Cultural Identity and Mathematics Learning of Chinese Families Living in Australia

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Summary

Research studies on migration and education often see Chinese families as homogeneous and Chinese identity as fixed and stable. This view on homogeneity dismisses the growing complexity of cultural identities of Chinese people living overseas in this era when migrants have frequent and multiple connections with more than one social world. Expectations of homogeneity also produce stereotypes that misrepresent who Chinese people are. Stereotypes of Chinese families often portray parents as demanding and authoritative, who have high expectations on their children who are disciplined, diligent and good at mathematics. The last stereotype is supposedly confirmed by media reports of Asian students' performance in international mathematics assessments such as TIMSS and PISA.

Adopting a narrative approach, this ethnographic study conducted by a researcher with a Chinese cultural heritage explored the cultural identities of Chinese families living in Australian and how they might impact on their children's mathematics learning. The notion of Chineseness in the diasporic context was interrogated and the impact of transnationalism on Chinese families' belonging to both their homeland and Australia were also examined. Results showed that participating families have considerably different ties with both their homelands and Australia. Their identities as seen in how they relate to the people and practices in both places did not have much impact on their children's mathematics learning. It was found that parents valued education and perceived mathematics more broadly as a subject to prepare their children

for a better future. The extra help offered by parents or private tutoring was seen to provide the support their children need to achieve in mathematics.

Statement of Candidate

I, Man Yee Angel Mok, certify that the work in this thesis is my original work and it has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University. It is entirely my own work and that every reference to other materials has been acknowledged. The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee Approval No.52001100768 (Appendix F). Ethical approval for interviewing families and teachers in schools has been obtained from New South Wales Department of Education and Communities state education research approval process (SERAP), approval No. 2011185 (Appendix G).

Signature of candidate:

Date: 11th February, 2015

送給父親母親

To my parents

Acknowledgements

This doctorate study is a piece of work that I completed with the assistance of a fantastic group people in my life. Without them I would not have completed or even embarked this journey. The list of these people is long but here I would like to mention some of them who have been incredibly supportive and encouraging.

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I am grateful of the help of the participating schools and families, without their kindness and generosity, this study would not have been possible.

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Finally I have to say thank you to my parents who have taught me the value of diligence and perseverance; and to my two lovely children, Lee and Pearl – you are my inspiration and pillar of my strength. Lastly, I want to thank my late friend Winifred Lai. Wini, I know you are smiling.

Glossary

Acronym/Term	Description
HSC	The Higher School Certificate (HSC) is a "recognised qualification for students who successfully complete secondary education in NSW". "One of the main aims of the new HSC is to make students better qualified to win jobs or go on to higher education when they leave school". (NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), 2013).
NAPLAN	"National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It is made up of tests in four areas, namely, reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy" (National Assessment Program (NAP), 2013)
OC	Opportunity classes (OC) are "classes in some government primary schools for students in Years 5 and 6 that cater for highly-achieving, academically talented students by offering an educationally enriched environment. To enter selective high school in New South Wales, students are considered on the basis of academic merit which is determined by the students' performance on the school curriculum and in the Selective High Schools Placement Test" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2012). As such, some parents perceive opportunity class as the first step to prepare their children to enter selective high schools.
PISA	"The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. To date, students representing more than 70 economies have participated in the assessment" (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), n.d.).
Selective High School	"Selective high schools cater for gifted and talented students who have superior to very superior academic ability which is matched by exceptionally high classroom performance. These schools can provide intellectual stimulation by grouping together gifted and talented students who may otherwise be isolated from a suitable peer group" (NSW Public Schools, 2014).

TIMSS	“The Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMSS) is an international survey that monitors the maths and science achievement of year 5 and year 9 pupils world-wide” (The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), n.d.). More than 60 countries from all over the world will be participating in TIMSS 2015.

PART 1

ENTERING THE STORY

In their discussion on experience and story in qualitative research, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that we come to each new inquiry in the midst of the stories of both the participants and the researcher. Indeed, stories do not happen in a vacuum but in a continuum called history. PART 1 of this thesis introduces how the inquiry entered into the stories of the participants and the researcher.

Although an inquiry starts in the middle, there is still a beginning, a place from where it begins. "Narrative beginning" that acknowledges the centrality of the researcher's experience is crucial in qualitative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As such, my narrative is given in chapter 1, *'The narrator'*, with its aim to make visible to the readers how my current position in the topics are framed by my experience in the past.

Research is a process to inquire into topics of interest. Acknowledging that the research process often opens up more questions than it attends, the aim of this study is to contribute to advancing current knowledge of the topic rather than providing *the* answer to a question. Chapter 2 *'The scene'* outlines the research context in which this study is situated and the research gap it addresses.

Stories of participants in this study are composed as family narratives that illustrate the experiences of *both* parents and their children in Sydney, in particular their learning experience in mathematics. A detailed discussion of what narrative approach is and how it is applied in this study is presented in

chapter 3 ‘*The Representation’*. Together, these three chapters provide the background information needed to understand the family narratives that are displayed in chapter 4 and 5.

Chapter 1 The Narrator

My positioning statement

It has been pointed out that the researcher in qualitative research cannot be separated from the research (see, for example, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Flick, 2006; O'Leary, 2010), and this study is no exception. My position in the study is even more complicated as I share both the cultural heritage and migrant experiences of living in Sydney. As such, it is of paramount importance for me to be highly reflexive of my positioning and explain my reflexion to readers of this thesis. O'Leary's comment that credible research demands "reflexive awareness of our worldviews and a conscious effort for us to take them into account as we enter into the research journey" (2010, p. 30) is particularly relevant. I entered this research as a researcher to explore Chinese students' mathematics performance from a cultural perspective. Researchers in ethnographic studies are always outsiders for everything could be regarded as different (Wolcott, 1999). However, I did not enter as a complete outsider because I have always been inside. My experience of living in Sydney and my Chinese heritage have already positioned me as an insider. This dual positionality has provided me with a bi-focal lens to understand participants' experiences.

This is a study about the interplay between self and culture and I engage myself differently at different points in this process. Self-conscious conversation has helped me to understand and acknowledge my identity and position in this study. I have made this revelation public in the form of a narrative that is also a record of my reflexion, or a "heightened awareness of self in the research

process" (Elliott, 2005). (Flick, 2006) notes that in qualitative research, "the subjectivity of the researcher and of those being studied becomes parts of the research process" (p.16). As a Chinese migrant living in Sydney, I share a lot of commonalities with the participants in this study and in many ways, I am researching my "own people" (Hayano, 1979, cited in Ellis & Bochner, 2000). However, while the methodology employed in this study is in general auto-ethnographic in orientation, and its interpretation that of cultural, the content of this study is not auto-biographic in nature (H. Chang, 2008). This is a *reflective ethnographic* study in which my own narrative is not the focus of the study, but my experience serves to illuminate the culture under study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). As such my narrative, displayed as a chapter in this thesis, is instrumental in examining "place, biography, self and other to understand how they shape the analytic exercise" (Macbeth, 2001, p. 35). Readers will be able to see how my experiences have enlivened an ethnographic study, and how research data were analysed through my eyes. Reflexion on my *self* is essential in identifying the discourses that have impacted the lens through which I see the world and the research data.

Unlike what is usually argued in bicultural studies, I do not see myself as navigating between two cultural worlds, namely the 'Chinese world' and the 'Anglo world'. Rather, I see myself living and navigating in a hybrid world in which boundaries are blurry and negotiable. I do not travel between the space of the researcher and the researched either because there are no boundaries between the two. Instead, I use my dual positionality as a hybrid subject to problematise the distinction between the observer and the observed, insider and outsider. I found Ellis and Bochner's use of "ethnographer's gaze" very

insightful in explaining my interpretive process (2000). My lens zooms inward and outward, forward and backward, between the personal and cultural, to achieve the clarity I needed in the interpretation. There are many entry and exit points in zooming in and out of the data. At times I found myself living in the lives of my participants, seeing the world through their eyes, feeling their pressure, frustration, as well as fulfillment and freedom of living in Australia. Other times I found myself trying to piece information together and make sense of it from a theoretical perspective.

As a researcher I persistently contrast and analyse the data from the 'etic' view (Wolcott, 1999), to look for patterns as well as differences and contradictions within and across data sets. However, an ethnographic study also adopts an 'emic' approach to both data gathering and analysis (Wolcott, 1999) in the way that information is sought and examined from the insiders' view. Being an insider I have the privilege to view the data with a special lens. Nevertheless, I always bear in mind that this is only my *own* lens and that there is no monolithic insider view either. In other words, no insider view is unified or without difference. As a researcher in this study, I have facilitated in the development of an open text that encourages multiple interpretations. Rather than *the* interpretation, mine is only *an* interpretation, from the eyes of this gendered, hybrid and historical self.

It is certainly not my intention to exercise my authority as the author of this thesis to force my readers to believe my interpretation is either the best or the only one. In fact, I would like to invite readers to take an active role in the construction of a response to the data presented to them. I appreciate multiple interpretations of postmodernist texts and believe this is how we can get closer

to the core of complex social phenomena. I created narratives that detailed the social, political and historical landscapes in which each family is situated. My analysis aims to guide readers to focus on the objective of this research. My intention is to provide space for readers to listen to the voices in and between families. The narratives of these six participating families, together with that of mine, provide examples of the experiences, the longings, the joy, as well as the frustrations in the grand narrative of the Chinese diaspora living in Sydney.

My narrative

"In short, if I am inescapably Chinese by descent,

I am only sometimes Chinese by consent.

When and how is a matter of politics" (Ang, 2001, p.36)

Australia has never felt foreign to my family. It was a holiday destination that we visited every year from the time my younger child was only 20 months old. We visited my husband's sister in Sydney and other cities in Australia a number of times before we made the decision to emigrate to Sydney. I love the space here - both the physical and intellectual space that I believe is vital to the development of my children. This open space contrasted significantly to the education system in Hong Kong which, albeit with continuous educational reforms, is still based on an elitist model favouring those already possessing certain capitals, and suppressing creativity and personal talents. Personally, having *survived* the elite education system in the 80s, I simply do not want my children to go through the same process, although I believe they could survive too. Subsequently, moving to Sydney in 2003 was a family decision - to provide an opportunity for a *better* education for the children who were 8 and 9 years old at that time.

We moved to a suburb that was highly homogenous in culture. As Asians were an absolute minority there, and it seemed there was also confusion about geographical boundaries and political realities. Many times I was asked by my new Caucasian friends, 'Where have you come from?' 'Oh from Hong Kong!',

and they would then start asking me about things in or from China; or in conversations about China or mainland Chinese, they would turn to me and seek my input. I tried to avoid such occasions, as I felt utterly uncomfortable by my inability to give them the answers they wanted. While at that time I knew *very, very* little about China, and I *was* also not interested to know more. Sometimes I would explain to them that my ignorance was due to the colonial background of Hong Kong but other times I just smiled. In my heart I was begging them not to put me in a Chinese basket (the Chinese basket of their assumptions), because Hong Kong was different and I was different from the mainland Chinese too. I did not expect that my difference among the locals would force me to consider my ethnic identity, a question I had never had to think about before.

My first encounter with mainland China was in 1979, just a year after the adoption of an Open Door Policy. My parents took my two brothers and me to visit my father's hometown in Zhaoqing, a city in Guangzhou province. Today it takes under 4 hours to travel by road from Hong Kong to Zhaoqing, but in 1979, it took two days and considerable effort. We had to catch a train to the nearest Chinese city, then another one to Guangzhou, before taking other transportations to the small village where my father had lived. As one of the aims of this trip was to bring resources such as clothes and non-perishable food items to our relatives in China, my brothers and I had to wear more clothes than we needed at that time, to leave with my cousins there – people who sounded very close in a familial sense, but unfortunately whom I had never met before.

Map of China (The small dot illustrates the geographical location of Zhaoqing in China)

I vividly remember sitting with the crowd at the train station in Hong Kong, waiting to get tickets in the early hours of the morning, a chaotic and frightening experience for a young girl. I also remember clearly how my father pushed me into the train carriage through the window and told me with serious urgency, “SIT DOWN RIGHT AWAY AND DON’T MOVE”. Even as I write this paragraph I can still feel the motion sickness of travelling on the car ferry to the village, with the smell of diesel, the noise, the people, the chaos, the unknown, all of which were far too overwhelming for me at that time.

We were greeted by a big group of people, none of whom had I met before, who followed us all the way to the little hut where my father was born in the 1930s. It was a very primitive environment with no flushing toilet or running water. Pigs, chickens and ducks were indeed ‘free range’ and I had to be very careful not to step on their excrement, especially early in the morning and night when it was pitch dark. Besides domestic animals there were rats and other unknown creatures around, and I was absolutely terrified.

In addition to all the complaints and whinges during the trip, I remember saying to my family after the trip "I will *never* visit that place again', over and over again. And no one has asked me to do so since.

Of course, looking back I can see why my parents would attempt a trip like this with three young children. My father had left this remote village around 1948-49, and three decades on, he was married and had established a family with three children. Although my grandparents had already passed away and my father's siblings were living in Hong Kong at that time, he would want to visit his homeland and bring us with him. Yet, I believed he was also in shock when he saw how behind the country was, especially since his life had changed so significantly since he had left. During that time he had worked in international shipping companies for over 10 years and travelled all over the world. My father's world had changed and so had he. And so I thought, if technology had not provided us with the luxury of keeping in touch with people in Hong Kong, I would probably have done the same, returning to my homeland with my children to see friends and extended relatives there when I could. We all need to know where we came from, as much as who our parents are.

Like most migrants, we experienced some challenges when we first moved to Sydney but luckily none of them was major or deterred our desire to start a new life. In fact I found the process of exploring this new place quite enlightening. While I was always puzzled by practices and values demonstrated in local people's behaviours this confusion only added to my effort to understand them better. I have made a few friends from church and through university study, yet I did not realise I was oblivious to the ethnicity of my friends, until I was asked numerous times by people who were interested in

my social life, '…so, what about your Chinese friends?' This question made me realise I had not made any friends from Chinese backgrounds since moving to Sydney in 2003. This was partly due to the fact that there were very few Chinese students in the courses I did at university, but more importantly, upon reflection, it is because I was not drawn to people *because of* their Chinese backgrounds. When connected to like-minds who are inspiring, their ethnic origins do not appear to matter at all!

I remember one of my lecturers, whom I respected enormously, said the following to the class about education, "Like it or not, you will become a different person after three years at university. You will be changed". While some of my classmates found this remark unsettling because they just wanted to get the qualification and did not expect any changes in themselves, personally I found it very inspiring and quietly looked forward to those changes occurring. Transformation is empowering. Supporting that transformation and seeing people, including myself, evolve is exciting and rewarding. Significant change has occurred again since embarking on my doctoral journey. My awareness of issues of identity has been sensitised, and this sensitivity has brought me a couple of very confronting experiences.

This first incident happened in early 2011 when I first embarked on this study. I was grocery shopping in a multicultural area predominately inhabited by Vietnamese. With bags of groceries in my hands I was stunned when a man jumped out from my right and face to face asked in Mandarin, 'Zhonguoren?' ('*Chinese people'* in Mandarin)'. I was completely shocked by him for two reasons. Firstly, his behaviour scared me, and secondly, I was utterly confused by his question. I kept thinking about the question that afternoon and long after

it, even writing an email to all my friends, including those in Hong Kong, trying to make sense of my frustration, confusion and disgust. And upon reflection, I realised my confusion primarily stemmed from my inability to answer such a *simple* question at that time. Below was part of the email.

By him asking me in Mandarin, I can't simply say 'yes' to his question. I wanted to ask him 'what do you mean?' I am a Chinese by ethnicity but not much the ‘country of origin’... so if he is after someone from China (since he speaks Mandarin), I am not the kind of person he is looking for...but hang on, my parents came from China, so is China or Hong Kong my ‘country of origin’? But I don't speak Mandarin. I could only answer 'I came from Hong Kong' but that's not answering the question....

So who am I?

I am not at all serious about traditions, customs or family titles but I am very serious about respect and equity among people from all backgrounds. So when I first came to Australia I told my nieces and nephew to call me by name instead of ‘auntie Angel’. Looking back I think some elders in the family (extended family) were probably unhappy with my suggestion because these titles represent family relationships and hierarchy for members that are important aspects of Chinese families. But for me, these young people were born in Australia and could address me the Australian way.

I think my supervisor was very intuitive when he said my observation skill has been sharpened and my interest in self-reflection has been activated while doing this study. I have realised my frustrations about some of the cultural practices have been turned into grounded argument, though I doubt if anyone

cares about it at all. A wedding of a close relative recently exposed the conflict between my views on tradition and assumption of Chineseness.

The wedding of these two young Australian born Chinese was held in Sydney. I have to say at the forefront that I have never enjoyed weddings, festivals or celebrations which involve unexplained rituals because I find the unnegotiable authority that rituals have upon people to be very restrictive and sometimes disrespectful. Of course I still participated in the wedding to show my respect to the couple and their families, and I had hoped to share and enjoy the experience with everyone but unfortunately, this did not happen. I was perplexed by the spread of it – a ceremony in church in an inner city suburb, a reception in a fancy venue in the city at night, *as well as* a Chinese banquet the next evening. I found the mixed practices difficult to comprehend; hybrid practices which were a combination of east and west, as well as everyone's interpretation and improvisation of what Chinese wedding practices should be like in Sydney. A *minestrone* of wedding rituals and practices indeed. To legitimize those practices, they were often associated with the introduction 'as Chinese, we…', or 'It is the Chinese way to…' These introduction only added to my frustration because I was just supposed to follow, not to question, as questioning would disrupt the harmony of the wedding. But I *really* wanted to ask 'who *are* the Chinese?' and 'what *are* Chinese ways?'

I am not sure whether it is me who cannot let go of the question of 'Zhonguoren?' or whether the question does not let go of me. My sensitivity continued to grow and later became heightened as I really wanted to find an 'answer' to this question. In a chat with a colleague about my presentation on the theoretical framework of this study, I shared what I had learned at that time,

that *hybridity* was the site in which this study was located. While I was enthusiastically explaining how I identified myself as *neither* 'Australian' *nor* 'Chinese' but as a hybrid subject, this colleague said to me, almost abruptly, 'you *are* Chinese!' I was shocked and frustrated, and almost felt offended. I was speechless. I waited for his explanation but that did not happen. No explanation. He simply looked at me and repeated, 'you are Chinese'. I did not know how to respond. I wanted to say 'No I am not Chinese' but it sounded too ridiculous. But at the same time I did not want to say 'yes I am Chinese' because that was problematic to me. I wrote a long reflection on this incident to make sense of my reaction and in the end I wrote,

'You are Chinese' is an observation, not an interpretation.

'I am a hybrid' is position.

I am feeling much better now. (16/11/12)

My children Jade and Arnold (both names are pseudonyms) were in Years 3 and 4 respectively when they started going to school in Australia. It was an independent school that offered K-12 education, located in a western suburb of Sydney, with students from different cultural backgrounds although Chinese was the minority. While Cantonese is our home language, I was glad to see that the transition to an English-only learning environment seemed to go quite smoothly.

Jade's school experience was not bad, but it was not particularly fulfilling either. Jade is an artist, a creative soul with a strong sense of social justice, who

also has a great sense of humour and empathy. Sometimes I think the structured and confined nature of a school seemed to be too rigid and restrictive for her. She was one of the two students who did not do mathematics for the HSC in her cohort, as I had encouraged her to choose the subjects she liked for the HSC. She got into the University of New South Wales to do fine arts for a year, however she found the course not what she had expected and she is now studying a degree in illustration in Hong Kong.

Arnold's school experience was somewhat different. He commenced high school in the same school but changed to a selective school from year 9. We had not considered a selective school for him earlier as he was doing well in his original school and had developed a strong network of friends. The change was based on teachers' comments about his lack of attention in class, which he admitted and said he was bored. I felt that I had the responsibility to provide the best learning opportunities for my children, so when my friends said Arnold might need a more challenging learning environment, I explored selective schools of which I had no prior knowledge. Eventually he was accepted into a selective school in which 90% of the students were from Asian backgrounds. Suddenly Arnold became a small fish in a big pond, and his desire to learn was sparked by the challenges around him again. He became very competitive and a very active member in the school community.

Both Jade and Arnold are independent learners and neither of them really needed any kind of tutoring in their studies. However, when Arnold started year 11, I suggested he to go to coaching college for two reasons. Firstly, from my experience of working at universities, I recognised the importance of having good language skills in tertiary education and for future career

development. Therefore, as English was their second language, I wanted my children to consolidate their English writing skills in their high school years. Secondly, as much as I don't like the idea of benchmark exams such as the HSC, I understood this was the rule of the game and if he wanted to play it well he needed to get himself ready for the challenge. He was reluctant at the beginning but since most of his peers had been coached for a couple of years, Arnold decided to get support with mathematics and English when he started year 12, earning him the results he needed to do the degree in medicine in one of the most prestigious universities in Australia.

I know my parents are very proud of my brothers and me, although it is not the practice in Chinese families to praise their children. But privately, in those father-daughter moments, my now 80-year-old father has told me more than once that he is very proud of my two brothers who are both professionals. I had never dreamed of doing a doctoral degree but in retrospect I can now see why I have done it. Besides having a genuine interest in my topic and in an attempt to see my potential, I have done this study for my parents who did not have the opportunity to get formal education due to wars and poverty. My father once said to me, "Education is very important ... since I did not have the opportunity to go to school, I really want my children and grandchildren to get as much education as possible… when I was young, I did not get the promotion at work because I did not have the qualification. No education, no qualification, no future". "Yes I understand", I told him. With that in mind, I did as much study as I possibly could. And at the same time this study has also helped me better understand who my parents are by examining the historical and economic contexts in which they lived. It has empowered my intellectual capacity to

understand their continuous connections with their homelands, even after living in Hong Kong for almost 70 years.

My Chinese name has caused a lot of confusion and inconvenience in Australia. The Chinese way to put our names goes like this: surname first, then the name that usually consists of two Chinese characters. Together, these two characters produce a meaning. So my name at birth was: Mok (surname) Man Yee (a smart and swift child). I added *Angel* to my name when I turned 18 because it was the name I took up in high school, and the one known to everyone. Having an English name was compulsory at the Catholic girl's school that I went to. I remember one day the class teacher in Form 1 (equivalent to Year 7 in Australia) passed down a seating plan for us to write down our English names. The name Angel was added to my Chinese name from that day. Mok Man Yee, Angel appeared in all legal documents in Hong Kong. But for simplification I anglicised my name to Angel Mok to represent myself as soon as I came to Australia. My name however, has still caused a lot of confusion and inconvenience to many people. Since it is not the name appearing in my passport, both the tax office and superannuation funds were confused and I have been asked numerous times to prove my identity. As well, all university systems liked to omit part of my name and simply call me Man Mok. I have been called rude when reluctant to answer the question 'what is your Chinese name' asked by a new colleague of Caucasian background. Like the question 'Zhonguoren', 'what is your Chinese name' is not a simple question to answer, especially to someone who has very limited knowledge of how Chinese names are constructed. As well, as it is not common practice in Hong Kong to ask for someone's Chinese name if a person is introduced by

her/his English name, further questioning is sometimes seen as insensitive. When I refused to explain the name to my colleague, insisting that it was not essential for him to know about my Chinese name, it left both of us feeling a bit offended.

I had my first academic paper published in 2012, using the name Angel Mok, and for a while, I contemplated *which* name I should use in my doctoral thesis. The final decision has been to use Man Yee Angel Mok, which is a suitable representation of my history and heritage. I have honoured my parents who gave me this lovely name and their unconditional support and guidance throughout the years, for which I am eternally grateful. The inclusion of the English name *Angel* tells the historical context of colonial Hong Kong in which I was born and grew up. My Chinese name is my Chinese heritage that I acknowledge. I did not intend to deny any part of my history because together, they constitute who I am.

The following books have inspired me to embark on a journey to understand Chinese people.

I have never felt so profoundly touched by a book. The book *Big River Big Sea: Untold Stories of 1949* written by Professor Lung Ying-tai tells events surrounding the period of 1945-1949, which ended in the defeat of Kuomintang and nearly two million people fleeing to Taiwan (Lung, 2009).

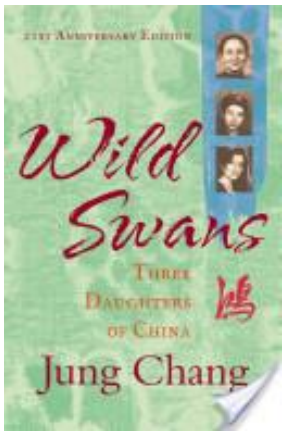
In Lung's words, this book gave a *poetic account* of what happened to China and the people in the civil war between 1945-1949. Not only did the book open my eyes and fill me with history, it exposed my naivety and ignorance about Chinese history. It told who the people before me were, who my parents are and thus, who I am.

I admire wholeheartedly Lung's intention and courage to publish this book that is now still banned in mainland China. In a speech she made at the University of British Columbia, she told the audience her intention of writing this book. First, it was written for millions of young people who died in the civil war. Second, it was written for those who survived the war and are still alive. It was to pay respect to this group of now very old people, when they could still read the history of which they were part. Third, she wanted to pass down *this box of memories* to the next generation.

There was intense resonance reading her book, although the intention and historical context of this thesis is hardly similar to that of Lung's book. But I feel that same sense of responsibility to do something for 'my' people. For me, it is to let others, including the policy makers, educators, and other members in

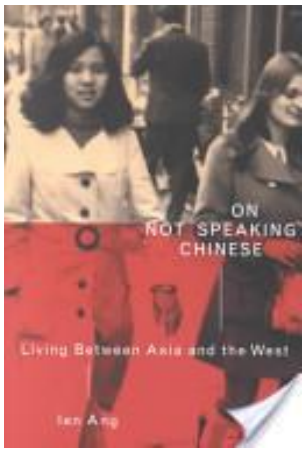
the community know who Chinese migrants are. I am humbled by this opportunity and feel honoured to be able to give them a voice – indeed to let their own voices challenge the misunderstanding, bias, and stereotypes of who Chinese are.

Born in colonial Hong Kong in the 1960s, I was not encouraged to learn about history and politics but to focus on personal achievement and wellbeing. The book *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang (J. Chang, 1991) put me back in the space of history.



Although the book was not about the history of Hong Kong but like *Big River Big Sea*, it gave faces to the people who fled from China to Hong Kong and other South-East Asian countries in 1949. It demonstrates to me that history is far from facts alone: it continues to impact us and future generations now. It shows how history has shaped us; how ideological difference, political struggles and greed for power changed the country and its people. It explains how poverty and insecurity pushed tens of million people out of their homelands. I recall Bauman's discussion on identity formation, that it is an on-going process that sits on our needs for freedom and security (2011), often creating tension and anxiety to the people. I think of my parents and many

others who moved to Hong Kong from China in the 1940s and 1950s. I imagine the tension and anxiety that they had once experienced, in their search for freedom and security. I can only imagine.



The book *On Not Speaking Chinese* written by Professor Ien Ang has expanded my intellectual horizons and enriched me with the knowledge to interrogate crucial concepts such as Chineseness and hybridity in conceptualising the experience of Chinese diaspora.

Born in Indonesia of Chinese descent, Ang experienced first-hand the frustration and challenges of being identified as a *Chinese,* an essentialised category that dismisses other aspects of who she is. Similar to her experience, my experience of living in Australia for over a decade compels me not to identify myself as fully Chinese, nor completely Australian. This reluctance to identify myself as either Chinese nor Australian, or any hyphenated form of them, which might be seen as deviance to norms and tradition, is in fact my way to challenge the categorical label of *Chinese,* as well as my awareness of identity politics that shaped and circumscribed my experience and subjectivity. (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) suggest that the "initial curiosities (for qualitative research) … come from real-world observations, emerging from the interplay

of the researcher's direct experience, tacit theories, political commitments, interests in practice , and growing scholarly interests" (p. 25). My personal experience and interests in the experiences of Chinese migrants embarked my engagement with the predicament of Chineseness and eventually led to an exploration of Chinese migrants' understanding of cultural identities, through the lens of mathematics learning in the context of Sydney, Australia.

All three books are biographic/auto-biographic in nature. I am deeply inspired by the power of storytelling and later decided to adopt narrative as the method of inquiry in this study. Stories are not simply a recount of what happened but they connect the personal to the social, cultural and political. It tells the context in which people experienced themselves in that time and place, and which explains the choices they made.

I have decided to invite my father to visit his homeland with me after I finish this study, if he can still manage the trip at that time.

Chapter 2 The Scene

Introduction

Research studies on migration and education often see Chinese families as homogenous and Chinese identity as fixed and stable. Categorisation of social identities often creates stereotypes and biases that in turn reinforce the views. Chinese parents are often described by others and sometimes themselves (Chua, 2011a) as strict and authoritative, and hold high expectations of their children. Chinese students, on the other hand, are portrayed as high achievers, rote learners and under enormous stress from their demanding parents. For example, Stevenson and Stigler (1992) report that Americans view Asian students as rote learners, innately docile, and are under great stress because their parents push them to succeed from an early age; these stereotypes still prevail nowadays in Australia (Vialle, 2013). Additional to these stereotypes is the recent image that Chinese students *are* good at mathematics. This last stereotype has been widely publicised in recent years as a result of Chinese students' superior performance in international tests PISA and TIMSS. Data from students' performance in these test, have provided a picture of comparative performance of all the participating countries.

Results from PISA and TIMSS see students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore consistently achieving high scores in mathematics since the 1990s. Recently, students from Shanghai have 'shocked' the world with their outstanding performance in their first participation of PISA in 2009. The article "Top Test Scores From Shanghai Stun Educators" in The New York Times is a

good example of how the media report Shanghainese students' performance (Dillon, 2010). Locally, while figures are limited, schools with high population of Chinese students in Sydney outperform their counterparts in benchmark mathematics assessment of NAPLAN in Sydney. For instance, according to the MySchool website, in Hampton Public School (pseudonym) in Sydney ninety-five percent of students are from language backgrounds other than English, with Chinese as the main cultural group. Year 3 and year 5 students in this school scored 453 and 614 in the assessment of numeracy respectively, compared to Australian's school average of 397 and 486 (ACARA, n.d.).

Chinese student's outstanding performance has been a phenomenon widely discussed and studied in the western countries (see Baldi, Jin, Green, & Herget, 2007; Fleischman, Hopstock, Pelczar, & Shelley, 2010; Rindermann, 2007), including Australia (Jensen, Hunter, Sonnermann, & Burns, 2012; M. Wu, 2006). It is not the scope of this research to study the results of PISA and TIMSS although they have provided statistical information in the comparison of student performance, which is explained later in this chapter. The goal of this research is to investigate how culture contributes to their superior performance and what researchers, policy makers and educators can learn from their performance. By examining the impact of cultural identities of families living in Sydney, Chinese students' performance in these tests is explored in a context in which culture is examined rather than taken for granted.

In Australia, performance of students from Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore have attracted extensive interests to both researchers (Thomson, De Bortoli, Nicholas, Hillman, & Buckley, 2010; Thomson & Fleming, 2004) and politicians. In 2012, The Australian federal government put together a Roundtable of educators from these highly performing countries, which aimed

to get understanding of the policy and practices of mathematics learning in these countries. It sought to analyse what lesson could be learnt from the success of these education systems (Jensen et al., 2012)

From "New Whiz Kids" in 1980s (Brand, 1987) to recent media reports that portray Chinese students' outstanding academic performance as an *outcome* of Chinese parenting styles (Chua, 2011b; Mansell, 2011), the stereotypes of tough and demanding parenting and high achieving Chinese students have been reinforced rather than challenged. Together with media coverage on Chinese parenting, coined 'tiger mother' after the publication of a book that claims to explain how superior Chinese parenting has brought about successful children (Chua, 2011a), Chinese culture appears to be *the* answer to Chinese student's performance that has been mystified.

This study was conceived by an interest in understanding the stereotype that Chinese students outperform their peers. Review on existing literature revealed that the impact of culture and values appear to be crucial in mathematics learning and performance of Chinese students. Acknowledging experience is better understood in the context it happens, research focus was then shifted to explore the cultural identities of the participants and how they might impact on children's mathematics learning.

This assumption of culture as the vital factor in Chinese students' success in mathematics seems to be supported by a recent study that reveals that immigrant Chinese students in New Zealand and Australia scored similarly high mathematics score as Shanghainese students did in PISA 2009, even after parental socio-economic status was statistically controlled (X.-h. Yin, 2004) Performance of these Chinese students, who were either born in the host country to parents who migrated from China or immigrated themselves to the

country before the age of five, was found to be much higher than their local western counterparts who are exposed to the same education system in New Zealand and Australia. However, the heterogeneity of the students and their families in this study needs to be examined. Further questions need to be asked, in particular, what aspects of Chinese culture contribute to their performance? And how do individuals make sense of these aspects in relation to their children's learning in Australian context?

The rest of this chapter continues with an overview of literature exploring the phenomenon, before it proceeds to a discussion of Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC), a commonality shared by the outstanding performing countries in TIMSS and PISA. Research questions are displayed and the theoretical approach that will be thoroughly discussed in the next chapter, explained. This chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

Research context

Since the 1980s, Asian students' outstanding performance in schools, in particular mathematics, has attracted huge attention in both the research community (for example, Hess, Chang, & McDevitt, 1987; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992; Stevenson, Stigler, Lee, & Lucker, 1985; J. W. Stigler & Perry, 1988) and the media (Brand, 1987). Early research efforts focused on cultural comparison of students' IQ, motivation, as well as parental expectation and support (for example, Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Hess et al., 1987; Huntsinger, Jose, Liaw, & Ching, 1997; Stevenson & Stigler, 1992). These cross-cultural studies suggest that there *are* differences in students' academic performance between Chinese students and their western counterparts, in particular that of mathematics, even among students within the same country (Huntsinger et al.,

1997). Findings from these studies suggest that since these differences are apparent even in first grade, cultural and family factors might contribute significantly to the differences. Subsequently, from late 1990s, research focus has shifted to investigate how Chinese culture, as represented by values and practices, might explain the children's superior performance. It has been consistently claimed that these values and practices are underpinned by the Confucian tradition, which places a high value on education and attributes success to the effort made by students (Lam, Ho, & Wong, 2002; Leung, 2002; T. Wang, 2006). Together with their continually superior performance in international tests such as TIMSS and PISA, the claim that Chinese students *are* superior at mathematics is well documented but seems open to questioning. In particular, more attention could be put to explore how Chinese students and their families perceive their performance in mathematics in relation to their cultural backgrounds.

One of the problems of early cross-cultural studies is that they treat Chinese students as one homogenous group; they are grouped under *the* category of *Asian* students, which assumes no social and cultural difference among them. While this big culture approach facilitates the drawing of generalisations for comparison, treating Chinese students as a unified group dangerously dismisses the impact of historical and political influences that shape who they are. This is particularly problematic when comparing a student's performance in a multicultural country such as Australia, as the category of *Australian students* encompasses children from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These studies seek to identify factors that explain Chinese student performance, such as more parental support, higher parental expectations and out-of-school coaching, with limited attempts to explore the values and beliefs

that underpin these practices, in particular, the cultural influences that underpin these values, as well as the variability within the Chinese group.

Mathematics as a cultural discourse

Understanding cultural influence on mathematics learning is crucial in the study of mathematics education. Similar to language, religion and rituals, mathematics is not culture-free but a cultural product that engages people to people, and people to the environment (Bishop, 1988). It is a kind of cultural knowledge in the sense that although all cultures generate mathematics, their view on it may not be the same. It is a cultural product that has developed as a result of activities in counting, locating, measuring, designing, playing and explaining (Bishop, 1988). Bishop (1988) highlighted that while these activities were universal, how each culture engaged in them was different. Likewise, J. Stigler and Baranes (1988) also claimed that despite some aspects of mathematics being universal, mathematics was "a culturally transmitted body of knowledge" (p. 259) and some parts of mathematics vary culturally.

Mathematics is also not value-free although it is often seen as manipulation of indisputable facts. Students do not only learn mathematics content in the classroom but the values that are both implicit and explicit in the learning experience. Bishop (2008) provides a clear explanation of the values in mathematics education. He claims that "[V]values in mathematics education are the deep affective qualities which education fosters through the school subject of mathematics" (2008, p. 232). Values are often manifested in attitudes and beliefs (Seah, 2002). Just like any other field of knowledge, adults express feelings, beliefs and attitudes about mathematics which relate to their own experience in school (Bishop et al, 2001), and students internalise these

affective qualities in the process of learning mathematics. Looking at values education from this vein, family and cultural values are both explicitly and implicitly passed to children in mathematics learning, often without adults' realising it. The implication of this is that adults, both teachers and parents, should investigate own values, in particular, their attitudes and beliefs about mathematics.

In his investigation on students' mathematics comparative performance in TIMSS, Leung (2002) has pointed out a commonality among the top four countries is that of influence of Confucianism which values education and considers diligence, perseverance, and humility as of fundamental importance to one's development. While it is not the scope of this research to study Confucianism, the Confucian ideology provides a perspective from which to understand a family's attitudes and practices in their children's education, in particular how Confucian values impact on parents' attitudes and children's learning in mathematics.

Bishop et al.'s (2001) argument that mathematics is cultural knowledge and adults express feelings, beliefs and values about mathematics in teaching children is highly relevant to this study. The following section provides an overview of previous research efforts in the study of Chinese students' superior mathematics, which sees a growing knowledge and focus on the impact of culture in the investigation. Adopting a narrative approach, this study explores cultural identities of Chinese migrants living in Sydney, and how their identities might impact on the students' mathematics learning. The chapter proceeds to describe the theoretical perspective and the methodological approach used to inform this study, which is further discussed in chapter 3

"The Representation". The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the structure of the thesis.

In search of an answer

The impact of culture in Chinese students' mathematics performance has been emphasised in recent years (for example, Bishop, 1988; F. Leung, 2006; Wong, 2004). Individual Chinese migrant's view on mathematics learning in Australian context is yet to be heard. In this section I outline the aspects that previous studies have explored in relation to Chinese students' outstanding mathematics performance, and how this study contributes to advancing the existing body of knowledge of this phenomenon from a cultural perspective by exploring how individual's cultural identities might impact on student's learning in mathematics.

(Brand, 1987)

The Michigan study conducted by Harold Stevenson and his colleagues in 1980s was the first large-scale cross-cultural study on children's academic performance, in which the teaching and academic performance of students in

America, Japan and Taiwan were studied and compared. Results of this longitudinal research were later discussed in their book 'The Learning Gap' (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992) and recommendations were provided to the American education authority. It suggested that although there was no overall difference in intelligence, mathematical achievement of Asian students was significantly better than their American counterparts. This study is significant at least in three ways. Firstly, it was the first large scale comparative study which involved thousands of parents and students in three different countries. Secondly, investigation into the different and/or contrasting perceptions of parents and students about learning as well as classroom practices revealed the importance of understanding learning in the educational context of a particular culture. Lastly, this study challenged the stereotypes many American (or Western) people may have held about Asian students and teaching approaches, for example, "Asian children are under great stress from very early ages", and "Asian teaching methods stress rote learning" (p. 21). It is important to point out that although students in this study only encompassed those from Japan, Taiwan and China, a collective category of "Asian children" in this study was used. A collective label is not only misleading as it fails to provide an accurate representation of who the participants really are, but problematic as it dismissed the cultural, social and political differences *among* these countries.

More recent studies have explored students' IQ, motivation, as well as parental support and expectation in relation to this topic. A reasonable place to start investigating a gap in academic performance among cultural groups appears to be the students' cognitive differences (Cai, 1995). Accordingly, Asian students' IQ has been extensively studied and compared to that of their western counterparts (Dandy & Nettelbeck, 2002; Hess et al., 1987; Lynn, 1991; Lynn

& Mikk, 2007). Early studies suggest that Asian students' superior performance in mathematics was attributed to their IQ (Lynn, 1991). This assertion was, nevertheless, disputed by James Flynn who concluded that there was no significant difference between the IQ of American students and their Asian counterparts (Flynn, 1991). This was supported by Dandy and Nettelbeck (2002)'s study in Australia, which claims that although Asian students outperformed their Anglo counterparts in mathematics there was no significant difference between the IQ of Chinese, Vietnamese and Anglo Australian students. Lynn and Mikk's (2007) continuous effort in exploring the correlations between national IQs and student's performance in mathematics and science in TIMSS 2003 appeared to confirm earlier claim that differences in IQ might explain the national differences in educational attainment.

National comparison, however, tells little about who the students are, which is vital in understanding their performance, in particular in an era when western populations are becoming increasingly diverse in culture as a result of globalisation. It also fails to examine family culture in the development of students' mathematics skills and performance. As Li (2004b) critiques, the positivistic paradigm that cross-cultural studies adopted "are not tailored to examine subjective family values and dynamic parent-child relationships (p. 168).

Subsequently, research focus shifts to the examination of the education characteristics *within* the Chinese families from 1990s. One of the first studies was conducted by Stevenson and Stigler (1992) who examined factors of children's socialisation, attribution, as well as parental satisfaction and expectations in Chinese families. They concluded that the differences in cultural beliefs and values in learning might contribute to the superior

academic performance of students from Taiwan and Japan. On the other hand, in a comparative study, Huntsinger et al. (1997) investigate how the types of parental support that Euro-American, Chinese-American and Taiwan-Chinese families provide their children are different, and how they might contribute to Chinese student's performance. The goal of this study was to discover if there were predictive factors that contribute to the phenomenon using a sample of kindergarten students and their parents. Results from this study showed that students from a Chinese background in America outperformed Euro-American students on measures of mathematics, spatial relations and numeral formation. The authors point out that since the difference in performance was evident as early as preschool and kindergarten, cultural and family characteristics might play a crucial role in children's performance. While the role of culture is emphasised, findings of this study which explains the performance *solely* on cultural grounds may be over-simplistic. Although in general, students from *a* Chinese background (either Chinese-American or Taiwan-Chinese) outperform the Euro-American students, *Chinese-American* students score higher than their Taiwan-Chinese counterparts on both formal and informal items and more importantly, these parents gave "more formal, direct mathematics instruction, structured their child's time to a greater degree, and reported more encouragement for mathematics-related activities" (Huntsinger et al., 1997, p. 371) than parents of Euro-American *and* Taiwan-Chinese backgrounds. The question worth asking here is that *if* culture is a determining factor in parental support, why was it not *Taiwan-Chinese* students parents who scored higher in the aspects mentioned? And, in what way is this difference a result of changed social and cultural context due to migration?

Researchers continued to investigate parental expectations and influences in mathematics learning of Chinese students (Cao, Bishop, & Forgasz, 2006; Chen, Dong, & Zhou, 1997; Li, 2001, 2004b) as well as family backgrounds (D. Wang, 2004). These studies highlight that compared to their western counterparts, Chinese parents have higher expectations and perceived influence on their children's learning. Later studies (for example, Cao et al., 2006; Li, 2004b) observe the change of expectations in migrant parents. For instance, Cao et al. (2006) note that students in China have significantly higher perceived parental expectations than Chinese speaking students in Australia. They suggest that this might reflect the fact that Chinese parents in Australia have lowered their expectations after they migrated to Australia. Likewise, Zhu and Leung (2011) have noted a gap in mathematics achievements between first generation student migrants from mainland China and the local Hong Kong Chinese students. These studies suggest the importance of examining the interplay between local educational and cultural discourses that underpin the education system and curriculum in the host country to migrant parents' backgrounds and expectations. The effect of migration has been highlighted by a recent study which shows that Chinese immigrant students in New Zealand and Australia achieve similar test scores in PISA 2009 to their counterparts in shanghai than to their non-immigrant peers (Feniger & Lefstein, 2014). The findings in this study suggest that cultural background seems to play a more important role in students' mathematics achievement than the educational system that they were exposed to.

Wang and Li (2005) also critique the limitations of a comparative approach in studying students' mathematics performance in different countries, which often focuses on schooling factors such as the curriculum and policy, with little

attention to non- schooling factors such as student's home experience that might also influence their performance. Their study reinforces the idea that mathematics learning is a culturally scripted activity, and that parental expectations and support play an important part in student's mathematics performance. Attention has to be paid to the backgrounds of students in terms of their families' migration history. A longitudinal study that investigates the academic achievement of immigrant students suggest a diminishing differences in performance and aspirations of first, second and third generation migrants (Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009).

These large-scale studies, as well as others, have made enormous contribution to the understanding of this phenomenon in the western countries, mainly in drawing comparison between students in different countries. Nevertheless, although generalisation can be drawn from findings in cross-cultural studies, differences in student's mathematics performance at national level is likely to be caused by a range of factors such as the curriculum (M. Wu & Zhang, 2006), education policy and materials (J. Wang & Lin, 2005), pedagogy and out-of-school tutoring (Bray, 2009). Reducing the difference to student's ethnic background is an approach too broad and simplistic. And it can hardly provide a convincing explanation of the situation that students with Chinese heritage outperform their *local* western counterparts (Fuligni, 1997; Huntsinger et al., 1997; McInerney, 2008; D. Wang, 2004). Subsequently, while comparative studies provide a sketch of characteristics of Chinese learners, this big brush approach provides little insight into why families embrace certain values and beliefs about mathematics education. In other words, what is really missing is what underpins these differences.

Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC)

In the previous section, we have seen how cross-cultural studies have provided evidence of the outstanding academic performance of students from some Asian countries. The consistent performance of students in Asian countries with strong Confucian influence in TIMSS in the past two decades has attracted research attention to examine the impact of Confucian culture in area of mathematics learning. The latest PISA result (2012) also reveals similar performance in mathematics of these Asian countries, with the top five being Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea. (Australia scored 504, which is higher than OECD average of 494, but considerably lower than the top achieving countries such as Shanghai (613) and Singapore (573)). It has been noted that despite their difference in social and educational landscapes as well as indigenous cultures, these countries share the CHC (for example, Biggs, 1996; Ho, 1994; Leung, 2002).

Confucian conceptions of education

Lee (1996) argues that Confucianism still holds currency in contemporary education. He provides a detailed account of Confucian conceptions on education, which presents another perspective to understand student's learning practices and family expectations. The first and foremost conception is the significance of education which is crucial for personal development, upward social mobility, as well as societal development. The significance of education is emphasised in the opening sentence of Confucius's Analects 1:1 "Is it not a pleasure, having learned something, to try it out at due intervals? (Analects, 1:1 學而時習之，不亦說乎《論語》1.1) (Lau, 2000). It is commonly believed in CHC that having academic achievements, which also result in

greater capacity to climb the social ladder, is a means to honour one's family, a value succinctly expressed by a Chinese saying '光宗耀祖' , which means 'to bring honour to your ancestors', which is often used as a compliment to students who have high performance. The function of education has been conceptualised by Sue and Okazaki (1990) in their idea of relative functionalism which argues that education serves as a means for upward social mobility. They point out that 'behavioural patterns, including achievements, are a product of cultural values and status in society (minority group standing)' (Sue & Okazaki, 1990, p. 917). Despite being criticised as 'misleading' by Lynn (1991), as they did not include some large scale cross cultural IQ studies when grounding their proposition, Sue and Okazaki have clearly pointed out the significance of examining cultural values in understanding achievement.

Another important Confucian conception in education is the notion that everyone is educable, "In instruction there is no separation into categories" (Analects, 15:38 有教無類《論語》15.38) Lau, (2000). The idea that positive attitudes foster learning, regardless of one's prior experience and knowledge renders everyone as perfectible. Subsequently, socially-generated difference can be overcome through education. Saying this, Confucian education was heavily gendered, with only males in the family had the privilege to get educated in the past.

The Confucian conception that education is significant and everyone is educable, and the view that everyone can achieve with effort and will power, has conceptualised success as a function of effort rather than capacity. As such, diligence and perseverance is highly regarded in CHC, and a strong work ethic

that emphasises commitment and hard work is both expected and respected. Continuous practice is seen as part of the learning process.

The emphasis of hard work and practice, unfortunately, has brought students in CHC the reputation of 'rote learners', and they are criticised for a lack of creativity and problem-solving skills. However, Biggs (1994) rejects this criticism by distinguishing rote learning from repetitive learning, the technique Chinese students use to enhance their learning. Repetition is a means to achieve deeper understanding of concepts in the process of learning by induction, through which students learn to develop reasoning and problem solving skills in a highly structured teaching environment. Mason (2014) believes that the effectiveness of inductive pedagogy is probably what could be concluded as an "Asian" model.

