discussed the socio-cultural characteristics of Chinese families. As this research project is located in the Chinese socio-cultural context, it is important to understand the situation as it effects Chinese families, including cultural background, family structure, relationships, and family values, thereby allowing both the researcher and the reader to have a thorough understanding of, and insight into the research context. The development of Chinese families is influenced by both a long-standing traditional ideology and new values developed in modern society, and both traditional and modern values can influence Chinese people's adoption of shared family activities.

In terms of this research project, FMI as a life style and leisure activity that can propel personal development can be regarded as a manifestation of the function of family. The choice and development of FMI is also closely related to social and cultural context. The function of musical involvement in families will be presented in Chapter 3, and the concept of musical identities will also be discussed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three: Musical Identities and Musical Interaction in Home Settings**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter presented key concepts and theories in family studies, and offered an overview of the social-cultural context that influences traditional and modern Chinese families. This chapter, as the second part of the literature review, outlines key findings to date on musical interaction in the home or childcare setting, including studies on parent-child musical interaction and play, musical parenting, parental involvement in musical development, parental difference in level of musical interaction, and the importance of musical interaction and its influence on the family structure. The concept of musical identities is reviewed first, as it is central to this research project.

### **3.2 Understanding Musical Identities**

The term *musical identities* has been a constantly evolving concept since it was first used towards the end of the 20th century by Western academics (Heerden, 2007). Hargreaves et al. (2002) define musical identities based on two aspects, namely ‘identities in music’ (IIM) and ‘music in identities’ (MII). IIM focuses on how people define themselves generally in relation to music; for example, whether they see themselves as a ‘tone deaf’, a performer or a musician. How people musically define themselves may not be linked to their technical skill or proficiency on an instrument; instead, social influences, such as family dynamics and educational environments, play a key role in the construction of musical identities (Hargreaves et al., 2017). For example, MacDonald and Wilson (2005) investigated Scottish jazz musicians’ views about jazz and being a jazz musician through focus group interviews. They found that the participants’ identity as a jazz

musician was negotiated (rather than shared) in the group context that the musician was in and the perceived dispositions of others. Later on, they investigated how jazz musicians (both male and female musicians) presented their collaborative musical practice (MacDonald & Wilson, 2006). This study revealed that identity as a jazz musician was negotiated with other individual identities (such as gendered identities), and that social expectations exerted an influence on jazz musicians' representation of themselves. This indicates that music allows people to adopt certain roles within a specific context.

On the other hand, MII refers to the role of music as a means of reflecting and developing other aspects of an individuals' personal identity, such as gender identity or national identity. Previous studies describing identity issues with regard to music's influence also indicate that young people's musical identities can help them to acknowledge their position in society (DeNora, 1999; Green, 1999; Heerden, 2007; North & Hargreaves, 1999; Sloboda, 1998; Watt & Ash, 1998; Weinstein, 1995). DeNora (1999, p.51) maintains that 'music provides a material rendering of self-identity; a material in and with which to identify identity.' In her research, for example, a participant used a vivid metaphor 'juicy chord' to describe her preferred type of musical material, linking this with her sense of self-identity; in which she regarded the 'juicy chords' as the 'me in life'. Furthermore, DeNora (1999) describes music as a mirror through which individuals can see themselves. Employing such a metaphor, it is possible to connect to a specific type of music that reflects one's self-perception and sense of identity. Similarly, Green (1999) in her study of the sociology of music education describes music as a significant symbol in culture and society, which thus helps young people express themselves and find their roles in society, thereby helping them construct their self-perception, and self-esteem alongside their social identity. North and Hargreaves's (1999) research into music and the identity of adolescents presents a positive association between adolescents' musical preferences, self-esteem, self-perception, and their normative expectations of being fans of a specific musical style. Consequently, their musical preference allowed them to recognise and evaluate the identities of others, and identify groups that share a

similar personality with themselves. Hence, teenagers regarded their musical preferences as representations of their own identities.

In brief, individuals' music preferences, choices, habits and behaviour are closely related to their musical identities. From this perspective, the area of musical identities has now been well-researched in the Western context (cf. MacDonald et al., 2002, 2017), although music and our relationships to it is constantly changing (Hargreaves et al., 2017). However, as I discussed in chapter one, musical identities is a relatively unfamiliar term in mainland China, with studies on this topic are scarce. Although there is increasing communication between the Chinese and Western scholars, only in recent years have scholars begun to address this research topic. Qian Lijuan (2005, 2006) examined the relationship between Chinese college students' music preferences and their identity construction from a sociopsychological perspective. She argued that college students used music as a means of self-expression, cultural identity and social adaptation. Her work is akin to research on music identities in a Western context. Wei Linlin's article (2015) is the only one to mention the term 'music and identity', which briefly introduces Western literature on music and identity in ethnomusicology. Huang and Zhou (2016, p.189) define identity with regard to music, observing that 'human beings use musical symbols to express their unique creativity, and combine musical thinking and behaviour in order to communicate with other individuals or groups; it refers to one's personal statement and the process of social functioning — the process of identifying one's religion, group, nationality and country'. They emphasise that music is a way to express oneself and support self-evaluation. However, Huang and Zhou use the term 'identity of music' rather than 'musical identities'. Their definition is close to that described in relation to the concept of 'music in identities' (MII) by Hargreaves et al. (2002). None of these three studies use the term 'musical identities', although they do reference this topic.

In my unpublished master's dissertation (Gao, 2013), I examined how extracurricular music education influenced the musical identities of young Chinese people, utilising questionnaires and interviews to obtain information about the listening habits and musical activities of a number of young Chinese

people compared with the types of music education and musical experiences they had in childhood. This was the first study that specifically set out to investigate Chinese people's musical identities in mainland China. After a thorough study of current publications concerning musical identities in CNKI (the most important online databases for academic journals in mainland China), there is no research to date (other than those I have identified above) focusing on musical identities within Chinese families or households.

To conclude, individuals' musical identities are closely related to and manifested in their musical behaviours. How people conceive of their music and themselves, and how they make use of music can reflect their own distinctive values, attitudes and views of the world (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Hargreaves et al., 2017), which is an important process in their identity construction. This makes musical identities a topic that is of interest beyond the realms of music research.

### **3.3 Musical Interaction in Home and Childcare Settings**

#### **3.3.1 Musical Identities and the Family Environment**

Studies that bring together music and family life largely focus on the musical parenting of infants or young children, such as mother-infant singing or musical interaction (Bergeson & Trehub, 1999; Custodero, et al. 2003; Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003, 2008; Gibson, 2009; Parncutt, 2009; Trevarthen, 2008), parental involvement with instrument learning/musical development (Davidson & Borthwick, 2002; Davidson et al., 1996; Gavin, 2001; Macmillan, 2004), parental attitudes towards music (Katz-Gerro et al., 2007), and music-making in the family context (Costa-Giomi & Benetti, 2017; Koops, 2014).

The above-mentioned studies have provided evidence that the family environment is critical for young children's musical development, but the majority have focused on families with infants or young children. Based on script theory, Borthwick and Davidson (2002) focused on the relationship between family environment and the development of children's identity as musicians, conducting investigations involving interviews with 12 families with older children (aged

6-18) over many years. They concluded that a child's musical identity is shaped principally by the beliefs and values held by his or her immediate family. All immediate family members, including parents and siblings, can play a role in shaping this process of forming musical identities, regardless of their background in music education. For example, even though some parents have had no music training, they can still exert an influence on their children's musical development through a desire to encourage their children to learn a musical instrument. Moreover, children can also influence other family members' musical identities, such as listening patterns or instrument learning. For example, one mother in the study showed a willingness to cater to her children's preferred musical genres, and another mother was inspired to learn to play the guitar herself after hearing her daughter play. As such, the influence of family members' musical identities and musical interactions is two-way and can be reciprocal.

In another questionnaire-based study, ter Bogt et al. (2011) argued that musical preference can be passed down from generation to generation. Their investigation involved more than 400 Dutch families with adolescents and young adults (aged 16-20), and revealed that parental musical preferences could predict their children's music choices. For example, a parental preference for 'Highbrow' music was associated with a preference of 'Highbrow' music among their children, and a parental passion for 'Pop' music was also associated with children's preferences for 'Pop' and 'Dance' music. Furthermore, ter Bogt et al. (2011) suggested that the first musical climate for a child is the sum of his/her father's and mother's musical tastes. There might be a strong link between parental preferences for a particular music style formed in their earlier lives, affecting children's current musical preference for a similar type of music. The findings of the study support the view that music can contribute to the development of collective/family identities, and to transmitting family values and culture (see also, Tarrant et al., 2002).

In their study of music listening in families and peer groups, Boer and Abubakar (2014) highlighted that music has been used as a form of family ritual for a long time. They define musical family rituals as a series of musical behaviours reported



within a family context, with a symbolic meaning for family members (Boer & Abubakar, 2014, p.1). These musical behaviours include, for instance, using singing to 'make special' routines and activities and to create and maintain family traditions in the early stages of life (Custodero, 2006, p.37), or listening to music with family members during special events and get-togethers, as part of a family's religious engagement and leisure activities (Boer et al., 2012). Building on the findings in previous research, for example, the ability of musical family rituals to create and enhance social bonding and identification (Boer et al., 2011; Tarrant et al., 2002), Boer and Abubakar (2014) assumed that family musical rituals are positively correlated with family cohesion and emotional well-being. They investigated the role of music listening in families and in peer groups for 760 young people (aged 13-29) in two traditional/collectivist cultures (Kenya and Philippines) and two secular/individualist cultures (New Zealand and Germany). The research revealed that across cultural contexts, musical family rituals affected young people's emotional well-being, when listening to music or speaking about favourite songs with family members or friends. However, compared with more secular/individualistic cultures, the influence of musical family rituals on emotional well-being might be more apparent in more traditional/collectivistic cultures. This finding highlights the influence of cultural difference in the study of family musical engagement. Boer and Abubakar (2014) also observe that despite the significance of both family and music in individuals' lives, few studies have focused on the function of music within the family unit, affording further evidence of the potential and need for the present study. Although studies across cultures highlight the significance of family members in the development of musical identities, none of the studies have focused on a Chinese family context or explored the differences in each family member's role in the musical interaction within a family. This gap in literature highlights the need for further investigation in a Chinese context.

### **3.3.2 Importance of Musical Play and Interaction**

The previous section highlights the significance of family factors, such as parental musical behaviour and preferences in one's construction of musical identities.

This section reviews the importance of musical interaction for children's development more specifically. Examination of musical play behaviours in the home and childcare settings provides a more thorough understanding of FMI, as well as of the musical relationship between family members.

Sound exploration is often integrated into a child's daily play, and researchers and educators have noticed its importance in the acquisition of musical behaviours. As such, Fox (1989) suggested parents could provide preschool children with support, in order to assist children to continue their musical exploration. Such support can include watching the children making music and sounds, physically engaging in children's musical play (such as playing a music instrument together) or giving a compliment about a specific sound or action. As such, parents' attention to children is the crucial link in children's musical development.

During a study of a ten-week music education program, Berger and Cooper (2003) examined how young children explored sound and played music alone or with others, and how adults promoted free musical play through behaviour and attitudes. The adults in their study provided positive and descriptive comments for children during free musical play, and refrained from correcting their non-traditional playing, thereby enhancing children's musical play. This benefitted children's acquisition of musical skills and growth. This finding supports Fox's (1989) viewpoint.

The role of adults in children's musical socialisation process should not be ignored. Adachi (1994) reported her three-month observation of a four-year old child's daily musical activities. She and the child spent half-hour in musical playtime every morning. Their musical interaction was spontaneous in most cases, including playing musical instruments, singing, body movement, listening to music, and music reading. Formal music lessons for preschool children were also given to the child. Throughout the observation, Adachi found that the child would firstly internalise the process of what she had learned from a caregiver previously, and then reconstruct music and musical scenarios when interacting with other caregivers. The child could not only memorise and replicate the music she picked

up from the researcher, but could also recreate and share it with others. This means that the adults' role is more one of practice partner than transmitter (Adachi, 1994, p.29).

In addition to the above benefits, studies also support the proposition that parent-child musical interactions facilitate parental emotional adjustment. According to Dissanayake (2000, p.390, p.399), music can serve as a means of group coordination and unification, which can benefit emotional regulation in mother-infant engagement, and provide affiliative bonding among participants. Interactive musical experiences can provide parents with emotional strength, and thus help them address and navigate the stresses of contemporary family life (Custodero et al., 2003, p.568). Moreover, music can be used to treat mothers who have post-natal depression while also simultaneously improving mother-child interactions (Field, 1998), helping these parents bond with their children (Custodero et al., 2003, p.556). The quality of musical interaction can also reveal parents' emotional conditions, and the frequency of musical interaction can be affected by parents' emotional problems, such as distress, and frustration (Custodero et al., 2003).

### **3.3.3 Musical Parenting**

Across cultures and throughout history, parents and caretakers have used music to promote the development of life skills and the individual abilities of infants and young children (Ilari et al., 2011; Trehub & Schellenberg, 1995; Trehub & Trainor, 1998). According to Ilari et al. (2011, p.52), musical parenting refers to 'the set of beliefs, values and behaviours that parents have/engage in with their children concerning music'. Gibson (2009) describes musical parenting as parent-child interaction in various kinds of musical activities such as singing and playing musical instruments.

Musical parenting is valuable as a tool for building a reciprocal and interactive parent-child relationship (Gibson, 2009). This is because infants and young children not only respond to caregivers' musical stimulation, but they also elicit and activate caregivers' responsiveness; as such, the participants in this interaction

function as a complex and highly dynamic, self-regulation system (Papousek & Bornstein, 1992, p.212). Therefore, it is necessary to consider and understand the engagement of both parents and the child in a dynamic musical relationship when investigating parent-child musical interactions (Gibson, 2009).

The study of musical parenting encompasses a variety of topics, for instance, parent-child music interaction in early life (Custodero et al., 2002; Custodero et al., 2003; Trehub & Schellenberg, 1995; Rock et al., 1999), parental differences in their musical interactions with infants and young children (Trehub, Hill et al., 1997; Trehub, Unyk et al., 1997), parental influence on later musical activities with infants (Custodero et al., 2003), parental role in music education (Davidson et al. 1996; McPherson & Davidson, 2002, 2006; McPherson, 2009), and music making and music therapy to benefit families (Abad & Edwards, 2004; Abad & Williams, 2006; Lum, 2008; McIntyre, 2009; Mackenzie & Hamlett, 2005; Pasiali, 2012a, 2012b; Thompson et al., 2013; Wetherick, 2009; Williams & Abad, 2005). (The area of music therapy is beyond the remit of my study.)

### **Singing Interaction in Early Life**

Music interaction exerts a subtle influence on the budding parent-child relationship (Choi, 2013; Trehub & Trainor, 1998). It has a significant influence on the process of enculturation as well. Through the process of enculturation, children explore and immerse themselves in their culture naturally and informally through music parenting interactions beginning in early life (Gibson, 2009, p.19). They initially acquire sophisticated musical behaviours, such as singing made-up melodies, and these interactions in early childhood can enable them to adapt to a culture musically (Gibson, 2009, p19).

Of the various forms of musical interaction, singing is the most widely engaged in by families with infants and young children. This may be because children can understand music before they are able to use language as a communication tool (Gordon, 2007). Many parents consider singing a significant parenting tool (Custodero et al., 2002; Custodero et al., 2003). For example, Byrn and Hourigan (2010) maintain that singing enhances the relationship between parent and child,

and is the most significant communication mode between a mother and her infant. Studies have also found that parents' musical stimuli can exert a positive influence on their young children, such as their language (Trehub & Trainor, 1998) and emotional development (Honig, 1995). Such musical stimuli mainly refer to singing with babies, because songs are helpful in conveying specific messages from parents and caregivers to infants and young children.

Parents frequently choose lullabies and playsongs when playing singing games with their children. They use these songs as the medium of the parent-child music communication. For example, because of their slow tempo and expressive power, lullabies can be used to soothe young children and send them to sleep (Chen-Hafteck, 1997). Playsongs have a faster tempo and wider pitch range, and are helpful for arousing and amusing young children (Trehub & Schellenberg, 1995; Gibson, 2009). Both these types of songs can be used to regulate infants' states and behaviour, and to express emotional information (Rock et al., 1999). In addition, playsongs and lullabies were found to be useful for facilitating emotional communication and developing reciprocal interactions and positive mother-infant attachments (Creighton, 2011, p.50). Often, parents choose these types of music for their young children to fit different purposes (Baker & Mackinlay, 2006; Custodero et al., 2002), moods, behaviour and activity of their young children (Ilari, 2005).

### **Parental Involvement in Children's Music Learning**

The concept of parental involvement is inconsistent. Parental involvement refers to general parenting style, family interaction patterns and parents' participation in school-based activities or activities outside of school, such as in the community or home setting (Creech & Hallam, 2003; Zhong, 2011). Many studies have indicated that parents can play an indispensable role in their children's musical development (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Creech, 2009; Elpus, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2006; McPherson & Davidson, 2002; Peterson, 2001).

Undertaking structured interviews, Davidson et al. (1996) investigated children who had taken instrument training but varied in their mastery. They reported that

at earlier ages, younger children might have less autonomy and so be more dependent on their parents' help. Typical parental involvement in music was found to involve listening rather than performing. The most successful children usually had parents who played an active participatory role in their music learning, such as speaking to the teacher after class or supervising their practice, over a period of up to 12-15 years.

McPherson and Davidson's (2002) study of children aged 7-9 during the first year of their music learning found that children often perceived their practice as a chore, or likened it to their school homework. Even though most children started their music learning as eager and interested learners, approximately 80% had to be reminded by their mothers to practice during their first month of learning. After the initial burst of excitement of learning a musical instrument has worn off, practising a musical instrument can create many unpleasant emotions (as children might be frustrated by not being able to play an extensive repertoire on their instrument), and this emotion might then escalate into anger. This explains why the majority of children rely on their mothers' reminders to stick to a regular schedule or to persist with music learning (McPherson & Davidson, 2002). Thus, the role of parents can be particularly important in helping their children develop the skills that are necessary for self-monitoring, motivation, attention management and dealing with emotional problems. McPherson and Davidson (2002) also suggest that during practice, parents would benefit from encouraging their child to take a break, so that they can sit with them and talk about any problem they have, providing a supportive comment. These strategies could help the child manage the high demands of music learning.

Margiotta (2011) also studied the effects of parental support and interactions on children's outcomes when learning the piano. She gathered data from observations of 34 piano students and 34 parents in different locations (private studio, school and conservatorium). At the beginning of the observation, all the participating parents were invited to be actively involved in their child's piano lessons and practice. At the end of the observation period, all the participants were asked to participate in a questionnaire investigation that focussed on five areas,

including: 1) parents' views about supervising practice and attending piano lessons; 2) children's views about their parents' supervision of practice and attendance at piano lessons; 3) children's views about piano lessons and practicing; 4) music background of parents; and 5) parents' view about their child's assigned homework, competitions or exams. The results of the questionnaire investigation were assessed referencing the following variables: 1) students' age; 2) students' grade level; 3) months of tuition; 4) location of tuition, parents' feedback of practice sessions; 5) parents' interest and their emotional response during piano lessons; 6) parents' recording of lessons and practice; 7) students' effort; 8) students' musical ability; and 9) students' overall attainment. The most significant result of the study was that self-motivation and the determination of young students were the most important factors contributing to a higher level of achievement. In addition, parental support was also found to be a significant factor helping young learners overcome challenges and achieve their goals during the early stages of piano learning, although it did not seem to influence young learners' overall attainment, level of interest or enjoyment of either lessons or practice. The majority of the parents participating in the study reported a willingness to be involved in their children's music learning by supervising their practice at home regardless of their children's age and level of music skills. Most children expressed a welcoming attitude towards their parents' assistance with learning, and better results seemed to arise when parents' supervision of children's practice occurred in conjunction with their attendance at the children's lessons. Moreover, in Margiotta's research sample, the majority of the parents involved in their children's music learning were mothers.

In a study of Chinese parents' involvement in their children instrument learning, Ho (2011) collected data from a questionnaire administered to 356 students attending grades 4 to 13 at different schools in Hong Kong. The questionnaire focussed on several areas, including students' musical interests, attitudes, habits of practice and perceptions of parental involvement in their music learning. The findings reveal that the overall level of parental involvement in Hong Kong students' musical learning and participation could be classified as low. Financial

support seemed to be the most common form of parental support, although the majority of students reported that parental support was the most influential factor when they were learning a musical instrument. Parents' encouragement was found to be critical for developing students' musical interest and skills, as well as their musical achievement. Although more than half of the students claimed their parents valued their academic performance and musical achievements equally, many students also reported that their parents did not strongly support their entrance to the music profession. Only those intending to pursue a music career perceived the highest level of parental support in music learning. A further point noted was that the level of parental support varied in relation to children's age. The perceived parental support was relatively higher at the elementary school level than at secondary school level. One possible reason for this situation is that the Chinese education system is highly exam-orientated, and schools are extremely competitive. The majority of Chinese parents have high academic expectations of their children and expect their children to achieve good grades in two examinations, namely, the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), taken at the end of Grade 11, and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, taken at the end of Grade 13. These two examinations determine students' further educational opportunities. Thus, secondary school students might play their instruments less because they place greater importance on other academic subjects, such as English, Chinese, mathematics and science. In view of the academic context, Hong Kong parents typically reduce their involvement in their children's music education when they move from primary to secondary school. This study questions whether families/parents in mainland China face the same situations with families/parents in Hong Kong. Although the education system in mainland China is also highly competitive and exam-orientated, the social system varies between the mainland and Hong Kong. Thus, the situation in mainland China might be expected to differ.

### **Differences between Fathers and Mothers in Musical Communication**

Musical parents differ in their musical interaction with children according to gender. In terms of the frequency of singing, Trehub, Unyk et al. (1997, p.501)



found in their investigation that far more mothers than fathers (72% and 26% respectively) reported singing often or always to their babies. In contrast, 74% of fathers and 28% of mothers claimed to sing rarely or occasionally. The vast majority (74%) of songs sung to infants were performed by mothers, 14% by fathers, 8% and 4% by siblings and others respectively. It is apparent that mothers are the most likely to sing to their children. Singing with infants is usually accompanied by other activities, such as chores, feeding, bathing, diapering, travelling by car, and in sleep preparation (see also, Bergeson & Trehub, 1999; Gibson, 2009, p.2).

Moreover, fathers and mothers also vary in how they select songs for their children. Mothers preferred songs that were more child-oriented, stereotypical and simple in form and content (such as 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star'), whereas fathers preferred to sing popular songs or folk songs (such as 'Mandy'), and even created their own complex songs for their baby (Trehub, Unyk et al., 1997, pp.505-506). On the other hand, both mothers and fathers adjusted their infant-directed singing to suit the patterns used more generally in infant-directed speech. They would use a higher pitch, a slower tempo and a more engaging manner parent-infant singing interactions (see also, Trehub & Trainor, 1998).

Custodero et al. (2003) also found that mothers played music or sang songs to their children more frequently than fathers did. However, in their research, nearly half of participating fathers were reported to sing or play music to their child every day. Furthermore, they found that parents with a higher educational level sang and played music more frequently than those less well educated. However, all this literature relates to infancy, rather than musical interactions with older children (such as school-age children).

### **3.3.4 Possible Factors Influencing Family Musical Involvement**

#### **The Gender of the Child**

Gender is considered an important and influential factor informing musical behaviours for both parent and child (Custodero et al., 2003). A study by Trehub,

Hill, and Kamenetsky (1997, p.385) found that both parents tended to sing more expressively and more playfully with same-sex infants than opposite-sex-infants (for example, fathers tended to sing more with boys than girls). Moreover, many studies have found that gender stereotyping is apparent in children's choice of music styles and instrument (Marshall & Shibazaki, 2011, 2013). Young students were likely to label different musical instruments either "masculine" or "feminine", and boys and girls had different preferences when choosing an instrument (Abeles, 2009; Abeles & Porter, 1978; Bruce & Kemp, 1993; Costley, 1993; Delzell & Leppla, 1992; Griswold & Chroback, 1981; Ho, 2001a; Marshall & Shibazaki, 2011, 2013; O'Neill & Boulton, 1995; Pickering & Repacholi, 2001; Zervoudakes & Tanur, 1994). In relation to school singing activities, the number of girls participating was far greater than that of boys, and boys who take part in school musical activities are seen as "unmanly" and may be called 'sissy' by their peers (Koza, 1993). Some parents have also been found to consider music an inappropriate subject for boys (Koza, 1993; Williams & Harrison, 2019).

### **The Age of the Child**

The age of the child is also an important influential factor in the musical interaction between parents and children. Many studies on this topic have focused on families with infants or preschool children. Although singing and movement can be spontaneous, children between 1 and 3 years old can still find musical interactions exciting but also cognitively challenging (Custodero et al., 2002; Custodero et al., 2003). Thus, the style of musical parenting is often modified to meet children's needs as they grow (Gibson, 2009, p.30). For example, when singing to infants and preschool age children, the choice of music is more language-oriented as the children age, in order to impart language-related knowledge (Custodero et al., 2003). Bergeson and Trehub (1999, p.51) found that parents sang songs that were more clearly enunciated to mature (preschool-aged) children than those sung to infants, highlighting relevant linguistic knowledge to language-learning children. Based on data from a survey of more than two thousand families and their children, Custodero et al. (2003) reported that parents tended to sing and play music more frequently for infants than for their older

children (24-36 months), and both the father and mother were more likely to sing and play music to their firstborn child more frequently than to children born afterwards.

After children enter school, the form of music parenting may change to parental involvement in the child's music learning/musical development (as discussed in section 3.3.3). However, how family musical involvement changes as children progress through their school years has yet to be fully researched.

### **The Musical Backgrounds of Family Members**

Previous studies have supported the impression that one's early musical background and experience can be positively associated with one's future musical involvement (Arasi, 2006; Green, 2002; Pitts, 2005; Silvey, 2001), music consumption (Kolb, 2001; Roose, 2008; Roose & Stichele, 2010), and musical interest (Andreasen & Belk, 1980; Bowles, 1991; Gary, 1998; Green, 2002; McCarthy et al., 2001; McManus & Furnham, 2006; Morrison & West, 1986). Musical experiences during the formative years can encourage a lasting interest in music, and provide an impetus to engage in musical participation in adulthood (Andreasen & Belk, 1980; Davidson & Burland, 2006; Howe et al., 1995; Jones, 2009; McPherson, 2009; Pitts, 2005). Musically experienced adults were more likely to continue their musical education after reaching adulthood; and might select their later musical activities according to their primary experiences of music training (Bowles, 1991). Moreover, studies also found that a person's musical interest and experience can influence one's family members' musical lives. Parents, siblings, grandparents and other relatives can play important roles in providing a suitable family musical environment, and young children are often influenced by their family members' musical tastes or interests (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003; Gibson, 2009, p.3), and musical development and identities (Borthwick & Davison, 2002).

Gibson (2009, p.3) suggested that young children can pick up family songs from their family members, and family friends and neighbours, or become interested in a musical instrument played by these people. All family members and relatives

can be potential influences on a child's musical development (Gibson, 2009, p.3). According to Custodero and Johnson-Green (2003, p.102), parents who have had musical experience in the past are often more active in their family musical interactions. The 'musical experience' included: 1) respondents' memories of their own father or mother singing to them; 2) playing a musical instrument; 3) participating in a choir, and 4) taking music training. To be more specific, parents who played musical instruments and took music lessons were more likely to sing made-up songs and play classical, jazz and world music to their children (Custodero & Johnson-Green, 2003, p.108-110). These findings indicated that the musical background of a family can affect musical parenting, and consequently the family's musical involvement.

### **3.4 Summary**

This chapter outlined key concepts and theories pertaining to the study of musical identities, which are at the core of this thesis. It also discussed literature on musical interaction in the home and in childcare settings in order to contextualise the concerns to be addressed in this study. Previous studies have supported the view that musical interactions have a positive influence on the family functioning, including parent-child bonding, family cohesion, parental emotional adjustment and the personal development of the child. However, most studies are based on Western contexts, and few studies have focused on the Chinese context. Chinese families might have different characteristics, attitudes and forms and effects of musical involvements. One example is Ho's (2011) study (discussed in section 3.3.3) of Hong Kong parental involvement in students' music learning, which identified a different form of parental involvement (financial assistance rather than singing) and a lower level of parental support in students' musical participation. This finding is in contrast to that of other studies based in Western countries.

To conclude, chapters two and three reviewed the existing literature in terms of family studies and music as these were relevant to my research scope; a study of Chinese FMI and musical identities. Several findings presented here can be

summarised as follows. Firstly, I provided in chapter 2 a broad overview of key concepts and theories in family studies, including the definition of family, the function and structure of the family, FLC, and concepts of identity and family identities. These concepts are often taken for granted and are constantly evolving. Individuals can have their own definition of family and its function according to their personal living situation. In general, a family provides people with an environment that supports their physical, mental and social development. Every family has its own life cycle, and the family members may take on different responsibilities and roles at each stage. Re-evaluating these concepts and terms could help narrow the research scope and topic.

Secondly, I introduced the predominant social and cultural characteristics of both traditional and modern Chinese families. The traditional Chinese family culture is considered male-dominated, as it requires women to be obedient to men (who are often seen as the head of the family). However, as a result of processes of modernisation, the status of women has improved greatly leading them to have equal power with their husband in the family setting. Social policies such as the One-child policy have also greatly influenced Chinese families' structure, values, beliefs, and activities. All these changes reflect current economic, social and cultural trends in mainland China, which is important to later analysis of the research data.

Thirdly, musical identity is an important component of how people regard themselves, while the family is a crucial factor in the creation and regeneration of individuals' musical identities. I also reviewed studies on musical interactions in the home and in child-care settings, which is also a focus of my study. A number of prior studies clarify how parents attend to their child's musical development, and that musical activities can enhance family bonding and benefit parent-child communication. However, while the topics of both musical identity and musical involvement in home settings have been much researched in Western academia, few studies of these topics exist exploring a Chinese context, particularly with regard to families in mainland China. Given that the forty-year one-child policy has significantly influenced family culture in mainland China, the characteristics

and effects of musical involvement might be markedly different from those outlined in the Western family context. As such, the literature review highlights the gaps in current knowledge about Chinese families' musical involvement and musical identities. It aims to take the first step towards applying Western concepts and theories to the study of musical identities in Chinese culture.

The next chapter introduces the research methods designed to meet the aims of this research project.

## **Chapter Four: Research Methods**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides information on the research methods adopted in this study. It is divided into nine sections. The first section provides an introduction to the chapter and the second section (Section 4.2) presents the rationale for the use of qualitative methods. Issues related to research rigour are discussed in Section 4.3, Section 4.4 describes the sample design, and ethical considerations are discussed in Section 4.5. Sections 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8 provide information about data management, including data collection, interview transcription, and data analysis. The final section is a summary of this chapter.

### **4.2 Research Methods**

This study employed qualitative research techniques, and in-depth interviews were considered to be the most appropriate data collection method for the research. Considerations and decisions regarding the implementation of this method are presented in the following subsections, beginning with an overview of the application of qualitative methods in the development of psychological research and a discussion of the dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research.

#### **4.2.1 Overview of Qualitative Research in Psychology**

Within the field of psychology, qualitative psychology has a short history. As a research method used in the study of psychology, qualitative inquiry was implemented a long time before the founding of psychology as an independent science (Wertz et al., 2014). As the founder of scientific psychology, Wundt defined psychology as a combination of human science and natural science (Kendler, 2005). He also viewed qualitative approaches as central to the study of

psychology and an important component of experimental psychology (Wertz et al., 2014). However, there are no hits for ‘qualitative research’ or any other terms associated with current qualitative methods in psychology journals prior to the 1980s (Brinkmann, 2015; Wertz et al., 2014). The field of qualitative psychology was not established until the 1980s (Brinkmann, 2015; Wertz et al., 2014), and the number of studies and textbooks focusing on qualitative psychology has greatly increased since the 1990s (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Gough & Lyons, 2015; Madill & Gough, 2008). As a result, the importance and scientific value of qualitative research methods in the development of psychology has been recognised and has received greater attention (Carrera-Fernández et al., 2014; Madill & Gough, 2008).

#### **4.2.2 Difference between Qualitative and Quantitative Research**

Qualitative research as an umbrella term is often presented in contrast to quantitative research (Sandelowski, 2004). Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have equally contributed to the development of the study of psychology. However, quantitative approaches have prevailed in the field of psychological research since the conception of psychology as a science in the nineteenth century (Gelo et al., 2008). The two approaches have fundamental distinctions regarding how data are presented and analysed (Smith, 2008), and each one has its own strengths and weaknesses (Gelo et al., 2008; Mays & Pope, 1995). They fulfill different functions – a qualitative inquiry cannot be effectively answered with quantitative methods, and vice versa. One of the most salient features of quantitative research is the use of numbers; quantification is central to the entire research process. It deals more with counting occurrences, volumes, or the size of association between entities, and focuses on the reduction of phenomena to numerical values in order to perform statistical data analysis (Smith, 2008, p.1).

Qualitative approaches differ from quantitative approaches in many ways. First of all, qualitative research usually involves collecting data in the form of verbal reports, such as interview transcripts or written texts. It focuses on interpreting



what a piece of text means (Smith, 2008). Thus, the data analysis is textual and interpretive (Banister et al., 1994). Moreover, according to Morse (1994), qualitative research does not require a formal hypothesis, but explores the complexity of social context objectively without being limited by perspectives. In psychology, qualitative approaches are generally employed to explore, describe, and interpret the personal or social experiences of participants (Smith, 2008). The aim of qualitative research is not to identify a universal law or derive a formula, but to carry out an in-depth study on a specific social phenomenon, thereby forming a better understanding of its nature. As Morse (1994, p.43) described:

*‘Qualitative research examines what people are doing and how they interpret what is occurring. It does so through direct observations of how people relate to each other to explain how, through these relations, they come to share some course of action. The actions themselves are secondary. What is crucial are the ties that bind people.’*

Thus, the focal point of qualitative research is to explain life, people, culture, or society. It seeks to understand not only ‘what happens in the world’, but also ‘who makes this happen’, and ‘under what conditions and for what reason an event or a phenomenon takes place’, in order to fully understand people’s behaviour and explore the essence of things in the world. As such, researchers must form a relationship with insiders of the event in order to observe their behaviour and to understand the relevant atmosphere, context, images, and stories. With regard to sample size, qualitative research usually involves a relatively small number of participants but gathers substantial data from each (Smith, 2008).

#### **4.2.3 Rationale for the Use of a Qualitative Methodology**

The previous sections described the scientific value of using qualitative methods in social psychological research, as well as the differences between quantitative research and qualitative research. As the description shows, methodology selection was driven by the research questions. The following sections describe the rationale for using a qualitative methodology in the current research.

As shown in chapter 1, section 1.4, the study focused on Chinese families' musical involvement and sought to answer the following research questions: 1) What is FMI and how can it be assessed? 2) What is the relationship between FMI and musical identities? and 3) What is the relationship between FMI and interpersonal interactions and family communication? The purpose of this research was to develop an in-depth understanding of the participating families' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of FMI and their musical identities. Thus, the research objects consisted of FMI (as a social and cultural phenomenon) and participants' experiences of FMI. This was in accordance with the purpose of qualitative research, which is to understand the characteristics of phenomena and events (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). Moreover, one important consideration was that the term 'musical identities' is a rather unfamiliar concept in mainland China, and FMI as an existing social phenomenon has not been well investigated even though enthusiasm for taking part in musical activities and other artistic activities has spread across the country. Thus, this study was exploratory. Conducting in-depth interviews can be helpful to better understanding and describing participants' perceptions and experiences, thereby helping to better answer the research questions. According to Smith (2008, p.2), qualitative methods in psychology are generally associated with exploring, describing, and interpreting the personal or social experience of participants. As such, conducting qualitative interviews was deemed an appropriate method for this research. The intention of this study was to gather substantial information from each person in order to fully understand their individual perspectives, and therefore a minimal number of participants would be expected to generate sufficient data to answer the questions.

#### **4.2.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research has many advantages for studying a social and cultural phenomenon. It is effective for obtaining insider views (Punch, 1998, p.243) and gaining a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the research by focusing on lived experience and data related to the local environment (Creswell, 2014). Thus, it allows researchers to examine an issue in detail and in depth, and to simplify and manage data without destroying complexity and context (Atieno,

2009). Furthermore, it is more flexible, as a researcher can quickly revise the research framework and direction when new information emerges (Anderson, 2010). Moreover, qualitative data based on human experience can be more compelling than quantitative data.

