

REFRAMING MOTHERHOOD IN A CULTURAL TRANSITION:
THE EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT CHINESE MOTHERS

by

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ABSTRACT

Mothering is structured by the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs. This study is based on in-depth ethnographic interviews with eight Chinese mothers who are recent immigrants to Canada from China. The study illuminates the ways changing social and cultural structures of mothering have reframed these women's conceptions of themselves as mothers and as workers.

Recent Western feminist writing has pointed out that mothering and caring for children is influenced greatly by social structures and social constructions and not only by the natural demands and needs of children (Everingham, 1994; Kaplan, 1992; Tom, 1993; Thurer, 1994;). Mothering occurs within specific social contexts that constrain and shape material and cultural resources (Glenn, 1994). Multiple perspectives are thus necessary in order to embrace difference as an essential part of commonality as we examine motherhood and mother-as-subject (Collins, 1994). Using a cross-cultural perspective, this study explores how these Chinese mother's conceptions of mothering were reconstructed in a specific historical situation: their emigration from China to Canada.

All the participants were under the age of 38 with children under the age of 8. Participants were selected using a snowball sampling technique. They were spouses of Chinese international students at one university. The study gathered information about these women's experiences as mothers in both China and Canada. My particular focus was on the ways these women's conceptions of mothering and employment were reframed in a cultural transition. The participants were asked questions about their ideas of mothering and how social and economic conditions influenced their mothering in China and in Canada.

This study compares these women's social conditions and resources for mothering in China and in Canada. I focus on the interaction between job (e.g., paid maternal leave, employment opportunities), familial support (spousal and extended familial assistance), social expectations and values surrounding mothering and women's employment, and access to and ideology surrounding extra-family child care for children of different ages.

The study found that when these women moved to Canada, they were confronted with changes that modified their experience of mothering. Their conception of motherhood formed in the Chinese cultural context was challenged and reconstructed as they went through their immigration experiences. The study shows that these Chinese women's new

conceptualizations of mothering are neither those they held in China nor those held by dominant Canadian society. These women came to value the mothering role highly as they assumed more mothercare. However, they still see caring for children at home as having less social status than employment outside the home. This study shows these women accepting and incorporating parts of Western attachment theory without surrendering totally to dominant Canadian mothering ideology. In their view, mothering is not women's primary and sole mission and chief source of satisfaction, but only one part of it.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In this study, I explore the mothering experiences of some recent women immigrants from China who had had paid jobs in China and left China for Canada to accompany their spouses who were international students at a university in Canada. The purpose of the study is to gather information about these women's experiences as mothers in China and in Canada, and to understand the ways these women immigrants think about their motherhood and employment in their original culture and in the Canadian context.

My particular interest as a feminist researcher, and as a mother myself, is to understand how these women's conceptions of mothering and caring for children have been reframed in this cultural transition. Feminist research has exposed the understanding that women's lives are much influenced by their kinship roles and obligations and are especially influenced by their biological roles as mothers (Moore, 1989; Tom, 1993a). Women's conceptions of mothering in different cultures and contexts are also important theoretical and empirical resources for feminist research (Tom, 1993a). By questioning "what is motherhood and mothering?" with these immigrant Chinese women, I especially wanted to understand how their previous mothering conceptions were challenged in Canadian society, and the ways their ideas were different from those of Canadian-born women. I am particularly interested in how the interests and needs of these mothers are integrated into and held to challenge the images of the needs and lives of children; and how ideas of mothering are integrated with an understanding of the nature of employment. By asking these questions, I hope to provide a historical and cross-cultural analysis of these Chinese women's experiences of mothering when they immigrated to Canada.

Recent Western feminist research has uncovered that mothering and caring for children are influenced greatly by social structures and are socially constructed, rather than constructed

only by the natural demands and needs of children (Everingham, 1994; M. Kaplan, 1992; Thurer 1994; Tom, 1993b). These researchers argue that the dominant ideology of good mothering is oblivious of a mother's desires, limitations and context. Because of women's heavy childcare responsibilities, motherhood is often seen and made to be an obstacle for many women who desire to assume other social roles and pursue equality in society.

This generation of Chinese women has had its beliefs shaped during a particular political period in Chinese history, the socialist system. Within this system, women's employment outside the home is encouraged and institutionalized, and centre or group (many of them are public funded) childcare services are pervasively enacted and used. Women in China see themselves as socially and economically equal to their husbands - life partners. Childcare is considered as a common responsibility between husband and wife, and the responsibility of the whole extended family. When these women came to Canada, their economic and social positions were instantly changed. The women found their beliefs of motherhood and mothering challenged by the Western dominant mothering ideology that is created by patriarchal capitalism. At the same time, their status as equals to their husbands was also diminished because of various circumstances, mostly economic. My thesis attempts to explore and discuss these questions. When they migrated from a "socialist patriarchal" system to a capitalist patriarchal one, what were their experiences in this cultural transition, and how did the ideologies from the two cultures interact? What was the outcome of this interaction?

Context of the Study

The women whom I interviewed had immigrated to Canada from Mainland China in the last three years at the time of the interviews. They were all under 38 years old and their children were under the age of 8. At the time of interview all of them were university international students' wives who originally were employed in China. This study emerged from a larger

research project sponsored by the SSHRC that was looking at women's work and mothering as a significant part of women's work¹. My interest in this particular group of people grew out of my experiences as a Research Assistant in this study, and fits nicely into the conceptual framework of the larger project. Throughout the whole period of the study, the meetings held for the larger project, and contributed a great deal in generating many of my thoughts on the study and the development of the study. The meetings were attended by people from the faculty, from the students, and from the community of early child education, therefore, the study is constantly nurtured by this group in a collective academic exploration.

The study also grew out of my personal concerns about the future or destiny of those Chinese women who share the same cultural background as myself, both as a professional in China, and also a mother. During this study, my status changed from that of a foreign student to landed immigrant after having been a non-status resident student for three years. I also became a mother for the second time. Therefore, in some ways, their concerns and issues reflect my own. As a student in the field of adult education, I wanted to explore how and in what ways these women learned about new cultures and incorporated that learning in their mothering. As I have undergone changes in my own mothering, I wanted to learn about how their conceptions of mothering have changed and in which ways they have changed.

Contributions and limitations of the study

This study describes previously undocumented mothering experiences of Chinese immigrant women. It captures the women undergoing a cultural transition in Canadian society. I hope that this study can contribute to the field of adult education by first, presenting concerns and

¹ This study collaborates on the larger research project, "the Meaning of Women's Work: The Ideas and Experiences of Caring for Children" headed by Dr. Allison Tom at the University of British Columbia.

issues of women immigrants from China; and second, exploring their unique experiences of learning particularly through mothering.

In the adult education literature, the representation of the realities and interests of immigrant women is thin (Payeur, el. 1994). More voices, issues and experiences of minority groups, especially minority immigrant women should be understood more deeply. In addition, theoretical discussions of adult learning in the field of adult education seldom take culture into consideration. These discussions emphasize individual psychological explanations (Rubenson 1982). Recent research in adult education has come to consider learning as a process of change that is brought about by reconstruction of ideas (Entwhistle & Marton, 1984). Harper (1994) investigates migration transition through anthropological life story. Her study describes an evolving transition process of interdependent changes, which take place on many levels. This study furthers her inquiry by focusing on the reconstruction of ideas for a particular group of Chinese women on a particular aspect: experiences of mothering.

Another contribution of this study is to feminist research in general and feminist theorizing about motherhood in particular. First, I provide important information about the experiences of immigrant women from China. Recent women immigrants from China have not been represented in research, including feminist research, and their lives and mothering are important sources for feminist analysis as women in other cultures. Second, I enrich feminist research by re-examining the notion of mothering from a cross-cultural perspective that reaches beyond Western and North American locales. Due to lack of access to the site and methodological problems, Western or North American feminist researchers are often limited by ethnocentric assumptions when they study other cultures (Gilmartin, 1994). In my study, the voices and concerns of the participants are heard and interpreted more because my own experience had much similarity with theirs.

Chinese immigrant women are diverse. Women from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan who

live under different political and social systems have different experiences even though they could be generally categorized as Chinese. Immigrant women from other countries and cultures also have different experiences and values. My study looks only at some women's experiences from a particular social group and cannot be generalized to all Chinese women and immigrant women from China and other countries. Their experiences also cannot be generalized to their social group as I demonstrate later that their experiences are also shaped by their specific family situations as well. Nevertheless, this study has value in feminist understanding of women's mothering in Chinese culture, and Chinese immigrant women's mothering in particular because it explains the cultural as well as situational dimensions as the particular experiences of eight Chinese women.

It is regretful that the studies of Chinese women by Chinese researchers are rarely available which has limited me from providing a more thorough analysis through comparison of findings.

Overview of Chapters

The rest of this chapter provides the literature review for my research on the feminist analysis of mothering and employment, and women's lives in modern China. This review is a result of continuous work throughout data collection and analysis. Chapter Two outlines the methods used to collect information for the study, ethical considerations and the rationale for the chosen design. It also introduces, in detail, the eight participants and their special immigration conditions. Chapter Three presents these particular women's mothering experiences in China, and followed by a discussion of their conceptions of mothering formed in China. In Chapter Four, I present and analyse the mothering and economic conditions for these women in Canada. In Chapter Five, I discuss how these women's conceptions of mothering have changed. A summary of the study and implications for practice and theory in both the fields of adult education and feminist research are discussed in Chapter Six.

Literature Review

Feminist Analysis of Mothering and Employment

Mothering

It became common for feminist writers during the 1960s and the 1970s to link motherhood to women's subordination and oppression (see Ross, 1995). Much of this early inquiry focused on daughters as the subject, rather than on the mother (ibid.). Where they were discussed, mothers were often identified as homemakers and it was argued that their lack of a sense of individual self-worth was a result of their oppression (Adames, 1995).

Since the 1970s, the focus of feminist research of motherhood shifted more to mothers as the subject and the experience of motherhood and child rearing practices (e.g. Arcana, 1981; Badinter, 1981; Boulton, 1983; Breen, 1975; Chodorow, 1978; Firestone, 1971; Gilligan, 1982; Oakley, 1974, 1979, 1980, 1981; Ruddick, 1980, 1982, 1984; Whitbeck, 1972). Feminists began to question social norms which prescribed the mother as the biologically "natural" caretaker of children, and linked the biological explanation to the sources of women's subordination in society.

Some of these feminists believe women's oppression is a direct result of their biology, of the fact that only women can bear children (Firestone, 1971). Firestone claims that only by freeing women from the reproductive processes of pregnancy and childbirth would women ever achieve social and economic equality with men. Other feminists such as Rich (1976) challenged the idea that women's biology was inherently oppressive. She countered that female biology, and the potential to reproduce, is a source of power, not powerlessness. Rich went on to point out that the institution of motherhood, not mothers or mothering is challenged by feminists. Women's experiences are generally constrained by social institutions that are built on a patriarchal system

Nancy Chodorow (1978) used a psychoanalytic framework and studied mother-daughter relationships. She claimed that it is because women, not men, are the primary caregivers that

women became subordinated. Chodorow explored that how girls, when cared for by their mothers, internalize mother's role and prepare for motherhood in ways that boys do not. Her conclusion is that the psychological differences between women and men arise out of the sexual division of childcare. Chodorow sees women's mothering as inevitable given the dominant social structures and the current sexual division of labour. Chodorow suggests that one way to relieve women's subordination is to persuade men to participate more equally with women in childcare. However, her ideas have been criticized for universalizing mothering experiences across race, class and culture and assuming that the issues all mothers face are identical (Glenn, 1994). Her work is also criticized in that it suggests all we need is a simple change in men's personalities and roles rather than examining structural processes in society that are oppressive to women (Bart, 1984; Richardson, 1993).

Sara Ruddick (1980) attempts to account for mothers' concerns for nurturing and protecting without resorting to natural or biological explanations (Glenn, 1994). Ruddick claims that maternal thinking, a combination of reflection and emotion, arises out of maternal practice that responds to the historical reality of a biological child in a particular social world. Varied in the style, skill, commitment, and integrity with which they engage in these practices, Ruddick argues that actual mothers have the same relation to maternal practice as scientists have to scientific practice, or believers have to religious practices (Ruddick 1980, 1982, 1984). Maternal thinking arises out of child-caring practice; biological parenting is neither necessary nor sufficient, and whoever becomes involved in this maternal practice is able to give good care to a child. Ruddick encourages men's equal inclusion in every aspect of childcare, which she thinks is not only fair, but also their obligation.

Some studies (e.g. Polatnick, 1984) point out that the reason why men do not rear children is because they do not want to, because they can gain money, status and power by being the

breadwinner, not child rearing. Child rearing would limit their capacity to engage in most other activities as it does women's. Polatnick articulates a sociological basis to the gender imbalance: generally, men enjoy a superior power position in relation to women as a gender. They are in control of the major sources of societal power: political, economic, social, and physical. Polatnick argues that the diminished role of child rearer is only one component of the total "power picture". She says that, in general, women are less powerful compared to men, and therefore, they are child rearers.

Most feminist research supports and encourages women in analysing their negative feelings about mothering (Richardson, 1993). Much feminist writing describes middle class white women's experience of mothering as "isolating", (e.g. Knight 1992; Rich, 1976, 1986; Rossiter, 1988;). Mothering for this group of women can be "tedious and extremely demanding, rewarding yet often exhausting and emotionally draining" and can limit mothers' attempts to enter the public world and find greater self-fulfilment (Wearing, 1984). For women, becoming a mother, the biggest loss is that of personal identity and individualism, status, independence, privacy, social networks, and the idealized and romanticized vision of motherhood (Oakley, 1979). Often, when these women work outside the home, they feel guilty for being away from their children (Oakley, 1974). This overemphasis on mothers' feelings of isolation and guilt characterizes a middle class white American mothering model in which paid employment of the mother is not viewed as essential but only a matter of personal fulfilment. Feminist analysis of mothering has largely neglected the mothering experiences of working class women and women in other cultures.

Feminist attention in the 1980s was largely shifted from psychoanalytic explanations to sociological accounts and the analysis of power, particularly focusing on structural economic inequalities. Many feminists argue that gender equality must be addressed through economic equality (Richardson, 1993). Women's economic equality with men is ultimately dependent on

women being able to participate on equal terms with men in paid employment outside the home. More equal shared parenting is demanded when more women demand equal employment and pay with men (Trebilcot, 1984).

Many women struggle in their pursuit for independence and equality without abandoning motherhood. The conflicts of career and motherhood create a dilemma for working women and feminist theorists. Meanwhile, some feminist findings show that the ideal model of shared parenting rarely exists. In 1984, Ehrensaft expressed doubts about the socialist belief that entry into the sphere of production is the ultimate road to women's liberation. Ehrensaft quoted Eisenstein (1978): "the sexual division of labour and society remains intact even with women in the paid economy" (Ehrensaft, 1984: 29).

Young (1984) argues that although parenting shared by men and women is a key step in eliminating the oppression of women, to really change the social relations of infant care would entail monumental changes in all institutions of society. Young further explains that gender division in parenting is only one among the many institutional structures that produce and maintain the oppression of women. "Without alteration in other elements of male domination, moreover, shared parenting, even if it happened, would not be likely to change greatly the patterns of socialization or the resulting masculine and feminine personalities"(p.143). To fight against male domination we need to understand how all the institutions work in such a way as to promote women's working for men; how current arrangements are enforced; and who controls the resources that produce and maintain these arrangements.

Recent feminist research reveals that overcoming isolation remains a prominent goal when describing mothering at home for American middle-class white women (A. Kaplan, 1992; M. Knight, 1992; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991; Rossiter, 1988). For example, Knight talked with and listened to white middle-class mothers explain the meaning of motherhood, their ideas,

desires, and experiences. It seems that these women's ideas of mothering accommodate the mother's needs and career interests, but also reinforce maternal isolation. They do not ask for or receive much spousal or extended family support. The feminist literature at this time seemed to have given too much attention to the issue of isolation in mothering expressed by white middle-class women who were able to stay home with the children. In the contrary, there was not enough concern about the difficulties of mothering experienced by working class women, and women in marginalized ethnic groups who could not afford to stay home with their children and had to work for pay outside the home.

Based on her own and participants' mothering experiences, Rossiter (1988) analyzes the social factors that make early mothering both a joyous and an oppressive experience. She points out that much of the feminist literature slides over the question of attachment and arrives at equal parenting solutions which, because they ignore preferential attachment, are therefore not real, possible, human solutions. She illuminates how children's attachment to their mothers is implicated in the maintenance of patriarchy and the importance of understanding how mothering works to continuously construct a concept of women that fits into patriarchy. Rossiter concludes that mothering and feminism should not be fundamentally and uncomfortably opposed to each other, but should be seen as a connected site of struggle for women. She argues for a re-focusing of attention away from women's reproduction of mothering and toward the practice of mothering as it creates the gender category Women. Rossiter's argument is that we have to look carefully at the challenge of mothering and understand how the real needs of children help the maintenance of patriarchy. Instead of looking at how women reproduce mothering, we should look at how the genuine needs of the practice of mothering create the categories of women. If we look at the actual experiences of mothers, their physical relationships with their children, then we can get better descriptions of what happens when they care for children, and then we won't attribute

women's oppression only to this cause. It is important to really understand what caring for children takes and face it with practical social solutions instead of either idealizing mothering or ignoring children's attachment to their mothers.

Most studies of mothering have emerged in the 1990s through the lenses of different disciplines. Women's lives have been put more at the centre of the writer's analysis. Some of these studies are attentive to motherhood itself, and the focus has begun to shift from the mother-child relationship to the relationship of mothers to society as a whole (Adames, 1995). Feminist researchers have come to realize that feminism can never get away from the "issue" of mothering if women want to pursue equality and social justice (M. Kaplan, 1992; Ross, 1995; Thurer, 1993; Tom, 1993a). Many of them have pointed out that without full recognition of the complexity of mothering, the ability of feminist scholarship to comprehend the scope of women's lives today is much diminished (e.g. Ross, 1995).

Many feminist writers have come to address the social constructions of motherhood in policy making, science, literature, and popular media (A. Kaplan, 1992; Gelpi, 1992; Leira, 1992; Rothman, 1992; Skocpol, 1992; Thurer, 1994; Waters, 1992). A diversity of theories has emerged in relation to the mother (A. Kaplan, 1992). In Ann Kaplan's historical, psychoanalytic and literary analysis images of the mother, as well as the discourses of the mother are often seen as contradictory, rather than consistent. Mothers are alternatively seen as "Angel" or "Witch". They are persuaded to combine career and motherhood, but they are also told they never can be both a good mother and a good worker.

Tizard (1991) points out that for forty years in the West, women with young children who have chosen to work outside their homes have been made to feel guilty and have been viewed as inadequate and selfish mothers. She further concludes that if childcare of reasonable quality is available, the situation has potential benefits for children as well as for their parents/mothers.

Through a review of historical and current literature, Tizard challenges Bowlby's (1951, 1973) attachment theory as a weak theory. It is not empirically sufficient to be used as a ground to oppose the employment of mothers of young children. She argues that the employment of their mothers is likely to benefit children through their greater variety of social contacts outside the family.

Woollett & Phoenix (1991) argue that in feminist literature, the psychological approach to motherhood has little to say about how the demands of motherhood conflict with women's other identities and the structural factors and the circumstances in which women bring up children. It does not talk about how constructions of motherhood have an impact on women's interactions and relationships with their children. This approach is limited because it does not analyze the experiences of women and the impact of the contexts in which they mother.

Feminists' analyses of mothering are more aware of the social construction of motherhood and mothering, the social contexts and historical circumstances in which women mother (Collins, 1994; Everingham, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991; Rothman, 1994; Tom, 1993a;). Rothman exposes the ideologies of mothering as existing within a network of complex ideologies: patriarchy, capitalism (an economic system based on exploitation), and technology (mind privileged over body). She believes that these three ideologies shape the experiences of motherhood in American society.

Other feminist researchers suggest that more attention should be given to studies of mothering in different regions, cultures, and communities and also to studies of the changes that mothering brings in relationship to jobs (Ross, 1995; Tom, 1993a). In these approaches, mothering and caring for children are created more by social structures than by the natural demands and needs of children (M. Kaplan, 1992; Thurer, 1994; Tom, 1993a).

Glenn (1994) claims that for a long historical period, mothering has been subject to one essential interpretation: it has been seen as natural, universal, and unchanging; This is a white, American, middle class model of mothering. In this model, the primary responsibility of mothering rests exclusively on the shoulders of the mother. She points out that "the existence of diverse, often submerged, constructions of mothering have co-existed alongside this dominant model" (p.4).

But, early feminist research overlooked the effects of race, class and culture on mothering. Collins (1994) argues that mothering happens historically in a complex of social interactions of race, class, and gender. In her study of minority groups of women in the United States, Collins reveals alternate social and family structures that produce varied experiences of mothering.