The importance of repetitive learning was advocated by Neo-Confucian scholar *Zhu Xi* (朱子, 1130-1200) who explained that 'The method to studying is, to read (the materials) once, (you) reflect on it; reflect on your materials, then study them again' (Juan / Volume / Book 10 讀書之法，讀一遍了，又思量一遍；思量一遍，又讀一遍《朱子語類》卷十). This practice reflects Chinese students' belief that learning is a serious endeavour which is a gradual process that requires dedication and hard work. Li (2004a) notes that Chinese students believe deep understanding is a process of thinking, reflection and practice rather than a sudden insight which American students believe to be. In another study conducted by Li (2004b) on pre-schoolers construal process of characters in two stories, Chinese pre-schoolers are found to perceive the learner's efforts such as diligence, persistence and concentration in completing

the task, whereas US pre-schoolers focus on the ability and task attempting of the learner.

These unique characteristics of CHC learners are also evident in Li (2004a) study in which Chinese students report a set of purpose of learning, which 'focus on perfecting oneself morally, acquiring knowledge and skill for oneself, contributing to the society, and obtaining social respect/mobility' (p. 148). These students believe that these purposes can be achieved by acquiring learning virtues such as diligence, endurance of hardship and perseverance.

These conceptions of education, when translated into the classroom, create a learning environment rather unique and different from those in the western countries. It was found that teachers in the CHC learning environment are well prepared for their teaching, and students are obedient and attentive in class. The protocols and classroom culture are also different from that of the western classroom. For example, students seldom interrupt the flow of the teaching by asking questions and teachers do not attempt to cater for individual differences in class. However, they do provide students with a lot of after-class learning and guidance (Wong, 2004). Observation on CHC learning environment suggests that teaching is highly authoritative, and focuses on the preparation of external examinations which are highly competitive.

Of course, we cannot conclude that Confucian values in education *are* the answer to the search to understand Chinese students' superior performance in mathematics. Clearly, there are many factors and influences that have contributed to this phenomenon. However, as shown in the studies above, CHC learners do display values and practices rather unique to the people from the Chinese heritage, which has resulted in a rather different view of education and mathematics. In light of cultural influences in mathematics learning, this study

explores the cultural identities of parents and children and their impact on their children's mathematics learning. It adopts a narrative approach that provides an opportunity for families' experiences to be understood and their voices to be heard. It aims to challenge the homogeneity of a Chinese identity and the stereotype that Chinese students' outstanding performance is due to their ethnic background by examining the values that underpin their practices in learning.

Research questions

Main question:

How does cultural identity impact on Chinese students' mathematics learning in Australia?

This question will be guided by the following questions:

What constitutes the cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora residing in Australia?

What are Chinese parents' expectations of and views about practices in their children's mathematics learning?

Methodological approach

The decision to adopt narrative inquiry as the methodological approach was made after an exploration of auto-ethnography and thematic analysis. Engaging with the literature on auto-ethnography made me realise my connection to both the study and the participants. As well it broadened my knowledge to see how biography can be used to connect the personal to the social (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). However, I soon realised that despite the resonance between my experience and those of the participants, my stories, which illuminate the data being studied, are not the research text.

A thematic approach provides the framework in the process of data collection, in constructing indicative interview topics, organising raw data as well as keeping the research focus. However its limitation is exposed when analysis and understanding come to the front, because experiences cannot be categorised in value-laden themes but understood in the wholeness. Saying this, these two approaches have informed my decision to adopt narrative inquiry as the most appropriate method in both the representation and analysis of data.

This study sets out to understand participants' cultural identities from their lived experiences by providing the opportunity for their voices which are often silent, to be heard. Research data comprised lived experiences that were collected by various means, namely interview, journal diary, observation and questionnaire. We live storied lives that involve many people and places, with all the happenings in between over the course of lives. Stories are complex experiences that are neither apolitical nor ahistorical. Understanding participants' experiences requires me to think narratively to consider the place, people as well as the local and global contexts in which their experiences happened. Narratives are compositions that draw together events and happenings and exhibit the activities in a holistic way. Family narratives, which display how participants engage in their worlds, were constructed based on the themes that I have explored in the review of the literature on the topic of cultural identity in diasporas.

We may feel our experiences come in a sequence but Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) have reminded us that experience is lived out in storied landscape which is not linear but three dimensional. The dimensions of temporal, social and the place in which experience happened are crucial in the understanding of

experience. Family narratives in this study piece together stories that participants experienced, they let us see what has happened as well as where things are likely to go. They are mainly descriptive narrative that aims to produce an account of individuals or groups experience in a sequence for interpretation (Polkinghorne, 1988). Participants travelled in their memories to recall incidents and experiences in the interviews, to explain some of the decisions they had made in life. Sometimes they told me the social and political contexts that informed their decisions of migration and other times those contexts revealed themselves in the experiences. At the same time, these narratives are also explanatory in nature as they let us see the connection between events (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Plot of the thesis

The structure of this thesis is crafted with the central features of narratives, in the sense that it is configured by *plots* (Polkinghorne, 1995), presented in *sequence* and finished with a *consequence* (Riessman & Speedy, 2006) It is structured in three parts.

PART 1, 'ENTERING THE STORY', consists of three chapters. The purpose of this part is to provide readers with the research context of this inquiry. It starts with the introduction of '*The Narrator'* (me) in chapter 1, which highlights some of my experiences and reflection of the notion of cultural identity and my view on education. In their discussion of Geertz's metaphor of parade which explains how events are nested within a whole, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain insightfully that "we know what we know because of how we are positioned" (p. 17). As both the researcher and a member in the

Chinese community in Sydney, it is crucial for me to reveal my *position* in this study at the forefront, which is represented in the form of a narrative

Chapter 2 *'The Scene'* contextualises the study and explains where this study situates in the investigation of the phenomenon of Chinese students' superior mathematics performance. It provides the backdrop in which stories in this study happened as well as an overview of previous efforts in the search for an answer for the phenomenon. PART 1 is concluded with a discussion of how the stories are understood and represented in chapter 3, *'The Representation',* which details the methodological approach that informs this study. It argues that narrative is the most appropriate tool for the experiences of participants to be understood.

In PART 2, 'TELLING THE STORIES, I draw out the particular features in understanding cultural identities of people in the Chinese diaspora in the globalised world in the 21st century. Chapters 4 and 5 are committed to review the literature surrounding the discussion of the identity formation of Chinese migrants in the globalised world. Each chapter starts with a literature review on the relevant concepts, which is followed by family narratives and finished with a *scene break* that concludes the chapter.

This part begins with an examination of how the experience of migrants is shaped by transnationalism, and how the building of belonging plays out in this transnational world in chapter 4, *The Whole of the Parts. The Parts in its Whole.* It acknowledges that experiences do not exist in isolation but are connected to the past and inform the future. They need to be situated in the continuity and wholeness of history and understood in both the global and local contexts in which it happened. Subsequently this chapter explores the notion of Chineseness within the Chinese diaspora in Sydney, and discusses the change

in the meaning of Chinese identity in history both within and outside China. This chapter discusses the ambiguity of assuming Chineseness as an identity, which further illustrates the fluidity and instability of identity. Chapter 5, *'The Narrative of Identity formation'*, discusses the debate of identity formation and the theoretical framework that inform my understanding of identity.

Participants in this study are not socially related – six students participated in this study studied in four different primary schools and those who studied in the same school were from different year classes. Their narratives, nevertheless, are not isolated experiences but happened in a shared context both within and outside Australia.

PART 3 'LISTENING FOR THE STORIES' consists of two chapters. The name for Chapter 6, *'The Unfinished'*, bears two connotations. Firstly, it acknowledges that participants' experiences are organic, in the sense that they continued to evolve in response to the changes in the environment. Secondly, it highlights that understanding of experience is an ongoing process and progressive understanding is achieved by inquirers moving forward and backward in the process of interpretation. By drawing on the experiences of all six families, this chapter provides a discussion on the key features of the themes that underline this study. By bringing the reader's attention back to the stories of the participants, the chapter demonstrates how the participants' experiences give insights into the problem of assuming a homogeneous Chinese identity (Vialle, 2013).

Like every story, there is an end after a sequence of episodes and events. The final chapter of this thesis, *'The END',* brings about the consequences of this study, which is the meaning that is made out of the participants' experiences. Subsequently, recommendations to policy makers, schools, and the wider

community are made. Just like experiences in life and life itself, *the end* is also a new beginning. What we have learned from the experiences of the participants opens up more questions for future enquiry. Rather than drawing conclusions this study opens conversation and allows multiple interpretation.

Chapter 3 The Representation

Introduction

In this study, families' cultural identities and how they might influence their children's mathematics learning are explored. Identities are not apolitical but interwoven in a historical, social, cultural and political web, which both constitute and are constituted by individual's experiences and interactions with the surrounding world. Yuval-Davis (2006) notes that identities *are* narratives, in the sense that individuals understand who they are by the stories they tell themselves and others. In their narrative study of teacher identity, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) define identity as the "stories we live by". Our experiences are structured in stories and through telling the stories and the process of preserving coherence in our lives, we make sense of our experience and gain more understanding of ourselves (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Adopting narrative inquiry as the methodological approach, this study examines how the discourses of Chineseness, as represented in language, practices and values, operate in the Chinese diaspora in Sydney. Through the stories that participants share, it explores how Chinese identity that is fluid and contextual, is constructed and given meanings by individuals. In other words, the meanings of the discourses were sought from how participants respond to them.

There is no single approach or perspective that can provide *the* pathway to the study of cultural identity of Chinese migrants living in Sydney. Rather, they are interconnected and informed each other, and need to be examined in a holistic way. A narrative approach to analysis allows the adoption of different

approaches, which has enabled me to unravel the complexity of identity formation from lived experiences of the participants through a multifocal lens.

This chapter outlines the research paradigm and framework for the interpretation of data used in this study, and explains the procedures adopted. It discusses the concern of validity in narrative research and how it is addressed in this study. Subsequently, it details how narrative inquiry has provided the space for the participants' voices to be heard, and concludes with a clear explanation of the process in which narratives were constructed.

The framework for interpretation

Family narratives in this study are interpreted and understood within a constructive interpretivist framework of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) that acknowledges multiple realities and employs interconnected methods and perspectives to approach research data. Ontologically, a constructivist paradigm acknowledges that multiple realities are locally constructed and can be altered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Laverty, 2003). As such, no realities are more *true* than the other, though some are possibly more informed than the other (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, the aim of interpretive framework is not to seek *the* truth but in-depth understanding of the research topic. Epistemologically, the relationship between the researcher and the researched is crucial as they co-construct meaning of the issues or experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Interpretations are influenced by the perspectives taken by the researchers in the research process. Therefore, as the researcher in this study, my *historicality* which includes my background and culture, has significant impact on my interpretation of narratives (Laverty, 2003). The *historicality* of the interpreter highlights the influence of interpreter's consciousness in

meaning making of the text (Heidegger, cited in Laverty, 2003). This awareness has led to the methodological decision to include *my* personal narrative in this thesis (chapter 1), with the intention to explain my connection to the study (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and provide the lens through which my interpretation is formed, while keeping voices of the participants at the centre stage in this study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 121) have insightfully pointed out that "narrative inquirers are always strongly autobiographical"; and similar to their experience, my research interest also comes out of my own experience and shape my narrative inquiry plotlines (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). My attention to particular social, cultural and political contexts of the narratives, inevitably, discloses my standpoint and historically-related frameworks of interpretation. Grbich (2004) concludes this eloquently, "[T]he author becomes the eye of the text – the facilitator of the display of voices, including her/his own, and the illuminator of the text through reflexive/reflective/refractive critique" (p. 3).

In developing an interpretive paradigm for the family narratives, I have explored hermeneutic phenomenology that has provided the philosophical underpinning in the interpretive process. The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to create meaning and achieve a sense of understanding of human experience as it is lived, by focusing on illuminating details within experiences (Laverty, 2003). Identity is primarily about experience, which remains open to contradiction, partiality and ambivalence. Narratives in this study have provided a space for meanings of their experiences to be made.

Hermeneutics underpinning in the interpretation of narratives

The interpretive process of family narratives in this research is underpinned by hermeneutic approach to interpretation, which intends to derive meaning and understanding of their lived experiences in Sydney. Interpretation is guided by central hermeneutic features of dialectic relationship between the part and the whole (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Laverty, 2003), the *historicality* of the interpreter as well as the text, and that interpretation is critical in the process of understanding (Laverty, 2003). Together these features constitute the totality of the interpretation in this study.

The main theme of hermeneutics is that "the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 53). Interpretation of the parts only makes sense when they are put in the context of the whole as the whole illuminates the understanding of the parts. This part/whole relationship is dialogic in the sense that the understanding of the whole is developed successively with the interpretations of its parts, and the understanding of the parts illuminates the view of the whole (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). This interpretive line of thought constitutes the first basic hermeneutic circle of part and whole. It should be pointed out that what is part and whole is not rigid but contextual and fluid. In other words, a part is made up of smaller parts and a whole is often a part of a bigger whole.

Experience is not a single, isolated perception but nested in a connected whole of an individual's life that is organic and continuous. In the context of this study, individual event and happening are parts of the whole life experience of a participant. And at the same time his/her life experience is a part of the grand narrative of the migration history of Chinese people. Understanding of the parts (individual's life events or the life of one migrant) contributes to that of

the whole (an individual migrant or migration history of Chinese people). Likewise, understanding of the whole illuminates the understanding of its parts. Zooming in and out the whole and its parts, interpreter achieves deeper understanding of the parts in the whole and what the whole is.

Objectivist hermeneutics grounds its analysis on a polarity between a subject (the researcher) and an object outside the researcher, for example, a phenomenon or an experience. The main theme for objective hermeneutics is to investigate the correspondence between the subject and the object. Alethic hermeneutics, however, dissolves this polarity and focus on *uncovering* things that are hidden. By investigating back and forth the data, researchers obtain a progressive understanding of the topic as something is uncovered or revealed in this interpretive process. Thus the second hermeneutic circle of pre-understanding and understanding, which is complementary to that of part and whole, is established. Successive understanding is gained from pre-understanding through interpretation of experiences that further achieve understanding of the topic. To consolidate understanding, researchers need to refer back to pre-understanding that will be enriched in the process. As interpretation is much influenced by the historicality of the interpreter, understanding is often tentative, temporal and incomplete. Yet, it is essentially *progressive* as the incomplete understanding will shed new light to the understanding further (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009).

Subsequently, the relationship between the interpreter and the text is dialogic and transformative (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Meaning making is an active process in which the interpreter attempts to understand a topic, based on pre-existing frames of reference. Interpretation is therefore subject to the stance of the interpreter, the sociocultural context and the creative space the

interpreter shares with the text. An example to illustrate how the interpreter and the text contribute to the totality of interpretation in this study is to imagine how the interpretation would be different if it was done by an interpreter from a different cultural background and gender to myself; or the text was a different writing journal such as a science report, rather than narratives. Hermeneutists argue that the reality constructed by the researcher is a function of who, how and from what perspective it examines, decisions influenced by the historicality of the researcher. In relation to this study, the interpretation provided in this thesis is the product of the method *I* chose, the *focus* I looked at (Patton, 2002).

Participants also gain understanding of their experience and who they are in the course of time and this new understanding facilitates them to their making meaning of their past and future. By telling and retelling stories, participants in this study move backward and forward to examine own lived experiences.

Narrative approach provides not only the context and coherence for the stories and experiences to be understood, but acknowledges the presence and voice of the interpreter in the process of interpretation. The following section provides a discussion of narrative approach that is adopted in the analysis and representation of research data in this study.

Narrative inquiry

Often used interchangeably with the term stories, the narrative form is generally understood as a sequential collection of events and experiences that happened to the characters (Riessman, 2008). Events and experiences are often presented as a plot that is enacted by the characters in the narrative. Many kinds of texts can be viewed narratively. For example, stories can be

constructed through the artistic form of paintings, drama, movies, and songs; or literally in diaries, biography, autobiography, and novels, just to name a few (Riessman, 2008). Narrative can be found in many sites that include spoken, written, visual and artistic materials.

Our experiences are interwoven and complex and narrative is a way to structure these experiences into meaningful units (Moen, 2006). People's experiences are structured as narratives and narrative researchers collect the stories told by the participants, and construct narratives of experience, which are evidence of their purposeful engagement in the world (Polkinghorne, 1995). Thus, narrative is effectively configured by stories and actions in human lives.

Stories, often seen as personal, is in fact "a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). In other words, stories connect us to the world. Personal experience told in the form of a narrative by an individual is neither a description nor a narcissistic account, but a space for both the individual and narrative inquirers to make sense of the personal experience within the broader social, cultural and institutional narratives in which the experience is situated. Narrative inquirers are interested in the life experience told by the narrators who have lived them. They explore how narrators make meanings of their experience, by investigating how narrators select and organise their experiences and connect those experiences to the context over time.

I draw on Polkinghorne's position and use "*narrative* to refer specifically to texts that are thematically organised by plots" (1995, pp. 5, italics from original). It is an organised whole by means of a plot which is a type of

conceptual scheme that provides the contextual meaning of events (Polkinghorne, 1995). The task of the researcher is to select the stories that contribute to the explanation of a situation or experience. In this study, stories are found in interviews, journals diaries as well as observations, and my task is to construct narratives from these sources. Plot is crucial in narrative which is storied with events happened to an individual, a company, a school, a city or a country and so on. Its significance lies in its role to provide the *structure* and *composition* of the narrative by setting out the criteria for the selection of the events, as well as the sequence of how they are unfolded (Polkinghorne, 1995). In other words, it is the thread that unifies the events into an organised whole.

What does narrative inquiry do?

Central to narrative inquiry is its commitment to study the *lived experiences* of individuals, which in essence are temporal and only come to our consciousness when they are reflected as past experience (Van Manen, 1997). It is important to point out that although this research studies lived experience, it is not a phenomenological study which focuses on the essence of shared experience, as cultural identity is *not* a phenomenon from which a *structure* could be detected and studied, but a fluid construct which is contextual and unstable. Rather, this study employs a general phenomenological perspective by using the method of narrative inquiry with which participants' experiences are captured (Patton, 2002)

In their discussion on using narrative inquiry as an analytical framework, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) remind us that the awareness of the temporal nature of lived experience is crucial because experiences do not manifest themselves in the presence. The aim of narrative is not to re-create the reality

or to determine whether events actually happened (Polkinghorne, 2007) but to "preserve or restore the continuity and coherence of life's unity in the face of unexpected blows of fate that call one's meanings and values into question" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). Undeniably, stories are not accurate accounts of the past because memories are fragmented, chaotic and incoherent. By telling stories that consist of other people, events and emotions that inform each other in the past, present and future, we give meaning to the experiences in which we have once lived. As Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014) sum up clearly, "the main strength of narrative inquiry lies in its focus on how people use stories to make sense of their experiences in areas of inquiry where it is important to understand phenomena from the perspectives of those who experience them" (p. 2). The meanings we give to our experiences are not stable in the sense that we are often found to give different meanings to the same experience in the past at different stages in our lives. Changing meaning is often criticised as the pitfall of using narratives in the interpretation process however I argue that this reflects exactly the inherent nature of experience, which is always temporal and partial. We make sense of them differently because of the change in ourselves in the course of time.

Narrative provides the space for the organisation of experiences and allows extended accounts of experiences to be told and understood. Listening to how narrators select and organise experience, and the extended account their stories bring, inquirers have the opportunity to understand how narrators make sense of their experience within the social and cultural discourses in which their stories are situated. Thus, meanings are not made within "discursive meaning-laden moments or thematic categories" (Riessman & Speedy, 2006, p. 8) but in a particular time and space. Storytelling, therefore, is a crucial process and

function of narrative inquiry in relation to meaning making of experience. Through storytelling, the richness and nuances of human experiences that cannot be expressed in definitions are evoked and demonstrated (Moen, 2006). It positions the inquirer as a listener who constructs narratives from the stories told by the participants, and seeks ways to make sense of the experience for both individuals and others.

Narrative as analysis

Discussion of narrative analysis sees researchers' attempts to provide understanding of the methodological underpinnings of narrative from a range of perspectives. Substantial differences in the use of narrative inquiry in research in human science were partly due to the epistemological stance researchers take, as well as their different research interests. Riessman (2008) states that the only commonality in the use of narrative among different disciplines is the contingent sequences of narrative, which is otherwise used differently. Riessman and Speedy (2006) argue it is the essential ingredients of *sequence* and *consequence* that distinguishes narrative from other forms of discourse. Identification of these essential ingredients provides a structural focus of what narrative is and boundaries for further discussion. Narrators select and organise events and experience and present them to the audience in a way that brings meanings to what they say. They create plots from disorganised experiences and in doing so they give reality a unity.

Elsewhere Riessman (2008) contends that narratives are strategic and functional, that they provide the point of entry for inquirers to understand both the content of the stories and the people who told them. In other words,

narrators construct both the narratives *and* identities through storytelling (Bamberg, 2006; Elliott, 2005; Riessman, 2008). The stories we tell and our understanding of our identities is circular (Riessman, 2008), in the sense that the stories we tell about ourselves influences how we see what we are, and our (self-) identification also affect what and how we tell our stories. Bamberg (2006) further suggests that by relating the content of the stories to the social interactions, narrators construct both the narratives and a sense of self. The construction of self in the narration moves the interpretive perspective to an individual level which sees individuals as responsible, social and interactive agents rather than texts for interpretation (Bamberg, 2006).

Although from a different genre of research, I find the idea of the auto-ethnographer's gaze (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739) highly relevant in understanding the relationship between stories and identities. Similar to auto-ethnographers who zoom in and out of personal experiences and the culture that constitute who they are, narrators move forward and background the personal and social realms and gain better understanding of how they are parts of a whole. Progressive understanding facilitates how they make sense of their identities within the context, and how their identities may have informed their views of the context.

Chase (2011) highlights several approaches in framing her discussion on researcher's interest in narrative inquiry. One of the approaches sees researchers' interest in both how *and* what stories are told by the participants in the study, that I find most relevant to my study. These researchers are interested in how personal experiences narrated in the form of a story are understood by the narrator within the cultural discourses. Attention is also paid to examine the linguistic practices such as word choice, repetition, hesitation,

laughter and use of personal pronouns, of the narrators (Chase, 2011). These personal narratives, which are diverse and different, challenge taken-for-granted assumptions of social phenomena and oppressive discourses exist within the narrative environment. Yet another function of narratives is that they invite others to enter the perspective and experience of the narrator (Riessman, 2008). Readers have the opportunities to identify with the experiences and gain understanding of what the experiences meant to the narrator. Understandings of the narratives are obtained when readers travelled emotionally with the narrators in their stories.

We live storied lives. Our Experiences are not linear and as such they should be read in a storied landscape. In marking out the landscape of narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) have identified a 3-dimensioanl space in the use of narrative inquiry in research of human experience. The three dimensions of temporality, sociality and place have provided an analytical framework to make meaning of research data.

Temporality suggests that human experience does not exist in isolation. It acknowledges the continuity of experience in history, that experience in the present is an outcome of another experience in the past, and it will impact experience in the future. Thus, narrative inquirers study events and people who are in temporal transition rather than fixated at a point in time. This dimension resonates with what Riessman (2008) highlights in her discussion of the functions of narratives, that there is "… a complicated relationship between narrative, time, and memory for we revise and edit the remembered past to square with our identities in the present" (p. 8). Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) also contend that human and human interactions do not exist out of context, nor do they happen out of time. The existence of human beings, Pinnegar and

Daynes (2007) argue, is not bounded, static, atemporal or decontextualized but in a continuum of time which we call history.

Sociality points out that individuals are always in interaction with the environment as well as other people, including the researchers, which encompasses both personal and social conditions. Personal conditions refer to the hopes, feelings, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions of both the narrator and the inquirer; while social conditions are the existential conditions including people and forces surrounding an individual (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Elliott (2005) also highlights that the meaning of events within narratives is derived from the social context in which the narrative is recounted. This dimension of sociality echoes with Bamberg's (2006) argument that in order to understand how selves and identities are constructed in storytelling, researchers need to study how individuals relate the content of the stories they told.

The third dimension of *place* refers to the 'specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place' (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 50). In the context of this study, Sydney is the pivotal place where participants experience took place. However, experiences are temporal and need to be understood in history. Thus, the conditions in their homelands with which they have strong and frequent connections, are also significant in our interpretation.

Likewise, Riessman (2008) points out that through the process of recalling, recollecting and reorganising past experiences that "may have been fragmented, chaotic, unbearable, and/or scarcely visible before narrating them" (p. 8), narrative provides individuals the opportunity to make sense of the past. She reminds readers to take into consideration of the historical context when

listening to stories, and to be aware of the power relations and discourse within which stories are constructed. Hence, in the context of this study, the stories that participants told in the interviews reflect the historical context and power relations in which the stories happened. In recalling and telling those experiences, they assign *significance* to the experience at that particular space in their lives.

Limitations of narrative inquiry

Qualitative research on human sciences strives for getting more in-depth understanding of a phenomenon to contribute to the existing body of knowledge of the topic. It is, however, often criticised of lacking objective measurement of reliability and validity, the methodological constructs quantitative researchers rely heavily on, which results in a lack of objectivity and generalisation. This criticism is defended by Hammersley (2008) who points out that the quality of qualitative research is often questioned because of the belief that quality can only be measured against of a set of criteria. Nevertheless, due to their inherent epistemological difference, measuring qualitative research with a set of finite criteria like how quantitative research is treated is fundamentally problematic. Qualitative research cannot be replicated in the way quantitative studies do because of the temporal nature inherent to human behaviours and existence. This, however, does not mean that the quality of a qualitative study is to be compromised. Scrutiny during the research process can ensure validity or the trustworthiness that researchers have identified ways to achieve. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) devise the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to assess the quality of a qualitative study. Polkinghorne (2007) also suggests means to

ensure, in particular, validity in narrative research. He does not deny or omit that limitation of language to reflect the reality and the subjective choice of events to be told has indeed raised concerns or even posed "threats" to the validity of narrative research. The gap between the stories that people tell and the interpretations of the meanings of stories by both themselves and the interpreter are often found to be the cause for these concerns. However, Polkinghorne argues, "storied evidence is gathered not to determine if events actually happened but about the meaning experienced by people whether or not the events are accurately described" (2007, p. 479). In other words, narratives inquiry is interested in understanding human experience, the *quality* and *meaning* of the experience to both the individual and social, rather than whether the narrators' accounts are accurate reflection of the actual events. In the context of this study, quality and meaning of what it means to be a Chinese living in Sydney cannot be measured and represented by statistics. It is valid to the people concerned.

The main concern of validity in qualitative research is whether the knowledge claim is believable (Polkinghorne, 2007). An argument is valid when readers are provided with sufficient evidence to base their judgement upon, which often comes in different forms. Riessman (2008, p. 186) asserts that stories that "diverge" and do not reflect the established truth are as interesting and worthy as those do, as they "indicat[ing]e silenced voices and subjugated knowledge". Georgakopoulou (2006) also points out the importance of not only capturing the big stories (Freeman, 2006) in the narrative, but the *small stories* which are the constant and natural features of everyday life. Small stories perspective focuses on "how selves and identities are 'done' in interactions" (Bamberg, 2006, p. 146). Small stories might be small in length but not in significance.

For example, the telling and retelling of certain events or hopes in the future, the refusal to tell or the absence of certain significant people in the stories, all have great significance to the participants and the analysis. On one hand, small stories are found to be informed by the big stories that have happened in the past. On the other hand, they project the life trajectory to the future. In order to provide sufficient evidence for a valid claim to be drawn, diverged stories and small stories are included in the family narratives in this study.

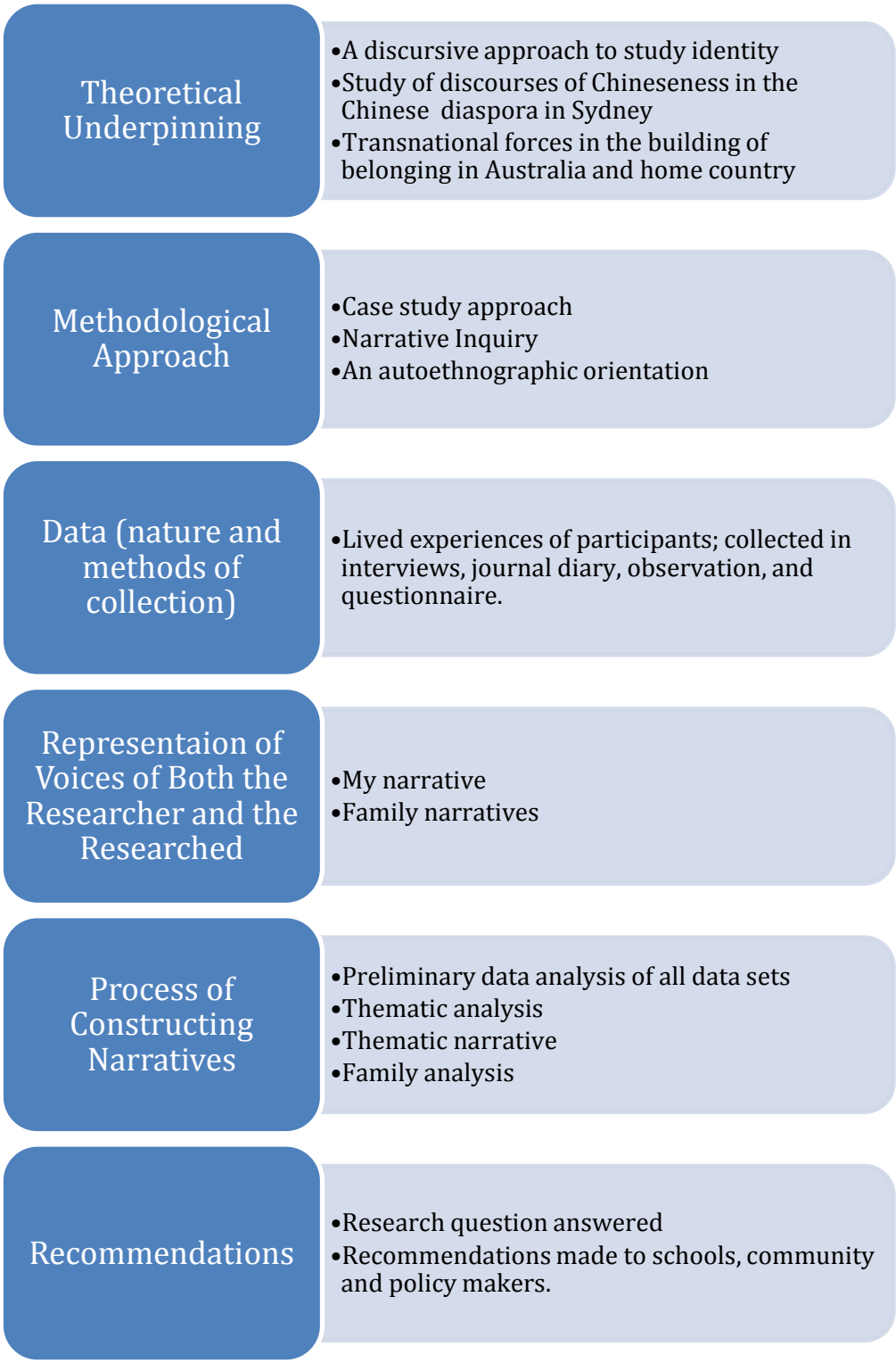
As stated earlier in this chapter, semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. The use of open-ended questions gave participants the scope to share their experiences. At the beginning of each interview, I explained to the participants that there was no right or wrong to the 'answers' they gave me, as I was interested to listen to their own experiences and views which were personal. In other words, there were no expectations of standard answers.

To ensure validity in narrative research, I made my modes of inquiry explicit, by making clear how the findings were generated by the stories I collected, which followed a methodological path and guided by theory and ethical considerations (Riessman, 2008). Arminio and Hultgren (2002) suggest six dimensions that interpretive studies should embody, discuss and illustrate in order to achieve goodness that allows the language of situatedness, trustworthiness and authenticity (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). By adapting the dimensions recommended by Arminio and Hultgren (2002), I ensured that the theoretical framework underpinning this study, the methodological approach, the kind of data it generated and how they were collected, the representation of the voices of both the researcher and the researched, the process of constructing the narratives, as well as the recommendations were transparent in each stage of the study (Diagram 1. Some of the aspects will be further

explained in this chapter). This allows readers to follow evidence and draw conclusions for themselves as to whether the knowledge claim is at a high level of validity (Polkinghorne, 2007).

Diagram 3.1. Ensuring Validity

The diagram below shows how goodness is ensured in the entire study. Adapted from (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002)



Narrative inquiry in this study

This thesis is concerned to investigate the relation between the individual and experience which Laverty (2003) considers inseparable. By looking at the lived experiences of participants, this study explores the nature of their experiences and makes meaning of what it is like to be Chinese people living in Sydney. It also examines how their cultural identities as expressed in their narratives might impact on their children's mathematics learning. Lived experiences are experiences that we are not aware of as they happen, and their meanings and significance are only recognised when we reflect upon them in retrospect as past experiences (Van Manen, 1997). Participants' lived experiences before and after migration were presented and interpreted in the form of family narratives. Presenting research data as family narratives is not to argue or draw conclusion but to open conversation. They are to be told and retold rather than theorised and settled. Stories of these families resonate strongly to what the literature told us about the experience of migrants, in particular the heterogeneity nature of their experience as well as positions of their identity.

This study examines participants' cultural identity, a construct that is a fluid, unstable and contextual (Hall, 1996). As such, studying experiences in the context in which they were lived can help to reveal what they mean to the participants. Yuval-Davis (2006) claims that identities are narratives that we construct and tell ourselves and others who we are. From a similar vein, Anthias (2002) also notes that people's identity will emerge through narration. She shares her experience in asking participants a question about their identity, which highlight how identity is a slippery concept and that it is almost impossible to get an answer from the participants. She states, "[A]asking

someone a question about their 'identity' often produces a blank stare, a puzzled silence and a glib and formulaic response" (p. 492). It is through the process of storytelling that gives people opportunities to recollect, reorganise and give meaning to their lived experiences that they make sense of who they are.

People's stories are not told in a vacuum. They are constructed in the *narrative environment* that Gubrium and Holstein (2009, p. xvii) refer as the "context within which the work of story construction and storytelling gets done", which include close relationships, local cultures, jobs and organisations. Attention to the narrative environment brings what is at stake for both the storyteller and listener to the forefront of analysis. As such, an understanding of the social and political contexts in both Australia and in the participants' home countries is crucial in understanding the situations they faced and the decisions they made.

As narrators, participants share their experiences before and after migration in the form of stories in the interviews. Details, events and stories constitute to the totality of experience of each individual. Likewise, experience of the each individual contributes to the understanding of the social, cultural and historical *whole* of the Chinese diaspora in Sydney.

The modes and process of data collection and analysis is illustrated in the diagram in the following page. Each aspect in the process will be explained on the following page.

Diagram 3.2. Modes and process of data gathering and analysis.

<table>
<tr><th>Data Gathering</th><th colspan="2">Data Analysis</th></tr>
<tr><td>Interview</td><td>Coding</td><td rowspan="3">Preliminary analysis - to expand meaning from data and detect new themes.

Reflective diaries taken during data collection.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Journal
Diary</td><td>Coding</td></tr>
<tr><td>Observation</td><td>Coding</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td rowspan="2">Meaning Making through:

1. Thematic Narratives

2. Family Narratives</td><td>Multiple readings of thematic narratives within and across families - to extract meaning of participants’ experiences in relation to each theme.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Multiple readings and editing of family narratives by cross-checking with raw data and thematic narratives</td></tr>
</table>

Gathering data

Research data in this study are the lived experiences of the participants. As Barkhuizen et al. (2014) point out, it is not uncommon for narrative inquiry to adopt multiple ways of data collection. Data in this study, in the form of stories and experiences, were collected from interviews, journal diaries, observations and questionnaire. The following section details how data were collected by each of these methods.

A Case study approach

This study adopts a case study approach to explore family experience. R. Yin (2009) asserts that case study is an appropriate strategy for studies that primarily aim at examining the "how" and "why" of the research topic, and phenomena which are not readily distinguishable from its context. This assertion is substantiated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) who state that case study anchors and implements the interpretive paradigm in the research site. In this study, a case is defined as a family being studied, who speak a Chinese dialect at home, and with one or more children studying in primary schools in Sydney.

The overriding principles of the use of multiple sources of evidence, a case study database as well as a chain of evidence was employed in the process of data collection (R. Yin, 2003a). The use of multiple methods was to secure in-depth understanding of the research topic (Flick, 2006). A research database which consisted of interview transcripts, narratives, field notes, family journal diary, and researcher's journal and reflections was developed and maintained during the course of data collection, with the intention to provide "sufficient

citation to the relevant portions of the case study database" (R. Yin, 2003b, p. 105).

Interview

Substantial portions of data were collected by interviews as this was the most appropriate means for stories to be told. However, other methods were also used to collect data (R. Yin, 2003a). Narrative interviews were conducted as a means to collect information for constructing the narratives, which sought to generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers. They also provided the opportunity for me to participate in the meaning making process with the participants. Riessman (2008) states that a good narrative interviewing allows participants to tell the stories they choose to tell, with minimum interruption from the interviewer. I drew on the wisdom of Polkinghorne (2007) and practised the ways he suggests to empower the participants in the interview process. He states that,

> By assuming an open listening stance and carefully attending to the unexpected and unusual participant responses, they (interviewers) can assist in ensuring that the participant's own voice is heard and the text is not primarily an interviewer's own creation (p. 482)

Thus, instead of being restricted by my interview agenda, participants in this study had the freedom to go down their trails. Indicative questions that were structured around the themes drawn from the review of literature on migrant experiences and Chinese students' mathematics performance were used to guide the interviews. The themes were, namely, connection to homeland, immigration experience, representation of Chineseness, education, mathematics education as well as perception of cultural identity (indicative

questions used in parent interviews were attached in Appendix A). Participants were given the space to tell stories that they wanted to tell, although some of the content might not sound relevant to the topics at the time of the interview. As such, interviews often went longer than scheduled. This extra space and time, however, had provided participants with the opportunities to recall past experiences that were often disorganised and distant, and presented them as stories. Participants often provided the historical, social and cultural contexts in which their experiences happened, often without my inquiry. They seemed to be concerned that their stories would not be fully understood without the provision of the background to their experiences.

I concur with Riessman (2008) that narrative interview takes a longer time to conduct than interviews which ask close-ended questions and where short responses are expected. In each case, a series of interviews were conducted with parents, students and teachers, and scheduled for 60 minutes, 20 minutes and 20 minutes respectively. However, the interviews often took longer than the scheduled time as participants took the opportunities to tell their experiences and stories, which were not always available.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the parents. Four out of six families invited me to their homes. The other two interviews were conducted either in or near participants' work place. Each interview was scheduled for one hour. The actual time taken for the interviews ranged from 50 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes. Children were withdrawn from class after consultation with the class teacher to minimise disruption that might cause to both the children and the rest of class. Interviews with children lasted from 20 to 35 minutes. Teachers were interviewed at a time most convenient for them. Interview questions were constructed from the information that I had

documented earlier in the in-class observation, which focussed on how the child related to his or her classmates and teacher in a mathematic lesson. Teacher interviews lasted from 20-30 minutes.

I started the parent interview with an introduction of the study and myself. I then invited them to tell me their backgrounds such as length of residence and reasons for migration, education and work experiences in Australia. They were found to 'open up' as soon as they discovered the connections between their experiences and that of mine. Clearly, the degree of reciprocity in the conversation is more conducive to the participants feeling relaxed in telling their own stories, than the wording of the questions. I also realised that storytelling often occurred at unexpected times, and that one story led to another. There were times when the stories seemed to be not research-related as the participant changed the topic in the course of storytelling. The shifts, however, were significant. They signalled participants travelling in memory to their pasts, selecting and organising events and experiences that they wanted to tell me in the interviews. Those shifts also told me the significance of the stories or experiences to them, in particular at the time the events or experiences happened.

In order to test out the interview questions, I was interviewed by my supervisor with the same indicative questions that I asked parents in the interview. This experience provided me with the opportunity to take a reciprocal position in the interview process, as well as a time for me to reflect on my own immigration experience. Part of the reflection was included in my narrative in chapter 1.

Journal diary

Parents were invited to a keep record of their children's afterschool activities for a week in a journal diary. The purpose of the diary was not only to record the kind of activity their children participate in, but more importantly the *responses* of both parents and the children to the activities. This was to get an understanding of their attitudes to their children's education from another perspective and in a different format. A completed journey diary of a participating family is attached in Appendix B.

Observation

One in-class observation of each child on a mathematics lesson was done after consultation with the class teacher. The aim of the observation was to gather information on how they related to others in a mathematics lesson, which included their work ethics and response in class. More specifically, their initiative, attitude and confidence in doing class tasks were observed. Interaction with the teacher and other students were also recorded. I also recorded the structure of the lesson and responses of the other students in order to get the context in which the activities happened. The technique of running record was used to document the observation. I was engaged in the role of a participant but with minimal participation (Crewell, 2014). Informed consent to conduct the observation was sought from the teacher and the parents. I was aware that the presence of an observer can distort the result (Koul, 2009). As for the setting of a classroom, the reactions of the students might be changed due to the presence of me as a researcher. To mininise the impact of my presence, I was introduced by the class teacher as a teacher who joined that particular lesson, without mentioning my role as a researcher or who and what

I was observing. Information collected informed interview questions in the interview with the child that was arranged on the same day of the observation.

Field notes

Apart from the data collected through interview and observation, field notes were also taken before and after the interviews and observations. They were recorded in both written and audio format. For example, the layout of the classroom, sitting arrangement and students' activities before and after the observation was documented. Likewise, the location of the interview venue, the atmosphere, and the activities in the area were recorded before and after each interview. I also audio-taped my impression and/questions after each interview, which was mainly to record my emotional response and/or observation that might not be so easily recorded in words at that time. Although they were only a small fragment of the notes used in this study, they formed part of the data used in the constructing the narratives. As well, they informed the analysis of data.

Questionnaire

There were both Chinese and English versions of the questionnaire. Questionnaires (in Chinese language) were sent to all Chinese families who speak a Chinese dialect at home in four participating schools in Sydney south. It was a recruitment strategy to ask, at the end of the questionnaire, whether parents would like to further participate in this study. Information that they provided in the questionnaire informed interview questions. Information in questionnaires returned from other families was not used in this study as they did not provide information to research data that were the lived experiences of the six families (The questionnaire (English) can be found in Appendix C).

Analysing data

In this study, each stage of data collection engaged analysis. According to Polkinghorne (1995), analysis refers to the treatment of the data, which is to synthesise rather than separate into parts. He contends that narrative analysis is the process of collecting and organising research data in a plot, and that "The outcome of a narrative analysis is a story" (Polkinghorne 1995, p. 15). As such, the narratives are the analysis (Polkinghorne, 2007). My task as a researcher was to collect, select and synthesise events from the lives of the people in the families and create a narrative which gives meaning to the events by displaying them in a plot. Since participants' experiences were different and there were aspects in their experiences that they chose to share more than others, it was found that each interview had a different focus. For instance, one parent was very enthusiastic in sharing her opinion on the mathematics curriculum in Australia, while another parent told me a lot about the immigration experiences of both herself and her parents. As such each family narrative has a different plot. However, they were all constructed around the themes that underpin this study. Acknowledging my lack of experience in writing narratives in a research study and to highlight some of the findings, data were analysed in the discussion chapter (chapter 6). In order to avoid repetition and highlight the connections of the themes, some of them are combined in the discussion chapter.

Events include stories shared with me in the interviews as well as information that I gathered from other data sets such as journal diaries and observations, which were selected based on their relevance to the research focus in this study. These data constituted to the narrative as a coherent whole.

Neither my participants nor my study are bounded, static, atemporal and decontexualised (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Events in participants' lives, though happened at different times, are not separated. Storied narrative unfolds the events in meaningful sequence and linkages between the events. It provides a retrospective explanation of how past events are linked and how the current outcome/situation has come about.

Experiences were told, organised and interpreted twice in this study, each by a different narrator. They were first told by the participants who recalled and gave meaning to experiences that were relevant to the discussion topics. Experiences were collected, organised and interpreted by me who then constructed family narratives that reflected the social, political and historical discourses in which the stories happened. Family narratives provided a unified picture of the lived experiences which were otherwise fragmented and fleeting. Experiences were interpreted both within and among families. Studying their lived experiences did not offer me classification or transferable explanation of their identities but "the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 9). As the creator of the family narratives, my views and attitudes towards participants' stories are inevitably present in the narratives, which may be seen as lack of objectivity. However, as explained in the chapter 'The Narrator', the researcher cannot be separated from the research, as such my analysis of the data is the function of who I am.

Examining themes

Interviews were guided by the indicative topics that were developed from the themes derived from the literature. They were digitally recorded and

transcribed (and translated) by myself. Three out of the interviews were conducted in either Mandarin or Cantonese. These interviews were first transcribed into Chinese transcripts then translated into that of English. In terms of translated transcript, I sought feedback from a colleague of a Chinese background. We would discuss on the meaning of the words or expression when there was discrepancy between our interpretations.

A preliminary analysis was undertaken as soon as the transcripts were finalised. The aim of the preliminary analysis was to expand interpretation by exploring the possibilities of understanding the data (Grbich, 2007). Saldaña (2013, p. 8) points out that coding is "heuristic", in the sense that it is a free form of exploration and the beginning of a more vigorous process of analysis. Transcripts, journal diary and observation were coded under the themes derived from the review of literature on cultural identity and Chinese student's performance in mathematics. These themes were identified as highly relevant in answering the research questions. They were also discussed and refined with my supervisors over a period of times. Consequently the following themes were identified: connection to homeland, immigration experience, representation of Chineseness, education, mathematics education and identity. New themes were identified in the coding process (the codes used are presented in Appendix D).

Thematic analysis has provided a thorough examination of the data under the chosen themes as well as great insights into understanding a complex social phenomenon in this research study. It holds the keys to unlock a large amount of data from a range of data sets and across families (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Subsequently, drawing from the data of each family, a *thematic narrative* was written for each theme, which was to provide a comprehensive account of the

information that participants provided in the interviews. Progressive understanding of the stories and events was established through looking forward and backward the information and zooming in and out the whole and its parts. However, while thematic analysis was a great tool to unbundle and give meaning to data, it failed to provide the context in which the experiences happened. The analysis was framed around the themes rather than the experiences of participant, and lacked coherence in the synchronisation of data. As well, themes which were value-laden could not provide the analytic tool to provide understanding to the fluidity and instability of cultural identity.

Narrative turn generally refers to social science researchers' turn from paradigmatic mode of thought that is associated with development of rational thinking to narrative (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). In their discussion on how the research academy has provided an environment for narrative inquiry to flourish, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) thoroughly discuss four themes in narrative turns that researchers often experienced. By turn, they mean "a change in direction from one way of thinking or being toward another" (p. 8). The four turns are, namely, the attention to relationships among participants, the move to words as data, the focus on the particular, and the recognition of blurred genres of knowing. While I did not turn from paradigmatic mode to narrative, I realised that the significance of stories told by participants and the context in which their experiences happened cannot be readily captured by thematic analysis. In the words of Riessman (2008, p. 12), the limitation of thematic analysis lies mainly in the problem that '… long accounts are distilled into coding units by taking bits and pieces – snippets of an often edited out of context'. Ultimately, analysis felt fragmented and sometimes even truncated.

Life experiences, however, are neither fragmented nor truncated. They might seem chaotic to outsiders who do not understand the context in which the experiences happened but they are not disconnected at all (Polkinghorne, 1995). Our life experiences are constituted by many people, events and emotions that informed each other in the past, present and future. They are connected in many ways, though sometimes not immediately.

Humans and human interactions do not exist out of context, nor do they happen out of time either. We exist in a continuum of time that we call history. Our interactions evolve in time, within a context that is ultimately changed by the interactions within it. As such, narrative inquiry that provides an accurate description of the history and context in which stories was found more appropriate in the analysis and presentation of research data.