However, qualitative research also has weaknesses and limitations. Firstly, it has been criticised by researchers for being significantly affected by researchers' personal bias and idiosyncrasies (Anderson, 2010; Mays & Pope, 1995). Secondly, the subjectivity of qualitative research may lead to a lack of reproducibility, which means that a different researcher may produce different results and conclusions even when using the same data and methods (Mays & Pope, 1995). Moreover, qualitative research lacks generalizability because of its small sample size (Mays & Pope, 1995).

## **4.3 Research Rigour**

### **4.3.1 Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research has been criticised for a lack of scientific rigour, poor justification of the selected research methods, lack of transparency in the procedures, or findings being merely large amounts of detailed information about personal opinions (Grossoehme, 2014; Mays & Pope, 1995; Noble & Smith, 2015). Therefore, incorporating methodological strategies to improve rigour in qualitative research is called for. Noble and Smith (2015, pp.34-35) noted that quantitative research often employs statistical methods for ensuring the credibility of research findings, and qualitative research could enhance the trustworthiness of findings by incorporating certain methodological strategies. They suggested nine strategies: 1) acknowledging the researcher's personal bias that may influence findings; 2) acknowledging the bias in sampling and continuous critical reflection of methods in order to ensure depth and relevance of data collection and analysis; 3) documenting the decisions made along the way and ensuring consistency and transparency of data; 4) creating a comparison case and searching for differences and similarities between accounts to ensure different viewpoints are represented;

5) using rich and thick verbatim descriptions of respondents' accounts to support findings; 6) demonstrating clarity of thought during data analysis as well as subsequent interpretations; 7) asking advice from other researchers to reduce research bias; 8) respondent validation: asking for feedback from participants after transcribing interviews and inviting them to comment on whether the final themes and concepts appropriately reflect the phenomenon under investigation; 9) data triangulation: employing different research methods to compare findings in a complementary way.

Since there is no uniform standard by which qualitative research can be judged and also no single way to enhance research rigour (Noble & Smith, 2015), both methodological techniques and reflexivity were adopted in this research project. For example, after the pilot study and the interviews, I made reflective notes about the interview process and any important information about the participants — such as emotional climate, facial expression, and body gesture — that may have affected subsequent data analysis. This assisted in providing a detailed description of the research method employed in this study. Reflexivity was a key strategy implemented for supporting trustworthiness in this study, and is introduced in the next section.

#### **4.3.2 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is a particular kind of reflection that requires the researcher to reflect on the whole research process in relation to the context in which the study has been carried out; it also requires the researcher to consider his or her own role in that process (Darawsheh & Stanley, 2014; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Frost & Kinmond, 2012; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009; Horsburgh, 2003; Koch & Harrington, 1998; Whitemore et al., 2001). In practice, reflexivity requires a commitment to identifying and displaying the researcher's personal agenda, such as a statement of their motivation and experience pertaining to the research topic (Gough & Madill, 2012).

The problem of subjectivity in the field of psychological research has long been recognised (Gough & Madill, 2012). It may be difficult to avoid in both

qualitative and quantitative research. One way to mediate the influence of subjectivity is to adopt a more reflexive scientific attitude (Gough & Madill, 2012). As phenomenological scholars have suggested, it can be difficult for researchers to set aside their own lived experience, existing knowledge, and personal background during the research process (Finlay, 2002; Heidegger, 1962). They may be likely to bring their personal experiences and pre-existing understanding into the research (Finlay, 2002). This supports Giorgi's (1994) suggestions that objectivity is an achievement of subjectivity, as nothing can be accomplished without subjectivity. The aim of reflexivity is not to eliminate subjectivity, but to help the researcher better understand the influence of subjectivity on the research. Finlay (2002) suggested that reflexivity could be applied in three stages within the research process: the pre-research stage, the data collection stage, and the data analysis stage.

This thesis provides a detailed description of how I used reflexivity to remain objective during the research process and critically reflect on this. For example, as a way of reflecting the researcher's sensitivity to the sociocultural context of the participants, as well as the potential bias and challenges, I introduce my personal background and Chinese context in Chapter One, Section 1.2. In addition, my role as both an insider and outsider is highlighted and discussed in the sections related to sample design (Section 4.4), data collection (Section 4.6), and data analysis (Section 4.8).

### **4.3.3 The Role of the Researcher**

Reflexivity is particularly important in qualitative research. It requires the researcher to contemplate his or her own role in the course of the research. One way to achieve this is by considering their role as an 'insider' or an 'outsider' (Couture et al., 2012).

The position of 'insider' refers to the researcher sharing similar characteristics, roles, or experiences with those being researched (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Being an insider can help a researcher develop a rapport with participants with greater ease and enable reliable data interpretation due to a shared knowledge with the

participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; O'Connor, 2004). An insider may be more likely to provide insights and inner meaning that could be overlooked by an outsider, and participants may be more open with an insider, which would facilitate the collection of rich data (Courtine et al., 2012; Hamdan, 2009). However, too much familiarity may be problematic. Familiarity may lead the researcher to make assumptions regarding what is being said rather than investigating further as an outsider would. Likewise, if a participant makes an assumption about similarity, they may not fully explain their experiences to an insider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), thereby diminishing the researcher's interpretative ability (Courtine et al., 2012; O'Connor, 2004).

On the other hand, 'outsider' refers to researchers who do not share similarities with or who are not seen as similar to those being studied (Courtine et al., 2012). The outsider position can help the researcher obtain more authentic knowledge (Rabe, 2003) and greater clarity in their research data (O'Connor, 2004). Advocates for the outsider perspective have argued that outsiders have the ability to interpret data without misunderstanding, thereby ensuring the objectivity of the data interpretation (Courtine et al., 2012; Mullings, 1999). Moreover, the outsider status could be preferential, because it may avoid the potential bias that arises from close affiliation with the research subjects (Allen, 2004, p.15).

Thus, both the insider position and outsider position have values and drawbacks in the research process, which should prompt a researcher to think beyond the dichotomy between them (Courtine et al., 2012). In fact, a researcher's identity is not static. It is fluid, and will shift depending on the situation, context, and how the researcher is perceived by the participants (Milligan, 2014). It will also have some influence on the discussions and analysis of the data, as well as the researcher's own reflexive accounts (Courtine et al., 2012). This fluid status often leads the researcher to be suspended in a betwixt-and-between position, and does not lead to either inclusion or exclusion (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010, p.34).

For the reasons discussed above, I considered the roles I played during the research process and their implications in each research stage. The potential bias

and influence these roles had regarding the research are addressed in the following sections.

## **4.4 Sample Design**

Sampling is an important step in the research process as it affects the quality of the study findings (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). It is required when it is not possible to investigate all of the research population during data collection due to constraints such as time and budget (Henry, 2009). The following sections focus on the sampling strategy employed in this research. The first section presents an overview of the different sampling strategies used in qualitative research; this is followed by a description of the sampling criteria used in the current study.

### **4.4.1 Overview of Sampling Strategies**

Sampling refers to the process of deliberately seeking out a portion of a population or universe (Etikan et al., 2016; Henry, 2009; Morse, 2004). In general, two main sampling strategies are used in family research: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling (Kitson et al., 1982). In probability sampling, randomisation is important, as each sampling element may be randomly selected from a known universe (Kitson et al., 1982). As such, probability sampling and random sampling are synonymous (Lynn, 2004). On the contrary, in nonprobability sampling, the researcher's subjective judgments and methods are used to select a sample from the population (Etikan et al., 2016). Probability sampling is the most common sampling method for quantitative research (Marshall, 1996; Omair, 2014). Samples need to be representative in quantitative research in order to be able to generalise the results to the target population (Marshall, 1996; Omair, 2014, p.142). The most common sampling method for qualitative research is nonprobability sampling, as the aim of qualitative research is to gather data from those who can best inform the research questions, with no assumption that anyone else might say the same thing (Marshall, 1996).

The most common nonprobability sampling techniques are purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling (Acharya et al., 2013; Bradley,

1999; Bryman, 2012). Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental sampling. In purposive sampling, the researcher uses his or her own judgement to decide whether the chosen elements are able to represent the population of interest (Kitson et al., 1982; Ross, 2005). This sampling strategy is typically used in qualitative studies (Etikan et al., 2016). Convenience sampling is also known as accidental sampling, haphazard sampling, fortuitous sampling, or opportunity sampling (Etikan et al., 2016; Kitson et al., 1982; Ross, 2005). According to this strategy, the sample is drawn from a group of people who are accessible to the researcher, such as people who are willing and able to participate in the research, or are easy to contact and reach (Etikan et al., 2016; Kitson et al., 1982;). One problem of convenience sampling is that the participants selected may not be applicable to the research problem; hence, there is a potential risk of poor quality data and inauthentic research findings (Etikan et al., 2016). Both convenience and purposive sampling employ non-random participant selection (as do other nonprobability sampling techniques), but they have different expectations and standards for selecting participants. Convenience sampling emphasises the accessibility of resources, whereas purposive sampling expects participants to provide abundant and unique information of value to the research (Etikan et al., 2016).

Snowball sampling is considered a form of convenience sampling in certain respects (Bryman, 2012). In snowball sampling, the researcher makes initial contact with a small population of known individuals who are relevant to the research topic and then expands the sample by asking these participants to introduce others who could also participate in the research (Bryman, 2012). Lack of external validity and ability to generalise the findings is a major problem in both convenience and snowball sampling strategies (Bryman, 2012, p.203). Snowball sampling is more appropriate to reach groups that are seldom heard in research or who are stigmatized by society (which is not the case in this research).

#### **4.4.2 Recruitment Criteria for the Current Study**

Convenience sampling was used in the participant recruitment process.



Convenience sampling focuses on the availability and accessibility of potential participants. Thus, the participants and research location used in this study were connected to my community and social network. It allowed me to recruit families whom I knew would have a musical child or FMI and could be informative, and who already had relationships of trust via acquaintances (as the length of my research visits would not allow me to establish this with families I had no connection with). These advantages outweighed the limitations of convenience sampling.

The research design incorporated two criteria. Firstly, it was decided that the sampling unit should be a family (including father, mother and the child). The purpose of this research was to explore Chinese families' experience of musical involvement and their musical identities. Thus, each individual family member's accounts were included in the data collection. Secondly, it was decided that families recruited for the research should be 'musical'; that is, they should be frequently involved in musical activities such as music listening, singing, and having a keen interest in music. The selection of 'musical families' was established as a criterion to help ensure the richness of the data and obtain detailed and in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Musical families were also the initial source of the motivation for the study.

To meet the second criterion, potential participant families had to have at least one family member with a keen interest in music; that is, they actively participated in musical activities, could play a musical instrument, or had taken any form of music training. This consideration was made according to the assumption that the families of people with richer experience of musical involvement may be more likely to engage in musical activities. As Upright (2004) suggested, arts participation is not just an individual decision driven by someone's personal experience or attributes, it is also a reflection of his or her ongoing social relationships. For example, someone's participation in artistic activities might be motivated and encouraged by his or her spouse. Thus, I assumed that if one family member consistently engaged in musical activities and shared their own musical experience and activities with their family, other family members would engage

with their activities or experience in some way. However, identifying suitable families was difficult. It was not possible to ascertain which families had experience of engaging in a wide range of musical activities without a pre-investigation, which would have been beyond the scope of the PhD project. As such, to narrow down the scope of the search, and also taking into account that children taking extracurricular music education is a common phenomenon in China, I focused on families with a ‘musical child’ (a child with experience of extracurricular music education, who planned to take music training, or who actively participated in musical activities) when recruiting participants. Moreover, my previous experience indicated that children’s extracurricular music education and musical activities are usually decided by their parents. Chinese parents often decide whether to send their children to learn about music or what musical instrument their children should learn; thus, in this study, parents of musical children would be more likely to provide more useful information and opinions. Hence, I looked only at families where a child was school age or above (i.e. subject to a ‘curriculum’).

#### **4.4.3 The Sample Size**

Determining sample size is an important stage of research design. As discussed previously, qualitative research often deals with a small sample size. It aims to answer questions about the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a particular issue, situation, or set of social interactions, and focuses on gaining a thorough understanding of a phenomenon (Dworkin, 2012). Moreover, analysing a large sample could be a waste of the limited available resources (such as time) when an answer can be accurately found from a smaller sample (Nayak, 2010). Qualitative research usually starts with an estimate of sample size – the sample size is judged to have been reached when new information is not adding to findings (saturation) (cf. Manson, 2010; Saunders et al., 2018). Thus, the sample size used in qualitative research is generally smaller than that used in quantitative research (Manson, 2010; Dworkin, 2012). For phenomenological research using interviews as the method of data collection, Morse (1994, p.225) recommended no less than six interviews and Creswell (1998, p.64) suggested five to twenty-five (see also,

Manson, 2010). Based on those references, I estimated that six families (urban, middle-class families with three family members — father, mother and the child) would provide sufficiently rich and varied perspectives to answer the research questions.

#### **4.4.4 Recruitment Selection**

##### **Selecting Research Participants**

The recruitment process has some elements of snowball sampling. First, I contacted people I knew from college (e.g. the mother of F2) and my former music training class (e.g. the daughter of F1), and asked to be introduced to other people or families who potentially met the recruitment criteria. I also used my mother's personal network. She recommended some families she knew (e.g. F3, F4 and F6) that met the research criteria. Thus, some of the participants were her old acquaintances, and she helped me establish contact with them. Nine potential participants were contacted by WeChat messages or phone calls. I introduced my identity as an overseas student and the research project (e.g. research purpose and object). Six participants (on behalf of their families) agreed to participate in the study, and three refused my invitation (this is fully discussed in section 4.4.6). They also introduced me to their family members and helped arrange the time and venue for the interviews.

I first contacted one of the family members, and he or she would then introduce the rest of their family. Initial contact with the participants was primarily conducted using WeChat (a social media application), as I was in the UK for my first year of study. For example, Lily in Family 1 was contacted via WeChat, and she gave her consent to participate and then introduced me to her parents by creating a group chat on WeChat. I then briefly introduced myself and the nature of the research to Lily's parents on WeChat, and they agreed to take part in the study. WeChat was also used to briefly explain the research process and ethical considerations (this will be dealt with fully in the ethics section, section 4.5). The same method was used to invite the other families to participate.

## Research Location

As convenience sampling was used, participants were from Chengdu — the city I had lived in. Chengdu has both cultural and economic advantages as well as socio-educational advantages for conducting music research. It has a flourishing musical culture and other entertainment industries (Taylor et al., 2016). It currently has the most music companies and institutional support from the government of all Chinese cities (Li, Y., 2018). In 2016, the total revenue of the music industry in Chengdu exceeded 2.26 billion pounds (20 billion yuan) (Li, Y., 2018). Moreover, there are more music venues — such as concert halls, sports stadium, theatres, and opera houses — and various social musical activities (such as live concerts and musical festivals) for people's daily musical entertainment.

Chengdu also has better socio-educational resources for music learning than other cities in the southwest China. It has more than ten universities and colleges that offer music programmes. Moreover, there are eleven independent music conservatories in China, one of which is the Sichuan Conservatory of Music (SCCM) located in Chengdu. SCCM is also the only independent music institution for higher education in southwest China. These independent music conservatories play an important role in the development of extracurricular music education in China, as they are qualified to hold a series of music exams and musical activities for children and youth, such as *Kaoji* (also known as SGEM for Standard Grade Examinations in Music) (Zhang, 2016, p.104) or exams held by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) every year. For many families with children who are undertaking music training, parents will accompany the children to take part in these activities, particularly the SGEM or ABRSM music exams held by these institutions every year. Thus, every summer, many music students from other cities in southwest China travel to Chengdu to take part in music exams or other musical activities held by SCCM. Since Chengdu has so many educational advantages and resources for music lovers and learners, it has been a favoured city for musical children and their families since the last century (e.g. Brahmstedt & Brahmstedt, 1997, p.29). As such, families in Chengdu are more likely to be influenced by these cultural and social phenomena.

Therefore, Chengdu is a social and cultural capital, making it an ideal location for conducting a study of music and collecting rich data in China, as local families have ample opportunities to engage in a wide range of musical activities.

The figure below shows the location of Chengdu. The city covers a total area of 1.46 million square kilometres. It is located in the west of Sichuan Basin, and has eleven districts, four county-level cities and five counties. As of 2017, the administrative area houses 16,000,000 inhabitants.



Source:

<https://www.chinadiscovery.com/chengdu-tours/chengdu-map.html#lg=1&slide=0>

#### 4.4.5 The Participating Families

Six families were selected to participate in this research project. They were all middle-class urban families from Chengdu. Family 3 lived in both Chengdu and Yaan (most of the time). Each family consisted of three people (father, mother and child). The parents had different occupations, including teacher, enterprise and institution staff, accountant, nurse, and architect. They were born in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. There were two high school age children (in Family 3 and

Family 6) and two adult children (in Family 1 and Family 5). However, given that participants were supposed to have the ability to communicate and express their experience and opinions articulately, two primary school age children (in Family 2 and Family 4) were excluded from the interview investigation (their mothers were asked about their musical involvement and other related situations). Family 4 had two children, but the son was only eighteen months old at the time of the interview, so he was not able to participate. As such, sixteen participants were ultimately recruited for the interviews.

Nevertheless, when I visited the two young children’s families (Family 2 and Family 4), I still asked the children several simple questions, such as ‘do you like music?’, ‘what are your favourite musical activities?’, and ‘do you like to play music with papa and mama?’. The conversations with these young children were very informal and short; thus, I only made fieldnotes about their replies using a pen and notebook. Figure 4.4.5 presents the demographic information of the six participating families.

Figure 4.5 Demographic information of family members

<b>Participant information</b>		<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Family 1 (F1)	Mr Zhou (father)	1962	Retired civil servant
	Mrs Zhou (mother)	1967	Accountant
	Lily (daughter)	1990	College teacher
Family 2 (F2)	Mr Hu (father)	1985	Enterprise staff (works for a local company)
	Mrs Hu (mother)	1985	College counsellor
	Leo (son)	2010	Primary school student
Family 3 (F3)	Mr Han (father)	1970	Businessman
	Mrs Han (mother)	1970	Civil servant
	Lucy (daughter)	2000	High school student
Family 4 (F4)	Mr Wang (father)	1982	Architect
	Mrs Wang (mother)	1983	Nurse
	Penny (daughter)	2010	Primary school student
Family 5 (F5)	Mr Yang (father)	1963	Civil servant

	Mrs Yang (mother)	1963	Enterprise staff
	Jim (son)	1991	Violin teacher
Family 6 (F6)	Mr Chen (father)	1972	Enterprise staff
	Mrs Chen (mother)	1972	Enterprise staff
	Jane (daughter)	2001	High school student

#### 4.4.6 Reflexive Account of Recruitment Selection

As discussed above, reflexivity is important in qualitative research. Thus, this subsection discusses how I considered and identified my role in the recruitment selection and its impacts on the sample design and data collection.

My personal experience and background directly impacted the participant recruitment and the selection of the research context. I had taken formal music training for more than fifteen years since I was a young child and studied music in college. This experience could have helped me identify people and families with similar backgrounds as the potential interviewees for the study. At the beginning of fieldwork, I decided not to interview the individuals or families that I was too familiar with in order to reduce the influence of any preconceptions and assumptions. Nevertheless, it was not possible to recruit participants entirely unknown to me. Although my friends introduced me to their other friends, when these extended friends were invited to participate in the study, they either did not reply to the text (two people) or refused in an indirect way (three people), such as: 'Let's talk about it later.', 'I'm not sure whether my family is available for this.' 'My family is very busy, I don't know when we could help you. I will ask them later see whether they are available.' These replies are common refusal strategies used in interpersonal communication in the Chinese context (Nelson et al., 2002). In fact, such replies were not surprising, because Chinese people are reluctant to initiate interactions and conversation with strangers until they become acquaintances (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). They tend to engage in honest and truthful conversations with insiders but are unwilling to disclose personal information to outsiders (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). As the study sought to ask questions about their family relationships, which included divulging private details, they did not want to participate. The rejections from people outside of my

personal network made me realise that I should focus on my closer networks, and thus I decided to invite acquaintances' families to participate instead.

Recruiting participants through personal social networks has been widely used by many Chinese researchers, as this strategy helps to ensure the efficiency of the participant recruitment and data collection processes (Cui, 2014; Lin, 2018). The advantages of the insider position were demonstrated by recruiting participants from my personal networks. Most of these potential participants accepted the research invitation in a short time. They also expressed that they would help persuade their family members to participate. In addition, some potential participants were friends of my mother and were willing to take part in my interview as a favour.

Nevertheless, although I was already an acquaintance of some participants, I was a stranger to participants' family members and did not know whether potential participants' family members would be willing to take part in the study. There was some concern that unfamiliar family members would have a negative attitude towards the investigation, which would not have supported the collection of rich data. Some fathers expressed that they were not confident in helping with the research as they were 'laymen' in music and had never had any experience with academic research. For example, the father of Family 1 emphasised several times that he did not think he would be able to answer the interview questions because he did not understand music. As such, considering the influence of cultural characteristics on interpersonal and social interaction, as well as the participants' confidence issues, I decided to visit the participants so they could get to know me and the research area better before the formal interviews commenced. At the same time, I also used social media (WeChat) to interact with some participants.

These pre-research home visits and interactions on social media were later shown to be important and useful for establishing my insider identity. For example, my mother was more familiar with some of the participants: she was a close friend of the mother of Mr Wang (the father of Family 4) and also an acquaintance of Mrs Wang (the mother of Family 4). Thus, Mr Wang's mother, whom I referred to as



Aunt Zhou, helped persuade her son and daughter-in-law to take part in the study. Aunt Zhou's help was mainly given due to the social and cultural emphasis on 'renqing' — the human imperative to express sympathy and provide assistance to friends and acquaintances when they face difficulties (Su et al., 2009). In this case, one potential problem was that her son and daughter-in-law may have hesitated to take part in the research. They might also have accepted the research invitation because of Aunt Zhou's persuasion but still have viewed me as an outsider. So, I first became acquainted with Mrs Wang by commenting on her posts or clicking 'like' when she posted pictures on her WeChat Moments. Her family was also invited to my wedding. These socializing activities (both online and in real life) helped me and Mrs Wang's family get to know each other better. Mrs Wang was then very active in helping persuade her husband to take part in the interview. As a result, both she and her husband became interested in my overseas study as well as my educational background and experience, because they thought that these experiences could provide them with a reference for their daughter's future academic development. For participants who were already acquaintances, such as Lily (the daughter of Family 1) and Mrs Hu (the mother of Family 2), I also visited their families and invited them to have dinner together in order to foster familiarity. During the dinner conversation, I explained that there were no right or wrong answers to the interview questions and they were not required to understand music, so they did not need to worry about their musical ability or knowledge. They were also introduced to other elements of the research, such as the ethical considerations and how the interviews would be carried out. According to Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998), in interpersonal communication in a Chinese society, a person is considered to be an insider in a specific context after a special relationship has been developed through sharing information with each other. Indeed, through the social interactions and sharing my experiences, the participants became much more active and interested in participating in the interview investigation.

To sum up, as discussed previously, a researcher's identity shifts depending on the social and cultural characteristics of a given context (Milligan, 2014). My role as

an insider or an outsider in the current study was mainly dependent on certain real-life situations, including the limitations of my social network, personal experience and background, the social and cultural characteristics of the research location, and how I was perceived by participants. All these elements and factors could have had a significant impact on the whole research process, particularly on sample design and data collection. However, I adapted to these situations to a certain degree by using some interpersonal communication strategies appropriate to the local culture. This indicates that the adjustment of the researcher's role requires a high level of awareness of any situations that might influence the research.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

A researcher is obligated to realise the harmful consequences (both physiological and psychological) that could result from his or her actions (Floyd & Arthur, 2012; Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). As such, ethical issues should be seriously considered in any research project. The ethical issues considered for this study included: 1) autonomy and informed consent; and 2) confidentiality and anonymity.

The first ethical consideration in this study was obtaining informed consent from the participants, which is an important ethical principle in qualitative research. Qualitative research should be concerned with respecting the autonomy of those being studied (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). This means that researchers need to respect participants' capacities and perspectives, their rights to hold certain viewpoints and opinions, their rights to make certain decisions, and their rights to take certain actions based on their own values and beliefs (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, p.75). Participants have the right to be informed whether they must allow some data to be gathered about them or provide data themselves, and whether the research is ongoing and if they will be observed at any point (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, p.82). Informed consent should be obtained before beginning the research and participants should be assured that they are able to withdraw from an investigation at any time (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

The second major ethical principle considered in this study was confidentiality, which included participant anonymity. It is important that they can trust the researcher and are confident that any private and sensitive information will not be disclosed. The privacy of participants should be maintained in order to protect them from potential harms resulting from the research actions (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012).

In the current study, I first submitted a research ethics application to the College Governance Ethics Office of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (AHSS) at the University of Edinburgh. No fieldwork activities, such as contacting participants, were conducted until this application was approved. Before starting the formal interviews, each participant was given a verbal explanation of the research project. This included a brief introduction to the research, including the research purpose and data collection procedures. The participants were also informed that the research would be carried out via interview and the estimated time for the interview was one hour. In addition, that the interview would be recorded with their permission and then transcribed into written words. Then, the participants were informed that their privacy would be guaranteed: their personal information would not be included in the transcriptions and all the information they gave would be anonymised. Furthermore, the interview recordings and transcripts would be kept on a password-protected computer and would be destroyed on study completion. Also, no one but myself would have access to them. Finally, the participants were informed that they would be asked to comment on family members and family events, so there was a potential risk of emotional discomfort. I took ethical responsibility for this and guaranteed to protect their privacy at all times. However, they were also made aware that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I sought to be reflective at each stage of the study and to keep a clear mind about any potential moral and ethical issues that needed to be addressed during the research process (Floyd & Arthur, 2012).

#### **4.6 Data Collection**

In qualitative research, there are a variety of data collection methods that can provide detailed insight into the phenomenon under investigation, such as interviews, observations, and focus groups (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). According to Banister et al. (1994, p.50), if a researcher wants to explore roles and relationships in a particular group, a questionnaire with rating scale categories is unlikely to deliver sufficient information. Therefore, considering the research purpose and questions of the current study (which involved exploring the family members' roles in musical involvement), interviews were selected as the most appropriate data collection method.

As one of the most popular data collection methods in qualitative research, interviews have several advantages. Firstly, unlike quantitative research methods that aim to simplify phenomena, qualitative interviews allow the researcher to gain richer data and explore complex issues such as participants' perceptions and social lives (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Banister et al., 1994; Barrett & Twycross, 2018; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The interviewer can directly ask the interviewees' thoughts and opinions on a specific question, and provide interviewees with opportunities to express their own ideas by using their own language and concepts (Chen, 2000). Moreover, the interview is a relatively flexible method, as it can be tailored according to the research question, the characteristics of participants, or the preferred research approach of the researchers themselves (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

At the same time, it is also important to consider the main drawbacks of interviews in order to better manage the research process and to assess the quality of research data. Conducting interviews can be time-consuming, as the data needs to be transcribed (Alshenqeeti, 2014). As this study focused on Chinese participants, the data analysis involved both transcription and translation, which increased the time pressure and the complexity of data analysis. Also, conducting interviews restricted focus to a small sample size, which may have reduced sample representativeness.

Furthermore, qualitative interviews have been categorised in various ways, the

most common three types of which are structured, unstructured, and semi-structured (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), and each interview type has its own characteristics, advantages, and drawbacks. Before the specific interview type used in this study is introduced, the following sections give an overview of the three most common interview types as potential methods of data collection.

#### **4.6.1 Overview of Interview Types**

##### **Structured Interviews**

Structured interviews are based on structured and closed-ended questions (McLeod, 2014). In a structured interview, questions are often asked in a set or standardised order. The interviewer should read questions exactly as worded to every interviewee, and should not provide information that is beyond what is presented in the questionnaire (Brinkmann, 2014). Compared with other interview forms, structured interviews can save time, and are easier to replicate due to the fixed set of closed questions. However, structured interviews are not flexible, as the researcher cannot probe beyond the answer received. This limitation can lead to a lack of detail; thus, structured interviews are often employed in surveys (Brinkman, 2014).

##### **Unstructured Interviews**

The main characteristic of unstructured interviews is that neither the interview questions nor the procedure can be prepared and determined in advance (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Therefore, although unstructured interviews are informal and non-standardised, they can also be flexible. The researcher can adapt and change the questions according to the respondent's answers (McLeod, 2014). This allows the researcher to explore unanticipated themes, and to better understand the interviewee's social reality from the latter's own perspectives (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). However, this interview type also requires the researcher to have certain skills, such as the ability to establish a rapport with interviewees, and being sensitive of the appropriate time and situation to probe. Also, this form of interview is time consuming for both data collection and analysis.

## **Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews contain elements from both structured and unstructured interviews (Cachia & Millward, 2011). A semi-structured interview is usually arranged in advance at a designated time and location (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). A set of predetermined open-ended questions is used as an interview guide, with other probing questions emerging from the conversation between the interviewer and interviewee as it progresses (Cachia & Millward, 2011; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Thus, the interviewer can ask follow-up questions not shown in the interview guide according to the response received. In this way, the interviewer plays a greater role as a knowledge-producing participant in the interview process (Brinkmann, 2014). Semi-structured interviewing is also a flexible technique for studies with a small sample size (Drever, 1995), although it can still be time-consuming to conduct and analyse due to the general characteristic of interviewing as a research method (Morris, 2015).

### **4.6.2 Data Collection Strategy for This Study**

#### **Face-to-face Semi-structured Interviews**

After a comparison of characteristics of each interview form, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were selected as the method of data collection in this study. Since participants would be asked about their daily musical interactions and how they perceived their own musical involvement, flexibility was needed in the interviews. Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed me to establish a rapport with the participants and gain insights into their experiences, and allowed the participants to speak openly and reflectively. It also helped find a balance between the pre-prepared leading questions and the open-ended questions which prompted the interviewees to enter an exploratory space (Dörnyei, 2007, p.136). Moreover, conducting semi-structured interviews in face-to-face form can provide both a researcher and participants with the ability to observe both verbal and nonverbal data such as facial expressions, gestures, and paraverbal communications, which enriches the meaning of spoken words and yields

authentic and in-depth descriptions of the research phenomena (Knox & Burkard, 2009).

The study aimed to investigate each family's musical involvement and experience, and how they commented on each other's roles in their family's musical activities; thus, all family members' opinions and descriptions were taken into consideration. However, given that different individual family members may have different opinions on the same experience, the participants were interviewed separately rather than together, in order to encourage them to speak openly and honestly when discussing their experiences. It was anticipated that since the participants would be asked to reflect upon both the positive and negative experiences of their musical interactions, and hence comment on these experiences, this might cause conflict with their family members. Participants might feel uncomfortable and might not be willing to talk about sensitive topics in a group interview in the presence of other family members and when they were not guaranteed confidentiality. Interviewing participants separately also allowed me to triangulate accounts of shared experiences (e.g. the different versions of father's involvement in FMI), rather than getting only the agreed version that would emerge from a joint interview.

### **Interview Setting**

Some scholars have suggested that appointments should be made before conducting the interviews, and the site selected for the interviews should be quiet and comfortable in order to ensure privacy (Burns & Grove, 2005; Whiting, 2008). Participants should also be able to select the venue. Therefore, appointments were made with participants in this study to confirm the time and venues for each individual interview. They were able to choose a place for the interview according to their own convenience. Thus, most of the interviews for this study took place in participants' homes. Only one interview took place in a café, in accordance with the participant's own preference and convenience.

### **Interview Process**

According to Newby (2010, p.340), an interview guide should be produced when conducting interviews to clarify the research questions. The interview questions used in this study were focused around the following topics: 1) describing FMI, such as each family member's personal daily musical activities, the musical activities of the whole family, musical resources that families owned, each family member's attitudes towards music and FMI, and their reasons and motives for FMI; 2) each family member's role in FMI; and 3) the influence of FMI on families. Before beginning each interview, I briefly introduced the interview process to the participants, explaining that there were no right or wrong answers because the interviews sought to understand participants' personal opinions and experience, full confidentiality would be guaranteed, and participants could answer the questions freely and should not feel pressurised. Each new topic was also briefly introduced before the related questions were asked; for example:

*'Now we are moving on to another topic. We are going to talk about the influence of taking part in music on your family. You can tell me both negative and positive experiences of interactions in your family's musical activities. So, my first question is ...'*

Open-ended questions were used in an unstructured way; for example:

- Can you tell me about your daily musical activities?
- Can you tell me about the musical activities that your family participate in together?
- What kinds of musical resources do you make use of for your family's collective musical activities?
- What does music mean to you and your family?
- How do you comment on your role in your family's musical activities?

Moreover, Leech (2002) claimed that prompts are as important as the questions in a semi-structured interview, as they keep participants talking and help the researcher keep the response on topic. Therefore, I also asked a number of



probing follow-up questions during the interviews, to encourage participants to give more information, such as: ‘Tell me more about that’; ‘Could you please tell me a little bit more about that?’ and ‘What do you mean by that?’ At the same time, follow-up questions were only used when necessary in order to give the participants enough space to discuss the issue fully.

### **4.6.3 The Pilot Interview**

#### **The Necessity of A Pilot Study**

A pilot study (also known as a feasibility study) is a piece of research conducted before the main study (Arain et al., 2010). It is used to test a particular research protocol, a sample recruitment strategy, or a data collection instrument such as a questionnaire or an interview schedule (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; Kim, 2010). No matter how reasonably and thoughtfully a study has been planned, the researcher may still encounter unanticipated difficulties; therefore, a pilot study is crucial to a research project. A pilot study can help the researchers become familiar with the research procedures (Basit, 2010; Hassan et al., 2006) and develop the interview questions (Gillham, 2000), so that they can pre-empt some of the challenges in the subsequent research (Arain et al., 2010). For researchers that use interviews as a research instrument, Dikko (2016, p.522) identified the following six reasons for conducting a pilot study: 1) highlighting questions that are ambiguous, difficult, redundant, and unnecessary, and omitting and changing similar ones; 2) recording the time taken for the interviewer to manage the interview better; 3) determining whether the questions are adequately answered; 4) testing whether replies can be properly interpreted; 5) checking whether the interview outline and research questions are logical; and 6) practising interview techniques. More importantly, as Van Wijk and Harrison (2013) noted, pilot studies can enhance the credibility and reliability of the entire research project. According to the reasons given above and suggestions given by other researchers, a pilot study was conducted in this research as a pre-test of the interview protocol.

#### **Procedures of the Pilot Study**

The interview schedule was originally written in English for the thesis, but this was translated into Chinese version as the fieldwork was conducted in China. Given my role as a novice, I first met with my supervisors and obtained advice about developing interview questions and techniques. Moreover, according to Hyatt (2004, p.56), a researcher can be too close to his/her own research project to judge it critically; thus, when conducting a pilot study it is important to have a critical associate to offer some constructive comments on what works and what does not by noting anything that may be unclear, ambiguous, unstructured, or poorly presented. This critical associate can be a family member, a close friend, or a colleague who can provide valuable advice and opinions. Therefore, I invited two Chinese friends to the pilot interview. One was a postgraduate student from the same university. The other lived in China and took part in the interview via video chat. I also made notes regarding any potential problems so that the interview schedule and questions could be improved before commencing the main study.

#### **4.6.4 Reflections on the Pilot Study**

Several problems were revealed by the pilot study. Firstly, the type of questions used was inappropriate. In the first pilot study, I used several closed-ended questions such as ‘Do you think that family musical activities are important?’ and ‘Can family musical activities contribute to your family?’. These closed-ended questions could be answered with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’, so did not generate sufficient data, and required the addition of ‘why?’ or ‘Why-not?’ questions to obtain further information. Such questions meant the first interviewee was unable to give adequate responses. In the second pilot interview, open-ended questions such as ‘How important are family musical activities to your family?’ and ‘How does family musical activities contribute to your personal and family’s development?’ were used. The modified questions were confirmed to be more appropriate, as more information was obtained from the second interviewee by using open-ended questions.