Examining the experiences of women from other ethnic groups reveals a different interaction between family and work than that of white, middle class Americans (Collins 1990; Dill 1988; Glenn 1985; Stack & Burton 1994). While the latter seems to operate in isolation, the former may rely on collectives. For example, shared mothering has been characteristic of African-American communities since slavery (Dill 1988; Glenn 1994). In African-American communities, women had to work outside the home even though they were mothers. Constrained by their economic circumstances, these women did not have the choices about employment that were available to middle class women. Dominant society relied on their cheap labour, and their poverty and lack of social support required them to diminish their personal and individual investment in mothering. Responsibility for mothering often had to be shared with other family members or other women in the community so they could work and support their families. Stack & Burton's study (1994) of low-income Black families reveals that "minority families have historically experienced issues such as the juggling of work and family roles for women, single

parenthood, extended family relationships, and poverty, that mainstream middle-class white families have only recently been attentive to" (p.42).

In dominant feminist theorizing about motherhood, research that examines social and economic dimensions of mothering from other cultures is lacking. There is also a lack of sufficient understanding of the interactions of women's various roles, especially the relationships between employment and mothering. Recent feminist analyses of mothering recognize the importance of understanding socio-economic and cultural contexts and historical circumstances. Minority women's experiences of mothering are increasingly recognized as rich sources of feminist theorizing about motherhood (e.g. Collins 1994; Glenn 1992, 1994). Multiple perspectives are increasingly used to embrace difference as an essential part of commonality in the examination of motherhood and mother-as -subject.

Employment

In many places of the world today, employment is an important role in women's lives. Women's lives are not only influenced by their kin relationships but are also influenced by their employment outside the home. Some societal changes and problems caused by women's participation in the paid work force have been documented in some feminist literature (Kahne & Giele, 1992; Kessler-Harris, 1982; Long & Kahn, 1993; Novarra, 1980). However, this literature is still inadequate in depicting a more complete picture of women's lives rather than presenting fragmented pictures of women's lives including their mothering experiences (e.g. Tom 1993a).

Most of these studies address the issues of equal employment, occupational segregation, the earning gap, workplace stress, and the overburden of housework and child care for married women (e.g. Kahne & Giele, 1992; Long & Kahn, 1993). Many studies document the conflicts and frustration of coping with women's "double duty " of mothering and working outside the home.

Historical analysis of women's employment in North America has shown that women's employment, women's perceptions of their motherhood, and the public perceptions of their roles have been influenced by economic situations and historical contexts (Kessler-Harris, 1982).

During World War II, because men were at war, the American government needed women to work. The women proved to be good workers. Day care facilities were provided, although they were not sufficient in quality and quantity. There was also more recognition of the difficulties of women's "double duties" but few solutions were offered.

After the war, the American government changed its perspective on the issue of women's participation in the paid labour force. When men returned from the war to the domestic work place, women were pushed out of their jobs, and told to go back to the home. This began a campaign to prove that a woman's place was in the home. Attachment theory was developed at this time. Employers believed that women were not suitable to most jobs and declared themselves unwilling to hire women for eighty-one percent of the available jobs².

Women were laid off at a high rate in the industries normally dominated by men. Women's wage work did not free them from socially generated pressure to stay home and be only good wives and mothers (Kessler-Harris, 1982).

In this period, studies came out questioning whether it was "right" for married women, particularly mothers, to go out to work. Women's working was still reduced to a stereotypical assumption of an economic rationale in spite of the fact that women's contribution to the society in the wartime was enormous (Novarra, 1980). The American society ignored the historical facts

² Honig (1988) compares this situation to China during the 1980s, when women (more in grass-roots work places) were sent back into the home after the government initiated an economic reform. She comments that in both countries, a period of widespread social disruption was followed by an attempt to re-establish clear gender roles by promoting the importance of good mothering. The participants in the study were not affected by this situation because they were too young to have jobs at that time and had higher education.

that large numbers of women were mobilized into the labour force during World War II and those childcare facilities were provided.

In Canadian context, two world wars witnessed women in large numbers moving into nation's factories, becoming an essential part of Canada's wartime labour force (Burt, Code, and Dorney, 1990). Single women, childless women, but also women with children were eventually all mobilized into workplaces in response to the wartime demand. However, this large number of labour force participation was only seen as a temporary policy to meet the wartime emergency. After the wars, women were still expected to go home to resume their roles as good wives and mothers no matter whether they chose this complex job or not.

Many studies take a dualistic position when examining women's work: working-class women work because of their own and their families' financial needs and other women (professional) have jobs for self-fulfilment (Tom 1993b). This dualism implies that women must choose to live in either a "public" or a "private" world and that it is not possible to live a life that include elements of both. Tom (1993b) calls for more holistic studies of women's work to overcome these dualisms, studies that acknowledge that "women's lives are made of elements that can be complementary and additive as well as contradictory and fractured" (p.37). The assumption that women who have responsibilities in both mothering and working are unnatural and unusual denies women general social support for trying to live lives that include more elements. Feminist research needs to examine critically the ways caring for children is constructed in cultural and social structures and values, and how such work interacts with women's employment.

Women/Motherhood in Modern China

A literature review of women's lives in China provides cultural background and relevance to our understanding of the experiences and beliefs of recent Chinese immigrant women,

especially mothers. Women's perceptions of motherhood influence their attitudes and performance. Social context influences women's beliefs and values in their various roles as women, workers and mothers. Modern China's socialist system since 1949 has had an enormous impact on Chinese women and their mothering. The participants in this study lived and formed their beliefs under the ideologies of this social system.

There is little research available that focuses on women's lives, especially mothering, for this period between the founding of the People's Republic of China to the present period. What is available is state-controlled publications, and primarily for English readers, introducing Chinese women's new roles in new China (e.g. Foreign Language Press, 1949, 1972). These works emphasize economic independence and diverse fields of work for women to demonstrate women's liberation in a socialist society. For the decades following the "liberation" in 1949, education and employment were emphasized as the necessary condition for women's independence in socialist China. Little was discussed, however, about how women juggled family roles and work outside the home. I have not been able to find any research available to me by Chinese scholarship on the structural impediments with which women still have to cope.

Broyelle (1977) presented the theme that work was changing Chinese women, and women were changing work and suggested that the first step towards women's emancipation was to ensure their full participation in the labour force. According to Broyelle, women's liberation could not be completed without a transformation of women's evaluation of themselves and society, and the reconstruction of socially ascribed 'value' in relations with society, the family, and men.

A number of studies of Chinese women since the 1980s (Andors, 1983; Croll, 1983; Gilmartin, 1994; Honig, 1988; Wolf, 1985) focus on the effects of state ideologies and economic policies in urban and rural areas. These studies reveal that women's participation in the workplace did not create women's liberation as Marxist theory predicted. They address the conflicts that

arose from women's participation in social production. One issue is the "double burden" of working mothers working in and out of the home; another issue is the conflicts between women's interests and those of the state, a "public patriarchy" (Stacey, 1983, p193).

Most studies recognize that since the Great Leap Forward ³, Chinese women have participated in the labour force in unprecedented numbers. They also question whether Chinese women's social status has increased, and whether equality has been reached. Croll (1983) studied political and social-economic policies and discussed the redefinition of women's social position and expansion of women's economic roles in China. She argues that women's production and reproduction roles have been greatly influenced by the structures of the political economy. The ideology of equality is limited by ever-changing economic policies and these policies shape the relations between male and female, husband and wife, mother and child.

Andors (1983) examined development policy and social change in modern Chinese history between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. ⁴ Focusing specifically on the family, she explored how the new productive roles for women had affected the nature and functions of Chinese society; and whether the division of labour within the family changed. She found that although women participated in public labour, many remained tied to traditional domestic roles. Honig (1988) points out that people received mixed messages about the sexual division of labour. The media focused on women's individual achievements outside the home, but it ignored the double burden. Wolf (1985) noted that the double burden was recognized by the state and by the public, however, the state assumed that women (urban and rural) would overcome

³ Mass mobilization of women to participate in the labour force ("economic production") during 1958-1959 by the government.

⁴ A cultural movement initiated by Mao with a complexity of considerations. It was aimed at eliminating the differences between urban and rural areas; and at removing "bourgeois" ideas from both people's minds and social institutions constructed by these ideas, such as bureaucracy, and the pursuit of luxury. It also involved severe and complicated political struggles for power and ideologies.

the burden by hard work and sacrifice for the sake of family. Andors (1983) points out that Marxist theory identified the family as the source of women's inequality, yet lacked a coherent analysis of how female roles would be transformed.

Some authors point out that although the Chinese party leaders firmly believed that paid employment outside the home was the key to liberating women and building a society on genuine gender equality, the government was not unequivocal in its commitment to women's participation in the paid labour force (e.g. Honig, 1988; Wolf, 1985). Women's employment outside the home remained subject to the needs of the patriarchal state, maintaining male authority, and giving priority to men's needs. The importance of housework and childcare remained ignored even when the state wanted women to participate in the work force. When there was a surplus of urban employment women were encouraged to leave their jobs and contribute to socialist construction by engaging in housework.

Honig (1988) remarks that in modern China, as well as in the West, the conception of a good mother is a cultural and political invention. Chou En-lai's reprinted speech in the 1980s reveals this:

We respect and promote mothers' duties, not from the selfish point of view of male society, but from the point of view of the public interest of human society... there is no task in the world that is more glorious and enduring than mothers' duties. Women can do anything that human beings can do. However, since mothers' duties are inevitable, natural duties for any woman, in performing mother's duties, women may do fewer other things. This is not only permissible, but also necessary in the division of labour (Li, 1992: 116)

Liu (1993) describes the patriarchal nature of Chinese political ideology, and argues that the hegemonic discourse of the state posits equality between men and women by depriving the latter of their difference. In the rhetoric of the state, women are subsumed under the national agenda, and women's liberation means little more than equal opportunity to participate in public labour with little attention given to women's other interests and concerns.

The above-mentioned studies of structural mothering in modern Chinese conducted by Western feminist researchers, contribute important understandings of women's lives in modern China but have not paid enough attention to the issue of motherhood and mothering from the perspectives of mothers. Wolf (1985) discussed the changing kin relationships in a changing China and some of the negative impacts of the economic reform on the improvement of women's status. She also addressed the different lived experiences between rural and urban Chinese women. Wolf focused on the older generation of women who experienced both "The Old and the New Societies" in rural areas. Honig explored the views and feelings of women workers in their new roles and identities as workers. Her emphasis is on the issues of women as workers, and their feelings as workers. There is a lack in this research of a focus on modern Chinese women's mothering experiences. My research focuses on the mothering experiences of immigrant Chinese women and will provide important information and understanding of women's lives in modern China and their views about paid work and mothering in Canada as well.

CHAPTER TWO

GATHERING INFORMATION

Using Women's Experiences

This study adopts the principles of feminist research that use women's experiences (especially those of women in minority ethnic groups) as theoretical and empirical resources (Collins, 1994; Harding 1987). Women are a diverse group whose lives are influenced by a multiplicity of interconnections of different classes, races, and cultures. Much theorizing on mothering has occurred from white heterosexist middle-class perspectives and reflects only one type of mothering. This study attempts to join other feminist researchers who are challenging the way knowledge is produced by presenting seldom-heard views. A central concern among these researchers is to document the different cultural contexts and material conditions under which mothering has been carried out (Glenn 1994).

Collins suggests shifting the centre of feminist theorizing about motherhood to the ideas and experiences of women of other ethnicities. Such a shift also requires a different methodology and yields markedly different result. Collins states: "We must distinguish between what has been said about subordinated groups in the dominant discourse, and what such groups might say about themselves if given the opportunity" (Collins 1994: 48). Western feminist analysis has not only neglected women's experiences in other ethnic groups in North America; it has also neglected women's experiences in other societies, especially in developing countries and regions. In particular, there is a lack of information about immigrant women from China, just as women's mothering experiences in China have been rarely studied by both Chinese and foreign researchers. Gilmartin (1994) argues: "we need to attend to the ways in which Chinese women and men assign meaning to their own recent history. We must listen to how Chinese women's studies scholars frame their struggles" (p.7). It is in this gap that my study fits and corroborates Collins and

Gilmartin's arguments.

I used a qualitative research method because it is best for understanding the dynamics of a situation and the beliefs and perceptions of the people in that situation (Firestone 1993). The study explores the meaning of motherhood and mothering from Chinese mother's points of view through in-depth interviews. Attempts were made to place the emphasis on participants' perspectives and on understanding how participants make sense out of their experiences (Geertz, 1973; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1992; Smith, 1984). I used the approach of experiential analysis (Kirby & Mckenna, 1989; Reinharz, 1983) to explore meaning from the perspective of a group of people who live on the margins of Canadian society, to reveal "possible knowledge" related to the vantage point of Chinese immigrants (Morgan, 1983). I myself am from Chinese culture and I am a mother. During my study, I became a landed immigrant. My interpretation of the data is influenced by my own reflection, the interaction between me and my participants, and my roles as both outsider and insider of the study. As I work across the boundaries of insider (a Chinese immigrant mother) and outsider (a researcher), I attempt in this study to create a less ethnocentric cross-cultural research environment and approach.

Selecting Participants for Study

Initially, I attempted to recruit participants through contacts with agencies and individuals providing support services to Chinese immigrant women and their families in the Vancouver area. I sent a number of Letters of Initial Contact explaining the project and asking them to participate in the research. I had difficulty finding Mandarin-speaking women. As the process of searching for Chinese mothers from Mainland China went on, I found from word of mouth that many women from Mainland China were spouses of university students and were available to the study. I decided to select only those women who were spouses of international students from China at

one university in Vancouver for convenience, and for consistency within the data. Snowball sampling was used in the actual selection process of individuals.

Process of Gathering Information

The study was situated in an urban area of the lower mainland of Vancouver. The interviews were conducted in either my home or the participant's home, sometimes, in public places. A letter of consent was given to each participant in Mandarin before they agreed to a 1-2 hour interview. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin, and were audio taped with their permission. I asked these Chinese mothers to reflect on the choices they made about having children, childcare arrangements, their own education and employment both in China and in Canada. A detailed outline of the interview questions is attached in Appendix C. After transcribing the interviews, copies were sent to the participants for their feedback. No suggestions of changes were made to the Mandarin transcriptions by my participants.

Ethical Considerations

Respect for my participants was an important principle in my search for meaning and understanding. A permission letter was presented to each participant for signing before the interview. This Letter of Consent explained in detail that participants would be referred by pseudonyms in the transcripts and final products. Tape recordings and transcripts were coded for identification and the codes were kept in a secure place separate from the tapes. The translations from the Mandarin transcriptions were used for writing and discussions in a large research project, "the Meaning of women's Work" of which this study was a part. I also explained that the participants would not be written about in any way that would make them identifiable to others. The participants were told that at any time they could leave the study, if they so desired. If this situation occurred, I reassured them that any references would be deleted from my research notes,

the transcripts of the interview, and the tape recording of the interview. Nobody withdrew from this study.

Special Conditions and Immigration Experiences

These eight Chinese women all had university and above educational background in China, and worked for some length of time in state-run institutions before they came to Canada. They did not come to Canada as landed immigrants in the first place. They all came to Canada on visitor's visas as the spouses of international students from China during 1990-1992. This is significant because the women did not have permanent resident status in Canada; their present was ambiguous and their future unsure. For most of them, when they first came to Canada, they were not sure whether they wanted landed immigration status or not, and whether they could gain such status if they applied. Most of them started to apply for permanent residence status when Canadian immigration policy was loosened in 1993 at that time for overseas students with high educational backgrounds. As heterosexual spouses of international students, they were eligible to work in Canada, even before gaining permanent residence status. However, for various reasons, it was impossible for them to continue the same professional work and maintain a privileged social status they had enjoyed in China. Five of them gave birth to a child in China.

Most of these women lived in Canada with visitor's visas for approximately two years before gaining permanent residence status. Their circumstances changed so much in the process of coming to Canada that these mothers had to concentrate at first on making adjustments to the new environment. During this time, their desire for establishing new personal identity and social status were subject mostly to what the family needed; according to their husbands in this case, it was helping and supporting their spouses in school. For some, their interests or obligations as mothers had to be set aside temporarily. Not even the interests of the children were always considered first. Three of these women experienced separation from their children in China, and

joined their husbands in Canada to work or support them. Their mothering experiences were characterized by separation from their children in a special situation: moving to Canada. The following is a brief introduction of the eight participants in my study, and all their names are pseudonymous.

Introduction of the Participants

Congshan:

Congshan was 32 years old at the time of the interview in 1995, and had been married for seven years. She came to Canada in 1992, and became a landed immigrant in 1994. She has two children: one, a boy, and the second, a girl. Both were born in Vancouver, one before she gained permanent residence status and another was born after that. Her field of study in China was commerce, and she had worked for eight years as an accountant. Her husband obtained his PhD at a Canadian university, and was pursuing an MBA degree at the time of the interview.

She had been a caregiver for Caucasian families before she had her two children. She stayed home to care for her two children for six months in each case because her children's grandparents could not obtain visitor's visas. She expected extended familial support but did not get it. She sent her son back to China when he was six months old to let his grandparents look after him because she was planning to get into a job-training program as a UI recipient. Instead, she got pregnant again by accident. She wanted to abort, but her husband insisted that he wanted the child. She then went back to being a nanny for a Caucasian family until her eighth month of pregnancy. For the first six months after the second birth, she cared for the second child alone all the time, and later she used her childcare subsidy to hire a neighbour to care for her second child while she studied in a job-training program. Her son was with her mother-in-law until he was over 18 months old.

While she believes that husbands and wives should share equal responsibility in caring for their children, she admitted that this is only a theory. Since her husband was so busy with his studies, she had to take care of the children. She stated she did not plan to stay home forever as a housewife. One year after the interview, she finished her training program under the Unemployment Insurance program.

Han:

Han was 36 years old at the time of the interview, and a mother of one boy who was 8 years old, born in China. She had a university degree in China and had been a college instructor for years there. She came to Canada in 1992, and became landed immigrant at the end of 1994. She has been married for eight years. Her husband is supportive of her. Her husband's mother and family cared for her son in China after the child was born. Her husband shared childcare with her after work, and came to Canada when the child was 4 years old. One year later, Han came to Canada to live with her husband and left her 5-year old son behind with his grandparents in China. She says she is lucky to have such a helpful mother-in-law and family support. Although her child was mostly cared for by her extended family since he was a few months after birth, she feels it is important for a child to be cared for by the mother in the child's early years.

Coming to Canada, she stayed home for a while and then started to learn hairdressing in apprenticeship from a Chinese hairdresser. Her son joined her one year later when her apprenticeship was about to end. She then stayed home with her son again because she still could not find a job with her newly learned skills. Han wants to get a Canadian diploma in cosmetology in order to feel secure in this society. She says she would not stay home even if her husband could provide for her. She wants to do something outside of the home to feel fulfilled. In the interview, she said she was going to study in a local community college to obtain a formal Canadian diploma. One year later by the time of this writing, she had obtained a college diploma, and was employed.

Jiamei:

Jiamei was 31 years old, and had a son of two and half years old born in Canada at the time of the interview. She has been married for seven years. She is learning accounting at a community college. She has a Masters degree in Russian language and taught in China. Her husband is a PhD student in Math and worked as well before he came here.

After being exposed to Canadian culture, she now believes that parents should raise a child by themselves if they want a child. Her husband helped with childcare for the first month, and then she took over all the care. She would like to leave the workplace for at least one year in order to be a full-time mother. She enjoys mothering and appreciates that in Canada a woman is not necessarily expected to go back to work when the child is young. She was a student in an accounting program at the time of the interview, and her child was in a day care centre nearby. She was in full-time employment with that diploma six months later.

Ju:

Ju was 32 years old at the time of the interview, and had two children: one boy, 5 years old, and one girl, 1 and half years old. The girl was born in Canada. She had her Master's degree in China, and had worked there for a few years. She said her husband supported her pursuit of another graduate degree in Canada, and required their first child to be left in China with his parents. She was separated from this child until he was three, and then he was brought over by her parents. She was among the few who had "good luck" in having both her parents helping her with childcare and housework in both China and in Canada when she worked or studied. She said that her husband took care of all the domestic matters. However, she was expected to obey his decisions all the time. She seems to accept the belief that men are superior.

Qing:

Qing was 31 years old at the time of the interview, and had been married for 6 years. Her 4-year old son was born in China. She came to Canada in 1994, and had recently obtained landed immigrant status. She had a Chinese university diploma and was an administrative staff member at a university. Her husband was a PhD student in Civil Engineering. She came to Canada one year after her husband was here, and left her child in China with her parents. For one year, she worked in a Chinese restaurant that paid her less than minimum wage and was separated from her child. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled in an ESL job-training program as a UI recipient to learn Food Beverage Services. She is also receiving some childcare subsidy for her son in a day care centre. She never wanted to stay home to be a housewife and a mother. She wants to have a job to support the family and feel secure in this society. According to her, as a woman, she has "no choice" about whether she wants children or not, being a mother is just a natural thing.

Lan:

Lan was 38 years old at the time of interview, and her daughter is 22 months old. She came to Canada in 1990 on a student visa, and the next year she married her boy friend who came to Canada earlier. In 1992, she became a landed immigrant. With her Bachelor of Plant Science from China, she was able to do graduate work in biology here. She worked as a technician in a university after graduation. She stopped working in a chemical lab after her pregnancy was confirmed in 1993. Her child went to the university day care centre at the age of eight months. She enjoyed being a mother, but was also frustrated because she had no support or appreciation from her husband. She believed that being a mother is the most important thing for a woman, for the sake of children. She certainly wanted to continue her career after having the child, and used childcare for this reason.