The process of data collection was inspired by the analogy of viewing qualitative researcher as *bricoleur*, or quilt maker (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) which highlights that the choices of interpretive practices are often contingent rather than pre-fixed. I bear in mind the importance of being flexible and contingent in the use of research method before and during the course of analysis and eventually turned to narrative inquiry for a more contextual. The turn from thematic to narrative was not without concerns, especially in terms of the efforts and time that have been spent in exploring the themes. However, I took courage from the wisdom of Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) who, when outlining the movement of methodology in social sciences in understanding human learning and interactions, acknowledge the importance for the researcher to explore ways of knowing and making sense of the research data. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) state,

> As researchers begin to embrace those they research as humans rather than as objects of study and as they struggle to make sense of the narratives that such interactions produce, they begin to embrace other ideas about how to make data interpretable and how to provide interpretations of data that are coherent, that resonate with the data, and that are true to them. (p. 18)

Never had I looked at my participants as *objects*. Nevertheless, in the process of finding the most appropriate method to make sense of their experiences, I have realised the need to be open-minded and persistent in exploring the ways that could provide coherent interpretations of data.

Constructing narratives

Instead of finding an answer which could be generalized and called truth, my intention in this study was to co-construct meaning and understanding of the research topic with my participants. Multiple methods were adopted to get detailed information from the stakeholders, not aiming to triangulate in order to find *an answer*, but to gain clarity to the research topic. Richardson points out that the problem of triangulation is that it assumes a "*fixed point* or an *object* that can be triangulated" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 963), and that there is an answer to be found. However, the purpose of postmodernist writing is not to find *an* answer but to obtain multiple interpretations. We believe there are no universal truths to be discovered as all truths are partial. As such, Instead of triangulation, Richardson suggests the concept of *crystallization*. Crystals reflect the external environment and at the same time they refract what's outside within themselves. The notion of crystallization suggests that postmodern texts should be read from different angles to achieve multiple

interpretations (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). It is also about feeling, thinking and interpreting a phenomenon or an experience and represents them in different forms of texts. Our own history, gender, and beliefs, all contribute to the angle we adopt in reading the texts and what we can see.

Developed from Richardson's original concept of crystallization, Ellingson (2008) expands and discusses crystallization as an emergent framework, and provides a definition of it.

> Crystallization combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematises its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (Ellingson, 2008, p. 4).

This explanation captures the work of crystallization as both a theoretical framework and process. It also highlights the contingency and ambiguity of postmodernist texts, which encourage multiple readings of a phenomenon. Narrative analysis in this research sees two *stages* or *levels* of crystallization. First, family narrative was produced through the use of thematic analysis and narrative inquiry. They inform each other and bring clarity to how participants relate their personal stories to the social. The second level sees each family portrait as a text in the bigger narrative of Chinese migrants living in Sydney. They are a 'partial account of a phenomenon that problematises its own construction' (Ellingson, 2008, p. 4). Some of these family narratives share similar pre- and post- immigration experience, which reflect the political and social discourses when they entered Australia. For example, the family who

migrated in late 1970's repeatedly mentioned the racial comments they received up to late 1980s. On the other hand, families who migrated from the 1990s onwards did not mention any discriminative experience. Contrasting stories from participants who came from a seemingly similar background continue to demonstrate how people's history, gender, beliefs and intention refract the externalities differently for different people in the analysis. Contrasting data further crystallise the lived experiences of these Chinese immigrants and challenge the assumption of an essentialist Chineseness.

Process

I recorded the place I visited, be it the home or office. I was overwhelmed by participants' openness and generosity. Acutely aware of the power relation between a researcher and the researched, I explained to the participant before each interview that the interview was an opportunity for them to tell me their experience, and there were no right or wrong answers. My Chinese background, as well as the friendly mood, seemed to enhance participants' willingness to speak candidly. Semi-structured interview with indicative topics provided room for participants to explore their thoughts, voice their ideas and tell me their stories. Conversations were intense at times and free-flowing at others. Personal and/or family history was told by participants as the explanation of the background of their immigration experience and attitudes towards mathematics education.

As soon as I left the interview, I voice-recorded my impression and reflection of that interview. I recorded my immediate emotional response, my impression of the participant through my observation of eye contact, voice, hesitation and

so on - information that could not be captured the voice recording of the interview.

During the course of data collection, I kept a journey diary to reflect on the methods and questions we discussed in the interview, as well as my learning about how Chineseness operates within the Chinese community. The aim is to reflect on the process and to inform future interviews. Some of these reflections were integrated in my narrative (A reflective diary that I kept during the process of data gathering can be found in Appendix E).

I chose to do the transcription to become intimate with the data. Doing the transcription myself enable me to go through the interview slowly one more time, to pay attention to the 'small stories', the pause, hesitation and tone in participants' speeches. This is particularly crucial when three of the interviews were conducted in participant's home language. Lots could be lost in translation. Preliminary analysis carried out immediately after the interviews were transcribed.

A family portrait was written after the preliminary analysis, based on the themes that I used in the interview. This was my first attempt to *see* the families in a holistic way. It was done before I started to peel out the layers and explored each theme, which resulted in the construction of five thematic narratives for each family (based on fives themes that underpinned the interviews). In the process of construction, I looked for both contractions and similarities in experiences among six families. However, the process of thematic analysis saw the emergence of a narrative for each family. The skeleton of each story slowly emerged, filled in over time with experience and perspectives of members in the family. I took great care not to distort the originality of the data, or distracted by the rich information that they told me. I

kept my focus on constructing a narrative for each family, which provides detail of the context, the experiences and emotions in a holistic way.

The form of the narrative influences the selection of data. Narratives in this study were written in an inductive mode that opens up possibilities for interpretation. In this mode, data tell their own study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As such, data were selected to be included in the narratives if they were relevant to the research topics and could provide insights into the research questions.

Narrative inquiry is driven by the sense of the whole (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and the meaning of the topics and experiences in the narratives are understood from the overall narrative. Plot and scene work together to create the quality of narratives. Plot is constructed in terms of the time in which the scenes happen, where actions occur and characters are formed. Scene is also where characters live out their stories and where cultural and social contexts are revealed. In the context of this study, scenes in which participants' experiences happened (both in their homeland and Australia) were recorded in the narratives.

Table 3.1. An overview of family information (in the order of interview)

The following table provides an overview of the information of six participating families. Parent (s) participated in the interview was/were highlighted in ***italics***.

Family name	**Homeland**	**Year of migration**	**Reason for migration**	**Home language**	**Parents' occupation. Mother (M) Father (F)**	**Parents' education**	**School year in which the child attended**	**Mathematics Coaching for children (as in 2012)**
Marin	*Mother* from Taiwan. Father's family came from the Netherlands in 1950s.	Mother in 1996	Mother moved to Sydney after she got married to her husband who is an Australian citizen	Mandarin and English	M: Finance. F: Coach captain	M: Masters degree F: High school	6	Yes (for selective school test only. Started about a year before the test and finished once the test was done)
Henly	*Mother* from Guangdong, China. Father unknown.	1996	Mother came for family re-union.	Cantonese	M: Housewife F: Chef	M: High school F: High School	6	Only started coaching when the family moved to Sydney from Melbourne in 2012. Children went to Chinese community school in Melbourne.
Tran	Father from Hong Kong. *Mother* from the Solomon Islands	Mother in 1977. Father in 2000.	For education and to live in a Chinese community	Cantonese	M:Accountant F: Househusband	M: High school F: Bachelor degree	3	No, but mother closely monitors child's academic performance and will send him to coaching college as soon as she perceives there is a need in Year 4, in order to better prepare him for the selective school test.
Low	*Father* from Shanghai, China; *mother* from Dalian, China.	Father in 1992. Mother in 1999.	Both parents came to Australia to study	Mandarin	M: IT professional F: Scientist	M: PhD F: PhD	2	No. Parents are critical of the coaching culture in the Chinese community.

Regits	*Mother* from Yanzhou, China	Mother in 1997. Father unknown	To get permanent residency.	Mandarin	M: IT professional F: Business Management	M: Masters degree F: Bachelor degree	6	Younger daughter started tutoring for 6 hours a week since year 5, for better high school exam mark’
Gibbs	Both *mother* and father from Guangdong, China	Both in 2008	For children’s education. Father got an offer to work in a restaurant.	Mandarin	M: Housewife F: Chef	M: High School F: High School	1	Y (coaching college and father. from Term 2 in Year1)

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed discussion on the methodological approach, analytical framework, as well as the procedure through which data in this study were collected and analysed. Together with Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 this chapter constitute PART 1 of this thesis that lays the background of this study. The goal of PART 1 was to explain the connection between the researcher and the study, identify where this study situated in the research context and the research gap that it addressed. It finished with a discussion of the approach this study adopted to address the gap.

The next two chapters in PART 2 bring reader's attention to the topic of this study, which is to explore the cultural identities of Chinese migrants living in Sydney. A few interrelated and interconnected concepts that frame the understanding of the narratives are reviewed in these chapters. Family narratives are presented at the end of each chapter to illustrate the argument presented in literature review. In order to maintain coherence in the narrative, analyses of experiences, unless very unique and specific to the family, are kept to the minimal. A discussion of the experiences of all six families is presented in chapter 6 *The Unfinished.*

PART 2

TELLING THE STORIES

Large-scale migration in the era of globalisation has resulted in multiple orientations and growing complexity of cultural identities. A single concept of identity is inadequate to explain the multi-faceted cultural process that constructs cultural identities in the transnational world. A multidimensional identity that reflects the social and cultural interactions in the multicultural societies will provide a better interpretative space to understand who we are.

Events in our lives might seem to happen in separate and linear fashion but as Connelly and Clandinin (2006) point out, stories happen in a 3-dimensional landscape and as such it is important to note that their meanings need to be understood in the social and historical contexts in which they happened. PART 2 provides thorough discussions of a few interconnected and interdependent concepts on identities and diaspora, which frame the reading of the family narratives associated in this part that consists of three chapters. Chapter 4 *"The Whole of Its Parts. The Parts in the Whole"* examines the contemporary issues of transnationalism and how this global influence has significantly impacted on the stories of the participants, as well as that of the Chinese diaspora. It also discusses the contextual condition in which the meaning of Chineseness is negotiated. As parts of the transnational community, the meanings of the experiences of the participants are best understood in the context of its whole. Chapter 5 *"The*

Narrative of Identity Formation" reviews the theoretical underpinnings of identity formation that have informed my position in this study.

Chapter 4 The Whole of its Parts. The Parts in the Whole

Introduction

The purpose of PART 2 is to provide the theoretical underpinnings to an exploration of notion of Chineseness as an identity in a world that is becoming more transnational. Experience is best understood in the social, political and historical contexts in which it happened. Thus an examination of migrant experiences in the 21st century would not be complete without considering the global changes brought about by transnationalism, which has been propelled and magnified through facets of globalisation. In this chapter, the narrative of transnationalism is reviewed and contemporary issues associated with it are also examined. This literature review also addresses how frequent and immediate ties with homelands, brought about by technological advances, have changed transnational family life. Dual or multiple connections to social worlds mean dual or multiple orientations for migrants, which subsequently shape their sense of belonging to both the host country and homelands. Subsequently, the notion of belonging is explored, with a special focus on how cultural identity is embodied in migrants by examining the notion of performativity.

The complexity of identity cannot be addressed by a single theoretical concept. Its fluidity, instability and multiplicity need to be studied from a range of interrelated, interconnected and interdependent concepts. In the process of constructing a framework to approach this study I have explored a number of aspects and presented them in chapter 4 and 5. Cultural identity, however, is not static nor is it

constructed in a vacuum, but within a web of social, political and historical forces and influenced by both local and global forces. As such, this chapter explores the notion of transnationalism and examine how it impacts on participants' building of sense of belonging both within and outside Australia. It then brings the focus to the context of this study, which are participants' understanding of their cultural identity in Sydney, by interrogating the concepts of Chineseness and diaspora.

In essence, this study explores how the notion of Chineseness operates in Sydney and its impact on children's mathematics learning. Without obscuring the context, nor reifying identities, it describes and characterises diasporic identities in Sydney. As such, the shifting notion of Chineseness within the Chinese diaspora in Australia is examined in the second half of this chapter.

Wetherall (2010) points out that the concept of identity that is "notoriously elusive and difficult to define" (Wetherell, 2010, p. 3). While seeking a definition is difficult, contrasting experiences of participants have revealed the limitations of adopting an essentialist approach that posit one aspect of identity as the sole cause of constituting the social meanings of an individual's experience (Moya, 2000). They have also proved that the assumptions of homogeneity and boundary are both simplistic and unrealistic.

Transnationalism

For centuries, migrants, regardless of their reasons for migration, have demonstrated a desire to maintain connections with their homelands in one way or another. Multiple ties and interactions link people across the borders of nation states. Calhoun (2003) argues that it is in the nature of humanity that we have this

desire to belong to social groups, relations, and culture. While migration is not a new social phenomenon, what is different in contemporary migrants is the magnitude of *intensity* and *simultaneity* of the transnational activities that they carry out (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999), which Vertovec (1999) notes as the "hallmarks" of transnationalism. Technological advances have facilitated real-time and intense interactions and exchanges across the world, which has created distinctive social structures in this world. Subsequently, central to the study of transnational migrants are the intense linkages between the place where they currently reside and their homelands, and possibly other places where they have lived in (Ma, 2003; Ong, 1999b; Vertovec, 1999). These simultaneous social, economic and political linkages with multiple places have created a new dimension in the social and physical lives of contemporary migrants. Travelling between the social and physical spaces between homeland and their new "home" creates not only multiple homes, but multiple belongings and multiple identities. This section provides a discussion on some features of the transnational reality, aiming to provide a picture of the world in where contemporary Chinese migrants are living, and how the flexibility and multiplicity of these connections shape their identity narratives.

As a concept that has long been widely used in disciplines such as anthropology, migration studies, education and ethnic studies, transnationalism carries diverse meanings in different disciplines and to individual researchers (Ma, 2003; Ong, 1999b; Portes et al., 1999). Regardless of the foci of each discipline in either the understanding or the application of the notion of transnationalism, it is a dynamic

social process (Ma, 2003) characterised by the intense linkages and connections that individuals maintain. Vertovec (2001) notes that transnationalism has not been developed as a theoretical approach but rather it is a concept overused, and as such he suggests theorising a typology of transnationalism and the conditions that affect it (p. 576). It is not the aim of this discussion to theorise transnationalism but by exploring how transnational border-crossing connections impact on the construction of cultural identities, it attempts to provide insights into the conditions that affect the study of transnationalism.

Generally, transnationalism refers to various kinds of global or cross border connections (Vertovec, 2001). Different from migrants in the past century, contemporary transnational migrants have more resources and agency in crossing the social, cultural, political as well as economic borders between nation states. Borders are dissolved and nations states de-territorialized as people are no longer connected by physical proximity but a common consciousness or bundle of experiences that exits (Vertovec, 1999). Awareness of decentred attachments has marked dual or multiple identifications for migrants nowadays, resulting in cultural identities that are multiply constructed across different, often intersecting discourses and positions.

Porous boundaries facilitate interactions - intense activities have caused new patterns in social organisation of social networks, families and households, ethnic communities, power relations surrounding gender and status, religious institutions and economic exchange (Vertovec, 2004). Heightened activities across borders, in return, further dissolve the boundaries. Subsequently, migrants nowadays live in a

transnational space in which cultural boundaries are contested, citizenship could be flexible, and flows of people, capital, and information are swift. This fluid movement creates new ways of identification that further challenge the complexity of identity formation.

Transformation

Besides its impacts on social organizations, transnationalism has brought about deep and far-reaching *transformations* of the social worlds of both individuals and families (Vertovec, 2004). Intense and real time connections with the home country have reconfigured both societies in which the migrant existence is ongoing. The capacity to maintain a dual orientation to both places also means negotiation of identities in two social worlds. Dual orientation, or bifocality, not only significantly impacts on migrants' lives but on those who are "left behind" (Vertovec, 2004, p. 976), in particular migrants' family and friends. In other words, transnational activities and ideologies among those who have migrated have brought changes to the outlooks and experiences to both themselves and those who are still living in the home country. Dual orientation is further complicated by different and sometime contrasting cultural practices and values in the home country and that of the host country. In their study to investigate how migrants from Eastern Europe maintain intergenerational relationships, Nesteruk and Marks (2009) found that families apply various strategies to maintain intergenerational relationships over a long distance. With a collectivist view on family and relationship between parents and children (and adult children), which embraces interdependence rather than independence, grandparents are seen as very

important others in the family relationship. Grandparents are often heavily involved in childrearing. As such, visiting their (adult) children in the host country to take up the responsibility of looking after their grandchildren is one of the core strategies that a majority of families employ. Subsequently, transnationalism does not only impact on the social worlds of the migrants but those "left behind" (Vertovec, 2004). Drawing on this idea, I argue that migrants' movements have a *ripple effect* on the lives of many others in the home country. Besides grandparents who have also developed dual orientation of two social worlds due to migration of their children, their own movements also bring another level of change to their friends and relatives in the home country.

Transnationalism has created a new way of viewing social formation that sees migrants' multiple identification to multiple places. This inextricable relationship between transnationalism and identity is cleverly articulated by Vertovec who claims that transnationalism and identity are "inherently called for juxtaposition" (2001, p. 573). He argues that on one hand, transnational networks of migrants are built upon the perception of a shared identity with the people in the country of origin, who share the same cultural and linguistic traits. On the other hand, connections affects migrants in terms of how they construct, maintain and negotiate collective identities which are being constantly negotiated within two social worlds. In other words, the perception of one's connections to the homeland shapes one's understanding of self that may reinforce or inhibit further connections. 21 Often unintentionally, the ossification of culture and language over time in the new environment often results in weakening of links and

attachment to the place of origin (Alinia & Eliassi, 2014; Waldinger, 2010). Contemporary migration is mostly voluntary which often involves activation of individual's skills and social capital. As such, cultural flows and identities of transnational migrants cannot be studied in isolation from social class and the resources associated with it. Ong (1999) argues in her critique of Appadurai's theorisation of 'cultural globalisation' that researchers in the 1990s seem to have overlooked the class stratification linked to global systems of production. The impact of social class can be seen in Waters' conceptualisation of education, social class and migration (Waters, 2008). In her examination of how capital is a crucial factor in migration, she provides examples of how middle class Hong Kong Chinese mobilise their social and cultural capital in providing the resources for their children to study in western countries to increase their credentials, a "move" that in turn reproduces and secures the social and cultural capital that the family owns. In her argument, overseas education is often a means to meet familial objectives rather than individual pursuit for Chinese families. Ong (1999b) also highlights the instrumental function of overseas education to Chinese families who own international corporations. Sending children to study overseas, who later assist in the expansion of family business in that country seems to have been a strategy for family business in the 1980s and 1990s. These children acquire not only the cultural capital in the form of western qualification and language, but embodied capital as in how they present and relate to the local businessmen (Waters, 2008).

Fuelled by the dynamics of capitalism, transnationalism has a different significance in the study of migration movement in recent decades. Economic objectives and capitalist activities shape contemporary migration movements and migrants' lives on not only individual, but familial as well as community levels (Ong, 1999a; Ong & Nonini, 1997). For example, a strong economic, social and political network with the home country has rendered transnational migrants greater resistance to local political and social pressure in the host country (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995).

However, as Vertovec (2004) notes, capitalism is often only a catalyst in transnational movement. Under the condition of global capitalism, opportunities to live in western countries, whether short-term or long- term, are more diversified and not necessarily capital oriented. The skills and social capital of individuals allow ordinary people to approach migration on their own (Portes et al., 1999). Western lifestyles which are disseminated by media and popular culture as more desirable have drawn people to leave their homelands and live in a foreign culture often very different from where they come from. Thus transnationalism not only creates economic impetus but also a complicated and entangled web of cultural relationships within the nation-state. More so, it gives rise to multicultural societies within which cultural boundaries intersect and become blurred. Rather than being a stable place in which cultures conglomerate, multicultural societies have far-reaching implications for the cultural identity of the individual migrant and their connections to both the home and host country (Van Meijl, 2010).

Children and transnationalism

Literature on transnationalism as experienced by children is scarce. And where they are mentioned they are often grouped in the category of 'family', where broader questions which concern topics such as the maintenance of intergenerational relationships (Gardner, 2012). Or, they are portrayed as 'victims' who are either left behind (Skrbiš, 2008) or have to struggle in two worlds. When identity and migration are concerned, much of the research has been conducted with children attending international schools (Fail, Thompson, & Walker, 2004; Grimshaw & Sears, 2008; Mclachlan, 2007). These students have been referred to as Global Nomads or Third Culture Kids and are attending the particular school because their parent or parents are working overseas for a period, or because their parents desired a specific schooling experience that was not available locally. The main difference between these children and those that we are calling the transnational child revolves around the notions of belonging and home. Fail et al. (2004) noted that some children may develop a sense of belonging while others develop none and much of this sense is determined by language use. But one key difference is that transnational children have made a permanent change for the foreseeable future.

Children's roles and perspectives in their transnational families are often overlooked. Understanding their perspectives, experiences and how they make sense of their experience, however, are crucially important not only for them and the family, but for researchers because as Gardner (2012) points out, how they experience transnationalism will impact on their future practices and possibly,

orientation. In other words, understanding their experience now will help us to develop better understanding of their perspectives in the future.

Childhood is socially constructed and there is no universal rule to explain who children are. As well, children are active agents who have their own views and thoughts on their social worlds (Hirschfeld, 2002). They play a pertinent role in what (Bryceson and Vuorela (2002)) call the 'frontiering' and 'relativising' of their transnational families. 'Frontiering' is a strategy that families employ to create networks and links in the new country. Children's submergence in the local society and their language ability are often the key in building the network and space. On the other hand, people establish and maintain relational ties with family members across transnational social space through 'relativising'. Again, children's role cannot be overlooked in this process. Some children develop the ties with a (or some) member(s) in the family afar, which, with the rich knowledge and attachment of cultural and social discourses in the home country, both shapes the formation of their identity as well as the transnational life of the family. Frequent interactions in two or more social worlds, accordingly, mean connections and belonging to more than one place.

Belonging

Calhoun (2003) contends that belonging is an inescapable condition of humanity. Central to the understanding of the belonging is our need to be included, or, our fear of being excluded. It is closely connected to the notion of membership (or lack of it) in groups or social institutions (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Although it is an important element that constitutes one's sense of belonging, membership is,

however, not the same as belonging. We can have multiple membership or citizenship (as in political belonging) in many institutions, as well as countries. Nevertheless, we may not necessarily develop a sense of belonging to the club, university, work place or even the country we are living in. Elements that constitute belonging are more complex that those for membership and citizenship. For instance, constitutive elements of citizenship of political entitlement, equal rights and equal treatment may not necessarily meet the needs of recognition and acceptance (Antonsich, 2010). In reviewing the literature on multiculturalism in relation to migrants' belonging, Antonsich states that migrants should feel they can be recognised as "an integral part of the community where they live, as well as being valued and listened to" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 650). In other words, people feel that they are in the right place and accepted and not out of place.

The literature on belonging has considerable breadth in terms of the approaches and perspectives taken by researchers and scholars. As a word used so frequently and readily both within and outside the academy, *belonging* is a term which is almost self-explanatory, and not much effort has been made in defining or theorising it (Antonsich, 2010). Among research studies which examine how the term is used, Yuval- Davis (2006) and Antonsich (2010) have provided an analytical frameworks for the study of belonging. Yuval-Davis (2006) highlights the difference between *belonging* and the *politics of belonging*, and argues that belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling *at home*. This definition is echoed by Antonsich's claim that belonging is personal and intimate feeling of being "at home" in a place (2010, p. 645), in what he called "place-

belongingness". For Hage (1997), a person feels at home when he or she feels familiarity, community, security and a sense of possibility.

While the notion of belonging refers to the emotional aspect of attachment and membership, the *politics of belonging* conceptualises the forces that would influence this attachment. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that belonging is a social and economic position in the grid of power, which is historically constructed. She refers to these forces as the politics of belonging, which are the "specific political projects" that "aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities" (p. 197). From a discursive viewpoint, Antonsich (2010) argues politics of belonging as "a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists form of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion" (p. 645). In other words, it is the social, cultural and political forces that facilitate or inhibit an individual's building of belonging. Both of them suggest that belonging is neither an essential entity which can be claimed, nor is it a status (being), but a dynamic process of becoming (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006), which does not develop in an emotional vacuum but is shaped by "specific political projects". In short, belonging is a dynamic process of becoming which is constituted within a grid of power relations in social contexts and particular historical moments. We feel we are a member in that institution, school, workplace, or country when we feel we belong. While belonging may take some time to build, identity could be added or removed instantly. For example, a young person becomes a university student once he or she is enrolled; or a person becomes a retiree the day after he finishes

the last work day in life, and his or her identity as a teacher, a farmer, a prime minister will be removed.

Where is home – belonging in the transnational space

The notion of home for transnational migrants is complex and multiple. Home is not only the physicality and the dwelling, but a space where social relations are built and nurtured, and identities constructed. It is spatial as well as temporal. In his discussion of *memories, belonging and identities* of Chinese migrants in Sydney, A. Davidson (2008) notes that in recalling the past from memories, migrants negotiate Chineseness in the stretch of homes between China and Sydney, within the social and cultural discourses in context. The building of belonging in the host country is a complex process in which migrants might experience rejection and/or social disjuncture. Davidson's idea that home is spatially stretched, in which "people conceptualise and act on different contexts of home, and are thus connected to home through variant social relations", resonates with Vertovec's claim that transnationalism and identities "inherently call for juxtaposition" (2001, p. 573). Who we are and who we are becoming are constantly negotiated within and between these homes, both physically and virtually. The location of belonging and relational ties is much influenced by the power relations that constitute within them, which is often overlooked. As such, belonging is political (Rowe, 2005), which reflects the power relations that are constituted our perception of the social divisions such as gender, ethnicity and class.

Home is where we construct belonging and build connectedness. A personal and unique relationship is developed among the inhabitants in the home, which constitutes their belonging to the place and space. Home is a social discourse or social institution, which does not always depend upon any one physical space and place (Austin, 2005b). It may not be the place we currently inhabit. For transnational migrants nowadays, home could be the home country, the city or town in which they were born and lived for years, or it could be stretched between the homeland and the place they are living in (Ma, 2003). Ma (2003) argues that first-generation Chinese diasporans are keen to maintain close ties with the people and the culture, and are keen to learn about the political and social conditions of the place. For most people, however, home and homeland have different meanings and hence different attachment. While others exist in home, homeland only exists in imagination.

An identity of *we* is constructed in home, which connects people to people, and people to the place. Subsequently, w*e* include people who are seen as part of home (Austin, 2005b). In this relationship, the boundary of *me* and *we* is often permeable. Extreme cases would see parents sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children; or soldiers sacrifice themselves for the sake of their homeland (Yuval-Davis, 2010). Subsequently, it has the power to exclude those seen as outsiders or *them*. Seen in this light, the discursive *we* is an identity which is constructed within, not outside, discourse (Hall, 1996).

As discussed in the previous section, migration has brought about dissociations of family, friendship and constitutional networks for migrants, which often have

strong emotional connotations (Skrbiš, 2008). Their sense of belonging might be shattered (Skrbiš, 2008), at least at the early stage of their migration, but migration also symbolises new beginning and new opportunities that ultimately transform once shattered belonging to a new form. Transformation could be outward and obvious, such as new friendship groups and an acquired accent. It could also be subtle and almost invisible, as in changes in values and perspectives. How migrants build their sense of belonging to both the home country and host country tell us their locations in these two worlds, which is revealed and can be viewed by their *performance*.

Performative belonging

My position in this thesis is that identity is not an entity that can be categorised and labeled, but a construct that is best understood in the narratives of experiences. It cannot be readily explained but it is often revealed by one's behaviours and actions. Narratives reveal the meaning, without external explanation, because the details define themselves. As Cavarero (2000, p. 3) highlights, "narration reveals the meaning without committing the error of defining it". In other words, identities should be made known rather than defined, as meaning will be reduced in the process of definition.

Identity narratives can be verbal or non-verbal (Yuval-Davis, 2010). The construction of identity narratives and that of attachments is constituted by repetitive practices which links individual and collective behaviour in special social and cultural spaces (Yuval-Davis, 2006). We should be cautious, however, not to confine our understanding of belonging from narratives to the emotional

attachment to groups or cultures only (Yuval-Davis, 2006), although it is a significant part for humanity. Belonging can be displayed, enacted, and performed, and there is a *spectrum* of "doing belonging" (Skrbiš, Baldassar, & Poynting, 2007). While Skrbiš et al. (2007) refer to national belonging in this discussion, their argument is valid in the discussion of cultural practices such as rituals.

According to Butler (1993) performativity is not a singular or bounded act but reiterative and citational practice. It is "a reiteration of norms that precedes, constrains and exceeds the performer" (Butler, 1993, p. 234). In her discussion of sexual identity, Butler argues that sex not only functions as a norm, it has the power to regulate the body that it produces. As such, sexual identity is performative. Our bodies materialise the cultural norm of sex through repetition of acts, gestures and enactment that are performative. For Butler, "…identity is performativity constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1990, p.25). Norms that possess power that undergoes ceaseless negotiation, exist within the society before the individual who performs them. Performativity derives its power from repeated practice or citing of the norm. Practices such as rituals create and maintain the discourses that they produce. They are performed as expressions of identity that is about how one expresses himself or herself in action, manner and word. Performativity, however, is socially constructed and we are not completely free in the process of the building of belonging. It is constructed in the intersection of social divisions such as gender, ethnicity and class, based on how we interpret the divisions and what they value.

Following in this vein, it can be seen how the regulatory norms of Chineseness are materialised in our bodies, which are expressed in acts, gestures and enactments. Practice of traditions is performative, often with the imagination of upholding an internal ethnic 'essence'. Hence rituals, the physical and practical representations of tradition, are public acts that we perform. They are often seen as norms that people in the cultural group should follow. Through repetition of rituals as seen in performance, identity is embodied and performed. In other words, rituals exercise binding power in their performance (Butler, 1993).

Embodied narratives are crucial in the construction and reproduction of collective identities. As such, the norm of Chineseness as represented in the way people act, derives its power through the citations that it compels. Take the practice of '拜年' – visiting each other in Chinese New Year – as an example. It consists of a set of expected behaviours as represented in the etiquette such as the greetings, the colour of clothes, food, or even mood (that bad mood will bring bad luck to oneself and the family). It casts within a formalised pattern that projects bodies within a structure of meaning that precedes them. The practice not only performs an action but it gives the power to what is performed (Butler, 1993), although individuals have the power to act out within the system.

In her study on Italian migrant belonging in Britain, Fortier (2000) argues that cultural identity is *at once* de-territorialised and re-territorialised (p. 1). Although the focus of her study is on institutional rather than individual experiences of identity, it has reiterated migrants' longing to belong and desire for an identity, often through the reproduction of traditions. Reproduction of tradition is

particularly important for people who believe that they can transfer the *culture* from their homeland and continue to live in it in the host country. Subsequently, some cultural practices are reified as the expressions of the ethnic group and seen as the result of that identity (Fortier, 2000).

This desire to re-create the idea of home and sense of belonging demonstrates one's need to feel included. What would be disappointing to these people is that this idea of a *reproduction of culture* in a new place is nothing more than a romanticisation of homeland, for culture is dynamic and cannot be 'transplanted'. Practising the rituals of Chinese New Year in Sydney, for instance, does not mean a transfer of Chinese culture to Sydney. At most, it is a *translation* of a cultural practice (Rushdie, 1991). Whilst this connection is important for the migrant's imagination, most is lost in translation, as the social world of Sydney is a *third space* which operates within different social, cultural and political discourses, and in which a new hierarchy of power emerges (Bhabha, 1990). Rather than transplanting traditional practices from their homelands as they imagine, migrants are actually creating new meanings for these practices - a hybrid tradition emerge in a hybrid space.

The Parts in the Whole

This section conceptualises Chineseness as a discourse and discusses how it operates within the diaspora in Sydney. Without obscuring the context, nor reifying identities, it describes and characterises diasporic identities in Sydney.

Chineseness

The question of cultural identity is troubling to most Chinese diasporic subjects who often feel they are neither Chinese nor Australians, even to second, third or fifth generation descendants of migrants (Ngan & Chan, 2012). On one hand, they cannot deny their differences in terms of physical appearance, home language, and possibly accent - the "inescapability of Chineseness" as Ang (2001, p. 28) called it. Visible markers often guide us in our perception of others, and others in perceiving us (Alcoff, 2006). They do tell us certain aspects of who someone is, but there is even more that they cannot tell. On the other hand, migrants' submergence in the local context and their distance from their (or their parents') homeland has created a lifestyle not quite the same as that found in their home country. Many have experienced being asked 'where did you come from', or "where are you *really* from?" (Ang, 2001, p. 29; Henry, 2003, pp. 231, italics from both originals) when they travel to other parts of the world. The name of the host country (Holland and the UK for Ang and Henry respectively) cannot always satisfy the curiosity of others, who possibly are expected to provide a national identity that sounds *right* to who they are perceived to be. The visible markers of their identity simply fail to match the identity they identify themselves with.

For diasporic Chinese, neither the national identity of Australian or Chinese is sufficient to tell the stories of their identities. They are in the in-between space, the liminality (Bhabha, 1990), a space of 'neither/nor'. It is a space in which a new hierarchy of power and positions emerge. The complexity of cultural identity cannot be easily described or explained because of the diversity in its

understanding due to the social, political, historical as well as personal circumstances in which the meaning is constituted. Subsequently, the *context* in which cultural identity is formed becomes crucial in our understanding of it to the individual. Identity is a location that an individual takes within a web of relations and power in context (Chun, 1996; Hall, 1996). This location is often found in the complicated crossroads of identities or social categories, subject to the interpretation and construction of self and the culture of which the individual is part. As such, unless we know how one's identity is constructed within the social and historical contexts, the short answer of 'I am Chinese' provides nothing more than convenience to the question of identity.

In this section I problematise Chineseness and argue that it is neither a stable and fixed category, nor an essential feature shared by ethnic Chinese. Rather, it is a fluid, contextual and *political* discourse which is interplay between history and culture (Hall, 1990). As such it needs to be understood within the social and political discourses both within and outside China. The following discussion which outlines the dialogues of scholars and researchers on the ambiguity and precariousness on Chineseness informs the perspective I took in regard to understanding research data in this research study, which argues that a migrant's cultural identity is a subjective positioning that they articulate in the discourse of Chineseness in Sydney. I will also examine the proposition of Chinese diaspora as an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) and argue that it is a site for interrogation of Chineseness. Examining migrants' ties to the homeland, the host country as well as the diaspora often provide insights of who they are. The

complexity as well as fluidity of their identities is then contextualized in the two family narratives that follow this review of literature on Chineseness and diaspora.

Chineseness and China

It is often believed that when Chinese people migrate to another country, they bring with them a set of homogenous practices, language and values – what Ang (1998) called as "migration of Chineseness". The problem of this view of a homogenous identity is not only that of injustice, in the sense that most people are automatically treated in certain ways (both good and bad) due to the label, but that it limits and desensitizes our capacity to interrogate a discourse which is subject to both local and global social and political changes. The significance of diaspora is that it provides the space for the interrogation of its meaning, as well as examining the problem of the assumption of a collective identity of Chineseness. The social, cultural and political distance from China allows us to see the difference and junctures in the imagined unity and the precariousness of a collective Chinese identity. The interface between Chineseness and local discourses in the host country creates a space for new power relation and practices - the Third Space (Bhabha, 1990), which exposes the distinction of how Chineseness is represented within and outside China. For example, as a Hong Kong- born Chinese, my knowledge of typical traditional Chinese New Year celebration include the New Year's Eve dinner, burning fire crackers, giving red packets to children, visiting 'end of the year market' as well as decorations (This knowledge is shared by other Chinese, for example, in ("Chinese New Year Traditions," 2015). The Chinese New Year *parade* as seen in overseas Chinese communities such as the one in

Sydney is a rather recent and contemporary way to celebrate Chinese New Year. It is a new tradition that encompasses most elements of Chinese New Year, such as community celebration, family reunion, as well as happiness as represented in crowds and bright colours. However, parades, an extravagant way of celebration, would not be seen in agricultural societies such as China. This is an *invented tradition* found almost exclusively in overseas Chinese communities, including Hong Kong (Hobsbawm, 2012).This practice is a re-creation of Chinese New Year celebration, developed through what (Tan, 2004) notes as transnational cultural flows with local forces. In fact, Chinese New Year celebrations and parades started in San Francisco during the Gold Rush. Parade, a traditional American practice was adopted in the celebration (n.d.). Hall (1992) argues that invented tradition is a strategy deployed to construct commonsense views of national belonging or identity. Looking from this light, the identity of diasporic Chinese is constructed through the invention of new practices such as parade, a representation of Chineseness unique to the overseas Chinese communities.

Dialogues of the issues among overseas Chinese around the world prospered from 1980s. Multifaceted discussions on overseas Chinese broaden our understanding of this group of Chinese from a myriad of perspectives. The ambiguity and precariousness of Chineseness as an identity was challenged rigorously by scholars of Chinese descent (see Ang, 1998; Ang, 2001; Chow, 1998; Chun, 1996; Tu, 1994; Gungwu Wang, 1999) For example, Gungwu Wang (1999) points out the problem of using the term *Huaqiao* (overseas Chinese) and diaspora to describe the group of Chinese people living outside China. Chun (1996) asserts the

ambiguity of resorting to Chineseness as cultural identity. And sharing her own experience, Ang provides a series of work to problematise Chineseness (Ang, 1998, 2000, 2001). What is in common in the discussion is the view that Chineseness as a discourse is not fixed and Chinese identities are not unified, as well as a shift in the approach to study Chinese diaspora (L. Wang & Wang, 1998).

The previous paradigm sees the discourse of Chineseness as a representation of what China is, which gives meaning of being Chinese. It is manifested in traditions, rituals, myths, as well as everyday practices and interactions, which are generated, respected and maintained among people who are willing to perpetuate the heritage. If "'Englishness' tells us what England *is*, gives meaning to the identity of 'being English'" (Hall, 1992, pp. 293, quotations and italics from original), Chinese identity could be represented by Chineseness which tells us what *China* is. In this paradigm, cultural identities are often regarded as timeless, original and everlasting.

In the study of the overseas Chinese, this paradigm also assumes a sense of nationalism and loyalty to China, that early migrants often saw themselves as sojourners and would one day return to their homeland. The sojourner mentality, however, has been transformed to deliberate migration (L. Wang & Wang, 1998). Migrants nowadays have different reasons for and expectations of migration, and hence hold a different identification with and attachment to a national culture which is only unified in imagination.

(In)Authenticity of Chineseness

Developed from ancient China, the meaning of Chineseness has been negotiated and transformed in the course of history. China, *Zhongguo*, literally means "Central Country" (Tu, 1991) or "Middle Kingdom" (Chun, 1996). Historically, the idea of Central Country differentiated the Chinese from the *barbarians* on the periphery and created national pride and an imagined unity of the meaning of Chinese (Tu, 1994). This imagined unity is reinforced and re-enacted in Chinese literature despite the fact that even in the pre-dynastic era, there were tribes and diverse ethnic groups who carried out diverse ethnic practices and customs. Paradoxically, although the Central Country was mostly ruled under the sovereignty of the ethnic group *Han*, it had been taken over by the *barbarians* in history. For instance, the Mongols and Manchus who had very different social, linguistic and cultural practices, had established the Yuan (1271 – 1368) and Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911)) respectively. Common ancestry, unfortunately, is just a myth (Tu, 1994).

The 1911 Revolution marked the end of dynastical rule in China that, however, did not bring the imagination of a unified Chineseness to reality. The establishment of "New China" (People's Republic of China, PRC) in 1949 had, paradoxically, seen the creation of two Chinas. The retreat of Kuomintang (KMT) to Taiwan, which is officially termed Republic of China (ROC), "depicted itself as the guardian of 'traditional Chinese culture'" (Chun, 1996, p. 116). One of the features of traditional Chinese culture is the use of traditional Chinese language in Taiwan,

which was also the sole Chinese script used in Hong Kong until its handover to China in 1997.

Individuals tell themselves and others who they are in narratives (Yuval-Davis, 2006). For a nation, its narrative is constituted by shared experiences, landscapes, historical events, images, national symbols, which are represented and communicated in the form of national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture (Hall, 1992). The year 1949 is critical not only because it is a political watershed that sees the creation of two political entities, PRC and ROC, but also the beginning of two narratives of *China*, each gives a different meaning to Chineseness. Taiwan was a site to which people fled after the communist victory in 1949. Chineseness is redefined (Chun, 1996) by these two nation-states that inherited remarkably similar Chinese heritage. The ideological change brought about by communism to China, the retreat of Kuomintang (KMT) to Taiwan, and eventually the establishment of a New China (mainland China) has caused a severe rupture to the history in and of China and to the Chinese. Tu (1994) notes Taiwan's "conscious effort to chart a radically different course of development, a deliberate challenge to the socialist experiment on the mainland" (p.9) has created a wide gap between the two *countries*, and unification is rhetorical rather than possible. The assumption of a universal, essential Chinese identity is subsequently questioned and challenged. Different national narratives between mainland China and Taiwan has brought about two national identities and reference points for their people to identify with. Migrants, depending on where they *originally* came from, often refuse to be identified by a homogenous Chinese identity. People from

Taiwan and Hong Kong often identify themselves as 'Taiwanese' and 'Hong Konger' rather than a collective Chinese.

Within the geography of China nowadays, we see the co-existence of different tribes who have different cultural practices and dialects. Even within the Han group there are regional differences in dialects and practices. For example, people in Harbin in the far north, Shanghai in the mid-east, and Guangdong in the south, do not only speak their own dialect, but also demonstrate differences in the celebration of festivals such as Chinese New Year. For instance, people in the northern China will eat *jiaozi*, or dumplings, for breakfast as the sound of *jiaozi* means "bidding farewell to the old and ushering in the new"; while southern Chinese eat *niangao* (New Year cake made of glutinous rice flour) because as a homophone, *niangao* means 'higher and higher, one year after another" ("Traditional Chinese Festivals," 2015). In short, a unified Chineseness never existed. A homogenous Chinese culture only exists in imagination.

Precariousness of Chineseness

As a discursive construction that represents what China *is (which* China is negotiable*)*, Chineseness is constructed and negotiated within the webs of power and meanings. Articulated by the authority through the media, popular culture, literature and history, Chineseness is not apolitical nor is it timeless and universal. Although "Chineseness has been traditionally shaped by the authority of a sinocentric core" (Chun, 1996, p. 123), its meaning has been redefined both inside and outside China in the course of history. Before the Open Door Policy in 1978, Chineseness did not only give a sense of mystery but poverty, exoticism and

remoteness (Ang, 2001). The remoteness and exoticism of Chineseness has created a lot of cultural misunderstanding in Australia that only adopted multiculturalism as a social policy in 1970s. With the rise of China in the international platform resulting from the rapid growth of economic capital, China and Chineseness have assumed a very different meaning from those inherited before the Open Door Policy in China. It no longer means a third world country but a global political and economic power in the 21st century (Ang, 2001). The change in meaning has major implications to both migrants and local people in the host country. For the migrants, they no longer see themselves from a marginalised and inferior state; for local people, these people are migrants from China, probably with no or little stigma of a third world country. In other words, migrant's self-identification is shaped by the economic and political power China currently possesses in the world.

In one way or another, Chineseness *outside* China is inevitably tied to what it means in the core. However, it is also being constantly challenged and moulded in the social, historical and political circumstances in the local country. In the discussion on Tu's (1994) suggestion of cultural China, Chun (1996) argues that with the rise of the Asian four dragons (Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Singapore) and the success of Chinese abroad, there seems to be a basis for a renewed sense of Chineseness. The contrasting image of Chinese merchants, bankers, entrepreneurs to that of peasants questions the meaning of Chineseness at that time. Chun's argument and suggestion is an attempt to challenge the idea of *essentialised* Chineseness, and that Chineseness is a construction which is being

constantly negotiated (Chun, 1996). It is important to point out that Chun made this argument in the 1990s, when Japan and Hong Kong were still leading the economies in Asia, and before the financial crisis happened of the late 1990s, which has caused a re-positioning of these two dragons in the world economy. Almost 20 years on, the situation is not the same. With unprecedented economic growth in the past two decades, China has not only gained economic power in both Asia and the world, but it occupies a significant political position. China has again become the core where Chineseness is invoked, at least from the perspectives of non-Chinese.

The construction of Chineseness is informed by the disjuncture of history both within and outside China, and the negotiation of Chineseness is often contingent to social circumstances (Ngan & Chan, 2012). It should be studied both *vertically* along the history line, as well as *horizontally* in different diasporas. The idea of diaspora provides a unique space for us to reflect on the meaning of Chineseness, where the often taken-for-granted assumptions of Chineseness can no longer hide under the radar. It is where Chineseness is represented as a function of local political, social and cultural forces, and also individual's position of how to express this new form of Chineseness.

Diaspora in modern time

Once a term used to refer to the exiled Jews, Greek and Armenian people, 'diaspora' is now used more flexibly and elastically to refer to people who have dispersed from their homeland, either voluntarily or by force (Ang, 2001; Curthoys, 2001; Tölölyan, 1996; Gungwu Wang, 1999). The proliferation of the

term has resulted in its meaning being stretched and usage expanded in various disciplines, such that it has come to embrace a range of people who are to some extent dispersed in space (Brubaker, 2005). In the words of Curthoy (2001), 'there is no longer a master model of diaspora such as the Jewish or Armenian or Greek; each can be recognised for its individuality" (p. 20). Hence the terms trading diaspora, mobilized diaspora, queer diaspora, digital diaspora, terrorist diaspora, and diaspora as long-distance nationalists and labour migrants and so on, were created to describe people who live away from their homeland. As such, modern immigrant-nations such as Australia, New Zealand or America, could be seen as countries of diasporas. Flexibility and proliferation has, however, caused confusion and the loss of "discriminating power" of who these people are (Brubaker, 2005, p. 3). Interrogation of the meaning of the term has become crucial (Ang, 2001; Brubaker, 2005), or at least some 'stringency of definition' is necessary (Tölölyan, 1996). The discussion below provides a brief overview of characteristics of diasporas in the modern world, followed by an outline of the China diaspora in Sydney.

Perhaps very few diasporas nowadays met the early criteria of traumatic destruction, coerced departure and the unwillingness to resettle in the host country that Tölölyan (1996) highlighted. Implicit in this earlier use of diaspora is the assumption that these people only aimed to live abroad temporarily, and they want and will return to their homelands one day. In this sense, they are 'sojourners', not immigrants who are ready to assimilate to the host culture (Skeldon, 2003; G. Wang, 2001). The constitutive elements that address recent changes in migration

have created some distinctiveness and discriminative power of the term (Brubaker, 2005; Tölölyan, 1996). Among all, the criteria of homeland orientation and boundary-maintenance suggest the migrant's multiple identifications across space. In one way or another, social and political connections with the homelands seem to be an unarguable element among migrants from any era. Nevertheless, while attachment to homeland seems to be a natural way for human beings to build a sense of belonging, this romanticised idea might only be 'a myth of return' (Gomez & Benton, 2003), that diasporas talk about return but rarely do so due to the investment of capital and emotions in the host country. Tölölyan (1996) calls it a 'mythicized idea of homeland', that although diasporans maintain consistent connections with the homeland through visits, texts, popular culture and financial assistance, it does not necessarily mean a physical return but a 're-turn' to the idea (p.14). In a globalized world where migration is often voluntary, this fantasy of home orientation warrants a discerning reassessment. As well, as a crucial site in the theorization of Chineseness, the criterion of homeland orientation needs to be cautiously scrutinized as it assumes the centrality of the homeland in our study of diasporic identification. Clifford (1997) and Gungwu Wang (1999) rightly point out that de-centring and de-emphasising of a homeland orientation is probably where we should begin our examination of heterogeneity and hybridity within diasporas. Migrant differences, in terms of their connections to homeland and practices in the local community, are a challenge to the static, rigid and stereotypical definitions of Chineseness.