The second problem identified through the pilot study was the structure of the

interview outline. Although many questions were listed, they were not categorised into specific topics, and this caused problems related to time and question omission. The original time planned for each interview was one hour, in order to prevent the interviewees from becoming uncomfortable. However, the first interview took over an hour. The feedback from the first respondent and my own reflection on the interview progress revealed that, the interview overran because the questions were not asked exactly as written and I did not follow the order given on the outline. As I was familiar with the structure of the interview questions, when the interviewee's answer related to a later topic in the interview outline, I jumped to that question. This disturbed the order of the interview questions and resulted in a waste of time and inefficiency, because every question was a foundation for its follow-up questions, and reconstructing the structural connectivity of the interview questions was difficult when the interview was in progress. Not following the written order caused some questions to be missed, and I had to relocate the missed questions as the interview progressed. I also asked many unnecessary probing questions. Moreover, skipping between interview questions also meant that the participant found it difficult to understand the kind of responses expected, so she could not understand the core themes of the interview and easily digressed into irrelevant details. This may be another reason for the prolongation of the interview time. To solve this issue, the participant suggested briefly introducing the main interview topics in order to avoid any confusion. After the first pilot study, the interview questions were categorised into different topics, each with no more than fifteen questions. In the second pilot study, the order of each topic and its affiliated questions was followed exactly, and the main topics were also briefly introduced before the related question in order to help the participant focus on the theme. This meant that the interview time could be controlled to around one hour without omitting any questions.

The third problem identified in the pilot study related to my interaction with the participants. The second participant reflected that the lack of interaction made her nervous and less inclined to answer questions actively. She observed that I was too focused on taking notes during the interview and did not look at her. Although

she understood that taking field notes, such as crossing off finished questions or noting something that could be interesting may be important, she explained that this also made her nervous and uncomfortable, and she could not help paying attention to the note-taking. She suggested that in future interviews, I could use more eye contact and facial expressions such as nodding more often while listening to the interviewee speaking, affirming that they are answering the questions appropriately, and encouraging them to continue. Furthermore, the participant noted that I should not look through the interview outline too often. In this way, the pilot study helped improve my interview skills as well as the interview design, which helped to improve the validity of the research.

#### **4.6.5 Reflexive Accounts for Data Collection**

As the participants were from my personal networks, and I had interacted with them before conducting the formal interviews, many pre-existing relationships had already been established. These existing social interactions and relationships had an impact on the data collection process. As discussed previously in this chapter, Chinese people are more likely to express feelings and emotions with close friends than with acquaintances or strangers (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). They tend to share less intimate topics with non-family members (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). Thus, how they perceived my identity influenced their responses to the questions. Although I sought to establish a friendship with the participants before conducting the formal interviews, as it was assumed that friendship could be helpful in recruiting participants and collecting valuable data; during the process of interviewing, it was also important to remember that the process from friendship to knowledge production requires the researcher to move from an inside to outside position (Nowak & Haynes, 2018). Thus, I consistently considered my role as a researcher and shifted between insider and outsider as appropriate. The inclusion of both these roles in the interviewing process directly affected the quality of the data and ethical considerations for this study.

For example, since the research investigated family relationships and asked participants to comment on family members' roles, relevant questions and

discussions could prompt family tensions and thus bring about further ethical challenges such as emotional distress. During the data collection process, some participants disclosed too much because they treated me as an insider, whereas some participants were less open due to their personalities and their perception of me as an outsider. It was important to protect participant privacy throughout, so they were repeatedly reassured that the interview conversation would never be shared with any other people. To do so would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards. When participants were less willing to talk about some issues, they were not pushed to answer the questions. Some participants complained about another family member's behaviour during the interview. For example, some mothers complained about their husband's or children's behaviours when recalling their family musical interaction. At these times, I adopted my role as an outsider of family issues, so I remained neutral and did not respond to the participants' complaints.

Another problem encountered during data collection was that participants often used Chinese idioms during the conversations, and they often assumed my ability to understand these idioms. However, as I was required to maintain my role as a researcher and an outsider in the interviews, and the thesis would be written for English-speaking readers, participants were asked to explain their meanings further. For example, the following figure presents a conversation taken from an interview in which the participant used the Chinese idioms *taoye qingcao* (陶冶情操) and *xiushen yangxing* (修身养性). Although I could immediately understand the meanings of these idioms, readers from other cultures may not be able to. Moreover, sometimes people have different understandings of the same idiom. Thus, it was better to define precisely what the participant meant when she used a specific idiom or dialect.

Figure 4.6.5 Example of conversation

*M-F1: Musical activities can help us 'taoye qingcao' [cultivate sentiment] and 'xiushen yangxing' [cultivate the self]. (The mother,*

**F1)**

**Interviewer:** *What do you mean by that?*

**M-F1:** *Everyone can hold their temper better when engaging in these activities. For example, my husband used to be very impatient. But when he plays music with us, he will become more patient, not as irritable as he used to be. Moreover, he used to be tone-deaf and had no interest in music. Since I invited him to listen to music with us, he occasionally hums some melodies. I think his temperament improves when he is engaging in music activities, so I always recommend that he organises more music activities for our family. For me personally, I think I can also better control my temper through these activities. (**The mother, F1**)*

#### **4.7 Transcribing the Interviews**

Dresing et al. (2015) proposed two methods of interview transcription — simple transcription and complex transcription. In a simple transcript, readability is the focus, and dialects and colloquialism are approximated to standard language. The simple transcription approach is time-saving, facilitates faster access to the content of the interview, and makes the transcript easier to read by dispensing with intonation details. In a complex transcript, a detailed set of transcription rules is considered and thus prosodic elements (such as intonation, volume, speed and pitch, primary and secondary emphasis) as well as a phonetic transcription (the use of phonetic signs to mark speech sounds) are included. The complex transcription approach allows the reader to obtain a deeper impression of the speakers by including intonation and vernacular.

Considering that the interviews for this study were conducted in a Chinese dialect, it was important to transcribe the conversations to a standard language in order to make the transcript more readable and easier to translate into English for the thesis. Also, the purpose of transcribing the interviews from an oral to a written

mode was to structure the conversation in a form amenable to later analysis (Kvale, 2007, p.94). Therefore, in the context of this project, prosodic and phonetic elements did not play important roles in the interview conversation, whereas the content of the conversation was of key importance to exploring and understanding the family's musical involvement and musical identities. Thus, this research followed the rules of simple transcription provided by Dresing et al. (2015, p.28-30), who stated that a researcher should only choose the rules that are suitable for his or her data and scope of analysis. Because the interviews were in Chinese and the guidance was written for English users, only rules that could be applied to this specific interview transcription process were followed. The key points of the specific transcription techniques used are presented below:

- 1) Transcribe literally rather than phonetically; the dialect is translated into standard Mandarin unless there is no suitable translation for a word or expression.
- 2) Retain sentence structures regardless of possible syntactic errors.
- 3) Delete discontinuation, filler words, stutters of words or broken sentences; translate word doublings only if they are used for emphasis.
- 4) Punctuation is utilised in support of legibility; use suspension marks in parentheses (...) to indicate pauses.
- 5) The interviewer's affirmative utterances (e.g. huh, yeah, right) are not transcribed; monosyllabic answers are always transcribed, and an explanation added to them, e.g. 'Mhm (affirmative)', or 'Mhm (negative)'.
- 6) Emotional non-verbal utterances or elucidate statements (e.g. laughter and sighs) are transcribed in brackets.

## **4.8 Data Analysis**

The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is a coherent way of organising and describing data sets in detail; it is used to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke,

2006; Banister et al., 1994, p.57). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.81), thematic analysis is a flexible and useful approach for providing a rich and detailed account of data; it does not require the detailed theoretical framework and technological knowledge of other approaches, and therefore it can be used to conduct a more accessible form of analysis within different theoretical frameworks. Moreover, it allows for social and psychological interpretations of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). As such, Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) provided guidelines for conducting thematic analysis, and the different phases are summarized as follows:

- 1) Familiarise with the data.
- 2) Generate initial codes.
- 3) Search for themes.
- 4) Review themes.
- 5) Define and name themes.
- 6) Produce the report.

Following the step-by-step guide given by Braun and Clarke, the detailed procedures of how the data was analysed using computer software are outlined in the following paragraphs.

In accordance with the framework given by Braun & Clarke (2006, p.87), the first step was to familiarise with the data. Thus, I imported interview transcripts into the computer software (NVivo) and repeatedly read through them. At the same time, I also printed them out and used a pen to analyse the data and make notes in alignment with my own personal reading habits and abilities. The second step involved generating initial codes. This involved coding interesting features of the data and then collating data relevant to each code. Important viewpoints and sentences were also highlighted as free nodes in this stage. In NVivo, the term 'node' refers to a terminal point, topic, theme, concept, opinion, or point of connection in a semantic network found in the data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p.75). These free nodes were marked with some short notes, topics, and themes,



such as: ‘father’s musical activities’, ‘mothers’ musical activities’, ‘children’s musical activities’, and so on. The third step involved searching for themes. In thematic analysis, a theme represents and captures something important in relation to the overall research question, and also represents some level of patterned response within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). The researcher can use his or her own judgement to determine what a theme is (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In light of the research questions for this study, all information related to families’ musical involvement — such as the whole family’s musical activities, each individual family member’s musical activities, their attitudes towards music and FMI, their motivation for FMI, and their reports on musical resources — were categorised into one theme. A second major theme related to each family member’s role in FMI as well as the influence of FMI on their musical identities. The overarching theme focused on family members’ FMI experiences and the influence of FMI on their family relationships. After completion of the third step, the fourth step involved reviewing the themes identified. This step aimed to check whether the themes, coded extracts, and the entire data appropriately reflected each other. In the final step of the data analysis, the three major themes were used as the titles of Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

It is worth noting that Braun and Clarke recommended defining and naming the themes after identifying and reviewing them (steps two and three). However, steps two and three were combined in this study, and each potential theme was named during the search process. These two steps are often implemented at the same time. Only the three major themes were named at the end of analytical process. Thus, the themes that had been named repeatedly had to be checked to ensure they appropriately reflected the coded extracts.

It is also important to recognise that thematic analysis as a method is not without some disadvantages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although the flexibility of the method can allow the researchers to have a wide range of analysis options, it can also lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when identifying themes in the research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Holloway & Todres, 2003; Nowell et al., 2017). Another disadvantage of thematic analysis is that compared to other

strategies, such as grounded theory or discourse analysis, is that it has limited interpretative power as it lacks a theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97). However, in this study, thematic analysis was pragmatically useful in helping answer the research questions, summarise the key features of a large body of data, highlight similarities and differences, and generate unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.97).

#### **4.8.1 Reflexive Accounts for Data Analysis**

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), a researcher's personal attributes, such as gender, race, social and cultural backgrounds, and experience, can influence the research process. As such, qualitative research data such as interview transcripts are often rooted in the interaction between the researcher and participants (Seers, 2012). One problem of this can be that the data analysis inevitably involves the researcher's subjective choices (Seers, 2012); hence, different researchers might analyse and interpret the same data in different ways. This is why subjectivity is considered such an important topic in research. Researchers may find it difficult to minimise or avoid subjectivity due to the influence of their personal attributes, pre-existing knowledge, and pre-existing relationship with participants. Thus, a researcher should reflect on how they might have influenced both the data collection and analysis as an important aspect of the analysis process.

As discussed in reflexive accounts presented previously in this paper, during the research process (including both participant recruitment and data collection), I recognised that my personal experience impacted the study. Similarly, I was also aware that my experience, roles, and positions would affect the data analysis. Thus, I considered my role as an outsider and attempted to distance myself from the data. For example, the figure below presents an extract taken from an interview conversation in which the participant used two Chinese idioms: *gege buru* (格格不入) and *duiniu tanqin* (对牛弹琴). During the interview, she was asked to explain these idioms. I also explained the meanings of the phrases during the data analysis and interpretation, as shown in Chapter Six, by drawing on other scholars' translations and also looking up these idioms and words in the dictionary

in order to avoid possible misunderstandings in my pre-existing knowledge. Since the study analysis involved translation from Chinese into English, I also consulted some friends with particular relevant expertise, such as an English teacher, in order to reduce inaccuracy.

Figure 4.8.1 Sample extract of interview conversation

***M-F1:** Like, my daughter and I often talk about music, but he barely gets a word in edgewise. Or when we went to the KTV he was reluctant to sing. Also, when we went to the concert he seemed uneasy and uncomfortable. I mean, in all of these occasions he always seems very Gegeburu [incompatible]. (**The mother, F1**)*

***Interview:** How do you think of these situations?*

***M-F1:** I feel speechless. It's like Duiniu tanqin [to cast pearls before swine]. (**The mother, F1**)*

***Interview:** Can you explain a little bit more about your experience of 'Duiniu tanqin'?*

***M-F1:** It feels like he doesn't understand and he has no interest; sometimes you feel that there is no need to communicate. He cannot integrate into these activities. (**The mother, F1**)*

However, it was difficult to be entirely reflexive about the data, because it was easy to take many things such as language or social and cultural phenomena for granted. For example, in the above figure, the participant mentioned 'KTV' (a place where people can do karaoke). I used the same word in my writing and did not consider that people from other cultures might not understand what it referred to. This was later pointed out by one of my supervisors, who noted that he did not know what 'KTV' meant. Thus, a picture of a mini KTV booth was added to help readers understand participants' musical activities. Moreover, since the two primary school children were excluded from the formal interviews, I asked their mothers (rather than fathers) about their musical involvement. This might have shaped the interpretation of data analysis, as I approached the data with assumptions about the families (mothers are usually more involved in domestic

affairs and child rearing than fathers). At the same time, I attempted to use reflexivity by constantly reflecting upon my position and personal influence on each stage of the research, in order to improve the reliability of the study.

## **4.9 Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodological design and issues of the current study. It has also provided reflexive accounts to illustrate the influence of the researcher's subjectivity on the research for consideration of research rigour. The first part of the research findings is introduced in the next chapter.

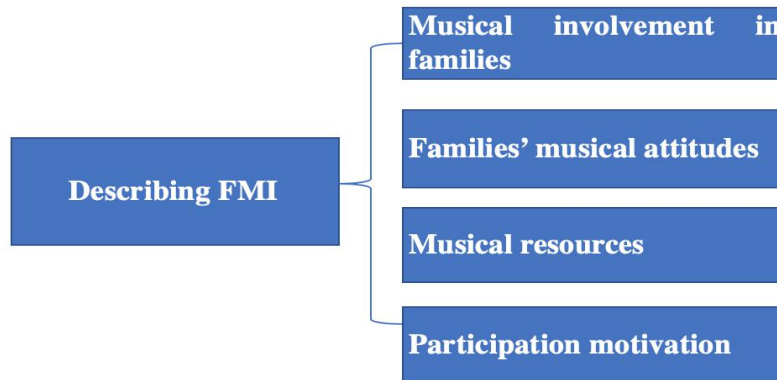
## **Chapter Five: Describing FMI**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter five explores the participating families' musical practices and their musical environment. The thematic outline of this chapter is presented in Figure 5.1. The overarching theme 'Describing FMI' comprises four subordinate themes, namely: 1) the musical involvement in families, which contains information about individual family members' participation in musical activities as well as the family's collective musical activities; 2) the families' musical attitudes, which examines individual family members' attitudes towards music and FMI; 3) musical resources, including information about participants' resources that could be used for FMI; 4) participation motivation, that explores participants' reasons for FMI.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section introduces the main structure and content of the chapter. The second section describes the musical activities that the participating families take part in individually and collectively. The characteristics of these musical activities and the factors that have an impact on them are also noted in this section. The third section discusses each family member's perception of, and attitude to, music and their families' musical involvement, to provide an insight into the participating families' musical identities. The fourth section describes the musical resources used for the families' musical activities. The fifth section deals with the participants' motivation to participate in family musical activities. The chapter ends with a summary of the main points of each section and some concluding points. The musical identities of each family member and the effects and outcomes of the families' musical involvement will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6 and 7 in light of the findings of the literature review.

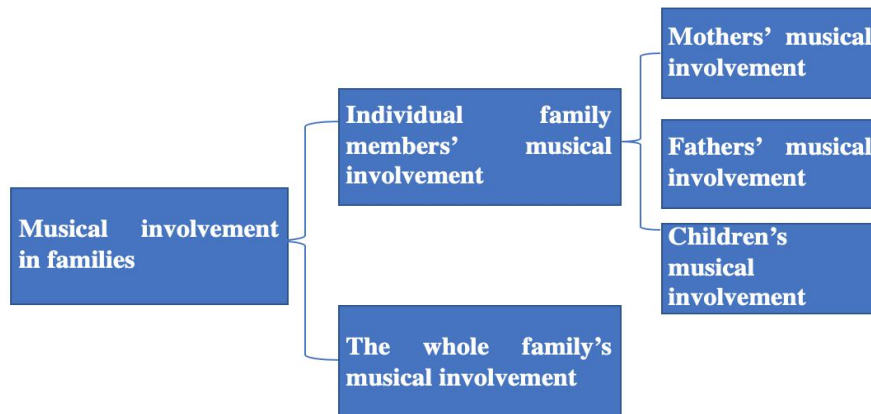
Figure 5.1 Thematic outline of Chapter 5.



## 5.2 Musical Involvement in Families

This subordinate theme provides information about the six participating families' musical activities. It is concerned with the individual family members' musical activities in their daily lives and the musical activities of the family as a whole. The structure of section 5.2 is illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Structure of section 5.2



### 5.2.1 Individual Family Members' Musical Involvement

#### Mothers' Musical Involvement

Table 5.2.1 Mothers' musical activities

<b>Mother</b>	<b>Musical activities</b>
F1	Using the mobile Karaoke app on the mobile phone to sing songs; listening to music while doing chores or driving; watching music programmes on TV after work; participating in choir activities in the workplace on festival days.
F2	Singing and listening to music while driving; going to live music concerts and music festivals; planning to learn a music instrument; participating in choral performances at the workplace; going to the KTV with colleagues or friends.
F3	Using the mobile Karaoke app on the smartphone to sing songs; listening to music; participating in choral performances at the workplace; watching music programmes on TV.
F4	Singing; listening to music while driving or at home; watching music programmes on TV; participating in choral performances at the workplace.
F5	Using the mobile Karaoke app on the mobile phone to sing songs; listening to music; going dancing; watching music programmes on TV; going to the KTV with friends.
F6	Singing; listening to music; watching music programmes on TV; participating in choral performances at the workplace.

The interview investigated both individual family members' personal musical involvement and family's musical activities and events. This subsection begins by presenting the findings regarding the mothers' musical involvement. During their interview, the mothers talked about the musical activities they often engaged in in their daily lives. They discussed factors that affected their choice of musical activities. Table 5.2.1 lists the musical activities described by the mothers of the

six participating families.

The mothers were generally willing to participate in a variety of musical activities, and this was reflected in their diverse musical interests. Their personal musical involvement at home included singing, listening to music, watching musical programmes on TV. One mother (in F2) was also interested in learning an instrument and was collecting information about course fees and training institutions in preparation. In addition to musical activities inside the home, mothers also actively took part in musical activities outside the home. Five of the six mothers mentioned participating in singing activities at their workplace; two mothers said that they often went to the KTV room (a place for karaoke interactive entertainment) to sing and one mother had experience of attending music concerts. Musical activities outside the home were a source of mothers' musical enjoyment (as opposed to activities inside the home).

Mothers were asked how they found time to engage in their music activities and how often they engaged in such activities. The mothers reported that they liked to enjoy music after work, at weekends, and on holidays. Their time for personal music enjoyment was flexible but limited due to family commitments, chores and participation in other forms of entertainment. The following are some of the replies given by the mothers who participated in this study:

*I am very busy when I get back home from work, because I have a lot of housework to do. The time for participating in musical activities is very limited. (The mother, F3)*

*I will also participate in other activities when I have spare time, such as sports, going to the cinema and so on. I can't just participate in musical activities. (The mother, F4)*

*It's hard to say. It all depends on the situation and it's flexible. If you have a lot of chores to do you certainly have no time for these leisure activities. (The mother, F5)*

In the extracts above taken from the interviews, two mothers (F3 and F5)



emphasised the fact that their time for music was limited by domestic affairs (per evening) such as doing chores. Although the socioeconomic status of Chinese women has significantly improved and they are encouraged to have jobs and to pursue their professional lives (Fung & Ferchen, 2014), the stereotype of gender roles still permeates the family context. All the mothers who participated in the study were working women and financially contributed to their families, but some still reported that domestic affairs took up a great deal of their time. This situation could strongly affect their musical involvement and musical identities. The influence of gender roles on musical involvement and musical identities will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.3 of Chapter 5.

### **Fathers' Musical Involvement**

Table 5.2.2 Fathers' musical activities

<b>Father</b>	<b>Musical activities</b>
<b>F1</b>	None
<b>F2</b>	Singing; listening to music; going to live music concerts and music festivals.
<b>F3</b>	Listening to music while driving.
<b>F4</b>	Listening to music while driving.
<b>F5</b>	Listening to music while driving; playing a musical instrument; watching music programmes on TV.
<b>F6</b>	Listening to music while driving.

Table 5.2.2 lists the musical activities that the fathers participating in this study are involved in. The fathers of F2 and F5 had a relatively rich experience of music; the fathers of the other four families were much less musically active. The other four fathers' personal musical involvement was confined to passively listening to music while driving. The father of F1 reported that he did not take part in any

musical activity in his personal leisure time. The comments below show that there was a lack of motivation to participate in musical activities among the fathers.

*I hardly participate in music activities. I don't listen to music and I don't sing. Besides, I don't understand music. (The father, F1)*

*I myself hardly engage in music. I haven't thought about this question. I guess I just don't have much energy to participate in this kind of activity except to listen to music sometimes. (The father, F6)*

Based on their own assessment, the time the fathers spent actively participating in musical activities is negligible. Only the father of F2 spends a relatively significant time on musical activities. Although the father of F5 does play a musical instrument, he emphasised the fact that he only plays it occasionally depending on time availability and mood.

*I sometimes play the violin, not too often, when I have spare time or when I am in the mood. (The father, F5)*

Both the fathers and the mothers reported that lack of time affected their participation in musical activities. Whereas the mothers reported being occupied with domestic affairs (such as housework), the fathers were more likely to emphasise their economic responsibilities and social roles because they value their work over other activities including musical activities. This phenomenon is in line with the traditional Chinese father's role (Li & Lamb, 2015, p.275; Shek, 1998), which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, section 6.2.1.

### **Children's Musical Involvement**

Table 5.2.3 Children's musical activities

Child	Musical activities
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<b>F1 (adult child)</b>	Playing piano; learning to play other musical instruments; listening to music; singing; watching music programmes on TV; participating in musical activities at the workplace; going to live music concerts and music festivals.
<b>F2(primary school)</b>	Singing; listening to music; putting on musical performances at school; learning to play the drum.
<b>F3 (high school)</b>	Listening to music; playing the violin; participating in music activities at school.
<b>F4 (primary school)</b>	Listening to music; singing; learning to play the piano; joining in school singing and dancing activities.
<b>F5 (adult child)</b>	Singing; listening to music; playing the violin; watching music programmes on TV; going to live music concerts and musical festivals; learning to play the cello and guqin.
<b>F6 (high school)</b>	Listening to music; singing.

Table 5.2.3 lists the musical activities undertaken by the children participating in this study in their daily lives. Both the adult children and the young children participated in music activities to a larger extent than their parents did. In addition to musical enjoyment such as listening to music and singing around the house, they participated in musical activities organised by the school, community and other social organisations. Learning an instrument was the most commonly stated activity for both the adult and the young children; five of the six children were taking or had taken extracurricular music training.

The children's personal musical involvement was linked to age. The adult children were engaged in more musical activities than the young children. The young children were mainly involved in singing, listening to music and learning a musical instrument. In addition, schools are the main place for these young

children’s musical engagement. They also often took part in the musical activities organised by their schools. Only the two adult children (i.e. the children of F1 and F5) mentioned watching music programmes on TV as their personal musical involvement. Younger children’s screen time was restricted by their parents and they could only watch TV when they were accompanied by their parents. High school children (including children of F3 and F6) were busy with their studies, so their musical activities were mainly confined to singing and listening to music during class breaks or after school.

The high school children’s time for musical enjoyment was limited. Although the child of F3 spent time playing the violin daily, she did this because she was planning to study music at college and take part in the music exam to obtain extra points in the National College Entrance Examination (which will be discussed in section 5.4). She cut down on other musical entertainment to make time for her school work. Time for the adult children’s musical involvement was flexible. Independence allowed them a measure of autonomy and discretion on how they spent their time. They could choose their preferred musical activities without interference from their parents. Since both the two adult children (F1 and F5) are music teachers, they could have more opportunities to participate in musical activities. The child of F1 reported that she has to practise the piano very often because teacher recitals are held each semester in the university she works for.

### 5.2.2 The Whole Family’s Musical Involvement

Table 5.2.4 The whole family’s musical activities

Family	Musical activities
<b>F1</b>	Singing (going to the KTV or using the mobile Karaoke app on the mother’s phone to sing together); watching music programmes on TV; going to the child’s recital and performance; listening to the child playing piano at home.
<b>F2</b>	Singing together; listening to music together; going to live music

	concerts and festivals; learning to play music together; going to the KTV.
<b>F3</b>	Singing (using the mobile Karaoke app on the phone to sing together); listening to music; accompanying the child to music class; accompanying the child to music contest; listening to the child playing violin at home; watching music programmes on TV; listening to the child playing violin at home or school; going to music concerts and the opera.
<b>F4</b>	Singing; listening to music; going to live music concerts; learning about music together; attending school music activities of the child; accompanying the child to music class; going to the cooperative singing class (learning to sing together).
<b>F5</b>	Singing; listening to music; going to the mother's dance show; putting on a musical performance (such as singing; dancing and instrumental performance) for other family members on important days (such as spring festival and mid-autumn festival).
<b>F6</b>	Singing (going to the KTV; or using the mobile Karaoke app on the phone to sing together); listening to music; watching music programmes on TV; watching the child's school music show (such as chorus performance).

This section refers to the activities involving the child or children and one or both parents together. The participating families made use of the various musical resources in the home and outside the home (such as musical instruments they owned, musical activities organised by the community or school, and musical media) to organise their family's musical activities and events. In general, the families' musical activities were more diverse than individuals' personal musical activities. As Table 5.2.4 shows, the family's musical activities could, to some extent, be seen as the continuation of the individual family members' personal

musical involvement. For example, the mothers who were fond of using mobile singing applications to sing songs often invited their husband or their child to sing along with them. Thus, in this way, singing became a family musical event. Also, the children (such as the children of F1, F3 and F5) who were learning to play a musical instrument often played live instrumental music in the presence of their parents. Similarly, the mother of F5 often went dancing with other housewives in her community. These housewives would occasionally put on a dance performance in the community or the shopping mall that would be attended by members of their families.

The family life cycle (marked by the children's ages) influenced the whole family's musical activities. The musical activities that families with younger children participated in were more school- and education-based. The parents of these families would also have to take part in musical activities organised by their children's school or that were related to children's extracurricular musical learning, such as attending the children's school musical performance, joining in the school organised cooperative music class and accompanying the children to music class.

Time and frequency of the whole family's musical activities varied across families but mainly depended on how much time the children had to pursue musical activities. As the parents said:

*As for how often we run those music activities, it really depends on the child. (The father, F1)*

*Basically, we arrange these activities according to the child's time. (The mother, F4)*

The comments above indicate that the FMI of the families sampled was child-centred, which means that the parents put the children's convenience and needs first and foremost.

### **5.3 Families' Musical Attitudes**

Watson (1968, p.12) defines the term *musical attitudes* as a person’s feelings, beliefs, prejudices, ideas, notions, concerns or fears pertaining to music. Thus, the subtheme ‘musical attitudes’ focuses on the participants’ feelings and ideas about the importance of music to themselves and their family. Musical attitudes can be important in the construction and negotiation of musical identities (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Lamont, 2002, 2017; Leung & Kier, 2010). Since family members live together, they may influence each other’s attitude to music (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002) and, thereby, develop the whole family’s musical attitude and identity. In order to explore the six families’ musical identities, participants were asked to describe ‘How important is music to you?’ and ‘What are your opinions on your family’s musical activities?’. The aim of these interview questions was to help define nuances in the musical attitudes of the family members.

The tables below (Tables 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3) are divided into two categories: the family members’ personal musical attitudes and the attitudes towards FMI. Some participants (mainly mothers and children) had stronger musical identities. They commented positively on the role of music in their lives, for example ‘music is important to my life; it adds flavour to my life and makes me more interesting and energetic’. Some fathers had a less positive attitude towards music; saying, ‘I’m a tone deaf. I don’t have a special interest in music.’ Thus, the different types of attitude were also marked in the ‘Attitude type’ column below.

Table 5.3.1 Mothers’ musical attitudes

<b>Mother</b>	<b>Personal musical attitude</b>	<b>Attitude type</b>	<b>Attitude towards FMI</b>	<b>Attitude type</b>
F1	First of all, I think music is very important for me. I think music is accessible to everyone. I think the passion for music is part of human nature. Music makes people more outstanding	positive	It is a reflection of the quality of family life, reflection of family resources, including your financial condition, your social resource, your cultural resource and so on. Taking part in music activities	positive & supportive

	and outstanding people love music. I think that's why social elites usually have a passion for music.		together is really meaningful and also interesting. I think we should take part in music activities.	
F2	Music is important to my life. It adds flavour to my life and makes me interesting and energetic.	positive	It's very important to my family. We should participate in music activities more often. Joining in these activities together makes them much more meaningful and interesting.	positive & supportive
F3	Music was my career, so it means a lot to me. It has been part of my life.	positive	Participating in music activities is important and necessary to my family. I always tell my family to participate in more music activities.	positive & supportive
F4	Life needs some music. It is a pleasure and a kind of ability.	positive	Music has been part of our family life since my daughter began to learn to play an instrument. We now pay a lot of attention to participating in these kinds of activities with her.	positive & supportive
F5	Music is an essential part of my life. I have to say that most of the joys of my leisure life come from music.	positive	Music is the favourite family entertainment for us, especially for my husband and son, they often play music together.	positive & supportive
F6	Music is quite important for me. Although I may not participate in music activities very often- I mean, mostly I just sing	positive	It's like a life pleasure of my family... I think participating in music activities is meaningful. Although we may not specially make time for these activities.	positive & supportive



	songs, listen to music or watch some music programmes on TV at home, but I still think that music is indispensable.		Your question reminds me that we should organise more music activities.	
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Table 5.3.2 Fathers' musical attitudes

Father	Personal musical attitude	Attitude type	Attitude towards FMI	Attitude type
F1	I don't know whether it is important. I'm a tone deaf. I don't have a special interest in music but I would rather not say it's not important.	Less positive (feeling uncertain)	My daughter is a music teacher, so it's definitely important to my family.  I am supportive of my family's music activities even if I don't enjoy music so much myself.	positive & supportive
F2	I like music very much. It is significant to me. For example, music is always the first choice when considering entertainment possibilities.	positive	Actually, it's our favourite activity. My family runs a lot of music activities; I hardly see any family who enjoys music as much as we do.	positive & supportive
F3	I haven't thought about whether music is important to me. It's definitely important to my wife and kid, but for me personally, it's just something I use to kill time.	less positive (feeling uncertain)	It is an important activity in my family, especially for them [his wife and daughter]. Both of them [his wife and daughter] participate in music activities very often; besides, my daughter is learning to play the violin, so	positive & supportive

			music is definitely important to my family.	
F4	I'm not saying that music is not good, but I just feel that I lack interest in it.	less positive	I think it's an activity that is worth doing...I think no matter how busy I am, I'm still willing to arrange a time with my family to participate in some music activities.	positive & supportive
F5	For me, music is not only a pleasure of life, it is also a companion.	positive	It is certainly an important part of our family life. It is an important source of our happiness.	positive & supportive
F6	I'm not so fond of music, so it's not so important to me. I'm not saying it's not good, I just mean that I haven't thought about questions such as 'how important music is to me'. I think, it's a good thing, but not that important.	less positive	I think it is a meaningful and healthy family activity. I certainly support this kind of activity. It's good for the family, meaningful, at least it's an elegant art and better than other entertainment.	positive & supportive

Table 5.3.3 Children's personal musical attitudes

Child	Personal musical attitude	Attitude type	Attitude towards FMI	Attitude type
<b>F1 daughter</b>	Music is definitely important to me, it's my career, it's what I'm living on.	positive	I think it's meaningful. I'm very supportive of having music activities in the home since my parents have	positive & supportive

			enjoyed these activities so much.	
<b>F2 son</b>	I like music very much. I want to be a musician.	positive	I extremely like singing with dad and mum.	positive & supportive
<b>F3 daughter</b>	I'm going to study music at college, so it'll be my major. Currently, it's a spirit companion for me.	positive	I think it's an interesting thing. I think they [her parents] should participate in more music activities together with me, because this makes me feel supported.	positive & supportive
<b>F4 daughter</b>	I think music is important. I like music very much. I like learning about music. I like to sing, dance, play piano.	positive	I like to sing with dad and mum, and I like them to watch my performances.	positive & supportive
<b>F5 Son</b>	For me, I can't live without music. My music and my violin is like a soul mate, a spiritual companion	positive	It's the kind of thing that bring us a sense of ceremony. My family all like music activities, I just think that we can take part in more kinds of music activities, not just playing the instrument at home or passive watching and listening.	positive & supportive
<b>F6 daughter</b>	Music is an important thing that helps me relax during my studies. I think music	positive	It's a kind of pleasure, a way to enjoy life, a way for us to bond. Besides, it's beneficial to the family atmosphere.	positive & supportive

	is very important to me.			
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### 5.3.1 Individual Family Members' Personal Attitudes towards Music

The mothers and the children tended to have a much more positive attitude towards music than the fathers did; only two out of the six fathers had positive attitudes. All of the mothers and children said that music was important to them. The mothers said that music is a significant part of their life and valued their personal musical enjoyment. They spoke in vivid metaphors when describing the importance of music in their lives, describing it as ‘human nature’, ‘a part of life’, ‘the flavour of life’, ‘life’s pleasure’, and ‘a source of joy’. The mother of F1 associated music with individuals’ social class referring to music as the pursuit of the ‘social elites’ (*shehui jingying* 社会精英). In her view, the passion for music is a status symbol that differentiates outstanding people (referred to by her as the ‘social elite’) from ordinary people. The mother of F2 said that music boosted her energy, making her more ‘energetic’. Thus, music not only added flavour to her life, it also functioned as the fuel of her life. For the mothers of F3, F5 and F6, music was a key component embedded in their daily lives that constantly provides them with pleasure.

Music also played a significant role in the lives of the participating children. Both the children of F1 and F5 are music teachers so music for them is not only a hobby but also a means of making a living. The son of F5 referred to his music and violin as a spiritual companion and soul mate when describing the importance of music to him. The daughter of F3 used the same metaphor — ‘spiritual companion’ — to describe the role of music in her life. She is planning to study music at college and, thus, there is a possibility that music could be her career in the future. For the daughter of F6 who is a high school student, music is a therapeutic tool that helps her maintain a good mood and take a break from studying. Both the children of F2 and F4 are at primary school and were excluded from the formal interviews. However, during informal conversations they also said they had an interest in music. The son of F2 spoke about his dream of

becoming a musician. The daughter of F4 listed her favourite musical activities to show the extent of her interest in music. Overall, mothers and children viewed and used music in a positive way and all attested to a high level of interest in music.

Only two fathers expressed a positive attitude towards music. The father of F2 ranked music as his favourite leisure activity and said that ‘music is always the first choice when considering entertainment’. The father of F5 treated music as a pleasure of life and a companion. His response was highly consistent with his family members’ responses (see Tables 5.3.1 and 5.3.3). His wife, for example, described music as a joy of life and his son referred to music as a spiritual companion. For the remaining four fathers, music was a less important activity; they had mixed feelings about the importance of music in their lives. On the one hand, they felt that ‘music is not that important’ for them personally; on the other, they also emphasised that ‘music is a good thing’ and they did not deny the value of music. The fathers of F1, F3 and F6 said that they had never thought about the importance of music in their personal lives before they were interviewed. Such an indifferent attitude towards music reflects weaker musical identities. Their motivation for musical engagement was hindered by their self-defined lack of musical ability or the lack of interest in music. For example, the father of F1 defined himself as being ‘tone deaf’. When asked why, he explained that he had never had any music education. This lack of exposure to music had discouraged his interest and confidence in music so he did not feel authorised by the education system. Similarly, the fathers of F4 and F6 also claimed that they lacked interest in music. As discussed in the previous subsection, some fathers also attributed their lower participation in music to lack of time.

All the mothers in this study were working women who also had to do a variety of chores at home, while the children were also busy working or studying. None of the mothers and children reported a lack of musical interest. Only fathers tended to emphasise their economic responsibilities and attributed their low participation in music to lack of time because of work. For example, the father of F3 said that it was expected that music was more important to his wife and daughter than to him.