Weifang:

Weifang was 30 years old at the time of the interview, and had been married for eight years. She had lived in Canada for three years. Her first son is 3.5 years old, and was born in China. She gained landed immigrant status in 1994. At the time of the interview, she was expecting another baby. She had been an accountant in China for two years. Her husband was in a PhD program in Forestry. She likes children very much and thinks that only "good-natured" women should become mothers. She came to Canada with her son in 1993 when her son was about 18 months old. She stayed at home with her child for four months and began to work in a university lab where her husband was studying until the time of interview. Her son had been in a family day care and university day care. She thinks that who should do the most housework is a family decision and the couples should not necessarily share equal amount of chores. She wanted to work to make a secure economic future for her children's well being and education.

Ying:

Ying was 32 years old at the time of the interview, and had been married seven years. Her son is four and half years old and was born in China. Her husband is a PhD student in Computer Science here. She also had a PhD degree from China, and was a senior Radiologist for more than 5 years before she came here. Her in-laws in China cared for her son when she was at work during the day while her husband was in Canada. In 1994, she came to Canada with her son to join her husband after a couple of years' separation. One year later, they gained landed immigrant status. Because she was very concerned about her son's adaptation to the society, she did not seek employment at first and at the time of the interview was still home with him full time.

She feels a great amount of responsibility for her son's development in all aspects. She said in conversation that she would like to be a full-time housewife as long as her husband can earn a lot of money, however, later she added that she would still want to continue her

profession in Canada. She is also confident that she would not lose her autonomy if she wants to be a homemaker because it is only a division of labour between her and her husband. She said she was able to do this because her husband was good. She wished to get a job where she could use her speciality, and she did this mainly for her son's sake: to provide him with best education she could manage. She started to work part time at a hospital not long after the interview and is still working at the time of this writing.

My Own Mothering Experience

I have two children, a daughter and a son. I had my daughter in China. I wanted to care for her myself during my pregnancy, and felt it was a dream of fulfilment of motherhood for a woman. I also desired that I could share both the toil and the happiness of caring for our child, the only child, with my husband. I think it is healthy for my child to have both parents around her throughout her growth. Although I expected to take the major responsibility in her growth, still I expected the same amount of sense of responsibility from the father of the child, even if only spiritually. Unfortunately, her father was away most of the time due to his location of work.

I was given a four-month maternity paid leave, and during that time I was a full-time mother. I stayed in my mother's house and my in-laws' house, however, I still felt exhausted. Nevertheless, I felt this was the time and energy I should devote to my child as a mother. After my four-month leave was over, I had to go back to work. I remember that I wished I could have a one-year leave to provide more mother care to my baby and to give myself more time to adapt to this new family situation. I could not imagine staying home more than that length of time because I thought work is more important than looking after children. Therefore, the decision was not whether to work or not, but how to arrange childcare.

I lived with my daughter together alone in the residence of my work unit. I could not rely on her grandparents because my mother still worked, and my mother-in-law, although retired, had

to take care of her husband and her other children. So they were not available for various reasons. Helped by my mother-in-law, I hired a live-in nanny from a small town near our city. I still had to do all the housework and also was responsible for this young girl's life. No matter how hard that period was for me, I firmly believed the idea that it was important for my daughter to be with me during her most early stage of life to have healthy emotional growth. I don't know where I got this belief. I don't think I had a chance to read any Western attachment theory at that time. I guess it was my own emotional need and hers, too. Although I was exhausted by the caring work, I did not complain. The only thing I felt anxious about was my neglect of my paid work for I also wanted to be good at my paid work, another fulfilment that I value very much. I was bewildered between my two kinds of work but wanted to be good at both.

When my child was one and a half years old, her nanny left my house without advance notice. After a few days' panic, I was introduced to a nearby factory day care with the help of my section leader (who was a woman). It was not an easy job. The day care did not provide food for children at my daughter's age because she could not feed herself yet. I had to cook all the meals in the evening, and get her lunch in a one-hour noon break, ride to the daycare by bike and feed her myself. Often, when I finished feeding her, I did not have time for my own lunch. I was always late for work and was not comfortable for I was originally a self-disciplined person and always wanted to have good work performance. I had no choice at that time. I had to survive between being a good mother and a good employee. The only way was to work myself to death. During that time I did not have any entertainment, or any social life. All my energy went to my two jobs: at home, and at the office. At the time, they seemed in such conflict.

My hardship seemed reduced when my child turned three years old, the time for her to go to a public day care and have a lunch there provided by the centre. Only factory nurseries provide

services for infants and toddlers. Sometimes I envied women factory workers, because they didn't have to worry about finding childcare although the quality of childcare may not have been good.

Just as I seemed to be able to resume to a more normal life (less daily fighting to survive), I encountered a chance for my professional upgrading. A project sponsored by Canadian International Development Agency was recruiting people to receive management training in Canada for one year. I finally decided to go, in spite of *my* attachment to my daughter, and all her needs for me. I wanted to take the exams in order to say to myself that I have tried. But the result was that I got hired among the six of us out of more than one hundred applicants and the only female. I got to go! But my heart was bleeding as the day of departure approached. The only relief was that I had arranged a daycare for her, and she was going to be with my parents (they had since retired). People had different responses toward my one-year leave. My parents and friends were happy for me to have an opportunity to go abroad to study though they were sorry for my separation from my daughter. However, they and I believed that this was something my daughter, my husband, and I had to sacrifice for better hopes in the future. This was a time for my daughter to learn to be away from her mother, and to get used to being with her other family members and get training from day care life. I expected her to begin her early education at day care. Our emotions would suffer, but this was the price we had to pay. Other people could not have the "luck" to pay!

When I went back home after one year's emotional suffering, I was so glad that my daughter did not have any problem in approaching me. We were as close as ever. And I swore to myself that I would never leave her again. I never knew at that time that both of us had to endure another trial later. Four years later, I came to Canada to study in this graduate program (Department of Educational Studies, UBC) and I left her with my mother again. I was caught by guilt this time more than the first time, mostly because I felt the helplessness and sadness for not

being able to be with her (this time, not for her need for physical care but for her education). In some people's eyes, my efforts were the very thing a good mother should do. Interestingly, however, in Chinese culture a child's education is considered the responsibility of the father. But a more moving story is about the mother of Men Zi (who is the greatest successor of Confucius). She is the role model of a good Chinese mother who would do everything for her son's education. She moved three times in order to choose a proper neighbourhood for her son to grow up in. Where my action is different from Men Zi's mother is that I am doing this, not only for my daughter, but also for my own interests. In comparison, in ancient China, a mother was supposed to live only for her husband and son's interests, and her reward and glory would rely on the status of her husband and son(s).

I had my second child in Canada while I was still in my graduate study. I took a one-year leave and was a full-time mother again. I was even more exhausted than the first time because I was and am doing the caring work and housework almost all by myself. My husband was a restaurant worker and came home very late at night. Even if I am willing to care for my children, and trying to do my best, I still feel so tired all the time. Oftentimes I want to run away to have a break. At those moments, I feel deeply confused about mothering. I know that when I put a lot of my energy into taking care of them, I am losing time doing the things for my professional and career growth. I know that I won't be satisfied only by my children's achievements as women in the older time were supposed to have been. Therefore, I have been anxious that my career growth is being slowed and even delayed by my mothering. I relied heavily on the assurance that there would be childcare services for my child after he was three. I would be very frustrated if all I could do was to take care of him. The job is tiring, and to me, very often boring, and messy. It makes me vulnerable to low self-esteem, even though it is theoretically, or superficially highly appraised; it does not obtain high respect from society.

In traditional and modern Chinese culture, women may think that caring for their children is something that has to be done without pay. They may conceive of the pay as in the good future and high achievements of their children. In the countryside, women need their children to support them in their old years, but in urban areas nowadays, people don't expect their children to help them economically since they have pensions. All they do for children is supposed to be out of duty and love. In China, there is an expression to describe the work of mothering: heavenly duty.

Recalling my own story reminds me that I am not satisfied with only having this work of "heavenly duty". My struggles between being a good worker, student, and mother helps me to understand both myself and my participants as women since they used to live in the same country and largely the same culture as I did; I also had the same painful experience of separating from my first child as some of them did. Both me and my participants believe that a woman will achieve a complete womanhood by being a mother, but at the same time believe that paid work is more important than mothering at home. Although some Western writers (e.g. Andor, 1983, Honig, 1988; Liu, 1993) observed that women's employment outside the home remains subject to the needs of the patriarchal state, my own experience and that of the participants in this study reveal that employment is also in the interests of women themselves. We did not want to stay home for a few years to care for the children. What we are concerned about is available and good childcare.

Through exploring my own mothering experience, I see more clearly my complicated and contradictory feelings toward mothering. On the one hand, mothering was not seen as important as a woman's paid work; on the other hand, I also see this mothering is something I would want to achieve in terms of my own sense of fulfilment of my dreams of a complete womanhood.

Telling my own story also provides for readers another dimension of the picture of how difficult it could be – what complicated feelings mothers could have to go through -- while mothering in China during the 1980s. What is different from my story and my interviewees'

stories is that I did not receive extended family support as much as most of these women did. It shows that mothering is not a universal practice (Glenn, 1994); even in China where it is assumed that extended family support is always there, the individual case is often different. Each individual's mothering practice is subject to different family circumstances and conditions, no matter whether a mother can receive extended family help or not, and how much she can receive, one thing is true: childcare remains women's work, even in China.

Summary

In this chapter, I presented a rationale for using a feminist perspective to study a group of Chinese immigrant women's conceptions of mothering. The process of gathering information was then introduced. The study was based on in-depth ethnographic interviews with eight Chinese mothers who were recent immigrants from Mainland China. The participants were selected through a snowball sampling technique. I then asked questions about their motherhood and their employment in their country of origin and in Canada. The study attempts to understand the meaning of motherhood and mothering drawn from these women's experiences. I focused on the ways these women's conceptions of mothering and employment have been reframed in a cultural transition. Their special conditions and immigration experiences were discussed in order to understand their specific circumstances in this cultural transition. I described each participant and their circumstances in order to situate them. I also presented my own mothering experiences in both China and Canada to give readers a space to see my possible biases and my personal position in analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTIONS AND CONDITIONS OF MOTHERING IN CHINA

The participants' initial conceptions of mothering were constructed at a particular time and cultural climate: The Chinese government officially stated that men and women were equal. This was supported by the political structure of the socialist system, and enforced by law, an ideal that the majority of women believed. Moreover, China needed women's participation in the labour force to increase in order to increase social productivity. Thus, women's increased labour force participation has been an economic policy since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and was implemented rapidly during the Great Leap Forward. Women with young children were mobilized to go out of the home to join the labour force. The women in this study were all born after 1957 when their mothers put most of their energy to their paid work, willingly or not.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a context and understanding of these Chinese women's original conceptions before they came to Canada. I first discuss Chinese women's employment opportunities and surrounding social expectations, for these expectations have a major role in shaping the conditions and conceptions of mothering in China. This background discussion is crucial for us to understand more deeply how and in what ways these women conceptualized mothering when they came to live in Canada. I then, examine particular conditions of mothering for these women in China: 1) paid maternity leave; 2) familial support; and 3) extra-family childcare. Next, I discuss the sociological constructs and constraints around the conceptions of mothering in a Chinese context, particularly focusing on: 1) the ideology of womanhood, mothering and family, 2) children's needs, and 3) social expectations about mothering.

Women's Employment in China

In China, both the official message, and women's belief is that employment is a basic occupation for women to develop themselves and the society. Working for wages is also considered the material foundation for achieving economic independence and other rights⁵ for women. With the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, women gained paid employment rights equal to men's. The Constitution states clearly: "Women enjoy equal rights with men in economic life. Men and women receive equal pay for equal work" (Investigation Team for the Survey of Social Status of Chinese Women, 1993). The Marriage Law (1950, 1980, quoted in China in Brief, 1993) in China specifies that both husband and wife must have the freedom to engage in production and other work, to study and to participate in social activities. Moreover, women's participation in the labour force is also a strategic economic policy for the country. According to Chinese official statistics, in 1993, over 82 percent of urban women between 16-54 years old were employed" (Investigation Team for the Survey of Social Status of Chinese Women, 1993).

All eight participants in this study were assigned to work units in China after they graduated from university. Their employment was guaranteed for life, and their pay was equal to men with the same education level. They were expected to work equal to men. For many years in China, once an individual was assigned to a particular work unit, all her future was tied to and controlled by this work unit. Each work unit is supposed to follow any law created by the state and to take care of its employees in all aspects of their lives.

⁵ Broyelle's study (1977) reveals that Chinese women play various social roles. According to Broyelle, the first step towards the emancipation of women is to ensure that they are fully able to participate in social labour.

Even when a woman wanted to stay home longer it was not easy for her to do so. For example, Ying wanted to stay home longer, but it was the regulation that she returned to work. Ju explains,

For sure, you have to go back to work. Yes. Nobody seemed to say so (not going back). Nobody ever stayed home taking care of her child. Maybe our work unit is different, there, everybody must go to work. If you don't work, you wouldn't be considered for anything, such as professional title, this sort of thing. It is not as simple as you are not paid if you do not go. Sometimes, I'd rather not to have the pay, but you just can't do it.

Not going back to work is not just a loss of professional status, but also a loss of seniority, promotion, and other financial benefits. Ordinary families need income but also the woman would lose her skills if she stopped working. In modern China, a woman is expected to contribute equally with her husband to the family finances. Congshan says,

What the problem in China is that maybe your husband respects you very much because the social status of the wife is not low the husband would respect her labour. However, the wage structure in China is not good. If only one person works outside, and the wife stays home caring for the child, the income and the status will both be affected. This means that society does not give you reward for mothering.

Jiamei echoed this,

It is difficult for one person to earn money for the whole family in China. It is impossible for a woman not to go out to work. If you do not go out, I think the people around you would look down on you.

Not only does the state regulate and enforce equal employment, the economic conditions are such that most people have to work, men and women alike. A woman's self perception and social status are measured by her work performance or her career achievements, not by her mothering.

Conditions of Mothering

Five of the women interviewed had at least one child in China, and all were from urban centres. All five had worked in state-owned work units before giving birth to their first child. One was a medical doctor, three worked in universities as lecturers or administration staff, and one was an accountant. These five were entitled to and received paid maternity leave in China ranging

from three months to ten months, and all of them went back to work when their maternity leave was finished.

These women's mothering was structured by the particular conditions of mothering and resources they had access to: 1) state-funded maternity leave; 2) familial support (including extended familial and spousal assistance); and 3) extra-family care (including nannies and baby sitters, and day care centres).

Paid Maternity Leave

The political structure of modern China supports women's employment. One way that the government does this is to provide paid maternity leave (The Situation of Chinese Women, 1994). Women are entitled to 'Special Rights' by law for the protection of their health during child rearing times. This set of special rights implies an addressing of previous inequality and now the equal opportunity of employment of Chinese women with men. A mandatory 90-day maternity leave, with an additional fifteen days for special cases such as a difficult labour or twins is one example of these special rights (China in Brief, 1993) ⁶. Each work unit can create additional regulations if desired. The paid maternity leave was intended to give mothers enough time to physically recover from birthing rather than to care for their baby. In some work units, a husband is given a 15-day leave after his wife gives birth to help with household chores. This leave is transferable to the woman, if need be. In the 1950-1960s, women who worked in the state-owned work units had 56 days of paid maternity leave.

Five women in the study used their special rights during pregnancy and after birthing. Ju had a three-month leave, Qing received four months. Ying was entitled to four month's leave

⁶ The Chinese government has published the "Regulations for the Protection of Female Workers and Staff While Working" and the "Interim Regulations for the Protection of the Health of Female Workers and Staff" which include comprehensive measures addressing the wellbeing of female workers and staff. (China in Brief: 22-23).

because she had a Caesarean birth. Her husband was entitled 15 days parental leave from his work unit, but he was allowed to transfer these 15 days to his wife Ying if he did not use them, so Ying had an extra 15 days. Weifang received ten months because her work unit provided extra time in addition to the state-regulated leave. She received seventy-percent of her salary during the extra time.

In modern China, it is a common practice for a Chinese woman to work outside the home during her work life (between age of 18-55) and to return to work soon after her children are born. The special attention and treatment of paid maternity leave provides women with an important opportunity to recover their health, to ensure fair access to employment, and to continue the family. There are two conditions encouraging working in China. First, women are expected to continue working after childbirth, and to do so, someone else must look after her child. Therefore, many children are cared for by others from the time they are very young. Most often, and in the case of the participants in this study, childcare support comes from the family. Extended family members, usually retired parents⁷, especially the mothers, are the major caregivers. The husband's help is most available during the time of their confinement⁸.

Familial Childcare Support

From the beginning of their maternity leave, these five mothers were engaged in childcare activities. However, they did not do this alone. Four of them (Ju's husband was away in Canada) lived with their husbands at the time when they gave birth. During their confinement, three were assisted by their husbands. All of the participants received assistance in various ways from their

⁷ In present China, the legal retirement age for men is 60 years old, and for women is 55 years old.

⁸ In China, there is a custom of "confinement." The confinement allows a birth-woman one-month rest without doing heavy housework, except feeding the baby. It is widely believed in China that during this month, she must not expose herself to cold, otherwise her health will be ruined for the rest of her life (specifically, her joints will ache because of the coldness that gets into the body by touching cold water).

parents or in-laws during and after the maternal leave. These women's childcare experiences reflect the traditional child-rearing practices in urban China: spousal and extended familial assistance provides the majority of childcare support, especially for young children under three years old.

Spousal Assistance

Three women received their husband's help after they gave birth to their child. Washing diapers is a major chore for women in China. Qing recalled:

Yes, we cared for the child together. We both worked on campus, so it was not very busy. In my first month, my husband washed diapers. After I finished the first confinement month, I could touch cold water⁹, so I did more. Then he was preparing TOEFL for overseas study, and he was very busy at work. If he had time, he would help me. After he came from work, he looked after the child, and then I could cook.

Ying was even more satisfied with her husband's sense of responsibility. For the first six months after their baby son was born, he assisted with feeding:

In the first six month, the child was both breast-fed and milk fed. He fed the child milk during the night. He did that all the time after the baby was brought home from the hospital until he was six-month old. He went to work during the day, while I was home looking after the baby.

Ying appreciated her husband for his role in feeding the baby, getting up in the night to give his wife more time to rest. This situation, however, only lasted six months because he came to Canada to study. Her in-laws moved in after that to share in childcare duties.

Although three women gained assistance in childcare, none relied totally on their husband. The husbands were more likely to help in the first month if there was no other helper. The women found that their husbands were often "too busy" to do more or they were absent, as in Ju and Weifang's case. Weifang did not expect or receive any help from her husband because of "the

⁹ See the previous footnote.

nature of his work" which often required him to be away on work duty for months. In every case, each husband was working to come to Canada, which further limited his already limited time.

Extended Familial Assistance

Extended familial childcare support is a tradition in China. It is also a practical solution for working mothers. Usually, the actual support comes from the mother or the mother-in-law of the woman. In some cases, other female relatives of the family are the helpers. Since the 1950s, women were expected to work outside the home. To achieve this goal, women had to be freed from the heavy demands of childcare. Many of these women expected and received familial support. The family structure for ordinary people in modern China is very similar to Canadian family structure, that is, a nuclear family model. Unlike Canada, however, the Chinese social system is still strongly influenced by tradition. It has retained the extended family connections so young mothers can expect their elders and other female relatives to care for their children. Extended familial support is also crucial in supplementing the centre or group day care services because most families do not prefer day care centres as an ideal arrangement for young children under three years old.

For the women in this study, a substantial amount of childcare support came from their extended family members. For example, Weifang didn't expect her husband to share in caring because she received sufficient support from her maternal extended family members. She went to her mother's home to give birth and stayed there for her whole maternity leave. She says:

I stayed in my mother's home until I went back to work. (My husband) went there once a week, to just have a look because he worked in the forestry department, and was always on business trips to the countryside. Once he was away from home, he did not return for one month or half a month. How can I expect him? I couldn't expect him to help.

All her maternal family members including her siblings who lived nearby helped Weifang:

It seemed to me that I had already been used to this situation. Because his work was, just in that kind of nature. Anyway, I had been used to his absence. I was at my mother's home, and if he could come to help, it was good. If he couldn't make it, there were many

people in the family anyway. My father, mother, brother, and sister, all were nearby and could help. Therefore, I rather did not care about his absence. I wasn't so busy at that time that I wished him to come back to help.

Han had her parents-in-law help her right after she had her first baby. She recalls:

Isn't this a good thing about our home country? Our parents are all retired¹⁰ and could take care of this matter without question. At that time, my husband's mother and father both retired and didn't have much to do. They also had promised to look after the child for us. They did everything.

Qing's parents were not retired when she had the baby. They still tried to help in other ways, such as cooking for her. They also managed some childcare after work if there was a need. Qing recalled:

His parents were far from us; my father and mother had not retired then. So no way (to let them to care for the child). However, my parents lived very close to us, and gave me much help.