Socially, boundary- maintenance encourages the development and maintenance of close social ties. It is nurtured by institutions such as community language schools which are not only ideological apparatuses (Ang, 2004) but a site for social networking. Boundaries are also reinforced by resistance to assimilation and all forms of self-segregation. For example, through self-identification of 'us' against 'them', or through refusal to participate in local celebrations such as Christmas, Easter and ANZAC day, migrants build and maintain their identities by excluding others, as well as self- exclusion.

It is often thought that migrants uphold their distinctive identity in relation to a host country. In the case of overseas Chinese communities, this "boundary-maintenance" (Brubaker, 2005) is marked territorially by the signs of Chinatown, which distinguishes the people within from the rest. It is not the purpose of this review to trace the development of Chinatown in Sydney, but I would like to refer to it as an example of how cultures are mixed and new practices emerge in the diaspora (see Fitzgerald, 2008). Chinatown was a symbolic representation of the connection to their homeland for early migrant's, the "trade diaspora" (Cohen, 2008) and the coolie labour, as "an institutional vehicle to be in, but not necessarily to become of, the societies in which they settled" (Cohen, 2008). In other words, it was a social institution to maintain internal ethic cohesion, distinctive from the people outside. It was a place to include and exclude. Inclusion suggests a categorical identity of Chinese within the physical space of Chinatown where, paradoxically, heterogeneous subjectivities exist. Nowadays, like its counterparts around the world, Chinatown in Sydney is constructed as an

attraction for the tourists, where we can find the local versions of what are *believed* to be traditional Chinese practices, such as acupuncturists, herbalists, masseurs, and Chinese restaurants (Cohen, 2008, p. 90). Ang (2004) argues these inter-cultural encounters that take place regularly in Chinatown are only artificially maintained in this hybridized world where boundaries are blurred and borders are porous.

Detached from the static and categorical ways of understanding differences between cultures, the concept of hybridization provides a more dynamic and flexible alternative in thinking about difference. In her discussion of cultural transnationalism, Ang (2004) highlights the fact that "the cut-and-mix circulation of cultural meanings activated by hybridization illuminates the relatively arbitrary and contingent character of all culture, its dynamic flexibility and profound open-endedness" (p.189). Chinese diaspora accommodates this flexibility and open-endedness in the re-negotiation and re-definition of Chineseness. It is a place that allows a pluralistic perspective on Chineseness, and a space where hybridization takes place. In short, the differences as seen within the Chinese community pose a challenge to the authenticity of Chineseness which is often believed to derive its meaning from China.

Chinese diaspora in Australia

Chinese migrants have a long history in Australia. Chinese migration started much earlier than the British colonisation, especially in the northern part of the country where the inter-marriage of Chinese with the Indigenous Australians was not uncommon (Ganter, 2006). Chinese people continued to come to Australia during

the gold rush in 1850s, or as coolie labour for mines and plantations (Cohen, 2008; L. Wang & Wang, 1998). There were 38,500 Chinese in 1861, in a total population of 1.1 million. There were a significant number of Chinese living and working in Australia and the number of Chinese settlers grew steadily until 1901 when the then *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* restricted the migration of non-British and deported migrants from Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. In 1901, there were about 29,500 Chinese in Australia and the number dropped to 22,750 in 1911 (National Archives of Australia, 2014). Deportation of Chinese and pacific islanders since the White Australian Policy, the implementation of the dictation test as well as the discourse of maintenance of a pure Anglo-Celtic race, have resulted in a low number of Chinese residing in Australia. The decrease in the Chinese population, however, saw an increase of connections between these migrants to their families in China (Jones, 2005). The final stage of the last dynastic rule in China has inevitably caused heightened concerns of the Chinese migrants in Australia, possibly political but more often familial.

Chinese immigration to Australia was quiet and slow in the post war era, both due to the civil war within China and the Australian government's immigration policy that favoured European immigration. Migration of Chinese started to resume from the 1980s when the negotiation between the British and Chinese government over the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty started in 1983. Uncertainty of the political future in Hong Kong prompted many people to seek security elsewhere, at least for those who could. A foreign passport offered the insurance and security as the holder could leave or return to Hong Kong (Ip, 2001). With the launch of

the Business Migration Program (BMP), many of the migrants from Hong Kong came to Australia as independent skilled migrants or business migrants (Ip, 2001).

Although international travel of people from the People's Republic of China (PRC) increased after the country adopted the Open Door Policy in the late 1970s, immigration from the country was still relatively small until mid-1980s when Australian government relaxed the regulations to allow overseas students to study English in universities and English language classes as fee-paying students (Ip, 2001). The Tiananmen massacre in 1989 resulted in the then Prime Minister Bob Hawke granting temporary protection visas to 29,500 Chinese students, which sharply increased the number of Chinese immigrants (Hugo, 2008). Concurrently, the skilled migration policy continued to attract a large number of skilled/professional workers to the country, from 24.1% in 1995-96 to 58.5% in 2004-05 of total settler intake, if New Zealand citizens are excluded (Hugo, 2008). This big pool of migrants from both Hong Kong and China has further boosted the number of Chinese immigrants to Australia through Family Migration Scheme. In 2006-2007, skilled migrants were outnumbered by family migrants by more than double (Hugo, 2008). Approximately 387,000 people from China were living in Australia in 2011, whereas there were 252,000 in 2006(Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2015). Immigration from Taiwan increased from mid -1980s and peaked between 1989 -1992. Most of them are business or skilled migrants and the majority of them chose to reside in Queensland (Ip et.al, 1989, cited in Ip, 2001).

Chinese ties

The term *overseas Chinese* is frequently used to refer to people of a Chinese descent living away from their homeland. However, a number of scholars have expressed their concerns and reservations in the use of this term as not only does it fail to reflect the diversity of the people who it tries to represent (Ang, 2001; Chun, 1996; Wang, 1999), but risks being seen as disloyal to the host country (Gungwu Wang, 1999). *Huaqiao*, or overseas Chinese, was first introduced in late 19th century and later cultivated by Chinese activists in the early 20th century to mobilise Chinese people scattered around the world. The term suggests homogeneity of a community of overseas Chinese (Gungwu Wang, 1999) and a hegemonic discourse aimed at restoring Chineseness at the periphery. The emotional call of a unified Chinese identity, both within and outside China, had created a national sentiment overseas, regardless of political stands – whether they expected a revolution to overthrow the existing empire or reforms to save the corrupted Qing government (Gungwu Wang, 1999). The identification of *huaqiao* at that time was not only political and nationalist, but financial as well. Financial contributions from overseas Chinese started from the end of 19th century and continued throughout the first half of the 20th century. For instance, the expectation that reforms in China would bring a powerful home country, coupled with the sojourner mentality of loyalty and attachment to their homelands, overseas Chinese living in America responded enthusiastically to the call for donation to support the reform which finally resulted in the 1911 Revolution (X.-h. Yin, 2004). Another peak of political donations happened during 1930s to early 1940s, in the war between China and Japan. For example, Chinese Americans

alone donated more than $25 million to help China's war against Japan (X.-h. Yin, 2004).

The assumed ties which the term *huaqiao*, or overseas Chinese, or later diaspora offered to migrants could be a double-edged sword. Both Chun (1996) and Ang (2004) point out that the term has provided an identity for the people to identify with a new imagined community (Anderson, 1991). To those who still have ties with their homeland, this could be "an extension of a primordial Chineseness" (Chun, 1996, p. 124), a form of connection to the ancestry past. However, implicit in *huaqiao* is a singular point of cultural and political identification to "real and imagined 'China', the centre of authentic 'Chineseness'" (Ang, 2001, p. 82. quotation from original). Diaspora is essentially nationalist, as "it assumes internal ethnic sameness and external ethnic distinctiveness" (Ang, 2004, p. 185). The use of the term *huaqiao* and later diaspora to arouse nationalist sentiment was evident at the turn of 20th century as discussed above. However, as historian Wang Gungwu has insightfully pointed out, the notion of overseas Chinese denotes a single people bound to China, who will never be loyal to their nation; as such needs to be used with caution (1999).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the narrative of transnationalism in modern world and the issues associated with it. I have highlighted how migrants identities have been complicated by frequent and multiple connections to more than one social world. The complexity of their cultural identities can no longer be described by *a* category or explained by a single notion of identity. Their attachment to discourses

in their host country sees the development of a sense of belonging, which is performed in how they act and relate to the people and place.

I have also examined the notion of Chineseness as an ambiguous and precarious discourse, and emphasise that its meaning is subject to the historical, political and social contexts in which it is constructed. I have argued that diaspora is a site where the peculiarity of Chineseness is exposed in how it is interpreted and represented in different places and spaces. Thus, a unified and stable Chinese identity only appears in imagination

The two family narratives below, the Marin and the Regits, told not only the stories of their experiences but how they relate themselves to the Chinese diaspora in Sydney. In terms of physical attributes and language, parents in Marin and Regits families undoubtedly share a lot of commonalities. As such, it is very likely that they will to be assigned a homogenous Chinese identity, at least from the eyes of non-Chinese. However, this taken-for-granted assumption was challenged by how they identified themselves and others. Their experiences and identification demonstrate how due to rupture in history, people from *Chinese* descent have different understanding and hence identification to their Chinese heritage. They also show how their locations in the local discourses in Australia continue to be influenced by the historical and political contexts in their homelands - how they relate themselves to their homelands, to a large extent, tell us who they are and who they are becoming.

Pseudonyms are used for the names of all the people and places appeared in all narratives in this thesis to ensure confidentiality.

Family narrative

The Marin

On a warm, sunny autumn morning, I interviewed the first participant of this study in her office located in a multicultural suburb a few kilometres from the largest Chinese community in the area. Excited and enthusiastic as I was about this new experience, I also found myself anxious and nervous about collecting 'data' for the first time. I arrived earlier than the scheduled time so that I could walk around the area with which I was not familiar. Her office was located in a two-storey building on a side street.

Wearing a grey suit over a dark-coloured shirt, Shannon, a financial planner, looked confident and professional. Her office was a big room which was organised and uncluttered, but without a window. Sitting there, I could not help but remember my role of a researcher in this meeting. In order to create a more informal atmosphere for Shannon to share her experience, I started our conversation by introducing myself and my study. I was glad to find out that Shannon and I had some similar immigration experiences. Soon after we built a connection, both of us started to feel more relaxed.

"If that's the culture that's shocking!"

Shannon emigrated from Taiwan to Australia in 1996 when she married her husband, whom she called "a white Australian". Before that, she was running her own business, a tutoring college that offered English classes to local students. This business was making $120,000 a year (which Shannon proudly pointed out was

four times a primary teacher's salary in 1999). She also received a Bachelor degree in business studies and Japanese, as well as a scholarship to study English in the UK for a year. A year after her return to Taiwan, she was offered a scholarship from Bond University in Gold Coast, Australia, which she had to give up because her mother wanted her to stay in Taiwan.

With such an impressive profile, she would not have imagined the process of getting her Taiwanese qualification recognised in Australia would be so difficult and frustrating. When she approached the university to get her Japanese language qualification recognised, she was initially told to *re-do* the degree as an *undergraduate* student again because, she was told, “Australian standards are very high”, and high school students “have probably done more than what you did in 3 years in Taiwan”. In re-telling this experience in the interview, Shannon looked quite calm, but said she felt offended by the rejection and that she was being judged by where she came from rather than her ability and achievement. Though she finally got advanced standing to do her study at university, she found that comment about Australian standards “arrogant” (her word).

I could not stop asking myself: This happened in 1996. Would her experience be different if it happened today? With the way the Australian government is positioning the country in the Asian century, would Asian standards still be seen as lower than those of Australia?

Shannon got this first hurdle out of the way. Her ultimate goal at that time was to get a teaching qualification in New South Wales. To do so, she needed to do a Diploma in Education, which required her to do practicum in public high schools.

That turned out to be an extremely negative experience. Not only was she disappointed by the lack of respect from the students, but without telling me the details, she claimed she was assaulted by students more than once. She reported this to her university supervisor, but received a response which, up to the time of the interview, still seemed to be disturbing her. She mimicked what her supervisor said, "That's what you have to get used to because that's the culture in schools in Australia." Shannon repeated this response slowly and loudly. With her fingers tapping the table, she looked me in the eye and said, "I replied her, 'If that's the culture that's shocking. *That's shocking.* Certainly not a culture *I am used to.*"'. A classroom is definitely a cultural interface, especially in the multicultural classroom in Australian schools. What was the culture that Shannon was 'used to', one that caused so much conflict with that of Australia?

An experience that Shannon shared with me might offer some insights into her understanding of culture. After she received her teaching qualification, she chose to work in TAFE because of the lack of respect from students and the fact that teachers did not have authority in class. Students in TAFE are older in age, but they do not necessarily show the kind of respect that Shannon expected from her students. Shannon was shocked and upset when a student left the class to the washroom without notifying her first. When the student said he never needed to do that in school, she argued that since it was a Japanese class and she was an Asian teacher, she did expect them to display manners deemed appropriate in an Asian classroom. In her opinion, the student should have asked her for permission to leave the room. She justified that by bringing up an Asian cultural characteristic,

she said, "…because we are all under Confucian influence, a teacher has a very high status in the society. You go to Japan… it's the same".

Once a primary teacher myself, I can empathise with her as I have experienced challenges in the classroom due to differences in expectations. In hindsight, I can see how my expectations were to a certain extent underpinned by Confucian values, even though at the time I thought my frustration was only due to the difference between my experiences as a primary student and what are expected from students in the Australian classroom.

And I wonder, now that she has been living in Australian for a long time and has a child in school, would she still feel the same?

Shannon was later made redundant at her teaching position in TAFE. She then decided to develop her career in the finance sector which she believed was easier to enter. As a financial planner, Shannon's clientele consisted of people from different cultural backgrounds. She appreciated the harmonious co-existence of different cultural groups in Australia. However, she also commented that most people of the same ethnic background only interacted among themselves, and most mainstream Australians (Anglo Australians) were not interested in people of ethnic minorities. She was critical that some migrants only interacted with people from the same cultural background and by doing so, they isolated themselves from the mainstream society.

"Your culture is your root"

I agree with her point that having an open mind to cultural differences is a good approach to build connection with people from other cultural backgrounds. And I believe Shannon has tried to engage in the community and embrace the Australian lifestyle, especially when she first moved to the country. Once she went to a friend's barbeque with her husband, who told her to wear T-shirt and shorts and that she was "overdressed" before. Thinking that might be a good idea to get closer to the *Australian culture*, she decided to follow her husband's advice. But soon she felt "terribly uncomfortable" in that outfit, as that was not the way she liked to represent herself. She said she was brought up to dress "properly" as soon as she steps out of the house. In other words, she did not see T-shirt, shorts, and thongs, the typical Australian summer outfit, as proper outfit. After that time, she would wear the outfit she used to wear because "it represents me".

Shannon has her own view on who she is as a cultural subject in Australia. "I see myself as Chinese, having Chinese background, but *at the same time* I see myself as Australian". She said,

> Just because you were born here does not mean you do more for your country … so I don't like the definition of the narrow definition of Australian. I think as long as you live in this society and you try to get involved with the mainstream, you contribute to the society, then you are Australian.

Shannon believes that regardless of where people used to live, they should not dismiss their identification with their homeland. She argues that this institutional

citizenship should not be in conflict with an individual's "original cultural identity" (her words). Her response to her grandfather-in-law's view on immigration demonstrates her own view. As soon as her grandfather-in-law came to Australia from the Netherlands in the 1950s, he did not allow his family to *speak* Dutch or *behave* like Dutch. She paraphrased what he said, "Once we came to Australia we are Australians, we speak English. We don't speak Dutch at home; we don't behave like Dutch". Shannon responded quite strongly to his remark even in the interview. She said,

> For me that's ridiculous because *your culture is your root*. And if you say you can forget about your root, you are someone with no soul because you live without your root.

Identity is embodied performance, acted out in our speech and behaviours. Refusing to speak and behave like Dutch, her grandfather-in-law wanted to shed the Dutch identity altogether. For Shannon, "it was shameful" because she saw how her husband's family lost the language and the interest to know about their homeland.

However, Shannon did remind me of the historical, political and social contexts in which her grandfather-in-law's comment was made. "They grew up in the background of White Australian Policy", when migrants were required to assimilate in the melting pot of Anglo-Australian society. I listened to the story about her grandfather-in-law, and reflected on the history of immigration and the experience of post-war migrants as well as today's migrants. It struck me how much things have changed in a few decades, and how the social landscape has

changed with the abolition of a policy that can no longer be sustained in an increasingly globalised world. I was reminded once again the significance of understanding experience in the context of history and place. Commenting on their attitudes and decisions based on our current values is unfair. I also see how cultural identity is contextual and often intervened by ruptures and discontinuities in history (Hall, 1996). War and immigration created a different context for the family, which was constituted by different discourse in their identification.

Acknowledging her Chinese heritage, however, did not render her into *the* Chinese identity originated in China. In the course of the interview she pointed out numerous times that she *was* a Taiwanese and *not* mainland Chinese, an identity which she carried with great pride. The line that she drew to distinguish her Taiwanese identity from that of mainland Chinese was indisputable and unnegotiable. This was reflected in the constant use of *we* and *they* in identifying Taiwanese and mainland Chinese, as seen in the excerpts below in which she gave me a few examples of how "*we* Taiwanese" and "*they* mainland Chinese" were different in a number of aspects. The following excerpt shows how she defined Taiwanese and mainland Chinese in terms of the concept of education.

> But I don't send her to those coaching schools run by Chinese… No, especially mainland Chinese. Because again, their concept of education is very different from Taiwanese… *We Taiwanese want quality. Mainlanders want scores*. And *this* is what they look at. Back in 20 to 30 years [20 to 30 years ago] this is (was) what Taiwan is (was) like. So I say most of *those* Chinese parents, I am not saying all

> Chinese parents, their concept of education is 20 to 30 years behind Taiwanese, right? *I didn't want that*.

Her perception that "mainlanders" wanted scores had deterred Shannon's desire to send her daughter Gloria to coaching college to prepare for the selective school entrance test because most of those colleges were run by mainland Chinese. Eventually she found one in another further suburb, which was run by a teacher of Anglo Australian background, and most of the other students there were Caucasians. She emphasised that it was "because I don't want (Gloria) to learn the Chinese (mainland) way".

Comparison between Taiwan and China does not just rest in the difference in the concept of education. For Shannon, Taiwanese responded very differently to the history that Taiwan and China shared in the early 20th century. She claimed that Taiwanese understood the history of Japanese colonisation and occupation before and during the Second World War, but they had moved on and later welcomed Japanese culture and popular culture with open arms. Mainland Chinese, contrarily, continued to hold on to the damage and humiliation from the war. She said,

> S (Shannon): Although Taiwan was hunted down by Japan during World War II and the colonisation period, the Taiwanese accepted the Japanese more than the Chinese (mainland). The Chinese from the mainland absolutely hated the Japanese. Every time the Japanese government denies the killing and invasion, *they* (Mainland Chinese) just jump up and down…

> A (Angel): So the mainland Chinese, not the Taiwanese Chinese…
>
> S: Yes, *they think differently*. We know the history background but *we* seem to move on better than *those* mainland Chinese.

Again she refers "the way of thinking" as the key to cultural identification. And as a Taiwanese, she thinks differently from Anglo Australians and mainland Chinese. I believe 'the way of thinking' stems from the values that she holds on to, and these values are reflected in her behaviours and interactions with others, as well as her expectations for Gloria's education.

Shannon believes that this Taiwanese identity is represented in and determined by how one thinks, not how one acts. It is how she thinks that distinguishes her from Australians *and* mainland Chinese. "It's purely because of how I think. *I think differently* from Australians".

And not so much the way you look because some people can look Asian but they think like Australian. And this is why *we Taiwanese* called 'banana type of people' – yellow skin and white inside. For us they are not Chinese. *They look Chinese but they are not Chinese because they don't think the Chinese way*. They don't have that culture or heritage, and they don't represent the culture or heritage.

Her way of thinking, which is demonstrated in her attitudes, values towards teachers, school, and education, distinguishes her from Anglo Australians *and* mainland Chinese, as seen in the next section of this narrative.

"Australian parents don't care"

Shannon's view on how to prepare Gloria for the future was clear. She believed it was very important for Gloria to set a good foundation in school, especially in primary years. She wanted Gloria to figure out what she wanted to do through high school years, and at the same time gain some work experience as she found a lot of new university graduates did not have work skills needed in the workplace. She was open to the possibility that Gloria may not go to university straight away after high school as nowadays studying at university was not restricted by age. This did not mean that she dismissed the importance of getting higher education, but that she was concerned about her daughter getting into the labour market.

Shannon's well-considered pathway for Gloria contrasted to her husband's lack of involvement in their daughter's education. It was Shannon's idea to send Gloria to coaching college to prepare her for the selection school test "because my husband doesn't know anything. *He is an Australian;* he couldn't care less". Is this an example of what Shannon said earlier, "Australians think differently"? This comment implies that 'non-Australians' care a lot. And how much does she care?

Within her family, she learned about the "Australian's way of thinking" towards education from her mother-in-law, who claimed that academic qualification was not the only way to success. It was more important to have a skill or a trade which would help young people to get a job easily. For Shannon, this view contrasted significantly with the *Asian* belief that "if you are not an academic achiever you have no future". To a certain extent, she agreed with her mother-in-law's view due to her own unpleasant experience in getting the job she wanted when she first migrated, which destroyed the trust and respect she had had for the Australian

university. She believed the lecturers at the university where she did her teaching degree had provided her incorrect information and hence false hope in getting a job in schools. "But they don't tell you the truth. So somehow you feel cheated by the uni for telling you lies, giving you wrong expectations. And at the end of 3 or 4 years you feel disappointed because you realise you'll get nowhere with your qualification".

When Gloria was in year 3, Shannon attended a NAPLAN meeting in school, in which the teacher explained the expectation and preparation for the assessment. Shannon was quite concerned about the assessment as this was the first time for her daughter to attend NAPLAN, and she did not know much about it herself. She asked many questions in the meeting, but her enthusiasm and commitment to her child's education was not appreciated by some parents. A parent, whom Shannon particularly pointed out as "an Australian parent", said,

> "Oh Christ, it's only an exam!"

Shannon imitated the tone, which was quite disrespectful, as though disgusted. She disagreed with this attitude towards examination, which she saw as an opportunity to learn to prepare for challenges and strive for excellence—an attitude rather unique to Chinese. So even though the teacher also told the parents that "it was just an exam and they did not need to spend much time preparing for it", Shannon still prepared Gloria for the assessment herself and was pleased to see that she got good results. She did not agree with both the view of the teacher and the parent because "… *for Chinese,* it is a 'no no' because we think exams are extremely important and that you have to be well prepared for that". She did not specify

whether it was Taiwanese or mainland Chinese here. Does it means when it comes to the attitude in examination, there is not much difference between these two groups?

Parental support in learning, Shannon believed, was the reason why Asian children outperform their counterparts in class. In her words,

> "They (Asian parents) prepare their children, whereas Australian parents *don't care.* They don't give a damn".

In terms of mathematics learning, there was also a gap in Shannon's expectations regarding the type of support Gloria should have and what the teachers were offering in class. For Shannon, teachers only taught the basics to meet the requirements and spent most of their time and effort in supporting the children who struggled, while those who were above average in their ability were often overlooked. Gloria was one of those children who always complained, "maths is boring". Shannon had attempted to communicate with both the principal and the teachers in terms of getting extra support, such as a gifted and talented program, for Gloria. To her disappointment, she was told that first, the school did not have such a policy and second, Gloria did not meet the criteria of being classified as 'gifted and talented'. One year, when Shannon raised her concern about the lack of academic support for Gloria in a parent-teacher interview again, she got this response from the teacher. "Ah, Mrs Marin, you know, when kids come to school it's not only about academic study. It's also about social skills. You know, other things". Shannon was far from satisfied with this answer. She responded with the following strong statement.

> We (parents) all know that it's important, but now I bring to your attention that my child needs more challenge(s) and ask how you are going to achieve it. And you are telling me 'don't worry about it'. So you are not giving me the answer I want, and you cut off the communication.

Again this not only reflects her commitment to Gloria's education, but exposes the gap between her expectation and the teacher's approach to meeting the needs of both students and parents. Shannon said that a lot of Asian parents shared similar frustration with the school. She repeated what other parents had said to her,

But we feel the same way and *we gave up a long time ago. A*nd that's why we all send our kids to coaching school since year 3 or even earlier. Yes, because you know you can't expect anything from the school.

Shannon said that Asian parents felt their children's educational needs were not being fully addressed, so they decided to send their children to tutoring college. She was not keen on this idea before because she believed it would just be a waste of time and money if the child did not want to study. But she was later convinced by some parents that it was the teachers who made a difference. What they meant was that teachers in tutoring college tried much harder to perform in order to get better results in children's learning; whereas school teachers only did the basics because they only needed to meet the basic requirements. So although she saw improvements in the school environment in terms of infrastructure, such as a new school hall, in terms of *quality of teaching*, "it's still not there. So we have *no faith* in public education".

Besides seeking support for Gloria to develop her full potential, Shannon also made great effort in getting her voices heard in regard to school policies, at least in Gloria's first couple of years in primary school. She would spend a lot of time expressing her ideas in the school's annual survey. Unfortunately, she found that the school was not responding to her feedback at all.

"Because he is an Australian"

Gloria, a soft-spoken girl, was in year 6 at the time of the interview. As a part time teacher working in her school for a couple of years, I often found her strolling in the playground with a couple of friends during recess and lunch time. She was one of those students whom teachers might not notice straight away in the classroom because she was capable and independent and did not ask for help from the teacher. I was therefore a bit surprised when she shared her interest in Japanese comics so enthusiastically in the interview. She told me the names of the artists and the websites where I could find the best comics. She also loved Japanese songs and said she wanted to be a singer one day to sing Japanese songs. She had been learning Japanese from Shannon.

Gloria is also fluent in Mandarin. This is likely a result of Shannon's perseverance in speaking in Mandarin to her at home, and her frequent contact with the extended family in Taiwan through mutual visits and electronic communication. However, Gloria's fluency in Mandarin does not seem to translate into an understanding of Chinese cultural practices. She liked her trips to Taiwan and enjoyed Chinese food but she could not name a Chinese dish, nor could she tell me much about her understanding of Chinese celebrations and rituals.

On the other hand, Gloria seems to be more engaged in "Australian" festivals and celebration. She claimed that they celebrated Easter "because my father is a Christian". She told me she would be visiting her grandfather at Port Macquarie with her father and best friend, and they would watch the countryside Easter show. Obviously, she was very excited about this trip that was going to happen just a week after the interview. That day would be a public holiday, but Shannon did not plan on joining them because "she doesn't *want* to go", Gloria said in a very calm manner, which seemed to suggest her absence was expected. I gathered this was not the first time that Shannon did not join Gloria and her husband in a family activity. While I did not know much about the family dynamic and issues around celebration of festivals, I wondered if Shannon would join them if it was the celebration of a Chinese festival. When I asked about celebrating Christmas, Gloria responded with certainty, "Yes, we celebrate Christmas because *my dad is Australian*". This response took me to deep thoughts not only because she expressed much more enthusiasm when talking about Easter and Christmas, but how she had an essentialised view on identity.

Compared to her response in regard to Chinese New Year, perhaps I should not be surprised by her certainty and excitement about celebrating Christmas, as undeniably that is a time of celebration in Australia. Born in Sydney, she is inevitably surrounded by the discourse that constitutes Christmas. The food, the parties, the gifts, the holidays… all of those make Christmas an exciting time for this young girl. However, I am intrigued by how she connected Christmas with her father's identity, "*because* my dad is Australian". This comment suggests that she

believes there are distinct cultural groups and each has its own identity and idea of celebration. This might explain why she was not disappointed or surprised that Shannon was not going to the Easter show with her. Interestingly, she did not mention anything about her father's Dutch heritage in the interview. I wonder how much the Dutch heritage was respected at home.

"I don't like them dumbing down the curriculum"

Contrary to the stereotypical belief that Asian parents believe maths is paramount to their children's academic success, Shannon challenged the need to learn abstract maths but agreed that basic numeracy skills are crucial in daily functioning in our society. As such, it was crucial for primary students to get the fundamentals right. In her opinion, a very weak part of the mathematics education in Australia is that "they (teachers) don't get the basics right". She did acknowledge the hands-on approach in teaching in school, especially in lower primary years. But she strongly criticised the lack of scaffolding to some students, and stressed the following:

> "I don't like them *dumbing down* the curriculum… it's good to be practical but not to dumb it down!"

"Dumbing down the curriculum" was a criticism based on a comparison. What evidence was the comparison based on? Shannon provided a few of her observations to convince that "Anglo-Australians" were incompetent in doing basic calculation. She shared her experience in everyday shopping when shop assistants gave her the wrong change, and then came to the conclusion that they could not do simple calculations without a calculator. She believed this was the result of poor mathematics teaching in primary schools in Australia and the same

situation was “unthinkable” (her word) in Asia because “we are trained to learn those things by heart, to do those sums in our minds”. She also encountered employees in the financial sector who could not work out the relationship between decimal and percentage.

Leaving her office, my mind was filled with her immigration experiences and her comments on education. It was not an easy interview, not only because it was the very first one that I did in this study but the richness of the content and intensity of emotions. I could feel her frustration in getting her qualifications recognised by the Australian authority. I also understand her challenges in adapting to the *Australian culture* and building friendship with the local people. Reading the transcript again and again, I was reminded of this quote from (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479), that story is “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful”. She gave meanings to her experiences in the interview, with the consideration of the cultural and political contexts in which they happened. I am glad that this interview has provided an opportunity for her to make her experience known.

Family narrative

The Regits

Speaking to an expert

Among a pile of returned questionnaires, I found Catherine's very impressive. Besides her neat handwriting and the use of a few Chinese characters in the questionnaire, her comments on the questions on mathematics were thought-provoking for me. Her comments triggered a lot of questions from me and I wanted to talk to this participant straight away. Her thoughtful and detailed answers suggested that she had thought through the issues before, and an interview would provide her exactly the opportunity to voice her thoughts.

Catherine worked as a manager in an international telecommunication company. Her office was located in one of the new commercial buildings in a very close proximity to my university. I sometimes visited the big shopping centre nearby but had never explored the surrounds that contrasted starkly to the leafy university campus. I had seen huge signs of international IT and electronic companies, and the shopping centre was always filled with business people at lunchtime. Catherine worked from homes some days and she was very accommodating in organising this interview as my schedule was restricted by work commitment. Eventually she suggested doing the interview near her office on a Monday afternoon. To make sure I would not have any problems getting to her office she provided me with clear instructions and she also reminded me more than once to call her when I was

near so that she could direct me to her office where I would meet her. Very thoughtful indeed.

I walked into this massive lobby of a new building, feeling a bit out of place. I used to be very familiar with this setting - the high ceiling, the cluster of elevators, the lights on the wall which was the reflection of the led lights right above my head – looked so similar to commercial buildings in Hong Kong: bright and modern. It contrasted to the cosiness of participants' homes where I would rather do the interview.

I sat on a lounge in the lobby, took out the digital recorder and the notebook and carefully organised myself for the interview. It was not a busy time of the day and there were only a few people chatting in the coffee shop. I got distracted by how softly they spoke, as if there were talking secrets. They looked rather uptight and I wondered if Catherine was like that too. Those couple of minutes felt very long. Eventually a lady wearing a blouse and trousers walked towards me and with a big smile on her face, she said, 'Hi, Angel?' She suggested to do the interview in the coffee shop and she bought me a coffee, which I really appreciated.

"I forced her to go coaching for maths!"

Catherine would be about my age. In fact, we have quite a lot in common in terms of our backgrounds, such as age, education, children and the area of where we lived at that time. She has three children; her oldest daughter Emma was studying year 9 in a selective school, second child Cindy was doing year 6 in an OC and her youngest child was in kindergarten. Our conversation started with children and school and soon I found that Emma was getting mathematics coaching at the time

of the interview. While it was not uncommon for children to go to tutoring college, Emma's situation sounded a bit dramatic. First of all, it was Catherine's idea to send Emma to tutoring college, who did not like it at all and "was a bit grumpy" about the decision. Grumpy and unwilling as she was Emma still did it for six months to prepare for the selective school test because Catherine warned her to. The reason she used to convince Emma to go was that, "if you don't go you may not get into it (a selective school)!". Emma successfully got into the selective school that they desired, which was one of the top ten schools in NSW in terms of university entry score, and over 90% of the students came from Asian backgrounds. It was a stimulating but also a very competitive learning environment.

Emma wanted to be an engineer and Catherine had no objection about it. She was, however, anxious that Emma was not in a good position to realise this dream because Emma was in the "average class" (her words) not in the "advanced class" in her cohort. Catherine said,

> She [Emma] *even couldn't* go into the advanced class, she *even* couldn't go into the top in her average class! She is just, probably *just* above average in her class!"

Consequently, Catherine "*forced"* (her word) her to receive tutoring for mathematics in Year 9. Again, it was Catherine's decision that was quite against Emma's will, who simply "hated it". Catherine explained her decision to me,

> She [Emma] wants to be an engineer, so… I told her "if you want to be an engineer and you are not good at maths, you can't go… you

> even couldn't start up engineer (engineering)… you can't get an engineering degree to have a good start!" It was *possible* to pass the barrier of maths. *So* she started coaching maths this year and she's doing well, she's *catching up*. She is above average in her class now.

Having a master degree in Engineering herself, Catherine said she could have taught Emma mathematics at home but she found it difficult to teach her own children who were much more cooperative to the tutors. In fact, as evident in the excerpt above, Catherine seemed to think highly of the value of tutoring college, that coaching had helped Emma to "do well", to "catch[ing] up" and got the median position in class. Catherine seemed to believe that coaching had provided the tool to sharpen Emma's competitive edge in her cohort.

Like most parents, Catherine tries to provide what she considers as the best for her children. She monitors her children's school performance and makes sure they are in good positions within the cohort. Catherine insists sending Emma to tutoring college because she believes that was of the best interest for Emma, consider what Emma wants to do in the future. I hope Emma has started to see the benefits of the extra support and the teachers in the tutoring college would inspire her to appreciate mathematics more.

Cindy, the second child in the family, had a rather different experience in going to tutoring college. First of all, Catherine claimed that Cindy was very smart, who got into OC without tutoring. Contrary to Emma, Cindy initiated going to do mathematics coaching with her friends to prepare for the selective school test, and she enjoyed the experience! From Catherine's observations, this was because she

got to do it with friends, as well as the independence of travelling there on the train with others. In the interview, Cindy also told me she did not mind going to tutoring college every Saturday because she had learned something more challenging than those in school.

"Asian people are good at maths"

Started from the beginning of the interview, I had noticed that Catherine had something she really wanted to tell me. I soon realised that Mathematics has a special place in Catherine's life and mathematics learning was what she wanted to me. Mathematics was not only a school subject that she loved, but an area she *is* still passionate about. "I *just love* it, simply love it", she said with certainty. As a school student, she had participated in a lot of mathematics competitions in China and won national mathematics tests, achievements that she *is* still very proud of. She said she loved it *so* much that she would like to do further study of it, possibly as a topic in a doctoral degree. It was lovely to see someone so passionate about an area and I encouraged her to pursuit her dream. She sounded hesitant because of the time and energy she needed to look after three children.

Possibly because of her own passion and ability in mathematics she had set very high expectations for her children's performance in mathematics. She regarded their results of high distinctions and distinctions in University of New South Wales' mathematics assessment "too bad" as they had never got the next level up which was an award. She felt "it was a shame" that neither of her daughters showed much interest in mathematics.

For Catherine, mathematics was not only vital in preparing her children in their pursuit of a professional career, it was also instrumental in both higher education and work. She did her master degree in engineering in Singapore, in which some students did their first degree in mathematics. Her experience of studying with these students was that "when it came to applying maths in research, you can't beat them". She looked envious of their ability and wished she had had more *training* in mathematics. Perhaps this was why she forced Emma to tutoring college.

Catherine was soft-spoken and she always had a smile on her face, which somehow provided an interesting contrast to the sharp and strong comments that she made about mathematics. She was convinced that Asians were good at mathematics, a skill that enabled staff from Asian backgrounds a unique position in the company. She had made this observation,

> *Because* most of the Asian people are good at maths**,** we can do problem solving, we can do better than Australian background IT people. I am not saying they are not good, they are good at organisation skills, initiation, and they are very good at a lot of things, much better than us in many, many areas. But in problem solving, they are not… I used to be the team leader in 'XYZ' (a telecommunication company), *all the hard problems are solved by us, they (the Anglo staff) can't solve anything.*

This comment appears to suggest that an advantage of Asian employees over their Australian counterparts is their strength in mathematics, as a result of *training* in schools. She continued,

> [Asian staff are better in maths] because of the *training* in maths, because of the logical thinking. They (staff from Anglo Australian background) didn't go through the *strict training in maths*. For us we go through primary and secondary… *we went through so much*".

She seems to believe that being good at mathematics is vital in a competitive work environment, which she strongly believes could be *trained.* And what does this comment say about her view on mathematics *curriculum* in Australia?

"It's like sweeping the floor"

Catherine has a clear view on what mathematics *is* and how it should be taught. Her opinion on Australian mathematics curriculum was specific and critical: "it was very shallow". She criticised the approach that teachers adopted in schools as lack of depth.

> When the school teach maths, they have one topic, just learn the concept, they haven't explored the topic … *They didn't do anything*! They *swapped to another topic* and then they just go to the very very basic concept. Just before they (the children) have the ability to build up a concept, and have the ability to go in depth they change the concept again! In this way how can they ... there is an old Chinese old story when the bear goes to the farm and takes some corn… and finds another corn and throws the previous one… so they didn't get into the

> essential part of maths… they just keep on changing keep on changing…

I explained to her my understanding of the Australian mathematics syllabus, that teachers often revisited and further explored the concepts either later in the year or in the next stage. My explanation, however, did not seem to be convincing to her at all. She claimed that she had read the syllabus and also observed how her children learned in school, and concluded that the pedagogy was not "right".

> … (Teachers) Keep on changing keep on changing (the maths topic). Just like when a year has finished … next year they go back to read those old concepts again, and after another swap, they go back (revisit the old concepts). *It's like sweeping the floor*, they don't dig in ... so my feeling is this is *not right, not right to teach maths.*

Then, what is the right way to teach mathematics?

> Their (schools') approach is layer, layer, layer (she explained this with hand gesture) approach but for maths the concept is not important at all, it's just a concept. The *logical part of maths is most important.* You *need* to train students to build up the way to get a maths logic. In this (school's) way they have no chance to teach students logical part (of maths)… *the use (of) the concept to build up some mathematic ability… is never being touched by school…*But even the second round, when they are sweeping, they are still keeping at the concept level. Just more concepts, more details in the concepts.

Hence, according to Catherine, 'the right way' to teach mathematics is to teach the 'maths logic', though she did not elaborate what "maths logic" actually mean. She believed mathematics is an abstract science and teachers should spend more time teaching students how to "think the maths way", rather than the application of mathematics. A better way to teach mathematics was to "Go deep. Go deep. Get one topic… in depth", Catherine said, with her voice a bit raised and fingers pointing down at the table.

Catherine's criticism on mathematics teaching in Australian classroom as well as her comments on Anglo staff's inability to solve mathematics related problems in workplace seem to suggest a view that mathematics and mathematics learning are free from cultural influence. I recall Alan Bishop's conceptualisation of mathematics learning, in which he argues that mathematics is a cultural product which is neither culture-free nor value-free (Bishop, 1988). Rather, it encompasses a range of cultural values and beliefs. Just like language, religious beliefs and rituals, mathematics ideas are sets of symbol, a 'technology' which engage people from the same culture to communicate with each other as well as the environment (White, 1959, cited in Bishop, 1988). Catherine's comment on mathematics education in Australia appears that she is either unaware or dismissive of the cultural influence. She seems to suggest that mathematics was a universal truth, an entity, which could be acquired as long as we adopt 'the right way', regardless of when, where and who we are. The curriculum in China when she was a student might focus strongly on teaching of mathematics logics but the curriculum for schools in NSW (K-10) in the 21st century has a very different aim. It aims "to

develop students' mathematical thinking, understanding, competence and confidence in the application of mathematics, their creativity, enjoyment and appreciation of the subject, and their engagement in lifelong learning" (Board of Studies (BOS), n.d.). Here, the focuses are on 'mathematical thinking', 'competence and confidence', 'application of mathematics', as well as 'enjoyment and appreciation' of mathematics, rather than logic of mathematics.

Clearly, Catherine was frustrated that schools failed to provide "the right way" to teach her children mathematics, a subject too important to be overlooked. She accounted this "superficial" way of teaching mathematics the reason why students from selective schools attended tutoring college as they provided the deep teaching that students could not get from school teachers. She attested that this dissatisfaction was not her subjective opinion but a collective view that was acknowledged and shared among her Chinese friends in Sydney. She claimed,

> Every time a group of Chinese parents sit together we start to complain - how horrible is school teaching maths. But nobody takes action. The media always said Australia do great work in teaching maths which is not true. Actually China is doing great work in teaching maths. Actually if you count maths professors are Asian background, there is (are) a lot. How many maths professors from western countries?

Reading the above comment again, I sense her frustration about mathematics education in Australia; at the same time I also feel the immense pride that she has on the mathematics teaching and achievement in China. Clearly, her defence of

Chinese approaches to mathematics teaching and learning represents a view that Chinese forms of teaching and learning are more superior, which was shared by Monica, Eva and Gemma. Although Shannon criticised the ways mainland Chinese taught mathematics in Sydney, she did admit that they brought superior outcomes.

Migrated from a country that is "doing great work" in teaching mathematics to one that, according to her, has a very superficial curriculum and poor pedagogy must be a very difficult experience for a mathematics lover such Catherine. Has this experience had any impact on how she relate to the people and place in Sydney?

The Chinese way

Working as a manager in an international company in Sydney, Catherine has the opportunity to work with people from different cultural backgrounds on a daily basis. I am glad to hear that she found no discrimination in the work place. In terms of career development, she admitted that she wanted to get promoted to a higher position, which unfortunately did not happen. Catherine ascribed this to her inadequacies in language and presentation skills rather than the system. Socially, she maintained a work relationship with her colleagues, which she believed was "fair" as she felt her colleagues also treated her as a workmate only. Her personal friends were all from Chinese backgrounds.

I had learned that Catherine had high regards on Chinese ways of teaching and learning mathematics and sensed that she had a strong attachment to China. I was, therefore, not surprised to hear her telling me, "I do everything *Chinese way*". She said she was only made aware of the "Chinese way" when her daughters pointed it

out. For example, they thought comparing prices in grocery shopping was specific to Chinese people, and call it the "Chinese way", a practice that they observed when they visited China. "They (people in China) negotiate a lot more", Cindy said. So when Cindy and Emma saw Catherine comparing prices in Australia, they jokingly said to Catherine, "you are so Chinese". They also made comments on her appearance and everyday practices, and labelled the ways she represented herself as "Chinese ways". Catherine was not offended because she said "(I) just behave naturally". When reflected on the changes of herself and other Chinese friends, she noticed that "some Chinese people migrate, they change to western life. I didn't".

This embodiment of *Chinese* behaviours and practices does not mean a complete alienation to Australia nor the people. Catherine praises Australia as a great country and people her are friendly and kind. While she has settled in this new home, her family still maintain close contact with their homeland Nanjing by frequent visits, which often involve local trips in the provinces nearby. Her emotional tie to China is evident in how quickly and confident she told me, "*Anytime*. I can go back and live in China anytime". This strong social and emotional connection with China, as well as the embodiment of Chinese behaviours and practices, are congruent with her self-identification of Chinese - She identified herself *Chinese* or *Chinese parents* four times in the interview.

At the same time, she was not unaware that her children's self-identification was different from hers. "But my kids really want our family to be Australian family, *to have a lot of Australian culture which we don't*". The only western practice,

Catherine said, was cooking "Australian food for the kids on the weekends", by this she meant pasta and pizza. Catherine was certain that her children would call Australia home and identify themselves as Australians, which however, was not exactly how Cindy identified herself.

Despite her strong connections to China, Catherine embraced her children's identification to the Australian culture because of her own family history. Her parents migrated from another city, Yanzhou, to Nanjing before. They still spoke Yanzhou dialect to Catherine though she spoke very little. Catherine saw a parallel between the experiences of herself to those of her children.

A transnational child

While Cindy had a quiet demeanour she was still prominent during the observation of the mathematics lesson: she was focused and demonstrated great enthusiasm in discussion and activities. She appeared to listen and think carefully before she attempted the questions that the teachers asked in class. She was a capable and committed class member who completed work independently. During the lesson observation Cindy appeared confident but at the same time had very high expectations. These seemed to be matched by the expectations of the school, her academically selective, mathematics class had finished the year's work and students were now tackling the curriculum for the next year. During interview Cindy adopted the same thoughtful approach she had used in class, and gave clear, precise answers.

Cindy's family had just come back from their biennial visit to China when she was interviewed; the trip was business for her father and recreational for the other

family members. Both Cindy and her sister Emma spoke fluent Mandarin and had no problems communicating with local people in China. Cindy spoke of the activities she and Emma did while overseas, including driving a motorboat on a lake. She thought it was fun though but was also aware that they did not have much training before they drove the boat, “we just do it!”, unconcerned about safety or the lack of protection while driving the speedboat.

She made observations about people and places in China, and drew comparisons between those living in China and the Chinese in Sydney, which were perceptive for a year-six student. Comments were also made on the social environment, “there were lots of people” and “it was chaotic”, and on people’s everyday practice. She observed, “they [people in China] negotiate a lot more”. For Cindy, a saving of AUD$3-4 was not a lot and did not worth the inconvenience, but her mother explained that local incomes were smaller than in Australia. She imagined that while the Chinese living in Australia also negotiated, but not as much, because “I don’t think they can”. These thoughts about financial matters were extended to family members. Cindy’s mother, Catherine, noted that her daughters commented on her appearance and behaviours, in particular when Catherine compared prices while grocery shopping. They said to her, “mum you are so Chinese!” Jokingly, Catherine said this was “discrimination”. Cindy’s observation seemed to suggest that ‘Chinese’ was a fixed category that could be determined by some prescribed characteristics, haggling over price being one of them. Her mother, who was prudent in her spending, was therefore perceived as displaying this particularly ‘Chinese’ trait.

Like a lot of bicultural children, Cindy constantly moved between her Chinese cultural heritage and the discursive practices in her country of residence. She seemed to flow seamlessly from one to another. Mandarin was the language spoken at home and Cindy shifted between speaking English and Chinese to different people in the family, based on their needs and wants. She tended to speak Mandarin to both her father and her younger brother because her father "prefers it" and her brother "is not very good at English". Her grandparents have been living with the family in Sydney since Cindy was quite young and her competence in Mandarin and understanding of Chinese culture was partly due of their presence and influence. She enjoyed watching some of the television programs broadcast on the Chinese channels and regarded watching the show on the eve of Chinese New Year as a treat. She liked both Chinese food and western food. In fact, she had never expressed negative comments about China, the place, or Chinese *culture*. Her acceptance of Chinese heritage was also reflected in how she identified herself. Cindy considered herself as *Chinese-Australian* because her parents came from China and she was born in Australia. Considering the time she took to answer this question, and the explanation that accompanied it, this answer was neither casual nor accidental.

Cindy probably satisfies most preconceptions of the traditional Chinese child: diligent, self-contained and resourceful, good at mathematics. But, we also see some departures from typical image of the obedient Chinese girl. Cindy came from a family background of relative affluence, certainly wealthier than the average Chinese family. The family operated strategically with business interests in China

and Australia, and the ability to choose where to live and where to holiday. While Cindy was resourceful and meticulous in her studies, an area in which she had developed some expertise, this care was not necessarily extended to financial matters. She would not bother bargaining for a better price, and saw her mother's domestic frugality as revealing an undesirable traditional value. She considered negotiating on price, when other people did it, a curiosity. Paying full price was a marker of wealth. Cindy was confronted, to some extent, by street life in China; an exciting spectacle but not a way of life you would choose. Cindy was also adventurous and prepared to take some risks, not unlike other well-off Australian children of her age, and this provided a challenge to the accepted 'Chinese girl' template. Certain aspects of Chinese culture were to be enjoyed, food and festivals for example, but others were just old-fashioned and she clearly did not see herself in this way. Cindy is a modern transnational girl able to move easily between China and Australia, and likely to extract the best for herself from both cultures.