### 5.3.2 Individual Family Members' Attitudes towards FMI

All the family members had a supportive attitude towards FMI. Even the fathers who showed a weaker musical identity were supportive of family members taking part in musical activities together. For example, the reason why the father of F6 was supportive of FMI was that he viewed music as an elegant art compared with other kinds of entertainment and, thus, he assumed that taking part in music could be a more meaningful activity for his family. Here he emphasises the benefit of FMI to his family:

*I think it is a meaningful and healthy family activity. I certainly support this kind of activity. It's good for the family, meaningful, at least it's a high art and better than other entertainment. (The father, F6)*

Although the father of F1 described himself as 'tone deaf' and seemed to find it difficult to experience the joy of music, his daughter's identity as a music teacher reminded him that there was someone in his family making a living out of music so the family needed music. He said that,

*My daughter is a music teacher, so it's definitely important to my family. I am supportive of my family's music activities even if I don't enjoy music so much myself. (The father, F1)*

In the quote above, the father acknowledges that music is important to his family and, hence, as a member of the family he should be supportive. Unlike him, his wife had a strong music identity and associated FMI with their family's cultural and economic capital.

*It is a reflection of the quality of family life, a reflection of family resources, including your financial condition, your social resource, your cultural resource and so on.' (The mother, F1)*

Some participants focused on the educational value of FMI and regarded it as a way to share family values and develop family history. For example,

*My view is that it can be a way of family education, telling the child that we are an interesting and loving family. It is the manifest of your lifestyle. (The mother, F2)*

*I think, for my family, our family musical activity is an inheritance of the family tradition. It is a kind of family culture and you can pass it on to the next generation. (The father, F5)*

For others, taking part in FMI was a responsibility because FMI is a family activity.

*Being part of it is actually a manifest of responsibility; your family's activity can reflect the duty allocation of your family. (The father, F3)*

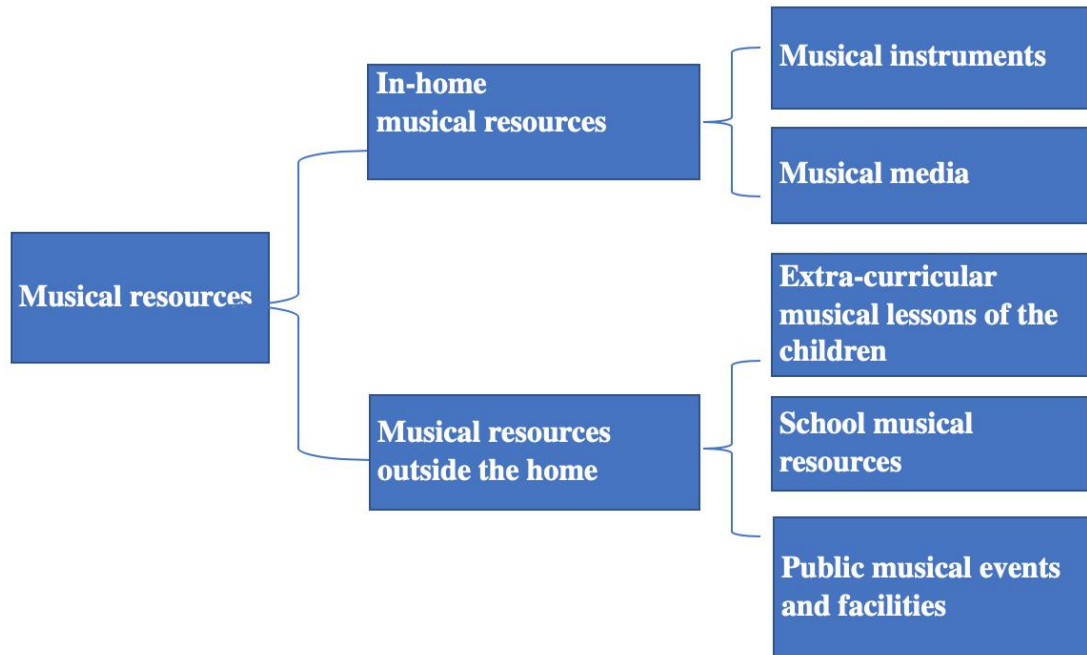
*It's my duty and responsibility, I need to get involved, to cooperate, to be part of it. (The father, F4)*

The extracts above indicate that participants valued the benefits to the family over their own preferences. They realised that family members should pull together and FMI should be a collective activity, and they hoped their family could benefit from FMI. As such, all the family members had a positive attitude toward FMI, even those who had weaker musical identities. Chinese culture is often described as collectivistic because the society emphasises the needs and views of family over those of the individual (Huang, 2006; Nelson et al., 2004). The concept of individuality in many Asian cultures emphasises harmonious interdependence with others by attending to others and fitting in as a member of the group. This is in contrast to the concept in Western culture, in which individuals tend to maintain their independence from others by attending to the self and emphasising their uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is also a manifestation of the collective identity. Chinese people tend to associate collectivism with solidarity and social cohesion (Huang, 2006). Also, the family is always valued as a cornerstone of society and has played a central role in both the social and the

cultural life of China (Nelson et al., 2004). As such, when music becomes a family activity, all family members tended to show their support in order to achieve a sense of solidarity through a collective activity.

## 5.4 Musical Resources

Figure 5.4 Structure of section 5.4



This section focuses on the kinds of resources used for the FMI of the six families and how these resources engaged the participating families in the collective musical activity. Access to music resources can significantly contribute to a family's musical environment as well as its musical engagement (Young, 2008; Gibson, 2009). It can shape a family's musical behaviour, habits, preference, music consumption and participation in music activities (Gibson, 2009). The study found that the participating families could take advantage of a large variety of resources within and outside the home to organise FMI.

### 5.4.1 In-home Musical Resources

The in-home musical resources consisted of musical instruments (including acoustic and electronic musical instruments) and musical media (such as music



programmes and movies on TV, recorded music from the internet and online music articles and magazines).

**Musical instruments.** The musical instrument was an important resource for the in-home live musical interaction of the families who took part in this study. Five of the six families owned at least one musical instrument in their homes. Some families owned over 10 musical instruments. These included acoustic musical instruments (i.e. piano, violin, guitar, harmonica, flute, recorder and ukulele) and electronic musical instruments (i.e. electronic drum kit and electronic guitar). As discussed in the section on music activities, children often had to play the music instrument in the presence of other family members at home, and parents would usually comment on or express their appreciation of the children's performance. As such, whether or not the children played music for their parents' enjoyment, their live music performance provided the family with an interactive experience. For example, when she talked about her family's music experience, the mother of F1 also mentioned that she interacted with her daughter at the piano:

*I used to sit down with her at the piano singing songs that I like and she would accompany me on the piano. She [her daughter] wasn't willing to do this so much. But now she's happy to do this with me. She will also teach me how to play the piano occasionally when she is happy. (The mother, F1).*

The father of F2 also played the ukulele and the electronic drum with his son, though he did not know how to play these musical instruments. Thus, these instruments were used as a sound maker or a music toy for their musical interaction in the home. As he said:

*I bought him [his son] an electronic drum kit and a ukulele. He often pretends that he knows how to play these instruments and asks me to play with him. (The father, F2)*

However, the study also found that the use of different musical instruments differed. Families tended to play the musical instrument that they (especially the

children) were better at or were paying to learn. For example, F1 owned the highest number of musical instruments out of the families interviewed. These included a piano, a ukulele, a guitar, a harmonica, a flute, a Chinese zither and a violin. The daughter of F1 is a piano teacher and could play all these instruments, but she only played piano for her family because she was not confident in playing other musical instruments.

*I'm not good at other musical instruments. I mostly play piano for them, and occasionally, my mum and I may play piano together. So I only play the other instruments myself. (The daughter, F1)*

F3 owns three instruments, including a violin, a recorder and a ukulele. However, the parents only interacted in their daughter's violin performance, because she was learning the violin.

*I like ukulele, but my parents are less interested in it. I only play it when I am on my own. They never listen to or talk about my ukulele playing. I think they pay much more attention to my violin skills because I'm learning the violin. When it comes to my violin learning, there's lots of interaction. (The daughter, F3)*

The parents of F4 also paid more attention to their daughter's extracurricular music training and cared less about the daughter's school music education. The daughter of F4 learned to play the recorder and harmonica at school during music class and was also taking weekly piano lessons outside school. However, she played the recorder and harmonica only during school music class. Her parents focused on her piano learning and frequently engaged in her piano learning and practice. When asked why they put much more emphasis on the piano than other musical instruments, the mother of F4 explained:

*She plays other musical instruments just for fun. Playing these instruments doesn't count as a skill. The piano is the most important, because she is learning it, so we often encourage her to play the piano for us. (The mother, F4)*

The comments above by members of F3 and F4 show that parents attached more importance to the instrument that the children were learning in the extracurricular classes. They regarded mastery of these instruments as being more important and hoped that their children would improve these musical skills by playing the instruments during family activities. They did not perceive playing other instruments ‘just for fun’ as being important and necessary. Thus, although families might own several musical instruments, only the instrument that they valued the most could contribute to FMI.

**Musical media.** Musical media were another important musical resource for FMI. These include digital musical resources, such as music programmes and movies on the TV and computer, music applications and social software on mobile phones, and music articles and magazines online, and online music lessons (i.e., online ukulele lessons). Young (2008) notes that the digitalisation of music has significantly changed the way individuals practise music. Digital musical resources are more accessible to families, as these kinds of resources are more flexible.

#### **5.4.2 Musical Resources Outside the Home**

The musical resources outside the home include extracurricular music lessons and school musical resources and public music events and facilities (such as live music concerts and music festivals).

**Extracurricular music lessons of the children.** As discussed in the section on instrumental resources, the participating families paid a lot of attention to the children’s musical achievements. Five of the six families sent their children to extracurricular music classes (children F1, F2, and F4 play the piano, children F3 and F5 play the violin, and F6 did not take instrument training). Parents reflected that no matter how busy they were and whether or not they liked music, they still tried to engage in the children’s extracurricular music learning by accompanying their children to the music class in person and communicating with the children’s music teacher. The children’s extracurricular music lessons are an important resource for FMI. For example, when talking about music resources, three fathers

said that they regarded the children's extracurricular music learning as an opportunity for FMI, although the findings in section 5.2 and 5.3 show that they had less interest and time for their personal music enjoyment. This is what they said:

*I think my daughter's music class was the most important resource. Although I'm not good at music, I still accompanied her to every music class when she was young. This was my responsibility as a parent and also shows my concern for her. (The father, F1)*

*You can treat the child's music class as a resource or an opportunity. We engage in her [his daughter's] music class together, otherwise I don't have much time to play music with them. (The father, F4)*

Chinese parents usually have high educational expectations of their children. The traditional values require parents to involve and concern themselves with their children's learning (Chao, 1994; Chao, 2001; Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008; Leung et al., 1998; Li, 2001a; Cheung & Pomerantz, 2011; Lee & Morrish, 2012). The traditional cultural belief that 'it is the father's fault for only raising but not educating his children' (养不教父之过 yǎng bú jiào fù zhī guò) (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008, p.11; Leung & Shek, 2015, p.2200) requires parents, particularly fathers, to take responsibility for the children's achievements, as children's achievements are considered to be a reflection of whether parents have educated their children well (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008). Since music is often considered to be a form of education at home, fathers sometimes seek to engage in this activity.

**School musical resources.** School musical resources were reported as being a type of musical resource for FMI by families with younger children (F2 and F4). These resources included the music shows and performances of the children and the cooperative music class for parents and children. However, school musical activities did not receive as much attention as the extracurricular music class did. Parents reported attending school musical events mainly because it was required by the children's teachers, as reported below:

*It is indeed a kind of resource, but the main reason we participate in these school music activities together is because the teacher will ask us to participate in—to help them connect family to school. (The mother, F4)*

*You have to attend because the teacher will ask you to take part in these activities, so you have to cooperate with the school and the teachers. (The mother, F2)*

The responses of the parents indicate that the potential of the school music show as a resource for families' musical involvement was not fully recognised. There is still space to expand this kind of musical resource for families. The Chinese education system is highly examination oriented and utilitarian. Even pre-school children often need to take entrance examinations (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008). Chinese children are encouraged to concentrate on subjects such as Chinese, English and Mathematics because these subjects are included in the entrance examination (Hu, 2002). Thus, children have limited opportunity for music instruction in school (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008) and the school music curriculum, especially school musical activities, might be considered as being less important than other subjects (Xie & Leung, 2010). School musical activities are not important in the parents' view because they are not part of the examination structure. Parents would attend only when they were invited by the school.

**Public music events and facilities.** Public music events and facilities were mentioned as being part of the participating families' musical activities. Public music events include musical activities in the community, music concerts and music festivals. The participants also attached educational value to these public events. For example, two parents mentioned that going to a music concert was beneficial to their children who were undergoing musical training.

*We can make use of some music concerts and organise a family event since the child is learning the musical instrument. (The mother, F4)*

*In fact, a live music concert is a good resource, not only for family*

*events, but also for music learning. Nowadays, we have many music concerts in the city. I think we should make full use of this kind of resource. (The father, F2)*

Discussion with participants about their music activities revealed that the music activities in the community could also provide an extra opportunity for the whole family. Some communities organised singing, dance and instrumental performances for the community residents. Families often attended the community musical activities in groups. However, the use and effect of this kind of resource was limited because it depends on the quality of the community, such as the service the community can provide. Not all participants reported community musical activities as being part of the family's music resources. Those who mentioned community activities also said that the community only organised musical activities on important festivals, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival and the New Year. Most families only took part in the community activities once a year.

*Our community only runs some music activities on festivals such as the New Year; so we only participated in these activities once or twice in total. (The mother, F6)*

The aim of community activities is to connect families and the community. The community activities are not confined to music, although music can be a key component in these activities. Thus, along with the development of community service, the community has potentially become a resource for the family's musical involvement. However, its music value and potential needs to be discovered and developed.

The public music facilities referred to as a resource included mainly the KTV room and the self-service karaoke booth in the shopping malls (as Figure 5.4-1 shows). The advent of the mini karaoke booth has brought convenience to families, as they could sing together any time when they see a self-service karaoke booth in the shopping mall.

Figure 5.4-1 Mini karaoke booth



Figure 5.4-2 Square dance in China (1)





Figure 5.4-3 Square dance in China (2)



## 5.5 Participation Motivation

Motivation is a determinant factor that influences people's behaviour. It refers to the underlying reasons for people's behaviour that is characterised by their willingness and volition (Guay et al., 2010, p.712; Lai, 2011, p.2), and the driving force that moves people to do or not to do something (Broussard & Garrison, 2004, p.106; Chen et al., 2015). The subordinate theme 'participation motivation' explores the research participants' motives for organising and participating in their family's musical activities. Participants gave a number of reasons for FMI. These factors were classified into four categories, including need for recreation, need to strengthen family bonds, need for personal development, and need for affiliation.

Table 5.5 Participation Motivation

Themes	Sub-categories
<b>Need for recreation</b>	relax, have fun, relieve stress and anxiety, eliminate mental fatigue, and regulate emotion
<b>Need to strengthen family bonds</b>	meet family expectations, improve family atmosphere / environment, communicate / interact with family members, and create family rituals
<b>Need for personal development</b>	self-cultivation, acquiring and improving a skill, improving career prospects, and identity and social positioning.
<b>‘Go with the flow’</b>	

### **Need for Recreation**

Recreation is a fundamental human need (Gulam, 2016) and is important to a family’s development (Whitacre & Rom, 1995). The need for recreation was found to be an impetus to the participating families’ music involvement. During the interview, each participant was invited to talk about their personal and family music stories or unforgettable musical experiences. Some participants said that they engaged in music with their family in order to relax, to have fun, to relieve stress and anxiety, to eliminate mental fatigue, and to regulate emotion. The following are a few of the comments that they made:

*We want to have a good rest or to do something that is enjoyable, especially after we have been working. So, music is a good choice. In the evenings, we like to relax with some music, for example, watch a music TV programme or go to a music concert. (The mother, F2)*

*I think music is just a form of recreation. It’s simple and fun, so*

*everybody can join in and enjoy. So, we play music together mainly for fun. (The father, F2)*

*We like to watch music TV programmes together, such singing competitions or other kinds of music shows on television. We also go to the KTV and sing together occasionally. I think everyone can relieve stress and anxiety through these activities, especially after a day's work and study. (The father, F4)*

The above quotes indicate that participants consider their involvement in music as a form of recreational activity. They organise their family's musical activities for the purpose of improving their quality of life, for individual family members' personal enjoyment and for the whole family's enjoyment.

### **Need to Strengthen Family Bonds**

The need to strengthen family bonds refers to participants' efforts to improve their family strengths and family competences, such as the ability to problem-solve (for example, when dealing with stress and crisis), organise, negotiate, communicate, provide a positive emotional environment, create a satisfying and fulfilling family life, promote effective and appropriate interaction among family members and enhance the functioning of the family (Trivette et al., 1990; Gleeson et al., 2016). Apart from the motives discussed in the above section, participants also said that they wanted to meet family expectations, to improve family atmosphere/environment, to communicate and interact with family members, and to create family rituals through their family's music involvement. These motives reflect their expectation of building family bonds and reinforcing closeness among family members. Hence, this category was named 'the need to strengthen family bonds'.

**To meet family expectations.** The study found that family members' expectations and attitudes about musical activities have affected and promoted their family's musical engagement to a great extent. Individual members would try to understand and meet other family members' expectations when engaging in

musical activities. They believed that this is an important way to take care of each other's feelings and emotions. As such, meeting family members' expectations is part of the process of strengthening the family bonds.

In the interview with the participating children, many said that their parents' musical attitudes and expectations helped motivate them to join in their family musical activities. For example, in the music story of F1, the mother was a big fan of music and encouraged her daughter Lily to learn about music and take part in various musical activities at home or within the community. Although Lily did not enjoy these musical activities, she still followed her parents' guidance so that she could please her mother. She recalled why and how she engaged in her family's musical activities:

*My parents have devoted their love, patience, money, and energy to me, wholeheartedly and unconditionally... I was always a "Daddy's girl" in my parents' eyes. Since my mum liked music so much, I didn't want to disappoint her. (Lily, the daughter of F1)*

F3 is in a similar situation. They often engaged in a series of musical activities, such as watching music TV shows, listening to music together, going to live music concerts or the child's school music festivals. However, these activities have stressed daughter Lucy who is also under pressure because of her studies at high school. Despite this, Lucy still actively involved herself in these activities. She made the following comments:

*My parents are very proud because I can play the violin. They are very happy to engage in my music learning and other music activities... So, it is difficult to reject their requests. If I say no, they will be disappointed. (Lucy, the daughter of F3)*

Other participants' narratives also show their intention and effort to meet family members' expectations. For example:

*She always hopes that my dad and I will support her hobbies and accompany her to her square dance activity... She is getting old.*

*Sometimes she is like a little child, and going to her dance show can make her so happy. (The son, F5)*

As Brand (1986, p.112) points out, young children are generally keen to please their parents. The excerpts above demonstrate the children's effort to meet their parents' expectation. 'Making parents happy and satisfied', 'not disappointing parents', and 'making parents proud and happy' is their basic motivation for taking part in the family's musical activities.

It is not only the children who want to meet the family's expectations, the parents also make an effort. For example, both the fathers of F1 and F6 talked about their experiences trying to fit in with the family's lifestyle. They described engaging in music as being part of their family life, although they themselves were less interested in music. Thus, they needed to adapt to this lifestyle so that they can keep in step with their family. This is what they said:

*We often do some music activities at home. This is my family's lifestyle. If they [his wife and daughter] think that we must listen to a piece of music together, we will listen to it together. If they want to watch a music TV show, I will not disagree. I need adapt to such a lifestyle. (The father, F1)*

*I rarely participate in any music activities, except my family's music activities. Since they have such a lifestyle, I need to cooperate with them [his wife and child] and try my best to keep in step with them. We always emphasise the collective spirit. So, I have to like what they like, and their hobbies are my hobbies...You know, for family harmony! (The father, F6)*

**To improve family atmosphere/environment.** Some families said that they organise their family's musical activities to foster a positive family atmosphere. For example, the mother and the son of F5 explained their reasons for participating in the family's musical activities:

*Doing some music activities, such as singing, listening to music*

*together, or watching some music films can create a warm atmosphere for us. We just want to make our family's atmosphere better. (The mother, F5)*

*We found that having some music activities is a good way to create a more active and harmonious family atmosphere, because the focus is on the fun of music and you can temporarily forget other troubles. (The son, F5)*

The atmosphere mentioned in the above excerpts is described as a positive environment for family members' mental well-being. In F1 and F4, the participants placed greater importance on a home environment that is suitable for the children's educational development. The father of F1 considers the whole family's engagement in music to be necessary and helpful to his daughter's achievement of learning to play the piano. As he explained:

*I think learning about music is never a personal thing. When a kid is learning about music, everybody in the family is engaged in her music. So, a music learner needs such a home environment, a music atmosphere. It's good for the child. So, this is why we all engage in her music. (The father, F1)*

The father of F4 also tried to create a music friendly environment for their daughter. He said that:

*We try to create a good music environment for her [his daughter]. For example, we occasionally go to live music concerts; we often play music for her at home as well, such as children's songs and classical music. A child who doesn't like listening to music will not go far on the path of music learning. (The father, F4)*

**To communicate/interact with family members.** Some families consider FMI as a strategy to bind all family members together; a way and opportunity to share and interact with one other. For example, the father of F2 said that, in addition to improving the atmosphere at home, accompanying his wife to various music

activities provides him with more opportunities to communicate with his wife. He said that:

*Accompanying her to these activities shows that I respect her interests. We can have more time to discuss our hobbies and interests, and to know each other better. We have found this is a good way to create a good family atmosphere. Also, we will have more opportunities to communicate with each other. (The father, F2)*

Similarly, the mother of F5 said that:

*Participating in music activities together can improve the family atmosphere. For example, everybody can sing so we can go to KTV once a month. It's a good opportunity to interact regularly and share our feelings with each other. (The mother, F5)*

**To create family rituals.** In F2, going to music festivals together at least once a year is an important tradition. The family is also interested in attending various kinds of collective musical activities. They do so not only to improve the family atmosphere and interact with family members (as the father of F2 mentioned above), but also to create family rituals and common memories. When asked about their reasons and motives for attending these musical activities, the mother of F2 replied that:

*We want to take part in different activities together, creating our common memories and special family lifestyle. Participating in music activities can be very ritualistic... we also want to create a family ritual that belongs to us three, such as going to the KTV once a month, watching a music concert once a year...' (The mother, F2)*

The mother of F2 also mentioned a 'sense of ritual' which plays an important role in the music life of F2. She said that:

*I always think that the sense of ritual is very important in life. I hope my family will have something that we can do and enjoy together. I*

*often imagine playing and enjoying music together after dinner: I play while they sing. It's a very special activity that only belongs to my family. (The mother, F2)*

When asked to elaborate on 'the sense of ritual', she explained:

*It's something that makes a moment or a day different, special or important. (The mother, F2)*

F5 also gives weight to the sense of ritual that musical activities can bring. He said:

*My son always says that life needs a sense of ritual. Playing music together is a very special interaction between me and my son. It has been our family's tradition and ritual. It's a very ritualistic thing and can make our family life different. (The father, F5)*

He describes his understanding of 'sense of ritual' as 'a state of mind' with a focus on 'doing something different and special':

*It's difficult to explain what 'the sense of ritual' is. In my understanding, it means doing something that makes you feel different and special, such as baking a cake for birthdays, buying a bunch of flowers to celebrate an anniversary. You must do something so that you can reach a state of mind. (The father, F5)*

The above quotes indicate that participants believe that an effective way to strengthen family bonds is to create family traditions and rituals; for instance, playing music at important festivals could create a 'sense of ritual' for the family. Doing something that the family might not usually do creates a common memory for the family members and increases life satisfaction. The so-called 'sense of ritual' helps meet the family members' psychological needs, such as feeling different and special (as stated by the father of F5 above).

### **Need for Personal Development**



Personal development refers to people's pursuit to achieve growth by broadening their knowledge, expanding their self-awareness, improving personal skills, maintaining expertise and learning about their strengths and weaknesses (Thomas, 2014, p.2; Beusaert et al., 2011). It is a process of self-awareness and of understanding one's identity, improving one's personal goals and achievements, and searching for acceptance (Tamminga & De Boer, 2018; Hughes & Youngson, 2009). The theme 'need for personal development' includes: self-cultivation, acquiring and improving a skill, improving career prospects and identity and social positioning.

**Self-cultivation.** The participants' pursuit of self-cultivation was expressed in the two Chinese phrases 'taoye qingcao' (陶冶情操) and 'xiushen yangxing' (修身养性). They consider music to be an important way to *taoye qingcao* and *xiushen yangxing* in China (e.g. Qiu, 2011, p.178; Judy, 2011; Xu et al., 2014; Chen, 2008; Weingarten, 2015). *Taoye qingcao* refers to cultivating one's sentiment, particularly the aesthetic sentiment (Griffiths, 2013, p.117), while *xiushen yangxing* refers to the cultivation of self, including the cultivation of one's horizons, behaviour, sense of self, ethical and moral qualities, aesthetic taste and character (Chen, 2012, p.54; Judy, 2011; Jing, 2014). Both phrases refer to the participants' pursuit of self-cultivation. In the quotes below participants explain how music helps them achieve these goals. The mother of F1 explained that according to her understanding of 'taoye qingcao' and 'xiushen yangxing', music could help her husband control his temper. She said that:

*Everyone can hold their temper better when engaging in these activities. For example, my husband used to be very impatient. But when he plays music with us, he will become more patient, not as irritable as he used to be. Moreover, he used to be tone-deaf and had no interest in music. Since I invited him to listen to music with us, he occasionally hums some melodies. I think his temperament improves when he is engaging in music activities, so I always recommend that he organises more music activities for our family. For me personally, I think I can also better control my temper through these activities.*

***(The mother, F1)***

The father of F2 mentioned ‘*xiushen yangxing*’ as a motivation for FMI. He emphasises the utilitarian function of music in the ethical development of individuals.

*It enables us to broaden our knowledge, to expand our cultural horizons and to raise our self-esteem. I think playing music can help us behave well and act as moral people. (The father, F2)*

His wife refers to the aesthetic value of music:

*Taking part in music activities can improve your aesthetic taste. You will become a better you through music activities. (The mother, F2)*

For the daughter of F1, music cultivates an individual’s virtues:

*These characteristics include, for example, a collaborative spirit, persistence, communication and negotiation skills, and concentration. You need these characteristics to organise a music activity and, thus, you will acquire these characteristics through interaction with family members, and through the effort of preparing for a family event or activity. (The daughter, F1)*

The comments above show that participants believe that musical activities help them perfect their personality and develop positive characteristics, including different practical abilities such as organising, communicating, negotiating and the ability to manage emotions and temperament. Moreover, personal qualities, such as patience, persistence, a collaborative spirit, concentration, good behaviour, better aesthetic taste and confidence, can also be enhanced. They believe that they could acquire these abilities and qualities through FMI because involvement in musical activities involves interpersonal communication, negotiation, and cooperation and, thus, these abilities could be enhanced. Moreover, the sentiment (the idiom *qingcao*) that the participants refer to represents a psychological state, which includes one’s temperament, emotion, disposition, artistic and aesthetic

value. The wish to cultivate sentiment actually indicates the pursuit of mental ability and spiritual life through participation in musical activities, thereby achieving the goal of ‘become a better me’. The pursuit of self-cultivation is also in accord with the Confucian teaching that music has moral, health, and intellectual benefits to people (Tan, 2015).

**Acquiring and improving a skill.** Some participants reported that they organised family musical activities to learn a new skill. For example, the mother of F2 encouraged her husband to learn a music instrument with her son. For F2, FMI is not simply a family ritual, it is also a way for each family member to develop. The mother said:

*Since Leo [her son] is going to learn a musical instrument, we [she and her husband] decide to learn this musical instrument with him. I think we can learn about music together, it's a family ritual and we can also pick up a new skill. (The mother, F2)*

In F4, the daughter's school provides some optional courses for families, including painting class and music class. Parents and children can join in these classes together. The parents of F4 chose the singing class to acquire singing skill. The mother said that:

*At first I thought it'd be just fun, but then I found my singing skill had improved. So, I asked them [her husband and daughter] to attend this class more often. It is good for your health and you can also acquire a skill. (The mother, F4)*

For Lucy, the daughter of F3, FMI was an opportunity to improve her music skill and increase her chances to go to college. Lucy was a 16-year old high school student when she was interviewed. In China, a high school student must achieve an excellent score in the *Gaokao* (National College Entrance Examination, NCEE) to enter a college. Because of this intense competition, many students try to find different ways to stand out from the competition. An additional marks policy is applied by the NCEE in some provinces. Many universities lower the entrance

requirements for students who have special skills in the arts or sports. Students who pass the relevant exam can receive additional points in the NCEE. Students who choose music, arts or sports as their college subjects will need a much lower score on the NCEE if they meet the entrance requirements in those subjects. Thus, learning about music may provide them with an opportunity to receive additional points. As a violin player, Lucy has an advantage in the NCEE. She planned to take a violin exam to gain extra points in the NCEE. This was one of the motivations for F3's FMI. Lucy and her parents regarded FMI as a pilot test and an opportunity to improve Lucy's practical skills in stage craft, time management, and dealing with the fear of public performance. She said that:

*My parents act as the examiners or audience while I'm playing for them. It's like a pilot test for the final examination. We think doing this helps improve my stage etiquette and manners, and the ability of time management—to start and stop on time. These practices can help me ensure a smooth show. This also helps improve my mental ability—I always feel nervous when I play for other people. (The daughter, F3)*

**Improving career prospects.** In F3, FMI was seen as being not only a pilot test for the daughter's college entrance exam, but also as a rehearsal for the mother's performance at her workplace. Her boss often asks her to sing at important festivals, such as the annual meeting. She has received many compliments and has won a number of prizes for her singing performance. Thus, she uses the FMI to rehearse her singing performance, thereby improving her career prospects. The mother said that:

*We can make full use of our family time. She [her daughter] needs practice for her exams, and I need to practice for the activities I organise at my place of work. (The mother, F3)*

When talking about the experience of his family's musical activities, the father of F4 also mentioned that engaging in musical activities can be beneficial to his daughter's future career development:

*These activities help her find confidence, skills, etiquette, and disposition. With these traits, she can be outstanding at school and even in her future work. (The father, F4)*

**Identity and social positioning.** Music is seen as way to forge an identity and enhance social positioning by some families. Positioning refers to a process through which individuals position themselves within the social hierarchy (Lawson, 2016; Hiles, 2007; Yamakawa et al., 2009). Some participants base their identity on music. They believe that their behaviour and the activities they engage in could reflect their social class and that taking part in musical activities improves their social status, in ways that other activities do not. For example, in the extract below the mother of F1 refers to activities such as playing Mahjong as ‘unhealthy’ or ‘bad’ and believes that music helps her family avoid getting involved in activities that are bad for her family’s identity and status.

*Music activities help us avoid unnecessary socialising and unhealthy entertainment. I know many people like to play Mahjong after work. This is a very bad entertainment and social custom. I don't like my family to be involved in these activities. These can lower your status. You hardly ever see a professor playing Mahjong after work, right?*  
**(The mother, F1)**

She also talks about why she sent her daughter to learn music and why she encouraged her husband to engage in music. She states bluntly that she had a utilitarian aim in doing this:

*Singing or playing musical instruments can not only make people more confident and outstanding; it's also a symbol of social stratification. Maybe my idea was very utilitarian, but I thought if my child plays the piano, she will practice and will not have much time to hang out with those kids who sit around after school. That is how individuals widen the gap between different social groups. This is the so-called "birds of a feather flock together". When other kids are playing games or watching TV, she is playing the piano - this is a*

*meaningful activity. (The mother, F1)*

In this mother's view, music can be used as a tool to establish the family's position and maintain her family's status in society. It is an activity that can make them feel distinct from other people or families who are involved in activities that are not recommended. Her daughter confirms that such thinking runs through the family. She says that:

*We engage in music because I am a music learner, so they always cooperate with me. They think we should engage in various music activities rather than other things, like watching soap operas, or playing Mahjong and skittles and drinking beer. At least this is a way to tell other people that we have a musician in my family. (The daughter, F1)*

F1 define themselves as a music learner's family and this identity gives them a sense of pride. They wanted to strengthen their identity by taking part in music. Other entertainment activities, such as watching soap operas, were not considered suitable to their assumed social status and identity.

Similarly, the father of F3 indicated that, when considering family leisure activities, the music activity least harms the family status in comparison to other kinds of entertainment. The father said:

*This is more meaningful than playing Mahjong or video games, which is vulgar, lowbrow, and can waste your money, harm your health and even lower your status. (The father, F3)*

Moreover, his wife talks about the relationship between identity positioning and the choice of lifestyle, and how they associate FMI with identity positioning. She said that:

*You can't deny that how you position yourself affects the choice of lifestyle and vice versa. Engaging in positive things like music can help you better position ourselves. You will realise that you are a*

*positive person, and you have good hobbies and a healthy lifestyle.*

***(The mother F3)***

Both F1 and F3 have created hierarchies for different leisure activities. The aim of such behaviour could be to stand out from the families and people around them. Previous studies have pointed out that behaviour has an influence on individuals' identities: people define themselves through their own behaviour and they also define other persons through others' behaviour (Cast, 2003). The participants associated their behaviour with their personal and their family's social identities. They had a low opinion of socialising and entertainment activities such as playing Mahjong as somehow meaningless (intended to pass the time instead doing something with one's life), and held the viewpoint that these activities are detrimental to their social image. On the other hand, they valued FMI highly and tried to construct their identity and social position through the experience of FMI. This may be because FMI could bring them, in their words, 'a sense of honour', and make them feel different. Therefore, FMI strengthens their aspired identities, that of 'musician' and 'a positive person'. They hoped to position themselves through FMI. This refers to the process of developing and understanding self-awareness and identities, which accords with one of the goals of personal development.

### **'Go with the Flow'**

Some participants reported that they were motivated to organise FMI by other people's or other families' musical engagement. These participants might have less clear expectations of FMI and lack consideration of their own beliefs and preferences. This situation is here referred to as 'go with the flow'. For example, use of social media amplified some participants' impression of other people's lifestyles and prompted them to emulate them.

*Many of my friends often post their family's activities on Wechat [social media], such as attending the child's school music show, or going to the KTV with the family. (The mother, F3)*

*My friends' families all organised activities such as going to music festivals, music concerts or accompanying the child to music class. I can see these phenomena on the Wechat every day. (The mother, F6)*

*Maybe in the past people didn't pay attention to these activities, but nowadays many families are actively taking part in various music activities- I always post this on Wechat. (The son, F5)*

The peer pressure felt by the children could spread to other family members. Parents feel pressured by their children's reporting of musical activities undertaken by their peers. For example, the father of F3 mentioned that, when he found that musical activities were popular among his daughters' peer group, he felt pressured to let her join in the same activities.

*Sometimes the kid would tell me, like, her classmates' families went to the concert, or someone in class is learning about music. I feel the pressure as well. So we have to do similar things. (The father, F3)*

This father perceived activities such as going to a concert or learning about music as being suitable for, and beneficial to, his daughter, so he did not want his daughter to fall behind her classmates. This concern for his child coerced him into participating in musical activities. Thus, 'go with the flow' is his strategy to cope with social pressures.

As Anderson & Meyer (2000) have pointed out, individuals are susceptible to social influences as they live in a society that is full of information about other people's behaviours and actions. It is difficult for them to avoid being influenced by the social and cultural context (Cohen, 2003; Fishbach et al., 2011; Fishbach et al., 2016). As such, other families' activities, peer behaviour and the wide use of social media have become important sources of social pressure. They adjusted their behaviour in order to fit in with the social trend because this can help them feel less stressed.



## 5.6 Summary

This chapter has presented detailed information about the six participating families' musical involvement, including the musical activities that family members participate in individually and collectively, the motivation behind the family's music activities, their access to musical resources and their attitudes to music. These elements are the basic components of FMI.

First, this chapter depicted the six participating families' music life by presenting detailed information about their musical activities. FMI consists of musical activities that family members could take part in individually and collectively. As family members live together, their personal behaviours and collective actions are interrelated. Investigating individual family members' musical activities and their collective musical activities is helpful in providing a bigger picture of the family's involvement with music in daily life. The participating families' music environment was also examined by looking at what kind of musical resources they had and how they made use of these resources to organise FMI. Because the study also aimed to investigate their music identities, individual family members' attitudes towards music and FMI were also examined, which is helpful in understanding the interrelationship of their music identities.