Usually when these mothers went back to work after their maternity leave was finished, they received or continued to receive extended familial childcare support. Ju felt most lucky: "I am lucky because both of my two kids are taken care of by our parents". In China, Ju's in-laws cared for her three-month old baby while she went back to work. She later left her son when he was eight months old with her in-laws when she came to join her husband in Canada. They were separated for more than two years.

Most of these women's parents or in-laws lived in the same city with them in China, though they did not live together in one house. Even when geographically separated by thousands of miles, the grandparents might come to the children's house to live and take the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren. For example, Ying's parents-in-law lived in the rural area in Anhui province far away from Beijing, yet, after Ying's husband left for Canada, they came all the way

¹⁰ The official retirement age in China for male is 65, and for female is 55.

to Beijing to live with Ying, and help her in the caring. Ying recalls her intention to keep both the child and her in-laws together with her:

At that time, actually, his parents really wanted to take the child to their home. They felt that it was too hard for me to care for him in Beijing. They hoped that they could go home with the child. They wanted to go back to their hometown. I said to them, if you want to go that's fine. However, I will keep the child with me, and look after him myself. In the end, they did not have the heart to leave the child alone with me, and they did not have the heart to see me so tired, so they never left. They never went back.

Another common experience for these Chinese women was that they gave birth and started to mother during the time that their husbands left for Canada, or were preparing to come to Canada. For them, obtaining extended family support was even more crucial and necessary. All these women's spouses left China for Canada when their children were young. In this case, these women had to rely heavily on the support of their children's grandparents. When some of the mothers went to Canada leaving the child behind, the mothering responsibility of caring for the child had totally fallen on the shoulders of their retired parents.

Extra Childcare

Because mothers are expected to go back to work soon after the children are born, using extra childcare support is a common practice for families in modern China. These five women all used extra-child care: public day care centres, and nannies or baby-sitters.

Day Care Centres

Usually, unless in special circumstances, Chinese families do not like to send their children under three or two years old to public child care services. One reason is that Chinese people believe that when a child is under two or three years old his or her needs are mostly physical. A day care worker can not provide this care as well as a mother or a family member. Also, children under two at least, are considered too young to leave their mother (in a normal situation), and it is believed that their emotional needs are best met when their mother and/or extended family care them for. Day care is considered only when all other resources are exhausted. A day care centre

is not considered the best place for meeting children's physical and emotional needs, but most Chinese people in both urban and rural areas believe it is the best place for children's intellectual development and socialization. Once a child reaches three years old, the most desirable place for the child to go is the day care centre. Day care fees vary depending on who runs it. For a day care run by a government institution, the fee is generally less expensive. If a community runs it, the fee is a bit higher. The day care in the factory is usually the most inexpensive one because it is counted as one part of the benefit a worker is entitled to.

Ying sent her son to the day care in her work unit when he was two years and eight months old after his grandparents went back to their home. Han's child was sent to a neighbourhood day care when he was one and a half-year-old because Han wanted him to get some training. She withdrew him soon after because she was not satisfied with the conditions and services there. She was concerned that her son was not being well fed there. Ju's son was in day care only for a few days at the age of two because the grandparents could not bear to hear him crying so much.

Extra-family Caregivers

If a mother has difficulty in securing sufficient extended familial care, an extra-family caregiver is considered the next to best choice because she has one-on-one contact with the child, and stays with the child a longer time. Often, grandmothers take the responsibility to seek extra childcare assistance for their daughters or daughters-in-law when they themselves are not available for various reasons.

A caregiver is called "Ayi" in Chinese (a respectful title used to greet any female who is about the same age group as a child's mother). Those women hired to care for young children are often from poor rural areas, or they are the relatives of the family. Sometimes, friends help to introduce some one to work for them. The family pays for a nanny or baby-sitter's care work. A nanny's pay is various; it is approximately 5-10 percent of a woman's income. As far as I know,

grandparents sometimes help to pay some amount. However, I did not ask whether the women in this study received financial support from their parents. Grandparents care, together with certain amount of care from a nanny or baby-sitter is the optimum situation or the idea mostly desired. Among the five women who had their child in China, two used extra family care. Qing hired a nanny when she went back to work. Weifang had a young baby-sitter to help at her mother's home right after birthing and later when she returned to work.

Many Chinese families only use extra caregivers to provide physical care as a transitional arrangement. They believe that once the child is older, day care is the ideal place to go. Lan said,

I think I should send her (Lan's daughter) to day care. Some people look for a babysitter. Babysitters are inexpensive, but for the interests of the child, and from a long run, day care is better. Day care is good.

Jiamei remarked:

Babysitter can only look after him (her son) temporarily when there is no choice. In the long run, for example, if we hire a babysitter, he would only play with the babysitter. I think that is not good for the child.

Ying added:

Although babysitting is a choice, but is quite troublesome to have a babysitter. First, the child would not have any company except for the babysitter. Then you have to consider the individual quality of the babysitter, and whether she has certain sense of responsibility. So selecting a babysitter is a headache, not like sending a child to day care.

Conceptions of Mothering

I discuss here the sociological constructs and constraints around the conceptions of mothering in a Chinese context. I specially focus on 1) conceptions of womanhood, mothering and family, 2) children's needs, and 3) social expectations of mothering.

Conceptions of Womanhood, Mothering and Family

The participants' concepts of motherhood were grounded in their ideas about womanhood. This has a strong connection to a traditional ideology of the family in Chinese culture, which prioritizes the interests of a family before that of the individuals. These women revealed that their

ideas of mothering were shaped by their ideas about what a family should be, and the role of a woman in it.

Although all of these women used to be career women, none of them would be willing to trade their right of motherhood for a high potential of career development. They all wanted a family and believed that a family without a child is not complete. They stated that it is natural and important for them to have (at least) one child for the family. All of them told me that they wanted a child for their marriage/family at some point in their lives. One could not have a family without a child. If so, it would be "defective", as Weifang put it. "Something missing" according to Ju. Jiamei called such a family a "tragedy". Han explains:

If you have a family and no children, you would not have a complete family. This is what I think. If I didn't have a child, then I would think that this were a bit too cruel, very cruel. This (a family without a child) also would not be counted as human life.

For these women, having a child or children was seen as the most meaningful thing for having a family. They also said having a child was their obligation and responsibility. This firm conviction to family life can be traced back to a powerful traditional concept: it is not filial to your parents and the nation if you do not have offspring (generally, boys). Even in China now, one still would not feel competent and fulfilled if she or he did not have any children. This ideology comes from a mix of cultural, social, familial, and psychological influences.

These women said that being a mother is something definite for them. If they could not be a mother (including the possibility of infertility) it would be a great "regret" forever and their lives would be incomplete. Motherhood is inextricable from their identity as women. Ying states firmly,

One thing I am positive of it, if a woman does not become a mother in all her life, it must be regret, and her life is not complete. Even if now when I feel that I have a lot of problems, and when I feel it is a real trouble to have children, I still feel that if I were not a mother, my life would be incomplete.

Jiamei says:

If a woman does not become a mother, what would you feel? What would be your feeling when you become a mother? Moreover, what would you feel if you were not a mother? If I were not a mother, I think, it would be the biggest regret in my life.

It is clear that their ideas about motherhood are grounded in two major convictions: family obligation and personal fulfilment of womanhood. Motherhood is seen as indispensable to their idea of womanhood. However, having children is not all they want as women. These Chinese mothers indicated that being "just" a mother is not what they desired. Motherhood should be only one part of a woman's life. Another important part of being a woman is the other social roles gained through employment and career development. Employment and career development represent a higher and ideal level of personal fulfilment; only by also pursuing a career can a woman's life be complete. I interpret that here they are talking about an ideal of personhood. An ideal womanhood includes motherhood and personhood, for the latter, a woman should have all other interests in addition to motherhood and mothering. These women include mothering and work (paid job or a career) as two elements of their life. All these women stated that both elements were important for them. Congshan was very firm on that: "I want children, and I want a career, too. These are the two parts of my life. I don't want to give up any of them." Ju also stated her attitude firmly: "Not that I give priority to my work (in relationship to mothering), I mean, I don't ignore my career."

These Chinese women, on the one hand have adopted the idea that a family is an important part of being a woman, and believe having children is a family obligation and part of personal fulfilment. On the other hand, they also believe having a career is an important part of being a woman, and are firm in pursuing outside employment as another integrated part of womanhood. It seems that they were not affected by the freedom in the West that a woman could choose not to have children. They seem to have a deep assumption that a woman can only live a full life if she becomes both a mother and a paid worker.

Ideas about Children's Needs

These women identified children's needs in three themes: 1) physical needs, 2) emotional needs, and 3) educational needs.

Physical Needs

Chinese people generally have different attitudes than mainstream Canadians towards and responses to what children need according to what age group they grow into. In most urban areas and many rural areas as well, Chinese people think for children under two or three years old mostly need physical care, such as feeding and changing. Because the need is more physical, they believe that this care can be provided by a number of people, not just the mother, except for breastfeeding. This idea eases employed mothers' separation anxiety. Han recalls: "I think my mother-in-law is especially good. She did everything. Every time when I went to work, I always felt well assured."

These mothers believe that mothercare is the best because of the blood tie between the child and the mother, and it is assumed that the mother gives unconditional mother love. However, they also agreed that others could care for the child as well. The women's experiences in China demonstrate that clearly. I interpret that when these women talk about mothercare, they mean that the child is mostly cared for by the mother, but not necessarily all alone by the mother. Normally, it is okay for a mother to leave the child for a certain time and come back (at least in order to breast feed), but not to be separated from the child for a long time, for instance, not living with the child. It does not mean that the mother should care for the child 24 hours a day. Even this idea is more ideal than realistic for many Chinese, especially for the participants in my study when they experienced an unusual course of moving to Canada. Ju only cared for her son for three months during maternity leave. After that, her in-laws cared for her son in their home because her husband was already in Canada. Her husband wanted her to spend more time to

prepare for the TOEFL to get into university when she came to Canada, so he arranged for his parents to take care of the child. Because Ju's in-laws lived far away from Ju's place, Ju only went there to see her son once a month. When her son was 8 months old, she left him completely with them and came to Canada. Nevertheless (maybe just because of this experience), Ju still believes that a child needs mothercare most under three years old.

Ying also could have chosen to let her in-laws take her 18-month-old son away from her to their hometown. Instead, she considered sending her son to day care because she did not want her child to leave her. She made this compromise in order to be near her son even though she believed that public daycare isn't as good as family care.

Emotional needs

In the conversations with these women, children's emotional needs were not extensively discussed, and it seems that these mothers were more concerned about their children's educational needs. I also did not have direct questions about children's emotional needs because initially I myself did not see it as an important part in my exploration of these women's mothering experiences. Although I asked about their feelings toward the separation from the child, the participants did not explicitly talk about it either. The preference for mothercare was discussed more in terms of physical needs than emotional needs.

Although children's emotional needs were not clearly discussed by these women, there was evidence that they were aware of these needs. For example, Ying's decision to send her son to the day care instead of having him away with her in-laws shows that she could not bear the separation, and thought her son could not either. Children's emotional and psychological welfare was not explicitly tied to the availability of both parents when they are young. The women's belief that two parents offer the best situation for children's psychological and emotional needs is implied rather than stated.

Educational Needs

These women talk more about their responsibility for their children's education than for their emotional welfare. All of these mothers indicated that their children's education was their biggest concern. They have made a long-term commitment to educating their children. Ying expressed her sense of responsibility,

The key is responsibility. Now I feel it is very heavy. Maybe I am living too seriously. I feel this responsibility on me all the time, always, very heavy. Any weakness or mistake of my child would make me worry. I am very anxious, thinking how can he be like that, how can I correct him?

In our conversations, the children's education was spoken about in two dimensions: first, family education, and second, education in public childcare.

Family education. In their discussion, they refer to family education first as a healthy family environment with both parents in it; second, to environments where parents are good role models for their children's moral development; and most ideally, a situation where parents spend time teaching children some essential reading and writing skills. Jiamei says,

Of course, this education does not only mean school education. Family education is reflected from all aspects, from very small things. It is a very abstract concept, actually, every small thing manifests education.

Different from their expectation for their extended family in childcare, these women expressed a great concern of the role their children's grandparents play in their education. They believed that it is not a good idea for the children to live with their grandparents alone, or with only one parent as some of their children experienced. All of these women believe that a child should live with both parents, who play different roles in the child's development. Weifang says,

I think children should live with their parents, in that, I mean in a complete family. When they grow old, it is also not good to be home alone or left only with their grandparents. When he is young, it does not matter whether only his mother cares for him. However, when he is older, like my son's age - he likes his father very much - he and other children too, especially boys, in their personality development, need fatherly guidance. Although his mother gives more care to him, her character, compared with his father, there is a big

difference! I think for a child, it is most ideal to live with his parents together, and grow with them around.

These women believe that having both parents with them is important for their children's educational needs. Obviously, these women wanted to provide children with different role models- two parents - different in their characters and approaches. For example, Jiamei thinks that mother and father teach a child differently at home. Han further explained this father-mother difference:

I think, for a child, during the course of his development, the relationship he has with a female and a male is different. For example, a female is more tender in character, and more thorough and exquisite when speaks and acts, while a father, generally speaking, has that kind of authority, and in a masculine manner. It's different!

Congshan proposed a most ideal family living environment for children:

The best way is to let children live with their parents, and have their grandparents from time to time. This is very good. If the parents both work, and have the ability to hire a nanny, or a babysitter, so the both parents' careers will not be affected, and the children's well being will not be affected, too.

Although the women spoke clearly about living with both parents, the issue of teaching their child to read was not explicitly discussed as part of these women's experience in China. This may be because their children were too young to learn to read while they were in China. A large component of family education is moral cultivation. Han, for example, gave much attention to this moral cultivation,

I stress the cultivation of his moral character. That is to say, he should possess traditional Chinese virtues. For example, a person should respect the old and love the young. He or she should not be selfish and should care about others in every circumstance. I often tell him (my son) these things.

Morality is taught in the family by what parents say and do. Therefore, the potential and continuous influence of the parents is the most important factor in children's morality and character development. Weifang's words capture all the others: "Parents act as role models for the child, to build his moral character. This is the most important." Ying states:

The most essential responsibility is education of the child because one can not rely on society for children's education. Nowadays the good influences of a society towards children, compared with the bad influences, if say, not the same amount, are not much there. I often have this fear (about the bad social influences). I think, the most important part of a mother's responsibility is to educate the child. If the society doesn't have good influence on the child, then in order to have a good influence on the child, it goes to the parents to set up role models for the child. This is most essential.

Education in centre or group childcare. If family is an important environment for the children's moral development, the day care centre is seen as the most important environment for children to learn socialization skills, especially collective awareness. These mothers rely on centre or group day care services for many reasons. First, childcare is considered to be good for learning social skills so children are more ready for school. The women firmly believe that if their children live in a group life environment, they will be more sociable, and have better communication skills. Ying says,

To let him (her child) into a collective group and he will learn how to get along with other people. If he does not know how to play with other little friends, and does not know how to live in a group, later he will have big trouble.

In addition to a cultural tradition that emphasizes the collective, these women's faith in day care centres to socialize their children may be because of the "one child" policy in China. Because their children are usually the only children in a family, they get more attention compared to a family with more children. Because they are so precious in the family, they believe that the adults in the family tend to spoil the only child. The child also feels self-centred easily in an excessively nurturing environment. Parents believe in the importance of a group environment for the healthy psychological development of the child. Han's remarks represent this common concern,

When we were in China, we both hoped to send him to day care. We hoped that with kids together, he could have some collective/group life. Having group life with other kids is very important, especially for those only children. If a child doesn't go to day care, and stays home, he or she will not be social.

These women have a strong sense of responsibility as mothers. They believe that mothering is caring for young children, being a good role model and providing educational

opportunities when they are older. Their focus of the concern shifts, as the children mature, from the children's physical care to moral development and social skills. These women's stories reveal that they believe their most important responsibility is education. They see physical care as temporary, and something that can be shared with others.

Social Expectations and Values of Mothering

Modern Chinese society expects a married woman to have a child, and to work outside the home while her child is still young. This social expectation has been deeply internalised by the women. It is believed essential that for a woman to have a complete life she must have a family, be a mother and have a career.

All of the women interviewed expressed a desire to stay home with their children longer than they had been able to or than they had in China. However, when the five women recalled their experiences in China, their emotional attachment to their children was not clearly addressed, or named. They did not emphasize mothering in the same way, or to the same extent, in their discussions of mothering in China as they did in the discussion of mothering in Canada. Their mothering conceptions were deeply shaped by the Chinese social system and the ideology of equality. Staying home was not encouraged, instead, having achievements in their work or career was more expected. This indicates that the dominant attitude toward motherhood is that work is more important than caring for children at home.

This social expectation is reinforced by women's families, most often by their parents (especially, mothers). Whether or not these grandmothers had been employed or stayed at home with their children, whether they could look after the child or not, they insisted their daughters take working outside the home seriously. This is probably because these women's parents belonged to the generation of the "Great Leap Forward" when women were required to put work before domestic matters always. Jiamei describes her parent's attitudes vividly,

My sister went back to work four months after she had the baby. My mother didn't want to look after the baby for her. His grandmother didn't want to help her either. I wrote to my sister. I said that the child was too young, and I asked her to stay home for a period. However, my parents said, how could she do that! Then her career would be affected. She is a doctor! So they think that career is very important. Actually, my parent's generation was more serious about a career. What about children? Don't care! Their whole minds were on production, on work. You know that.

For these women's parents' generation, mothering was minimized and public child care facilities were everywhere, free or inexpensive (Lee, 1992). In this generation, a good mother is supposed to be a good worker without neglecting her mothering duties.

These women may have taken for granted social expectations and values about relationships between mothering and work while they lived in China. When they came to Canada, however, they brought their attention to not only the differences between Chinese and Canadian social expectations of mothering but also their own understanding of the relationship between work and mothering. Han comments,

I think the females in China who have had that kind of (high) education are very strong, not like Westerners. Westerners think that taking a good care of children is all a mother's responsibility. In China, this won't do. It seems that as a mother, you must work and you must care for the child. If all your time goes to the care of your child, I am afraid that you will not be in a high social status.

Han's remarks show two dimensions in social expectations about mothering. One, Chinese women are proud that they are seen as equals to men in pursuing employment. Two, they have a "double bind".

Western researchers report that women with children in China have a double burden because of "liberation" (e.g. Andors, 1983, Honig, 1988; Wolf, 1985). However, most Chinese women still prefer to work although it means extra work (The Situation of Chinese Women, 1994). Staying home to care for a young child was not a social expectation for an educated urban mother and was not desired. These Chinese women's conceptions of mothering

have been greatly influenced by the Chinese social context in which the value of women's employment is much higher than mothering at home.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the women's favourable employment opportunities in China and examined the mothering conditions and conceptions of the participants. These Chinese women's mothering experiences included paid maternity leaves, familial childcare support, extra help from nannies and babysitters, and social and political pressure to work. The participants held firm beliefs that part of their womanhood is achieved through being a mother, but they also believed the part was achieved by working outside the home. Having children is seen both as a family obligation and as a personal fulfilment for a woman. Though it is expected that a woman will have a child for the family, it is not expected that she will be the only caregiver. Women are not only guaranteed jobs; they are expected to work as equals with their husbands. These women see work and mothering as integrated parts of their life. Mothers of young children are expected to work outside home. Women are encouraged by the state, by society, and by their families to achieve a career beyond mothering. Although mothering is given more attention than the last generation gave it, these women still see mothering at home as having less social status.

Children's emotional needs were not explicitly discussed in the interviews, however, their physical and educational ones were. Although these mothers believed that mothercare was the best, they agreed that this care could be shared satisfactorily. They believe in collective caring and believe that their children develop an awareness of the collective in group settings. Their children's socialization is very important to them. For working mothers experiencing the double burden of outside work and childcare, hard work and sacrifice is not enough. The possibility for women to struggle between the two worlds of work relies heavily on extended familial support plus extra childcare.

CHAPTER FOUR

MOTHERING IN CANADA

After coming to Canada as spouses of international students¹¹, these Chinese women confronted many changes. The most important change was their social and economic conditions. In this new society, they no longer had their original high social status and identity as professionals did. Their economic conditions also worsened. The changes to their economic status affected their experiences and conditions of mothering, but they also felt that they encountered a different ideology of mothering in Canadian mainstream culture. This encounter has changed their maternal attitudes in Canada in various degrees. In addition to that, their individual family and personal circumstances also affect their experiences of mothering. In this chapter, I examine the different social and economic conditions for these women in Canada, which include their lost social status and identity and lost social support, their employment barriers, their language barriers, and their low family income. I then explore how these changes conditioned their mothering activities and how they saw the dominant Canadian ideology of mothering influenced their mothering attitudes. Finally, I discuss how their specific familial situations shaped their mothering experiences.

Social and Economic Conditions

Loss of Social Status

These women lost their social status when they moved to Canada. They left behind both their social relations and professional roles that were built through years of education and work. When they came to Canada as the spouses of international students, their previous relatively

¹¹ Lan was the only woman who came with a student visa with the help of her boy friend who came first to study. Later she married him.

high social status in China was instantly lost. Some feminist studies (e.g. Smith, 1978; Ng, 1981, 1982; Anderson, 1990) show that the experience of women immigrants in Canada is conditioned by their specific material social relations in the new social context, a context which is structured and organized in a way that is beyond their control.