Catherine made an interesting observation in the week she completed the journal diary. She recorded that voluntarily, Cindy recited the value of π up to 50 digits after the decimal and loved learning tips and tricks in doing mathematics from her. Catherine was pleased to see this though no one in the family understood why Cindy did this. I also learned from Catherine the following year that in the first year in selective school, Cindy topped in her cohort in mathematics. Nevertheless, she kept refusing to admit to both her parents and friends that she liked mathematics.

The contrast between Catherine and Cindy on their appreciation and skills in mathematics was intriguing. Catherine openly admitted that she loved mathematics that was fun and "a treat" for her when she was in school. Cindy, however, responded to this passion that her mother showed as un-preferable, "because you have no life". She also drew a generalisation on Chinese students who spent a lot of time doing and learning mathematics - "Chinese kids have no life". Her comment suggests that a preferred life is constituted by *other* fun things, not mathematics. And *non*- Chinese kids have more fun things to do and they do not need to resort to mathematics to enjoy life. Juxtaposing Cindy's comment of "Chinese kids have no life" and her refusal to admit that she liked (if not loved) mathematics, I see a deliberate detachment of Cindy from the identity of "Chinese kids".

This modern transnational girl who navigates freely between China and Australia, seems to be suspended in an in-between space. Cindy's refusal to be seen as 'a Chinese kid who is good at mathematics' reveals not only the complexity of cultural identities of migrants but the limitation of a homogenous Chinese identity in their identification.

Voice

Both Catherine and Cindy are soft spoken, a disposition quite contrastive to the assertive and confident manner evident in how they expressed themselves in the interview. I did not get the opportunity to interview Catherine's husband but his presence is obvious in the interview data. His formal training was in medicine but since he could not get his qualification recognised in Australia, he is now doing

business between China and Sydney. Besides his clear expectation that Cindy and her siblings have to speak Mandarin at home, his expectation on their children's future career is also straight-forward. "He wants the kids to be professionals like doctors, solicitors, *like most Chinese parents*", Catherine told me. He wants Cindy to become a doctor or a professor because he believes Cindy is very capable. Failing to get own medical qualification recognised by the Australian government, I am not sure how much his expectation is a vicarious realisation of an aspiration that has to give way to circumstances. For Cindy, she does not mind to become a doctor as she can help others through this profession but she prefers to be a teacher. Consider the family support and own ability and motivation, I am sure Cindy will have a great achievement regardless of what she will do in the future. I wish her all the best.

Scene break

History has created two "Chinas" and as a result two national identities. Shannon and Catherine, both proud of their homeland, identify themselves strongly to the national identities of Taiwanese and Chinese (mainland Chinese) respectively. Interestingly, it can be seen that their self-identification that is influenced by their attachment to their homelands, also impact on how they relate to the people with a Chinese background in Sydney. Their identities are not a given but locations constructed within the web of historical and political discourses both within Taiwan and China, as well as other parts of the world.

Our world, which is more connected and compressed as a result of technological advances in the past couple of decades, is given a more diffuse sense of extended space. Transnational movement has created new global and local discourses that shape migrant identities in a new way

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Chapter 5 Narratives of Identity Formation

Introduction

For centuries, scientists, philosophers, and social scientists have tried to understand our existence in the world and to answer the question of who we are. Identity has thus become a concept widely studied in various disciplines. Interaction of two cultures has made identity of migrants an even more complex topic. As Ngan and Chan (2012, p. 8) have rightly pointed out, "there is no single theory that can describe the sense of identity of immigrants nor explain their differential identification as they construct their lives in different societies". From assimilation and integration to its discursive nature, the only aspect that we can say for sure about identity seems to be its ever-evolving nature.

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature that has influenced my understanding of the topic of identity, that identity is partial, fluid and contextual. This review highlights the ambiguity of Chineseness as an identity. It is followed by four family narratives from which participants are found to identify themselves in different contexts at different time.

Identity formation

The search for an 'answer' for a theory of cultural identity was time-consuming and yet personally enlightening. As one of the most important concepts in human science, which helps us to understand and organise our lives, identity is relevant to every person and yet few can tell exactly what it means. My engagement with the work of Stuart Hall was crucial at the initial stage of this study. His work (1990,

1992, 1996) has greatly influenced my understanding and intellectual position in approaching the concept of identity. It has provided me with the conceptual framework to engage in the discussion of this important and yet slippery topic. In particular I draw from his work on discursive positioning of identity to de-stabilise the essentialist claim on identity.

Identity is seen as a position that individual constructs *within*, not outside, discourses and as such, it is not an essence that is fixed, but a positioning that is shifting and always in process (Hall, 1996). Hall (1996, pp. 5-6) defines identity as

> The point of suture between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to "interpellate", to speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be "spoken".

In other words, identity is a position, the "meeting point", where individual is found to attach him/herself to discourses and practices, while it is also a process in which individuals are constructed as subjects. As such, identity is not only about being but a process of becoming (Hall, 1990). The notion of interpellation (Althusser, cited in Hall, 1996) suggests that individuals are interpellated, or spoken to, into the subject position by the process of identification. This is an ongoing, two-way process in which individuals are not only spoken to, but articulate back to the discourses. Identifying self, thus, is about meaning making process. For instance, what it means to be an Australian or a Chinese person involves communication and negotiation of the cultural and social discourses that constructed these identities (Jenkins, 2008). In this sense, identity formation is a

process of continuous negotiation and re-negotiation within discourses (Bauman, 2011). The dynamic and contextual nature of identity has, paradoxically, undermined its capacity to provide the explanation of who we are, which is gradually replaced by the notion of identifications (Hall, 1996) that is always in progress and only occurs in multiple form (Van Meijl, 2010).

Identities are constructed through differences (Hall, 1990), and it is *difference* that takes a pertinent role in the theorisation of identity. The notion of identity encompasses both similarity *and* difference, which are interdependent of each other in understanding identity (Jenkins, 2008). In assuming an identity, an individual simultaneously identifies who he or she is and who he or she is not (Austin, 2005a; Van Meijl, 2010). The sameness and uniqueness of a cultural identity is brought to the consciousness to individuals after the difference with others with a different cultural backgrounds become apparent (Van Meijl, 2010).

While differences in economic, political and cultural structures between societies are adequately attended to in the exploration of identities, differences within groups are often overlooked. M. Leung (2006) reinstates that the fluid and dynamic contour of difference within groups needs to be identified in our study of identity. Mathews (2000) also highlights that different cultures shape selves differently, which have different ways of experiencing the world. Inscribed in our cultural identities, this difference is specific and critical in the understanding of cultural identities (Hall, 1990). Subsequently, to understand how identities are constructed, it is vital to examine the politics of power and difference that are played out within cultural groups.

In his discussion of identity formation, Hall asserts that identities are not biologically but historically defined (Hall, 1992). One of the crucial forces which creates difference is that of history (Hall, 1990). History is not just old facts, it continue to speak to us in the present. It provides the "routes" rather than acts as the roots in the construction of identities (Hall, 1996). It has become "a resource to articulate identifications in the future and past" (Van Meijl, 2010, p. 72). Ruptures caused by colonisation, war, and racial conflicts transform and create new identities. Discontinuities and ruptures in history bring changes and create differences to culture, which plays a crucial role in the formation of identity even to the seemingly similar groups of people. For example, the ideological conflict between the communist party and Kuomintang in the first half on 20th century in China resulted in the civil war and later the fleeing of Kuomintang to Taiwan in 1949. Before then, Taiwan was inhabited by indigenous people who spoke their own dialects and carried out their own cultural practices such as celebrations. As well there were descendants of immigrants from Fujian, China, who were imported from China by the Dutch in the 17th century. Japanese colonial rules between 1895-1945 not only brought about social and cultural changes to Taiwan but added the complexity of Taiwan's identity.

In its debate against essentialist perspective in the past three decades, the postmodernist camp has indeed gained a great territory. However, Alcoff (2010) and Moya (2000) criticised both of them as inadequate in accounting for the social, political, and epistemic significance of identities, that neither of them provides the resources to evaluate the possibilities and limits of different identities. Although the postmodernist view points out that identities are constructed within discourses

and sees all identities as unstable and arbitrary, it does not provide a clear *explanation* of how people experience and understand the social and economic structures of the world. Postmodernists' reluctance to accept the existence of objective knowledge which is theoretically-mediated and subject-dependent, is challenged by post-positivist theorists who claim that postmodernist approach fails to provide an adequate account of the causal and referential relationship.

Examining this issue from a post-positivist perspective, Mohanty (1993) argues that the question of cultural identity should not be framed in terms of a rigid opposition between essentialism and social constructionism. He comments that postmodernist position on identities cannot explain what difference that different kinds of construction make, in particular, how changes in cultural identity reflect moral and political growth (Mohanty, 1993). The tendency of postmodernist as looking at identity *inward*, critiques note, does not recognise the causal constraints placed by the social and natural facts of the world (Moya, 2000). It claims that objectivity or objective knowledge "can be built on the analysis of the different kinds of subjective or theoretical bias or interest" (Moya, 2000, p. 6). As a form of reality, identity, Mohanty (1993) argues, consists in the fact that they refer *outward*, to the features of the social world. A post-positivist approach, Mohanty argues, embraces identity as both constructed *and* real at the same time (Mohanty, 1993).

In this section, I have stated my view that identities are positions within discourses, which are unstable, partial and fluid. The following section examines the tools that attempt to address the criticism that postmodernism does not provide

a clear explanation of how people experience and understand the social and economic structures of the world.

Analytic tools

The discussion of identity is taken further by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) who argue that the constructivist stance on identity which sees it as multiple, fragmented and fluid has created a term too ambiguous to do the conceptual and theoretical work that it is supposed to do. It bears a multivalent theoretical burden because of the range of theoretical and explanatory work it aims to do, however, its use has been proliferated and thus lost its analytical purchase. As such, the term identity has left us "ill- equipped to examine the "hard" dynamics and essentialist claims of contemporary identity politics" (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 1). Their argument has taken the discussion of identity to a different direction as identity is a slippery term that tries to explain and understand a lot. Consequently, they suggest a few clusters of words with which they aim to replace the term identity, and the work it is supposed to do.

While scholars have their own understandings of the term, *identity* cannot be discarded as it is needed in our discussion of people's social and political experiences. as a term used so readily in the public discourse, its significance lies not only in the academia but our social lives (Jenkins, 2008). Nevertheless Brubaker and Cooper (2000) have contributed in providing some analytical tools in understanding one's subject locations. In particular, the cluster of *commonality*, *connectedness* and *groupness* are particularly useful in examining an emotionally charged aspect of identity, namely that of affiliative forms of self-understanding

(Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 19, 20), as in our discussion of ethnicity, religion, sexuality and gender.

Commonality denotes the sharing of some *common attributes* (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 20), such as ethnic background, education, reasons for migration, and expectations on children's school performance and so on. an individual claims an identity based on the perception of commonality with others (Austin, 2005a). Connectedness, on the other hand, is the *relational* ties that link people, such as the relationship developed within a social organisation or community; for example, Chinatown, language schools. Connectedness is often built on commonality, though sometimes the attribute may not be obvious. For instance, families from different ethnic backgrounds, with different education level and reasons for migration can form connections due to the value they place on education.

Groupness, or the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidarity group, is often created through commonality and connectedness. However, it is important to point out that this creation cannot be taken for granted. Although migrants could have high levels of commonality and strong connection to their counterparts, they may not necessarily develop the same degree of groupness that is a subjective social location. Groupness is strongly categorical and bounded, and is sometimes generated out of minimal or no relational connections. This can be seen in identification to a nation state, where the connections and commonality among the members are *imagined* rather than real. Apart from the degree of commonality and connectedness, this feeling of belonging together is also influenced by the public narratives and prevailing discursive frames (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). In the

context of recent history of China, public narrative such as Tiananmen massacre in 1989 and prevailing discourse of higher education may, to certain extent, draw Chinese migrants together. This cluster of terms, together with the idea of self- and other- identification will be used in the discussion of participants' subject locations in this study.

Understanding cultural identity

Decolonisation has brought our attention to the issues of cultural identity of the once colonised. Scholarly discussion and dialogue which explored the meaning of cultural identity flourished from 1980s (for example, Bhabha, 1990; Gilroy, 1991; Hall, 1990, 1992). Discussion on *Chinese migrants'* identities was also ignited around this time (Ang, 1998; Chun, 1996; Tu, 1994; Gungwu Wang, 1999). Investigation on the meaning of *being Chinese* continued in different parts of the world. For example, Chan, Curthoys, and Chiang (2001) in Australasia, (Ma, 2003) in America, (M. Leung, 2006) in Germany, and more recently (Ngan & Chan, 2012) in Sydney, Australia.

Identity formation is an on-going process which undergoes continuous negotiation and re-negotiation (Ang, 2001; Bauman, 2011), for both social structures and individual's conditions of life are constantly changing and evolving. Bauman (2011) argues that identity is unstable and ever-changing because identity formation sits between two indispensable values of *freedom* and *security*. The inherent contradictions within these two values create us with tension and anxiety. To an extent, security limits freedom, and freedom undermines security. Although tension and anxiety is not obvious in the experience of the participants in this

study, questions of their locations in the community and frustration are evident in their responses.

As an imagination

In the discussion of cultural identity, national identity is a key factor that needs to be addressed (Mathews, 2000). As a rather new concept that was only created in 19th century, *nation state* is not only a political entity but it represents a culture. National identity that offers both the political citizenship of nation state and the identification of the national culture (for example, Chinese), is often seen as timeless or primordial. People who are identified with the same cultural identity are often seen as a collective self that share the same cultured codes and historical experience, an identity which implies sameness and not differentiation. While this definition might make comparison between cultural groups more straightforward, it is, however, over simplistic and artificial (Hall, 1996) as it dismisses the role of history and individual in the formation of identity. Cultural identity is *not* a fixed or essentialised category of traits or selves, which is only defined by common ancestry hold and history.

Postmodernist approach sees identity as a construction within discourse. When individuals identify themselves as citizens of a nation state, they also identify to the cultural discourses found within these nation states, which are expressed in representations such as rituals, literature, art, movie, music, folktales, and history (Hall, 1992). From a similar vein, Anderson (1991) asserts that national identity is constructed within an imagined culture created by an imagined community. He argues that the decline of religion and growing awareness of diversities has given

rise to a subjective dimension of nationalism that ultimately creates an imagination of nation states (Anderson, 1991). Often, our sense of belonging to the members in the community is not real but imagined, in the sense that we do not often possess common attributes or social connections with them. For migrants, our connections to the cultural discourse, similar to what Anderson has pointed out as fraternal comradeship in the past two centuries, is largely an imagination. We try to create the narratives of identities, to reclaim what was lost from the memories, through creating invisible places and stories of the *imaginary homeland* (Rushdie, 1991). Post-positivist, however, would argue that national identity should also refer outward to the features of the social world. While to certain extent it is constructed within national discourses, there are also objective features or knowledge that gives meaning to a national identity. It is clearly not an automatic identification and should not be taken for granted. In other words, cultural identity is not 'natural' but political. Suffice it to say, national identity facilitates the creation of a unified cultural hegemony that in turn constitutes political hegemony. In the case of Chineseness, national culture is often represented in the customs, language and traditions in mainland China. Identification of Chinese people, both within and outside China, not only reinforces its cultural hegemony but contributes to the political power of mainland China (Tu, 1994; G. Wang, 1993).

As strategic locations

Gilroy (1991) suggests that migrants develop multiple identities in transnational spaces, a 'double consciousness' as he puts it. Despite its attention to circumstantial contexts in which ethnic groups find themselves, this concept,

however, is formulated around the notion of essentialist identity categorisation and suggests that migrants oscillate between two (or more) identities. Hall's conception of in-betweenness acknowledges the fluid and contextual attachments migrants display in their host country. The use of language (either home language or host language), for example, shows how much they attach to the dominant culture. Also acknowledging the hybridity in identity formation, the idea of *Third Space* (Bhabha, 1990) provides a more accurate and epistemologically salient explanation. Rather than a space which contains two cultures, (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211) argues that hybridity is the *third space* which "enable other positions to emerge". It is an in-between space, the liminality (Bhabha, 1990), a space of 'neither/nor'. In other words, this is a transformative space that sets up new structures of authority and displaces the histories that constitutes it - a place where new practices and new traditions are born. In the context of Chinese diaspora in Sydney, cultural practices that migrants carry out tell us the place and culture from where they came, although most of the practices are re-invented in the local context. A hybrid wedding arrangement mentioned in Chapter 1 *The Narrator* is an example.

The notion of hybridity highlights the contradictions within the essentialist framework which favours essence and homogeneity within groups. For migrants, hybridity has created space that unsettle the boundaries between groups The use of hybridisation as a means to problematize the process of entangled identification of the host culture and their ethnic origins has not only shed new lights but underpins the study of transnational identities in diasporic literature (Ang, 2004). Contrary to a common belief, hybridity is not conglomeration of different items or concepts,

nor is it a space for *either/or*, nor *both*. It is not an amalgamation of cultures and practices which exists harmoniously together, but a place where tension, friction and misunderstandings are found with the differences. In other words, it is a creative space where *neither/nor* exists (Ang, 2001), a space that is not politics-free. Examining the politics of hybridisation would help us to understand how power relation and history configure the interactions and encounters of people in the process of hybridisation.

Cultural identities are individual's locations on the global canvas of cultures. It is constantly being re-constructed by the political and social discourses of cultures, which both constitute and are constituted within identities. Suffice it to say this global canvas which is created and recreated, shaped and reshaped by prevailing discourses are *multidimensional* and *temporal*. Multidimensionality is defined by both categorical attributes such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion, as well as social structures such as occupational structure (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Temporality acknowledges the instability and fluidity of cultural identity and that it is about being, but more importantly, becoming (Hall, 1990).

Subsequently, rather than oscillating between two cultures, migrants position themselves at different points on this canvas; sometimes without a choice, but most of the time strategically, as identities have *consequences* in terms of the associations that we form and the activities we engage in (Moya, 2000). I concur with Leung's (2006) observation on individual's connections on identity, that individual's perception on the capital that they can turn into impacts on how and where they situate themselves. And I argue that these locations are subject to their perceptions of the capitals or benefits associated with the locations, both to

themselves and/or *their families*. Migration, especially for Chinese people, is often a family affair (K. B. Chan, 1997). As such, identities are not just products of the structural power but they involve subjective reasons which can often be identified and evaluated (Moya, 2000). The question of maintaining solidarity or facilitating integration by collapsing the social boundaries, is often subject to circumstances and perceived benefits. Individuals identify with different groups at different times, often depends on the perceptions of capitals they can get from the connection. As such, cultural identities for migrants are particularly fluid and contextual. Leung (2006) has concluded the multidimensionality and temporality of cultural identity eloquently below.

> Overseas Chinese in Germany, like other overseas Chinese communities (or any other social groups in fact), are embedded in complex communal relationships constructed along divisions of birthplace, language, gender, generation, professional background, and political and religious affiliation. These axes of division shift in time and space, carving out changing socioeconomic spaces for different individuals and groups, this in turn shapes their sometimes similar, at other times contrasting, experiences and self-perceptions (p. 243).

Indeed hybridity is an integral part of this contemporary world in which interactions are not restricted by boundaries. We are translated men (Rushdie, 1982) in this transnational world. Like Rushdie, I believe there are things to be gained, not always lost in the translation. What and how, is a matter of position(s) that needs us to acknowledge and work through difference, to be reflexive and to embrace the politics of hybridisation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a literature review and discussion on identity formation and outlined the theoretical approaches that have framed the understanding of identity and identification in this study. It has provided an overview of identity politics in which the discussion of Chineseness is formulated. Jenkins (2008) reminds us to avoid reification that assumes identity as a *thing*, for careless reification would refrain us from paying sufficient attention to how identification works. A reification of the idea that Chinese identity as a fixed category would only harden the boundaries between Chinese and non-Chinese. The following family narratives record stories of four families of vastly different educational and socio-economic backgrounds. From their stories, we see how boundaries of the two social worlds are blurry.

Advances in technology has made visiting homeland much affordable nowadays. Participants were found to make use of this convenience in different ways. One of the patterns seen in the family narratives is that of frequent visits of grandparents which is evident in the following narratives. Interestingly, while returning to home country is not impossible, the Gibbs who are recent migrants are found to embrace and appreciate their new lives in Sydney despite language barrier and social isolation. Quite contrarily, having lived in Australia for over 30 years, the Trans still appear to have a strong connection to the imagined community and Chinese culture.

On the other hand, Lows and Henlys, who contrast significantly in terms of education level and reasons for migration, are both found to embrace the Australian culture, though in different ways.

Family Narrative

The Tran

Just feels like home

The Trans live in a quiet suburb, 10 minutes away from the largest Chinese community in the area. Their place is only a few minutes' walk from the school that their son, Shane, goes to. I used to work as a part-time teacher there and got to speak to both parents often. Their house was tucked away at the end of a row of town houses. Walking along the path towards their house on a peaceful Saturday afternoon, I felt a bit self-conscious. I felt like a total stranger entering into this close knit community which displayed a strong sense of home - the aroma from the cooking inside the houses, the noise from the TV, the barely audible conversation inside the houses – they reminded me of visiting my parent's home every Sunday when I was still living in Hong Kong.

Walking into Monica's house was another experience altogether – I did not feel like a stranger anymore. It was a cosy little home, with a small lounge room at the front, followed by a dining table which was partly occupied by newspaper, letter box drops and some books. It was honestly not one of those glamorous show houses that we found in the marketing materials from local real estate agents. It was a bit cluttered but this was what made it homey. I noticed the family portraits hanging on the wall, in which I saw Monica, her husband Jamie and their only child Shane. Casual, happy, and full of love. The uniformity as seen in similar photographs everywhere showing smiles and coordinated outfits made them *perfect* family photos. There was also a big Chinese calligraphy hanging on the wall in the middle of the house, and I got

the impression that it was done by someone who was very skilled in the art. I later found that it was written by Monica's uncle who was quite a famous calligrapher in Guangzhou, China. It was a gift to Jamie who Monica described as "…loving Chinese culture and 'everything old' and 'having history'". Going further into the house was the kitchen in which I found very familiar things – the snacks I bought from the Asian shops nearby, a Chinese tea set, a rice cooker, as well as a coffee plunger, Tim Tams (iconic Australian chocolate biscuits) and a lot of green tea which Jamie loves. I love a full kitchen.

Monica had prepared lamingtons for afternoon tea with green tea because their green tea which was gifts from friends, was of a very high quality. A few minutes later Monica came out of the kitchen with Chinese tea in the coffee plunger with the lamingtons on a plate – a unique 'Chinese / Australian' afternoon tea which proved to be a surprisingly good combination.

Monica speaks fluent English and also a couple of Chinese dialects, and she chose to use both English and Cantonese in our interview, because she knew Cantonese was my home language. She explained that she naturally speaks Chinese (language) to Chinese (people) having been informed by her late mother that it was disrespectful not to speak *Chinese to Chinese*. So although it was not her home language she chose to speak in Cantonese in the interview, with a couple of words or sentences in English. She said with great pride that she taught Shane the same values and would teach her grandchildren to do so if she could. Her commitment to the use of Chinese language was impressive and it became clearer and clearer in the course of the interview, how much she respected her parents, holding on to everything her mother taught her, who for her was the greatest source of Chinese values and traditions. I was surprised to see how she followed the traditional teachings even when they were

contradictory to the social and cultural discourses of Australian life. It is clear that the Chinese value of '孝順' ('xiaoshun', filial piety) has played an important part in how she respects and follows Chinese culture. The essence of '孝順' ('xiaoshun') is to respect and obey your parents, which I believe Monica is doing very well.

From Solomon to Sydney

I learned from the questionnaire data that she came from the Solomon Islands in the 1970s and I was very intrigued to know more about her background. I soon realized it was a story of labour migration in the early 20th century, the kind of family movement not uncommon at that time in Chinese history. Her father and grandfather worked in the Solomon Islands in 1940s as manual labourers in factories. As a result, Monica emphasized, her parents had not been able to live together for seven years, until her mother also moved to the Solomon Islands with Monica's older brothers. Monica and three other siblings were born there in the 50's and 60's.

Jamie was born and grew up in Hong Kong but he also has a strong connection to the Solomon Islands. His parents have a big business there and he had spent almost 20 years looking after the family business after finishing his study in Australia. During that time, he was the secretary in the Chinese Association and an active member in the community who had organized community activities such as fund raising, and hosting a radio program. He spent a lot of time building networks and connections with the people and the government in the Solomon islands. "He was high up there!" Monica proudly exclaimed. He still has strong connections there on occasion acting as a bridge between the

local government and foreign investors. At the time of the interview Jamie was invited to go to the Solomon Islands by some friends from Hong Kong who wanted to open a restaurant there.

Migrating from the Solomon Islands to Sydney in 1977 was a great "sacrifice" for Monica's parents, one that Monica appreciated wholeheartedly, "a gesture which is really great". It was a decision that involved giving up a couple of profitable businesses and a wealthy lifestyle. Monica and her siblings also had to make sacrifices as they were going to an elite school at that time and had formed many friendships with the people there. I was puzzled by this decision. Why would this Chinese family which had 'just' settled in the Solomon islands after a long period of separation and hard work, give up what they had established and move to a western country with four young children? What pushed them out, and what 'pulled' them into this English speaking country, when they spoke limited English?

"It's because of our education", Monica explained. Her parents left the businesses to the older children and took with them four young children and some capital to open a Chinese restaurant in Sydney. They first settled in Greenville which was a suburb mainly inhabited by Anglo Australians. Like most young people, Monica adapted to this new life quickly and soon developed her friendship with some school friends in the neighbourhood. They visited each other often and sometimes her friends would spend the night at her place but Monica and her siblings were not allowed to stay at their friends' homes. Monica said having friends visiting was not an issue '*but* we hung out with the Anglos…'and soon she started to feel the pressure from her mother who was worried about the possibility of them marrying Anglos in the future. "I think she was a bit traditional but she didn't want to be too vocal", said

Monica. As a result, their parents sold the restaurant and moved to a suburb where there was a larger Chinese community.

This decision to move suburbs was a replica of why Monica's parents migrated to Sydney in the first place. Monica's parents were not comfortable with the idea of their children marrying indigenous people, especially as their older sons in the Solomon Islands each had more than one wife, some of whom are Indigenous, not an uncommon incident in the Solomon islands. As Monica said, "my mum didn't want us to marry the Indigenous or local Chinese", so leaving the Islands was seen as a way to prevent this happening with the younger children. This reason has provided a great insight into what she told me about her family values later in the interview.

Wang (1999) argue that early overseas Chinese often saw living abroad as temporary and they would choose to go back to China when circumstances allowed. This was nicely expressed by the Chinese idiom '落葉歸根' ('lou ye gui gen'), literally meaning, "falling leaf return to the roots". Figuratively it implies all things go back to the source eventually. The image of leaves growing on expanding branches, stretching out into the sky, which later fall back onto the ground and the roots is used to describe situations when expatriates intention is to return home. This Chinese idiom captures beautifully the hearts of the *huaqiaos* in the old days. With this cultural knowledge, I was at first puzzled by her father's decisions to get his wife and children to the Islands instead of going back to China itself. When considering the political and economic contexts at the time the family moved however, the reason became quite obvious. Since the 1920s China experienced significant political and economic challenges, civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist party which opened a most chaotic and bloody page in the modern

history of China. The Japanese invasion had brought a temporary coalition between the two parties but in 1945, at the end of WW2, and the start of a global recession, China entered into another period of war. Civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist party raged for another 4 years until 1949, with the loss of millions of lives. The economy was drained, lives were unsettled, and hundreds of thousands of people fled to south-east Asian countries such as Burma, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Hong Kong to avoid persecution from the Communist Party. At that time for Monica's family, going home was simply not an option.

During the process of multiple reading and analysis of Monica's transcript, I gained a better understanding of her family history and my respect for her parents grew. I respect not only their courage to bring four young children to Australia in the 1970s, and the personal sacrifice they had made for their children's future, but I also respect their commitment to the Chinese culture. They seem to believe that intermarriage would bring impurities to Chineseness and should be avoided at all cost. While I understand that such thinking is a personal choice, I wonder how long this purity could be kept. Growing up in an Australian context, so vastly different from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan, second generation Chinese are surrounded by a Chineseness that has been redefined and renegotiated by the people over time. I wonder how this commitment to racial purity will be interpreted by Monica's son Shane.

"I'm not going to take that!"

As a child, Monica enjoyed the friendship of her Anglo friends but like a lot of migrants at that time, she also experienced racial discrimination and hurtful comments. Although the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act has encouraged the

growth of a multiethnic society in Australia, the community was still skeptical of Asian migrants. Remnants of the White Australia Policy could still be felt strongly in the community. As a student, Monica did not have many complaints about school but she often heard racial comments from other students. Monica told me,

> "… They said *ching chong*… I said 'what ching chong?! Come closer. *What did you say*?'"

Not a pleasant encounter for a young person! She is pleased to see that "Nowadays kids don't do it (use racial comments?) because it's more multicultural. But at that time it was *not* like this".

Racial comments were also heard in the wider community. Once Monica and her friends who were visiting from Solomon Islands "got kicked out" (her words) from the sports centre where they used to play squash and tennis. And they were told, "Don't speak Chinese here!"

Furious and annoyed, Monica protested.

> "Why not? It's our mother tongue, why can't we? You can't tell me I can't speak my mother tongue. You can't ask us what I can say! I can say it if I want!"

She was proud to tell me that she *fought* and *battled*, shouting at the man who had spoken to her, yelling "(you are) the biggest racist pig"! Today however, she acknowledges that this is history, saying, "*But* that was in the 80s. You don't have it now".

Monica's protection of Chinese culture and the use of Chinese language was also reflected in a fiery argument with her boss not long before I interviewed her, after he asked her not to speak in Chinese to her father on the phone. Quite lively, Monica told me the details of the incident.

> I argued with him, saying that I am Chinese, so why can't I speak Chinese, "*what's your problem*?" He said, but "you also speak Chinese to other colleagues". I said "yes, *because* my mum taught me that I have to speak Chinese to Chinese. Why should I speak English to someone who speaks Chinese?" Monica's boss asked her why this was the case and Monica replied, "My mum said it is disrespectful and I also teach my son this. Are you saying I can't speak Chinese to my Chinese colleague because you don't want us to do so? It's not going to happen". He said 'I didn't know it was part of your culture and I'm sorry".

In her conversation with me, Monica said, "I stood up. I am not going to take that!" She defended her identity as a Chinese person and would not stand being ill-treated *because of* her ethnicity. Her behaviour was a manifestation of her respect for her culture which she guarded with love, and which no one could trample on. Similarly too, on another occasion when a shop assistant served an Anglo lady who pushed in, Monica shouted, "I am first! Are you not serving me *because* I am Chinese?", although she was aware of the community's greater acceptance of people from minority cultures nowadays.

In spite of these past unpleasant experiences, Monica seemed to have moved forward very well. Rather than holding on to hard feelings, she was instead reflective of the *history* of the development of multiculturalism *as well as* herself. As she admits, the world has changed and so has she.

"I'm still Chinese, I am"

But one thing has not changed. More than an hour into the interview, I asked Monica how she saw her identity, and in English she said,

"I am *still* Chinese, I am".

From the stories she had told me and the way she had told them, I was not surprised by this answer at the time. However, it caused me to think deeply afterwards when I listened to the recording again.

It was my practice to listen to the recording straight after the interview and to do the transcription and initial analysis in a couple of days following. Upon reflection, Monica's answer confused me.

I asked myself, why did Monica say she was 'still' Chinese?

The use of 'still' did not seem to be accidental. Rather I believe it signified something very important in her self-identification. I tried to understand this response looking at three different possibilities. The following could be the meaning underneath this self-identification. She may have been thinking:

1. "Chinese is my ethnicity that I cannot erase. Like it or not, I simply can't escape this identity **so** "**I'm still Chinese'.**" This possibility acknowledges the ethnic commonality between her and other Chinese. However, it does not necessarily suggest connectedness to the Chinese community.
2. "Since I was born in the Solomon Islands, other people might question my Chinese identity. But my family and I speak the Chinese language and follow Chinese traditions and practices so **'I'm still Chinese'".** This could possibly reflect an understanding that ethnic Chinese people still embrace Chineseness and hold a Chinese identity, irrespective of whether they are born in China, the Solomon Islands or even Australia.
3. "My parents are Chinese so **I am still Chinese** regardless of where I live (and I hope my next generation still call themselves Chinese)". Looking at it from a linguistic level, this response suggests genealogy and family connectedness down through the ages.

Monica's affection for both Chinese culture and the people was reflected in almost every aspect of her life. Suffice it to say, she identified with ethnically Chinese people and has a strong sense of connectedness to them, regardless of which part of the world they came from. She admitted she felt closer to Chinese people, saying, "I am friends with many cultures but I feel a little closer to home (with Chinese people)". This connectedness and sense of being part of a group, however, is likely to be built on an imagined commonality with the Chinese folk she meets. The reality is that there are so many dialects, practices, values and beliefs associated with a broader Chinese culture, that those held by other Chinese, could be very different from her own.

I feel rather shameful when I see how committed Monica is to Chinese culture. Like her mother, Monica embodies her family's Chinese values and practices in every aspect in her life. From the use of the language, to the teaching of her child, she embraces the culture fully with great respect to her parents. She told me numerous stories of her mother's teaching and how much she (Monica) has done to make sure it is passed down to Shane. She sang Chinese nursery rhymes to baby Shane although not sure about the lyrics. She teaches Shane how to physically care for the elders. When his late grandmother in Hong Kong (Jamie's 'second mother' as Monica called her) could no longer feed herself, Shane was taught how to feed her breakfast. He was also taught the values and skills to help out in Qingming festival, the annual event of honouring the ancestors at the gravesite. Within Monica's social circle, Shane has to call her friends aunt or uncle rather than informal first names like most Anglo Australian children do; and she expects the same courtesy from other children. Shane is expected to greet all teachers who taught him in the previous years, as this kind of respect for teachers and elders is a very important Chinese value.

She said, without any doubt at all, that, "It (the use of Chinese manners) is very important. It is more important to me (than to Jamie), and if I have a chance to see my grandkids, I will still insist they must do the same". While I fully appreciate the respect in which Monica holds teachers and elders, believing this is deserved, I wondered how Shane would interpret such rules and expectations. What would he say? I could not wait to talk to him.

"I only have one child, he has got to be good'.

Shane was excited by the opportunity to be interviewed, which I did at his school where I spent a couple of days interviewing other students and teachers. When he saw me in the school ground, he made eye contact and ran to me. Still puffing, he said, "Ms Mok, my mum said you want to talk to me…" Probably he wanted me to lead conversation, as he did not finish the sentence, yet this enthusiasm was all in his eyes, which said, "… I am ready anytime!" Excitement overflowed, and I gathered he must have felt very special to be invited for a chat with me in class time.

In front of me sat an 8-year-old boy with big eyes that followed me almost every second of the interview. Talking with him was a pleasant experience because he was eager and often provided me with interesting comments. Obviously a bit nervous and excited at the same time, he listened intently to my questions and provided me with answers that seemed to be well thought-through.

We started talking about his life in Year 3 that he seemed to enjoy a lot. He has a few close friends who he befriended in kindergarten, although as with all friendships, his were not without dramas. As a part-time teacher in Shane's school, such dramas amongst schoolboys, all of whom are from different

cultural backgrounds, were commonplace. They usually play soccer at lunch break but sometimes just "hang out" and chat. Shane said that sometimes he and one of his friends who speak Cantonese, speak Cantonese together in the playground, "so that no one knows what we are talking about". He just shrugged his shoulders and smiled when I spoke of his bilingual skills, about which I thought he would be proud, however he said, 'it's pretty special to speak two languages, but I won't say I am proud of it". He chose to speak in English in our interview although he was happy for me to use some Chinese words. He attempted to respond using a few Chinese words when I probed him in our conversation about Chinese celebrations. It was then that I realized he could understand Cantonese well but was not fluent in his speech at all.

In class, Shane was quite an independent learner and whenever he needed help in his work, he would turn to the classmates on both sides, who happened to be two girls from Anglo backgrounds. They seemed to work well together and were supportive of each other. His teacher Mrs Ling said he was terrific in technology and was always happy to offer help to her and other students. She also pointed out that Shane was good at mathematics, in particular with questions using numerals only. When mathematics was expressed as a word-based problem there were occasional problems. Although Mrs Ling did not attribute this to the fact that English was his second language, she was aware of his language background and said "as an ESL (student), his English is quite good".

Although only in Year 3, Shane already seemed to have thoughts about high school. He told me that his mother wanted him attend a Catholic school but he did not want to because none of his friends would be going, *and* he was not a Catholic. Regardless of the *correctness* of his answer, I was quite impressed by

this interpretation of this Year-3 child. So I asked Shane if he has discussed this with his mum.

A (Angel): Have you told mum about your thoughts?

S (Shane): I told her but she said "I'm your mum you have to go!"

The fast tempo and the pitch of his voice suggested that he was somehow disturbed by this decision. He explained a bit more about the family dynamics. "My mother told me *what* and my father told me *why*. *He* listens to my view". While I fully understood Shane's frustration, I was also not surprised by Shane's observation of his mother's position. Monica's 'command' might sound authoritarian but it was not inconsistent with the values that she embraced, that parents were responsible for the future of their children and that children should obey their parents. The traditional adult-child relationship she had developed with Shane, was what she had learned from her parents, and one that was consistent with the stories she told me. Irrespective of *how* she said it, Monica's motivation was to ensure that Shane was provided with the *best* in every aspect of his life.

Always actively involved in Shane's education, Monica has a clear picture of Shane's performance and position in class. She checks his homework regularly in order to learn what and how well he is learning, often without him seeking support in the first place. Most of the time she only checks his mathematics homework because she thinks his English is fine and that he does not need help. Her involvement is not limited to assessment-related tasks but other school activities as well. From the entries in the journey diary, I learned that about a week before 'Spelling Bee' (a school-wide spelling competition), Monica spent every night revising spelling with Shane. She developed a time-table and set targets for him to meet, and would feel very disappointed when

Shane made mistakes in the practice. She devised a particular way to practice – 'read, cover and write the words four times', which Shane was reluctant to follow because his teacher had said "there was no need to write the word!" Monica insisted however, and although upset, Shane did as he was instructed. Preparation for 'Spelling Bee' also exposed differences in the expectations of Monica and her husband Jamie, who was more relaxed about the preparation. I recalled what Shane had told me in the interview, when he said that 'my mum told me what to do but my dad listened to my view', and I gained significant insights into the subtle dynamics in this family of three.

One of the aims of the journal diary was to seek understanding of the parents' attitudes towards their child's responses to the activities they did after school. The following entries Monica recorded over a week provided insights into her expectations and the support she gave in preparing for the Spelling Bee, and more. (To keep the originality of the diary entries, no editing was done in the records below, including words in capital letter and the punctuation).

Day 1: I (Monica) have put a timetable in place for him to go through 100 words from the list...

Day 2: I expected him to go through the next 20 earlier so we could just randomly revise all the words before bedtime…to my surprise, there were some silly mistakes…We got into an argument about not taking his spelling bee seriously and he commented in the argument that if he knew it was this much work, he would have made a couple of mistakes (in the selection test so that he would not be chosen). I did not take that well and was very disappointed that he would think like that.

Day 3: … He told me the teacher said no need to write, but I insisted so there goes my unhappy child puffing while he writes out the words and memorises.

Day 4: I am ONLY into my 4th day with the spelling Bee, I am exhausted and all nagged out…I am NOT happy!!!

Day 5: No revision because Monica was out for dinner with friends.

Day 6: Throughout the day, a word here and there from the list… More disappointment when he gets the easier words wrong and the harder ones right…

Day 7: Same issues as yesterday, not concentrating on list, rushing through the words and telling me he knows except when I test him, its mostly wrong by a letter here and there… I spat the dummy and just told him to PLAY all he likes, don't worry about school and why don't' we just give up now coz we are ongoing anywhere…Shane came 5th out of 12.

Despite being a co-curricular competition which was not compulsory, Monica took the 'Spelling Bee' very seriously, but I am not all that surprised by expectations and her tutoring support, nor am I surprised by her disappo intment at both Shane's performance and attitude, which is common among families in Hong Kong. In fact I have seen even more demanding parents who, I think, define both themselves and their children by their children's academic performance. Although Monica was not too concerned about Shane's performance, she does value effort and commitment, and believes that practice will bring improvement in learning.

Monica's commitment to Shane's educational outcomes is a response to perceived competition in the school (and beyond). She consults the teacher regularly and makes reference to his school report and NAPLAN results to

assess his performance in comparison to other students in his cohort. She also draws on what she has learned from education in Hong Kong, knowing that it is more competitive and that students there work very hard. Monica believes that their hard work was the reason why students from Hong Kong "excelled" when they studied in Australia. This awareness of keen competition appears to have prevented her from feeling complacent about Shane's good performance at school. Even when suggesting that satisfaction with Shane's school performance, she contextualises her satisfaction, noting that the "…Australian standard is way too *low*". Against a Chinese standard which was higher, Shane is doing reasonably well, and Monica summed up her expectations and Shane's performance in a few words saying, "so even if he isn't the top in the Chinese standard, he has to be on par"!

In planning for Shane when he is *not* on par, Monica has already told him that she will closely monitor his performance in school in Year 4 and if he does not meet her expectations, he will have no choice but to go to a coaching college. Year 4 is considered critical to some families as it is when children take the test for OC (Opportunity Classes providing enriching experiences for gifted students) which they believe will put their children in a better position to get into selective school.

Monica admits that she is very strict with Shane because, "I only got one and he got to be good". I believe what she means is that her expectations are high and she wants him to obey and as such there is not much room for negotiations. She does not have specific expectation for Shane in terms of his future career but she does expect him to stand out from the crowd because she believes he has the potential. At the age of eight, Shane was clear that he wanted to be a game designer. Monica was concerned that it was a very competitive field, but

Shane reassured her that he was up to the challenge. It seems that Shane is becoming the ‘rounded’ boy that Monica would like to see - He is respectful and obedient, he follows the Chinese practices as told and he is doing well in school. Monica said, “He is a good boy, very teachable and he listens”. “I’m not boasting about my own child… he is alright”, but I also think there is nothing wrong in boasting about my own child if he/she deserves it.

Family narrative

The Gibbs

This place serves her well

Another cosy home interview. This time it was in Shantin, a Chinese community in South Sydney. It is a convenient hub of shopping and transportation, with a large shopping centre, Chinese restaurants, groceries, bakeries, hairdressers, as well as a train station, all within a close proximity to each other. As I drove around the area looking for her place, I saw many new high rise apartments and construction sites. It is one of those places in Sydney where migrants can speak in their home language both inside and outside the shops. I used to live just 15 minutes from Shantin and I was always fascinated by the blurred boundaries of linguistic and cultural practices. I often heard people speaking different Chinese dialects of Shanghainese, Mandarin and Cantonese even within the same shop or restaurant.

I believe the dialects I have heard in the shops reflect the change in demographics of the suburb. My memory of Shantin when I first visited it 15 years ago is rather different from what I see now. Besides fewer shops and fewer people, Cantonese seemed to be more widely used before, however when I researched the statistics from the ABS, I realised my memory might not be very accurate as there were more Chinese from mainland China than people from Hong Kong before 2000, and the number is growing. The arrival of *Chinese born migrants* increased from 1596 in the year 1991-1995, to 10480 in 2006 (ABS, 2006). People who were born

in China and Hong Kong constitute 14.2% and 2.7% of the population the local area respectively (ABS, 2011).

Just like a lot of suburban areas in Sydney, people living in Shantin travel to work in the city, leaving the suburb to the stay-at-home mother or father, their young children, and the retirees. It is rather quiet and peaceful during the day before the dynamic of the place changes quickly after 3pm when children from nearby suburbs came for more study in the coaching colleges there. My eyes meet the signs of numerous coaching colleges within just one block. Signs in big Chinese words '補習' (tutoring) covered a part of my view. Saturdays are even more hectic; besides the children coming to the coaching, there are also families rushing in to the shops and restaurants.

Since the interview was scheduled in the morning on a school day, I did not have to struggle with the crowd. Rather, I saw grandparents placidly pushing baby trollies to the park and retirees watching kids playing or people passing by. There was a sense of peace and calmness which could only be found at that time of the day, a tranquillity which continued when I walked into Gemma's apartment.

Establishing new roots in the new soil

Gemma's family had just had a new baby girl, who now at 5-weeks-old, was sleeping when I entered their apartment that was quiet and a bit dim. I was lucky to have met Gemma's husband before he went to work though I only had a very brief conversation with him. He was the Executive Chef of the largest Chinese restaurant in Shantin and just like people working in the hospitality industry, he worked long hours and often did not get home until almost mid-night. I also met

Gemma's mother, who was visiting from China to provide the support this young family needed with a baby and a young child. While I saw some familiar Chinese artefacts such as a Chinese calendar, magazines, books, and food in the house, it was all fairly limited. The decoration was basic and minimal, which was all understandable as Gemma and her family were renting the place at that time and were planning to buy a property in another suburb in the future. This small and simple apartment, however, is not a representation of the hearts of the people who live there.

Gemma chose to conduct the interview in Mandarin as her English language skills were limited. She was softly-spoken and displayed patience when I struggled to speak in Mandarin sometimes. She picked up a little English where she worked when she came to Australia in 2008 to join her husband who had accepted the offer of working as the Executive Chef in the restaurant in 2007. It was not an easy decision for her as they already had a child and accepting the offer had meant separation from the child who was only a toddler at that time. They came up with an arrangement which allowed both Gemma and her husband to work in Sydney, while their daughter Yvonne stayed with Gemma's mother in China. Gemma got a job as a waitress in the same restaurant where her husband works. Leaving Yvonne in China was not a preferred choice for them but one based on financial consideration as looking after Yvonne herself, either in Sydney or China would mean one less income for the family. So Gemma chose to stay with her husband and visited Yvonne every year. Yvonne finally joined her parents in Sydney in 2011, and started kindergarten at school the same year.

Yvonne attended Shantin South Public School (‘Shantin South’ hereafter), a medium-sized school, and a 10- minute walk from home. Although there was a larger and more popular school nearby, which had an enrolment of over 1000 students, where 90% of the students spoke Mandarin or Cantonese (Shantin Public School, School report, 2012), and offered an opportunity class, the closer proximity of Shantin South meant Yvonne could walk to school with grandmother every day. In 2012, it had an enrolment of four hundred and forty students of which fifty-five percent speak Mandarin or Cantonese at home. The school is located on the quiet side of Shantin, away from the hustle and bustle of the shopping area and train station. It is a typical public school built in the 1970s, which would have witnessed the change in demographics in the suburb of Shantin in the past 10-15 years. Assistant Principal Ms Nelson noticed that the significant increase in the number of Chinese students in the school had impacted the school in various ways. One of the most significant was the difference in families’ expectations of children’s learning in school, in particular mathematics. She saw a gap between what was provided by the school and what the families expected. She found it particularly difficult to understand why Chinese families send their children to get mathematics coaching, regardless of the needs of the children. Almost in disbelief, she told me of a ‘case’ in which a Year 2 student who struggled to do mathematics in class due to lack of interest and ability was sent to mathematics coaching by her parents. While she understood this was a family decision and she respected their choice, Ms Nelson was concerned that more study of a subject that the child did not enjoy would only increase the pressure for both the child and the parents. She was interested to know more about the priority of

Chinese families in terms of education and how the school could meet their expectations and hoped that my study would give her some ideas.

Resilience

Looking for a child in the school playground was not easy especially when I knew little about both the school and the child. I followed the teacher's direction to find Yvonne in the area designated for K-2 students but did not have much luck. Fortunately I got some help from her classmates who were enthusiastic in helping this stranger. "Yvonne! Yvonne! The teacher wants to see you!" Yvonne came with a smile though I could tell she was a bit nervous. When we finally sat down and had a chat in a room, she started to relax and told me about herself and her family, as well as her friends. She told me her Chinese name and wrote it down on a piece of paper, a skill that she seemed to be proud of. She also named her friends to me, a list of eight people, which included both girls and boys. She was excited to tell me about her baby sister and interests, and that she was involved in a number of extra- curricular activities. We conducted the interview in English and I was pleasantly surprised by her English language skills. She expressed herself clearly and accurately in complete sentences most of the time.