The findings indicate that, in terms of personal music participation and attitudes, there was a gender difference between fathers and mothers. The mothers were more active in musical activities and had stronger musical identities than the fathers. They were more likely to engage in both individual and collective musical activities. The fathers were more likely to show a lack of motivation to participate in music activities and tended to attribute this situation to their work. Overall, the parents often associated both their personal and collective musical activities with their children's music learning and activity. They all showed positive attitudes towards FMI as they believed that FMI was good for the children's development.

The children also had a diverse music life because both the parents and the schools gave importance to their musical achievement. Their music involvement

was related to their age. The musical activities of young children were mainly education-based. They either participated in school musical activities or took extracurricular music classes. For these children, their musical involvement is 'education first and entertainment second'. They spent most of time improving their music skills rather than enjoying the music. This situation is reflected in how they make use of their musical resources. Adult children reported that as adults they can have more choices in terms of music entertainment due to the greater availability of time and money; for example, they can afford concert tickets and singing in the KTV.

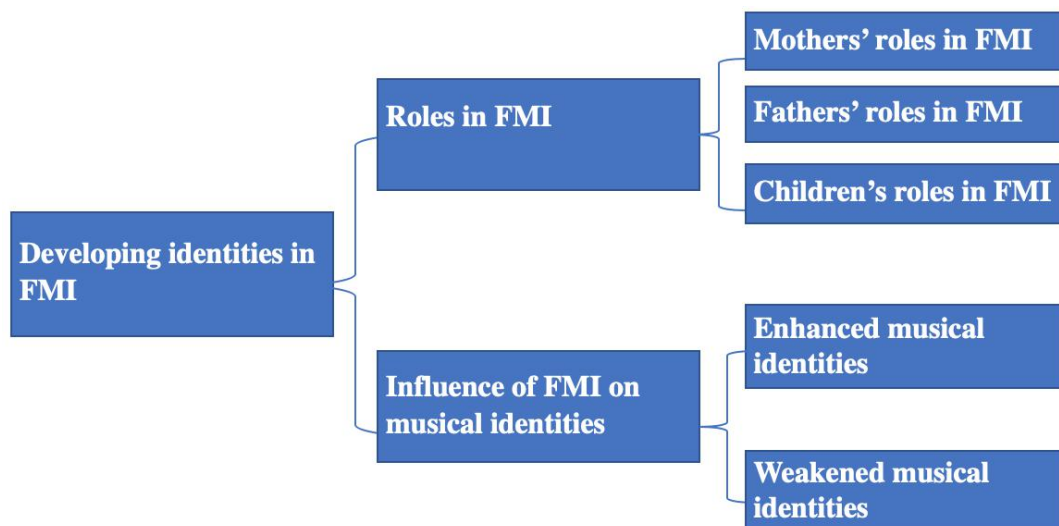
To sum up, it can be argued that the participating Chinese families' attitudes and motivation to participate in musical activities are mainly utilitarian and child-centred. Parents prioritise music activities that are related to their children's musical achievements, but to the particular achievements they want for their children and their future – for instance, becoming a pianist or a violinist. From this point of view, FMI is perhaps sometimes centred on the parents' ideals for their child. This finding foreshadows the negotiation of individual family members' musical identities, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## Chapter Six: Developing Identities in FMI

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings associated with Research Question 2: What is the relationship between FMI and musical identities? The theme ‘developing identities in FMI’ comprises two sub-ordinate themes; namely ‘roles in FMI’, and ‘influence of FMI on musical identities’. Figure 6.1 illustrates the thematic structure of Chapter 6.

Figure 6.1 Thematic structure of Chapter 6



Studies pertaining to identity address questions for the individual such as ‘Who am I?’, ‘What am I going to do with life?’, ‘What is my place in my social group?’, ‘What is important to me?’, and ‘What do I value?’ (Eccles, 2009, p.78). In other words, the study of identity explores individuals’ perceptions of themselves, the people and things around them, as well as their situation and social context. Individuals’ identities can reflect values and beliefs proceeding from their perceptions of the role they occupy, their goals, and the standards by

which they assess personal success and outcomes (Horton, 2006). As such, this chapter affords further insights into the relationship between FMI and individual family members' musical identities, by examining the participants' roles in FMI, and the perceived influence of FMI.

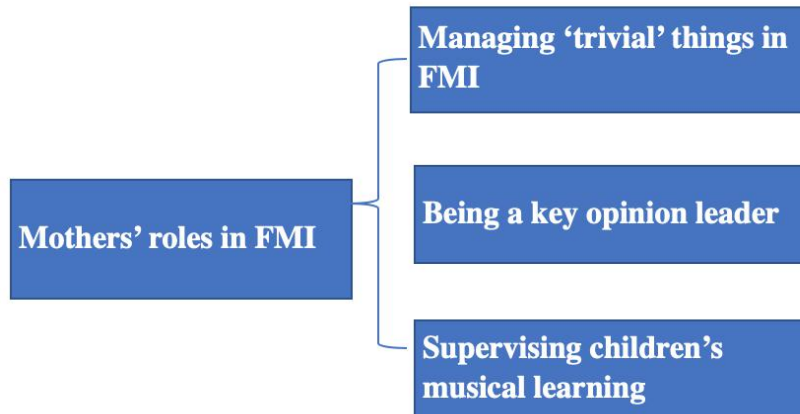
This chapter consists of four sections. The first section introduces an overview of chapter 6, while the second section 'roles in FMI', provides an analysis of the roles that individual family members played in their FMI. The third section 'influence of FMI on musical identities' discusses the influences of FMI on participants' musical identities, including changes to various aspects such as their musical ability, preference, and confidence. The final section provides a summary and conclusion to the chapter.

## **6.2 Roles in FMI**

This sub-ordinate theme depicts the roles that family members play in FMI, by looking at how the participants define themselves and their family members, and whether they have broader views about their roles. It is divided into three emergent themes, including mothers' roles in FMI, fathers' roles in FMI, and children's roles in FMI (see Figure 6.1).

### 6.2.1 Mothers' Roles in FMI

Figure 6.2.1 Mothers' roles in FMI



This subsection focuses particularly on how the research participants perceive the mothers' role in initiating and maintaining their family's musical activities. The greatness of mothers has been recognised in all sectors of society, and works of literature, poetry, music, and drama have celebrated mothers, not only for their ability to give life, but crucially for their love, effort, devotion, patience, diligence, and sacrifice for the family and to society. All this has generated strong social norms for a maternal role in all arenas, including music. In most cultures and situations, mothers take the responsibility of care provider for children, and even the whole family; although they may do so primarily in response to the great weight of cultural expectation. The dominance of mothers' involvement has also been observed in the domain of music. Mothers might be more active when singing and interacting with their infants and young children (Custodero et al., 2003; De l'Etoile, 2006; Gratier & Trevarthen, 2008; Ilari, 2005; Sullivan, 1995; Trehub, Unyk et al., 1997; Trehub, Hill et al., 1997), and they also engage in their child's musical learning (McPherson, 2009; Mcpherson & Davidson, 2010). In this study, different types of mothers' roles in FMI emerged from the analysis of the interviews, including 1) managing 'trivial' things in FMI; 2) being a key opinion leader; and 3) supervising children's musical learning.

## Managing ‘Trivial’ Things in FMI

In this study, mothers also had to manage the musical affairs of the family. Some participants called the things mothers dealt with ‘*suǒ shì*琐事’ — which is usually translated as ‘trivial matters’ (e.g. Sanders, 2014, p.91). However, the things mothers did might in fact be crucial to maintaining FMI.

The mother of F2 perceived her role as that of a manager of her family’s musical activities. According to F2’s mother, both she and her husband often engaged in diverse musical activities, such as going to concerts and musical festivals; and were also willing to take their son to participate in these activities. However, although her husband held a supportive attitude towards these musical activities, it was usually her responsibility to organise and manage them.

*Usually I arrange a time for these things according to everyone’s situation. I will also look for information on the internet, to see when and where is appropriate. These sorts of things are under my purview. (The mother, F2)*

Similar to the mother of F2, the mother of F3 also perceived her role in FMI as proceeding from managing various domestic matters. She illustrated how she perceived her role in FMI, by giving examples of how she became involved in her daughter Lucy’s music learning. Despite living in Yaan most of the time, to ensure that Lucy could receive a high-quality violin education, she found Lucy a teacher in the provincial city of Chengdu. As a consequence, F3 lives in two cities. On weekdays, they live in Yaan because of the couple’s work and the daughter’s schooling. Every Friday evening, Mrs Han drives Lucy to Chengdu for Lucy’s violin and English classes on Saturday, before driving back to Yaan on the Sunday evening. They have been living this way for more than 10 years, ever since the daughter started to learn to play the violin. Thus, the mother commented that she takes on the roles of both ‘chauffeur’ and ‘nanny’. She commented:

*What can I do? I have had to be her chauffeur and nanny these past 10 years, sending her to Chengdu and taking care of her life,*

*arranging times for other family reunion and affairs, helping her father and her balance their work, study and family. If I don't do this, nobody will. (The mother, F3)*

The above description of the mother of F3 reflects her experience of FMI. By asking the rhetorical question 'what can I do', she emphasised her lack of choice when taking on these duties in FMI. In early research into mothers' leisure experience, Wearing (1993) reported that mothers found it challenging to find time to engage in leisure activities apart from their families, because of their personal beliefs about their role in the family. Tasks and ideologies in relation to motherhood can affect how they feel and deal with family activities. The mother above might also have had such an experience. Her comments seem to be somewhat contradictory, because she had expressed a very strong musical identity and positive attitude towards FMI previously (see chapter 5, section 5.3), although her musical attitudes might not reflect how she truly felt about FMI. Her strong musical identity encouraged her that it was worthwhile juggling the burden of transporting her daughter to music lessons. Although this might not necessarily be musically rewarding for her, it can be justified as music is important to her. Therefore, the mutual influence between FMI and musical identities might prove to be a complex process generating some upheavals.

Similar to the above mother, the mother of F5 also described herself as a 'nanny' when discussing FMI:

*I feel like a nanny for my family, I am in charge of everything, let alone those music class and musical activities... I accompany them to everything, like, his [her son] music class, his school musical performance, I ask his father to come with us. (The mother, F5)*

Both the mothers of F3 and F5 aligned their roles with jobs, which in the hierarchy of societal roles are often treated as functional or low status, such as 'chauffeur' or 'nanny'. The mothers above viewed FMI as an ordinary family commitment, and thus, their basic duty was to ensure the smooth running of FMI. However, this does not mean that what they did was trivial or insignificant. Rather,

the mechanism of FMI could not function well without their input. Comments from the fathers of F5 and F1 also confirmed the significance of the mothers' management of FMI.

*His mother [his wife] deals with most of the trivial things [suǒ shì 琐事], such as initiating running an event, finding a proper time, etc. Without her managing these things, we might not even have the enthusiasm for these activities. (The father, F5)*

*You can't deny her devotion. She manages all aspects of the scheduling, keeping us involved in music. She contributes a lot to these things. (The father, F1)*

Both fathers viewed their wives' devotion as undeniable. Although at first the father of F5 categorised his wife's work as focused on 'trivial matters', he clearly appreciated his wife's contribution. The words 'most of' and 'etc.' indicate the amount of work that his wife has to manage, and the latter comments '*without her managing these things, we might not even have the enthusiasm for these activities*' confirms his acknowledgement of his wife's pivotal role in FMI and her significance.

The managing role adopted by mothers can change according to different family life cycles. When developing FMI, there can be a switch in the roles of the mother and child when the family develops over different phases. Mothers with adult children also reported that when their children grew up, their managing role could be taken on by their children, because adult children would become more independent and this would help the family manage affairs and make decisions. This is evidenced in the comments of the two mothers with adult children.

*But now things are getting a bit different. She [the daughter] can manage these things herself. Sometimes she can also arrange an event for us, like, taking us to the KTV or concert. (The mother, F1)*

*But now it's usually my son himself who's in charge of these activities. He's a grown up now and can make decision himself, so*



*our opinion doesn't affect him so much now. (The mother, F5)*

The exchange of roles from mother to child was confirmed by the son of F5, who spoke about his experience of exchanging roles with his mother:

*I think when I was young my mother was in charge of more things, but now I'm managing more as they are getting old, you have to be independent. Besides, it's a time that parents can lean on us. (The son, F5)*

The interchange between parents' and children's management role indicated that family members' roles and responsibilities are dynamic and adapt to the different stages of the family life cycle (Higgins et al., 1994). This finding is also in line with the indication in previous studies that when studying family leisure, the family life cycle is an important influential factor (Kelly, 1983; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975; Smith, 1987; Wearing, 1993).

Mothers also emphasised that they always took the initiative by creating a music-friendly environment, such as playing music and advocating running musical activities to benefit the family. For example, some mothers commented:

*Usually, it is always me who takes the initiative to play music for the whole family, or advocates for including some musical activities, such as going to a concert or singing outside. (The mother, F4)*

*I think I have done well in creating and improving the musical environment and atmosphere. I used to play classical music for my son every day when he was young. And now I will still take the initiative to play music for the whole family, for example, I'll play some special songs for special festivals. (The mother, F5)*

To emphasise their function in FMI the mothers above describe their experience using the Chinese word '主动' (*zhǔ dòng*), which means taking the initiative. Their comments indicate that they acted as pioneers in FMI: devoting themselves to creating a more music-friendly environment, raising the entire family's

awareness of the importance of music, and getting everyone together to explore the joy of music. The proactive behaviour of mothers was reflected in their children's responses. When the children were asked to comment on their parents' roles in FMI, the daughter of F1 said:

*In terms of this aspect [FMI], I think my mom does play a much more significant role than both my father and me. If she hadn't taken the initiative to organise and advocate for these things [musical activities], we might never do so. It is always her who takes the initiative to do these things. (The daughter, F1)*

The quote above highlights the mother's dominance in FMI. Although the daughter of F1 is a music teacher and has a strong musical identity, she still observes that she might have lacked the motivation to organise musical activities for her family without her mother's efforts.

Taken together, although the participants sometimes used the phrase 'trivial matters' to describe the things their mothers dealt with, these things were actually rather important and fundamental. They took the initiative to manage domestic affairs, including transporting the children to music class, taking care of family members, scheduling family events, and creating a musical environment. They also stimulate their family members to engage regularly with music.

### **Being A Key Opinion Leader**

Before identifying whether mothers perceive themselves as being in a leading or managing role, it is necessary to differentiate between leadership and management. Leadership and management are often used interchangeably, as they share several similarities. However, there are also many distinct differences between these two concepts (Capowski, 1994; Kotter, 1990, 2001; Kotterman, 2006). Both require involvement in allocating resources, setting direction and motivating others (Kotterman, 2006). However, management focuses more on planning, organising or maintaining, while leadership emphasises establishing direction, motivating and inspiring (Kotterman, 2006). When clarifying the similarities and differences

between these two kinds of roles, the mothers' experience became more transparent.

A key opinion leader (usually abbreviated as KOL) is a person who can exert an influence on the thoughts, opinions, behaviours and decisions of others (Carpenter & Sherbino, 2010; Neglia et al., 2012; Steensma, 2015). In the context of the participating families' FMI, the mothers were generally aware of their leading role as a KOL in both children's musical learning/involvement and the whole family's musical participation. They can provide key opinions and make decisions, especially when other family members lack ideas. For example, as the mother of F4 said:

*Sometimes they just lack ideas and motivation, so it is always up to me to tell them what to do and when to do it, you know, that sort of thing. For example, whether we go to the music class or not, which song we should play, sometimes even which channel to watch. (The mother, F4)*

The mother of F2 perceived her role as a KOL in relation to the allocation of family responsibility. She explained:

*I'm responsible for helping them realise and get used to the idea that music is part of our life, and to set a direction for everyone. For example, usually, important things I will discuss with his father, but domestic affairs like music are always in my purview. The older one [her husband] is often indifferent to domestic affairs because he can feel these things are too small, the younger one is too young to understand these things. So, if I want my family to get involved more in music, I have to encourage them and support them, for example, find different ways and ideas, or give them some suggestions. Otherwise they may not take the initiative to take part in music activities. I mean, they might play music individually, but they will not think of music as being family thing. (The mother, F2)*

Mother F2 regarded maintaining FMI (including keeping her family musical and making music part of her family life) as her personal responsibility, rather than that of other family members. She reported that her husband might reasonably distance himself from FMI as it was ‘too small’, even though he is a father with a strong musical identity himself, he might still treat things occurring outside the family environment as more important. Thus, this mother had to encourage other family members to engage in music and establish the proper direction for the family’s activities and development. These actions illustrate her leadership and willingness to maintain the mechanism of FMI.

When discussing FMI the participants agreed about the children’s music learning, and their involvement as a family event. As evidenced in chapter 5 section 5.3, even though some fathers reported having a weaker musical identity and less interest in music than their wives and children, they still expressed a willingness to engage with their children’s musical activities. This is probably because children’s opportunities for personal development in music were regarded as valuable or important, whatever feelings they might otherwise hold about music. In this context, the mothers in this study dominated their children’s music learning. For example, the mother of F1 spoke about how she had helped her daughter decide to choose to attend a piano class rather than an alternative extracurricular activity.

*She was too young to know what to do so you have to lead her to make a proper choice. She even wanted to learn Kung Fu. So, I just told her ‘if you choose Kung Fu you have to shout every time you attack [the action of shaking one’s fist in traditional Chinese martial art], and that seems very silly’. I also told her if she could play the piano, she would become elegant [gaoya 高雅], would have another skill, you know; I told her what kinds of advantages she would get if she chose piano. And finally, I made the decision for her, and sent her to learn to play the piano. (The mother, F1)*

In the quote above, the mother assumes that her daughter did not have the ability

to make the right decision for herself because of her age. The mother also attached gender labels to different activities. In her opinion, Kung Fu as a martial art was not a suitable activity for a daughter, despite her daughter's interest. She suggested Kung Fu would involve a series of actions, such as 'shouting' and 'attacking' that are aggressive and not 'elegant' for a girl. Thus, she tried to help her daughter construct an identity that she regarded as suitable; i.e. being an elegant pianist. As a 'leader' in FMI, she guided her family through difficulties and convinced them to continue when there were obstacles, such as financial pressure, and a lack of interest and patience, which might otherwise interrupt the child's musical learning or affect her other musical activities.

*At first, I got laid off, and this placed a huge financial pressure on my family. On the other hand, the child wanted to give up the piano learning. So my husband didn't support the child's piano learning either. So, I told my husband that education is the last thing to sacrifice. We didn't have the chance to learn about music, so we couldn't let this happen to the child. I also told the child that you can't quit when you want, it's not like playing a game, it's playing the piano, you have to persist! I had to explain the reasons sincerely and seriously to her, so she would understand. (The mother, F1)*

In her narrative, the mother above not only plays a role as opinion provider, listing the advantages of playing the piano and the disadvantages of learning martial arts to her young daughter; she also acts as decision maker. Her leadership can be confirmed by her husband's comments, as he straightforwardly points out that his wife is the 'leader' in FMI. However, despite being referred to as a 'leader', she still had to persuade him to get the result she wanted, because her decision was potentially in conflict with the family's finances, which she thought her husband might treat as more important. She made a rational appeal to her family members, telling them the value music could bring is beyond entertainment, because it is 'not a game' and could help her daughter cultivate better behaviour and learn to be 'elegant'. She was aiming to convince her family that piano lessons were a justifiable expense within the family's budget. These

opinions proved very influential and important when the daughter was young.

In some cases, mothers' managerial and leadership roles can be interdependent. The leading role and managing role can be simultaneous, because mothers sometimes described themselves both ways over a short space of time, sometimes feeling they have to do both. For example, the mother of F3 described her role helping her family, as '*finding a direction, analysing some situations and giving some opinions*'. She not only established direction in the manner a leader would do, she also took on a managing role organising the family as needed.

### **Supervising Children's Musical Learning**

Some mothers also elaborated on the significance of their role in supervising the family's musical activities, particularly the children's musical learning. In outlining the story of the musical background of F3, the mother shared her experience supervising her daughter's musical practice. After her daughter Lucy started learning to play the violin, the mother became, as she called herself, Lucy's 'second supervisor'. Because Lucy had started learning the violin at a young age, and could not keep pace with the class, the mother had to accompany Lucy to every lesson, taking notes on everything the teacher said and required, recording the lesson, and recording comments and notes after the class. She also asked Lucy's father to do the same if she could not attend Lucy's class. Under Mrs Han's supervision, everyone took part in learning the violin and adopted certain duties.

*I was like her second supervisor, because I had to take notes about everything so that I could tutor her after the class. I taught her some simple knowledge about music theory. As for the things I didn't know, such as shifting and changing position, I had to draw a picture to remind because I didn't play the violin. I felt like I was half a violin teacher at the time. (The mother, F3)*

The mother of F3 expresses her belief that practice is the most important link in learning a musical instrument. Every time young Lucy practised, she sat beside

her, reviewing the study notes and ensuring that Lucy followed the guidance and requirements set out by the violin teacher.

Sometimes the supervision involved more than helping the child accomplish her homework. In some cases it also involved supervising the father's behaviour, as some mothers felt that fathers might be less effective at musical parenting. For example, F4's mother mentioned she had to supervise her husband's behaviour because she felt he lacked the requisite sense of discipline and had lower expectations of their daughter's music learning.

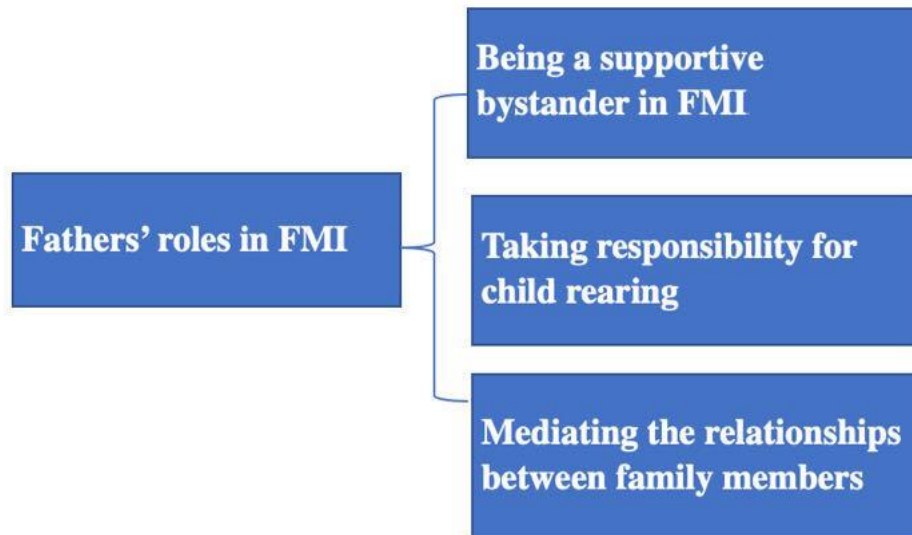
*Her father always lets her do whatever she wants. If she doesn't want to go to the music class or doesn't want to practice, he will always allow that. You have to establish rules and insist on them, otherwise they will lose self-discipline. Sometimes you have to supervise them! Isn't this funny? (The mother, F4)*

Although the Chinese proverb 'strict fathers and kind mothers' (*yánfù cí mǔ* 嚴父慈母) stipulates fathers have disciplinary responsibilities over their children (Chang et al., 2011, p.105), in the case of F4 the father seemed less strict and disciplined, as he often allows his daughter to do 'whatever she wants'. His behaviour has challenged the traditional values associated with the Chinese parenting style, and even his wife was amused highlighting the necessity of 'establishing rules' for the child.

To summarise, mothers played multiple roles in FMI, namely managing 'trivial' things in FMI, being key opinion leaders and supervising their children's musical learning. These roles do not function independently but are complementary and reinforce each other. In some situations, mothers could play these multiple roles together to maintain FMI. Their roles in FMI challenge the traditional belief of their role in a family, such as being subordinate to their husbands, or having a lower status.

## 6.2.2 Fathers' Roles in FMI

Figure 6.2.2 Fathers' roles in FMI



This subsection serves to explore the self-reported role of fathers in FMI. Throughout much of Chinese history, the father has played a significant role in the family. Most previous studies depict the Chinese father as a much more influential, powerful and authoritative figure than the mother and child, particularly in the areas of child training and education (e.g. Chen, 1998; Chen et al., 2000; Ho, 1986, 1987; Lee, 1999). However, music is a very distinctive area within both the family and society. As the discussion about the mothers' roles in FMI above suggests, mothers are particularly proactive and influential in the construction and maintenance of FMI, as FMI was usually considered to be an 'interior affair' (see section 5.2.1) and the responsibility of the mother. From the perspective of this research project, the role of a father should be constructed according to the pattern of communication and interaction with other family members, so that each family might have certain expectations of the role of a father. Thus, the fathers' role in maintaining the mechanisms of FMI should be considered.

Analysis identifies the participating fathers' roles as: 1) being a supportive bystander in FMI; 2) taking responsibility for child rearing; and 3) mediating the



relationships between family members.

### **Being A Supportive Bystander in FMI**

The bystander is the father who is generally less willing, and so less frequently takes the initiative, to organise and maintain the family's musical activities. Despite all fathers expressing a positive and supportive attitude towards FMI, fathers gave few examples of how they put this attitude into practice. This was with the exception of the fathers of F2 and F5, who reported that they would take the initiative to organise family musical events alongside mothers. The other four fathers admitted they were less likely to be proactive in these musical activities. In the majority of situations, they described behaving and acting as bystanders in the case of FMI. For example, the father of F1 described himself as a listener and the audience of his daughter's performance, and did not take charge of other things, such as decision making for FMI.

*Usually, I'm just in charge of listening to them [his wife and daughter] singing or my daughter playing the piano. It's basically about watching them, listening to them or accompanying them and doing whatever they want. I can't make decisions about these things. It's all up to them. (The father, F1)*

The father explains that he rarely took the initiative in determining his family's musical activities, because he felt the determination of musical affairs was the domain of his wife and daughter. His description indicates the influence of this allocation of family responsibilities, explaining how it caused him to give up the right to decision-making in the area of music, thereby affecting his role and behaviour in FMI. When asked to explain why he could not make decisions about things related to FMI, he cited his wife's greater authority and expertise in music.

*Her mother has already done all these things well. She [his wife] is way better than me in this aspect. She understands more than me. You know, these things, such as music and education, are usually under the control of her mother. It seems that things like musical*

*activities have nothing to do with me. I think there is nearly no place for me to function. So, in most situations all I need to do is just sit there. Anyway, it's just, you know, be there together. (The father, F1)*

The father tended to define himself as having a limited musical identity and ability. He felt that 'music has nothing to do with him', because his wife knew better than him with regard to music. He claimed that his wife had taken on multiple responsibilities, undertaking things effectively, so he had little opportunity to share responsibilities or take the initiative with FMI. However, as Higgins et al. (1994) pointed out, the division of family roles and responsibilities, as well as relationships are dynamic in nature and therefore should not be fixed. This means that family members need to share in each other's responsibilities in multiple situations. Thus, although his words '*there is nearly no place for me to function*' might reflect his frustration and powerlessness when addressing his role as a bystander, it could also be his justification for his lack of participation in FMI, and for doing less towards the child's musical development than his wife.

In the case of F3, the father described his role in FMI as being mainly to provide his family with emotional and financial support. Notably, he mostly just served as a silent listener and audience to the family's musical activities.

*To be honest, I hardly engage in these affairs, which is a shame. Mostly, I just, for example, sit there and listen to them playing the music, or, accompany them to take part in some musical activities if they want me to. It's more like emotional support, because I'm not good at these things and I don't understand music very much. I can provide emotional and financial support to them, but most of the time, I think I am more like a supporting role in these activities. (The father, F3)*

This father was also clear about his role as a bystander in FMI. In his narrative he used the word 'shame' to express his awareness of and regret for his absence in FMI. Thus, he emphasises the need to provide different kinds of 'support' to his family in order to show his contribution, even though these contributions might

not just be musical. Simply playing a ‘supporting role’ does not mean he is indifferent to his family’s musical activities, and his narrative suggests he would still be willing to ‘sit’, ‘listen’ or ‘accompany’ them, as a less prominent form of participation or cooperation.

The bystander role of father F3 is also partly reflected in his daughter’s comments. When asked to comment on her parents’ roles in FMI, his daughter said:

*My mother is in charge of everything, but my father at most plays a role as a ‘Peichen’ [background]? I think my father doesn’t play a role. He at most, just accompanies me to the class or other activities, or just sits there and has nothing to do. (The daughter, F3)*

The daughter’s comment about her father’s role expresses a sense of grievance and dissatisfaction with her father’s behaviour in FMI. She describes her father as a ‘Peichen’ (陪衬), which denotes a supporting role, and one who functions in the background to reflect the prominence of the subject (Chinese English Pinyin Dictionary, 2019). This is in line with her father’s self-evaluated role as ‘a supporting part’. She only recognised the minor contribution and limited presence of her father in FMI, stating that she did not think he played any role. Her use of the relative terms ‘at most’ and ‘just’ indicates that she might have expected her father to do more in FMI.

Being a bystander in FMI does not mean that fathers are excluded entirely, although it can. The fathers interviewed realised the necessity of their participation in FMI, but some still chose to stand by, as listeners or audience members. Gender stereotypes regarding the allocation of family responsibilities or in the case of music can also affect the role-taking process; as is particularly apparent in the narratives of the two fathers below.

*My main duty is just, being there, you know, accompanying them. I think that it’s better to stand by in this area, just don’t interfere with them. Because mum is better at accompanying the child, singing and dancing with the child, accompanying the child to learn about music,*

*etc. You don't understand music, so you just don't speak too much.*

***(The father, F4)***

*I follow them, accompany them. Like, sometimes they may suggest: hey, let's go to the KTV or the concert. I'll also be happy to follow with them. The thing is women are better at singing and dancing. It's an aspect that her mother is better at. (The father, F6)*

Moreover, such a stereotype can also be reflected by the narratives of the mother of F4, who observed that 'men seemed less involved in musical things' (section 6.2.1). Both fathers and mothers opined that women were better than men in the domain of music, and treated music as a more feminine art or activity. This could have led the mothers rather than the fathers to take the initiative in FMI, and encouraged fathers to take less responsibility for FMI. The lack of confidence in the area of music reported by fathers might not be only caused by their personal musical ability, it could also be gender related.

Fathers (e.g. F1, F3 and F4) did however emphasise that they were less proficient at music than their wives or children. This might have been an example of modesty or humbleness, as is common in Chinese culture. Chinese people tend to not to take credit for their behaviour, or act boastfully in any situation (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998, p.48). Whether or not they lack musical knowledge or ability, they might still describe themselves in this way, especially when comparing themselves to members of their families who were more involved in music.

### **Taking Responsibility for Child Rearing**

Although mothers are often regarded as the primary caregiver (Grbich & Tutor, 1987), child rearing is also considered the responsibility of the father. Despite fathers acting as bystanders, they also take a shared responsibility in child rearing. This responsibility forces them to find their own place and value in FMI whether intentionally or otherwise. For example, fathers commented:

*I will share the responsibilities, taking them to go outside for a concert, or making decisions with their mothers, sending the child to*

*music class. (The father, F2)*

*I think although I may make a small contribution, I still have value, I also send the child to music class, accompany them to music activities, I know what my responsibilities are, what I should do.*

*(The father, F4)*

*I still try to get more involved, to take part in these activities more often, even if I can only do some minor things, like helping the mother take care of the child, learning with the child. After all these things are beneficial to the child so both parents should be responsible for them. I still need to lighten the mother's burden. (The father, F6)*

The fathers quoted above agreed that they should take part in the process of child rearing and be part of the family team, regardless of their feelings towards music. Companionship was recognised as a key theme in their parental responsibility, as they emphasised their engagement in accompanying their children to music class and activities. However, these things were described more as shared duties, or as a requirement or a kindness to their wives. They did not explicitly express any desire for their children to become musical.

### **Mediating the Relationship between Family Members**

Some fathers reported that when family members engage in musical activities together, it might be easier for them to experience a divergence of views, habits, and preferences. These divergences, differences, and even quarrels or conflicts often arise between the mother and the child, arguably because they spend more time together. At this time the father could play a role as mediator. For example, the father of F1 revealed that in many cases, a mother and child might fail to reach an agreement on many things associated with their musical involvement. Thus, he can play the role of peacemaker, mediating differences and disagreements between them:

*I think I may still have some influence and value, in the aspect of*

*mediating family relationships. I can play a role as a mediator between the mother and child. You know, they spend too much time together on these things, and this can be a problem. There were times when they had some conflicts; for example, the child didn't want to play the piano, and didn't want to go to the music class, or didn't want to put on a show for us when visitors came to the home, like these things. Or, when they wanted to listen to different types of music. Anyway, there could be a quarrel, and this has happened before a lot of times. In these cases, I try to mediate their differences and disputes. (The father, F1)*

Although this father showed a lack of confidence or low self-esteem with regard to FMI, he recognised his role as family mediatory as valuable. In addition to resolving disputes and disagreements, the mediating role of fathers could also be reflected in fathers' input into their management of their children's studies and lives. The father of F4, for instance, spoke about how he helped his daughter alleviate the burden that arose from FMI.

*Sometimes I even remind my wife: 'don't make these things [music activities] too utilitarian and formalistic, don't place too much pressure on the child, because she's [his daughter] been involved in too many musical activities both inside and outside school'. (The father, F4)*

This father has suggested to his wife that expecting participation in too many musical activities could place a huge pressure on the child, especially when the motive is too 'utilitarian'. His use of the words 'utilitarian' and 'formalistic' indicate that his wife might direct too much attention towards the practical benefits of these activities. This could relate to intellectual or social development, possibly overstressing the importance of participation; thereby overlooking their daughter's psychological well-being. In his eyes, his daughter was only a primary one student and he had observed that taking part in 'too many' extracurricular activities was placing a huge pressure on the young child. He recognised the

possible negative outcomes that arise from taking part in musical activities without personal motivation. As such, he sought to balance and mediate between the mother's motivation and the child's musical involvement to avoid possible consequences.

In F3, the daughter recalled that her father 'covered up' for her when she did not want to play the violin.

*But my father often helps me sneak out of my mom's control. If I don't practice enough, he won't tell my mom, my mom often calls him a 'plasterer'. (The daughter, F3)*

In the narrative quoted above, the daughter describes her father as a 'plasterer'. The word 'plasterer' has a slang usage in Chinese discourse; it is used to describe someone who tries to mediate disputes or difference by glossing things over. Her father is her 'accomplice'. They gang up together in order to evade her mother's intentions. This is in contrast to previous studies that argue that Chinese children are more likely to turn to their mothers rather than fathers for emotional support, or to help them deal with the problems of daily life (Chen et al., 2000). In this family, the father behaved more like a father from a Western cultural background. In Western cultures, fathers are more actively involved in play, and tend to help their children develop autonomy by acting 'peer-like' as playmates (Chang et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2000, p.403). Perhaps cultural globalisation has exerted an impact on modern Chinese fathers' and mothers' parenting style. Thus, some studies have suggested that Chinese fathers may have adopted a Western parenting style, having developed a new mixed mode of fatherhood (Kwok et al., 2013). These fathers are also willing to cultivate a good parent-child relationship (Kwok et al., 2013). However, the findings of my research are in accordance with a recent study that mainland Chinese mothers are more authoritarian than fathers are (Chang et al., 2011). The traditional stereotype of parental roles and parenting style in Chinese families has recently been challenged.