The participants in this study were disadvantaged when they first came to Canada. Specifically, they lost their permanent government jobs and their relatively high professional ranking. Most of them were no longer their husband's equals in terms of opportunities for a "decent" social identity. Most of them had no education in Canada. Their previous education was not recognized in Canada. The change in social status and identity affected their psychology and self-image. For example, Congshan began to feel helpless and useless. These feelings affected her feelings as a mother. She complained,

Here it is like everybody has to start from the scratch. No matter what background you have, what qualifications you have, you've lost them all here. Moreover, your age is not the one for you to start from the beginning, it feels like...well, how can I say? Very hard to describe this feeling... I found that once you find yourself unable to do well, same, as you were able to do at our home country, you would feel that you are unable to give anything to your children.

For Congshan, a well recognized social status is not only what she should pursue, but also makes an important part of being a good mother. Now she feels inadequate in mothering.

Feeling lost is common among these women who used to have very active social roles in China. Han talked about her feeling of loss and frustration when she first came to Canada,

After coming here from China, we really could not find ourselves. It is true. It was a very tough situation, especially at the beginning. When I went out into society, I felt it seemed that I...I could do nothing! It is true.

These women were not wealthy female immigrants from Hong Kong, neither were they poorly educated, low-status refugees (Stasiulis, 1991, quoted in Chiu, 1994). They were middle-class citizens with a strong educational background and relatively privileged social relations which were instantly lost when they arrived in Canada. Not only was the culture different, they also had

to face a different and diminished social status. Their "lived experience" (Ralston, 1991) has undergone tremendous change.

Barriers to Employment

When these women first arrived in Canada, they did not have permanent residence status. They were in a very unfavourable position with many fewer rights than landed immigrants. Although they were legally eligible to work in Canada, they did not have the same employment opportunities and rights as Canadian citizens or permanent residents. They were not eligible for any job-training programs to enhance their "employability". They were either unemployed or underemployed. The opportunity for obtaining a job equal to their level of education and previous professional status was bleak¹².

Some Canadian studies on immigrant experiences reveal structural barriers at all social, economic and political levels (Chiu, 1994). These barriers discriminate against immigrants and prevent them from moving upward in the job market. The barriers identified in these studies include inability to establish Canadian equivalence for educational and professional credentials, supposed deficiencies in training, poor dominant language proficiency, and lack of "Canadian" work experience. Most of these barriers are also found in the experiences of the participants in this study when they sought employment in Canada. These women's previous work experiences were not recognised in Canada. For survival, some of them took low-paying and even under-paying jobs. Others, determined to succeed in this society, tried to gain entrance to educational institutions (financially supported by scholarship). No matter what they did, however, they had to choose between personal development and family responsibility, especially their now inescapable

¹² A study (Chiu 1994) on the job transferability of Chinese women immigrants from Hong Kong who used to be professionals reveals a similar situation, however, unlike the women from China, the women from Hong Kong in Chiu's study do not rate English as a barrier to their employment.

sole responsibility of mothering.

Ying was a doctor in China. However, after coming to Canada, she stayed home for about a year without looking for a job. In the early part of the interview, she explained this as a need to care for her son who was slightly over three years. At that time the family was not eligible for any childcare subsidy because of the lack of a permanent residence status. Later in the interview, she said the main reason she did not have a job was she found it extremely difficult to be a doctor again with the professional credentials in China. She explained:

If I could find a job without changing my profession, I would just go and work. If I have to change my profession, I have to go back to school. I still wish to work in my own profession, I have learned this for many years.

Ying realized that going back to school and changing her profession was a big decision, and she needed some time to make this transition. Her uncertain residence status complicated the process of the consideration. She finally decided to concentrate on helping her son make the adjustment.

Qing was expected to earn money for the family because her husband had only a meager income as a Research Assistant. She had to take any employment available to her, and could not afford to wait for something better. Qing, too, had to compromise when it came to working,

After I came here, I have had so many worries, because you don't know your future. Even if you can find a job, you will probably lose it soon. Therefore, the pressure is much bigger than when we were in China.

Qing found a job in a Taiwanese restaurant, and was paid lower than minimum wage. She accepted these conditions because she had no other choices. She could work full-time and even over time because she left her son in China with her parents.

Weifang felt lucky to get a job four months after she came to join her husband. She was hired as a low-level technician in the lab where her husband studied. Although she had been an

accountant in China, she could not pursue such a position in Canada until she had a Canadian accounting diploma, related work experience, or both.

Congshan and Jiamei worked as care givers; Ju was also a nanny before she was finally admitted to university after she wrote the TOEFL (an English language test for applicants who are not native speakers of English). Because of job shortages Lan could only find a job as a lab technician even though she had a Canadian Masters degree in Microbiology and a Chinese Masters degree in Biology. Han had been unemployed despite becoming a landed immigrant after staying in Canada for two years. At the time of the interview, Ying had never had a paid job in Canada.

Language Barriers¹³

These women experienced a double bind of language barriers. Not only did they not speak English well enough to get a good paying job; they also did not speak Cantonese, the dominant language in the Vancouver Chinese community. They couldn't get a job in either community because of their lack of language skills. Chiu's study (1994) of Hong Kong women, who had years of formal schooling in English, and were fluent in Cantonese, found that language was not a major barrier for them when seeking employment. Most of the participants in this study felt that their lack of language skills was the biggest reason for their inadequate employment. Qing told me her story of job-hunting in a tone of desperation:

The biggest obstacle for me in looking for a job was my language. I walked into many restaurants along the street, and was always rejected because I could not speak Cantonese! I bought newspapers and made phone calls, but whenever they heard me speak Mandarin, they hung up the phone. Although friends introduced me to Western restaurants, I could not get any jobs there either.

¹³ It is important to say that standards of "English Language Proficiency" are very much related to state immigration policy with strong political implications. It is beyond the intention and scope of this study to address Canadian immigration policy. Some studies (e.g. Basran, 1983) have examined Canada's immigration policies in relation to the nature of capitalism and the role of the Canadian state.

Not only did inadequate language skills limit their employment opportunities; they also affected their educational opportunities. Congshan remarked: "The biggest obstacle, if speaking of education, is the language; if speaking of employment, then the biggest obstacle is that you don't have education here."

Many told me that even for a job-training program, one needs to have a certain level of English to get into the program, regardless of the type of content. Qing reached a dead end when she tried to get into a drafting program:

I wanted to take drafting most, it is the closest to my original speciality, and I am interested in it. Nevertheless, my English level was not up to grade 12, so I could not enter this program. I have tried. I went directly to the head of this program, talked to him about my professional background, and showed him my diploma. He promised to take me in, but said he had to put me on a waiting list. He said if I didn't get a notice, I had to wait for another chance in the future. Moreover, I have not got a notice.

The language barrier caused many of the women to lower their career expectations. Weifang thought that it would take her many years to improve her English to a sufficient level so that she could pursue a master's degree. Therefore, she decided to settle for a lower level diploma, and a lower level of work. She stated:

Because my language is not that good, I want to begin to learn English as soon as I've got time. I learned accounting in my home country, I think if I can study in a low-level accounting program, and then get an average job, it will do. That's so much for me, anyway.

With exception of Ju and Lan who have already earned Canadian master's degrees, the rest believe that their future professional development will always be constrained by language limitations. They accept this and most want to get ordinary jobs to support their families. Their economic hardship is so time-consuming and desperate that they can not spare much time or money to improve their English. They became stuck in a vicious circle of despair. It was urgent for them to increase the family income, in order to increase their sense of security. However, it

was a despairing security because they would not get further ahead without taking time off their work or mothering responsibility to study English.

Family Income and Childcare Subsidy

The women's ability to compete socially and earn adequate wages was constrained and limited by their low employability and their inadequate English skills. Their economic position now was much lower than their positions in China ¹⁴. These families lived on their husband's fellowships or wages from jobs as Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants (approximately \$1000 Canadian dollars a month). Weifang recalled her anxiety about this tough financial situation when she joined her husband in Canada:

I stayed home for four months. My husband was very nervous. He had a TA from January to April, and had only 1000 dollars (per month). Therefore, the budget was very tight. I was extremely worried then, and I said, "what shall we do?" I said that if I did not have this child, I could have worked. Nevertheless, with him here, I cannot... I was extremely anxious about it. I kept saying, "what is this about? We are eating away our savings"! It was very stressful.

Restricted by their visitor's visas in the beginning, these women did not have access to all the resources available in Canada. They found their responsibility as mothers a big constraint. They needed child care support to go out to seek employment and training, yet they either had no access to support or could not afford it. Ying said that she had to send her child away to daycare to free her to look for jobs. They were not entitled to any financial support from the government as Canadian citizens or people with permanent residence status were ¹⁵. Han recalled this tough situation: "Economic problem is a big one. At the beginning, we were not immigrants. How could I have the idea to send my child to day care? No way! I didn't

¹⁴ These women were among the middle, and higher ranking in family incomes based on the low level of consumption in China at that time. Both husband and wife worked, and had equal pay (government employees in China get paid by their educational level regardless of gender).

¹⁵ Before they became landed immigrants, they were not eligible for a subsidy no matter how low their family income was. Most of them were entitled to the subsidy after they became landed and entitled as a low-income family.

have that condition.” Qing echoed: “Before we became landed immigrants, I would never consider day care thing, and we just didn’t have that condition. I quit my job when my child came.” In these changed economic conditions, these women’s mothering conditions also were changed.

Mothering Conditions

Five women had their children born in China, among them, Ju had her second child in Canada, and Weifang was pregnant at the time of interview. Three women, Congshan, Lan, and Jiamei had their first born child in Canada, and Congshan had two. The material conditions in Canada for childcare are very different from China. Compared to China, the women had limited resources on which to rely. Extended familial support was no longer automatically available. The women rarely used extra childcare such as nannies or baby-sitters in the early months after having their children. Instead, they assumed most of the childcare responsibility and chores themselves. Coming to Canada directly affected their mothering in two areas: familial support and mothering chores.

Loss of Familial Childcare Support

Grandparent Support

When these women moved to Canada, they moved away from their extended families that would, had they stayed in China, be expected to support the childcare. Han, Ying, and Weifang received direct help from their parents or in-laws in China, but not any more in Canada. When Lan, Jiamei, and Congshan had their children in Canada, they had heavier motherwork plus housework because their extended family members were not around. In China, the mothers on both sides would have been the persons who would have done the most caring work.

Three families had successfully ¹⁶ applied for their parents/in-laws to come over, but only one Ju, actually received childcare support from her parents. The rest of the women struggled on their own to care for their children and adjust to a new culture. Ju had parental support for each of her children. Lan's mother came to visit her two months after Lan gave birth, but Lan did not expect her mother to help because she was old and not in good health. Congshan expected her mother in-law's help, but was unable to secure her passage. Congshan was very anxious:

Well, of course, originally, we hoped that the old could come to help for a period as in Chinese tradition. Therefore, I would be able to go out to look for jobs, or go to school. This was a long-term consideration. I needed to learn something and work. I could not stay home, looking after the child all the time. However, because of the visa problem, I had to stay home to look after him.

Because of these problems, most of these women's parents – or in laws -- could not come to Canada to help their daughters or daughters-in-law when they gave birth. What made their situation even more difficult was that their husbands were also no longer readily available and willing to share in this work. Their husbands' help may not have been as much as that of their parents or in-laws if they were in China, however, in China, their husbands' help would have been more available than was in Canada.

Spousal Assistance

Spousal assistance was reduced from what it would have been in China. Although equal sharing of childcare, as we have seen, has rarely existed in China, it was even less after these families came to Canada. In China, Han, Qing, and Ying shared childcare with their husbands in various amounts, however, in Canada, all the participants except Ju reported a lack of their husband's assistance. Lan, Jiamei, and Congshan had to assume total responsibility for childcare, tasks that would have been shared at least by other family members if they had been in China.

¹⁶ Many Chinese parents with overseas students in Canada had difficulty in obtaining a visitor's visa from the Canadian Embassy in Beijing.

Although each women stated firmly that caring for children was the responsibility of both the father and the mother, their conversations revealed that they actually did most of the care. At this point, sharing care became an ideal rather than a reality.

It is also necessary to clarify here that the concept of "sharing care" is different for these Chinese women from what Western feminist theorize about parenting sharing. The latter may tend to talk about a full, equal sharing of all household chores (e.g. Ehrensaft 1984), while the former expect that husbands must assume a more supportive role than those in the previous generation. Some of the participants' husbands shared caring for children born in China, but the amount of work they did was very limited because they had to work during the day. Only one participant reported that her husband was entitled to a 15-day parental leave. He transferred this leave to his wife rather than staying home to help her. Although the dominant ideology in China encourages husbands to share housework with their wives (The Situation of Chinese Women, 1994: 28), it is impossible, and not expected, for husbands to share fully the responsibility of mothering with their wives.

Congshan received some assistance from her husband for her first child. He was writing his dissertation at that time and had a more flexible schedule. She was totally on her own with the second child because her husband was much busier in a new graduate program. She felt this was unfair,

Having children is the matter of two persons, and I don't think a woman should do all the housework. I think it should be equal since the children are both of ours. We both have the obligation. Of course, in practice, it depends on the circumstances, don't you agree?

I suggest that perhaps her husband was very busy, but it is possible that her husband was influenced by Canadian dominant mothering ideology, which expected mothers to be the major caregiver of the child. Although in China, husbands do not do as much childcare as wives do, the social theory is that they are supposed to.

Lan felt frustrated that she could not expect a bit from her husband because he was busy in taking extra courses while doing his post-doctoral program in Math. She said that she had wanted to be cared for the first month while she was in confinement and she didn't get that. Her voice was full of resentment when she recalled that period:

My husband, I think he didn't live up to his responsibility at the beginning. He didn't live up to his responsibility at all. I said to him, I did not want to rest for a full month as women do in China, but you should take some care of me, right. They say that in China, (the mother) should not touch cold water, how could I possibly not to touch cold water? Cooking, washing clothes, all were my job. He could have given me some care, I mean, he could have done a bit more.

She continues: "He asked me why I need a confinement month. He said that other foreigners (Canadians) go out two or three days after birthing, he said, 'why do you need a confinement month?'"

Lan complained that she did not have one day's rest in her first month. She particularly resented that she was even not appreciated for all the work she did. She sounds like she is talking to her husband when she remarks,

I think it does not matter if I do all the work, but you have to support me, right. You have to support me, and you have to appreciate me, then I would be happy to do it. If you don't, I will feel especially hurt.

Lan needed mental and physical support for mothering. It seems that she received none. Other women reported that they also were not satisfied with the small amount of support their husbands gave them. Their husbands used the Canadian norms that mothers do everything, but their wives were trying to take on the burden of Canadian norms of how mothers do in situations of incredible changes in social and economic status. These mothers did not even have the resources available to ordinary Canadian mothers because they had the combination of low salary and no access to services, so they were doubly disadvantaged. These women expressed both their resentment and disappointment and their understanding and psychological support to their husbands. They all explained that their husbands had heavy pressure because of school study and

the women accepted more responsibility for parenting and sustaining the household. These women began to take on the old traditional role for a woman when there was a conflict between their husband's career development and their own. They assumed both the childcare work and housework all by themselves.

Staying Home and Mothering Alone

These women, who previously had enjoyed and been successful in their careers, were now more involved in childcare activities than they had been in China. With the exception of Ju all the women who had children born in Canada unanimously declared that their domestic daily housework was heavier in Canada than in China. Most of them stayed home longer for the interests of their children. All of them, except Ju, did the caring alone.

Lan was employed before she was pregnant, but quit her job after she learned of her pregnancy. She stayed home for six months after her daughter's birth. Congshan stayed home for six months after the birth of her first child. She also stayed home for the same period to care for her second child, and sent her first child to China with his grandparents. Jiamei stayed more than a year at home and was responsible for all childcare. She stayed home with her first son for four months, and then went to work, leaving her child with a baby-sitter. Jiamei described her life:

I do all the household chores, domestic and external. Then the childcare as long as I have time. Generally, I have to look after him, telling stories, playing outside with him, as well as looking for day care, and contacting social service. All these jobs are mine. Anything related to the child is my job.

Congshan said this way:

Here, a mother works harder and has to be mature. It seems that you are able to endure more hardship. There is no way that you can act like a child before anybody. Your parents are not here. The only person you can rely on is your husband, who would not assume most of the housework on him in this society. You (a mother) have to assume all of this.

Not only the women who had their children born in Canada stayed home for longer period, the women who had their children in China stayed home although their children were older. Ying

stayed home after she brought her three-year old son with her to Canada. Han also stayed home to accompany her child when he later came to join her. Qing quit her job after her child came to Canada and stayed home to look after him until she studied in the ESL training program. For a period, it seemed that motherwork was the only task they could perform. Ying explains:

At that time, I spent most of my energy on the child, and did not think much of myself. Meanwhile, I knew that it was not easy for me to get a job with the occupation I had. It is very difficult to become a doctor in Canada. It is almost impossible.

These Chinese women had no other choices but to do childcare and found themselves in the same position as many Canadian mothers. The truth may be that many Canadian mothers choose to stay home for longer time not only because they are influenced by Western attachment theory, but also due to difficult economic situations, and the economical difficulties for these Chinese women were even greater. In most cases, the changes in these women's life conditions required them to stay home and providing more mother care became their major commitment. However, this major commitment was reinforced by the Canadian white middle-class cultural ideal of mothering. This research has revealed how their economic and social conditions pushed them to assume many more mothering tasks. This is combined, however, with a greater or lesser acceptance of the Western ideal as they made adjustments in a new culture.

Canadian Cultural Encounter

Nelson (1994) points out that in North American history, motherhood has been viewed as an intensely private, full-time activity for middle-class, white American women since the early nineteenth century. Attachment theory, first proposed by Bowlby in 1951 and reinforced by his colleague Ainsworth in 1978, has been a foundation in many manuals on childcare. Bowlby (1951, 1966, 1969, and 1973) believes that it is the quality of the mother-child attachment in the first three years, which shapes the child's later personality development. Therefore, mothers of young children have been advised to stay at home with their children to avoid

making their children insecure as a result of a repeated separation from their mothers. The principle message in this philosophy is that the mother, because of her biological tie with the child, must be the natural caregiver of the children. Feminists have shown that this notion of mothering has been manipulated to oppose to the employment of mothers of young children by patriarchal Western society (Polatnick, 1984; Tizard, 1984). Although attachment theory is no longer accepted without criticism, people still act in ways to let us know that they think children are very fragile when it comes to separation from their mothers. North American mainstream society assumes that a mother of a young child must make caring for her child a primary commitment at least for the child's pre-school years. For years, in North America, women with young children who have chosen to work outside their homes, were made to feel guilty and were viewed as inadequate and selfish mothers (Tizard, 1991).

Although my participants were emotionally unwilling to leave their children of a few months, they were used to the expectation that they would return to employment soon after childbirth. In China, staying home until one's child was a few years old was not an option. The women wanted to work because working was critical to their self-fulfilment and their ideal of equality with men.

These women scrutinized their new environments. They became exposed to Canadian mothering ideas through reading Western child rearing books and through daily contacts with Canadian mothers. For example, when talking about how to learn mothering, Jiamei remarked,

After I got pregnant, I looked after other people's children for a period as a learning experience. I had to read books when doing breastfeeding... I had to learn all these things by reading books. Later, when the baby was bigger, there would be different responses and demands. I had to know which was a normal situation, and which was not. For all these, I had to read! Even now, concerning the child's education, I have to go to library and find out what are the problems for children in this particular age group.

The Chinese mothers with strong English reading skills read English books. They received new and different knowledge about child rearing and mothering from these sources.

They saw this kind of knowledge as scientific and advanced both in rationale and in method, because of its reliance on experts. They felt as if they had missed this type of knowledge in China and now they had a situation where they could try out these new philosophies and ideas. These women were eager to learn different ways of mothering and raising children for the good of their children. Lan said that she read and learned very quickly because she had such deep desire to learn.

Some of these women who worked as nannies and babysitters for Canadian families saw this as an intensive learning opportunity. They accepted some elements of Canadian ideas of children's needs; however, many remained critical of the expectations put on women to be the primary caregivers. Some of the women saw mothers being respected for mothering full-time; others felt that Canadian mothers are disadvantaged by this role. One thing, however, that all remarked on was the extent to which Canadian society demands that women be the primary caregivers. They also believe that Canadian women have internalized this philosophy and participate in supporting it by accepting most of the responsibility.

Congshan learned a lot about how to raise children by caring for Canadian children as a nanny. In her opinion, Canadian women have lower social status than their Chinese counterparts. She remarked on the life of a Canadian professional that she worked for as a nanny. The woman had a high education and strong social ability, was successful in her career, and was probably more accomplished than her husband was, but when it came to the issue of caring for children, Congshan was concerned:

She will naturally take all the work to herself... I think she is already working very hard, caring for the children day and night, and wants to get her work done. She does not want to stop her career, and hoped to do a lot in her parental leave. She is doing housework such as shopping, cooking, and all of these things! She would still ask this question: "am I too lazy?" Sometimes, her husband does a little shopping, which is very natural, but she would feel guilty, asking whether she is actually lazy to let her husband do this... How can she think all these things are hers? I just cannot understand!