Yvonne had a very busy after school schedule. Besides lessons for swimming, ballet and guzheng (a Chinese string instrument) every Sunday, she had drawing class on Tuesdays and mathematics coaching which focused on mental calculation on Saturdays. Gemma did not seem to have set very high expectations on Yvonne in terms performance in any of these activities. She was simply pleased to see that Yvonne was learning skills and participating in activities that she enjoys. Gemma

did expect Yvonne to have a strong work ethic, which was evident in her diary entries. She expressed in the journal diary more than once, her disappointment when Yvonne was not serious in doing her revision. Nevertheless, she also understood that over-supervision was a problem which could be draining for them both and detrimental to their relationship. Gemma therefore chose to encourage Yvonne rather than push her to do revision. As for the mathematics coaching on mental computation, Gemma only hoped Yvonne could maintain the mathematics skills that she had learned in China. To Gemma, the curriculum in Year 1 was a 'regression' of what Yvonne had already achieved. Going to a class to learn mental computation was to consolidate the basics though she actually did not see much improvement.

In class, Yvonne was attentive and alert, and an enthusiastic participant in class activities. Although mathematics was not her favourite subject, she still tried hard and seemed to enjoy the class. Her choice to sit next to someone who could offer help in class told me her determination to improve and possibly achieve. She told me she chose to sit with Aidan in class because "Aidan is a Chinese boy and he also know(s) English so I think he can sit with me… but Aidan is now in China'. The teacher said she saw lots of potential in Yvonne, though at that stage the language barrier was hindering high achievement. I saw determination and strength in Yvonne, and was pleased to see how much this young child had achieved for herself in under two years. I am also glad to know that the teacher shared similar views about this 6-year-old child.

Empathy

It is amazing to see how far Yvonne has travelled. I cannot imagine that this strong and confident child I met in the interview was once a frustrated new student who felt "inferior" in school. I recalled what Gemma told me about Yvonne's first school experience, which was not at all easy for either of them. I listened, intently, to the stories and the emotions, which almost brought me to tears. Like most migrants, Yvonne's major challenge was lack of English language skills when she first started going to school in Sydney, yet I would have thought that the Chinese speaking students in the school would have been of great help to her. However, according to Gemma, most students communicated in English to each other in the playground despite speaking a Chinese dialect at home. In Gemma's words, she recalls the playground experience when Yvonne first started school.

> A (Angel): Could she (Yvonne) speak English?
>
> G (Gemma): No, not at all… She started going to childcare in China at 5-6 months of age. Then she came here (at the age of 5), even though there are children from Chinese background, they often use English in their conversation… (When she was with a few other children) She would retreat and stood at the back. She fiddled her fingers… just keep fiddling… (Laugh). She just didn't know what to do, but standing there fiddling with her fingers, *feeling inferior*. She came home and said to me, 'mum, I don't know English, I don't know how to play with them'.

Just like all children, Yvonne had a desire to play with others but the language barrier created a significant challenge for her. Gemma continued.

> She also wants to have some friends. So I said 'it's ok. You just go and play with them. If they speak English, you can ask them "what did you mean? Can you tell me?"' But she said, 'mum, *I do not have the courage to speak (English)*'.

While my heart went out to this young child, I was intrigued by this incident. Yvonne had developed from someone who did not have the "courage" to speak in English to one who communicated clearly and confidently in English to a stranger and I wanted to know what had happened between then and now. How had she achieved this level of competency and confidence in under 2 years? How had she overcome the challenges?

I found the answers from Gemma.

The language barrier had not only created issues in forming friendship in the playground, it was a significant challenge for Yvonne in class as well. The first and foremost challenge was the lack of understanding of the instructions of how to do her homework. Gemma said she was not able to offer much help due to her own issues with the English language but this limitation did not deter her desire to support Yvonne. Gemma learned how to look up the meaning of the vocabularies from the internet so that she could explain the instructions to Yvonne who would then able to complete the tasks herself. Both the teacher and Gemma believed it was not Yvonne's abilities in doing the work which were deficient, but her lack of English skills in making sense of the instructions. She only needed time.

Yvonne's experience was not uncommon to new migrant students who face significant challenges when they first start school in Australia, even with a range

of transitional programs in place. They often feel lonely and helpless and Yvonne's experience was not much different. The following incident would probably resonate with many migrant students.

> G: Once the teacher asked her a question in class. She answered it but her pronunciation wasn't accurate. The teacher didn't quite understand. A lot of students in class started to laugh. She said she felt terrible. She told me, 'my tears just rolled down…'
>
> A: Did it happen this year?
>
> G: Yes, this year. She said she understood the question and knew the answer. But her pronunciation wasn't accurate … then the teacher asked again to find out what she said. She said students in class were laughing. And I said to her, 'They are not laughing *at* you. They just thought it was very funny, just funny…. It's like when people chat and relax'. I said there wasn't anything to feel bad about.
>
> A: You are such a good mother.
>
> G: (laugh) I told her, 'Don't be upset. *You will be fine in the future*… You are not strong enough... Kids don't want to play with you if you look like this (upset). Why? Because they think you cry easily, and they would think 'We don't know what to do if you cry'. So you have to smile.

This incident which captured the challenge and frustration of a new student was probably only one of many challenges that Yvonne and Gemma had experienced. Gemma admitted "I also feel terrible when my kid feels bad. I was very upset

when she told me this". The way Gemma and Yvonne handled this incident had made them stronger and more resilient. While it might have been upsetting for them, I was in awe of them. I was particularly impressed seeing how well Gemma responded to Yvonne's fear, sense of helplessness, and frustration and how she empowered Yvonne with the positive outlook needed to face the challenges. Now I know where Yvonne draws her strength from, I respect both of them enormously.

I believe Gemma's empathy towards Yvonne's experience was partly due to her own experience as a new migrant in Australia. Due to the financial situation of her parents, Gemma had to leave school early and did not have an opportunity to learn English. Working in a Chinese restaurant in Sydney, she did not have the opportunity to learn English either. This lack of English language skills has become the major obstacle for her and her family in settling in to life in Sydney. Although engaging in everyday activities such as shopping is not a problem as they live in a predominantly Chinese community, Gemma finds it challenging when she has to approach agencies such as the banks and Centrelink. This is when she seeks help from friends who can communicate in English with staff. Alternately, she only goes to agencies where there are Chinese-speaking staff.

Despite these challenges, Gemma was certain that she liked the life in Sydney. She said it was a nice place. By this she meant the people, transportation and the environment. As a family, they seem to have settled into this place very well. Gemma said,

> Although I don't speak English, I feel that Sydney is doing very well in the cultural aspect. It's really good. Housing and air is

> good. It's very convenient in where we live – both shopping and transport are convenient in where we live. We don't have much trouble. Only in language…

Not only did she have high regard for the facilities and environment, but she also enjoyed the friendliness of the people, both Chinese and Anglo-Australians, who she met in the restaurant. She was grateful for the help that her *Chinese* friends offered, particularly how they had helped her with the language problems. It sounded as though her Chinese friends had also been a great support in the family's induction to the community as well. Anglo Australians have also been friendly and kind, and Gemma is pleased that she is accepted, although she would like to have the language skills to be able to engage in deep conversations with them.

> G: I think they are very friendly, very nice. *Foreigners (she referred Anglo Australians as 'foreigners')*… it's hard to feel that closeness because of language barrier (smile). Chinese friends are very important to me. I won't exclude other Chinese. No, not at all. I feel that no matter which colour skin, which ethnicity, it's the same. I won't change how I see them due to their ethnicity. It's only that my English is not good. I also won't exclude Chinese people. They are really nice...

Gemma's view on *difference* gives me insight into her identification as an Australian and her remarks about calling Sydney *home*. She does not only acknowledge her connection with the Chinese people living in Sydney, she also embraces the difference in language and cultural background of people from other ethnicities. "I feel that no matter what colour skin, what ethnicity, it's the same. I won't change how I see them due to their ethnicity". She does not omit

difference but she focuses on similarities within the difference. She locates herself in a position where she is able to appreciate both Chinese and non-Chinese culture and the people. Gemma has a big heart that can accommodate both Chinese and "foreigners".

Gemma regarded Sydney as home despite the language barrier. She said it was not only because her family are now living in Sydney but that for her "wherever you are used to, that is your home". In other words, she is used to the life here. It is lovely to see that although she does not share much commonality with the Anglo Australians, she does feel a sense of belonging, or what she called "closeness" to them. She does not alienate herself from them. With this attitude, cultural and social boundaries are relaxed rather than hardened.

Opportunity

Migration is not an easy business. I am sure Gemma and her family have overcome many challenges in the past five years and I wanted to know what brought them here in the first place. Had they overlooked the challenge of the language barrier before they came? What motivated them to make the decision to move to Australia?

Before they emigrated to Australia, both Gemma and her husband had jobs that provided them with a comfortable lifestyle and status in the community, both for themselves and their families. Gemma was the manager in the catering department of a restaurant and her husband was a chef. They both earned a good income and Gemma seemed very content with their lives in China. An opportunity came up in 2007 when the boss of the Chinese restaurant in Shantin approached her husband to work as the executive chef there. This offer might be viewed as a golden opportunity for some people, but not initially by

Gemma and her husband because neither had a need nor desire to leave China. However, their friends persuaded them to view this as a great opportunity, which should not be missed, and they were eventually convinced to make such a big move.

> A: Why did your family come to Sydney?
>
> G: Initially we didn't want to come because we were earning pretty good income in China at that time. I earned a few thousand dollars (per month), and he also earned a few thousand dollars. As well, we were at management level. Work was quite easy for us and our jobs look good for the family. But they kept asking us (to work in Sydney). They said lots of people spend hundreds of thousands to send their children to study overseas, etc. etc.… now you don't have to pay a cent. And both of you can accompany her to study overseas. So well said … (smile)
>
> A: Yes so well said …
>
> G: And we thought. It doesn't cost us money anyway. Then our kid came. *We just accompany her to study*. We thought we would just go back (to China) if it doesn't work. It's not a bit deal … so we all came.

Unlike some participants in this study, living or working overseas did not seem to be a desirable alternative for Gemma and her husband. Better job opportunities or lifestyle did not immediately attract them either. However, this job opened a possibility which they did not seem to have contemplated before, that was to send their daughter to study overseas. While they were not interested in leaving their homeland, an opportunity for *their daughter* to study overseas appeared to be desirable for Gemma and her husband. Opinion and

words by others changed their perception of the job opportunities, yet they were clear that the reason for their move was to 'enable Yvonne to study' in a place where education is free, and thus they were prepared to make sacrifices for this outcome.

While I did not hear a word of complaint from Gemma in the interview, I could tell that life was not easy for them at the beginning. From what she told me about her friends' encouragement I believed she had considered moving back to China when they were still settling in, despite the fact that she did not say this in the interview. When I asked her to tell me more about her migration experience, she said it was for the *children's* future.

> We often visited (their homeland). Friends said to us, 'yes, it's like *this* when you first live overseas, it'll get much *better*!' They said it's usually *harder* for the first generation. The next generation will be better. We thought, 'yes, *it's all for the kids*'… then we stayed. (smile)

I recall the Confucian value that education is for upward social mobility and the concept of functional relativism that suggests that education becomes salient as a means for mobility when other avenues are blocked (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Lack of cultural capital in Australian society sometimes blocks the mobility in non-educational avenues such as leadership, politics and so on. Thus education and local knowledge often help second generation migrants to achieve better outcomes than their parents. Education is important in Gemma's family, to an extent that she and her husband were willing to sacrifice what they had established in China and their social networks, to live in an English speaking country. Having seen how Yvonne is acquiring English and building

friendship here, I foresee that "it'll get better", as Gemma's friends in China encouraged her.

Generalisation, of course, cannot be made from this personal experience of a migrant family. However, Gemma's experience has provided insights into the social and cultural context in which it happened. The decision to give up well-paid jobs and leave family and friends to make a new home in a foreign country reflects a commitment to their children's future, a decision made, not for the benefit of themselves but their children. I wonder how much this decision is influenced by Gemma's own lack of education. It also exposes the value that Chinese people (at least from where they came) put on overseas education. It is a socially accepted norm that parents sacrifice their own career and network for their children's better future, especially when it involves overseas qualifications. Their friends' comments were charged with the values and attitudes of the social world in which they occurred.

With the sacrifices Gemma and her husband have made for their children's education, I wondered what aspirations they had for their children's future career. Gemma told me the following story thus increasing the respect I have for her even more.

Once Gemma visited the doctor with Yvonne. It was a busy clinic and they waited for a very long time. Yvonne said to Gemma, "mum, I want to be a doctor so that you don't have to wait so long to see a doctor". Gemma was pleased by this loving idea which she said "comforted my heart". But this was what she said to Yvonne:

> You are such good girl and mum is very pleased to hear what you just said. But only study medicine if you want to be a doctor, you don't

> need to do it for me. There are many doctors out there who can look after me!

So what does Gemma want Yvonne to do in the future? “Anything… as long as she *is* happy”.

Family narrative

The Lows

The Lows live a busy and structured lifestyle that is quite common among migrant families who often do not have support from the extended family. They have a 'synchronised' schedule every day and parents' non-working hours revolve around the needs and wants of the children. I can empathise with the hectic days that were all very familiar when both of my children were in primary schools.

Hilary and Wilson have two young children, Cameron and Elizabeth, who were aged 7 and 3 at the time of the interview. Hilary worked in the city so she needed to leave home very early in the morning, as it was an hour-long trip for her to get to work. Wilson's office was only 5 minutes from home so it was his responsibility to take Cameron to school and Elizabeth to childcare centre in the morning. Cameron was in Year 2 at that time and went to a local community college nearby, which offers education for children from Kindergarten to Year 12. Every afternoon, he went to the after-school care nearby until after 5pm when either parent picked him up to attend an after-school activities that include soccer, Taekwondo, and swimming. Evenings were spent at home. Saturday morning was family time that Wilson seemed to enjoy a lot. They often spent the day watching Cameron playing soccer when it was soccer season. Otherwise they would spend the time in the local library.

Wilson offered to do the interview at their home at 7:30pm on a weeknight. I was a bit concerned if this might interrupt their dinner or it would be too late

for a young family to have a visitor. But he insisted it was fine so I brought a sponge cake with strawberry jam to visit them on a wet and cold winter night. The rain reduced the visibility of the roads in a quiet suburb where street lights was dim. I took the wrong turn and I worried that I would be late and be seen as unprofessional. Soon I realised my worry was not necessary. When I eventually found the place I was welcome by not one but three voices. Wilson and the kids came to the door when I rang the bell. Hilary later came out from the kitchen. They must just have finished dinner. I would have interrupted their dinner had I arrived earlier.

Walking into the house I was immediately distracted by the toys which 'colonised' the left side of a large lounge room. The amount of toys was quite impressive. We sat down on the other side of the room and Cameron went back to his drawing at the table, which he was doing before I arrived. He told me he loved drawing and 'art' was his favourite subject. Elizabeth was sitting in the lounge room too, playing with some toys and occasionally, looked at me. Soon I realised doing an interview with a family with young children was a challenge as they sought attention from their parents frequently. Cameron was engaged in his drawing but Elizabeth would call out 'mum/dad!' in the middle of our conversation. About 20 minutes into the interview I saw Hilary quietly went to the back of the house and put a DVD on for the children. She also brought some Chinese tea from the kitchen. So we have a cup of Chinese tea to go with the strawberry jam cake.

"I needed to get out of there!"

Wilson was fluent in his spoken English and he also had a rather strong Australian accent. I was once mistaken that he was born in Australia. Only

later did I realise that he left China at the age of 21 and had been living in Australia for 20 years. He was already doing his undergraduate degree in engineering when he left Shanghai so coming to Australia was not to get overseas education but to leave China. He declared, without any doubt or uncertainty. “I needed to get out of there”!

My ears heard a young adult yearning for freedom, and my eyes saw a free soul that could not be contained. This decision was not an impulsive youthful idea but a well-planned move that was supported by his family. Wilson explained that it was not uncommon for Chinese to move overseas “to achieve prosperity”. And he ascertained that this was and still is a value commonly found in China. Hilary, who was sitting quietly with us, supported Wilson’s comment that the situation was similar in her homeland Dalian, a city located in the North-eastern part of China. Her parents, for example, were happy for her to settle in Australia “to live a better life”, Hilary said.

Unlike what we commonly see nowadays, that Chinese parents pay huge overseas tuition fees for their children to study in western countries, Wilson claimed that getting a scholarship was almost the only way to study abroad in 80s and 90s. Getting a scholarship, however, was very competitive, but his strong desire to leave China had given him the motivation to stay disciplined and committed for months to prepare for the examination. Eventually he received a scholarship from a university in Sydney to study physics. Although Australia was not his first priority, he still accepted the offer simply because he wanted to leave China. He later received a doctoral degree and now he was working as a scientist in a government agency.

Leaving home at the age of 21 and live in a western country on his own, I thought Wilson would have developed a sense of belonging to the Chinese

community in Sydney. I was proven to be wrong in this assumption from the comments he made about the community as well as his view on 'culture'. Knowing that I am a relatively new migrant from Hong Kong, Wilson gave me a concise overview of the history of recent migration of people from China.

In late 1980s, due to a change in government policy that offered short-term visas for students to study English in Australia, a large influx of students were seen in the major cities. Their "real" aim, according to Wilson, was not to learn English but to get resident status. He explained that it was as an opportunity for the young people to leave the country. Perhaps this was an example to illustrate what he said that in China, people "get out… you don't stay in China… because you achieve prosperity. It's the *worship*…" He did not explain to me why it was "the worship" but he was very confident about what said, as if it was an indisputable fact. His comments seemed to suggest that one could only achieve prosperity when one got out of China. He did not further explain what he meant by prosperity but from what he had achieved in Australia in terms of education and career, as well as the lifestyle that he had adopted, achieving prosperity (or 'to live a better life' as Hilary pointed out earlier) is not singly focused on material prosperity.

While it had become easier for Chinese students to get short-term student visas, it was still difficult for them to get the resident status unless they could get sponsorship from employers or families. Stories of these students and their families would not be the same had The Tiananmen Massacre not happened in 1989. Fear of personal safety and potential persecution due to perceived connections to the demonstration that ultimately resulted in bloodshed shooting by the army, these students simply could not go back. The then Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke granted temporary protection visas to 29,500

students (Hugo, 2008) who eventually formed the foundation of the Chinese community in Sydney. Wilson called them "founder Australians" in Sydney (Not founder Chinese?) This group of people, together with their families who came along under Family Migration Scheme, had brought huge human and economic capital to Australia, which ultimately changed the social and cultural landscapes in the country. Where was Wilson in this changing landscape?

He first described himself as the youngest in his generation. But further into the interview he said "I was not a proper member of that generation… because I came to university. The proper one, the bulk of them came in the late 80s, around 1987, 88, 89". He continued,

> "In the 1990s, *my* generation… there weren't that many that go back, to visit or something. *They* were too busy, working hard and accumulating wealth. And then … *their* kids are growing up. *They* became quite well off. *Their* parents started to age. *They* started to go back".

It was clear to me that he acknowledged a membership or at least a relationship to the Chinese community in Sydney. However, it did not take long for him to draw a line from them. The repeated use of 'they' in his remark above suggests neither connection nor a sense of groupness often associated with the membership. While he could not deny the commonality and membership, he seemed to refuse to acknowledge the connection or attachment to the community.

Emancipation of a city boy

Wilson called himself a city boy who grew up in the heart of Shanghai, where he experienced a lot of "neon lights, entertainment and people". Shanghai, a

city that is growing in colour and light, is a place a lot of people want to visit. However, Wilson said he did visit shanghai often many years ago to see his ageing grandmother, but he stopped the visits after she passed away and the last time he visited was 7 years ago, that was with Cameron who was just a few months old. When asked if he missed the place, he answer was, again, very straight forward. "Once I left these behind I don't miss them. *I don't miss China!* I don't miss the food!*"* He did admit he missed his family and friends.

As first generation migrant and someone who spent most of his formation year in China, I was surprised to find that he showed limited emotional attachment to China. On the other hand, I found it quite interesting to see how he separated the people from the place and food in China. What does the place mean to him? I started looking for some insights from his memories of his homeland and was intrigued to find that unlike a lot of migrants who tended to beautify their homelands by (re)constructing memories of the place and people, there was not much nostalgia in his memories of Shanghai The picture of his home city that he described to me was rather uninspiring.

> "When I left Shanghai in 1992, there was *only one* high rise in shanghai, 25 stories near my home. One. There was *no* bridge for the river, not a single one. There was *no* tunnel either. So that was 20 years ago. 20 years ago, there was *no* private ownership. Everything is (was) state owned. And as I was leaving, the day before I left, we had a telephone connected. My life in shanghai, we *never* had a telephone at home… the Shanghai I left had nothing to do with the Shanghai I see today".

I saw how he travelled back in the memory lane and constructed a narrative of a place where he once called home. He collected the memories and chose to

tell me some of them. What was the image he tried to show me *and* himself? Considering the negatives that he used in this image of the place, I could not help but think he really wanted to leave this place. And I wanted to ask, 'so, what did Shanghai have?'

In their conceptualisation of diasporic memories, (A. Davidson & Eng, 2008) argue that memories are constructed by social experiences before and after migration, political interference, as well as individual choices of what to remember and pass down to the next generation. I do not know a lot of details of Wilson's pre-migration life, but the image of Shanghai that he sketched tells me it was not a place that he wanted to live anymore. I do not know a lot about his post-migration experience in Sydney and Canberra either. But reading the transcript multiple times, I notice that he did not say words such as 'discrimination', 'unfair' or 'racist'. Rather, he seems to integrate very well to the cultural practices in local context. From a regular customer to local cafes to a fan of AFL, and a committed parent in Cameron's soccer team, he seems to embrace the Australian lifestyle very well.

As far as my experience tells me, post-Tiananmen square massacre period was a very difficult time for many Chinese both within and outside China, who try to comprehend the act of that the government did to its people. What memories did Wilson have? And, what and how would he tell his children about this history? Unfortunately we did not have the opportunity to go deeper into topic in the interview. I did, however, learned about Cameron's attitude on China.

"There are lots of thieves and robbers in China"

Cameron was drawing on the coffee table when his parents were chatting with me. From time to time he would give a response that was usually a couple of

words or a smile. But when he did make a more detailed response, it shocked both Wilson and me.

We were talking about how most parents took their children to China to see the iconic places such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, hoping to instil Chinese culture to their children and provide the opportunity for them to learn the language. Wilson expressed that he was not in a hurry to follow this practice though he knew it was eventually inevitable. His concern was the safety of the children. “In China, at train station, shopping centre you can’t let go”. And this was when Cameron made an unexpected remark.

C (Cameron): Because there are lots of thieves and robbers in China.

This commented triggered the exchange between the father and son.

W (Wilson): who told you that? I’ve never said that.

C: (pause) it’s either you or mum.

W: I’ve never said that. I think you just guessed.

C: No. (Eye on his drawing)

W: maybe true in some places but not completely.

There was an odd silence for a couple of seconds and tension in the room was rather obvious to me. Regardless of where he learned this knowledge from, it was apparent that he did not have a good impression of the place. In fact, he did not like speaking the language either. He said loudly in the family interview, “I don’t like to speak Mandarin! (spoken in Mandarin)”, although he knew clearly this was the language that he was expected to speak at home. He does speak mandarin with grandparents on the phone or when they visit but that is only because they speak Mandarin only. Interestingly, his sister said exactly the same thing afterward. Speaking Chinese language at home is a common, tangible signifier among overseas Chinese parents of a desire to

maintain cultural identity and continuity. This is, sadly, a common source of friction between parents and children, as Cameron's outburst seemed to hint. As much as Wilson wanted to distance himself from the Chinese community, he still made speaking Chinese the rule in the family, whether it was followed was another story.

Wishing for a dragon child?

Children are at the centre stage in this close knit family. Apart from work and school hours, they spend most of the time together. Watching Cameron playing sports on Saturday mornings is a family activity that they look forward to. They would go camping in the countryside in the holidays. Probably because of the age of the children, neither Wilson nor Helen seems to worry about their study.

During the course of the interview that took an hour and a half, Wilson presented himself as competent and confident. He often gave long and detailed explanation and justification on his observation and thoughts. His proficiency in English was evident in how he engaged in the interview. On the contrary, Helen was quiet, partly because she had to respond to the demand of the children, and she also seemed to be less confident in expressing herself in English in an interview.

Wilson's reservation in telling me his expectations on Cameron was quite contrary to the articulate and outspoken image that he gave me right from the beginning of the interview. He seemed to be careful and almost reluctant to tell me his expectation on Cameron. He gave a long introduction to his explanation, which was preceded by a long pause. He answered the question with great caution.

> (Pause. 9 seconds.) Yes, yes, to be honest … (a few seconds) yeah yeah … ah … expectation… I have a hope of what he will … but that's just a hope. But different to the hope there is also realistic expectation… I think no matter how relaxed approach we take to the education (shao xia (carefree), in Mandarin). I do expect him to … (pause) to have … (pause) … to achieve academic excellence. It's got to be (pause) … he should … I don't see any *deficiency* in his make-up at the moment …so I do expect him to reach *that* standard. And then of course it's not … I am not single minded about what extent should be because he may have very different interest to me. But generally speaking you think they should have excellence, but as to which area and direction is really up to him. I can't predict it … My ideal scenario is for them to become a *natural scientist.* By that I mean they become scientists in particular disciplines, that you study nature rather than in the laboratory …

His response reminds me of the Chinese idiom 'wishing for dragon children' (望子成龍 'wangzichenglong'). Dragon is seen as the most precious and respectable in the hierarchy of non-human creatures. As such, only the Emperor could wear clothing with a dragon on it. (It should also be pointed out that 'dragon' is male in gender. The female counterpart is represented by phoenix). In Chinese Horoscope, those who were born in the year of the Dragon were seen as the ultimate portent. This idiom captures the essence of Chinese parent's high expectations on their children. It tells how parents wish their children to stand out from the crowd. J. Wu and Singh (2004) argue that this is still deeply rooted in Chinese families and has strong influence on Chinese society and the Chinese diaspora. I am not surprised at all by his

‘expectation’ of a natural scientist as science seems to play role in the education in the family. Besides the scientific background of Wilson and Hilary, both Wilson’s parents were retired engineers. But I am much intrigued by Wilson’s hesitation to tell me his thought. I am sure Wilson knows of the idiom and I cannot stop myself thinking that he was trying to escape from this image of Chinese parents. Is his reservation a reflection of his concern of being seen as ‘wishing a dragon child’, a discourse deeply rooted in the Chinese community?

I believe there is nothing wrong with ‘wishing for a dragon child’. Expectations could be motivation to succeed. But I also think parents should think carefully if those are realistic expectations and consider the child’s interest and welfare as well. Cameron has a very well balanced learning environment as evident in the journal diary, in which his interests in art and sports are nurtured. Wilson’s expectation on Cameron seems to have taken consideration of both his ability and welfare. Wishing a ‘natural scientist’ from a very capable child is not unrealistic as long as it does not cause too much pressure on the child. After all, it is a wish.

Nothing unique about Chinese culture

Interviewing two scientists about culture, education and learning was an eye-opening experience for me. I found it fascinating to see how our perception of the world is shaped by our experience in which education plays a crucial part. Wilson not only impressed me with his logical, deductive way of thinking, he also demonstrated to me how he framed his understanding of the social world, including human development and identity, in a positivist paradigm.

I found the opportunity to ask him the question on his cultural identity, and wondered how his scientific view might influence his perception of identity. Wilson took some time to think about this question before he explained, "I see myself as an *Australian with Chinese background.* I can't… background is always there. It *cannot be erased*. It's always there".

In other words, Chinese heritage is the background that he cannot deny. However, this heritage, according to him, is nothing unique or special and he would challenge people to give him an example of a trait which was Chinese specific. He continued,

> (Long pause) I don't think Chinese culture is any special. In fact I don't see much. I don't see anything *unique* about Chinese culture despite people say about it. I think all the nice characters that people usually attribute to Chinese culture I actually see it as completely universal.

He used 'respect the elderly and look after the young' as an example to argue how there was nothing unique about Chinese culture. He agreed that we should look after the elders when they got old but he refused to accept this a *Chinese* character because "every culture does". Chinese heritage that he inevitably relates to is almost non-existent. He went on and criticized the 'Chinese version' of this universal virtue of respect to the elders, that sometimes "the respect was stretched to absolute obedience". He doubted if younger generation should obey elders who abused their seniority and made unreasonable demands.

Wilson further broke the cultural boundaries and dismissed 'Chinese culture' altogether by arguing that all traits (except cooking) are universal across all cultures and as such there is *nothing unique* about Chinese culture. I think,

when boundaries are dissolved or become very blurry, identities are even more fluid and boundless. His Chinese background would have little meaning if Chinese culture did not exist at all.

Hilary appeared to have a different understanding of her identity. Though her English language skills were not as good as Wilson, I could understand the subtlety of her location in the community. She said she was "more Chinese at home and more Australian at work". She was aware that she was 'the same' in China because "you are one of them"; whereas in Australia "you are expected to be a bit different". Her comment reveals her understanding of cultural groups as bounded entities that suggest rigidity. Distinct boundaries between cultures enable her to articulate clear identification in different contexts. Her identity is constructed within *difference* that she appears to be very aware of. What did she see as *unique* in Chinese culture? "Chinese (people) are good at technical things", Hillary claimed.

"Maths is easy"

I am not sure whether it is actually more, or less convincing for a PhD in Physics to say "maths is easy". But Hilary did provide a logical explanation for her claim. She believed "maths at early stage is more like a technical thing". With the appropriate materials children could be "trained" (her word). In other words, with appropriate materials and teaching, children will be good at mathematics as long as they keep practising.

On the other hand, Wilson sees mathematics as "low risk" because there is no ambiguity in the outcomes – "you work hard … you do the exam, right is right, wrong is wrong". Unlike subjects such as arts that cannot be assessed objectively, maths is a subject with high return because outcomes are often

determined by the effort. Based on this interpretation, art, Cameron's favourite subject, is a 'high risk' subject. Wilson made an interesting observation on Chinese parents' commitment on 'high risk' subjects or activities. For him, Chinese parents in Australia are very reserved in supporting their children in sports that he regarded as "maybe even higher risk" (than arts). He made a strong remark when Hilary pointed out that a couple of Cameron's friends who came from Chinese background were doing some serious training on sports. He said,

> What are you talking about? Alex and Jason? *Because* their dad is *Aussie,* their dad used to be very good sportsman. He played for Queensland. They are half… they are mixed. Others are not interested".

"Others" in the last sentence referred to Chinese families. Here Wilson argued that these two boys were committed to serious sports training *because of* their father's Anglo- Australian background. This comment suggests that they would not be committed to sports had their father been a Chinese, which ironically suggests boundedness of cultures that he had denied earlier. I reflect on Cameron's interest and after-school activities, that he was a committed member in the local soccer and football teams, of which Wilson was very supportive. I believe the training in the soccer and football teams were not that "serious" at that time but I am very interested to know what decision Wilson would make if Cameron wanted to commit to some serious training in the future. Would Wilson reject the idea like "others"?

Besides being easy and safe, Wilson acknowledges the practical values of mathematics especially when one pursues a science career. Being a scientist, he

has interesting insights into the values of mathematics in science. He believed that

> the power of modern natural science is actually in using maths, using statistics and maths, to unlock the trend, the pattern, the natural laws within that… And I think if you are good at maths you stand out because most can't do maths. Even the good scientists can't do maths.

In other words, if his children were going to pursue science-related studies and career, mathematics knowledge and skills would be greatly beneficial for them. However, this did not mean he was going to send their children to receive tutoring. Rather, he was apprehensive and almost critical of tutoring. He said,

> But I'm also very mindful that I shouldn't enforce any kind of *typical image of Chinese community* such as coaching, very early coaching, drilling, the mechanical drilling and mechanical exercise… In China, the coaching culture has gone mad!

According to what he learned from his friends in China, children from lower primary school already spent long hours doing their homework, often until very late at night. He criticised that as "crazy" and commented that education was much better in Sydney and as a result "there is no way" that they would their children back to China for education. Again, he was assertive and firm. I could feel that there was really *no* way for that kind of teaching to happen to his children.

Wilson's criticism on coaching practice and drilling does not mean his complete dismissal of private tutoring. He said that he would send Cameron to tutoring to prepare for OC and/or selective school tests if he believed it would

help Cameron to learn the examination skills needed to do perform in those tests.

Although Wilson was critical of the mathematics tutoring in Sydney, he also challenged Cameron with mathematics questions from time to time. He explained that those questions were problem-solving questions base, and they aimed to provide him opportunities to 動腦筋 (‘dong lo gen’ which literally means ‘exercise the brain’. Wilson said this in Mandarin). Cameron told me in the individual interview that those couple of questions that Wilson gave him every week did not require computation with paper and pen. The questions were often given in the form of scenarios. He did not mind doing the questions as they were quite fun and correct answers are also a way for him to ‘trade off’ punishment from other wrongdoings. I sensed that Cameron was not particularly enthusiastic about the questions but still responded positively to parents’ request, especially when correct answers could help him to get out of troubles. I believe this is mainly for fun and not practice as from both my observation and his class teacher, Cameron was doing exceptionally in mathematics. He was in year 2 in a composite class for Year 2 and 3. His teacher told me he had already finished Year 3 Mathletics (a web-based learning program) and started to do Year 4’s.

Wilson’s comment on “typical image of Chinese community” and his refusal to send Cameron to tutoring college in Sydney, is another example of him drawing a boundary between himself and the Chinese community again. By refusing to practise the act, he also refuses to identify himself as one of them.

Reading his comments on coaching culture in China and his description of Shanghai in the past, I see how he travels back and forth the present and the past. He was like a narrator telling me the stories of China - He narrated the

changes in the environment, the technology, and education, but where is *he* in China now? I feel like reading stories told by a social researcher. I can see him back in Shanghai in early 1990's but I cannot see his presence in China now.

Dayton is mainly inhabited by Anglo-Australians. It is 7 km from the closest train station which Hilary caught a train to work every day. Wilson said the reason to live in Dayton was because it was close to work for him. While it certainly was more convenient to live near his work place, the closest suburb with a high Chinese population is only 20 minutes from his work place. There is also a train station, which means Hilary could have much easier and faster access to work. It seems to me that their choice to live in Dayton is to *keep a distance* from the Chinese nearby, both literally and metaphorically. He probably just does not want to build the connection with the Chinese community. After all, why made an effort to connect to a Chinese community when all he wanted to do 20 years ago was to "get out of there"?!

Family narrative

The Henlys

Visiting a familiar stranger

More than once, I was amazed by the connections that participants in this study and I had. Among all, my connection with Eva is probably the most obvious. Besides the coincidence of sharing the same surname that is not the most common, she was actually born and grew up in the city of Zhaoqing, China - the same city in which my father grew up. Soon after we discovered this link to a *homeland*, we shared our knowledge on the cultural practices from that city, such as eating rice dumplings in Chinese New Year. I am surprised by the connection that this shared knowledge bring to us. Her mother who was visiting her at that time was particularly interested to know more about my father's history such as the name of the village in which he grew up. I was able to answer them as my father told me a lot about his childhood and I also visited his birthplace once.

This family of five lived in a house within a walking distance to the shopping mall and the train station. This was the first and only time that an interview was conducted purely in my home language of Cantonese. Quite contrary to what I had expected, I found myself a bit nervous before the interview. I did not fully understand my response but upon reflection, I believed I was unsure of the expectation that Eva might have on me due to this commonality. What would she expect from a researcher who has the same surname and speaks the same mother tongue? Would she categorise me into a certain group? If so, what would it be?

I used to work in a local school in the suburb of Retland as a casual teacher, which is a multicultural suburb with 42% of the population came from countries where English is not the first language. Among 5055 residents in Retland, 10% were born in either China or Hong Kong (ABS, 2011).(2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011) Many public housing complexes were going to be demolished and replaced by new social housing for seniors and private apartments, as well as a new library and community centre - a reflection of the change in demographics in the community.

The family tie

Eva and her family moved from Melbourne to Retland in January, 2012, only four months before the interview was conducted. Her three children, Billy, Jack and Jodie, were going to Retland West Public School ("Retland West" here after) of which she seemed to be satisfied. Although it was not her first choice, she was glad to know parents in the school regarded it as "a good school", and that her children were learning swimming in the communal pool next to the school.

Henly's had had a couple of moves in the past few years - first from a small country town Scaddan to Melbourne, then from Melbourne to Sydney. Eva herself migrated from China in 1996 and united with her own family in Scaddan where she met her husband later and started a family. For a few years they ran a Chinese take-away shop in that town. Her husband was the chef and

she helped out in serving customers and as such she had a lot of interactions with local people, who were predominantly Anglo-Australians. Although her English language skill was not very good, Eva liked living in the country town because people there were very friendly. However, she also realised that this English-only environment in the country town was not favourable for their children in terms of learning and practising their home language. Eventually they sold the business and moved to Melbourne when their first child Billy was 7 years old.

Billy and his younger brother Jack attended the Chinese community school in Melbourne, in which they learned writing and reading the Chinese language. The community school was highly regarded by Eva who was impressed by the resources and the range of classes that it offered, which include mathematics and interest groups. Despite the teaching medium being Mandarin rather than Cantonese, Eva believed her children had learned a lot about the Chinese language and culture. However, while the community college in Melbourne had provided the learning opportunities for her children, Eva felt isolated from other family members as none of them lived in Melbourne.

Moving to Sydney was a well-considered decision that involved sacrifices of the connections that they had built in Melbourne. Living in Retland was to meet their desire of living close to the relatives. In fact, a number of her relatives lived in Retland, and the furthest member is only half an hour away from her. Her children, however, did not attend any Chinese language school in Sydney as Eva was not satisfied with the quality of the teaching. Instead, with the materials she got from the language school in Melbourne, Eva taught them at home. She believed constant revision would help them to maintain the language skills.

On the day of the interview, Eva's mother who lived with Eva's brother in country NSW was visiting them. She usually visited them during the school holiday. She was minding one of her grandchildren at Eva's place on that day. Like a lot of migrant families, the use of home language as the medium of communication at home was upheld in this family, which was mainly for the ease of communication within the family. Eva said,

> E (Eva): because this (speaking Cantonese) will help them to maintain Chinese language. Most importantly it is to *keep our language.* (She said the words in italics in English)
>
> A (Angel): why is it so important to 'keep Chinese language'?
>
> E: After all, *we are Chinese*; after all, we still hope they speak Chinese to us at home. If they 'forget' their language (Chinese) one day, it would be very difficult to communicate with them.
>
> A: What about communication with grandma? How was communication with Chinese and English like?
>
> E: Just don't understand! Sometimes they use body language … so we hope they can talk to us in *our language*

Eva's mother who was sitting nearby heard our conversation. She added, 'exactly! I don't know what they say!"

The move from Melbourne to Sydney sees Eva and her husband's determination to live closer to the extended family and the provision of a language environment for their children to learn and practise the home language. Ironically, their children were found to communicate with them in English more and more, a change with which Eva sounded quite upset.Once again, language maintenance seemed to be crucial to the parents who were

willing to make personal sacrifice to "keep the language", as part of identity and cultural continuity.

Living in Sydney is not quite the same

After almost a term, her children started to settle in and Eva was particularly pleased to see them developing friendship with a few classmates. Interestingly, both Eva and her children noticed that the school culture in Sydney was quite different from that in Melbourne. Billy had expressed that students in Retland West were "smarter and more competitive" than those in Melbourne. Similarly, Eva's second child Jack told her that he preferred studying in Melbourne because it was more relaxed there.

Likewise, Eva's school experience in Sydney was also different from that in Melbourne. Retland west was a medium-sized school with students coming from different cultural backgrounds. According to the Principal, the number of Chinese families had been steadily growing in the past couple of years, with about 15-20% in 2012. Parents from Chinese background were certainly visible in the school, who were often found socialising in the morning and afternoon. Social networks are very important for migrants in their identification and building of a sense of identity in the local community. However, for Eva, it was also a source of pressure as she was frequently asked by other parents about her children's learning. For example, she was often asked if she had planned to send Billy to a selective school, and if yes, how she was preparing him for it; or the extra-curricular activities that her children did after school, and whether they were going to tutoring college and if not, *why*. They told her that her children would be disadvantaged from not getting extra learning from tutoring college. Telling me these experiences in the interview, Eva, who has a

quiet demeanour, suddenly raised her voice and spoke faster. She admitted that she felt pressured and while she did not intend to send them to tutoring college in the first place, "those parents have changed me (her)". At the time of the interview, both Billy and his younger brother were attending tutoring college. Tutoring college, however, did not seem to provide the support Eva had expected. She said,

> E: They do have more work to do from the coaching class. But in fact *I don't see any improvement.*
>
> A: It only makes them busier?
>
> E: Yes, they are busier. They have to do worksheets after school. But I *don't see any improvement*, only more worksheets. And they have less time to play now.

And I thought, "was the quality of coaching college really so bad that there was no improvement at all?" I soon found out that it was actually because Billy and Jack had already learned the content at home. For years, Eva taught them mathematics at home -she borrowed materials from the library, often those at a level higher than what they were learning in school. She had even tried to teach Billy Year 10 mathematics, and was glad to see that he understood most of what she taught. At the other end of this teaching and learning process, Billy appreciated his mother's teaching and would like her to continue doing it even when he went to high school because this had helped him to learn in class. In fact, Billy seemed to be benefiting from the teaching of *both* Eva and the teacher, which appeared to be complementary to each other. He gave me an example of how Eva taught him "the basic way" or "the old way" (both his terms) in doing division, and compared it to what the teacher taught in class, or

"the fast way" as he called it. He said he often applied *both* ways, often using *mum's way* to cross check the answer he got from using the teacher's way.

I did not further investigate how and to what extend the "basic ways" had helped Billy in class as this was not the focus of this research study. I did, nonetheless, witness how independent and focussed he was in class. His class teacher testified this and added that Billy was a fantastic student who did extremely well in all aspects. Both Billy and Jack went to 'maths group' in school, which aimed to provide a more challenging mathematics curriculum for some students in Year 5 and 6, who could benefit from it. Their teacher in maths group Mrs Flynn said they were both very capable and had the desire to do well. Billy was quiet but also showed some competiveness. She was particularly impressed by his positive attitude and happy demeanour. "He always looks like he is having a good time!" Jack was a little slower when it came to doing class work but Mrs Flynn said "he was very bright for Year 5".

Embracing local culture

As a part time teacher in the same school, I met Eva a couple of times before we did the interview. Her youngest child was in kindergarten at that time and Eva always accompanied her to school and spent time with her in the playground in the morning. While most parents took the opportunity to socialise, she did not appear to actively join their conversation but stood by the side watching her child interacting with other children. I found her polite and respectful.

Half way into the interview, Eva started to look more relaxed and told me more about her immigration experience in Sydney. After living in different parts in Australia for many years, she had noticed the changes within herself in

particular her ways of interacting with others. In her words, "I became more friendly and polite after living here", by that she meant now she took initiative to greet and thanked others, something she did not do before. She explained that it was because she had accepted the *culture* in Australia and was willing to adapt to the social and cultural values, which were often quite different from those in China. She explained, "…after all**,** we are now living in Australia and are *Australian citizens*. I accept the teaching and culture here. 入鄉隨俗 ('Embracing the local culture)".

I respect how Eva has embraced different cultural practices and that she made a decision to perform those she believed as appropriate, albeit they were not what she used to. Her experience of living in different places in Australia had probably sharpened her perception of people in the community too. One of the observations she made was that compared to those living in Melbourne and the country town Scaddan, Anglo Australians who she met in Sydney were "less friendly", who often dismissed her greetings.

Interestingly, regardless of this "less friendly" attitude she had detected from Anglo Australians in Sydney, she still felt more connected to them than the Chinese people living in Sydney. The excerpt below that recorded a snapshot of her interaction with staff members in agencies in Sydney told me how she saw the difference between these two groups of people.

> E: After living here for so long… if I have to seek help from agencies (for example, in government agencies or banks)… I feel good if the staff member was an Anglo Australian. *We* are friendly and respectful to each other. *We* can communicate. But I don't like the Chinese here who are arrogant and look down upon others.
>
> A: you mean Chinese living in Sydney?

> E: Yes. I've found that when I go to the agencies to seek help, those Chinese staff are not friendly *to me* but *they* are to people from other cultural backgrounds. *They* don't want to answer my questions. *They* chat and laugh among themselves ... It feels like 'Chinese (staff) look down upon Chinese (the clients) 中國人好像看低自己中國人那樣'. *They* are very nice to people from other cultures. *They* are really not friendly (to me) …
>
> A: It must feel very bad …
>
> E: yes very bad.
>
> A: So you have experienced this yourself?
>
> E: yes I did.

Her experience with local Chinese assistants sounded very unpleasant for her. What she shared above sees a clear divide in her identification with two groups of people - the friendly and respectful Anglo Australian assistants whom she called *we*, and the arrogant and unfriendly Chinese speaking staff members who were regarded as *they*.

When asked about her thoughts on the attitude of the Chinese staff member in the above incident, Eva said,

> E: Maybe because when they were living in China, this was the kind of education they received. (But now) We are living in Australia … As I said before, we have to follow the customs of the place, others' (Australian) culture, you came here, you have to *learn*.

But wasn't she also educated in China, and she received similar "kind of education" as those Chinese staff did? Her decision to accept and adopt the Australian manners reminds me of Stuart's Hall's argument that identity is a

point of suture, or a connecting point to the discursive practices (Hall, 1996). It appears that Eva sees "friendly, respectful and polite" as the discursive practice in Australia and invests in a position in this discourse. This position tells me not only who she is but also who she is becoming (Hall, 1996).

Her identification to Anglo Australian in terms of the way of social interaction, however, did not mean a dismissal of her Chinese identity. In fact she was found holding strongly onto her identity as a Chinese, which could be seen in how she referred to Chinese language as "our language" more than once in the interview. As well, she had clearly identified herself and her family as Chinese within the first 12 minutes of the interview.

> (3:08) (minutes into the interview): …And *we are Chinese*; we think kids would have more opportunities to learn Chinese in the city. They didn't have the chance to learn Chinese in the country town...
>
> (8:50): … Say for example, the food we eat. *We are Chinese* so we certainly like Asian food, right? But if they don't' eat (the Asian food I cook), I will have to cook two different dishes…
>
> (11:13): After all, *we are Chinese;* after all, we still hope they speak Chinese with us at home.

Eva's identification might seem to be contradictory, which in fact is perfect example to demonstrate the fluidity, contextuality and multiplicity of identities. Her identification is not restricted or bounded by the categorical label of Chinese or Australian but expressed in her attachment to the discourses. She acknowledges her Chinese heritage and the practices such as the food they eat and the language their use. At the same time, she also identifies herself to

Anglo Australians in a different context. Cultural boundaries are blurry and negotiable.

Competition

Study and schoolwork seemed to have an important position in the family. Teaching, learning and studying took up a considerable part of the family time after school and on Saturdays. Afternoons were spent on homework, reading, piano lesson and occasionally, watching TV and playing computer games, provided that they finished their work. On days when they did not get homework from the teachers, Eva would teach them mathematics, or just provide them with more practices on certain concepts. Sometimes Billy would express that he had learned the concepts before but Eva believed a strong foundation in primary years was crucial and it would make learning in high school more manageable - ‘勤能補拙’(Diligence makes up for deficiency) as she called it. Another activity which was encouraged in the household was reading. Billy was also allowed to read books online, if he had finished books that Eva borrowed from the library. Eva was vigilant in terms of the materials that Billy assessed online. He was allowed to use Facebook but she made sure he would not meet strangers there.

I have seen similar kind of structured, study-based schedule in Chinese families, both in Sydney and Hong Kong. This kind schedule might seem to be a ‘problem’ to some people as lack of fun for children and deprivation of children’s choices. However, most children in these families, just like Billy and Jack, do not seem to complain about the focus of academic learning at home. Of course this attitude cannot be generalised and surely there are children who do not like this kind of schedule and practice, but from my knowledge,

academic focus is a readily accepted value within the Chinese community. It's a family business that involves both children, parents and sometimes the grandparents. As such children often feel supported and this household is a typical example.