Overall, the mediating role of fathers can be positioned in different ways. Some tended to resolve conflicts between the mother and child (e.g. F1), some tried to

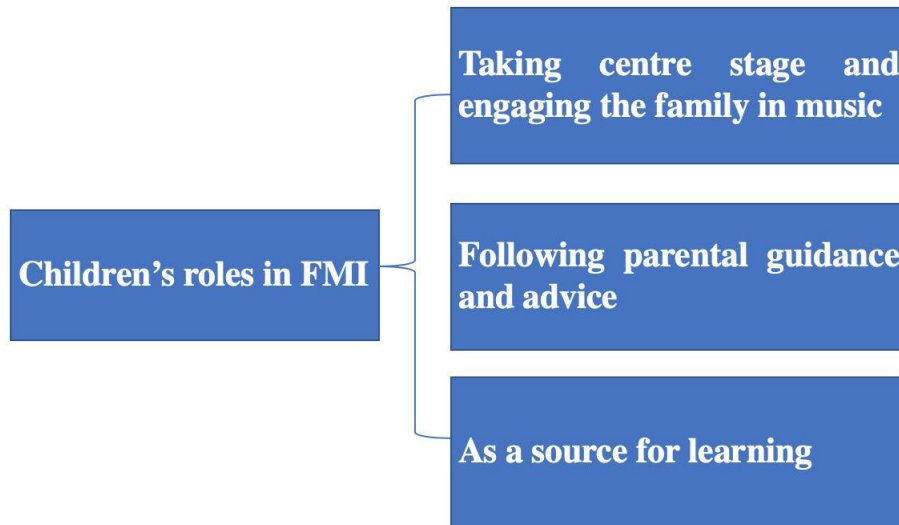
negotiate with their wives by pointing out potential problems or risks (e.g. F4), and some directly formed an ‘alliance’ helping the child to escape the burden of practice (e.g. F3). All these different forms of ‘mediating’ serve the stability of the family. This mediating role is important to the maintenance of FMI. Their narratives have implied that differences, unhappiness and even conflicts can occur, affecting the family’s musical interaction. Thus, this role is not only important in FMI, it is seen as significant for maintaining extended family relationships and improving family functioning. The influence might extend far beyond its function in FMI.

### **6.2.3 Children’s Roles in FMI**

As discussed in chapter 2, children (in one-child families) are considered precious and their lives are held in the palms of their parents (see also, Liu, 2016, p.105). The families participating in my study had all experienced the one-child policy. Since Chinese families generally place great importance on their only child’s development, this might then exert an influence on the parents’ approach to child rearing and the family’s development. In the previous chapter it was observed that FMI occurred because parents were paying considerable attention to all aspects of their children’s development. This attitude might also influence the role of children in FMI. Thus, the role and status of the child in both the area of FMI and the entire family is worthy of further exploration in the context of the Chinese family and its musical involvement. Children’s roles were identified as follows: 1) taking centre stage and engaging the family in music; 2) following parental guidance and advice; and 3) as a source for learning. Figure 6.2.3 illustrates the thematic structure of the subordinate theme ‘children’s roles in FMI’.



Figure 6.2.3 Children's roles in FMI



### **Taking Centre Stage and Engaging the Family in Music**

Chapter 5 reveals that FMI is often child-centred, and parents also reported putting the child's needs and development first. Children themselves perceived that they were particularly motivated to engage with music, while their parents were more passive recipients of their music. For example, when asked to comment on their roles in FMI, the children replied:

*I'm in charge of 'chuī lā tán chàng' [playing music or musical instruments]', while they are in charge of appreciating this.' (The daughter, F1)*

*I'm the one who plays and sings, and who needs to go to the music class. They don't play any musical instruments; they also don't need to learn about music. They just accompany me. (The daughter, F3)*

In the first extract, the Chinese phrase 'chuī lā tán chàng' (吹拉弹唱) literally means 'to blow, to draw/pull, to pluck and to sing' respectively (Jiao et al., 2019, p.37). It refers to a variety of musical skills, such as playing musical instruments and singing. This narrative suggests the child is putting on a performance while her parents sit there and watching. The word 'appreciate' indicates that her parents

worship and adore her mastery of music, and put effort into understanding and admiring her musical skill. For the daughter of F3, her parents were more companions for her, while she was the one who was involved in musical tasks and activities. In section 6.2.2, both she and her father described her father's role as a supportive one. Her comments here highlight her role as the main character; whereas her parents' role is much less dominant when compared to her own. The following extract further exemplifies her central role. She even referred to herself as an actress in a one-man show surrounded by an audience:

*I often feel I'm like an actress. It's just like a one-man show, and you are standing on the stage and everybody is watching. This is because I feel everyone pays attention to you. (The daughter, F3)*

In the extract, her words '*standing on the stage and everybody is watching*' highlight her feeling of being in the spotlight on her family's musical stage as she receives considerable attention from her parents. Since she was preparing for the college entrance music exam when she was interviewed, this feeling might have been especially heightened at this time.

Children's central role is reinforced by their ability to engage their parents in music.

*Anyway, I should be the key person determining this family's activities, especially music activities. They pay more attention to music because I'm learning about it. Actually, what they pay attention to is not only the music, they also pay attention to me, because I am their music. So, my job is to engage everyone together. (The son, F5)*

The son of F5 reflected that his parents' musical involvement was mainly motivated by his identity as a music learner. His words '*I'm their music*' illustrate his strong influence in terms of his importance to his parents in the arena of music. He realised that his parents focus on his musical activities and on other areas of his daily life. As such, he is an indispensable component of his family's FMI. As

an adult child, the participant might experience a sense of responsibility to ensuring his family's functioning, and also treat keeping his family musical and organising collective family activities as a 'job'.

When parents were asked to comment on their children's role in FMI, all the parents agreed that their children were in a central position with regard to FMI. They described their children as 'the focus', 'the pillar', and 'the main character' of FMI. The one-child policy has led Chinese parents to 'centre around' their only child, thereby pushing their children to take centre stage. The mother of F1, for instance, set out her daughter's role in FMI by highlighting the daughter's high status in the family.

*The child is obviously the focus, the centre. Her status is high in the family. We all centre around her; we are all her faithful audience. We do everything for her: we accompanied her to the music class, to the concert, listen to her music. If it wasn't for her development, who would do these things. Because she was learning about music, we almost changed all our habits. We gave up any form of relaxation and entertainment just to accompany her. We also went to her recital to watch her performance. (The mother, F1)*

Her husband described their daughter as the main character:

*She is definitely the main character. She is the one who understands music and plays music. We barely know anything about music, so we can only listen and watch. (The father, F1)*

In the extracts in the previous sections (6.2.1 and 6.2.2), the father described his wife as 'leader', taking a more active role in FMI than himself. However, when commenting on his daughter's role in FMI, he described both his wife and himself as observers. When the child appeared on the stage, even the mother, who could play a role as a KOL, was put in the shade and took on a supporting role.

The mother of F4 directly pointed out that music served as a stage for the child rather than for parents. Although her daughter was only at primary school child,

and might not be under as much pressure at school as high school children (F3 and F6), the mother still viewed the child as pivotal.

*Music is definitely a stage for the child, not for we parents; otherwise it's us who learn about music and play the musical instrument. We just accompany her; we are not the main characters.*  
**(The mother, F4)**

Overall, children's musical involvement could have a catalytic effect on FMI, and thereby encourage their parents to participate in music. The one-child policy might increase competition between modern urban families: many parents might encourage their children to learn music in order to improve their general competence (Brahmstedt & Brahmstedt, 1997, p.30), as they believe that children can benefit from learning music (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008). Thus, the child naturally becomes the focus of attention and love, as they are the only hope of their parents (Fong, 2004, p.107; Yang, 2009).

Although section 6.2.1 highlights mothers' dominant role in FMI, the participants' responses indicated that the children were central to FMI. When the parents compared themselves to their children, they tended to describe themselves in supporting roles, placing their children in the spotlight. Nevertheless, the children themselves did not perceive their role in the same way their parents did. This contrary view is apparent from the next emergent theme.

### **Following Parental Guidance and Advice**

Since there was a key opinion leader in FMI (usually the mother), there might also be a follower or implementer who forged opinions and created practical plans. Despite the fact that most musical activities were reportedly child-centred, both the parents and children themselves were able to recognise that their children take centre stage in FMI. Nevertheless, these children expressed that their role in FMI was not as predominant as it had appeared in some situations. Some children described their role as followers of their parents' guidance, and so had to carry out their parents' plans and decision making. For example, the daughter of F1

qualified the centrality of her role in FMI, because she was dependent on her parents' guidance when she was young, and still put her parents' commitments first, even though she was already an adult.

*I don't think I am always more important than them, although I might be their motivation to engage with music. Also, because a lot of the time I also feel that my main value, or, my role is to cooperate with my parents, finishing the task they have assigned to me. Such a feeling was particularly strong when I was young, because at that time I did not have autonomy, so I was very dependent on my parents making decisions for me. But now, I still listen to their guidance and advice, because I want them to be happy. So even now, I'm a grown up and I can manage my domestic affairs, I still take their opinions into consideration. So, actually, now, they are my motivation for organising musical events for the family. (Lily, **The daughter of F1**)*

During the interview process, this participant mentioned her effort and willingness to cater to her parents' needs several times. She chose to do whatever her parents (especially her mother) wanted; from learning to play the piano to listening to her parents' favourite music even though she did not like doing either. As such, she actually played the role of follower of her parents. Although this could be closely related to the parent-child interaction style in her family, this phenomenon is very common in Chinese society (Hui et al., 2011). As discussed in chapter 2, the literature review, Confucian philosophy is central to traditional Chinese culture and value. One of the most important concepts in Confucianism is filial piety. According to Chow (2000; see also, Mehta & Ko, 2004), filial piety has three levels. The first level is providing for material needs (including giving care), while the second level requires children to take their parents' wishes into consideration and obey their preferences. The third level includes pleasing parents, making parents happy and ensuring they are satisfied. Both the second and third level of filial piety can be reflected in the daughter's narrative. Furthermore, even music education can be used to convey the value of filial piety and promote bonding between family members in Chinese society (Ho, 2008, 2013; Ho & Law,

2015). In the case of F1, filial piety, as a specific and complex syndrome (Kwan, 2000; Yang, 1997, p.252), can also be identified in the daughter's description of her mental experiences, as she emphasised her mother's leading role and her willingness to take her parents' opinions into consideration to make them happy.

The obedience of children is also reinforced by the narrative of the son of F5, who mentioned that following the guidance of parents is a common phenomenon in the Chinese context, as many children are educated to be '*tinghua*' (obedient) from a very young age. He explained:

*From a young age, we have been told that we should be 'tinghua'. It is hard to not be influenced by this concept. So, even if it's things about music —my career, I will still more or less consider their feelings and preference. When you were young you listened to them because you had no independence, but now you are an adult, you still choose to take their advice. (The son, F5)*

The idiom '*tinghua*' (听话) literally means 'to listen without talk', but can also be paraphrased as 'to be obedient' (Chen et al., 2011; Fong, 2007; Fung, 1999; Goh & Kuczynski, 2009; Lau & Chen, 2019, p.208; Liao & Hong, 2011). The concept of being a '*tinghua*' child had affected the son above very deeply. Even though as a violinist he was much more professional than his parents, as mentioned in reference to the previous emergent theme, he admitted knowing that his parents focused on him; on the other hand, he mentioned that he had willingly considered his parents' advice.

The daughter of F3 expressed that although she could perceive her importance in FMI, she still felt 'unsure' about her role, because her parents had arranged everything for her, and thus she only needed to do what she was told, responding to plans and decisions her parents had made for her.

*I don't know what my role is. But I know that I am definitely central to these activities, because it's me who is learning about music. And only I can play a musical instrument. But most of the time, my*

*parents have arranged everything well and give you some guidance, like, whether you should go to the (music) class, the concert; or, which piece you should play, etc. So, I'm actually not clear what my role is. I just follow their guidance and carry out their plans and decisions. (The daughter, F3)*

In the quote above, the daughter emphasises twice that she does not know what her role is in her family's musical involvement. This underlines the complexity of the network of roles and responsibilities. She recognises that although she is receiving a music education, the scope of her musical activities is scripted and controlled by her parents' expressed wishes or intentions. She describes a musical identity constructed by her parents rather than herself.

Although many studies have commented on urban Chinese-only-children's role in family as 'little emperor' or 'priceless child', the children participating in this study were likely to generally obey their parents when getting involved in FMI. This is perhaps because FMI was often associated with children's musical learning, and Chinese parents are highly involved in their children's educational activities (as discussed previously). Receiving a high level of attention from parents can lead children to conform and engage with things they might not feel strongly about, because this can serve as a source of motivation for children attaining their goals (Chen-Hafteck & Xu, 2008). However, it can also make children feel like they are being guided to follow their parents.

Moreover, none of the parents perceived their children's role as followers. This is perhaps because individual family members stood in different positions, having different opinions and perceptions of each other's roles. Parents often focussed on how much attention they gave to the child, so they perceived the children taking centre stage. On the other hand, the children tended to express their obedience to their parents, although they were clear about their importance to parents and FMI. Chinese people tend to establish a positive image in public and concealed their dysphoria (such as depression, dissatisfaction and sadness) from the outsider (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). The fear of demolition of one's public image might lead

both the parents and children in this study to describe themselves in a good light; either as a dutiful child, or as a responsible parent.

Nevertheless, combining narratives can reflect mutual cooperation and interrelatedness, such as the patterns of ‘leader and follower’ and ‘performer and audience’. This will be concluded in the chapter summary section.

### **As A Source for Learning**

The previous section highlighted the perceived role for mothers as home supervisors or tutors relative to their children’s music learning. This indicated parental involvement in children’s musical achievement, as parents viewed FMI as a form of family education. In fact, during the musical interaction in FMI, parents could also learn from their children. In this case, children actually play the role of their parents’ teacher. For example, some parents mentioned that they could learn a lot from their children in terms of interaction and communication in FMI.

*I think the child is our teacher as well. I’ve learned a lot from my daughter. She changed me a lot. My daughter will teach me how to play the piano, and share with me with some knowledge about music.*  
**(The mother, F1)**

The mother of F4 pointed out that when accompanying her child to learn music, she was also engaged in music learning.

*Actually, I think parents grow with the child. I think I would prefer to say that the child gives us a new opportunity to learn, rather than we accompany her to take part in musical activities. I have encountered many new things I have never met before — new knowledge, and a new perspective. For example, recently, she started to learn about music, so I bought some books and started to learn with her. So, you see, the child can be a source for our learning.* **(The mother, F4).**

As discussed in section 6.2.1, some mothers play the role of their children’s home

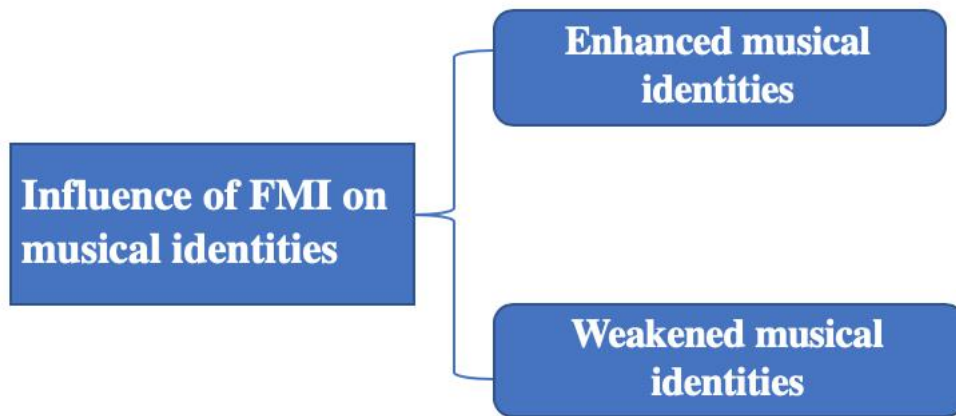


supervisor, helping their children take notes in music class and practice. The comments above reveal that FMI provides an opportunity for mutual learning and communication. Accompanying the child in their studies can also be seen as a source of mothers' knowledge acquisition. Thus, children either directly pass on knowledge to their parents, or they promote their parents' engagement in learning. This reinforces the emergent finding that the roles of parents and children are interchangeable in many respects.

### **6.3 Influence of FMI on Musical Identities**

The previous section discusses individual family members' roles in FMI. This section continues by discussing the participants' perceptions of the influences of FMI on their musical identities. It focuses particularly on changes to their identities, coming about through FMI. In the operation and maintenance of FMI, each family member plays certain roles. These roles shared by family members might be interchangeable in a specific context. The significance of family interaction as an influence on the construction and negotiation of musical identities has been highlighted in previous studies (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002; Caldwell, 2014; Hargreaves et al., 2018). Through mutual interaction and interdependence in FMI, family members can share and exchange their experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and preferences. All these factors could influence the formation and construction of musical identities. Figure 6.3 illustrates the thematic structure of this section.

Figure 6.3 Thematic structure of section 6.3



### 6.3.1 Enhanced Musical Identities

In general, the participants expressed that FMI could enhance their musical identities by awakening the participants' perceptions of them; expanding their interest in music, and improving their musical knowledge, ability and confidence.

With reference to the musical interaction in FMI, the participants were influenced by other's behaviours and identities, and thereby constructed a renewed sense of self. For example, the father of F1, who referred to himself as 'tone deaf', was able to adopt a new identity as 'a father of a music learner' through FMI.

*I think the most important thing is that these musical activities can make you realise that your family has a music learner, and that you are a parent of music learner. This idea wasn't evident at first, but on one occasion I was watching her play the piano at her music class and I suddenly realised that, oh, my daughter is a music learner.*  
*(The father, F1)*

In the above quote, the father's identity shift resulted from a process of

quantitative change to become qualitative change. His daughter had previously attended a weekly piano lesson when she was young, so her father had to engage in his daughter's piano learning, such as by listening to her playing the piano at home, accompanying her to music class and accompanying his family as they participated in musical activities. As time passed, engaging in these activities, either voluntarily or involuntarily affected his identity and self-perception. He associated his daughter's identity with his own identity, and thus a renewed musical identity was gradually awakened through the accumulation of involvement in and observation of his daughter's musical practice, although he might have been insensitive to this change at the start.

Some of the participants developed a broader interest in different types of music. The father of F2 had a stronger musical identity than the other participating fathers, although he was mainly interested in pop music. In FMI he considered his family's (particularly his son's) preferences and development, choosing music or musical activities that he thought might suit his son. Thus, exposing his son to different kinds of music and musical activities provided him with opportunities to experience different genres of music. His interest now extends beyond pop music.

*I will have more opportunities to experience different types of music and musical activities and broaden my interest in music. For example, we two [he and his wife] might go to the popular music concert, but we may take the child to watch musicals, or go to the theatres. You can consider everyone's likes and dislikes, so you can be exposed to different kinds of music. (The father, F2)*

Adopting new musical tastes was also something reported by participating children. For example, the son of F5 stated:

*The main influence is that you will learn to respect their musical tastes, because it's kind of family activity, and family is about mutual respect and compromise. Like, I used to look down on the dance square, but since my mom often joins in these teams, I have started to accept this activity and I have even watched their dance show. I*

*can now accept these activities and music. (The son, F5)*

As a violinist, the son above was interested in classical music, but treated square dance (his mother's favourite musical activity) as a lower form of art. Meanwhile, he regarded FMI as a family activity, demonstrating that the core of a family event should be mutual respect and compromise. In chapter 5, section 5.5, this son stated that he considers his mother's feelings because she is getting old. His care for his aging parents prompted him to nurture a shared musical taste for the sake of faith in filial piety. Thus, not only parents (such as the father of F2 above) put children's preferences first and foremost, children also tried to respect and accept their parents' musical tastes in FMI.

FMI could also facilitate a sharing of memories through collective activities. These shared memories could be useful in enhancing family members' awareness of music. The father of F4 mentioned that he was more likely to be attracted to things that related to his daughter's musical learning, as well as the musical activities that his family might enjoy. His relationship to music was improved through FMI, because he was willing to organise musical events for his family on his own initiative:

*One obvious change is that you will become more sensitive to things that are related to music. For example, if there is a music show on TV, I might watch it for a few minutes or ask them to watch with me. Because my daughter is learning about music. Also, I won't pay attention to information about music concerts, but since they like to go to these activities, I might buy tickets for them or ask them whether they are interested. (The father, F4)*

The findings in section 6.2 reveal that both mothers and children could play a role as the source of learning. Thus, the participants also observed that FMI could help them improve their musical knowledge and ability, thereby acquiring confidence in music. As most children were taking or had taken instrument training, they were also able to teach their parents how to play a musical instrument. In this case, FMI could provide the participants with an opportunity for knowledge exchange,

allowing them to learn a lot from each other through shared interactions.

*The main thing is that I made progress in terms of music. Like I said before, I learned a lot from my child. So, for example, I now can play some very simple tunes on the piano, and I also gained knowledge about music. (The mother, F1)*

For the mother of F6, the interaction with her child in FMI brought her more courage:

*I think these activities enabled me to be more confident. For example, I couldn't sing in tune. But afterwards when I sang with my daughter several times, I didn't care whether I could sing in tune. (The mother, F6)*

In the above quote, the mother's confidence is manifested in her ability to put down the psychological burden of singing out of tune so that she can enjoy herself without worrying about her musicality. The reward for overcoming self-doubt in music helped her focus on the joy of singing.

Taken together, FMI can bring about a series of changes to participants' musical identities. Some participants might take the initiative when making changes, such as the father of F2 and the son of F5, who tried to nurture and share their tastes with family members. Some realised these changes in hindsight; such as the father of F1, who developed a new musical identity as someone associated with music. Improved musical ability and confidence was also experienced by some participants. All these changes made a positive contribution to the participants' construction of independent musical identities. However, one participant also reported a negative change in her musical identity, as discussed in the next section.

### **6.3.2 Weakening Musical Identities**

Despite most of the influences of FMI being reported by participants as positive, the daughter of F1, Lily, recalled that her relationship to music was damaged by

listening to music her mother liked.

*I always chose the music my parents liked, such as folk songs, red songs... and participated in musical activities that my parents wanted me to do so. I lost my interest in music. At that time, I felt like that I was a music learner who didn't like music at all. (Lily, the daughter of F1)*

The findings in the previous chapter point out Lily had a strong musical identity because of her career as a music teacher. The situation described in the above extract happened when Lily was a teenager. There was a time she had very different musical tastes to her mother, which led to a mother-daughter conflict. Her mother encouraged the young Lily to listen to classical and traditional music, and did not like her listening to pop music. However, Lily was not interested in her mother's taste in music, but dared not say so. Lily had described herself earlier as a 'daddy's girl' and her motivation for FMI was 'to cater for the tastes of her mother' because her parents devoted a lot of money, love and patience in her music learning (see chapter 5, section 5.5). Thus, her belief in filial piety and appreciation of her parents' devotion led her to obey her mother's authority, concealing her own feelings. However, hiding her inner thoughts and feelings caused strong negative emotions. Perhaps because she found no proper way to vent her frustration, refusing to engage with music was a way to express her annoyance about listening to music or taking part in musical activities she did not like.

Previous studies have indicated that music could be the cause of problems in some relationships (Morgan, 2015). Listening to music can be associated with different levels of mental health (Gabrielsson, 2010), and in many situations it can yield positive emotions and experiences, thereby promoting mental health (Baker & Bor, 2008; Gabrielsson, 2010; Lin et al., 2011; McPherson, 2006; Miranda et al. 2012; Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Juslin et al., 2008). However, Miranda et al. (2012) indicate that in some situations, listening to music can generate a negative outcome and hinder psychological wellbeing. Conversely, Morgan (2015)

indicates that differences in musical preferences and tastes could positively support a couple's relationship through the desire to respect one another's individual likes and dislikes as well as to seek a compromise. In accordance with Morgan, in my study the children of F5 and F6 reported developing shared musical tastes and a joint identity with their family members. However, the case above also reveals the influence of disparities over musical preference as regards musical interactions. When family members encounter different opinions (for example, different musical preference), not everyone is able to resolve these differences and conflicts as the son of F5 did. In Lily's case, she did not resolve differences in musical preference, and so perceived herself as having a weakened musical identity; becoming a 'music learner who didn't like music'. Lily claimed this situation arose only in her teenage years. Although the son of F5, Jim, was the same age as Lily, he did not report this difficulty. However, as a teenager, the daughter of F6, June, did report a similar mother-daughter conflict caused by different musical preferences, when asked about her experience with FMI (as will be discussed in chapter 6). The case of Lily (as well as June) suggests that FMI in families with teen-age children might be challenged because adolescence is a transitional stage in terms of both physical and psychological development. Different opinions and preferences with regard to FMI cannot be avoided, and thus strategies to resolve these problems are particularly important. Failing to overcome them might exert a negative influence on participants' musical identities, and even negatively affect family relationships. The next chapter will discuss this in greater detail.

## **6.4 Summary**

This chapter illustrates the relationship between FMI and the participants' musical identities. It has examined the mutual influences of FMI and individual's musical identities from two perspectives: 1) the roles the participants played when engaging in their families' musical activities; and 2) the influence of FMI, with regard to how participating in the families' musical activities affected the individual's musical identities.

Each individual family member adopts certain responsibilities and plays certain roles within the family. They take on different tasks and commitments in order to ensure the family functions well. Taking families as a microcosm of society, family members might have expectations associated with each other's duties, obligations, and status (Lu & Lin, 1998). These qualities might also be reflected in family activities, which could also prompt family members to adopt new roles to share each other's responsibilities. Taking FMI as a family event, the roles that individual family members play reflect their status and how they perceive the status of music in their family, which is helpful to understanding the mechanisms of families' musical participation. People's roles are not static. Although family members might share some common beliefs and values, they also have their own unique personal ideas, opinions, and ways of doing things (Zhu, 2013). These individualised attitudes could relate to context and will vary over time. Therefore, the maintenance of FMI can be influenced by social and cultural context within and outside the home, but conversely it might also influence the operation and maintenance of the family. Family members might treat FMI as a stable characteristic of their family; however, the reality is that it is as dynamic and flexible as identity; arguably more so, since it reflects multiple factors.

Although many studies of Chinese families argue that Chinese fathers are authoritative and superior in relation to mothers and children (e.g. Farh & Cheng, 2000; Li & Lamb, 2015; Wolf, 1981), my study found that in the domain of music, mothers are in a leadership role, being more proactive than fathers and even the children. In my interviews with the participants, I queried their perceptions of the roles they had adopted themselves and those of their other family members in regard to FMI. In general, mothers appeared to play a significant leading role in FMI. They took the initiative when advocating, organising, providing key opinions, and making decisions about things related to the family's musical involvement. These roles were indispensable when supporting the smooth operation and development of FMI; so much so that it can be argued that among my research sample, FMI could not take place without the input of mothers. However, although fathers were less active than the other family members, they



provided emotional and financial support, which is a fundamental role. The roles that fathers played should not be overlooked, as they share practical responsibilities and mediate family conflicts.

In the case of children, their roles have attracted more attention in the studies of families, music education, and social policies, due to the various social and cultural features of Chinese society. The one-child policy shaped family life in modern China, placing children at the centre of their families (Xu, 2016). This policy has also pushed parents to take a huge interest in, and have very high expectations of, their children's achievement (Xu, 2016). In this study, the parents all agreed that their children were the main character on the stage of FMI. As such, children were promoted and even pushed to take a centre role in FMI. Their parents' attention and expectations could in large part be the motivation for their musical involvement. This was even the case when the children themselves felt reluctant to take on such a role because they felt less dominant in FMI. The influence of the cultural belief in filial piety possibly encourages children to accept their parents' guidance and advice, even though this obedience could cause negative emotions.

The participants' roles and identities are dynamic in terms of their interaction with FMI. The roles of family members are interchangeable in many situations. For families with underage children, the mother might play a managing role or leading role. When the children grow up (such as F1 and F5), the adult children might take on these roles. Additionally, some mothers played the role of a second musical supervisor or instructor for their children, but they also reported learning from their children when engaging in music together. In summary, without mothers, there would be no organisers of FMI; without fathers, there would be no audience or listeners; and without children, there would be no driving force and motivation for organising FMI. However, because parents and children occupy different roles, they have tended to construct themselves positively. Parents perceived themselves as selfless, while the children view themselves as obedient and dutiful.

Engaging in music with family members could bring about a series of transformations in individuals' musical identities. The participants reported that they experienced increased and broader interest in different genres of music, as well as improved musical ability and confidence. Some of them developed a renewed sense of music and musical identities. However, unpleasant musical experiences, such as listening to dispreferred music in the interaction of FMI could be harmful to the development of musical identities and even family relationships if unresolved. Therefore, the next chapter will focus on the influences of FMI on family relationships; both negative and positive influences will be discussed in depth.

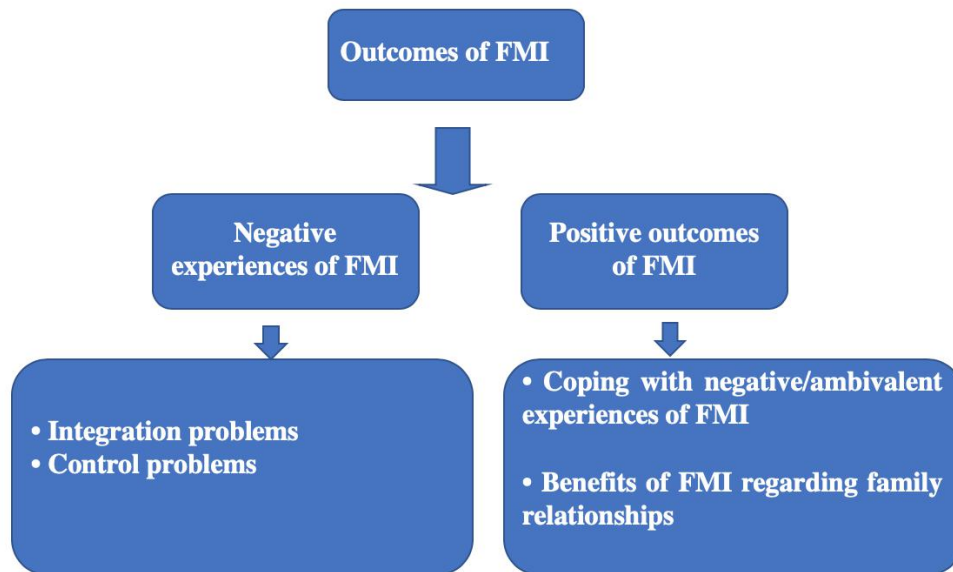
## **Chapter Seven: Outcomes of FMI**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter Six investigated the relationship between FMI and musical identities through the analysis of each individual family member's role in FMI interactions and the influence of FMI on their musical identity. Chapter Seven expands on the influence of FMI on the participants' family relationships examined in Chapter Six. The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the third research question: 'What is the relationship between FMI and participants' interpersonal interactions and family communication?' Participants reflected on both their negative and positive experiences of FMI and the role that these experiences played in their relationships with their family members. Their descriptions revealed the mutual influence and interdependence between different communication patterns and the operation of FMI.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section is the introduction of the chapter structure. The second section presents details of participants' self-reported negative experiences of FMI, including problems with integration and control. The third section focuses on their positive experiences of FMI, including how they coped with negative experiences and how they evaluated the benefits of FMI for their family relationships. The fourth section is the summary and conclusion of this chapter. The following figure (Figure 7.1) illustrates how the themes in this chapter are subdivided.

Figure 7.1 Structure of Chapter Seven



## 7.2 Negative Experiences of FMI

Although many studies have demonstrated that music can have a positive influence on partner relationships (Morgan, 2015; Pasiali, 2014), and parent-child relationships, (Gibson, 2009; Pasiali, 2010, 2012; Ridley, 2013), as well as personal and family resilience (Greeff et al., 2011; O’Callaghan et al., 2013; Pasiali, 2010; Walsh, 2016), there is scant research into the negative experiences that can occur when families engage in musical activities together. Indeed, when music becomes a family activity, the situation may become more complex as more people and more relationships become involved. Since FMI involves the allocation of rights and obligations, it may also cause problems, quarrels, and even conflicts when there is a loss of balance in the allocation of obligations or when family members have disagreements. Thus, this section presents participants’ narratives of their negative experiences caused by interactions with family members in FMI. The data shows that the negative experiences were manifested in two ways — as integration problems and control problems.

### 7.2.1 Integration Problems

The emergent theme ‘integration problems’ refers to participants’ feelings of not being able to enjoy or to integrate into the family’s musical activities. For some participants, their family’s musical activities were not always intrinsically motivated or necessarily enjoyable. As discussed in the previous chapter, some fathers demonstrated a lack of knowledge, interest, motivation, and confidence in music. This led to a sense of isolation during FMI interactions. For example, the father of F1 talked about feeling separated from his family members during FMI interactions.

***F-F1:** To be honest, although I know music is good, I don’t always feel comfortable with these activities. (The father, F1)*

*Interviewer: Why?*

***F-F1:** I think music activities are more fun for them, and my job is mainly to accompany them. So I sometimes feel a bit isolated, feel like I don’t know what they are doing. It’s like I don’t belong to this team. It’s like a sense of loneliness. (The father, F1)*

*Interviewer: What do you think are the reasons for this situation?*

***F-F1:** It’s still my problem. I don’t understand music, so I’m not confident. What I mean is that sometimes participating in music together is not always fun for everyone. (The father, F1)*

The extract above demonstrates that taking part in musical activities with family members may not always generate emotional engagement. The father noted that engaging in music together made him feel isolated, and attributed this to personal qualities and traits such as his lack of personal interest and limited ability in music. He elsewhere defined himself as a ‘tone deaf’ and with a very weak musical identity. When engaged in musical activities with his wife and daughter, who had strong musical identities, he tended to amplify his self-perceived weaknesses. He defined a limited musical identity for himself as one who could not ‘understand’ music, and therefore created a dividing line between himself and his family

members in the family's musical activities. The self-perceived limits to his musical ability hindered him from feeling part of his family team. Nevertheless, he also noted that although the integration problem might not be avoidable, the side effects could be temporary and transient:

***Interviewer:** What are the impacts of these feelings on your communication and relationship with your family?*

***F-F1:** This feeling would pass very quickly. It's transient. But, you would indeed feel a little bit down in the moment. **(The father, F1)***

Although participants were interviewed individually, other family members also noted that this father had difficulty integrating into the family's musical activities. The extracts below highlight his daughter's recognition and feeling regarding his integration problem:

***Interviewer:** What do you think are the effects or influences of participating in music together on your family?*

***D-F1:** At least for my family, music is not always fun and beneficial. Sometimes taking part in music together can be a burden for us, particularly for my father, I think. **(The daughter, F1)***

*Interview: Why?*

***D-F1:** I once took my parents to a music concert and my father just fell asleep in the middle of it. So, I really think it's not necessary for him to accompany us to the concert. After all, sometimes music can be a very personal thing. **(The daughter, F1)***

***Interviewer:** What was your response to this situation at the time?*

***D-F1:** To be honest, I felt a bit awkward at the time. I mean, I don't blame my father now, but at the time I was even a little bit embarrassed and disappointed. I didn't think it was his fault, but I suddenly realised he was not suited to these activities. He could be*

*very unintegrated with some music activities. (The daughter, F1)*

In the example above, the daughter described a negative experience of FMI. She was embarrassed by her father falling asleep in the middle of the concert, and the situation also reinforced her view of her father's incompatibility with musical activities. She described her disappointment in her father's behaviour as if she wished that he could nurture a shared feeling with her and could have enjoyed what she enjoyed during the concert. However, she later realised that she should not impose her feelings on other people, because music can be very personal — what is enjoyable to her may not be enjoyable to someone else. As such, she believed that simply putting everyone together in a musical activity without considering each other's preference could be a 'burden' for some family members. When discussing the effect of FMI, the mother of F1 also described her perception of her husband's reluctance and incompatibility:

*M-F1: For example, her father. If you ask him to sing with us or listen to a concert, he is definitely not willing to do so. Even if he cooperates with you, he can be very reluctant. Reluctance is not our original purpose. So I now will not force him, since I have found that it is too hard for him to join in with us. (The mother, F1)*

*Interview: Can you tell me more about the situations in which you can feel his reluctance?*

*M-F1: Like, my daughter and I often talk about music, but he barely gets a word in edgewise. Or when we went to the KTV he was reluctant to sing. Also, when we went to the concert he seemed uneasy and uncomfortable. I mean, in all of these occasions he always seems very Gegeburu [incompatible]. (The mother, F1)*

*Interview: How do you think of these situations?*

*M-F1: I feel speechless. It's like Duiniu tanqin [to cast pearls before swine]. (The mother, F1)*

*Interview: Can you explain a little bit more about your experience of 'Duiniu tanqin'?*

*M-F1: It feels like he doesn't understand and he has no interest; sometimes you feel that there is no need to communicate. He cannot integrate into these activities. (The mother, F1)*

The narratives presented above show how the mother used two Chinese idioms to describe and emphasise her perception of her husband's dilemma and its impact on her feelings. The idiom *Gegeburu* (格格不入) refers to 'being incompatible' (Colijn, 2018, p.45) and 'like square pegs in round holes' (Xue et al., 2015, p.269). The other Chinese idiom, *Duiniu tanqin* (对牛弹琴), can be literally translated in English as 'play the lute to a cow' (Weimer, 2012, p.7; Li, Z., 2017, p.57; Ma, 2015, p.18) or understood as the English idiom 'to cast pearls before swine' (Zhao & Guo, 2016), which means to provide something that is valuable or helpful to those who do not appreciate or understand it (The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, 2002). The mother earlier described music as 'human nature' (see Figure 5.3-1), but in the extract presented above she compared her husband to an animal (cow or swine) with no ability to appreciate music. This illustrates her frustration at the lack of understanding she perceived her husband to have. Her husband's reluctance to cooperate with and integrate into their family team was not aligned with her 'original purpose'. The father considered his main 'job' to be 'accompanying his family', but the mother hoped that he would be more musically active and would 'sing', 'listen', or 'talk about music' with them. All members in this family observed that the father was 'not comfortable' and 'incompatible' in FMI, but each presented a different focus. The father tended to emphasise his self-perceived limits in music and his sense of isolation and loneliness, whereas the daughter focused on her own experience. Both the daughter and the mother were disappointed by the father's failure to integrate with them. This indicates that taking part in musical activities may not always be helpful in building family cohesion. Instead, integration problems can often occur when family members have different attitudes, feelings, and opinions. Instead of connection, a sense of awkwardness, then embarrassment, isolation, and



emotional distance can be triggered by a failure to fit in with FMI. One person's difficulty to integrate into a family's musical activity and the various emotions this creates can be easily perceived by other family members and hence affect others' feelings, just as the daughter in the above example was embarrassed by her father's boredom during the concert.