Congshan had strong criticisms of the way things are for women in a patriarchal system:

Why can't a husband stay home caring for children and I (a wife) go out to look for jobs? If in this way, if you let a husband stay home to look after the children, he would feel ashamed. This is, oh! How can I tell you! This is a role, a role given by society, as if the male should go out, and the female should stay home, and not the opposite way. You can say that a woman can go out, but you can not say that a man can stay home. This seems the same in every society. If he stays home, this means to others that this man is good for nothing, or hen-pecked, or he would get other unpleasant comments. A woman will not get these comments if she stays home as if she is supposed to stay home.

As they came to Canada, read about and saw different ways of raising children, these women's ideas about mothering began to change. They now expressed more concern for their children's emotional needs. They seemed eager and willing to change their attitudes and behaviours in response to this new culture.

Specific Family Situations

These women are influenced by the ideology of mothering in the Canadian cultural environment. Still, the stronger factors affecting their experiences of mothering were the material conditions in general and their individual family situations. Three of these mothers took their husband's advice (or demand) to leave their child in China while they came to Canada to accompany their husbands¹⁷. One of them had to send her six-month old first child back to China when neither familial nor extra-familial childcare was available. Their mothering experiences were marked by this painful separation. Their husbands' attitudes towards childcare and their husbands' future employability were also decisive factors affecting these women's mothering experiences.

¹⁷ It is called Peidu in Chinese PinYing, meaning accompanying (husband) to study. In China, a woman or a man is allowed to get a passport if she or he can prove that her or his spouse is studying in a foreign university; there are more wives than husbands coming to accompany though. It is usually expected and a serious task for a wife to support her husband by doing all the housework, and make money if necessary, while her husband is studying for a degree.

Separation from the Child

Stack & Burton's study (1994) on low-income Black families in the United States shows that in these families, the members work out family responsibilities including child care as multigenerational collectives. This is similar to what these Chinese women and their families did. When Ju, Han, and Qing left their children to join their husbands in Canada, the responsibility of caring for the children was placed on the shoulders of their retired parents back in China.

They coped with this hardship by accepting that this was the cost they and their children had to pay in order for the family to come to Canada. Qing recalled the economic rationale for this decision,

I thought we had no choice. In the early period when we were in Canada, I expected a period of hardship. Of course, I missed my child very much. But if the child came, I wouldn't be able to make money.

Ju left her first child with her in-laws and came to Canada. Not long after that, she entered a graduate program in Chemistry. She recalled her separation from her son also being one in which she felt she had no choice:

Of course, I wished that my child could be with me. My second child is with me all the time. I had no choice then. I really had no choice at that time. I was fortunate that I did not bring him here, because at the beginning, the life was ...hum, it is a long story. Therefore, the child was not here until he was three years old, when his grandparents brought him here.

Although some of their recollections demonstrated their emotional suffering from this separation, I did not dig further around this issue because at first I did not anticipate that this theme would emerge as a strong theme in my data. More detailed information was not available about whether they considered any harm this might be to their children's psychological development. Qing talked about how she maintained an emotional tie with her child: telephoning, sending money, gifts and postcards. She recalled,

What I could do was to make telephone calls back home. During that period, our telephone bills were crazy, every month. I tried my best to let him remember his mother,

and let him know that his parents did not forget him, and were missing him. I did not know what was the feeling of the child then. That was all we were able to do.

It was not all bad, however. During the separation, Ju successfully passed the TOEFL and began to study in a graduate program soon after her arrival. Qing worked to support the family, and Han entered an apprenticeship to learn hairdressing. Although their husbands made the decision about the separation, the women agreed to it as a necessary but temporary situation of family transition (Stack & Burton, 1994). It was expected that the mother and the child had to make emotional sacrifices to support this transition. I argue here that these women's new social and economic conditions constrained and forced them to compromise their child's emotional needs¹⁸. When the family was in a transition, geographically and culturally, emotional needs, including the children's, became subordinated to the long-term goal. These mothers considered this separation was temporary under an extremely difficult family situation. They believed that, in the long run, this emotional suffering would be paid back because the child would have a better future in Canada. Therefore, the child's interests and benefits are not ignored but considered in the long run at the cost of their immediate needs.

They could argue that they were acting as responsible mothers, so that their children might have a better future. The pain of separation was an expression of their responsibility; therefore, they did not suffer guilt for leaving them. In addition, they did not have much time to think about what their children might be feeling. Ju recalled:

I did not think much about the child. I felt that I had many things to do. Therefore, I did not think much about this. I wrote GRE the day after I arrived, and I wrote TOEFL one month later. He (her husband) was pushing me so hard!

¹⁸ Another important reason is that Canadian immigration official sometimes will not issue a visa to a spouse if she applies for her child to go with her.

In Ju's case, her husband made the decision that the child must go for the sake of her career development. This illuminated how husbands were the ones making decisions about and for the family.

Attitude of the husband

This study found that to some extent, the conditions of these women's mothering were dependent on the attitudes of their husbands. The participants' perceptions and behaviour in the process of immigration demonstrate a complex pattern of family relationships. While there is a strong ideology of equality between men and women, and a strong sense of autonomy on the part of many women, a wife may be dependent psychologically and emotionally on her husband when making big decisions (The Investigation Team for The Study of the Social Status of Chinese Women, 1993). Men's decisions usually were considered more "rational", in the name of the interests of a whole family or of the child (their only heir). A woman's or a child's emotional needs are often ignored, thought of as trivial, and as needs that must be suppressed when in conflict with the family interests or women's own career development.

This is contradictory and many educated urban Chinese women reveal this contradiction in their thinking and behaviour. It reflects a society in transition. Although the Chinese socialist system and mainstream rhetoric speak of equality for women, inequality still exists in many ways. This is caused by complex historical and cultural factors, plus insufficient social productivity. Mothering and domestic work is still not valued and rewarded in a society with a traditional semi-feudalistic and semi-colonial culture. Consequently, many Chinese women's self-awareness is contradictory: On the one hand, because of socialism, women in China have a strong sense of equality and economic independence; on the other hand, they remain dependent on men in important family matters, regardless of their decision making power in everyday domestic matters (Ibid.). The participants reveal that their husbands' attitudes influence their decisions as mothers.

For example, although she suffered the pain of separation from her first child, Congshan felt that it was done for her sake. Her husband rationalized this decision by encouraging her to attend university soon to gain knowledge and skills to get a job. He assumed that their son would be well cared for by his grandparents in Beijing.

Lan resented her husband's ignorance of her work as a mother. She did all the intensive mothering tasks on her own, as well as all the housework:

At the beginning, he did not have any experience, he said: "you stay home all day long, can't you just take care of a baby?" That is why I said that I did not have one restful day in my first month. He was always busy with attending lectures in the university, if he did not; he felt he had losses. Therefore, I had to make lunch for him if he had a lecture at 1:30. It is always me who does the cooking, laundry, and caring for the child. He does not have time.

Recalling those days was not a happy or light-hearted thing for Lan. Although she was busy, her husband urged her to find a job because he was still at university and not sure when he could be guaranteed a decent family income after graduation. Lan was expected to assume the task of the major wage earner for the family while he was still studying. Lan's husband probably also considered that Lan would lag behind in her profession if she stayed home too long.

Ju's husband arranged everything for her to go to university, and made the decision that she should leave their child in China. Ju recalls:

When I was about to come, my husband said: "don't bring the child over". It was because he had not been here long enough, and the life was not easy... I had to establish my own ... (smile) career... I left when he (the child) was ten months, and for the next two years or more, I did not see him.

Han and Qing were also told to leave their children at home when they came to join their husbands. Qing recalls,

I came to Canada in 1994. When I came, my husband said that because he was studying here very intensively, and our budget was very tight, if I brought the child together with me, I could not go out to work. Therefore, the life would be very hard, and it would affect his study. Therefore, I left my child with my mother who had retired by then.

Han had a similar story:

I thought this way. Not that I didn't want to bring him over. My husband said he just started his Ph.D. program, and the first and second year was very tough. With a child, it would not be easy to cope.

Generally, these women respected their husbands' decisions and considered them a necessary part of a bigger family plan. Ju's comments reveal an attitude of a Chinese husband in general: "I do not know it is in other families, but in our family, everything is under his supervision. He requires me to rely on him. If I do not, he is not happy."

Congshan, Lan, and Ju were urged and supported by their husbands (mentally at least, if they did not do it by sharing housework and mothering) to find a job or attend school. In contrast, Ying and Han felt they were free to do anything that they decided. These husbands did not try to control them. Ying felt that she would not lose her autonomy, even if she stayed home to be a housewife.

Because my husband is a good husband, I do not have this kind of concern (of lost autonomy). I do not know what it would be like for other families. If I did not have this man as my husband, I do not know what I would do. I do not have this kind of concern at all if I wanted to be a full-time mother. I will have my autonomy as ever, and I would not feel that he fed me.

It seems that for Ying, having a supportive husband did make some difference in her thinking and experience. Ironically, most women in China feel that they are spiritually independent of men, and are equals to them, yet it seems that women's destinies are still greatly dependent on the "goodness" of their husbands. Han talks about support from her husband,

My husband has given me quite a lot of support, which is nice. He always supports me to do whatever I want to do, that is why I can make it. If he had not supported me, I had no way. I think this is very important. Whatever I want to learn, he would think is a good idea, and be very understanding. He is not that kind of, how to say, not a patriarchal type of man. He is very agreeable, and I think this is his strength.

Although these women experience a variety of attitudes from their husbands, one thing is clear: their husband's attitudes and personal preferences have affected their mothering

experiences. It is also possible that their husband's conceptions of womanhood and mothering affected their mothering experiences, however, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Husbands' Future Employability

The issue of their husband's future employability also affects these women's maternal attitudes and experiences. For example, Han's husband was in the Math department and she worried that he would not get a job after graduation. She pushed herself to learn some new employment skills to share the family economic responsibility, and left the child with her husband during the day for long periods. Weifang's husband was not guaranteed secure funding, and the family savings dwindled. She sent her child to a caregiver, and got a job to feel more secure. When Congshan had her second child (by accident), she stayed home to take care of the newborn baby, and her mother-in-law looked after her first child in China. Lan insisted that it was good to send her eight-month old daughter to day care despite the cost because she was exhausted, and under pressure from her husband to get a job. Qing worked at a low-paying job in a Chinese restaurant and suffered a lot from missing her child. Ying stayed home a year with her son and did not hurry to find something for herself. She was not worried about her husband's future employment as he was in Computer Science.

Regardless of their situations, these women's life choices were largely determined by their husband's opportunities. They interpreted the husband's needs and interests as the family's needs and interests. These women's conditions of mothering were in various ways constrained by their husbands.

Mothers' Personal Situation

Their own employability also affected these women's experience and conception of mothering. Those such as Lan and Ju who had more marketable and lucrative specialties used day care earlier to get a better-paid job. Ju had a Canadian graduate degree in applied science, and

she found a job with relatively little difficulty. She also had her parents to help her with the child care and daily housework. She emphasizes spending more time with her children, having been separated from her first child for more than two years, and now working full-time. Lan quit her job in a lab when she was told she was pregnant and wanted to go back to her job after the birth for fear of losing the skills and lagging behind the technology. She sent her child to day care when she was eight months old despite feeling that it was too early for her child to be in day care. Jiamei and Congshan did not have Canadian diplomas, and they stayed home caring for their children longer.

These mothers, on the one hand, felt that they had to accept this situation and stay home a longer period that they would be expected to if they were in China; on the other hand, they considered this to be necessary and better for the child. At the same time, if they had had more promising career opportunities, they would prefer to pursue them instead of spending more time on childcare.

Age of Children

In this study, I found that these mothers' perceptions of mothering roles vary according to their children's age. Mothering a new born baby is thought of as much work if there is lack of familial support in either Canada or in China; while it is seen to be more relaxed in Canada than in China if the child is approximately over two or three years old. At this age, a child's physical needs are greatly reduced. A child can go to day care to free the mother from intensive physical care and the child is emotionally stronger for facing separation from the mother. Ying's son was three years old when Ying brought him to Canada. She felt that the responsibilities were less for that age and that he could attend a day care centre. Unlike those who had heavier motherwork in Canada, she feels:

Mothering is more relaxed here than in China. In terms of everyday chores, it is much easier here. In terms of the child's education, if you really want to follow with Canadian

system, you will not be that tired. If you can completely accept this Western educational system, you will be very relaxed. I do not know whether foreigners (Canadians) teach their kids at home or not. If you can let the child go with the flow, and let him develop freely, you will be quite relaxed as a mother here.

Generally, the mothers of young children in Canada had to work very hard because they had no support and could not afford childcare. When their children became older, they found all sorts of affordable resources to assist them in their responsibilities of mothering. Most of the mothers thought that they should wait until their children were two or three years old before sending them to day care. Congshan remarks: "I mean, it depends on how old the child is. If the child is very young, under two years old, I do not suggest day care." Jiamei says: "When my child reaches two years old, even if we have very good conditions, I will still send him to day care."

Lan was an exception among these mothers in sending her daughter to day care when she was only eight months old. Later Lan said she did not think that day care could give a childcare that was as good as that of a mother. However, she said that in terms of the development of the child, day care is good. The mothers all agreed that after a child is three years old, the child should definitely be sent to a public child care institution. Therefore, as their children grew older, the mothers grew more confident in terms of pursuing their own development. Mothers whose children were older expressed less frustration about the daily toil as a mother, and expressed more optimism about integrating career and mothering in their lives. Their children were at day care for the day, and at home with them at night. Ying was very optimistic about working and mothering,

After I come home from work, I can spend four to five hours with him during the evening, which is enough. Some book say that you should be with your child at least three hours a day, so four to five hours is enough. I think even when I have a job; I can still look after him. I can try to spend some time with him every day.

Summary

When these women came to Canada to join their husbands, they were confronted with many challenges and hardships. The first challenge was the loss of social and economic status.

Their limited English skills made obtaining adequate work difficult. It also limited their access to educational opportunities. They were not immediately entitled to childcare subsidies, and often did not have familial support from either their husbands or extended family members. This created another barrier to work and/or education. To cope, some were forced to live without their children, which was painful; most were stuck at home doing the entire child care duties.

Although these women had a firm belief in equality between men and women, including sharing housework and caring for the child, there was no hope of this occurring. Their husbands were too busy with their own struggles to offer regular assistance. Although their ideas about equality have not changed, they were no longer given the needed conditions and resources to maintain a balance between work and mothering. In their new circumstances, they had to compromise their ideal of equality. They took it for granted that their husband's career interests should be prior to their own. Family survival during this special difficult situation became the top priority influencing all their decisions about childcare arrangements. In all the cases, family survival meant supporting their husbands to ensure their success and relinquishing their own career plans in order to care for the children.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGED CONCEPTIONS OF MOTHERING

During immigration and settling down, these Chinese mothers' ways of thinking and their original conceptions of mothering have been challenged. This study has found that these women's conceptions of mothering are different from those they originally held in China, and from those held by who they perceive as dominant North American society. Coming to Canada has inspired these mothers in their role as mothers; the area that was reconsidered is their children's needs, the area least conceptualized in China. In this chapter, I present and discuss their changed conceptions of mothering around particular themes that emerged from their stories and experiences: 1) reconceptualized children's needs, 2) reframing mothering role, and 3) mothering and working.

Reconceptualizing Children's Needs

Maternal thinking and practice is closely grounded in women's conceptual construction of children's needs. To reconceptualize one's mothering practice requires confrontation, reflection and being challenged with newness and difference, and seeing value in reflection. The participants in the study began to re-construct their ideas of mothering when perceived Canadian dominant family ideology and changed conditions challenged them. Although these Chinese mothers still viewed their children's needs to be primarily physical care and education, they adopted some Canadian norms. For example, the children's emotional needs were given more consideration, and day care, while important in China for socialization, remained important as a way to socialize their children to Canadian culture. Their concern about their children's intellectual development was expressed in a central attention to their children's English language learning.

Mothercare

The mothers said that they now believed that a newborn child needs more care from themselves (mothers), both physical and emotional, than they believed children needed when they lived in China. They were less willing to think that their children could be satisfactorily cared for by a wide range of people. All of them now place more emphasis on the importance and necessity of staying home with young children for a longer period of time in order to nurture the growth of very young children. Congshan said this:

In my original conception, a child under the age of three only has physical needs, and no spiritual needs, therefore, during that period whoever cares for him or her would do. In our conception, the love grandparents can give the child is the same as the love parents can give? So, I used to think that it is totally no problem. But now, I have lived here, and I don't think that I have been assimilated by this society, but I have come to understand that it is true to say that a child's real need is to be with his or her mother. The mother is the closest person to the child. What a mother can give nobody can substitute. Grandparents may be able to give excessive love to a child, but what they give is not necessarily a child's real emotional needs.

Jiamei had a child born the next year in Canada, and she remarked:

I like doing mothering, I am very happy being a mother, and I am interested in teaching and educating my son. No matter what he will be in future, I think it is my responsibility, and it is my interest.

All of the women expressed recognition of the change in their perception of their children's emotional needs, and believed that they expressed their children's emotional needs more explicitly. Jiamei stayed home and cared for her child for over a year. She said this,

When my child was young, I did not have the heart to send him to day care. Now I am looking after him myself, although we are not in good shape financially. Later, if I have my second child, I will do the same. I think a mother should care for her children in their first two years. In this period, the child's desire to be with other children is not as strong as his desire to be with his mother. He needs his mother more. For a newborn baby, you ask him to be in touch with the society, but he only recognises his mother. If you want him to be separate from his mother, it is too cruel!

Talking about her newborn daughter, Congshan's feelings echo those of Jiamei's:

I think the child should be with the mother once she is born. I now accept this idea, too. At least for the first half year, I think. Because for the first year, the child most needs the

mother's care most and wants to be with the mother more time. So I think, if you breast feed, you should do it for at least half a year. I don't have a plan to do anything else in this half year. I couldn't give her anything else. However, at least I should give her more what I can give her, that is my care and my love.

For Congshan, love (emotional need) and labour (physical need) are not separated in the care she provides to her child, these two are intermingled together as "mothercare".

These women not only stated firmly that mothercare is the best care, but also that they now wanted to do it themselves. They gave more emphasis on the mother as the first and most important person in the child's world. Although this belief in mothercare was recognized and implicitly expressed, it was not necessarily adopted in their previous childcare arrangements in China. Mothercare, even if desired, was seen by mothers and others as less vital in a child's early life because mothers were expected to resume work soon after. Both their mothering conditions and their perceived dominant mothering ideology of mother's caring for young children have made these women practice and value mothercare more here in Canada. They felt that Canadian society encouraged women to stay home or stay home for longer in order to do mothering. Han made this comparison:

If it is in the West, she (a mother) has good conditions. She can quit and wait for this period (early intensive mothering) before return to work. If it is in China, you are not allowed. If circumstances allowed, it should be done this way. It is because a child of one or two years old is not very strong physically, and gets ill easily. Another point is for early education. In the past, it was not emphasized, and now it is very much stressed. This is also important. It is also good for your recovery. Therefore, it is good both for mother's health recovery and children's development. In addition, if you want to do breastfeeding, it is beneficial for you, too.

Although, staying home for longer period after the birth was a reality for most of them, these women did not feel the "isolation" the way many Canadian women have described in some feminist writing (e.g. Knight 1992). They were aware of their losses for mothering alone and not being able to be involved in larger community and they discussed the difficulties of caring for young children without the expected support and involvement of more extended family members.

They seemed to accept this reality with a positive attitude with this choice out of no choice: now their children's emotional and physical needs have been given the most attention. Their children now have had more mothercare that they probably could not have had in China.

While they each had different answers, most of them believed that an ideal length of mothercare was within the first three years of the child's life. Although her first child was mostly cared for by her in-laws, Ju believes in mothercare:

Children under three are especially in need of their mother's care. So you can give them the best care and mother love. For a child under three years old, a mother should have the best communication with her child, so you put more of your energy at home.

While they all placed a higher value on a mother's care, they retained a clear and firm idea that a child needs public childcare. They all believed that the ideal age for a child to go to a day care centre is when the child reaches three years old.

Centre or Group Childcare

These Chinese mothers firmly believe that centre or group childcare is good for children, although they are concerned about the quality of the childcare services. The women relied on day care so that their children will learn Canadian culture and gain social skills. In China, they believed that day cares were good for teaching their children Chinese values, and they believed the same of Canadian day cares.

Learning Canadian Socialization

As new immigrants, these mothers are very concerned that their children be accepted in Canadian society. Jiamei believed that is most important for her child to learn socialization skills at a day care centre:

I think that since I have immigrated here, I should help my child to understand this society, the people, and their ways of doing things. He needs to have a real understanding of these people, not only Chinese. Moreover, I always feel that our generation does not have enough understanding of Western culture. I think, since he was born here, and will have to survive in this society, I have to let him fit into it from the time he is young.