When asked about their children's aspirations, Eva said both her husband and her were "very free", "as long as they can support themselves" and "as long as they are happy". The children did have their thoughts though - Billy wanted to be a doctor and Jack an engineer. Eva also said she did not expect them to get a job in China although some of her relatives and friends did. For her, "It doesn't matter whether it is (a) Chinese or western country… it's more important that they are happy". I believe she truly does not have very high expectation of their future career. It appears to me that her conscientious and on-going support, as well as emphasis of work ethics, is her commitment to help her children to build a strong foundation for their future study and career. In fact, she seems to view that there is keen *competition* both in school and after school. Billy also seems to perceive the competition in class though he does not mind it because it motivates him to work harder, as he did not want to "fall behind". I am not sure why Billy would have the concern of falling behind, as according to the teachers and my observation, he was doing exceptionally well in class and demonstrated both capacity and conscientious in his study. Perhaps like Eva, he wants to set a strong foundation for his future.

Eva's free and relaxed attitude on children's future career, however, does not mean a care-free approach in their study. Her on-going support in terms of mathematics teaching is a good example. She wants to "deepen what they have learned" and teach them the content *before* the schoolteacher did. She does not follow the school syllabus but choose the materials to teach them based on her

experience as a student in China, regardless of what they are learning at school. She was teaching her children algebra when the teacher was teaching three-digit addition in school.

She commented a few times in the interview that the mathematics curriculum in school was “too simple” and “too easy”. She said, “I expect them to learn something more difficult. I hope they can learn something more challenging in school”. Billy also said class maths was easy for him. She kept challenging her children with advanced maths. This intense scaffolding of mathematics learning might seem to be unnecessary as both Billy and Jack are doing extremely well in maths in school. However, knowing that they have the desire to become professionals in the future, their motivation to learn more advanced mathematics appears to be justifiable.

And what motivates Eva to teach them advanced mathematics? What was her education experience like in China?

Like most students in China in the 1980s, she went to a boarding school in high school. The school life she described did not sound much fun - long school hours (9-5), six days a week, with lots of homework every day. She said it was not fun but she did not complain about it either. She said to her children they are “lucky” because they have shorter school hours and not much homework to do. Mathematics was her favourite subject in school and this is why she believes she can support them while they are still in primary school.

Eva’s education experience demonstrates a high level of self-discipline, diligence and perseverance. This work ethics, interestingly, was also found permeating in both the expectations and practices on her children’s study. She mentioned a couple of times in the journal diary that she was pleased to see Billy doing his study or reading, even if he would rather not to. She also

reported that she was happy and felt “comforted” (her words) to see her children going to school and tutoring college enthusiastically. They commitment impressed her indeed. On the other hand, she felt “angry” when they were reluctant to get up themselves to school in the morning; she scolded Billy when he watched TV while doing his homework.

Activities in this household, however, were not about study only. Eva also encouraged her children to go to gatherings in a local church on Friday afternoons and was happy to see them forming friendship with the children in the neighbourhood. She allowed her children to play computer games and watch TV as long as the content was appropriate and they had finished their homework. Sometimes she would watch TV with them and asked about the games that they played.

Rules, nonetheless, were clear and enforced in this family. For instance, there were rules on when and what children could do in their spare time, which they were expected to obey and if not, Eva admitted that she would get upset. Clearly, besides commitment, *obedience* is a quality highly regarded in this family.

She shared an incident in the diary that had reflected both her appreciation of commitment and obedience. One day, just before Eva was to take Billy to his weekly piano lesson, Billy asked if he could have a short practice of a few minutes. Eva wrote clearly in the diary - “I was angry”, and refused his request. Her explanation was that firstly, Billy should have done his practise regularly, not just a few minutes before the lesson. Secondly, they would be late and this would be disrespectful to the teacher who might also see Billy’s lack of commitment.

This work ethic, however, did not always translate into other learning areas. One morning Billy did not want to go to swimming because he was tired. This time, Eva sounded quite relaxed. "*I didn't push him* (to go swimming). Sometimes I let him make decisions himself because he is getting older, and he will leave me one day". It was great to see how Eva encouraged her children to be independent. At the same time, it was interesting to see the contrast in her response in Billy's missing a swimming lesson and that of running late to the piano class.

It is delightful to see Billy growing up to a young person who is committed, independent, diligent, and enjoys learning - qualities that are highly regarded by Eva. Teacher's observation that Billy enjoyed learning was indeed very accurate. For instance, rather seeing it as a compulsory activity after school, he claimed that he actually *liked* learning advanced mathematics from Eva because it helped him to *learn* in school. He also displayed quite a positive attitude in learning Chinese language despite Eva commented that he was using the language less and less in their communication. It appeared that he enjoyed the learning process and he had an intrinsic desire to challenge and enrich himself.

I enjoyed the interview with Billy who is a well-mannered and conscientious student. He seemed a bit nervous at the beginning of the interview but as soon as he started telling me about the school race that happened the day before, in which he came second, his eyes started to shine. I was, however, a bit surprised to learn from him later that he did not join any team sports *because* he was afraid that he would let the team down. Reading his comment again and again, I gather he has very high expectation of himself, which is likely to be a reflection of the standard that Eva has set for her children. His comment also

suggests that he sees own *efforts*, which is not contingent on the people and system in the environment, to be the key to succeed. Perhaps, I ask myself, this is why he is so motivated in learning – a way to equip himself for competition?

Scene break

Personal stories reflect the social, political and historical discourses in which they happened. The early immigration experiences of Monica and Gemma are rather different mainly due to the change in the broader social and political contexts in which they negotiate their identities. Monica's more relaxed attitude in defending her 'Chinese' identity in recent years is a reflection of a more accepting attitude to migrants in the wider community. Gemma's gratitude to the friendliness of local Anglo Australians also signifies a more harmonious migration environment.

Their experiences also demonstrate how global forces shape the way we make sense of our cultural identities and where we build our sense of belonging. Connection and identification to an imagined homeland renders Monica a strong and un-negotiable identity of *Chinese*, while on the other hand, Gemma's strong connection to her homeland support her to build a connection to the local people in Sydney. A common theme in the migration of the family of Trans (Monica), Biggs (Gemma) and Henlys (Eva) is parent's desire to create a better future for their children, albeit sacrifice to the parents, which they were aware of in the first place. Education is instrumental in both the induction of the culture (Welch, 2007) and the preparation of their children's future. The experiences of all six participating families in this study vary but they all place high value on education.

On the other hand, while Wilson and Eva did not deny their Chinese heritage, cultural boundaries were blurry for both of them. Rather than restricted by a categorical label of *Chinese*, their self-identifications were fluid and contextual. They embraced the Australian practices and lifestyles and adopted identifications that acknowledged an Australian identity. However, Eva was found to have greater acceptance of hybridity who embraced the Chinese practices and values as part of her identity. Wilson, on the other hand, rejected vigorously the Chinese identity by not only distancing himself from the Chinese community but dismiss the idea of culture altogether. To further understand the context in which Chinese migrants negotiate their identities, the following chapter examines the diasporic context in Sydney, in which the assumption of a homogenous Chinese identity is challenged and the notion of Chineseness as an identity interrogated.

PART 3

LISTENING FOR THE STORIES

Just like we enter an inquiry in the midst of stories of the participants and the researcher, we also leave it in the midst of them. The stories of the participants do not stop with the conclusion of this study. They go on. This study has provided an opportunity for them to reflect on their experiences and appreciate who they are in this transnational world. Their joy and fear, fulfilment and frustration, have been made visible to us. Their stories, however, tell more than what was told. Behind the frustration is the longing for belonging. Holding on to the past is a fear of disconnection from the root. Chapter 6, *"The Unfinished"*, draws all six family narratives together to listen *for* the stories below the surface. This section is concluded with the last chapter in this thesis *"THE END"* in which recommendations drawn out from the discussion are provided.

Chapter 6 The Unfinished

Introduction

Family narratives displayed in the previous three chapters have not only demonstrated diverse immigration and education experiences of the participating families but their locations on the cultural canvas woven by the hybrid cultural and social discourses operating in Sydney. Individual events and happenings may seem unrelated but as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose, experiences happen narratively and they are best understood in the continuity and wholeness of one's life experience. Moreover, participants' experiences, which are composed in the family narratives, not only explain the choices and decisions that they made for both themselves and their children, but inform who the participants are and who they are becoming.

Drawing together all family narratives, the following discussion examines how some significant features of the themes that underpin this study, namely, connection to homeland, immigration experience, representation of Chineseness, education, mathematics education, as well as perception of cultural identity, operate within and across the families. Each section starts with a brief overview of the literature in relation to the theme, which is then followed by an examination of the experiences of all six families, in light of the literature presented. This discussion seeks to expose the contrasting experiences in a seemingly similar group of migrants. Contrasting experiences are evidence of heterogeneity that speak for themselves, and further challenges the homogeneity of Chineseness.

Table 6.1 An overview of participants' connections to their homeland and their self-identification

Family/participants (Child's name in bracket)	**Birthplace**	**Connections**	**Self-identification**
Catherine (Cindy)	Nanjing, China	Visit at least every two years. Sometimes with the whole family, other times with one or two children. Grandparents visit every year and stay for a long period of time, who spoke to their friends in China on the phone daily.	"I *am* Chinese".
Wilson and Hilary (Cameron)	Shanghai and Dalian, China	Frequent visits to own grandmother until she passed away. Last visit when Cameron was a few months old. Grandparents visit frequently. They communicate with friends in China daily through internet chats.	"I am an Australian with Chinese background which I *can't deny*".
Monica (Shane)	Solomon Islands	Frequent visits with friends to Solomon islands before she got married and settled in Sydney. Visited HK every year until grandmother passed away.	"I am *still* Chinese".
Shannon (Gloria)	Taipei, Taiwan	Every two years now as she has to pay adult fare for Gloria now. Gloria's auntie is her Facebook friend with whom she communicates frequently.	"I am a Chinese and at the same time I am *also* an Australian".
Eva (Billy)	Zaoqing, China	The whole family visited in 2013.	"*We are* Chinese".
Gemma (Yvonne)	Guangzhou, China	Visited her daughter three times in three years before she moved to Sydney in 2011. Grandmother visited and stayed for a long period of time before and after the second child was born.	"I *feel* that I am an Australian".

Connection to homeland in the transnational world

Changing image of homeland

Migration and diaspora studies provide valuable insights into migrants' connections to their homelands. One essential characteristic of earlier studies of diaspora has been the idea of a *home* in which they would return one day. Unsurprisingly, *homeland orientation* which suggests migrants' desire to maintain close connections to their homelands was one of the constituent elements in defining diaspora (Brubaker, 2005; Tölölyan, 1996). Significant as it might be, homeland is, however, a notion that is often a 'mythicised idea' (Tölölyan, 1996), in the sense that consistent connections with the homelands through different means does not necessarily mean a physical return but a 're-turn' to the idea (p. 14). Gomez and Benton (2003) call the idea of returning "a myth of return" (p.11), that migrants talk about return but rarely do so due to the investment of capital and emotions in the host country. Advances in technology in the 21st century have further complicated the idea of homeland orientation. Affordable air travel, instant and multi-modal communication with people in the homeland, have not only compressed time and space, but made homeland readily available at all times. For most, homeland is no longer a faraway place or idea, but a space *right here, right now*.

While homeland seems to be a natural place to build a sense of belonging, Gungwu Wang (1999) points out that homeland orientation as a constitutive criterion for diaspora needs to be cautiously scrutinised as it assumes the centrality of homeland and overlooks the local forces in the study of diasporic identification.

De-centring and de-emphasising of homeland orientation would provide a space to examine heterogeneity and hybridity within diaspora.

The literature on transnationalism highlights migrants' dual orientations, or bifocality, of two worlds. Transnationalism refers to various kinds of global or cross border connections (Vertovec, 2001), which are characterised by *intense* and *simultaneous* activities carried out between home country and host country (Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 1999). As a dynamic social process (Ma, 2003), transnationalism adds to the complexity of migrant identification that is always changing and contextual. Migrants' continuous engagement in community activities, which connects them to the local community, signifies the evolving nature of diasporic identity (Gao, 2006). Vertovec (2001) asserts that transnationalism and identity are inextricably related and "inherently called for juxtaposition" (p. 573), in the sense that transnational networks are built upon the perception of a shared identity with the people in the home country. Transnational activities, on the other hand, construct, maintain and enable the negotiation of migrant identities. Intense border-crossing activities dissolve social, cultural and political boundaries and cause de-territorialisation of nation states (Vertovec, 1999). Frequent and real time connections with the home country have not only resulted in migrants' continuous presence in two social worlds but a re-definition of their social worlds. Subsequently, their social worlds are re-territorialised, which bring about a new dimension to their identification to both worlds.

Transnational activities and ideologies not only transform the lives of those who have left but also those "left behind" (Vertovec, 2004, p. 976), in the sense that

family and friends of migrants also develop a dual orientation or bifocality and their social worlds are also changed. Besides frequent contacts through internet communication, due to technological advances and competition, it is much more affordable for the family and friends to visit their migrant family or friends nowadays. Having said that, overseas visits mean expenses and time off from their job duties for migrants' friends and family. As such the frequency and length of stay of family and friends is somewhat determined by their economic status as well as job obligations that is a reflection of their education and social status.

As significant others, grandparents pay regular visits to their adult children and grandchildren in the host country. Intersecting with collectivist values of interdependence and family relationship, they stay with their migrant children for a long period of time to help out in childrearing (Nesteruk & Marks, 2009). In this section, I discuss some pertinent features of the participants' connections to homelands, which reflect the changes in their lives as well as the social and economic contexts in both their home country and Australia. I argue that grandparents have emerged as a *new* group of transnational subjects. As well, I propose that more work should be done to understand children's perceptions of both social worlds by examining how they position themselves in them.

Visits

All six families in the study have frequent contacts with family and friends in their homelands, possibly due to the fact that they are all first generation migrants. Their experiences resonate with the literature on transnationalism which highlights that transnational migrants nowadays have frequent and intense social, political

and cultural ties with more than one country (for example, Ma, 2003; Vertovec, 2001). Three themes were detected in the participants' connections to homeland. Firstly, frequency and modes of visits evolve over time. Connection is influenced by circumstances such as marriage, sickness, and the cost of travelling, both of the subjects and others surrounding them. Secondly, due to advances in technology in the past decade, connections nowadays come in different forms, ranging from regular visits to virtual communication such as emails and Facebook. This has resulted in the continuous presence of migrants and people in the homeland in each other's social lives. Thirdly, grandparents' visits are frequent, regular and play a crucial role in maintaining family relationships and the teaching of cultural and linguistic discourses to the grandchildren. While some grandparents are Australian residents who are currently living in Sydney, others travel regularly to stay with their children and grandchildren for a long period of time, mainly to participate in child caring. These changes signify the idea that transnationalism is a dynamic social process (Ma, 2003) in which transnational migrants maintain close social, cultural, political and economic linkages with two or more societies simultaneously.

Before discussing the aforementioned patterns, it is necessary to point out that the homelands in the participants' "mind's eyes", as suggested by Bhabha (1990), are not necessarily the same. While some of them demonstrated strong connections to both the *place and people in the home country*, others are only connected to the *people* in the city. For example, Shannon and Catherine, who demonstrate strong and consistent connections to their home countries, Taiwan and China respectively, show themselves to be very proud of both their country and the

people in various aspects. On the other hand, Wilson's connection is built on the personal relationship with the people in the city in which he grew up. He admits that he misses the friends and family there but not the place, nor the food. He shared this with me in the interview.

> I do have friends there … (Pause 3 seconds)… (sighed) I, I , I have school friends and other family there. Yes that's true. *That's the bit I miss*. But otherwise *I don't miss China*. I am a bit different … to …I don't miss China*, I don't miss the food* ... I don't miss the food, the neon lights, and /the crowd. I know some people miss it a lot. 31(Wilson, 10/7/2012)

There is another group of people whose attachment is built on the Chinese values and practices that they have learned, perceived, and internalised from their own)experience or people close to them. Monica, for example, has learned and followed Chinese practices and values from her late mother. Born in the Solomon Islands, her connection to China is limited and hence her construction of a transnational network is built upon a perception of a shared identity to a Chinese community, which paradoxically, only exists in her imagination. But this imagination is crucial to how she makes sense of her identity.

It was found that the frequency of the visits was influenced by many variables in life, and was often not in the control of individuals. For instance, Wilson visited China frequently to see his grandmother who was frail and unwell, but he stopped the visits as soon as she passed away. Gemma frequently visited her daughter Yvonne who was being cared by Gemma's mother in China between 2008-2011– an arrangement purely based on financial concerns. Another example can be seen

in the family of Monica and her husband Jamie, who has connections to more than two places. Born and raised in Hong Kong, educated in Australia, Jamie's parents have a family business in the Solomon Islands where he spent a few years looking after the business until he married. Hong Kong, however, is the place he travels to often, either to visit aging relatives or to get Chinese artefacts that he admires. His transnational network sees multiple connections that have evolved over time.

In general, it was found that families have paid less frequent visits to their homelands than when they first migrated 15-20 years ago. Nevertheless, this does not mean their connection to the place and/or the people has in any way diminished. Technological advances have created a space in which geographical distance seems to have disappeared. As observed by Harvey (1990), time and space are now more compressed and the world has become smaller, which has had a significant impact on people's political and social life. Communicating with relatives in the homelands no longer involves a lot of writing and/or days of waiting. Mobile gadgets such as mobile phones and tablets, as well as communication software such as Skype have made communication not only free and instant, but mobile and multimodal. Monica's daughter Gloria, for example, befriended her auntie in Taiwan on Facebook and communicates with her frequently in that virtual space. A cheap international calling plan has enabled Catherine's parents to talk to their friends in China for a long time every day. As well, Wilson's parents and parents-in-law, who are retired scientists, communicate daily with friends and family in China through Chinese social media. Communication is instant and almost barrier-free. Time and space are indeed compressed.

Wilson, who has been living in Australia for over 20 years, has made this observation that summed up some of the important changes of migrants' visit to their homelands.

> In the 1990s, my generation, there weren't that many that go back, to visit or something. They were too busy, working hard and accumulating wealth. And then … their kids are growing up. They became quite well off. Their parents started to age. They started to go back. It's all over the last 10 years or so. There are how many airlines… half a dozen airlines, flying every day – Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou. Every day… *South China airline fly Guangzhou, East China airline fly Shanghai, China airline fly Beijing* (spoken in Mandarin). Then CX (Cathy Pacific), Singapore airlines, all airlines fly there. And now you can just … people just go back *all the time*. (Wilson, 10/7/2012)

Participants' perception of homeland before and after migration seems to be rather consistent, *regardless* of whether it was good or good. Both Catherine and Shannon made positive comments on their homelands, which spread across different aspects, from the place to people and education. Wilson's cry that 'I need to get out of here (China)' seems to be the reason why he is not eager to bring his children to visit the place. Interestingly, while both Wilson and Catherine received tertiary education in China before migration in the same period of time, they made very different comments on the education in China nowadays. Wilson criticises that it as being too competitive and focused on mechanical drilling, Catherine praises the mathematics education in China as the best in the world.

Transnational grandparents and transnational children

Migration is often a family affair rather than an action or decision made by an individual (see K. B. Chan, 1997; Waters, 2008). Rapid changes in the transnational lives of migrant families see myriad diversities in how they make sense of migration experience. Grandparents and children are two groups of people whose social lives have been changed significantly in the migration of families. As significant others to the migrant families, literature in the area of transnationality of grandparents, however, is limited. Nesteruk and Marks' (2009) study on how Eastern European families maintain intergenerational relationships in their host country, the United States, notes the role of grandparents in this process. Grandparents in their study travel from their home country to the U.S. to stay with their children and grandchildren, for as long as their visas allowed. These grandparents play a significant role in childrearing, as well as in the teaching and practising of home language to the grandchildren, conditions congruent with the data collected in this study. The intersection between collectivist practice and values and to a more individualistic society is highlighted by the conflicts between the two.

Visit of grandparents is a prominent feature in the interview data from all six families. Some of them stay for an extensive period of time, mainly to help in caring for the grandchildren. These *transnational grandparents*, while capable and in good health, provide great support to their children (the parents in this research) who often lack the social and emotional support they need in settling in to their new homes in Sydney. Grandparents, however, are not just helping hands but mobile *cultural subjects* who embody Chinese values and practices. With limited

English language skills, these grandparents only communicate with their children and grandchildren in their home language. Some of them, such as Catherine's parents, build social network with local Chinese people during their regular and long stay. They shop and carry out their activities in the Chinese communities only and, as such, reinforce Chinese values and practices by living them. Xu, Connelly, He, and Phillion (2007) also highlights that leaving China as caregivers for their grandchildren in Toronto, grandparents bring certain kind of ties to the homeland. It also reveals that consistent with worldwide demographics, roughly one third of Chinese immigrants become Haigui (sea turtle) returning to the homeland. The impact of China's rise and ever changing political and economic situation worldwide changes expectations, hopes and ambitions and thereby the identity of Chinese newcomers wherever they go.

Grandchildren in these families also benefit from the frequent visits of grandparents. Apart from speaking fluent Mandarin, some of them have readily embraced Chinese culture and practices. Among all, Catherine's family has a special arrangement for the stay of grandparents. Grandparents from both sides of the family stay with them for up to 11 months in alternate years (the maximum period that their visas allow), helping out in the care of the grandchildren. Living with grandparents means a childhood constructed from daily interaction with them - eating the food they cook, listening to the stories they tell, and watching the Chinese TV programs they like. Consequently, Catherine's children are surrounded by the discourse of Chineseness *from China*, which is represented by the language, cultural practices as well as values brought about by the grandparents. Clearly, the presence of grandparents has enriched the children's

cultural repertoire and understanding of their parents' homeland and as such, acceptance of Chinese culture. In the case of Cindy (Catherine's daughter), she has demonstrated her ability to travel the Chinese context and that of Australia, easily and seamlessly.

Of course, it is not only the children who are impacted by this arrangement; the lives of the grandparents are also transformed. Grandparents have become, in essence, transnationals who not only carry out frequent and intense social, cultural and physical border crossing activities, but have dual orientations of here and there (Vertovec, 2004). The ripple effect that I have suggested in the review of literature on transnationalism is evident in their movements between here and there, both physically and virtually. Grandparents' frequent communications with friends and family in China, just like their prolonged absence, has created another kind of dual orientation to their *own* friends and family.

Children are often overlooked in the literature on transnationalism. They are often grouped as part of the family and their voices and perspectives are not given much attention (Gardner, 2012). However, understanding their experience is important because it will help us to understand their perspectives in the future. Their negotiation of identities in two social worlds provides insights into the fluidity and subjective positioning of a diasporic identification. The case of Cindy has provided a good example to illustrate multiple and fluid identifications. Cindy speaks fluent Mandarin and is happy to communicate in this language in Australia and China. She travels to China with her family regularly and enjoys the cultural TV programmes broadcast on Chinese TV channels. As well, she seems at ease with

the people and places she visits in China. She did comment on her experience in China, that “there were lots of people” and “it was chaotic”, as well as “they (people in China) negotiate a lot”, but these comments focussed on the social environment and were presented as observations rather than criticisms. Driving a speedboat on a lake without prior training was not a concern, an activity that “we just do it”. By contrast, Cameron (Wilson’s son), said loud and clear in the family interview that “I don’t like speaking Mandarin!” despite knowing that it was the language his parents preferred to use at home. He also added to his father’s comment about his (father’s) concerns of travelling to China with his young children, by saying “because there are lots of thieves and robbers in China!” – a response not only unexpected in the family interview but not grounded from his experience – he only visited China once when he was seven months old.

Cindy and Cameron’s comments on their Chinese experience, real or imagined, reveal the complexity of the subject positions of these children who have connections to two or more places. Their experiences provide examples of how “transnationalism and identity are concepts that inherently call for juxtaposition” (Vertovec, 2001, p. 573). Cindy’s family encourages her frequent travel to China, and the transnational links it fosters. This, along with her acceptance and ease with Chinese language and culture, facilitates her self-identification as Chinese-Australian and her sense of belonging to both places. By contrast, Cameron’s comments on the ever-present dangers in China and his resistance to speaking Mandarin suggest his lack of shared identity with people in China. These transnational children develop (or refuse to develop) a sense of belonging to the

homeland of their parents. Their experiences and stories tell us how they identify themselves, much more than categories such as Australian Chinese.

Representation of Chineseness outside the core

As a discursive construction, Chineseness is, however, often seen as homogeneous. It suggests timeless, original and ever-lasting traits that are fixed and stable. Manifested in its traditions, rituals, myths as well as everyday practices and interaction, it is believed that Chineseness, at least from the eyes of non-Chinese, tells the narrative of China. Traditionally shaped by the authority of China that is seen as the core in the process (Chun, 1996), it is also believed to tell what is the meaning of *being Chinese*. This assumption of a homogeneity of Chineseness, with its meaning defined by the narrative of China, is problematic in two ways. Firstly, as a discursive construction, Chineseness is constructed and negotiated within webs of power and meanings that are subject to the political and economic power within which it is constituted, its meaning changes in history, both within and outside China. For instance, with the rise of China in the international platform resulting from the rapid growth of economic capital, China and Chineseness have assumed very different meanings from those inherited before the Open Door Policy in China. It no longer means a third world country but a global political and economic power in the 21st century (Ang, 2001).

Secondly, disrupted by the rupture in modern Chinese history, a single definition of Chineseness that originates from China only exits in the imagination. For example, the separation of Taiwan and China in 1949 has resulted in the creation of two Chinas, with two very different sets of political and social discourses.

Suffice to say, different ideologies between the Communist Party and the National Party, as well as the different experiences of people due to the separation, have brought about two national narratives vastly different from each other. Subsequently, each narrative gives a different meaning to Chineseness that is redefined by these two nation states that have inherited a remarkably similar Chinese heritage (Chun, 1996). A wide gap between these two nation states has been created, particularly by Taiwan's "conscious effort to chart a radically different course of development, a deliberate challenge to the socialist experiment on the mainland" (Tu, 1994, p. 9). Likewise, Chineseness is manifested differently in places such Hong Kong, Tibet and Yunnan, due to political and historical reasons. Chineseness is thus a discourse that is ambivalent and ambiguous, and provides only limited meaning to the identity of transnational Chinese migrants.

Reinforced by visual markers such as physical appearance, the perpetuation of a homogenous discourse of Chineseness has significant impacts on migrants' experience in Australia. It is often believed that Chinese migrants bring with them a set of homogenous practices, languages and values to their host country, "migration of Chineseness" as Ang (1998) calls it. Nevertheless, research data have shown that participants do not demonstrate a unified set of pre-given, fixed and universal values and practices. The only commonality seems to be the emphasis of the use of home language due to a practical reason of communication with family members such as grandparents. Their attitudes toward *Chinese* values and practices also vary. Contrary to common belief, factors such as education, length of residency, age and gender do not have predictive values in understanding an individual's attitude towards Chinese values.

Cultural practices are sets of meanings that are socially established norms, which are ritualised and legitimised. They are public acts that we perform. Performativity is a reiteration of practices that constitute and represent the norm which derives power from the repetition. Chinese New Year rituals, for example, are practices that reinforce the norms that precede, constrain and exceed individuals. In repeated performance of norms, through acts, gestures and enactment, our body materialises the norm that, in turn, is legitimised by the performance (Butler, 1990). Reiteration and citation of practices materialise the norms that give power to the practices; and identity is embodied and performed through the citation of practices. There are, however, no pre-existing Chinese norms by which an act might be measured. There is no right or wrong of Chineseness, for it is being constantly negotiated and re-created in the social world of each individual. This is supported by research data that see differences in participants' understanding and attachment to the discourse of Chineseness, which not only challenge the notion of homogeneity, but support my argument that diaspora provides the space for the interrogation of Chineseness. Detaching from focussing on China as the core for understanding the meaning of Chineseness, diaspora decentres and de-emphasises the orientation of China and allows us to examine heterogeneity and hybridity within it.

Speaking Chinese. Doing Chinese

Speaking Chinese (either Mandarin or Cantonese) at home was regarded as very important by all parents in the study. They employed a variety of ways to teach and maintain the use of the home language to ensure that their children, most of whom were born in Australia, are able to communicate with other members in the

extended family. However, despite their efforts, which included sending their children to Chinese language schools, buying teaching resources such as story books and DVDs, as well as taking the children to visit their homeland regularly, these second generation migrants were found to communicate with their parents in English more. Parents seemed to feel helpless and disappointed about this change, although they understood the challenges of practising Chinese language in an English speaking environment.

In some families, rules for speaking English to certain members in the family were non-negotiable. In other cases, the use of home language is need-based. For instance, Cindy speaks *only* Mandarin to her father because he "requested it" (her words); and to her younger brother as his English was not very good at that time. Despite her proficiency in Mandarin, Cindy is not able to read or write the language. Her mother sounded disappointed when she found her children communicate among themselves in English more and more as she believed a diminishing use of Mandarin would result in their inability to appreciate the Chinese culture and "all the great things in China" (her words). On the other hand, Eva emphasised that the use of Chinese language was "to keep our culture". She would pretend she does not understand when her children speak to her in English. As for Monica and her husband Jamie, they also try to speak in Cantonese (Jamie's home language) with Shane but I also noticed that they spoke in a mixture of English and Cantonese to Shane on several occasions. Probably because of this, Shane can express himself in Cantonese if he has too, but in a broken form and with an accent.

Increased use of English seemed to be a common phenomenon for migrant children. Among all children in this study, Cameron showed the greatest resistance to the use of home language, despite his proficiency and parents' desire. In the family interview, in front of his father, Cameron said loudly, "I don't like speaking Mandarin! (spoken in Mandarin)". The use of a Chinese dialect is not only an act; it is a norm or a practice that is performed. The acceptance and refusal to use the language demonstrates how children do belonging differently. For sure, cultural identity cannot be reduced to physical appearance. It is constructed by how individuals interpret and attach to discourses operating in their worlds. What they do and how they act tell us more about their positions in the discourses than their appearances. Cameron, with the appearance of a Chinese person, commits to the local Australian norms. He speaks English only (except to grandparents when they visit), has developed a social circle of children from Anglo backgrounds, and is committed to sports and is a fan of a local Australian Football League (AFL) team. Of course, the physical and social environments he lives in, an *Anglo* suburb that his father Wilson has selected, have shaped him.

Other practices

While the use of home language is quite consistent among the families, their attitude to Chinese practices such as celebrations varied. Though in different ways and on different scales, Chinese New Year is the only Chinese festival that every family celebrates. Eva articulates the reason why it is important to celebrate Chinese festival concisely, "(It is to) *keep the culture*". From this perspective,

cultural practices such as celebrations, rituals and language are representations of the culture.

The rituals of Chinese New Year maintain the discourses they produce and they are performed as expressions of identity. Despite the parents' desire and good intention to enrich their children's cultural repertoire, children show limited enthusiasm for or knowledge of the celebrations. Most of them know what they do in festivals such as Chinese New Year, but none of them seems to understand the reasons or stories behind the rituals. While the adults are engaged in "performativity that consists in a reiteration of norms that precede, constrain, and exceed the performer" (Butler, 1993, p. 234), these children only perform the behaviour as a bounded act. It was observed that involvement in celebration is not a function of variables such as length of residence, education, or language ability. Rather, it is personal attachment to the discourse. For instance, though with very different educational backgrounds and length of residency in Australia, both Gemma and Wilson are not involved in Chinese celebrations.

In one way or another, the Confucian values that underpin Chinese culture for over two thousand years are evident in these families. Education was highly regarded in all families, regardless of the aspirations parents had for their children. Parents were found to make huge sacrifices for a better educational future for their next generation, which included giving up a career, moving to a different city or even another country. The high value placed on education was not only represented in home teaching by parents but in the education practices of after-school coaching, or "shadow education" commonly found in Asia, which often induce substantial

cost for tutoring (Bray, 2009). The high value of education and the belief that tutoring is beneficial to their children's learning, meant that some parents were found sending their children to after-school coaching regardless of their children's desire or need. For instance, Catherine sent her elder daughter Emma to coaching college despite her clear awareness that Emma "hates it". Shannon, while apprehensive of the coaching culture in Sydney, sent Gloria to a tutoring class to prepare for the selective school test when she finally found one with which she was satisfied.

Confucian work ethic of diligence, which underpins the belief that success is a function of effort rather than capacity, is evident in the children's academic and non-academic learning. Monica, for example, devised a schedule for Shane to practise spelling for the 'spelling bee' every night, and he was extremely committed and serious in the preparation, even exceeding the expectations from the teacher. She did not care much about the outcome but sounded disappointed and frustrated when she found Shane not trying his best. Eva was also committed and proactive in teaching Billy and Jack advanced mathematics that was not yet taught in school. She provided them with home tutoring almost every day of the week.

Respect to teachers and elders was highly regarded by all participants. Monica is particularly persistent about this in her teaching of Shane. Among all the participants, she seems to have embodied and performed the cultural practices and values most. She claims that she is not going to compromise this practice in Australia, which is underpinned by the Confucian values of *respect* and *social*

relationship. For Shannon, it was exactly the lack of respect in the classroom that pushed her away from a teaching career. Virtues, such as respect, are often seen as universal but these Confucian values are the cornerstones of moral education in Chinese families, at least from my Chinese eyes. Obedience, a value materialised from the virtue of respect, is highly valued and expected from children to their parents.

Immigration experience in context

Despite the challenges of defining an identity, who we are can be understood by how we interpret, attach to and appropriate with the social, cultural, political and historical discourses surrounding us. The immigration experience of migrants should be read and understood in the historical, political and social contexts in which it happened. The experience of migration is *part* of the *whole* flow of people movement. Their experience constitutes history and history helps us to understand their experience.

Immigration experience is often influenced by factors such as language skills, social network, qualification and expectations. It is also influenced by the social, political and historical context in the host country. Participants in this study migrated to Australia at different times. Different eras see the operation of different social, cultural and political discourses within the society. As a result, their experiences differ vastly from each other. Visible markers such as appearance and accent often guide our perception of others, and, of course, how others perceive us (Alcoff, 2006). Like a lot of migrants in western countries, participants

who moved to Australia in the 1970s reported experience of discrimination and/or racist comments.

The plurality of the meaning of Chineseness can be seen in how it has changed in the past few decades. With the change in political and economic power of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, the meaning of Chineseness has not only changed within but also outside China over time. Chineseness is no longer seen as remote and poor but a representation of global political and economic power (Ang, 2001). This change has far reaching significance for both self-identification and other-identification for the migrants. On one hand, they no longer see themselves as being from a marginalised and inferior state; on the other hand, the stigma of migrants from a third world country no longer dominates. Saying this, the diversity of the meaning of Chineseness, even within the same country, should never be overlooked.

Chineseness outside China is inevitably tied to what it means in China. Nevertheless, it is also constantly being negotiated and shaped by the social, cultural and political discourses in the host country. At the policy level, multicultural policy has marked an era in which resources and effort were devoted to embracing and respecting people from different cultural backgrounds. At the social level, the increase in the number of Asian migrants from the 1970s onwards provides Anglo Australians opportunities to understand and interact with them. Heightened activities by transnational corporations, fuelled by the force of globalisation in the past couple of decades, have rewritten the meaning of

Chineseness for both the Chinese within and outside China, as well as non-Chinese (Ngan & Chan, 2012).

Friendly, but not friends

Like most transnational migrants nowadays, the purpose of migration for participants in this study is to seek improvement in life opportunity, either in terms of study or work, or both. In other words, migration is a tool to seek what they desire, or sometimes, to avoid the undesirable. It involves dissolutions of social networks and ties to the people in their homeland (Skrbiš, 2008). Sometimes it also involves financial sacrifice. However, while making sacrifice is difficult, these people have the capital and resources to consider migration in the first place. In other words, migration is almost impossible without resources and, as such, certain classes of people are found to hold the keys to this modern social movement. Subsequently, the study of global systems of production will not be complete without examining class stratification (Ong, 1999b). In her study of the link of capital to overseas education in the middle class Chinese in Hong Kong, (Waters, 2008) also highlighted the impact of social class in education and migration. While class often determines the capital migrants have, skills that are not necessarily class specific also provide migrants, such as Gemma's husband who is a chef, the opportunity to migrate.

While migration provides an opportunity for individuals to seek a different future, sometimes the decision is for the benefits of the next generation rather than themselves. Monica's parents, for example, gave up a promising business future and status to migrate to Australia in the 1970s with the intention to live closer to a

Chinese community. Similarly, Gemma and her husband, who were initially reluctant to leave their family and stable jobs in China, accepted the job offer to work in Sydney for a better education future for their children.

The immigration experience of participants was, in general, positive. Monica is the only participant who has reported discrimination, and this happened around the 1970s and 1980s. From the experience of Wilson, Catherine, Eva and Shannon who migrated to Australia in the 1990s, discrimination did not seem to cause troubles at the social level and they all agreed that Anglo Australians were friendly and helpful. However, both Shannon and Catherine have experienced *institutional discrimination* at work. Shannon's unsuccessful battle with both the education authority and the university has resulted in her change of career. In her words, "I was rejected by the system at one stage". She is now self-employed as a financial planner. She shared her experience of the challenges some migrants face.

> The government system here is like … they put the threshold so high that migrants or new people come to this country find it very difficult to ... Many people give up eventually, to participate in the mainstream society, right … you really need to have the determination. (Shannon, 26/3/2012)

On the other hand, with the appropriate qualification and determination, Catherine's experience of starting a career in Australia was more straightforward. She has worked as an IT manager in a couple of big corporate companies. Her frustration, however, was the glass ceiling that prevented the promotion that she wanted. She attributed this to her lack of language and presentation skills expected of a higher position. On the other hand, as a new migrant who came to Sydney in

2008, Gemma had only positive words to say about her immigration experience. To Gemma, both Chinese and non-Chinese people were very friendly, helpful and approachable.

Although not everyone has developed connections with Anglo-Australians, all participants agreed that Anglo-Australians are friendly and helpful. Shannon's observation has provided some insights into the situation. While acknowledging that different cultural groups live rather harmoniously in Australia, she said,

> Well Australia's multiculturalism is a superficial thing because each individual ethnic group just live in their own little circle and the way … the way they work in their country. They don't participate in the main society and white Australians in the main society have no interests in them… they are just individual groups living in the same country. There is no interaction. When there is no interaction there is no understanding. (Shannon, 26/3/2012)

Shannon's comment suggests that Australian multiculturalism which emphasises tolerance and harmony is constructed within the discourse of non-interference, that is, while living harmoniously with each other, mainstream Australians (as she called them) are not interested to know more about other ethnic groups. In other words, they are "living-apart-together", rather than "togetherness-in-difference" (Ang, 2001, p. 14). Central to the idea of multiculturalism is the recognition of different racial and ethnic groups living in a particular nation state in which their own distinct cultures are recognised. While the idea is built on the virtue of respect, it assumes cultures are distinct and static. It also overlooks the dynamics and challenges that occur in the interaction between different groups (Ang, 2001).

It was precisely this recognition and appreciation of the Anglo-Australian culture as a distinct culture, which encouraged my participants to comment that Anglo-Australians were friendly.

Among all participants, Wilson, who believed culture was non-existent and that differences in practice were due to personal choice rather than cultural influence, appeared to be the only one who practised "togetherness-in-difference". For him, cultural boundaries were not only porous but non-existent. It is this dismissal of culture that frees him from the boundary of Chineseness. His connection to the local people and his refusal to get involved in the Chinese community tell a narrative of identity not quite the same as those of other participants.

Of course, the membership in a football club or being active members in the school community does not render Wilson and his family the sense of belonging to the groups. Rather, it is the feeling of recognition and acceptance that they are an integral part of the community which is crucial in the building of belonging (Antonsich, 2010). Belonging, in essence, is the personal and intimate feeling of at home (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). One's sense of belonging is built in his/her connections to social groups in everyday life. These connections and experiences, told as stories, are written as narratives in this thesis, which speak to us about where they belong.

Connecting to belong

As first generation migrants, participants in this study share a lot in common with each other as well as people in the Chinese community in Sydney. However, commonality of background does not mean consistent and predictable connections

with others. Rather, connections were found to be varied both among themselves and in different settings. The boundary-maintenance that encouraged the development and maintenance of close social ties (Brubaker, 2005; Tölölyan, 1996) was, geographically, manifested in the community in which they lived and socially in the people who they were connected to.

Examining participants' connections and senses of belonging to the group provide examples and insights into the multiplicity and instability of identities. Using the analytical tools of *commonality*, *connectedness* and *groupness* (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000), a comparison can be drawn between Wilson, Catherine and Monica, in terms of their connections and sense of belonging to the Chinese community. Coming from a Chinese background, they share *commonality* of language and practices with other Chinese migrants in Sydney. Their *connectedness*, or relational ties, linked them to other Chinese people through friendship groups or institutional membership such as school and community language school. Categorical commonality and relational connectedness, however, do not engender groupness, or a sense of belonging which is emotion-laden (Antonsich, 2010; Skrbiš, 2008). Hage (2005) suggests that belonging denotes familiarity, community, security and possibility is probably a close description of participants' sense of belonging to other Chinese migrants, which is captured nicely by this remark made by Monica,

> I *feel closer* to Chinese (people). I will greet them naturally, unless that person did something bad to me … Chinese to Chinese … I

> don't want to be mean or discriminative. I am friends to many cultures but I feel a little closer to home … (Monica, 12/5/2012)

Similarly, Catherine, who described her practice as "I do everything [the] Chinese way", preferred to include only Chinese people into her social circle. She had noticed that this preference was not due to any difference in what her Anglo colleagues did, but rather the familiarity and security that her Chinese friends provided. Wilson, on the other hand, developed a sense of belonging to Anglo-Australians, as seen in his commitment to and participation in the local football club and friendship groups. In essence, while commonalities are inheritably related to history, *connectedness* and *groupness* are elements of identity related to the current context.

Education and mathematics

Chinese parents are often found to place high value in education and great emphasis on the academic achievements of their children (D. Wang, 2004). They assume great responsibility to their children's education and are ready to sacrifice their own interests for their children's education (Lam et al., 2002). As well, it is said that they believe that failure in education is attributed to their children's lack of effort, while success comes from effort and diligence, a characteristic prevalent in CHC learners (Wong, 2004).

These characteristics are reflected in how Chinese students perceived parental influence in their studies. Cao et al. (2006) note that students in China and Chinese speaking students in Australia demonstrate a higher level of perceived parental

influence than English speaking students in Australia, mainly in the dimension of parental *encouragement* and parental *expectation*.

Education is highly valued within families of Chinese heritage. This significance can be traced back to the ancient Chinese social class structure of 士農工商 (scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants) (Barbieri-Low, 2007; 許淑婷, 2008). This structure categorises people in terms of occupation, in which the first tier in the social hierarchy was that of scholars. Unless people were born into this tier, the only route to get there was through education, a Confucian value underpinned the practices of Chinese students and parents for more than 2500 years. From Imperial examination in the ancient dynasty to the National College Entrance Examination nowadays (commonly known as *Gaokao* (高考), examination is considered to be the way to identify the "cream of the crop". It has always been extremely competitive, which often involving years of study and support from the families in terms of finance and sharing of family responsibilities. This deeply rooted cultural value, coupled with the perception of severe competition in both schools and workplaces, propels parents to prepare their children as much as they can for the future challenge.

High expectations, together with the belief that success is attributed to effort and diligence, may provide some insights into Chinese parents' consistent support to their children's education through out-of-school tutoring (widely known as shadow education) that is now expanding in many parts of the world, particularly in East Asia (Bray & Lykins, 2012). Shadow education mainly aims to improve students' performance in school and on standardised examinations (Zhan, Bray,

Wang, Lykins, & Kwo, 2013). Mathematics and English are the two main subjects taught in tutoring college, not only because they are important in students' schooling in the long term, but they are measureable subjects that are assessed in school and through standardised tests such as NAPLAN and the HSC in Australia. There is evidence to show that private tutoring has a positive impact on students' academic performance. For example, Liu's (2012) study reveals that there is a significant positive effect of tutoring on mathematics performance in high school students in Taiwan, although the positive effect diminishes with the increase in the hours of tutoring. Other studies also show positive but small effects of tutoring on academic performance (for example, Kang, 2009; Sohn, Lee, Jang, & Kim, 2010).

Attending tutoring college is a common practice for students in Asia. For example, 90% of elementary students in the Republic of Korea receive some sort of tutoring; whereas in Hong Kong, about 85% of senior secondary students do (Bray & Lykins, 2012). Subsequently, many high school students in Hong Kong consider tutoring "a necessary and a normal part of life" (Zhan et al., 2013, p. 506). As the "shadow education" has greatly expanded in recent decades, its effectiveness has also drawn a lot of research attention, for example, Dang (2008) in Vietnam, Zhang (2013) in China, Zhan et al. (2013) in Hong Kong, Bregvadze (2012) in Georgia, America, and Davies and Aurini (2006) in Canada. While empirical data are not available in Australia, anecdotal evidence has suggested it is a common practice for students from Asian backgrounds to attend private tutoring colleges, which are readily seen in communities with high Asian population, at some point in their schooling.

Superior mathematics performance of students in East Asian countries is well documented. In terms of attitudes towards mathematics, despite their outstanding performance in TIMSS, students from CHC countries were found to display negative attitudes towards and attach less importance to mathematics. They lacked confidence in doing mathematics and their self-concept in mathematics was lower than the international average (Leung, 2002). These attitudinal features seem to be contradictory to their performance, and, together with the common practice of private tutoring, raise the question of the role that tutoring can play in their mathematics achievement.

It is not within the scope of this study to investigate the effectiveness of tutoring or how it contributes to the mathematics performance of Chinese students in school or international assessment tests. Research data, nevertheless, have shown that private tutoring is a practice widely acknowledged and practised among the families. As such, it is necessary to examine families' attitudes to education and mathematics and discuss their perceptions of private tutoring in their children's education.

Attitudes to mathematics

Congruent to the report on Chinese students' attitudes on mathematics (Leung, 2002), and despite their excellent performances in comparison to others in their cohort, children in this study did not demonstrate particular interest in mathematics. None of them claimed mathematics as their favourite subject. Saying this, none of them complained about mathematics or commented negatively on it

either. Mathematics seemed to be *just* a subject in school, which they managed well.

Interestingly, parents also did not attach particular importance to mathematics. It was found that, in general, parents adopted a pragmatic view on mathematics learning and they believed mathematics was only important in two aspects. Firstly, it was important in daily activities such as shopping. Shannon, Gemma, Eva and Monica shared their personal experience in how mathematics operates in everyday life. Shannon concluded that it was crucially important to "get the fundamentals" right in primary education, by which she meant basic computation. She argued that other aspects of mathematics such as algebra were not important in life. Secondly, parents believed that mathematics is important when their children aspired to pursue science-related subjects. For instance, Catherine insisted her elder daughter Emma obtain tutoring mainly because Emma wanted to study engineering at university.

Another common opinion shared among parents was their views on mathematics education in Australia. Most of them (five out of six families) criticised that mathematics curriculum in Australia was too easy and too simple. They based this opinion on their own experience in the past and their knowledge of the syllabus used in their home country now, often through frequent contacts with friends and family there. For example, based on her own experience as a teacher in Taiwan before and the information provided by her sister who was a school teacher, Shannon believed that the mathematics curriculum in Taiwan was much more advanced than that in both Australia and mainland China. She attributed the

mistakes that Anglo-Australian workers made to what they were not taught or failed to learn in school. Catherine, on the other hand, criticised the curriculum in Australia as shallow, since it failed to teach children *real* mathematics. She drew a collective view that she perceived from her social group by saying "every time a group of Chinese parents sit together we start to complain - how horrible is school teaching maths". Gemma made an observation on what her daughter learned in Year 1 in Sydney and concluded that her daughter already learned the content when she attended childcare in China. Wilson and Helen were the only parents who disagreed with the view that the Australian curriculum was simple. They believed that the primary curriculum in Australia was appropriate and compared to its equivalent subjects in China, mathematics in HSC was more advanced.