In addition to feelings of boredom and awkwardness, another negative FMI experience could be a feeling of lower importance caused by not enjoying musical activities. For example, the father of F4 stated:

*You feel you have a lower sense of 'Cunzaigan' [a sense of existence] in these activities. You are important in other aspects of the family, but you feel less important in these activities. (The father, F4)*

This father felt belittled, as though his role was simple and unimportant, when failing to integrate into FMI. The term 'Cunzaigan' (存在感) used in his narrative refers to a person's feeling of others acknowledging his or her existence and the sense of not being ignored by others in a social group (Li, M., 2017). His words 'you will have a lower sense of Cunzaigan' reflect his perception of being ignored by his family. Engaging in musical activities that he did not enjoy or was not good at made him feel less connected to the family team. The construction of family cohesion requires emotional bonding and connections (Weber & Fournier, 1985), and feelings of isolation, loneliness, separation, or awkwardness are not helpful to achieving this goal. However, the father in this example also stated that he thought it was worth suffering negative feelings as long as the reward or value was sufficient:

*It's mainly because I think these feelings are normal, because you can't enjoy every activity in your life, and your moods are changing all the time. There are a lot of reasons for this (situation). You can only learn to adapt and adjust by yourself. And maybe your choice of musical activity is also important. For example, I may enjoy popular music, but I can't ask my daughter to appreciate it with me, because it's not suitable for her. So it's hard to explain. (The father, F4)*

The comments above also highlight the importance of the choice of musical activity. Like the daughter of F1 who felt that her father was not suitable for a concert, the above father also assumed that the music he liked might not be suitable for his daughter. This indicates that individual preferences are a key factor influencing different FMI experiences. This was also suggested by the mother of F1, who argued that engaging in music for learning or for fun generates different levels of enjoyment for family members:

*This really depends on the kind of musical activity and your motivations and purpose for this activity — whether the theme is ‘play’ or ‘learn’. If it involves learning the musical instrument, that may cause some unhappiness. If it’s just for fun, everything is ok, everyone is happy. If it’s about learning, we had lots of unpleasant memories and experiences. (The mother, F1)*

This mother suggested that the motivation or purpose of FMI could determine whether FMI is a play-based or education-oriented activity. Furthermore, that learning does not equal fun, perhaps because it tends to be more purposeful and involve more tasks and goals. This indicates that the nature of FMI is associated with its purpose and thus affects family members’ attitudes and feelings towards it.

The teenage children seemed less interested in FMI because it was considered a collective family activity. For example, Jane reported that she could not enjoy taking part in music with her parents:

*I think collective activities can easily make people feel embarrassed. I just can’t enjoy parents singing or dancing in front of me, that’s so embarrassing, so silly. (Jane, the daughter, F6)*

Jane’s situation is comparable with Lily’s. Unlike Lily (the daughter of F1), who wanted her father to be more musical and was frustrated at her parents’ lack of participation, Jane was embarrassed at her parents’ engagement and described their musical interaction with her as ‘silly’. When asked about the reason for her

embarrassment, she replied:

*I don't know, maybe because of personality? I just don't want to play with them too often, I can't really enjoy collective activities. Especially with my parents, maybe it's a problem of puberty? Especially when they seem to really enjoy (those musical activities) but you can't feel what they feel. (Jane, the daughter of F6)*

Perhaps due to her guilt over being critical of her parents or reluctance to 'blame' her parents, Jane attributed her inability to enjoy her family's collective musical activities to age-related issues or features of puberty. Puberty is the transitional period between childhood and adulthood, during which young people go through both physical changes and physiological growth and thus become very self-conscious (Rankin, 2004; Somerville et al., 2013). In this way, adolescence may be a more sensitive period in which children have more disagreements with their parents. Lily also noted that her negative experiences mainly occurred when she was a teenager, because '*when adolescence meets menopause, there can be lots of problems, so you may not enjoy being together*'. The fact that both Lily and Jane emphasised the association between their negative feelings and adolescence indicates that families with adolescents may face bigger challenges regarding FMI.

On the other hand, adult children may be more appreciative of the opportunity of FMI. For example, Lily suggested that when she entered adulthood she became more aware of the value of FMI, and thus her attitudes towards FMI were different from what she felt in adolescence:

*As you grow older, your opinions and attitudes towards things and your family change. Your way of looking at issues changes as well. So, my opinions and experience of enjoying music with my parents are very different from my past experience. I think it's part of growth, for both yourself and your family. (The daughter, F1)*

As an adult, Lily contemplated the changes in her perspectives over time, and

then described the negative experiences in the past as irreconcilable but acceptable and even rewarding because they were ‘part of growth’ for both herself and her family. She considered the difficulty of being trapped by negative feelings as inevitable, as if it was a process she had to go through.

To summarise this subsection, integration problems can be a significant challenge for FMI. These problems were illustrated by participants’ descriptions of not being able to enjoy their families’ musical activities or feeling less than part of the family during FMI. These behaviours and psychological states directly and indirectly impacted their communication and relationship with their family, although they attributed such challenges to elements of their musical identities including confidence, interests, ability, age, motivation, and the choice of musical activities. The participants also indicated that failure to integrate into a family’s musical activities can lead to a series of negative emotions, including a sense of isolation, embarrassment, and lower importance. However, the integration problems were generally acknowledged and accepted as a normal phenomenon by participants, as the father of F4 described: *‘these feelings are normal because you can’t enjoy every activity in your life, and your moods are changing all the time’*. Participants were able to recognise that FMI might not be enjoyable for all family members involved.

### **7.2.2 Control Problems**

This subsection examines participants’ feelings of loss of control in FMI interactions and how these feelings affected their interpersonal communication and family relationships. As mentioned previously, interaction and communication in FMI involves more complex and intertwined relationships than personal musical enjoyment. These include couple relationships, parent-child interactions and the allocation of rights and obligations within a family. Family members may compete for power in some situations, and participants reported a sense of loss of control. These control problems manifested in various ways, such as children’s loss of autonomous choice regarding musical activity and musical genre, mothers’ feelings of not receiving the support and responses expected in

interactions, and fathers feeling powerless in negotiations and communication. This subsection begins with an examination of the children's experiences of being compelled to get involved in some musical activities.

Several children reported similar unpleasant experiences of being pushed to put on a performance for the whole family at important festivals or when there were visitors in their home. They particularly emphasised how much this specific unpleasant experience upset them. Nevertheless, research has shown that in some families, particularly for the parents, being 'musical' is seen as a form of 'capital' (cf. Reay, 2001) — a thing that can bring about a sense of pride. For such parents, one of the manifestations of their families' musicality is their children's musical talents. For example, Lily recalled that when she was younger she was often pushed to take part in various musical activities, such as piano performances, talent shows, school concerts, or singing at various occasions. All these activities and interactions made her feel out of control of her own musical life. Of these activities, she was most upset by being asked to put on a musical performance in the presence of other people:

*For my mother, the fact that I was learning to play the piano was capital that she could show off to their friends. My mum always wanted me to show off my musical talents. She thought performing in front of the public would make me outstanding. When I was young I hated this the most. Every time there were visitors in our home, she always said: 'Come on, come on! Play a piece of music for us! Play the Beethoven!' In fact, nobody wanted to listen, who cares whether your daughter can play the piano! I felt like a monkey in a zoo. And then this one time she asked me to play again when there were other people in our home, I just played Twinkle Little Star with one hand. It was my silent rebellion against my mother. I was so speechless about my mother's behaviour! (Lily, the daughter of F1)*

Although Lily's mother was proud of Lily's musical talents, Lily disagreed with the opinion that playing music in public could make her outstanding, as she used

the derogatory term ‘show off’ (*xuàn yào* 炫耀) to describe this behaviour and to express her dissatisfaction with her mother’s requirement. Lily also assumed that her mother was overestimating the visitors’ response, because she felt that they lacked interest in and respect for her performance, which made her feel observed like ‘a monkey in a zoo’. In order to regain autonomy in choosing her preferred musical activities, she played the piano for the family visitors in an unexpected way as a way to take back control of her musical life.

In contrast to Lily, her mother always perceived her musicality as positive. As shown in Chapter 5, this mother described music as a pursuit for ‘social elites’ (Section 5.3) and indicated that her ‘utilitarian value’ of music was ‘a symbol of social stratification’ (Section 5.5). When recalling her own school time, she assumed that she was popular and welcomed at school because she could sing well, but she stated that never receiving formal music training was a disappointment, an experience which prompted her to provide her daughter with an opportunity to receive music education:

*I always wanted to learn about music, but I didn’t get the chance. So I decided that if one day I had a child, I would send them to learn about music. (The mother, F1)*

In this way, the mother sought to live vicariously through Lily and hoped to compensate for her own regret of not taking musical training by sending Lily to learn the piano. This could explain why Lily felt that her mother treated her musicality as ‘capital’ and a source of pride.

Lucy, the daughter of F3, also experienced a loss of control in her musical life because of her mother’s interference. Her mother actively encouraged her to sign up for various school musical activities and competitions outside school and often suggested suitable music to listen to. However, Lucy was not satisfied with her mother’s involvement in her music and felt that she lived a life chosen by her mother:

*She always recommends me some classical music or traditional*

*songs, no matter whether I like those music genres or not. She also criticises the music I like. For example, I like popular songs, but I'm not allowed to listen to those songs when she is beside me. She thinks popular music is vulgar. Also, she always asks me to register for some violin competitions or the school talent show, and this makes me so stressed. (Lucy, the daughter of F3)*

It is notable that the daily practice, her teacher's attitude, and her mother's criticism and interference in her music taste were not the things that bothered Lucy the most. The behaviour that she disliked the most was being asked to play the violin for strangers:

*The thing I hate most is not the daily practice or the teacher's sullen expression. It is when someone asks me: 'You can play the violin? Play a song for us!' This makes me so embarrassed. In fact, these people are not interested in the violin or music at all; I don't understand why they want to see my performance! And my parents always want me to play for these people! (Lucy, the daughter of F3)*

Like Lily, Lucy also assumed that people lacked interest in her performance and she could not understand why they still asked her to perform. In contrast to their parents' willingness to 'show off' or display their musical talents, these two children seemed inclined to keep a low profile. Moreover, her parents' involvement in her musical life made Lucy feel controlled and under scrutiny, and she described her mother as 'interfering too much' (管太多了). She explained that she could not go out with friends without finishing her daily practice, she had to play the violin for at least two hours every day, even on holidays, and had never had a whole day free. She also had to take her violin with her everywhere she went. She described how when she was younger, the situation once compelled her to try and think of ways to end her violin career:

*I devoted myself to reducing practice time, such as complaining of wrist pain or stomach pain, going to the toilet, running out of the room. I could find hundreds of reasons to stop practising. I often*

*stood at the window, playing the violin while watching other children playing games on the ground. (Lucy, the daughter of F3)*

In fact, both Lily's and Lucy's descriptions of their musical interaction with their mothers paint a picture of the fierce competition for control in their families. As previous chapters have illustrated, musical interaction within the family context often involves the balance of individual family members' power. Although the predominance of filial piety culture in social and cultural contexts in China has deeply affected children's responses to their parents' advice and guidance, they nevertheless seek a sense of personal control — the belief that one can master, control, and shape one's own life (Ross & Sastry, 1999). For both Lily and Lucy, the loss of control in their personal musical lives and other areas also created a sense of insecurity and antipathy during adolescence, which is a typical response of adolescents to unwanted parental control (Omar & Merrick, 2007). As such, despite the fact that they might behave like obedient children most of the time, they may also 'fight back' against or attempt to reject the restriction of their parents' psychological dominance through a series of 'rebellious' behaviours, as demonstrated in the narratives presented above.

The children's 'fightback' against parental control was also perceived by their mothers. Despite the mothers' leading role, some of them also faced difficulties when organising FMI. They described being frustrated and disappointed by not receiving an expected response from their spouse or child. This feeling was especially dramatic in F3. As the previous quotes (see Section 6.2.1) show, the mother perceived herself as a 'nanny' and 'chauffeur'. In the interview, she described how she 'sacrificed' her personal hobbies and time, especially for Lucy's music learning. However, she felt that this sacrifice was not acknowledged by her daughter or even her husband. This 'seesaw battle' between mother and daughter has been illustrated in the daughter's quotes presented above, and the mother also made comments on it:

*These activities are often like a seesaw battle in my home. She became very passive about learning the violin. I asked her to*



*practise; she was always reluctant to take up the violin. Sometimes I felt so anxious and could not help scolding her, so she often cried while practising. The atmosphere was tense whenever it came to playing the violin, and her father also said that I was too pushy. Anyway, I did so many things, but they did not recognise it. (The mother, F3)*

The mother viewed her strict parenting in FMI as a form of dedication and emphasised that she ‘did so many things’ for her daughter’s musical achievement. However, her parenting style caused an intense relationship between her and her daughter and was also criticised by her husband as ‘too pushy’. She felt that her family lacked understanding of her devotion. The mother of F1 also described a similar family situation. She reported being judged as ‘extremely controlling’ by her husband because she was enthusiastic about pulling all family members together in music:

*At the time I thought that it was very common for young children to be unable maintain interest in an activity for a long time. For music learners, if their parents can help them persevere with practising and learning, they will persevere. So I had to be a strict parent. Anyway, they criticised me a lot of times, saying things like I am extremely controlling and they can’t bear me. (The mother, F1)*

As the above examples show, mother F1 and mother F3 identified a series of reasons for why they helped their children maintain active musical engagement and strategies for doing so. They assumed that their children would not maintain interest alone so needed a strict parent, or they described their child as passionate about music but lacking motivation. Both of them believed that their efforts and contribution to FMI should be acknowledged by their family, but their family members did not respond to them in the way they anticipated. The mother of F1 even reported quite shockingly negative reactions – being told by other family members that they ‘can’t bear her’ is quite a lot for a parent to have to accept and persevere against. Hence, according to their reports, spousal communication and

the parent-child relationship were affected negatively due to this perceived lack of support, whereas other family members believed they were being controlled by the mothers' behaviour.

The control problem was also experienced by some fathers, and their responses to the FMI outcomes indicate a feeling of powerlessness. According to Cummings et al. (2002), parenting often involves the control of children (including discipline practices and child management strategies) and reflects the qualities of emotional relationships and communications between parents and children. As such, effective parenting requires spousal cooperation and negotiation. However, it also involves power competition and balance between parents, because both the father and mother need to establish their individual images and demonstrate a certain level of parental authority in front of their child. Hence, when different opinions emerge in parenting, the parents also face the problem of seeking balance and control, which can lead to a parenting conflict.

The findings presented in Chapter 6 indicate that mothers have a predominant status in both FMI and children's education, and they often provide key opinions and even make decisions for the whole family. In addition, although fathers and children may comply with the mother's advice in order to seek a compromise, such a compromise might be a consequence or a resolution of multiple disputes and conflicts. For example, the father of F1 shared his experience of quarrelling with his wife due to their differing opinions regarding music and their child's musical education. He described trying to persuade his wife to abandon their daughter's musical education as he recognised that she was not enjoying it. According to his narrative, he struggled to find a proper role in his daughter's musical learning, either as the amiable father of a daughter or a strict parent of a music learner. On one hand, he accepted his wife's emphasis on the educational aspect of music, so he tried to help their daughter persevere in her learning and practising. On the other hand, he understood his daughter's unhappiness and wanted to help her change the situation, so he negotiated this with his wife. However, the couple did not reach an agreement. He described this powerlessness in communications with his wife in the following example:

*I told her if the child didn't want to learn, just give up! It's torture for the kid. Besides, there is no musician in my family history! My family doesn't have the 'musical gene'! I couldn't see the reason for learning about music at that time. However, she didn't listen to me. In my family, the children's education is always decided by my wife. I have no voice. (The father, F1)*

The examples above show that the father diagnosed himself as not having 'the musical gene'. This self-defined defect led to a loss of power and control in the area of music in his family. His words '*I had no voice*' suggest a sense of helplessness in his situation. In his account, he described being frustrated by his powerful musical wife and having to seek a compromise and give up his expected control in FMI and children's education, which is also a common resolution for family conflict (Recchia et al., 2010; Smetana et al., 1991; McCoy et al., 2013).

Fathers' relinquishment of parental control was also found in other families. In F4, the mother was keen to take her daughter to various kinds of extracurricular activities and classes since she was kindergarten age. These activities included weekly ballet class and various dance performances, a double-keyboard piano class, a singing class, and an English class. However, the father demonstrated a less positive attitude towards these extracurricular activities and classes. This is evident in his comments presented below:

*Sometimes I think that these activities in my family may be a little bit out of control. Her mother a little bit overvalues the importance of these activities. You see, the aim of taking part in extracurricular activities should be enjoying the happiness. But now I find it's kind of like a burden for the kid. Sometimes she [his daughter] can only go to bed at 11pm. That's too much for a kid. I think this is over exaggerated in my family. She [his daughter] is only a primary school kid! So it's hard to evaluate these activities. However, if you don't take your child (to these activities), you will be nervous because other families all do the same thing. (The father, F4)*

The narrative above highlights the father's control problems in two ways. In the first place, he could not manage his family's — especially his daughter's — life routines. He used the phrase 'out of control' and 'like a burden' to describe his perception of the musical activities in his family. Similar to the father of F1, this father wanted to help his daughter ease the stress caused by her busy musical life. He argued that the role of music in a family should be a recreational activity rather than a heavy 'burden', especially for a young child. On the other hand, although he also did not support the routine for his young daughter's busy life, he recognised it as a common social phenomenon in China, so he decided to conform to this social norm and be more flexible. Not having the ability to take control of his family's musical life and the social context around it induced a sense of powerlessness. As such, his description presented above illustrates that maintaining a musical life is not always fun and easy; when music becomes an involuntary choice, it can be burdensome for some family members.

These control issues — either being controlling or being controlled — appear to be present in all aspects of FMI interaction, and can thus be experienced by all family members in different ways. This next subsection highlights the importance of the control issues to FMI outcomes and identifies several key points of the analysis. Firstly, individual family member's control issues influenced other member's feelings and experience of FMI. The mothers faced control problems due to misunderstanding and the rejection of cooperation by their children and husbands, and the children's control problems were caused by not having a choice regarding their preferred musical genre and activities due to their mothers' interference. The fathers felt that they did not have control in FMI and their children's education. Secondly, when feeling a loss of control in FMI, family members usually chose to compromise, but the participants indicated that adolescent children may also fight back through some 'rebellious behaviours'.

Seeking a sense of control is not only the manifestation of power competition within a family, it is also an important component in the construction of family relationships (Cook, 1993) and resilience (Henry et al., 2015). In the domain of FMI, it can directly influence how participants perceive the outcomes of FMI.

Whether in daily family life or FMI, insufficient management of these control issues can cause a series of negative emotions, such as stress, discouragement, frustration, and insecurity. In FMI, these negative feelings can cause burnout in children, as demonstrated by the decline in musical enthusiasm experienced by the daughters of F1 and F3. As such, identifying ways to solve the control problems could be significant for the mechanism of FMI. The next section presents a discussion of the participants' positive experiences of FMI and illustrates how they changed their negative experiences to positive experiences.

### **7.3 Positive Outcomes of FMI**

Despite the negative experiences reported in the previous section, most of the participants stated that they generally had a positive experience of FMI interaction. This section focuses on the exploration of participants' positive experiences of FMI and how these positive experiences influenced their interpersonal interactions and family relationships. The first subsection, 'Coping with negative/ambivalent experiences of FMI', is particularly related to Section 7.2. However, it is categorised under participants' positive outcomes, since the process of mediating negative effects could ultimately lead to a positive experience.

#### **7.3.1 Coping with Negative/Ambivalent Experiences of FMI**

The ability to cope with negative experiences and consequences is a significant component and manifestation of family strength and resilience (Lietz, 2006; Orthner et al., 2004). It also reflects how the participants of this study benefitted from their family's musical involvement. Many of the participants expressed ambivalent feelings towards FMI, because they generally made a positive comment about their experience of FMI right after expressing negative aspects of FMI. However, as presented in the previous section, participants perceived these ambivalent or negative feelings as an acceptable and normal part of FMI, because they could find ways to reduce and eliminate the effects of negative experiences, and thus the negative feelings regarding FMI could be diminished through their self-adjustment as well as mutual cooperation and understanding. Such strategies

and measures changed participants' opinions, attitudes, and experiences.

**'Looking on the bright side'**. One of the most common self-adjustment strategies was to look on the bright side of FMI and then build a positive experience of it. Thus, this section begins with a presentation of the participant Lily's (the daughter of F1's) account of how she adjusted her own experience using this method. The previous section presented Lily's experience of being embarrassed by her father falling asleep in the middle of a concert. However, as the following conversations show, Lily additionally expressed that her father's attendance at music concerts also generated a sense of appreciation for her parents and her family's musical involvement; furthermore, this change was particularly salient when she grew older, because her ability to take a new perspective increased with age:

*But now things are getting so much better, and I think this is mainly because as I have grown older, I have started to learn to put myself in others' shoes. Why should I ask my father to appreciate something that he doesn't like and understand? That's too inconsiderate. Besides, afterwards I found that my parents gave up so many things for my music learning, like their leisure and entertainment, you know, they didn't even watch the TV anymore just because they thought it would be harmful to the home environment for my study. They thought listening to music would help my music learning, so they often played music for me. My father, a man who doesn't like music so much, was willing to go to a classical music concert with me! I can recognise his effort and dedication. So, looking on these bright sides, generally music means a lot to us, because everyone contributes a lot. (Lily, the daughter of F1)*

When Lily was interviewed, she was already a mother. Along with the change of her own identity and age, the growth of her ability to recognise other perspectives played an important role in the psychological process of turning a negative experience into a positive one. By recognising her father's perspective of FMI

through ‘putting herself in her father’s shoes’, she could perceive her parents’ devotion to her music learning and feel empathy with her parents, particularly — as the narrative above shows — with her father. This process of psychological change helped Lily re-discover the positive aspects of her experience of FMI and acknowledge every family member’s contribution.

Similarly, despite criticising his wife’s strict parenting style, Lily’s father also made positive comments about his wife’s decision:

*But in retrospect, I have to say my wife made the right decision. If she had not insisted on it, my daughter might have given up her piano learning. That would have been a waste of money and time. I think my wife was right, although my daughter wasn’t happy; but no pain, no gain. Anyway, you should still appreciate her merits, think more of the advantages. (The father, F1)*

This father rationalised his negative experience by using the phrase ‘no pain no gain’. He realised that FMI had brought a lot of ‘pain’ to his family, but compared to what they had gained — his daughter’s musical achievement, he still felt amply rewarded.

For the father of F4, the effect of FMI depended on people’s subjective opinions:

*To put it another way, if you treat these activities as tasks, of course these things can be exhausting. But if you treat these things as a pleasure — you can accompany your family, you can see how your child grows up — these things can be more interesting. Also, you can prompt the child to discover the interesting side of these activities. (The father, F4)*

This father suggested that the key to acquiring desired outcomes from FMI is to think positively about FMI. He argued that by focusing on the rewards of FMI, such as promoting family companionship, the negative experience is diminished or becomes a sense of positivity and even a parenting method. Likewise, his wife suggested a similar method for generating a positive experience of FMI:

*Every coin has its two sides. I prefer to think more of the bright side. I think in the long run, these activities will bring us, the child and my family, a lot of benefits; although we may face a large variety of challenges. (The mother, F4)*

The above narratives indicate that by ‘looking on the bright side’, the participants were able to view situations from different perspectives and thus build a mutual understanding with their family members. This helped ease their disquiet regarding FMI. As such, they could more easily discover and experience the fun and benefits of FMI.

**Touching moments in FMI.** Insight into the influence of positive experiences of FMI on family relationship can be obtained by examining participants’ recollections of touching moments they experienced. As a socio-emotional skill, recalling some touching memories of their family’s musical life helped participants ease the unpleasant musical experiences and increase their interest in FMI, although they did not know at the time that they would be touched by the events at a later date. This could also explain why participants generally placed a high value on the importance of FMI despite reporting a lot of negative experiences of it. For example, following the description of her self-adjustment method of taking perspective, Lily mentioned a scene that influenced her experience of FMI positively. When she recognised the importance of perspective-taking and looking at the positive side of her family’s musical life, her father’s weaker musical ability no longer bothered and embarrassed her; instead, it became a turning point in her experience of FMI and helped her build a strong attachment to her father. This is reinforced in the excerpt below, which shows how Lily recalled being moved by her father trying to use singing as a method of grandparenting when taking care of her son. According to her description, although her father could not sing in tune, she still appreciated his effort:

*You know, a few days ago I found my father singing for my son, and he was a little bit out of tune. But I didn’t laugh. Rather, I felt so moved by his off-tune singing. You will suddenly understand: you see,*



*your father is diligently changing himself for you or for your son.*

*(Lily, the daughter of F1)*

Several fathers also built a positive experience of FMI through the recollection of some touching moments. These touching moments were usually associated with their children's musical achievement and often functioned as a source of pride. This is illustrated by the following extracts:

*Because my family's music is always associated with my daughter's music learning. Learning about music brought us lots of unhappiness and quarrels when my daughter was young. However, I think now it brings us more satisfaction and honour. Especially, I remember one time I was watching my daughter playing piano on the stage, and suddenly I heard the applause from the audience. At the time I felt so proud, and I felt everything was worth it. (The father, F1)*

*But when you see your child's growth you still feel so proud. For example, my daughter is often chosen to be the lead singer of her school chorus, and when I see her singing I feel proud. After all, music is a kind of talent; if your child has this talent you will also feel satisfied and happy. (The father, F6)*

Since the mothers' negative experiences were mainly caused by family members not recognising or acknowledging their devotion, they were touched when family members expressed appreciation for their contribution to FMI. For example, the mother of F1 said:

*But afterwards when she [her daughter] went to the college, she said, 'Mum, I am still grateful for you leading me into the field of music. If you didn't push me so hard, I might not have had any achievement in music and could not understand the value of music.' At that moment I felt amply rewarded. (The mother, F1)*

When recalling a touching moment of FMI, the mother of F3 explained that when her child benefitted from music, they realised and understood why she was being

pushy and then changed their attitude towards FMI and expressed their gratitude to her:

*But I try not to be too upset by these, because sooner or later they will be grateful for these musical activities. My daughter now is active in music because she has realised that music has helped her a lot. She once said thanks to me because I asked her to participate in a competition and she won finally. Her father also admitted that she could not have succeeded without me pushing her so much, and he could not have realised how many benefits that music could bring my family. So, when they said these things to me, I was moved and felt that my sacrifice was not in vain. (The mother, F3)*

The touching moments reported by participants reinforce the positive impact of FMI. They show that recalling touching moments is not only important to reducing the negative experiences of FMI, it also plays a significant role in the creation of affectional bonds with family members. However, such touching moments are usually not recognised at the time they occur and may be recalled much later than the original FMI was taking place.

**‘Let it go’.** Similar to ‘looking on the bright side’, the emergent theme of ‘let it go’ demonstrates some parents’ strategy of self-adjustment through changing their parenting style. The previous section presented the ‘seesaw battle’ between the mother and daughter in F3. The mother later recalled that to ease the tension between her and her daughter, she decided to change her parenting style:

*I shared my experience with other parents and also discussed this with her father, and they persuaded me that governing the child is like holding sand: if you can't hold it, scatter it. I think this works because afterwards my family's atmosphere eased a lot, she started to share her experience and music with me, I became less critical. Anyway, my experience is 'let it go', don't be too strict, especially with things like music, just let it go. (The mother, F3)*

This example shows that the mother-daughter conflicts prompted this mother to draw lessons from previous experience and to adjust her parenting. She used the analogy of holding sand and parenting to describe her relationship with her daughter. She found that when she identified the balance between being caring and controlling and gave more autonomy to her daughter, the mother-daughter relationship could be improved through sharing music, and thus the whole family dynamic became less stressed. This change was also perceived by her husband when he mediated the conflict in the family:

*Anyway, it's impossible to think that we don't have disagreements and conflicts just because it's a music activity — it doesn't matter if it's about music or sports or any other activities. Because family is a place where conflicts can happen, in order to ensure that everybody is happy, parents need to be aware of not meddling. That's what I often tell her mother: 'Don't meddle with too much, let it go'. In fact if you don't meddle with the child, she [his daughter] will feel that you support her. You see, she [his daughter] is much more proactive (in practising) than she used to be. (The father, F3)*

This father suggested that since disagreements and conflicts are inevitable in families, parents should be aware of their parenting skills and realise that giving a child some autonomy could be a way to express a sense of understanding. He felt that reminding his wife to not meddle prompted his daughter to be more interested in her music learning.

The above narratives illustrate different family members' strategies for obtaining positive outcomes from FMI, or turning their negative experiences of FMI interactions into a positive energy. Many studies have demonstrated the positive influence of music on interpersonal relationships. Indeed, the benefit of taking part in musical activities is often assumed. However, the current study shows that interaction in FMI involves more complicated relationships, and thus conflicts and disparities regarding music also occur. Thus, obtaining the benefits of FMI depends on how participants deal with the unexpected outcomes.

### 7.3.2 Benefits of FMI Regarding Family Relationships

Although the participants had negative experiences of FMI for various reasons, they all reported that FMI was helpful in improving their interpersonal interactions and family relationships. The expected benefits of FMI were illustrated by the participant descriptions of their motivations to implement FMI presented in Chapter 5, which reflected participants' expectations regarding FMI outcomes. The current subsection examines the benefits that participants had already obtained from FMI, particularly positive outcomes regarding family relationships.

**Benefits to parental relationships.** For some parents, FMI helped to reinforce their marital relationship by providing them with an opportunity for cooperation. The findings presented in previous chapters indicated that participants highly valued FMI and advocated for it because they believed that taking part in musical activities was beneficial to their children's personal development. This shared belief between parents promoted their mutual cooperation in keeping the family engaged in music and providing a musical environment for their children. As the excerpts below indicate, this shared belief also helped them moderate negative experiences and mediate conflicts, thereby further maintaining all family members' musical engagement:

*I think the most important influence is that it helps us experience cooperation, mutual cooperation, between family members, particularly between her father and me. Because her father is always busy, but when it comes to his daughter's musical activities, such as music classes, performances, and contests, he will always try to participate. He values these activities very much; we all give importance to music. Besides, we may have differences in many things, but in terms of music, we have a common belief that we should accompany and help the child to insist on (learning). (The mother, F1)*

*I think it's an opportunity for cooperation between father and mother.*

*You can witness the growth of your child, you take part in these things together, both of you give importance to these things. (The mother, F4)*

In addition to cooperation, the following passages show that FMI also helped parents re-allocate and share their responsibilities and obligations, and the mothers achieved a sense of satisfaction when their husbands shared the burden of child rearing:

*There are a lot of benefits to my family. For adults, at least it lets my husband share the responsibility for our children's family education. Although he is sharing, he is the economic backbone. He is always busy so he often misses many family affairs. But since I told him the importance of family education for the child, he has become more involved in these activities. This is what I am most satisfied about. (The mother, F3)*

*I think this is also a reflection of responsibility. Taking part in these activities could help everyone cultivate a sense of responsibility, especially the father, letting him be involved in child rearing and the construction of family culture. (The mother, F6)*

Furthermore, the following excerpts show that fathers who were less involved in domestic affairs better understood their wife's workload and dedication, and made up for their absence in either domestic affairs or their children's education:

*Through these activities you can see your partner's dedication and tolerance. You can see how much energy she has spent on the family, on the child, on how to pull us together. It's all about tolerance and understanding. (The father, F4)*

For some participating parents, FMI played a salient role not only in their marital relationship, but also in establishing their parental image in front of their children. For example, unlike most of the participating mothers who treated FMI as a child-centred activity, the mother of F2 regarded FMI as an equally important

activity for parents. She believed that parents should first enhance their attachment through FMI, because a good marital relationship can help build better communication and interaction with a child:

*These activities are important to both parents and the child. At first, you should have your own hobbies, you can do something you both enjoy. This is good for your marriage. Also, only when adults really enjoy these activities can the child feel the fun of music. So, parents taking part in these activities is also like being a role model for the child. (The mother, F2)*

**Benefits to parent-child relationships.** Some participants evaluated the outcomes of FMI from the perspective of its influence on parent-child relationships. Through sharing each other's musical experiences, family members gained access to each other's lives, and thereby enhanced their mutual emotional attachment. More importantly, engaging in music together helped the parents express their concern and affection for their child:

*You will have an opportunity to experience your child's interests and hobbies, to know what he likes, and he will understand what you like. This can enhance your mutual understanding. (The mother, F5)*

*This can let the child know that we care about her; we can play together; we can share, we will accompany her, I'm willing to listen to what she listens to, etc. (The mother, F6)*

For other parents, their level of satisfaction regarding the parent-child relationship was improved when they saw that their child could obtain pleasurable experiences from FMI. For example, the father of F2 said:

*This is a good opportunity for communication between the parents and child, to build an emotional connection with each other. Such an interaction is very special, it's more impressive and acceptable for young children. If you see your child is happy, you will feel happy too. (The father, F2)*

Moreover, participants also reported that taking part in music together helped them nurture shared musical tastes, and thereby bridged the generation gap between parents and child by generating more conversations about music. This is evident in the F5 participant statements below:

*Because my father liked classical music and Western pop music when he was young, I listened to this Western pop music and classical music with him when I was young. So, now, as long as I know any new Western pop music, I will recommend it to him, we will discuss it. (The son, F5)*

*We have the same interests and tastes, we both like classical music, so we don't feel the generation gap in our communication. At least we don't feel the generation gap in terms of music. (The father, F5)*

Thus, the interviews revealed two important kinds of family relationships: couple relationships and parent-child relationships. The participant responses show that FMI helped parents enhance their marital relationships through establishing a shared goal. This included helping the child persevere in music, providing the child with a musical environment, accompanying and supporting the child's music learning, witnessing the child's musical achievement together, sharing the responsibility of child rearing, and nurturing a joint hobby. Moreover, FMI gave children and parents access to each other's musical lives, musical tastes, and thus generated more opportunities to share, communicate, and enhance parent-child attachment. Finally, these positive experiences built up in their memories helped them mediate and reduce the negative feelings caused by FMI and even conflicts in other areas of family affairs.

## **7.4 Summary**

This chapter analysed both the negative and positive experiences that FMI can generate for family members and how family members deal with these experiences. The findings show that the relationship between FMI and interpersonal interactions and family communication is complex, but there is a

mutual influence. Key conclusions are:

- FMI not only generated positive outcomes for the participating families, it also had some negative impacts on their relationships. These negative experiences included integration problems, such as not being able to enjoy family musical activities, and control problems, such as participants feeling out of control of their own musical life.
- The influence of negative experiences was short-term and transient as it was often mediated by the participants in a positive way. Thus, negative experiences somewhat promoted participants' socio-emotional skills and abilities.
- FMI could bring benefits to parental relationships and parent-child relationships.
- The operation of FMI and family relationships and communication are mutually dependent. Effective communication is the basis of the operation of FMI, and FMI impacts family members' interaction and communication.