However, the learning that their children were accomplishing brought about tensions between cultures. Once their children were in day care centres, they began to experience many conflicts caused by the different value systems and cultural norms. Day care centres became the places that demonstrated most intensively these different ideas about how to care for and educate children. For example, Chinese mothers would want the day care teachers to judge between wrong and right and criticize the one who initiated things when the children fought with each other. The teachers, however, believed fighting in general was natural and unavoidable among children, so it was not necessary to do so. Chinese mothers expected the teachers to give more systematic training and standards for literacy teaching. The teachers preferred a more child-centred style, seldom requiring the children to reach a certain level of knowledge or skills. Although these mothers understood that the Canadian strategy of day care teaching is learning through play, they still felt that the teachers should use some amount of structured method. When there is a conflict between the ideas about how to do things in the day care, most of the women tried to adapt and understand Canadian ways. Ju remarked,

I have no choice. This is the Canadian system. I can do nothing. Sometimes I think, well, maybe it is good. Let the child be adapted to this society. Only when he is adaptable to this society, can he survive in it, and become competitive.

These women are open and sensitive to Canadian ways of doing things. Despite the cultural conflicts, they still appreciated Canadian day cares for cultivating their children's spirit of independence, creativity, and freedom. At the same time, they compared the different cultural emphasis: Canadian culture stresses individuality, and Chinese culture stresses collective spirit.

Congshan says:

They (day cares) emphasize the free development of children, letting children develop their characters naturally. One good thing about the day care here is that they encourage the development of a child's personality. I always feel that they never put down the children or require them to be modest. They encourage children to do whatever comes to their mind, and this is very good to their personality development. I think this kind of education makes each individual have a unique personality.

As I mentioned before, these women are concerned about Canadian values. They are concerned about what their children learn. Lan was worried that her daughter was not willing to share her toys with the other children. Lan described this behaviour as selfish. The teacher, however, thought that her daughter was okay, because it was her turn to play with the toy. After her initial uneasiness, Lan said she had to let her daughter learn Canadian rules if she is going to live in Canadian society. These mothers observe social and cultural norms closely in order to make sure that their children are properly socialized. In talking about how her child responded to another child's attack in day care by crying, Qing remarks:

Now I am teaching my son if others beat you, you fight back. According to Chinese principles, even if other kids attack you, the teachers would say, do not fight back. You are expected not to hit back when you are hit, not to call names when you are called names. However, when you come here, this does not work. Therefore, I think we need to learn to be more aggressive. It will be better.

Weifang was happy to find that her son became less timid after she no longer required her son to use traditional Chinese ways to deal with interpersonal conflicts. Racial discrimination was mentioned in our conversations when talking about day care centres. However, it seemed that most of the mothers had already anticipated this situation and tried to deal with it in their own way. Moreover, in spite of the conflicts between Western (or maybe individual day care centre's) and Chinese ideas about education, these mothers still believed that day care centres are ideal places for their children to receive intensive training in Canadian culture, language and socialization.

Learning the English Language

If helping their children socialize was a concern for these Chinese mothers, this concern was furthered by their eagerness to get their children into a day care centre to learn English. Their own language barriers are an impetus for them to encourage their children to learn. After listing socialization as the first purpose for a child in day care, Ying sums up all of the women's

expressed concerns: "Secondly, I think, it is the language. Language is very important for the child as a new immigrant in this country."

The acquisition of English is necessary for their children to develop their intellectual ability fully and survive and succeed in this country. Congshan felt that she was inadequate to help her children's development in this area. She was prepared to send her first child to day care soon to "get some education". She says,

Suddenly I feel the lack of ability to educate my child. I used to feel that my education would allow me to educate my children, now that is not the case at all. I feel that the child has a lot of potential, but I do not know where to start in his education. If he misses this process, I feel it is my fault. We parents have the responsibility.

These mothers emphasized the need for their children to learn English so that their children not only learn Canadian norms and establish new value system, but also develop fully intellectually for future success.

Reframing Mothering Role

Although these women belong to a minority in Canada, their experience is not identical with those minority ethnic groups of women in feminist studies such as Collins' (1994) and Stack & Burton's (1994). The mothering conditions of these women were similar to white middle-class professionals in Canada characterized with little or no familial support. However, their current economic conditions and social positions were more disadvantaged than those women, and closer to the situations of those ethnic groups of women with disadvantaged material conditions. Their experiences involved isolated mothering at home similar to those of white middle class women (Knight 1992) with more emphasis on mothercare for a young child's well being. They also consider mothering tasks as a division of labour and family responsibility. Their mothering role was also engaged in a new function: maintaining Chinese identity and values. Helping their children to learn the Chinese language became another important part of their motherwork.

Mothercare and Social Status

These mothers now paid more attention to mothering their young children. Their changed conditions meant that they had to or could stay home a longer time with their young children.

They changed their ideas about staying home because they found support in Canadian culture to do so whereas in China they would have been under pressure to work ¹⁹. Jiamei says,

Yes, in China, as I have said, I would not stay home to look after children. One has to go to work. How can you stay home to look after children? For me, it was impossible! That would be an insult! Could I be only good at looking after children? Am I am good for nothing? Now, my idea has changed so much since I came here.

Jiamei was influenced by the Western ideology of mothering and individualism. For example, she expressed the belief that if one family wants a child then they should be responsible for the caring, and not expect the old to help: "We think it has not much to do with the old. We want a child, we should care for him. We don't want to let others do it." Caring for her child was a major responsibility for Jiamei. She never had help from her parents or in-laws. It is not clear, however, in Jiamei's case whether this was because she had adopted the Canadian ideas or her family situation was such that she could not ask them to help.

Nevertheless, these mothers remarked that discovering that Canadian mothers were encouraged to stay home actually had lessened their guilt for being a housewife instead of a career woman. They did not hear questionings and problematizations against this assumption in Canadian society (e.g. Tizard, 1991). Some of the women such as Lan and Jiamei interpret this as meaning that: contrary to the situation in China, mothering at home is more respected in this society. Jiamei says,

¹⁹ According to Statistics Canada (1994), by 1993, 54% of women with children less than age 3 were part of the paid work force, up from 39% in 1981. Women's labor force participation rate, compared with the situation in China in the same period, is still relatively lower although in Canada, the participation rate has risen greatly in the last decade.

Here, caring for children is seen as a quite lofty career. Staying home and taking care of children does not mean you have no knowledge, are illiterate, and lack ability to work outside. If I were in China, I would be thought of this way. I would be seen as having no knowledge, no education, no ability to work and all I could do was to stay home and take care of children. It is different here.

Living on campus, these women might be getting a limited view of Canadian mothering practices. They might have paid more attention to mainstream mothering ideology and practice. Their impression is that more Canadian women seem to accept that caring for children is mainly their responsibility. In comparison, in China, staying home to be a full-time mother or for a longer period after giving birth is not acceptable for a professional. The participants in this study all have university degrees and years of work experience in China. They firmly believe that a woman should work outside the home to obtain equal social and economic rights and status with men. Even when they understand that staying at home caring for children is a respected position they maintain that mothering is under-appreciated. I chose Han's explanation as a summation of this opinion:

I don't think staying home to mother has a high status. Because we get this kind of education in China (women should have equal social status and work achievements outside the home), we won't act like that (staying home to be a housewife). My personal opinion is if a woman only looks after her children, wouldn't this be like the situation before liberation ²⁰? With that kind of image of a women (weak, oppressed)? It gives this impression.

Congshan, Han and Ying remarked that Canadian mothers have a lower social status because they are more expected to be the major childcare giver. They have difficulty in understanding why these Canadian women accept the belief that caring for children should be the major duty of a mother.

²⁰ It refers to the time before 1949 when women were expected to stay home being a housewife.

Congshan and others commented that Canadian women are not as high in social status as their counterparts in China because they are unaware of the unfairness of taking major or sole responsibility for the children. Congshan says of this:

I think, compared with a Chinese woman at the same level, a Canadian woman's social status is much lower. In Canadian society, the division of labour by the society and husbands put childcare, this obligation and labour division on the shoulders of women so naturally. However, in China, ideologically and psychologically, no matter whether they (Chinese women) do (mothering) or not, they do not have this idea in their minds. They do not think that they must do it this way (mothering alone).

Ying echoed what Congshan commented: "Here, actually the degree of women's liberation, if according to our standards, is not as high as in China."

Although these immigrant Chinese mothers appreciate more acceptances of staying home and caring, they are very clear that they see mothering as a common responsibility shared by their husbands and the extended families. Their core belief of womanhood remains: mothering is only one part of a woman's life; a respected social status is obtained through paid employment. For these women, if mothering is one major element of their self-fulfilment, paid employment is another element.

Family Responsibility and Division of Labour

This study also found that most of them explained their much heavier motherwork (and daily housework) as family responsibility, a division of labour in the family. For American immigrant women, Collins (1994) quotes Glenn's (1986: 192) words:

Women's reproductive labour-that is, feeding, clothing, and psychologically supporting the male wage earner and nurturing and socializing the next generation-is seen as work on behalf of the family as a whole, rather than as work benefiting men in particular" (p.47).

These Chinese mothers say a similar thing about themselves. Weifang says,

This is a general situation, and it is a social division of labour, right? That is to say, hum, I feel that most men, no matter how, have to support a family. It is not a big deal for a woman to spend more time on domestic chores, unless you are that kind of very... very busy, and you have a lot of things to do.

She continued:

I think you do not need to force a man to spend more energy at home, or he must share all the housework with you equally. In most cases, the man is working or pursuing a degree, they usually are very busy. If both of them, as in some families, are studying, then they will be busier. In our family, I am the person who is not that busy (laugh), so I just take more housework. I do more at home, and he does more outside.

Weifang's explanation of the usual division of labour that took place in these Chinese families reflects a practical response to their particular situation; however, this strategy requires that the woman compromise their careers in this re-division of labour. Although Weifang's idea of the division of labour was that it was only for those women who do not "have a lot of things to do," I interpret this here as it reflects the fact that the women's work now counts less than their husbands'. In this study, all the women held lower career expectations than their husbands after coming to Canada and saw their husbands as the major earner for the family.

Ying explained this division of labour as though it did not violate the principle of equality of men and women,

Without my efforts, he would not earn money so light-heartedly, he does not worry about anything at home. If I let him stay home and I go out to make money, it would be the same situation. It is the only a difference of the division of labour.

According to Ying, in this division of labour, men and women seem equal as ever, and it is merely a decision of who should go out and who should stay home. Nevertheless, in these women's experiences, they are usually supposed to be the one who stays home, for both the children and the family's interests.

If in China caring for children was the responsibility of the whole family (both the nuclear and the extended family) this family responsibility was now solely allocated to them. This discussion of the division of labour did not occur when they talked of their mothering experiences in China, where they were required to go back to work--they did not have a choice. What I want

to emphasize here is that even in China where these women did not feel that they were solely responsible for childcare, the work is still primarily the women's work, if not solely one woman's.

In another dimension, however, questions could be asked about why it is women who take the supporting role in this family strategy. Congshan, having an idea of equality in mind, accepted a certain amount of division of labour between men and women, such as pregnancy and breastfeeding, but still puzzled over why men did not do the rest of the caring work and housework. She remarked:

I would not say in the first place that a woman should let her husband do all the housework. Still a woman should be the same as a man who can have a job. Only when it comes to division of labour, a woman will do a bit more. For example, a man can not get pregnant, and do breastfeeding. A woman has to do these all by herself. All the rest men can do. In fact, men can do (all the rest), but why don't they?

An implicit consensus among these women is that these women's career development was always not as important and promising as that of their husbands. For, example, Ju cited that she was not as intelligent as her husband. Therefore, it is logical to let the person with the higher development potential to have the priority. Ju stated this clearly, even though she was one of only two of the participants with a Canadian Master's degree:

I think, in average, female is inferior to male in ability. People are born the same; the environment, social environment, physical situations, and all kinds of factors have made men and women different. I think we should admit this difference.

Although not all the women said as explicitly as Ju did that they stood aside to allow their husbands' great potential to grow, this is the impact of their behaviour. I see the complexity of their minds and behaviour, and they are sometimes contradictory. Nevertheless, I argue that this changed perception of the division of labour reflects, first, more a familial strategy in coping with specific situations rather than an altered belief of equality. Second, these women believe that women are better caregivers for children, therefore, it makes sense for them to take major responsibility if their mothers were not available as in China. However, this strategy is also based

on a deep-seated idea, of both the husband and the wife, that men are superior to women and, therefore deserves more opportunities. In these women's minds, the idea of equality is not abandoned, however, when it comes to a situation in which family as a whole has to be considered, women tend to be the one who step aside. Another hidden factor is that because of the idea that male are superior to female is accepted by these women (to various degrees), it is possible that they are not as ambitious and competitive as their husbands are. What needs to be noted here is that these women still believe that caring for children is the responsibility of both the parents, but it seems on the condition that when the father of the child is available. Unfortunately, these fathers are most of the time, not available (even in China). For those who had children in Canada, their mothering role became all the more important.

Maintaining Chinese Values and Identity

Another aspect of motherwork that these women worried about was educating their older children in order to maintain their ethnic values and identity. This motherwork happens through their everyday interactions with their children. In describing mothering for ethnic groups of women in the United States, Collins (1994) claims:

Racial ethnic women's motherwork reflects the tensions inherent in trying to foster a meaningful racial identity in children within a society that denigrates people of colour. The racial privilege enjoyed by white, middle-class women makes unnecessary this complicated dimension of the mothering tradition of women of colour (p 57).

The women in this study likewise struggled to foster a meaningful ethnic identity for themselves and their children. These Chinese mothers used to have better social positions and higher educational background. Confronted with a gap between their conceived self and their existing social beings in Canada, they hope to regain their status through their children. Their motherwork includes both helping their children become socialized into dominant society and helping them retain a strong ethnic identity.

The first and most important task for the women was to teach their children Chinese. They used the language as a tool to teach Chinese culture. In China, these mothers wanted their child to learn how to read and write Chinese to be literate, here, however, they do it to help their children maintain their Chinese identity, and not lose their Chinese culture. These women feel that teaching their children Chinese is an indispensable family obligation for them. Weifang was anxious about her child's ability in the Chinese language. She remarked: "As Chinese parents, at least we should help our children learn the Chinese language. This is very important." Ying taught Chinese Pinyin phonetics to her son. She is aware of how difficult it is for her son to learn Chinese, but she is patient. She expects that "When he (the son) grows up, I can instil him with some knowledge of the Chinese way... It takes time."

Maintaining Chinese values was a big concern for these mothers. For example, they found that Canadian daycare teachers would not judge who was right and who was wrong when conflicts occurred among the children in the daycare, as teachers in China would have. Nor is competition for good performance encouraged in the daycare environment as in China. Individuality is emphasized to a great extent. The women's basic approach for teaching their children at home was to use role modelling. For instance, respecting teachers is an essential behaviour for Chinese people. These mothers taught this to their children. Making their children study hard is another example of their teaching Chinese values. To achieve these goals, these mothers had to work "overtime" (Congshan's words). Qing is quite optimistic about her son getting two types of education: "I am thinking that he gets education at day care. When he comes back in the evening, we give him a type of Oriental education to blend the two together. Isn't this even better?"

For the mothers who had children at Canadian day care centres, racial discrimination was a sensitive issue. Chinese mothers worried about the treatment their children received at day care centres. They felt that a certain degree of discrimination was acted out by some of the teachers

and that there was no way to avoid it. Jiamei's son was in a day care centre and, she felt that her child was discriminated against because he was a non-white child. She observed the attitude she felt at her son's centre:

I mean that they can not discriminate against Chinese. Let me put this way, if a Chinese kid hit a white kid, the teacher would scold the Chinese kid very sternly. Well, when a White kid hit a Chinese kid, the teacher just slightly... it totally depends on a teacher's attitude.

In our conversations, mothers said that they had accepted that they should adjust their original values and norms to help their children fit into Canadian society. They tried to teach their children some Canadian norms to resist any felt discrimination. Weifang and Qing told similar stories about how their attitudes had changed around the issue of children fighting at daycare.

Qing remarked:

Now I am teaching my son that if others hit him, he should hit back. According to the kind of education in the day care in China, even if other kids hit you, the teachers would say, "you don't hit back." One is not expected to hit back when being hit by others. The Confucious thought is like that. However, when you come here, it does not work this way, if you want to fit into this society. We have less population here after all, and we need to learn to be more aggressive. It is better this way. [We have] no choice.

The general approach of these Chinese women toward any discrimination was to make adjustments in themselves, instead of making confrontations with mainstream Canadian institutions or individuals. Han avoided thinking much about this issue: "Anyway, I don't care. One does not have to care about this. You just don't care because you do not have choice. If you try to talk to them, they would not respond to you." Jiamei, Ju, and Weifang echoed Han's observation. They were aware of the persistence of discrimination in this society against minority ethnic groups, and they felt powerless before the system. The only way for them was to make self-adjustments and create their own way of resistance. For example, Han chose to avoid confrontation and ignore the issue; Weifang and Qing chose to teach their children to learn Canadian rules but still be aware of their difference from Chinese ones.

Teaching their children to balance between cultural adaptation and resistance is a very difficult mothering task. It requires a long term commitment and patience as their children resist this over time. However, they see it as a new part of the mothering role as they work to live successfully as Chinese in Canada.

Working and Mothering

No matter how their mothering role has changed, these women still insist on working outside home in order to get some income and gain a higher social status. All of them said that their ideal was to have a job and be a mother. At the time of the interviews, those mothers who had left their children behind them were all reunited with their children in Canada. As they mothered, they agonized over the loss of their previous social status and professional positions in China. Many realized that they had to play a supporting role in terms of their husband's career development. Some sought consolation in the explanation of the sexual division of labour; others lamented about no longer feeling equal with their husbands.

Even though they have taken on more responsibility in parenting and become more aware of children's emotional needs, these women have not been "assimilated" into Canadian culture. These Chinese women maintained their belief that working outside home is more socially valued than staying home to be a full-time mother.

Survival, Identity, and Self- fulfilment

Most of these immigrant Chinese women realized that if they wanted to survive and fit into this society, and support their children to do so, they had to start from scratch. They had to go back to school to improve their English and get some kind of education to enhance their employability. Most sought adult education programs as a path to survival first. Collins' study (1994) discovered that one part of minority ethnic women's motherwork was struggling for survival and identity. The participants in this study showed similar experiences. Qing was very

clear about the situation she was in. She remarks: "I think I had no choice. Here, if you do not have a local diploma, you can only end up doing the low-ranking, low-paying jobs, and just survive." For economic survival, she accepted less than minimum wage to earn some income. When she was granted permanent residence status in Canada, she was able to receive state-funded job training. Although the course was not exactly what she wanted, she accepted it in order to facilitate her learning and planned to make the best of it.

I would definitely choose this, because it is free. Since it is free, it is good to learn a skill. I thought this way at that time, one purpose is for learning English, and one is for future. If I can not to find a good job (with this diploma), it is okay to have a poor one, as long as I can survive on it. That is all I can do.

Han is also clearly aware of the importance of a Canadian diploma for her as a non-native-speaker of English,

Then you have to have some skills to stand on your own. I feel that only learning it from Chinese is not enough. I do not have local education. I made this decision after hesitating for a whole year. I enrolled at a local community college. This was mainly because I decided to receive its education, and get a diploma from there. Then I will try again. I think it will be better by that time. Because I will have a formal education here, and I will hold a diploma after training. I think it will be better.

Regaining their original status might be a far off goal, or could remain a dream forever, however, these women are unceasing in their struggle for a decent social identity. For Congshan, this was not only a personal realization, but also work on behalf of the family. For Congshan, it was also very clear that getting an education was only a first step.

Among these eight Chinese women, Lan was the only one who came here as a student; she obtained a master's degree in biology. Ju studied in a graduate program after she arrived here (her child was still in China). Han and Qing were in the middle of job-training programs at the time of interview; one was in hairdressing, and the second was in food beverage services. Congshan and Jiamei had clear plans for attending community college accounting programs, and later, they both

completed these programs. Weifang planned to study when her second child was old enough to be cared for by others.

I found that the women believe that high self-value and social value could be only obtained through employment, even when outside employment was not financially necessary for them. They felt that even if their husbands could support the family and gain status, they would not have value. They see both mothering and work as personal fulfilment.

When asked whether they would stay home to be a housewife if their family financial situation allowed them to, six of the eight women interviewed stated explicitly that they would not stay home as housewives but would go out to work as soon as their children went to day care. Although Ying stated earlier in the conversation that she wanted to be a full-time mother, later in the conversation, she contradicted the statement:

Even if I feel it is a real trouble to have children, I still feel that, my life would not have been complete if I were not a mother. Nevertheless, is it (mothering) the most important thing? Maybe there are a few important things in a person's life. If this is true, I think mothering is one of them. Whether it is the most important one? Maybe not. For example, if I were in China now, I wouldn't think that being a mother is the most important thing, right? Under the environment in China, everybody has a job. I for sure would like to have a very good job and I did enjoy my work back there.

These mothers did not want to give up their pursuit of self-fulfilment through career achievements just because they are mothers. Han said this in real earnest,

This is something to do with my personality. Because I can not stay idle, you know? I am a person with this character, I really want to do things, and I don't like to be idle. I just can not idle away. I'd like to do something. Before in China, we all said that we should have some achievements while we were young, to have achievements in your career.