Another common view about mathematics learning across the families was that it was not a difficult subject, a view based on their own experience of learning mathematics in their homeland. In general, parents see mathematics as a skill that can be improved through practice. Helen (Wilson's wife) made a clear comment on mathematics which provided some insights into Chinese parents' views on mathematics. She claimed that mathematics was easy because it was a technical subject in which students could be *"trained"* (her word). Wilson also agreed with this view and he added that, "with maths, right is right, wrong is wrong". For Wilson, subjects such as art, are "subjective" and as such a "risky" subject to do in school. Thus, mathematics is both easy and safe.

The view that mathematics is a *skill* that can be improved through "training" is significant in understanding how parents perceive mathematics learning and

subsequently, how they support their children. Under this view, mathematics performance is not a function of natural talent but rather of persistent and ongoing practice. As such, parents channel their resources to finding avenues to support mathematics learning, which include home teaching by themselves, and sending their children to private tutoring college. Four out of six children in this study had received some kind of tutoring during the 12 months prior to the interviews were conducted. The other two, Shane and Cameron, received support from parents at home.

Mathematics in education

Education was highly regarded by all families; its significance was reflected in the plan and strategies employed to achieve education goals. Selective schools are highly regarded among parents and their peers from Chinese backgrounds in Sydney, due to their academic focus and performance in the HSC. Hence, not surprisingly, the entrance test for selective schools is highly competitive. Among all six children, three of them were in Year 6 at the time of the interview, and all of them received tutoring to prepare for the selective school test. In families with younger children, not only did parents monitor their children's work and progress closely, they were also proactive in providing support. For instance, Gemma sent Yvonne, who was in Year 1, to tutoring college because she saw a regression in Yvonne's mathematics performance in class. Similarly, Monica communicated with the teacher regularly to make sure Shane was "on par" with her classmates. She told Shane that he would have to go to private tutoring if he showed signs of not meeting her expectations.

All parents were confident that they could teach their children mathematics at home, although some of them also provided their children with private tutoring that was widely accepted and had become a norm in the Chinese community. Eva's experience with Chinese parents in the school, in which she was approached and finally convinced that her children would be disadvantaged if they did not get tutoring, showed how it had become a powerful discourse. However, it is important to point out that sending their children to tutoring in mathematics did not mean parents believe it is of particular importance. Rather, it is education that is highly regarded. Since mathematics is one of the subjects assessed in entrance tests for OC and selective schools, a good scores in mathematics often means better and more education opportunities in the future. Accordingly, private tutoring, which aims to improve school results and performance on standardised tests (Zhan et al., 2013), is a *tool* to reach their children's education goals. For instance, Shannon only sent Gloria to private tutoring to prepare her for the selective school test. Emma (Catherine's daughter) was "forced" to get tutoring because her mathematics performance in school did not meet Catherine's expectation.

In short, both children and parents did not see mathematics *per se* as a particularly important subject. Its importance lay in the fact that it is a subject assessed in the entrance test for OC, selective school, as well as NAPLAN. Mathematics contributes to the final scores of these tests that might have determining influence to their children's education future. This finding is supported by (Lam et al., 2002)'s study on parental beliefs and attitudes in education, in which parents strongly agree that mathematics is significant to their children's climbing up the

education and social ladder, and that success is attributed to effort and perseverance.

New themes

New themes emerged from multiple readings of the research data and revision of the analysis. As mentioned earlier, parents across all families view mathematics as a *skill* that can be improved or *trained*, rather than an innate ability. This view is crucial in the nature of parental support. As a skill, mathematics can be improved with practice and this is exactly what parents provide their children with – practice through teaching by themselves and/or at tutoring college. In other words, it is effort rather than innate mathematical capacity that determines mathematics performance. Associated with this view is parents' confidence and attitude that mathematics was a subject that could be managed rather than something to be anxious about. Performance outcomes could also be improved through external help.

Analysis also revealed parents' perception of a strong sense of *competition* within school, in higher education as well as the workplace. Their investment in their children's education, as seen in their time and money spent in private tutoring and additional learning materials, appeared to be a response to this perception of competition. This response should be understood in relation to the collective culture in China that most parents believe it is their responsibility to support their children's education. As such, we see Eve teaching her child Year 10 mathematics when he was in Year 6 because she wanted to prepare him the best she could for high school. As well, we see Catherine closely monitor the mathematics

performance of, her daughter Emma's mathematics performance, who wanted to study engineering but did not get into the advanced mathematics class in her school. Behind the support, regardless of the child's will, was the hope of sharpening their skills and giving them a competitive edge over others. Interestingly Catherine's comment on her classmates in the Master Degree in Singapore also revealed her perception of a competitive education environment, "when it came to applying maths in research, you can't *beat* them". Here, "them" refers to her classmates who did their first degrees in mathematics. Wilson, who strongly criticised both the practice of private tutoring and mathematics education in China, however, did admit that mathematics skills would help someone to stand out. He shared this view in the interview, "… it's the mathematical modelling to extract the natural laws from observation. And I think if you are good at maths you stand out because most can't do maths. Even the good scientists can't do maths". Hence, parents seemed to believe that competence in mathematics positioned a student and an employee better in a competitive environment.

Finally, another theme that is closely related to the discussion above is the emphasis on *work ethic*, which is as highly regarded as the outcome of their children's learning. They expected their children to take initiative and be responsible in their work. For example, Monica was more concerned about Shane's attitude in the preparation for the 'spelling bee' than the final outcome. Gemma and Eva were pleased when their children showed initiative and commitment in their learning and disappointed when they were not serious about their work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the significant features of the themes that underpin this study. Drawing on the experiences of all the families, the discussion compared and contrasted the diverse experience and listened *for* the meaning behind their stories. It can be seen that although they all share a Chinese heritage and migrated to Australia in the past couple of decades, their experiences, as well as their perception of who they are in Australia, varied.

Chapter 7 THE END

Introduction

This inquiry has come to an end that, however, is also the beginning of a new direction, understanding, and perspective for further exploring this topic. This final chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study. This is followed by recommendations drawn from what has been discovered in the discussion of the data.

Cultural identity and mathematics learning

Social and political changes in China in the past few decades have changed the experiences of Chinese people around the world. Together with the shifts in global economic and political power, the identity of Chinese people is constantly being negotiated. Cultural identities of Chinese families living overseas are further complicated by the multiple and frequent connections with more than one social world. The notion of Chineseness is not only ambiguous but it limits our understanding of the experiences of Chinese migrants by the homogeneity that it assumes. The assumption of a homogenous Chinese community dismisses the social, cultural and political discourses operating in the host country. The assumption also creates stereotypes and expectations. Among the views of Chinese parents and their children, the one that sees Chinese students as high achievers, in particular in mathematics, is regularly publicised and reinforced in the media. Family narratives in this study not only challenge the homogeneity of Chineseness, they also revealed that students' outstanding performance in mathematics is more

or less an outcome of the effort they spend in their studies, a value underpinned by Confucian teaching.

Parents in this study grew up in places in which social relations and cultural practices were underpinned by Confucian values. Interview data showed that they have high regard for education, a discourse pertinent in Confucian teaching. Confucian values of diligence, perseverance and obedience are also evident in their teaching to their children. In a collective culture that emphasises interdependence rather than independence, the relationship between parents and children is reciprocal in the sense that parents take up the responsibility to create opportunities for their children to succeed; in return, children strive to succeed in order to honour their family. Education, often seen as *the* way for upward social mobility, becomes the area in which families invest in order to get a promising future. Together, children and parents work towards this common goal.

Mathematics is a tool to achieve this common goal. It is a significant tool because of its position in education systems that emphasise the skills of literacy and numeracy. In NSW, as a subject that is tested in the entrance test for OC and the selective high school test, as well as NAPLAN, mathematics has become an education discourse that has generated enormous power. In terms of their children's future career, parents in this study regard mathematics as an important skill if their children have the aspiration to pursue a science-related career. This perception contributes significantly to how they support their children's mathematics learning. The general consensus that mathematics is a skill that can be *trained* creates the view that it is a subject that can be managed. As a result of this pragmatic approach, private tutoring and teaching by parents is a common and

acceptable practice within the participating families. Children do not hold a negative attitude about mathematics and tutoring is a means to get additional support.

The belief that mathematics is a skill that can be improved through practice, and that with perseverance and hard work everyone is educable, has resulted in family's investment of time and money in private tutoring. In other words, to a large extent, it is the influence of Confucian teaching, rather than the identity of being Chinese, that contributes to their outstanding performance in mathematics.

Implications and Recommendations

Outstanding performance by *Chinese* students in mathematics has drawn a lot of public and research attention that is interested in understanding why this is so and what lessons can be learned. The Australian federal government's initiative of a Roundtable in 2012 should also be understood against the backdrop that in recent years education expenditure has been significantly increased, yet student performance in mathematics has fallen (Jensen et al., 2012). Government operating expenses on primary and secondary education increased from $30,496m in 2007-2008, to $40,625m in 2012-2013 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2014) an increase of 33% in only five years.

Despite the substantial increase in government expenditure, 26with greater rises in private sector funding, than public, over the years (Dowling, 2007), Australian students' performance in international assessment such as TIMSS has not improved in the past decade. Australia has participated in TIMSS since its inception in1995 and Australian students' performances (in 2003, 2007 and 2011)

are close to the TIMSS average (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), nd.). Over the years, there was no significant difference in Australian students' performance in mathematics although there was fluctuation (Thomson et al., 2012). But since a number of countries have significantly improved, Australia's ranking in the assessment has dropped. The then Education minister Peter Garrett, commented on Australia's performance in TIMSS by stating that the "results are a wake-up call for the Australian education community, parents and governments" (Dodd & Mather, 2012). Media responses have also sketched a gloomy picture of Australian students' mathematics performance: "Australian students get C on global report card" (Dodd & Mather, 2012).

The decline in student performance has presented itself as an issue worth the urgent attention of educators and policy makers, as well as parents. It is found that confidence in learning mathematics has the strongest influence on mathematics achievement (Thomson & Fleming, 2004). Attitude towards mathematics starts to develop early in a student's life, which impacts on their view of mathematics into adulthood. The fact that most adults avoid mathematics or even hate it can often be traced back to their school experience (Boaler, 2010).

Tackle maths anxiety on parents

Mathematics is not value-free and adults' own values impact on children's when it comes to mathematics learning. In the case of this study, while there was no consensus in parents' attitudes towards mathematics coaching as well as the significance of mathematics, it was found that none of them showed anxiety towards mathematics. While limited research has examined the impact of parents'

negative beliefs and anxiety on their children's mathematics learning, a large volume of studies has shown that *teachers'* attitude towards mathematics has a significant impact on their confidence and pedagogical approach in teaching the subject (for example, Beilock, Gunderson, Ramirez, & Levine, 2010; Gresham, 2007; Swars, Daane, & Giesen, 2006). Bursal and Paznokas (2006) point out that *maths anxiety* is seen as a construct that stems from both cognitive and affective roots. Primary school students are found to adopt avoidance strategies in mathematics classrooms in which teachers provide little cognitive support and have high demand for correctness, and that students hold responsibilities for their lack of understanding (Turner et al., 2002). This might explain why most pre-service teachers report that their negative beliefs and anxiety towards mathematics emerged in primary school (Uusimaki & Nason, 2004). Teacher's anxiety in mathematics, unfortunately, was found to be transferred to their students (Wood, 1988).

Although research on parents' mathematics anxiety is very limited, some studies have pointed out that one's mathematics anxiety often results from parents' and teachers' attitudes towards mathematics (for example, Fiore, 1999). Tackling parents' anxiety or negative attitudes towards mathematics is crucial in children's mathematics learning as parents' anxiety could limit the opportunities for children to seek support, and cause premature closure in their children's exploration of mathematics, which consequently may limit educational and career options (Ashcraft, 2002). They could also pass the anxiety to their children, without even realising it.

Mathematics anxiety is a learnt dislike (Uusimaki & Nason, 2004). As such, parents are advised to be sensitive in how they communicate with their children about their perception of mathematics. Words that have negative connotations could create negative images about mathematics. Perhaps parents can apply the wonderful support that they always provide their children in other learning such as sports – to 'give it a go'.

Setting aside the criticism of early coaching and repetitive drilling, perhaps what parents from other cultural backgrounds can learn from their Chinese counterparts is their 'no fear' attitude on mathematics. Like other skills such as music and sports, most children are able to acquire the skills if they are provided with the support needed in the journey. This is not to say everyone will be a mathematician, but external factors such as parents' positive attitudes, as seen in that of the participants, can encourage the development of the skill. This is not to put the blame on parents as some of them also acquired mathematics anxiety in school. The cycle of mathematics anxiety, however, needs to be addressed as children today may become teachers and parents in the future. While this anxiety is learnt, it can be also be unlearnt and relearn.

Every child can be good at mathematics

Challenging taken-for-granted assumptions is often seen as a way to do justice to the group being labelled or targeted. Challenging the assumption that Chinese students are good at mathematics, however, benefits *both* Chinese and non-Chinese students. The impact of this assumption is that it creates expectations on *all* Chinese students to perform well in mathematics, which dismisses individuality and personal

preferences. The stereotype creates pressure for students who do not have the desire to do mathematics (See, for example, B. Chang and Au's (2008) article titled 'You're Asian, How Could You Fail Math?'). Labelling children as possessing talent in mathematics limits their opportunities and space to explore other aspects in their learning such as sports and art. This stereotype has the potential to predetermine the future of some students even before they have the opportunity to explore their talents.

Likewise, the assumption that students from a Chinese (or Asian) background *are* better in mathematics has created a category of 'others' that is defined by their relatively poor performance in mathematics. This 'low achievers' identity is constructed through the difference between Asian and non-Asian students, which can limit their opportunities to achieve to their full potential in mathematics. Understanding that Chinese students' relatively high performance is not due to their ethnicity *per se* but the values of hard work and the perception that mathematics is a skill that can be improved through practice, students from other cultural backgrounds should be encouraged to challenge themselves. In discussing how America should find its own resource to be great, Stevenson and Stigler (1992) insightfully pointed out, "[B]but if we perpetuate biased, stereotyped views of ourselves as well as of others, we won't accomplish this" (p. 20). Bias and stereotypes indeed restrict both others and ourselves. We identify through differences. In perceiving Chinese students as good at mathematics, we impute that students of other cultural backgrounds are not good at it, or they are good at other subjects only. In reinforcing the image of the "tiger mom" for Chinese parents, we

create an image of relaxed parenting for Anglo-Australian parents. In emphasising that Chinese parents have high expectations and demanding at home, we define the Australian classroom as fun and relaxing. Debunking the myth that Chinese students *are* good at mathematics provides other students with the opportunities to explore their abilities in it.

The belief that every child can be good at mathematics has significant pedagogical implications for teachers. Teachers should reflect on their own attitudes, and possibly assumptions on Asian students' mathematics abilities, and provide the opportunities for *all* students to challenge themselves in terms of mathematics.

Study of transnational grandparents

Grandparents' worlds have been transformed by transnational movement. Unlike their counterparts, transnational grandparents live in two social worlds that are very different from each other. They embody Chinese cultural values and bring with them practices and language to the host country. On one hand, they change the cultural discourse in the host country, and on the other hand, they are changed by the local discourses. Their presence in one world means absence in the other. Despite space being more compressed by advancement in technology, their absence is still causing changes not just to themselves but others in their homeland. Understanding grandparents' transnational lives is equally important to the study of transnationalism and globalisation. Future studies can investigate their social lives in both places, so as to gain insights into the ripple effects that they have caused to a wider circle. The intersection between collectivist culture to that of individualist as seen in the western countries should also be explored.

Methodological suggestions

Globalisation dissolves national boundaries, facilitating movements of resources and people. Epistemologically, it challenges the idea that the world is a well-bound system. Practically, it creates opportunities for families to move from one place to another through work or study. Large-scale movement creates new social and cultural discourses that constitute each individual's identity. Examining the experience of families of Chinese backgrounds has allowed me to gain an understanding of how these social and cultural discourses operate within both host country and home country. The sheer mass of migration of people from mainland China in the past two decades signifies a phase of transnationalism that flows from the east to the rest of the world. By putting families at the centre stage we are not only giving them the voice to tell us their experience – the challenges, joy and fear of being transnationals, but also providing social researchers with a new perspective to understand the process and impact of globalisation from below. Family experiences are mirrors that reflect the forces of globalisation on individuals and families. They crystallise discourses and illuminate the study of globalisation from within.

I am aware that the methodological decision to employ narrative inquiry to understand the research data risks the criticism that the study may lack objectivity and generalisability. Nevertheless, the experience of developing and presenting family narratives has confirmed the strength of narratives in piecing together complex the social experiences of the participants. Narrative explains context and display experience for readers to draw conclusions for themselves. It is

recommended that future research could adopt methods such as narrative inquiry portraiture or life history to get a holistic understanding of meaning.

The opportunity for children to share their experience in this study highlights children's perceptive ability and capacity to understand the influence of changes beyond their immediate environment. Born into a world where transnational movement is common, they have developed the understanding and sensitivity of their locations in a globalised world. Their social world is not defined by a place, but two or more places and the interactions between them.

Another methodological suggestion is the use of longitudinal study on children. Longitudinal studies of children's experience over a number of years would give researchers the opportunity to examine the changes that children go through, and the decisions they make in the context of those changes. Understanding their experiences over a long period of time is vital as their experiences reflect the impact of globalisation on individuals. For instance, the decisions that Cameron, Cindy and Shane will make in relation to future study and work may provide us with insights into how they connect to both Australia and where they (or their parents) came from. Diverse experience may make generalisation difficult but studying them together we could identify trends and patterns. Longitudinal study would give researchers a sense of children's future orientation and trajectory, to provide us with insights into the decisions they will make in the future.

Leaving the inquiry

By the time this chapter was almost finalized, my thoughts on my identity were re-ignited by the pro-democracy protest in Hong Kong. Vertovec (1991) noted that one of the conceptual premises that transnationalism has been grounded upon is that it is a site of political engagement. My attention to Australian news and politics in the past few years has created an assumption (for myself) that I am not related to the political activities in Hong Kong anymore. This obliviousness was awoken by the protest that suddenly appeared to my eyes.

This protest, widely supported by the citizens of Hong Kong, was a voice from the people expressing their desire for direct election of the chief executive in 2017. Starting very peacefully, this protest was soon suppressed by the police with the use of pepper spray. Watching the news in Sydney one morning, my heart ached. The images of the faces and places, saturated with the familiar pollution and congestion, as well as the humidity and heat, connected me instantly to what was happening there. I was surprised by how distressed I was, even though I did not know any of the people personally. The information and voices that flooded in through the news reports, social media, and instant messages took me back to the place of my birth, and all of a sudden I found myself standing right there in the group.

I have never felt so close to Hong Kong before. While I have always acknowledged my history, the connections that I have developed in Sydney in the past few years have taken centre stage in my life. This protest has activated my sense of transnational belonging and reminded me of my connections to this place in which I grew up.

This rupture in history further complicates the identities of people in Hong Kong, a place that inherited 150 years of British rule. It continues to impact on whom I identify myself with and how I see my connection to the people in Hong Kong.

Lastly…

My reflexivity, or a heightened awareness of self (Elliott, 2005), has brought about a series of reflexive writings in the research process, such as the one above. These writings are evidence of both my intellectual growth and reflexive awareness of the changes within me. They document my responses in the multiple readings of the transcripts, and later the family narratives in different stages of the analysis process. Reflexive writings have enabled me to see my progressive understanding of the narratives and the self.

This study, at its core, is to challenge stereotypes of Chineseness, using Chinese student's mathematics learning in Sydney as a lens in the investigation process. I understand my background has positioned me in a unique space to make sense of the research data and it is my desire to provide opportunities for the voice of Chinese families, which is often silenced, to be heard. What I had not expected was how much I have changed in the research process. Changes are not only caused by what life has thrown at me, or the shifting ground, which is partly created by the change in government policy towards higher education, that I am standing on. They are brought about by what I have reflected upon and they happened internally, quietly and almost invisibly within me. Research often focuses on a contribution to the existing knowledge, or the impact of a study on the participants, while that to the researcher is not often mentioned. Not only have I realised that the connection between the

researched, the researcher and the research is inseparable, but the changes brought about by this study are long-lasting. I have gained understanding of the participants, the topic as well as myself, in particular, the Chineseness that I embody, which I have once overlooked if not completely dismissed. I also learned about the history of China, the Chinese diaspora, and more profoundly, who I am in this time of the history.

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Appendix A

Indicative interview topics

Homeland

Are you connected/linked to your homeland?] In what ways?

Heritage

What Chinese heritage have you kept? How has this been done?

What's your expectation on your children in terms of speaking and understanding Chinese language? And maintaining cultural practices? E.g. Attending end of the year (Chinese New Year) dinner, giving and receiving red packets in CNY, adopt the Chinese style in their wedding etc.

Immigration experience

What was the most challenging aspect in your immigration experience?

Chineseness

What's your understanding of your 'Chineseness' (being a Chinese)

Is this understanding shared by most of your friends? If no, what are their views?

Cultural identity

What do you consider your cultural identity to be?

What circumstances make you feel/aware that you are Chinese/Australia?

Were there times when you have not wanted to be identified as a Chinese?

Expectations for child's school performance

What do you want him/her do after school (year 12)?

What does s/he want to do?

Family educational background

(Only for participants who have studied at university)

Whose choice was it for you to study this course?

How did you find studying this course?

What was your experience like studying at University?

(For participants who did not go to university)

How did you find going to school in your homeland? (In terms of teacher's support, family support, school work and friendship)

What was/were your favourite subject(s)?

Mathematics

What are your expectations on your child in terms of doing maths?

(Based on their response on Q.25, 26 in the questionnaire, follow up questions of the support they provided will be asked)

Appendix B

Sample journal diary

This was the original copy provided by Monica (The Tran). In order to maintain its originality, this journal diary had not been edited. Pseudonyms were used.

Shane's Journal 16/07-22/07/12

Date	Time	Activity	
16-Jul	**3.30-5.30pm**	Shopping with his Dad	
	8.30-9.00pm	Homework	No homework this week due to first week back to school.
	8.30-9.00pm	Spelling Bee	Sure Mum, no problem can do that after dinner but then something else came up watching TV and was distracted a little, gave me some attitude and said they don't need to study for the words. I insist on going thru with the first 20 words which was quite easy. I have put a timetable in place for him to go thru the 100 words from the Spelling list, I have broken it up into groups of 20 words per day
Tues 17/7	**3.30-6.00pm**	Tim came over for a play with Shane	
	9.00-930pm	Spelling Bee	Mum, yes I have gone thru the words and can we do the spelling Bee revision before bedtime. Shane's idea of studying is reading the words aloud and spelling out the letters when he feels like it. I expected him to go thru the next 20 words earlier so we could just randomly revise all the words before bedtime. Every now and then I would pick a word out of the list and ask him to spell. To my surprise, there were some silly mistakes in the spelling like "believe" to "beleive" and "communal" to "commual" etc. We got into a argument about not taking his spelling Bee seriously and he commented in the argument that if he knew it was this much work, he would have made a couple of mistakes, I did not take that well and was very disappointed that he would

			think like that
Wed 18/7	**3.30-5.00pm**	Shopping with his Dad	
	8.30-9.00pm	Spelling Bee	Managed to spend a bit more time with the list, I wanted him to READ, COVER and write the words four times and he told me the teacher said no need to write, but I insisted so there goes my unhappy child puffing while he writes out the words and memorises. I told him I expect a lot from him and I know he is very capable if only he puts his mind to it, I think he understands, he gave me an example of the two PWPS runners in the cross country and how much training they do. I am tired today so we only revised 50 words
Thurs 19/7	**3.30-5.30pm**	Played with neighbours	
	6.00-7.00pm	Soccer Training	
	9.00-9.30pm	Spelling Bee	We revised our 50 words plus went thru the next 20 words for tomorrow. Told him the words are getting harder and longer now, so please put some time and effort into it. Yes, I know …….. So how many times do you want me to read it (looking annoyed)?? I am ONLY into my 4th day with the spelling Bee, I am exhausted and all nagged out. Jamie has been asking him to write out the words after he comes home from school and that's it, thinking that he can spell it out on random request, well almost correct except there are still silly mistake here and there. I am not HAPPY !!!
Fri 20/7	**3.30-6.00pm**	Shopping with his Dad	
		Spelling Bee	Writes out the next 20 words 4 times (happy I gather coz Mummy is out having dinner with friends) No revision tonight.
Sat 21/7	**8.30-9.00pm**	Spelling Bee	Writes out the next 20 words 4 times and also revised all his words. Not too happy, wondering when is this going to end ……. Throughout the day, a word here and there from the list. Saturday is his activity day starting with soccer in the morning and then a play at his cousin's. More disappointment when he gets the easier words wrong and the harder ones right. I don't know he is doing it on purpose or rushing thru the list so he can do other

			FUN stuffs.
Sun 22/7	**2.00-2.30pm**	Spelling Bee	Writes out the last 10 words 4 times and also revises all his words. Not a happy boy, studying is eating into his playtime …….. NOT FAIR. Same issues as yesterday, not concentrating on list, rushing thru the words and telling me he knows except when I test him, its mostly wrong by a letter here and there eg. "familiar" to "familar" and so on. I spat the dummy and call it a day and just told him to PLAY all he likes, don't worry about school and why don't we just give up now coz we are not going anywhere and if you keep this up, you will be one of those BUMS on the street busking for money. Sebastian came 5th out of 12 and lost out on "FAMILIAR". (Two were Year 4 students). After the Spelling Bee, he told me he should have studied a bit harder and maybe he could have come first or even second …….. If only.

Appendix C

Questionnaire

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Family questionnaire

Code: _____
(For researcher's use)

Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese in Australia

This questionnaire is part of a study looking at how family's identity impact on their children's mathematics performance in school. You might want to discuss some of the questions with your child. Completing this questionnaire should only take about 15 minutes.

There are 3 sections in this questionnaire. In section 1, you will be asked to provide some background information about you and your spouse. Section 2 is about your family's experience in immigration and your child's experience in school. In session 3, you will be asked some questions about your attitudes towards both Chinese and Australian culture.

Name of the school your child/children go to:
_____

Section 1

Yourself

1. Where did you come from (your homeland, eg. China, Hong Kong, Vietnam. Write 'born in Australia' if you were)? _____
2. What is your gender? ☐ male ☐ female
3. What is your age? ☐ 20-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40-50 ☐ 50+
4. What was your highest academic qualification?
   ☐ Primary ☐ high/secondary ☐ Bachelor ☐ Master or above
5. What is your occupation now? _____
6. What was your occupation in your homeland? _____

Your spouse/partner

7. Where did you come from (your homeland)? _____
8. What is your gender? ☐ male ☐ female
9. What is your age? ☐ 20-30 ☐ 30-40 ☐ 40-50 ☐ 50+

10. What was your highest academic qualification?
    ☐ Primary ☐ high/secondary ☐ Bachelor ☐ Master or above
11. What is your occupation now? _____
12. What was your occupation in your homeland? _____

Section 2

13. Which year did your family move to Australia? _____
14. What is your current citizenship status? _____
15. What language/dialect do your family speak at home? _____
16. Which suburb did you live when you first migrated to Australia?
    _____
17. Which suburb are you living in now? _____
18. If you have moved to a different suburb from the one you first resided, why did you move?
    _____
    _____

19. What were the reasons for immigration? (you may choose more than 1 answer)
    - ☐ a. Work/business
    - ☐ b. Your (or your spouse/partner's) education
    - ☐ c. Your children's education
    - ☐ d. Family reunion
    - ☐ e. Better living condition
    - ☐ f. Political reasons (please explain)
      _____
      _____
      _____

20. How would you rank the difficulties of these subjects/skills for your child:

	difficult	*Somewhat difficult*	*Somewhat easy*	*easy*
■ Art	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ English	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ HSIE	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Maths	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Music	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Social	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Sports	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Sci & Tech	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. How would you rank your child's performance in these subjects/skills:

	not good at all	*not very good*	*good*	*outstanding*
■ Art	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ English	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ HSIE	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Maths	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Music	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Social	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Sports	☐	☐	☐	☐
■ Sci & Tech	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. Indicate by number 1-5 (put 1 to the subject he/she likes least, and 5 to the subject he/she likes most), how much does your child like these subjects?
    - ■ Art _____
    - ■ English _____
    - ■ HSIE _____
    - ■ Maths _____
    - ■ Music _____
    - ■ Social _____
    - ■ Sports _____
    - ■ Sci & Tech _____

    Why?

_____

23. How important is it for your child to do well in maths?
    ☐ Not important ☐ Not very important ☐ Neutral ☐ Important ☐ Very important
24. *Besides what he/she is learning in school, which aspect/area of maths would you suggest the school to teach?*

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

    (If you have more than one child studying in primary school, please provide answers for both child 1 and child 2 in question 25-27)
25. In terms of learning maths, is your child getting any support outside school?

Child 1 (Year)	Child 2 (Year)

☐ No ☐ Yes. Please specify. (For example, from you or your spouse, from an older sibling, from coaching college or a private tutor) _____ _____ _____ _____	☐ No ☐ Yes. Please specify. (For example, from you or your spouse, from an older sibling, from coaching college or a private tutor) _____ _____ _____ _____

26. If your child goes to a tutoring class/coaching college or have a private tutor,

Child 1	Child 2
a. At what year (grade) was your child when he/she started going to tutoring class? _____ b. How many hours does he spend each week in tutoring now? _____ c. Where did you get the information of this college/tutor? _____ d. What benefits do you think the coaching college/ tutor are providing to your child? _____ _____	a. At what year (grade) was your child when he/she started going to tutoring class? _____ b. How many hours does he spend each week in tutoring now? _____ c. Where did you get the information of this college/tutor? _____ d. What benefits do you think the coaching college/ tutor are providing to your child? _____ _____

27. In general, how satisfied are you with your children's education?

Child 1				Child 2			
Very unsatisfied	somewhat satisfied	satisfied	very satisfied	Very unsatisfied	somewhat satisfied	satisfied	very satisfied
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

28. Did you see changes in the following areas of life after moving to Australia:

	worse than before	*more or less the same*	*better than before*
a. Work (the nature of your job)	☐	☐	☐
b. Salary	☐	☐	☐
c. Job opportunities (eg. Change of jobs and promotion)	☐	☐	☐
d. Housing (size and quality)	☐	☐	☐
e. Education opportunities for your children	☐	☐	☐
f. Education opportunities for yourself	☐	☐	☐

Section 3 **Items**	**Not at all**	**A little**	**Quite a bit**	**Very much**
29. How much are Chinese values a part of your life?	0	1	2	3
30. How important is it to you to celebrate holidays in the Chinese way?	0	1	2	3
31. How important is it to you to raise your children with Chinese values?	0	1	2	3
32. How comfortable would you be in a group of Chinese who do not speak English?	0	1	2	3
33. How proud are you of being Chinese?	0	1	2	3
34. How much do you enjoy speaking Chinese?	0	1	2	3
35. How much do you enjoy Chinese TV programs?	0	1	2	3
36. How much do you like to eat Chinese food?	0	1	2	3
37. Do you think Chinese are kind and generous?	0	1	2	3

38. How important would it be to you for your children to have Chinese friends?	0	1	2	3
39. How important is it to you to celebrate holidays in the mainstream Australian way?	0	1	2	3
40. How much are mainstream Australian values a part of your life?	0	1	2	3
41. How comfortable would you be in a group of mainstream Australians who don't speak Chinese?	0	1	2	3
42. How important is it to you to raise your children with mainstream Australian values?	0	1	2	3

Items	Not at all	A little	Quite a bit	Very much
43. How proud are you of a mainstream Australian identity?	0	1	2	3
44. Do you think mainstream Australian are kind and generous?	0	1	2	3
45. How much do you enjoy mainstream Australian TV programs?	0	1	2	3
46. How much do you enjoy speaking English?	0	1	2	3
47. How much do you like to eat mainstream Australian food?	0	1	2	3
48. How important would it be to you for your children to have mainstream Australian friends?	0	1	2	3

Adapted from *The modified Cortes, Rogler, and Malgady's bicultural scale, generic-version (Cortes et al.1994)*

Would you like to participate in an interview, for this research, so that you can tell me more about some of the answers you provided above?

☐ **Yes**

Please provide contact details

- **Phone (home or mobile, whichever is more convenient to find you) _____**
- **Email _____**

☐ **No**

Thank you very much for doing this questionnaire.

Appendix D

Connection to homeland Frequency of visit to homeland Perception of homeland (before) Perception of homeland (now) Other ways of connecting to homeland Pre- migration experience (in study) Pre- migration experience (in work)	HL- vs HL- per-b HL- Per -n HL- oc Prem -std Prem-wk	**Codin g**
Immigration experience Context for migration Reasons for migration Interaction/connection with local Chinese Interaction/connection with non Chinese Perception of life in Sydney	Mig-conx Mig –res Int –Ch Int – nCh Mig - per	
Chinese representation Use of Chinese language in Sydney Attitude on using Chinese language ‘Chinese’ practice ‘Chinese’ values attitude on Chinese practice and values	Chl –use Chl –att Ch –pra Ch –vl Ch-pra-att	

Education	
Attitude on education (general)	Edu –att
Own education experience (in homeland)	Edu – exp – HL
Own education experience (in Australia)	Edu – exp-Au
Subject choice (own)	
Subject choice (child)	SubC –own
Aspirations on child	SubC- chn
Parental influence on study	Asp –Chn
Opinion on coaching (general)	Sty-parn-inf
opinion on selective school	Cch- op
opinion on education in Australia	SS – op
	Edu-op-Au
Opinion on education in HL	Edu-op-HL
Child's performance in school	Sch- perf
Maths	
Opinion on maths (general)	
Opinion on maths teaching in Australia	Mth-opn
	Mth-opn- Au
Opinion on maths teaching in homeland	Mth-opn-HL
Expectations on child (in maths)	Mth-exp – Ch
Opinion on maths coaching	Mth-coch-op
Peers' experience in maths coaching	Mth-coch-pr
Supports to child in maths	Mth-sup-ch
Child's performance in maths in school	Mth-chn-perf
Child's response on maths coaching	Mth-cch-ch-resp

Identity Self-identification Other identification Self-understanding Social location Connectedness to Chinese community Connectedness to non-Chinese community Groupness to Chinese Groupness to non-Chinese Commonality to Chinese Commonality to non-Chinese Difference to Chinese Difference to non-Chinese	Iden-sf Iden-oth Und –sf Soc-loc Cont- Ch Cont –nCh Gp-Ch Gp-nCh Com-Ch Com-nCh Diff-Ch Diff-nCh

Also look for (in the transcripts or other data sets):

Repetitions (of words/incidents/topics)

Transitions (pause, sighs, silence)

Metaphors

Use of Chinese expressions/phrases/parables etc in the interview – if it's not conducted in Chinese.

Frequency

Similarities and differences (between cases)

Appendix E

Reflective diary

10/4/2012

I did 2 parent interviews, 2 teacher interviews, an observation and a student interview in the past 2 weeks. I feel I am being 'stirred' by all these interactions with the stakeholders. I feel a bit unsettled emotionally. It's a mixed feeling and I feel excited at times and confused at others. I love this learning experience which I am basically doing all these myself, though David always provides his emotional support.

I know that the experience of people like Shannon and Eva are very different from that of mine. We brought with us very different life artefacts and we meet very different people in the time we have been here. But there are also a lot of similarities in where we came from and where we are now. Apart from speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural heritage, we have experienced the subtlety of the meaning of 'Chinese migrant identity'. We can empathise each other's experience. We may not have the same expectations in life or our children's education, but in a lot of ways we can understand each other. These amazing and inexplicable connections and closeness surprise me – we understand where we are from – that emotional journey which is so personal and complex that I can't express clearly in words.

The interviews made me realise how intimate I am with the Chinese diaspora. The people I have interviewed made me very aware of my identity as a Chinese. As much as I don't like to label or be labelled into any social groups, I can't avoid this identity. But the awareness is daunting. It seems that suddenly I have a 'new' identity. I always think I am a transnational subject. I enjoy being a member in different groups and don't like to be labelled as and bounded by any one of them. However it seems that there is one identity I can't 'avoid', and that is the diasporic identity. And it's daunting, because suddenly I am labelled, I am categorised, I belonged to a group, and I will be restricted and controlled.

Well I am always a Chinese and I am doing Chinese – speaking the language, eating the food, practising the 'practices'. But I don't like to be labelled as it means I have to do things in the Chinese ways. I don't want to be restricted by the narrow definition of Chinese. I feel that being a Chinese should also mean that I can do what a non-Chinese does. In other words I want my other identities to be acknowledged as well. I want to do things which make sense to me.

I went to Shantin (a suburb with high Chinese population) yesterday and I felt something was not the same. Things started to feel subtly different. Or am ***I*** the

one who is not the same? I used to take the stance of an outsider – I only went there to get the Chinese groceries! I didn't particularly care what Chinese people did nor did I participate in any of the celebrations. But I suddenly feel I am not an outsider anymore. I found my antenna more sensitive yesterday. I observed what others did – the people in the restaurant – the number, the appearance, the language, the topics, their relationship etc. It seems that I am starting to care about who 'they' are now. And sadly, it seems I don't have a choice.

The interviews have also activated my 'Chineseness', or the sensitivity to it. The Chineseness in me, which has always been hidden, embedded or taken for granted, is suddenly brought to the front and being placed under a spotlight for interrogation; a private interrogation by myself who is trying to reshuffle, reconsider and reposition who I am both in the Chinese diaspora in Sydney, and in my world.

The senses of the binaries me/you, us/them and Chinese/Anglo, or more specifically 'we Chinese/they Australian' has been greatly sharpened.

And this morning I saw a group of 70-80 old Chinese on the platform at Central station. I was listening to their conversation and found they were going to a b-day celebration. It seemed to be a community activity and they were catching the train to 'city circle', so it was a local activity. Their appearance reminded me of old people in HK – the backpacks, the clothes, the colour of their clothes, their hair, the language, the way they spoke. I could imagine these people standing on a train platform in HK – they would fit in the scene very well. And what was really interesting was the fact that I paid attention to them, which was not usual in the past.

Appendix F

Ethics Approval (Macquarie University)

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

MAN YEE ANGEL MOK <man-yee-angel.mok@students.mq.edu.au>

Final Approval with Condition - Saltmarsh (Ref: 5201100768)
1 message

Fhs Ethics <fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au> Thu, Nov 10, 2011 at 11:23 AM
To: Dr David Saltmarsh <david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au>
Cc: Ms Angel Mok <man-yee-angel.mok@students.mq.edu.au>

Dear Dr Saltmarsh,

Re: "Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese living in Australia"

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and you may now commence your research.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Dr David Saltmarsh - Chief Investigator
Ms Angel Mok - Co-Investigator

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports. Your first progress report is due on 1 November 2012.

If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Sub-Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Sub-Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Sub-Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your

research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

http://www.mq.edu.au/policy

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of Final Approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have Final Approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Peter Roger
Chair
Faculty of Human Sciences Ethics Review Sub-Committee
Human Research Ethics Committee

Faculty of Human Sciences - Ethics
Research Office
Level 3, Research HUB, Building C5C
Macquarie University
NSW 2109

Ph: +61 2 9850 4197
Fax: +61 2 9850 4465

Email: fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/

Appendix G

Ethics Approval (DEC, NSW)

NSW GOVERNMENT | Education & Communities

Ms Man Yee Angel Mok
Balaclava Road,
NORTH RYDE NSW 2109

DOC 11/303215

Dear Ms Mok

SERAP Number **2011185**

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled *Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese living in Australia*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.**

This approval will remain valid until 04/11/2012.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Name	Approval expires
Man Yee Angel Mok	04-11-2012

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

Yours sincerely

Dr Robert Stevens
R/Senior Manager
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation
12 December 2011

Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau NSW Department of Education and Communities
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300 Telephone: 02 9244 5619– Fax: 02 9266 8233 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Appendix H

Parent information sheet and consent form

Department of Education
Faculty of Human Science
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 (0)2 9850 8798

Fax: +61 (0)2 9850 8674
Email: david.saltmarsh@ mq.edu.au
Email: man-yee-angel.mok@students .mq.edu.au

PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Project: Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese living in Australia

Dear parents/guardians,

You are invited to take part in a research project that is being conducted to meet the requirement of the PhD study of Angel Mok under the supervision of Dr David Saltmarsh (please see contact details below).

This study aims to find out how Chinese families see themselves as part of the Australia community, and how this perception may influence their children's mathematics performance in school. Understanding this relationship may help us to know more about why Chinese students do well in mathematics both in Australia and internationally. It will provide schools and other culture more understanding of the role Chinese parents play in their children's mathematics performance. As well, by providing an opportunity for Chinese family to share with the community their background, values and practices, this study will enhance community's understanding of the Chinese living in Sydney.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire which takes approximately 15 minutes, and possibly participate in an interview which will take about an hour. Questions about your immigration experience will be asked in the interview because it is a very important piece of information in this research. We may

also need you to clarify some of the answers you give in the questionnaire. If you agree to participate in an interview, you will be provided with a journal diary to record the afterschool activities and learning which your child participates in a week. Your child may also be invited for a short interview of about 20 minutes so that she/he can tell us about their experience in learning mathematics both inside and outside school (A separate note will be sent to them). All interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed for accuracy. With your permission, your child may be observed in class. Observation will take place in a natural setting and will not interfere with his learning.

You may feel a bit uncomfortable when telling us some of your experience as a migrant. However, it is entirely up to you what to tell us in the interview and you can choose only the events or people you want us to know. We will not ask you to tell us experiences that you do not want to disclose.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (*except as required by law).* Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used so no individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Audio recordings and transcriptions will be securely stored along with other data in the researcher's office and held for a period of five years after which they will be destroyed. Only the researchers have access to your data. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. A brief report will be made available to you and the school.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you only take part if you want to and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. If you do decide not to take part, it will not affect your child's results or progress at school. If you or your child changes your mind about taking part, even after the study has started, just contact the researchers or the school and any information already collected about your child will be destroyed.

M
U

Researchers Contact details 研究员联络资料

知情书

计划名称：居澳华人的身份认同与数学学习

我们邀请您参与一项研究计划，有关于华人家庭的文化身份，及其子女的数学表现。研究目的在于审视华人家庭在澳洲社会中，如何看待自己的身份，这种意识如何影响孩子在学校的数学表现。认识这种关系，有助解释华人学生在澳洲及国际的数学科成绩优异的原因。这亦能让学校及其他文化了解到，华人家长在子女数学表现上的角色。此外，透过华人家庭分享自身的背景、价值观和习惯，可以促进社区对悉尼华人生活的理解。

此研究由麦克里大学（Macquarie University）教育学系David Saltmarsh博士进行，研究生莫敏儿小姐(Angel Mok) 将在David Saltmarsh博士的指导下开展计划，以符合其博士研究的要求。
（David Saltmarsh博士联络电话: 02 98508798；电邮：david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au）

如果您决定参与研究，您将需要填写一份问卷，需时约15分钟，并可能接受大约一小时的访谈。如您应允接受访谈，我们还会给您一份记录表，用来记录孩子在课后参与的活动和学习。您的孩子也可能受邀请参与访谈（约20分钟），让她／他告诉我们在课堂内外学习数学的情况。

当谈及某些移民经验的时候，您可能会感到有点不舒服，然而，您完全有权决定要向我们说些甚么，我们不会要求您说一些您不愿意说的事情。
另请留意，访谈期间我们需要录音，以助研究。

所有在研究中收集到的讯息，以及所有个人资料，都会保密（除了法律要求外）。当研究结果公开时，均不会显露任何参加者的身份。只有研究人员有权接触您的资料。如您要求，我们可以给您一份结果概要，也会给您和学校一份简要报告作参考。

参与此研究全属于自愿，您没有义务一定要参加；如您决定参加，也可以在中途退出，无需给予理由，亦无需承担任何后果。

Appendix H Parent information sheet and consent form

Dr David Saltmarsh, Department of Education, Macquarie University麦克里大学教育学系 Phone电话: 02 9850- 8798 Email 电邮: david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au	Ms Angel Mok, 莫敏兒 Department of Education, Macquarie University麦克里大学教育学系 Phone电话: 02 9850-8798 Mobile手机: Email电邮: man-yee-angel.mok@students.mq.edu.au

Department of Education
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Phone: +61 (0)2 9850

8798

Fax: +61 (0)2 9850 8674
Email: david.saltmarsh@ mq.edu.au
Email: man-yee-angel.mok@students .mq.edu.au

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Name of Project: Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese living in Australia

I, _____*(your name*) have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understand the information in the Parent/carer information sheet and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date:_____

I also agree my child to take part in this research. I understand that the researcher will have an interview with my child about learning maths both inside and outside school. And she will also ask him/her something about him/her and his/her friends.
I understand that the interview will be tape recorded and pseudonyms (fake names) will be used. He/she can withdraw from further participation without consequence.

Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval number: 5201100768D. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Department of Education
Faculty of Human Science
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

同意书

计划名称：居澳华人的身份认同与数学学习

本人_____已阅读（或由别人向本人读出）以上的讯息，所有提出的疑问（如有）亦获得了满意解答。本人应允参与这个研究，并明白到本人有权在任何时间决定退出，无需承担任后果。本人已获得这份表格的副本以作保存

参加者姓名：_____
(大楷)
参加者签署：_____日期：_____

研究者姓名：_____
(大楷)

研究者签署：_____日期：_____

本人亦同意让孩子参与这个研究。本人明白研究员会与孩子进行访谈，内容是有关他／她在课堂内外学习数学的情况，此外也会问到孩子自己和朋友的一些情况。
本人知道访谈过程会录音，但研究结果公开时会使用假名。孩子可以选择不参与进一步的研究，而毋须承担任何后果。

参加者姓名：_____
(大楷)
参加者签署：_____日期：_____

研究者姓名：_____
(大楷)

研究者签署：_____日期：_____

Appendix I

Teacher information sheet and consent form

Department of Education

Faculty of Human Science

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109

TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Project: Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese living in Australia

Dear Teacher,

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted to meet the requirements of the degree *PhD in Education* for Angel Mok, under the supervision of Dr David Saltmarsh, Macquarie University (please find contact details below).

The purpose of the study is to investigate how Chinese families perceive themselves as part of the Australia community, and how this perception may influence their children's mathematics performance in school. Information generated from this research study will contribute to the understanding of why Chinese students outperform their local counterparts in mathematics, which is well documented in both local and international literature. It will provide schools and other culture an alternative understanding of the role Chinese parents plays in their children's mathematics performance. As well, by providing an opportunity for Chinese family to share their background, values and practices with the community, this study will enhance community's understanding of the Chinese living in Sydney.

Specifically we are seeking teachers who are willing to distribute and collect questionnaires from Chinese families in their class. You may be invited to go for an interview with the researcher in which you can share your experience with Chinese students in class. Interview will be organised at a time and place most suitable for you. Interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed for accuracy. With the permission from you and the Principal, I may also do some observation on some of the Chinese students in maths lessons. Every effort will be made to minimise any possible disruption that may be caused from the observation.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (*except as required by law)*. Pseudonyms will be used so no individual will be identified in any publication of the results. Audio recordings and transcriptions will be securely stored along with other data in the researcher's office and held for a period of five years after which they will be destroyed. Only the researchers have access to your data. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request. A brief report will be made available to you and the school.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

When you have read this information the chief researcher, Angel Mok will be available to answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact any of the researchers (see contact details below). Concerns or complaints regarding the way in which the research is or has been conducted, should be directed to Macquarie University Human Research and Ethics Committee, Ethics officer on (02) 9850 7854.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Contact details of the researchers	
Dr David Saltmarsh, Department of Education, Macquarie University Phone: 02 9850- 8798 Email: david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au	Ms Angel Mok, Department of Education, Macquarie University Phone: 02 9850-8674 Mobile: Email: man-yee-angel.mok@students.mq.edu.au

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Name of Project: Cultural identity and mathematics learning of Chinese living in Australia

I, _____ (*your name*) have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date:_____

Investigator's Name:_____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ ___ Date:_____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval number: 5201100768D. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Contact details of the researchers	
Dr David Saltmarsh, Department of Education, Macquarie University Phone: 02 9850- 8798 Email: david.saltmarsh@mq.edu.au	Ms Angel Mok, Department of Education, Macquarie University Phone: 02 9850-8674 Mobile: Email: man-yee-angel.mok@students.mq.edu.au