Previous studies have suggested that music can bring people together through shared music preferences (Boer et al., 2011; Selfhout et al., 2009) and the development of collective identities (Boer & Abubakar, 2014; Boer et al., 2013; Tarrant, 2002; Tarrant et al., 2002). Many scholars have argued that musical activities can also contribute to social cohesion (Boer et al., 2011; Boer & Fischer, 2012), family cohesion, and the wellbeing of individual family members (Boer & Abubakar, 2014), because engaging in musical activities together as a family can generate strong emotional bonds (Parncutt, 2009; Trehub, 2009). However, the findings of this study are contrary to the findings of previous studies, and indicate that taking part in music together may not always be enjoyable for all family members, because differences and conflicts can easily occur. From a positive perspective, participants' negative experiences were short-term and accepted as a normal part of family life, because they soon found ways to moderate these experiences. For example, by adjusting their own perspective and parenting style, or by being moved by some unexpected touching memories, the participants rebuilt bonds of affection with family members. This indicates that the impact of



FMI somewhat depends on participants' subjective opinions. Nevertheless, the findings also show that FMI can still positively influence couple relationships and parent-child relationships. For participating parents, their partnership was strengthened when they established a shared interest in accompanying and witnessing their children's growth or when they shared the burden of caring for the child. For participating parents and children, FMI provided them with a platform for sharing their music and this in turn enhanced their mutual understanding.

Although the slogan 'those who play together, stay together' is commonly used, the findings of this study suggest that nurturing a shared hobby or experience through a family activity is not as simple as the phrase suggests, and the benefits for family members' emotional wellbeing generated by musical involvement should not be assumed. The research findings suggest that effective communication and close family relationships are the cornerstone of successful FMI, and individuals' subjective opinions and self-adjustment abilities are crucial factors in how they feel about FMI outcomes.

## **Chapter Eight: Discussions and Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into five sections below. The first reviews the evidence collected for the research. The second section presents the major findings of this research in response to the three research questions. The third section discusses the contributions of the study and provides recommendations for future research on musical involvement, music education, and musical identities in a Chinese context. The limitations of this study are addressed in the fourth section. The final section concludes this research project.

### **8.2 Major Study Findings**

This thesis studies six Chinese families' musical involvement and their musical identities. Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect the data. The participants were recruited from Chengdu city, Sichuan Province, China. The data were analysed using thematic analysis to answer the three research questions outlined below:

1. What is FMI and how can it be assessed?
2. What is the relationship between FMI and musical identities?
3. What is the relationship between FMI, interpersonal interactions and family communication?

The following subsections present the overall findings and discussion in light of each research question.

#### **8.2.1 Research Question 1: What is FMI and how can it be assessed?**

Chapter one explained what FMI is understood to mean in order to define the key

research focuses and objectives. FMI (family musical involvement) is a new term I have proposed to describe all kinds of family-based musical activities. In order to examine and assess participants' understanding of FMI, I evaluated their families' musical involvement, with regard to: 1) individual and collective musical activities in their daily lives, 2) musical attitudes, 3) musical resources, and 4) motivation to participate.

- **Musical activities.** All the Chinese families investigated made use of various inside and outside home musical resources to organise a large variety of individual and collective musical activities; although their degree of personal interest in, and attitudes towards music, differed. However, the individual family members participated in music to different degrees, expressing various musical identities. Mothers and children spent more time participating in music than fathers. Only two fathers expressed a passion for engaging with music, and listening was the most common form of musical engagement mentioned by fathers. This indicated that mothers and children generally developed stronger musical identities than fathers. Children's musical activities were associated with age, and this also influenced the family's collective musical activities. For example, although musical media was an important resource, some younger children might not have had access to musical media as their parents restricted their screen time.

Families were involved in diverse collective musical activities; i.e. singing, going to music concerts and listening to the child playing their instrument. Technology has greatly influenced families' musical life. For example, using a mobile Karaoke app on the phone to sing together was reported as one of the most popular musical activities. Parents also recounted enjoying their children's instrumental performance. Accompanying the child to a music class was viewed as a collective family activity rather than the child's own thing. Parents reported that they prioritised music activities, particularly those relating to their children's musical achievements.

- **Musical attitudes.** All the participating families highly valued the FMI in their

lives, although music played different roles for each of them. Overall, mothers and children spoke positively about the meaning of music to them. Interestingly, although some fathers showed less interest in music personally, they still commented positively on FMI, believing it to be beneficial to their children's development. For this reason, they were keen to support their wives' and children's engagement in various kinds of musical activities. Their reasons and motives for FMI could explain the paradoxical attitudes towards music activities demonstrated in Chapter 5.

- **Musical resources.** The participating families made use of musical resources both inside and outside the home when organizing their families' musical activities. The in-home musical resources mainly consisted of musical instruments (including acoustic musical instruments, such as piano and violin; and electronic musical instruments, such as electronic drum kit) and musical media. Since most children were embarking on, or had taken instrument training, their families often asked them to play music when guests were visiting or when celebrating festivals. Musical media was the most common source of in-home musical activity, as this was convenient for families. Since most children were embarking on, or had taken instrument training, their families often asked them to play music when guests were visiting or when celebrating festivals. Musical media was the most common source of in-home musical activity, as this was convenient for families. Musical resources outside the home included extracurricular music lessons and school musical resources, and access to public musical events and facilities (such as live music concerts and musical festivals). Within these resources, children's extracurricular musical activities received much attention from their families, because parents paid a lot of attention to their musical achievements. This finding also echoes the research context discussed in Chapter 1; i.e. taking musical training is a popular extracurricular activity for many school children, and their families enthusiastically devote money, time, and energy in their music learning, in order to help their children improve their musical skills. For example, in this study, the parents also reported that they always accompany their children to extracurricular music classes. Thus, it was not a surprise that extracurricular

music classes were emphasised and considered an extra opportunity for another kind of family musical involvement by participating parents.

• **Participation motivation.** The participants reported a number of reasons and motives for organising FMI. These motives were categorised into four themes, including need for recreation, need for family strengthening, need for personal development, and ‘go with the flow’. Their narratives of participation motivation reflect their expectations from FMI and the benefits of FMI. Parents tended to focus on family bonding and their children’s personal development (such as musical achievements and career prospects), while children tended to meet parental expectation in FMI. These also explain some fathers’ positive attitudes towards FMI, despite their apparent lesser interest in music. Thus, the idea that it is ‘all for kids’ might be the most important factor in maintaining the mechanism of FMI in the Chinese families interviewed.

Overall, the essence of FMI is a manifestation of the lifestyle of a family closely related to music. For the majority of parents, the main motivation for FMI is the next generation’s personal development beyond music, as reflected in their comments about their motives for FMI and musical identities. Thus, arguably these Chinese families’ FMI is child-centred. This reflects the work of Feng et al. (2014), who suggested that Chinese urban families’ activities focus more on children rather than on other family members.

### **8.2.2 Research Question 2: What is the relationship between FMI and musical identities?**

In order to answer this research question, the study investigated each individual family member’s role in FMI, and their perceptions of the influence of FMI on their musical identities. Their descriptions in relation to these two aspects revealed the complex relationship between FMI and the participants’ musical identities. I begin by discussing the findings associated with each individual family member’s roles in FMI. In the musical involvement of a typical Chinese family in this study there was a ‘powerful’ mother, a ‘weaker’ father and an

obedient child.

**Mothers' roles in FMI.** The dominance of mothers' roles in FMI was particularly apparent. Three roles for mothers in FMI were identified, including 1) managing 'trivial' things in FMI; 2) being a key opinion leader; 3) supervising children's musical learning. When organising FMI, mothers were often put in charge of managing various things, such as helping family members arrange the time and venue for FMI. They reported feeling like both a nanny and a chauffeur for their child. Although the participants used 'trivial' to describe these roles, they were not unimportant. Without mothers' arranging of these things, their families' FMI would not be organised smoothly.

In fact, female/mother dominance is a common phenomenon in Chinese music culture, although traditional Chinese culture and society are considered patriarchal and male-dominant. Chinese music culture is regarded as an effeminate arena, having a feminine inclination, by many scholars in both China and Western academia (Shi, 2006). For example, a project of mothers' music education called 'Mommusic' (China Musicology Network, 2008) started recently. This project reflects that Chinese music education often focuses on the role of mothers rather than fathers. The book *All Mothers Are Musicians* (《所有的妈妈都是音乐家》) has proven a popular parenting book. All these phenomena enhance the impression that music is an area for mothers to manage. Along with the development of society, the status of women has improved. As such, both the characteristics of the Chinese music cultural context and traditional family values emphasise the feminine image. These stereotypes in traditional cultures might somehow explain why mothers were 'stronger' than fathers (in FMI), despite fathers' economic contribution to the family and their typically stronger influence outside the home. In recent years, Chinese mothers have established the image of 'the tiger mothers' in many areas (Cheah et al., 2013; Chua, 2011a, 2011b; Guo, 2013; Kim, 2013; Rhee, 2013; Wang, 2011). This image of strict mothers in China is in accord with the role taken by the mothers in my study.

**Fathers' roles in FMI.** The study finds that the image of a Chinese father in FMI

is quite different from other aspects such as workplace and society. Their roles were identified as follows: 1) being a supportive bystander in FMI; 2) taking the responsibility of child rearing; and 3) mediating the relationship between family members.

It is noteworthy that fathers also reported that they share the responsibility of taking care of children, such as accompanying them to a music class or concert. In most situations, however, they described taking on more of a bystander position in relation to FMI, although this role might not have been the one they would have chosen themselves. This was consistent between comments from themselves and from other family members. Socio-cultural and family pressure (such as traditional values regarding the different responsibilities of fathers and mothers as discussed in mothers' roles above), gender stereotyping in music, and fathers' musical confidence issues and musical identities all contribute to their role as bystanders. Increasingly, in recent years, the lack of the Chinese father's role in family affairs, particularly in family education has received criticism (Dai, 2012; Li, 2016; Zhang, 2012; Zhao, 2017; Zhu, 2011). This phenomenon is common in Chinese society and has also been observed in this study; FMI constitutes family education and is seen by participants a domestic affair. As discussed previously (Chapter 6), traditional societal values expect that men will take care of issues outside the family, and women those inside, giving fathers and mothers different roles (Xu, 2010). Fathers are endowed with the role of financial provider, and their social status and economic level are often seen as measures of whether a man is successful (Wang, 2017). Taking care of children at home and managing domestic affairs is often seen as unmanly. Moreover, maximising the fathers' family role has not received support in national policies, work organizations, or across the community (Wang, 2017). Traditional conceptions of different parental roles within the family, as well as the social context, could adversely affect fathers' motivations in both domestic affairs and FMI.

In addition, although traditional Chinese ideals emphasise the role of 'strict father and kind mother' in parenting (Benner & Kim, 2010), in modern Chinese families, the roles of Chinese parents have evolved into 'kind father, strict mother.' (Shek,

2005, 2007; Zhang, 2012; Zhao, 2017). This evolution of parents' roles is also apparent in the families sampled in this study. Evidence was found in participants' narratives of the fathers' role as mediating the relationship between family members.

**Children's roles in FMI.** Children's roles were identified as follows: 1) taking centre stage and engaging the family in music; 2) following parental guidance and advice; and 3) as a source for learning. The findings revealed that FMI is child-centred from different perspectives and in a variety of aspects. This characteristic encourages children to take centre stage in FMI. In a Chinese family, the (single) child often plays the role of 'the only hope' of the family (Xu, 2016). Even fathers who reported weaker musical identities and less musical interest explained they were enthusiastic about providing their child with a good musical environment by participating in music with the family or accompanying the child to a music concert or class. Thus, children are at the core of FMI. In comparison to studies of musical parenting in a Western context, Gibson (2009) found both parents' and children's preferences and interests shape the entire family's musical environment. The musical environment in a Chinese family might also be more child-centred. Arguably, FMI cannot operate and be maintained if the purpose of organising it is not for children's development. However, perhaps influenced by the traditional value of filial piety, the participating children expressed that they had to follow their parents' (particularly mothers') guidance in most situations (especially when they were young so that they had less autonomy). Thus, the mother dominance and the phenomenon of 'strict mother and kind father' in FMI is emphasised again. Overall, children get the spotlight in FMI, and thus they engage the whole family in music.

**Influence of FMI on musical identities.** FMI can have a range of influences on participants' musical identities, including: 1) regaining and broadening interest in music; 2) improving musical ability; 3) adopting new musical tastes; 4) adopting new identity; and 5) weakening musical identities. Although in most situations FMI can have a positive influence on participants' musical identities (as the first four influences show), the study also discovered an unexpected finding, i.e. that



there is a negative influence from FMI on musical identities. This was caused by unpleasant musical experiences with FMI. Although many previous studies indicate that taking part in musical activities is beneficial to individuals' musical identities or to interpersonal relationships (e.g. Brand & Bar-Gil, 2010; Passanisi et al., 2015; Wallace & Harwood, 2018), my study found that FMI as a family activity might not necessarily be enjoyable for all the family members involved. In a study of family recreation, Agate (2010) pointed out that promoting family activities should not simply mean inviting the entire family; instead, families and activity organisers should take steps to facilitate an enjoyable experience for all the family members involved. To do this, family activity providers (e.g. family members or community workers) should consider families' needs, leisure interests, preference and abilities (Agate, 2010). In light of my study, when organising a musical activity, factors such as individual family member' music preferences, personal interest, personality and children's age need to be taken into consideration. Families should also recognise the challenges they might face in FMI; for example, families' needs are constantly changing and evolving throughout the different stages of the family's life cycle (Agate, 2010). Simply pulling family members together might not achieve the goal of 'families that play together, stay together'; instead, it can adversely affect individuals' interests and motivation in FMI, as well as their communication and relationships with family members.

**Relationship between FMI and musical identities.** The study suggests there might be a reciprocal relationship between FMI and musical identities. This was reflected in participants' reports about their roles in FMI and the influence of FMI on their musical identities. Firstly, findings associated with participants' musical identities, attitudes and roles in FMI imply that their self-defined and perceived musical ability, confidence and identities strongly influence their behaviour, interest and motivation. For example, since mothers and children have stronger musical identities, they play a more dominant role in FMI. Meanwhile, fathers, who expressed weaker musical identities played a less active role in FMI (often that of a bystander). Secondly, FMI can have both positive and negative influence

on participants' musical identities. The majority of participants experienced a positive change on their musical identities when engaging in FMI. However, when family members' preferences are not facilitated and balanced, FMI might also be less interesting and enjoyable for the family members involved. Moreover, roles and identities in FMI are not static. The roles that family members play are interchangeable in many situations depending on the family's life stage, family members' age, and a variety of other factors. For example, both participants F1 and F5 mentioned that when the children were younger, it was usually the parents who organised and managed musical activities; however, when the children grew older, they took the initiative to organise family musical events themselves.

### **8.2.3 Research Question 3: What is the relationship between FMI and interpersonal interactions and family communication?**

The study suggests that FMI and family relationships can mutually influence each other. FMI could exert both negative and positive influences on interpersonal interactions and family communication, and effective family communication is the foundation of the smooth operation and maintenance of FMI.

**Negative experiences in FMI.** As discussed above, FMI could cause participants unpleasant feelings and experiences. The data analysis indicates that these negative experiences can be divided into two aspects, namely integration problems and control problems. Integration problems refer to participants' reluctance to engage in FMI or being unable to enjoy FMI, while control problems mainly refer to participants' feelings of being out of control, which were caused by different preferences or opinions about FMI. These problems imply that FMI involves more complex interactions and relationships, such as the parent-child relationship, spouse relationship, the allocation of family responsibilities and competition for power among family members. Negative experience indicates that individuals and families should not take the benefits of FMI for granted. Families might not be able to build family cohesion and a meaningful lifestyle via FMI if they do not communicate and interact effectively with one another.

**Positive experiences in FMI.** FMI can bring benefits both to parents and children. It can help parents generate cooperation and shared goals in child rearing, and thereby promote marital relationships. Additionally, it can improve parent-child relationships, by negotiating musical tastes, establishing mutual understanding, and providing parents and children with more opportunities to communicate. It is worth noting that in spite of negative experiences reported, FMI was described as having a positive influence on family relationships in most situations. Even when family members have negative feelings about FMI, they still find ways to adjust themselves; for example, they might bias their memory and attention toward positive information. Therefore, negative experiences can be mediated and transformed into positive memories and feelings. This can be linked to socioemotional selectivity theory (SST), as set out by Carstensen (1992) and the strength and vulnerability integration theory (SAVI) put forward by Charles (2010). Both these theories indicate that as time goes by, people might change their perspectives and increase their knowledge of preferred emotion-regulation strategies, thereby reducing the negativity they experience in conflict situations, or enabling them to avoid negative experiences in their environment (see also, Charles & Carstensen, 2010; Hebblethwaite, 2015). Older adults (although not all of them) tend to choose to participate in relationships that are closer and more rewarding, in order to maintain their affective well-being (Charles & Carstensen, 2010; Hebblethwaite, 2015). SAVI also proposes that when people cannot avoid negative experiences (for instance, when their emotional regulation skills and strategies are not employed appropriately or successfully), age-related improvements in affective well-being will be attenuated and even disappear completely, and they may still experience emotional distress. However, after experiencing a lot of positive and negative experiences, older people have learned how to survive, how to feel contentment or how to avoid high levels of distress in their daily lives. This might explain why some participants reported that negative experiences were transient, and in retrospect they generally made positive comments about FMI immediately after reporting negative aspects. Perhaps as a result of time left to live (as posited by SST and SAVI), or as people age (such as the case daughter of F1), they tended to focus on positive experiences and

comment on FMI positively. In this study, both parents and children tended to behave like this.

Shaw and Dawson (2001) indicate that family activities are often purposive in nature: many people do not merely focus on the enjoyment aspects of family recreational activities; they plan and facilitate family activities to achieve certain short- and long-term goals (see also, Agate, 2010; Hebblethwaite, 2015). These goals can include, for instance, enhancing family functioning, improving communication among family members, and providing children with knowledge about healthy lifestyles and moral values (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Perhaps FMI as a family activity is also purposive. Developing 'healthy' or 'functional' musical identities may be a goal of FMI. For example, the evidence in chapter 5 suggests that one of the motives for FMI is to build family cohesion and a healthy lifestyle. As such, even though negative experiences may be irreconcilable, family members can find ways to adjust it. Thus, from this point of view, negative experiences in FMI might not be completely harmful to the construction of family relationships, as their influences are short-term and transient and family members might find strategies to cope with unexpected feelings. This finding is in accordance with Hebblethwaite's (2015) research on intergenerational family leisure, in which she suggests family leisure activities with a purposeful and generative intent can mediate ambivalent feelings in a positive way, allowing family members to address them. As such, its positive influence should outweigh its negative influence. Although the study does not follow participants up over long time periods, it is also possible that negative experiences do result in long term damage to family relationships if not handled in appropriate ways by all family members. By improving interpersonal communication strategies (for example, be more respectful), and balancing family member's different preferences and needs, negative feelings can be reduced to a large extent.

As Shaw (1992, 1997) pointed out, family activities have contradictory aspects. On the one hand, they are viewed positively, because they are always highly valued and believed to have some positive benefits. Simultaneously, they may be experienced as work with negative repercussions for those family members who

have to plan and arrange activities. Motivations for family activities can be both intrinsic and obligatory, and thus both positives and negatives can result from a family leisure activity (Agate, 2010; Shaw,1992). The findings of this study confirm that when engaging in music as a family unit, positive and negative outcomes coexist (as Shaw suggested). Taken together, it is arguable that FMI is purposive and incorporates contradictory aspects.

It is acknowledged that in the data analysis, the three overarching themes/categories were used to organise material relevant to each of the research questions, and some material is relevant to more than one overarching category. Nevertheless, all subordinate and emergent themes from the levels underneath were consistent with the thematic analysis, which solely emerged from the data alone.

### **8.3 Research Contributions and Implications**

**1.Main contributions.** The main contribution of this study is that it presents a new area of research by exploring Chinese families' musical involvement and musical identities. The study is the first study to adopt and adapt Western concepts and theories (such as musical identities) into a musical psychological study in a Chinese context. As previously mentioned, despite the fact that the area of musical identities has been widely researched and explored, few studies have focused on a Chinese context. For example, the book *Handbook of Musical Identities* (MacDonald et al., 2017) contains 44 chapters and none of them focus on musical identities in China. The meaning of musical identities in the context of Western theories is quite different from that in Chinese musical research. As academic communication between China and Western countries is increasingly frequently, combining Western and Chinese theories and concepts is a meaningful pursuit.

In both Chinese and Western, the family has played an important role in shaping one's musical identities. However, the different social-cultural context (such as the highly competitive education system) and social policies (such as College

Entrance Exam and the One-child policy) are expected to strongly affect Chinese families' musical engagement, suggesting unique aspects with which to explore the Chinese context. For example, in Borthwick and Davidson's (2002, p.64) study, there was a strong parental expectation for the children to be musically active, and a clear and united 'musical group identity' serving to bind all family members together: music was for all to discuss, listen to and either play or supervise. The current study also found that Chinese parents are keen to support their children's engagement in various kinds of musical activities. However, Chinese families' musical involvement is particularly child-focused, and the united musical group identity is 'all for kids'. In a contemporary Chinese family, parents' musical identities and practices may not strongly influence the development of musical group identity; instead, it is the only-child's musical preference, engagement and identity that can determine how the family's musical identities are negotiated and maintained, and how the family's musical involvement is developed. One example is the case of F1: the father was constantly reflecting upon his identity in FMI, and defined himself as 'a tone deaf' and 'a parent of music learner' at the same time. He associated his own identity with his daughter's identity. This highlights the correlation between the changing nature of both families and musical identities. Musical identities are constantly evolving throughout lifespan in response to interactions with others (Hargreaves et al., 2017), and so do families. Since the one-child policy ended in 2015, it is possible that the family patterns mapped in the current study could be on the way out in China, and this may also influence the development of musical identities of Chinese families.

**2.Implications from findings regarding fathers' musical identities.** Of equal importance are the research implications for future studies, particularly for studies on music psychology and family research. The study highlights gender bias in FMI and music culture in Chinese context. Various factors might be expected to contribute to fathers' weaker musical identities, such as educational background, economic level, personality, or social status. Due to the research purpose and questions, this study did not further explore the reasons behind the phenomenon.

Thus, there remains space for future studies on Chinese fathers' musical identities and family status. In addition, the absence of fathers in both FMI and family affairs should garner more attention from all segments of society. The role of the father is irreplaceable in a family. Improving fathers' musical identities and motivation in FMI might generate more benefits for the family and improve the effects of FMI. Chinese families, schools, communities and policy makers could also draw upon experience from other countries. For example, some Western countries, such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, have taken steps to promote family-friendly policies (e.g., paid parental-leave) encouraging and supporting fathers to spend more time caring for their children (Huerta et al., 2014). Some scholars also advocate for informing parents of both maternal and paternal involvement; as these are equally important to children's development (Huerta et al., 2014). In China, family activity organisers could provide more opportunities for fathers to participate in family activities, for example, schools and communities could encourage fathers to participate in activities; and the media should not only emphasise mothers' participation in family affairs, but turn the spotlight on fathers thereby raising their awareness of participation in family. In the case of F5, the father seemed to subvert gender norms as he is a violinist and took a more active part in FMI when compared to other non-musician fathers. Future research could focus on the influence/roles of musical parents.

**3.Implications from findings regarding mothers' musical identities.** The study has also realised and revealed the rising status of mothers in the family. This also affects some issues associated with perspectives concerning parenting style. As shown in chapters 6 and 7, fathers and children often complain about mothers' parenting, and many conflicts in FMI were also generated to some extent by mothers' strict parenting. This finding brings some new considerations and thoughts regarding the role of parents. Chinese parenting has long been discussed by both Chinese and Western societies. The issue of 'stronger mothers' in this study is not merely about whether a family should have 'a strict mother and a kind father', or 'a strict father and a kind mother'; more importantly, it raises

awareness of the importance of the allocation of family responsibilities, the balance of both fathers' and mothers' power, and the cooperation of parents and even family members in FMI. Future studies could examine the connections between parenting style and the outcomes of FMI. In a study of mothers and daughters' musical interactions in the UK, Morgan et al. (2015) found that middle-aged women are able to absorb and appreciate a large variety of musical tastes, using them for various physical and psychological needs. The participating mothers in Morgan et al.'s study were willing to tolerate their children's preferred music (such as pop music in vogue) in order to define their joint identity with their teenagers. Conversely, in the current study, mothers, especially middle-aged mothers (such as mothers F1, F3 and F6) seemed more authoritative, as they often suggested suitable music for their child. Future research could also compare the different musical parenting styles between Chinese and Western families.

**4.Implications for future research methods and scope.** Although the study focused on a small sample size, the findings of the study may still be transferable and applicable to samples selected from other places in China. Future studies could usefully focus on a larger sample size by applying quantitative methods to study different family members' behaviours and experiences with FMI. Future studies could also choose samples from rural areas in China, as different levels of economic development might create different situations with regard to FMI in rural families. Moreover, future studies can also expand the research scope toward nuclear families and include other types of families, such as extended families, multiple-child families (since China has ended its one-child policy), or separated families (for example, how FMI takes place across households where parents have separated, but children still have musical lives). Since the study reveals that the choice of a family's musical activities is often related to children's age or family stage, future studies might also consider age issues (by following families over a number of years), and investigate and compare musical activities that take place within families at the same stage.

This study also provides implications for gender studies, family studies and music education studies in China. The findings of this study indicate that gender issues



might also be important factors influencing FMI. Some Chinese researchers have directed attention towards the gender imbalance issues in the area of music education (Chen, J., 2009), and parental differences in terms of family interaction/education (Zhang, 2012; Zhao, 2017). Future studies could further explore the influence of gender on FMI and other family activities in China; for instance, whether the child's gender influences parental choices of musical/family activities. In terms of music education studies, further options are to focus on parents' roles and musical parenting/parental involvement in (family) music education (Jiang, 2016; Zhang, 2017). This study offers new insights into musical engagement within the family unit. Future studies could focus on the everyday use of music within a family, which is a less widely researched area in China. Future research could also make cross-cultural comparisons in order to see what could each culture gain from adopting from the other; for instance, a study comparing Chinese and Western families (e.g. UK, US or Australian families), or other Asian families (e.g. Singaporean, Malaysian or Japanese families).

**5. Practical implications.** The findings concerning negative experiences with FMI also have practical implications for families. Leisure studies have pointed out that even though family leisure could play a significant role in constructing family bonds, it can also prove challenging for families because of its ambivalent nature (Hebblethwaite, 2015; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2010). Family leisure can be both consensual and conflictual (Hebblethwaite, 2015; Hebblethwaite & Norris 2010). On one hand, engaging in leisure activities together can generate positive experiences for families by encouraging the development of common interests and strong emotional bonds, as well as increasing interpersonal communication; on the other hand, ambivalent thoughts and emotions can often be experienced when families engage in leisure activities (Agate, 2010; Freysinger, 1997; Hebblethwaite, 2015; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2010; Kay, 1998, 2000; McCabe, 2016; Rosenblatt & Cunningham, 1976; Rosenblatt et al., 1979; Scraton & Holland, 2006; Shaw, 1992, 1997; Shaw & Dawson, 2003; Trussell & Shaw, 2007, 2009). Since FMI is another form of family activity, families can also experience shared challenges. In fact, negative feelings or ambivalent feelings are common

phenomena in the context of family leisure activities (Hebblethwaite, 2015; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2010; Hogerbrugge & Komter, 2012). They are relevant to personal and societal development and are largely irreconcilable (Hebblethwaite, 2015). Both Chinese and Western music educators, music therapists, and community workers could devise strategies to help families see any problems as something other families come across, and how they can overcome these or get more positive time from their musical interaction. Perhaps adjusting family members' expectations and motivation for the outcomes of FMI could reduce pressure. After all, musical activities are supposed to be fun and enjoyable, they are not intended to create extra burdens for family members.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of the study is the composition of the study sample. China is a multi-ethnic country comprised of 56 nationalities with the largest population in the world. Each Chinese ethnic group has their own characteristics associated with their music culture. For example, Tibetan people and the Uyghur people engage in a variety of musical activities in their daily lives. Moreover, since China is a large country, different cities and areas have varying levels of economic development and cultural characteristics. In addition, minority ethnic families and families in some rural areas are not affected by the one-child policy. However, only Han people were selected from urban cities, and five of the six families in this study were nuclear families. This was because it was beyond the scope of a 3-year PhD project to encompass the full diversity of Chinese society. When I have referred to Chinese society, culture, and values in the thesis I have been referring to mainstream Chinese culture. Therefore, the sample was limited in terms of diversity, and thus the results of the study may not be generalizable. For this reason, in the above section I have addressed my recommendations for future studies to employ quantitative methods when investigating a larger sample size, or to take a focused qualitative look at other types of family.

#### **8.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed the study's main research findings, and made suggestions and recommendations for future studies. The limitations of the study are also discussed. To summarise, this study has expanded our knowledge of Chinese families' musical activities and musical identities. It introduced the term 'musical identities' to study Chinese families and music psychology research in Chinese academia. It provides information about the current situation with regard to Chinese families' musical identities and each individual family member's role in FMI, and examined the outcomes of FMI.

Evidence suggests that music has always been a part of human experience. As Green (2003, p.263) observes, 'a society without music has never been discovered.' In China, during the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period, the function of music in terms of promoting harmony within specific relationships was emphasised by ancient philosophers (Higgins, 2001). Alongside the development of economy and society, Chinese people have begun to place greater importance on the quality and well-being of their spiritual lives. Increasingly, therefore, families are becoming interested in various musical activities. As an essential part of daily life, music does not merely play the role of entertainment, it can also function as an expression and representation of an individual's identity. As Hargreaves et al. (2002, p.1) point out, individuals use music not only to regulate their everyday moods and behaviours, but also to present themselves to others as they prefer. This is also in accordance with the ideas of ancient Chinese philosophers such as Confucius and Xunzi (Higgins, 2001). Consequently, both music and family are two aspects that Chinese people cherish and pursue. In summary, I hope this study can offer up some new insights into the relationship between music and family constructs in the Chinese context. Building a happier family through music is a worthwhile pursuit. However, this study has shown that achieving this goal might not be as simple as it sounds. Thus, both Chinese and Western families, music educators, music therapists, communities, schools as well as social institutions need to pay more attention to addressing practical considerations. Further research needs to be undertaken to expand the scope of the study and review additional factors from multiple

perspectives.

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## **Appendix I: Interview Guide**

### **Interview Guide**

#### *Family Musical Participation*

- Would you please tell me about your daily musical activities? What kind of musical activities do you participate in often?
- How often do you participate in these musical activities?
- Would you please tell me about your family's musical participation? What kind of musical activities does your family participate in together?
- How often does your family participate in these musical activities?
- Would you please tell me what kinds of resources you make use of for your family's collective musical activities?
- Would you please tell me what music means to you and your family?
- Would you please tell me how important music is to your family? What are your opinions regarding your family's musical activities?
- Would you please describe to me your motivation for participating in these musical activities in your family? What do you expect to achieve from these musical activities?

#### *Musical Identities*

- Would you please tell me how would you describe your role in your family's musical activities? What kinds of roles do you play during these activities?
- Could you please comment on the roles that your partner/parents/child plays in these activities?

- In terms of the aspects of music, what are the kinds of changes or influences that your family's musical involvement/activities have brought you?

*Outcomes/Effects of FMI*

- Would you please tell me about your experience of your family's musical activities? (both positive and negative)
- In terms of the aspects of your family relationship, what benefits do you experience when engaging in musical activities?
- In terms of the aspects of your family relationship, do you have any negative experiences relating to your family's musical activities, or is there anything else that you are not satisfied with in relation to these activities?

## Appendix II: Interview Guide (Chinese Version)

### 访谈提纲

#### 家庭音乐参与情况

- 能否谈谈您的音乐生活？您平时都有哪些音乐活动？
- 您参加这些活动的频率如何呢，多久参加一次这些音乐活动？
- 能否谈谈您家里的音乐参与情况？您家平常都有哪些可以一起参加的音乐活动？
- 你们多久参加一次这些活动呢？
- 能否告诉我您家有哪些可以用组织音乐活动的资源？
- 能否谈谈音乐对您个人和对您整个家庭而言的重要性？您如何看待/评价自己家庭的这些音乐活动？
- 能否谈谈您组织这些家庭音乐活动的动机？比如您为什么组织这些活动、您希望从这些活动中获得什么？

#### 音乐认同

- 能否告诉我您如何评价您自己在家里的音乐活动中扮演的角色，或者说有什么作用？
- 您如何评价您的伴侣/父母/孩子在这些活动中的作用或者扮演的角色？
- 就音乐方面而言，参加这些音乐活动带给您的改变或者影响有哪些？

#### 影响/效果

- 能否谈谈这些家庭音乐活带给您的体验或感受是什么呢？
- 就家庭关系而言，家里参加的这些音乐活动带给您好的体验是什么？
- 就家庭关系而言，这些音乐活动有没有带给您什么不好的体验或经历？

## Appendix III: Consent form for participants

Dear Participant:

I am a Ph.D. student from the University of Edinburgh. My study concerns Chinese family's musical involvement and musical identities. I would like to invite you to take part in a personal interview. I will ask you questions about the current situation with regard to your family's musical participation. The interview may take approximately one hour. I will audio record the interview if you permit. The interview recording will be transcribed, but your name and identity will be anonymized. I will use pseudonyms in the interview transcription and throughout my thesis to protect your privacy. The recording and transcript will be safely password-protected, and will be destroyed after I have completed my research. No one but myself will have access to the document. Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no known risks associated with taking part in this research. However, since I may ask you some questions about your family, if you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview and do not want to answer my questions you can choose to withdraw freely. You can also refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Yours sincerely,  
Yili Gao

If you have read and understood the information above, please sign your name below.

**Name of participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parental consent (If your child is under 18-year old)**

I have read and understood the information stated above and I am happy for my child take part in this project.

**Name of Parent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information**

Researcher: Yili Gao

Email: Yili.Gao@ed.ac.uk

Supervisor: Raymond MacDonald

Email: [Raymond.MacDonald@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Raymond.MacDonald@ed.ac.uk)

Supervisor: Graeme Wilson

Email: [Graeme.Wilson@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Graeme.Wilson@ed.ac.uk)

## Appendix IV: Consent to participant (Chinese Version)

### 参加研究知情同意书

尊敬的参与者：

您好！我是来自爱丁堡大学的一名博士研究生。我正在进行一项关于中国家庭音乐参与和音乐认同的调查研究。我诚心邀请您参加一场个人访谈。我将询问您一些关于您家庭的音乐参与情况的问题。本次访谈将耗时一小时左右。如果您同意，我将对方谈进行录音。访谈的内容将会被我整理成文字以方便我的数据整理。我会在所有的资料以及论文中使用化名，您的身份和姓名都将进行严格保密。所有的数据（包括访谈内容、录音等）都将被安全保管并且只有我能够接触。我会在研究结束后销毁这些资料和录音。本次访谈以自愿为原则。参加此研究并无已知的风险，但我可能会问及您一些关于您家庭的事宜。如果您对此或是在访谈进行中有感到任何不舒服，您可以在任何时候选择退出这次访谈，而不用担心 有什么后果。您也可以选择拒绝回答某些问题但继续参加本次访谈。

如果您已阅读并理解以上信息，请在下面签名。

参与者姓名： \_\_\_\_\_

日期： \_\_\_\_\_

### 未成年家长同意书

我已阅读并理解以上信息且同意我的孩子参加次研究。

家长签名： \_\_\_\_\_

日期 \_\_\_\_\_

### 联系方式

研究员： Yili Gao

邮箱： Yili.Gao@ed.ac.uk

导师： Raymond MacDonald

邮箱： Raymond.MacDonald@ed.ac.uk

导师: Graeme Wilson

邮箱: Graeme.Wilson@ed.ac.uk

## Appendix V: Ethical Approval

### research ethics application

WARWICK Genevieve <G.Warwick@ed.ac.uk>

Thu 01/06/2017 16:25

To: GAO Yili <Yili.Gao@ed.ac.uk>

Cc: ENQUIRIES ECA PGR <ecaresearchdegrees@ed.ac.uk>

Dear Yili

Thank you for your application, I am happy to say that this has been considered by ECA PGO and AHSS College Governance Ethics Office, and has been approved.

On behalf of ECA PGO I would like to wish you the best for your research.

Genevieve

Genevieve Warwick / Director of Research School of History of Art / Director Edinburgh College of Art Postgraduate School / AHRC Strategic Lead College of Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences

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