Looking farther ahead in their lives, anticipating a time when they could live on their husbands' earnings, these women still feel the desire to go out to work. Jiamei had her philosophy, "Even if we have enough money, and enough to eat and drink, I think I still want to go out to work. I think, work is not, say, for money. It is for the enrichment of my life." Ju furthered the explanation of wasting no time to go out to work,

It is for social value. If a woman stays home looking after children, it will affect her future career. After you graduate, you are probably already in your thirties, and you stay home with your children. You do not have any Canadian experience yet. After you have brought up your children, you are thirty-five, then you go out to look for work; it will be very difficult.

These women planned to leave their homes to seek employment or re-learn for future employment once they thought their children were old enough to go to day care.

Relying on Centre or Group Childcare

These women sought day care to free them for paid employment. They believe that centre or group childcare is good for children and that it is also good for the mothers so they can pursue other things. Although they stayed home when their children were young, they did not see childcare as a big obstacle in seeking employment when their children were older. Getting a decent job was more difficult for them. If they could find a good job, they would have the money to pay for the day care. Ying says of the centre day care: "Moreover, once I send him to day care, I can go out to look for jobs with a light heart. This is also one of the reasons. It is indeed boring to have him with me all day long." Qing shared this feeling too, "If the child is older, and there is a day care centre available, or there are others (such as his grandparents) to look after him, I will definitely go out to work."

Most of the mothers would prefer to care for their children by themselves until they think their children are old enough to go to day care. Lan, a technician in a biology lab, was anxious to go back soon after she gave birth to her daughter:

When she was eight months old, I thought it was time to send her to day care, so I did, and I went to look for jobs. Our financial condition was okay at that time. I mean, it was tight, but it was manageable. But I just thought that I couldn't stay home for all my life. And if I am off work longer, the harder it will be to go back to it. People will ask me, "what have you been doing these years?" It is because the field of Biology is developing very fast.

Employment for Children's Interests

These mothers thought working outside the home was in their own interests and in the interests of their children. They did not separate their interests distinctly from their children's. Working and family are interwoven in their minds. Recent feminist literature reveals that this is the case for many women, especially immigrant women (, Dill, 1988; Collins, 1990, 1994; Glenn, 1985). Often their motivation for employment is fused to their sense of responsibility as a mother to meet their family's (children's) interests.

When I asked whether she would like to go back to work, Weifang said she would in order for her children to have better living conditions. Ying and Ju wanted to work to invest in their children's future education. Congshan believed that her career would lead to a higher social status for her children,

I am saying this not only for myself. On one hand, it is for myself, for the future path I have to go along. I should have my role in society, a status; I have to do it. On the other hand, I need to do it for my children's sake, for my family.

Ying first said that she would prefer to stay home to be a full-time mother. However, she still longed for her work outside the home. In a later conversation, she changed her mind saying she would like to work:

I would like to go out to work. One reason is that I can't give up my profession. Another reason is that I hope that my child will receive a good education. My husband's earning is not enough. If I could have a job, and income, then my child could go to a private school. I like piano a lot, and I hope that he can learn piano. All these need money. If I don't have a job, I can't accomplish these for my child. So my motive of getting a job is one, for me, the other is for my child.

Congshan clearly realised that she had to make efforts to establish her identity in this society, and it was never easy. She figured that language and education were her biggest obstacles. She says: "Here, you have to learn from the very beginning, then could you possibly talk about doing anything." Ju justified leaving her child in China to come to Canada for further education, she explains:

Of course, I want to be with my daughter a bit longer time, especially at her age. But I think, as a mother and father, it is important to have some requirement for your own self-value. This plays a big role in the development of your children. If you as parents are self-empowered, it will give invisible influence on your children.

Their motivations for work are not only for self-realization, but are also connected with being responsible mothers. Some American research on mothering reveals that some women's interests can be subordinated to their children's or differentiated from the children's. These Chinese women do not see their interests as separated from their children's, but as connected to their children's interests and benefits. They see their children's interests as embedded in their interests. This is how some of them could bear the pain of separation from their young children and moved to Canada to seek a new life environment: it was done mostly for their children's sake.

Summary

These women adapted their ideas of mothering when they came to Canada. Their reconstructed ideas of mothering were discussed in three aspects: re-conceptualized children's needs, reframed mothering role, and working and mothering.

One aspect of mothering that was changed was paying more attention to children's emotional needs. Mothercare was more valued than in China, and all of them became willing to stay home longer than when they were in China. Mothercare was seen to be good, for both the physical and emotional needs of their children. Going to a day care centre was seen to be the best way for their children to learn Canadian social skills. Learning English is pivotal in adapting to the new culture.

Mothering roles were reframed in response to the changed material circumstances and social cultural contexts of the women's lives. More mothercare was assumed in various degrees according to each woman's personal and familial situation. In the division of labour, all of the women took on more responsibility for parenting their children than in China. Maintaining their

cultural identity and values was another major part in their mothering role that was new to learn as a result of coming to Canada.

Although mothercare became more valued, these women still believe that working outside the home offers the highest social status. Mother's employment was believed to be helpful for their own interests, but also for their children's. Mothering and outside work are seen as the two major elements of a woman's life. These women feel that working is as self-fulfilling as mothering, but also that working is important for survival and establishing themselves and their families in a new society.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This study explored the ways a particular group of Chinese immigrant women changed their conceptions of mothering during a particular process of immigration to Canada. In Chapters Three and Four, I presented their mothering conditions in China and in Canada. In Chapter Five, I examined and discussed the factors that influenced their conceptions about motherhood and mothering. In this chapter, I summarize my findings, discuss implications for feminist research and the field of adult education, and recommend some future research.

Mothering in Two Specific Social Contexts

In China

Five out of eight women in the study relied on multigenerational collectives to care for their children. In China, these women's mothering experiences included paid maternity leave, extended family support, some help from their husbands in the early period, and extra help from hired nannies and baby sitters. The participants strongly believed that having children is both a family obligation and personally fulfilling. In the context of current ideas about mothering in China, women are expected to have a child for the family, but this does not mean that they are expected to be the child's only caregiver. This is because the regulation of women working as equals to men has been in place since the participants' mothers' generation. Mothers of young children are expected to work outside the home soon after the birth of their child. These women see work and mothering as integrated parts of their lives.

These Chinese women think children's needs are physical, emotional, and educational, although they emphasize mothers' responsibility for their children's educational needs. Although they believed that mothercare was the best care, they agreed that the care for children's physical needs could be shared with other family members to a satisfactory degree. Children's emotional

needs were not explicitly discussed. The women's ideas about mothering reflect Chinese cultural norms. These norms dictate that women must participate in the paid labour force because it is more valuable and important to the society than staying at home mothering.

In Canada

When these Chinese women came to Canada to join their husbands as spouses of international students, their belief systems about mothering were challenged and confronted. They lost their social and economic status instantly. They were challenged by their inability to work because of inadequate language. In addition to this, they needed recognizable education which meant they had to seek re-training or education. Their situations were exacerbated by the fact that they were without permanent status of residence for two or more years.

Their dramatically lowered social and economic conditions caused a great change in their mothering conditions. Most of the families' financial ability was not high enough to qualify them to sponsor their parents coming to Canada. Therefore, they could not rely on extended family childcare assistance as in China. They were neither eligible for a childcare subsidy before they became landed immigrants in Canada, nor were they able to afford sufficient childcare for younger children if they wanted to work or to study. Because their economic situation was so tough, some of them left their children behind in China. Most of them ended up doing more motherwork at home than they would have in China.

Although these women had a firm belief in equality between men and women, including sharing housework and caring for the child, their immigration experiences changed their economic and mothering conditions. Although their ideas about equality have not changed, they were no longer given the conditions and resources to keep a balance between work and mothering. In these circumstances, they re-framed their interpretation of "equality", and had to put their husband's career development ahead of their own. Equal sharing of parenting was little more than

a distant idea after coming to Canada. Family survival in Canada became the top priority influencing their decision about childcare arrangements. In all the cases, family survival meant the guaranteed academic success of their husbands, and resulted in compromising their own career goals to do mothering if there was no childcare support within their means.

Reconceptualizing Mothering

These women's mothering role was reframed in response to their changed material circumstances and social cultural contexts. Each woman, according to her personal and familial situation, did more mothering and valued it more highly than in China. The women believed that mothercare met both the physical and emotional needs of their children. They have recognized their children's emotional needs more explicitly. The women assumed more responsibility in the household division of labour.

Maintaining their children's cultural identity and values was another major part in their perceived mothering role, especially as a minority group. They also feel strongly that they are responsible for their children's educational needs. English speaking day care centres are believed to be the best way for their children to be socialized into Canadian society. Learning English is seen as vital for cultural adapting.

Although mothercare is more highly valued, these women still believe that employment outside the home has higher social status. Mothers' employment was not only for mothers' own interests, but was also for their children's interests. Mothering and work are seen as two major elements in a woman's life. Employment is seen as a path to self-fulfilment, as was mothering. But employment is viewed as more important for survival and establishing identity for new immigrants.

Social Construction of Mothering

- Implications for Feminist Analysis of Mothering

Glenn (1994) claims that mothering occurs within specific social contexts that vary in terms of material and cultural resources and constraints. This study supports this claim. For a long historical period, mothering was essentialized to a natural, universal, and unchanging viewpoint that fundamentally reflected a "white, American, middle-class" model of mothering. Recent feminist scholarship (especially those by minority writers) has begun to challenge earlier views of mothering and shift the centre of discussion to include the experiences of minority ethnic groups. More studies have given attention to understanding the historical and social specificity of mothering in different ethnic groups in Western societies (Glenn 1994). It is also important for feminists to analyze motherhood through the different perspectives women's lives in other social, political, and economic systems offer in order to expand feminist visions and understand the complexity of mothering.

This section will present the following themes for the discussion of mothering constructed by this group of Chinese mothers in a specific situation. It will also discuss the implications for feminist theorizing about motherhood in the themes of material conditions for mothering, kin obligations and patriarchy, the balance between mothering and working, and mothercare and childcare.

Material Conditions for Mothering

According to Young (1984), mothering is greatly constrained by the material conditions within a historically and culturally specific circumstance. My study supports Young's claim that we must examine concrete material conditions and women's oppression related to mothering in various social contexts. In urban areas in China where the participants used to live, mothering practices are different from a North American middle class model in which a mother feels guilty if

she works outside the home when her child is young. However, the dominant Chinese family structure in urban areas is very much the same as a nuclear North American family (except that more Chinese young couples have only one child). The official Chinese ideology of equality in employment rights and opportunities is grounded in the need for maximizing social production in a developing socialist system. The intersection of raising women's status and the need of the country gave Chinese women a great deal of freedom in working outside the home and guaranteed job security. As previously mentioned, in China, women's wages in a family are as important as their husbands' (a woman gets the same wage as a man if she has the same education), making an indispensable contribution to the income of a family with children. In the Great Leap Forward, women participated massively in the labour force and public childcare facilities were set up to assume most of the responsibility of childcare (Lee, 1992). Mothering at home was largely ignored and certainly not encouraged. After the Cultural Revolution, however, services for children under the age of two were not always adequate (Ibid.) or desired. I believe that it is not particularly the Chinese cultural tradition that makes early child care arrangements a responsibility for the extended family. It is mostly because there are fewer material and resources available and so the participation of extended family members is necessary.

When these mothers moved to the different social context of Canada, their material circumstances were abruptly changed. In China (before 1990s), they had paid maternity leave, and did not worry about losing their jobs, even if they wanted to stay home for a longer time (though they might lose seniority and other benefits). They did not pay their parents for childcare and, often, their parents financially supported them. Although both parents have to work, expenses are not as high in China as they are here. These women's families were ranked as middle-class families because of their high educational backgrounds. Most importantly, childcare expenses were affordable for most (urban) families. When they first came to Canada, they were in

an unfavourable situation. Most of them lost extended family childcare support and could not afford to hire nannies for young children or use public childcare. Although their budgets were tight, these women could manage to stay home with careful management of their low incomes. In addition, sometimes they made a little extra money from baby-sitting or doing other odd domestic jobs. Constrained by their different material conditions and resources in Canada, they experienced mothering differently than they had in China.

Family Responsibility and Patriarchy

These women's reframed ideas of mothering exhibit the Chinese notion of family responsibility. This belief and commitment to family responsibility are partly derived from traces of Chinese feudalistic patriarchy which teaches women to be good supporters of their husbands and (later,) their sons. In Canada, they are no longer controlled by the socialist patriarchy in China which is manifested in the excessive emphasis on the needs of the country over women's own (e.g. Liu, 1993; Stacey, 1983). However, feudalistic patriarchy still works to influence these women's attitudes and behaviour. This study found that these women had to change their priorities when they came to Canada. For example, they put their husbands' careers before theirs with little hesitation and they were willing to support them for the sake of the family although they had similar levels of education from China.

It is clear that there was a disparity between their belief of equality and their practices. They talked about and hoped for a common responsibility held by both father and mother in caring for their young children. In reality, however, they did the most caring and were the most concerned about matters relating to their children's education. They seemed to have a sound rationale for this situation. This would not be the situation if they were in China where it is institutionalized that men and women are supposed to work equally and be paid equally. Influenced by Chinese feudalistic patriarchal ideology, these women had to sacrifice their equal

rights of advancement to support their husbands' career development. This is doubly reinforced by the patriarchy in capitalist Canada where mothers are encouraged to take the primary responsibility for the children at home.

Patriarchy takes different expressions in different societies and cultures. Rich gives a working definition of patriarchy:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men--by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male (1986, p.57).

Patriarchy exists in both socialist China and capitalist Canada; however, its manifestation is different. In modern China, (socialist) patriarchy is shown in the insistence of the state that a woman should put the interests of the state before her own. In addition, the state is a male-dominated authority. For example, women's emotional sacrifices (and their children's) are subordinated to a social and economic expectation for women to go back to work when their children are still young. Capitalist patriarchy, based on economic competition, encourages the women to stay at home and the husband to work outside. Although parts of the patriarchal systems are different, they were in both China and Canada, outside work has more status.

In China, the patriarchal ideology exerts its power by providing limited options for the ways women may combine mothering and employment. Women have to compete for their career development in men's world and by men's standards. They have to maintain their social status by ignoring their children's emotional needs, and their own desire for providing more mothercare to their children. Women in China could not imagine staying home for long to care for their children, if they did, they would miss the opportunities of personal and career development. They also would not accept this kind of self-image. It was only when they were in Canada that they had more "choices" as to how long they want to stay home with their children for their children's

benefit. Ironically, this increase in choices about staying home occurred in the context of a decrease in choices about returning to their previous career path.

The Western feminist analysis of Chinese patriarchy has focused on the influence of the patriarchal political ideology and the gain of women's own interests (Andors 1983; Honig 1988; Liu 1993; Stacey 1983). They claim the women's liberation in China means little more than equal opportunity to participate in public labour. I think, however, that it must be remembered that in China the patriarchy Chinese women experience is different from the patriarchy Western feminism thinks it is. In my interviews with the women in the study, the patriarchal authority and the priority of men's needs (Honig 1988; Wolf 1985) was not strongly felt by them in their experiences in China. Although the conception of a good mother is a cultural and political invention in China as elsewhere, this group of Chinese mothers seemed to have more awareness of equality than anything else. In a normal family situation in China, these women were, or would have been, assisted with childcare by their extended families, if not specifically, by their husbands. In Canada, material conditions made their families divide their labour as a strategy to overcome the hardship of immigration. There was no doubt that someone had to make the sacrifice. In this context of making choices about family welfare, patriarchy may have reasserted itself as women make the sacrifice.

It is worth noting that these women saw the division of labour as taking responsibility for the family. They do not see entirely as serving patriarchy. The division of labour is also an indication of the flexibility of these families when faced with hardship. Whether they came to make more money or to get into university, these mothers all considered moving to Canada as part of a family plan rather than as an individual decision. Mothers are believed to be the best caregivers to the children, and even in China when women have a career, they are expected to be good mothers. For these married Chinese women, it seemed important and essential to always

consider their families as a whole, including child care arrangements. The mothering experiences of these women were integrated into their considerations about family prosperity. Their conceptions of mothering were influenced to a certain extent by the Chinese traditional beliefs that the family is a whole social and economic unit, and a mother is a member of that family which is more important than being an individual.

This study also found that these women experienced Western patriarchy differently from Canadian women. These women tend to interpret positively the mainstream Canadian mothering ideology as a respect for mothering. For the time being, they used Canadian mothering ideology to relieve themselves from their loss of employment status. They felt less anxious about not going out to work or study as an equal to their husband. Staying at home for a while did not erase their value of work outside the home. These Chinese mothers used Canadian patriarchal to serve their own interests, and to meet their children's emotional needs, which had been in certain ways ignored in China. Therefore, we can see that in different historical periods and cultures, patriarchy is interpreted and experienced differently by women in different social situations and personal circumstances.

Mothers' Interests versus Children's Interests

When in China, the women's ability to tend to their children's emotional needs was constrained by a social structure. Women's own interests, in terms of personal development and career achievements, were emphasized at the cost of their children's needs and interests. Women's own sets of interests were affected to a minimal degree by becoming mothers. In the different social context in Canada, the women were allowed a space in which they could express more concern for their children's emotional needs. Staying home longer to nurture their young was adopted, not only for its practical purposes but also for its theoretical implications. The women perceived early intensive mothering as a sacrifice and felt more conflicts with their

mothering role. However, this conflict was diminished when their children reached three years old. They see their employment outside home in society as complementary to their children's interests. Although these women have valued mothercare highly than they used to, their mothering role was reframed as their children mature. All the participants in this study indicated that they would go out to work after their children grew older (generally over three years old). It is predicted that compared with average Canadian women with young children, their expectation for employment is still higher. According to Statistics Canada (1994), by 1993, the proportion of women with youngest child aged 3-5 working outside the home was 59%, although Canadian women's participation rate already rose, from 47% in 1981.

The women see their employment as important not only for increasing the family income, but also for building up their own social status, and providing better family environment and conditions for their children's education. They also think of their employment as creating a good model of self-reliance and self-esteem for their children. When the children are older, the women feel fewer conflicts between their own interests and their children's.

In most recent feminist scholarship, more recognition has been given to diverse perspectives in the analysis of mothering in different social and cultural environment. Feminist (Western-based) analysis seems bogged down in dualisms of working versus mothering, children's interests versus mothers' interests. The dominant feminist analysis of mothering, until recently based on an individualist philosophical ground, has characterized mothering through dominant American mothering model as isolation. In this context, this heavy responsibility is shared with others, and the feeling of "guilt" becomes and remains the central focus.

It seems to me that some feminist analyses often separate mothers' interests from their children's. A new attitude should be engaged, to examine not only one model or style of mothering, but also a variety of diverse mothering activities. Although some Western feminists

claim that women's interests in China were ignored when they were required to work soon after giving birth, this study shows that seeking social status and career development is also in many women's interests. In a male-dominated society, it is especially important for women to achieve social status and political power through employment. This can lay a foundation for successfully gaining women's other interests including more choices for mothering. In addition, the conflicts between mothers' interests and their children's are not unchanging, and do not doom women to live as victims. This study reveals that mothering is a social construction in specific historical circumstances and cultural contexts. Once their children reach three years of age, Chinese mothers send them to day care centres without the guilt many Canadian career mothers experience. Such a difference can be explained not only culturally, in terms of different ideologies of China and the West, but also because of all the other social, political, and economic differences in the two different social contexts.

Centre or Group Childcare

This study has demonstrated that more family support and a reliance on centre or group childcare can characterize a pattern of mothering and childcare in China. I argue that centre or group childcare could remain an effective measure to free women from "guilt". In this study these women's mothering practices and childcare arrangements in China can provide meaningful insights for the Western feminist struggle to include both mothers and children's interests when women mother and have jobs. The study supports the idea that women in other social systems develop different patterns of mothering and childcare. Mothering experiences are flexible according to the needs in women's lived social situations.

In recent Western feminist writing about mothering, childcare is heralded (e.g. Kamerman, 1985; Yeager & Strober 1990; Tom 1993b) as a solution for women's freedom from home to pursue their other interests, without the fear of causing damage to their children's development.

Centre or group childcare has been also seen as good for children's development in some feminist studies and many women believe this. In this study, the Chinese mothers firmly believed that childcare is good for children. Centre or group childcare is important in helping their children adjust to Canada. While Western feminists and mothers desire shared parenting and more social support in centre or group and public childcare services²¹, Chinese mothers have experienced this for many years (though not to a state of perfection).

As mothering is very much socially constructed, it can be re-constructed in ways that are more just. First, we should be honest with ourselves that mothering ideology is a cultural convention in every society and historical period. It is based not only on either the needs of a male-dominant society, or the presumed needs of children, it also results from specific material conditions under which women live. Some feminist research (e.g. Collins, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Hays 1996; Tizard, 1984) and this study has shown that mothers can be relieved from heavy responsibility of mothering, and have more equal rights as men in achieving their other interests, or even just feeling happier and more fair.

It is important for feminist analysis of mothering to study childcare in reference to the meaning and experience of motherhood in different cultures (Tom, 1993b). Understanding how childcare is valued by society, what meaning of childcare is constructed by the culture, society, and women themselves, further challenges the status quo.

Implications for the Field of Adult Education

Cultural Learning for Immigrant Mothers

This study has described the different mothering experiences of a group of Chinese

²¹ Women in the Labor Force (1994 edition, Statistics Canada, 1994) says: "One of the most dramatic trends in Canada has been the growth in the work force activity of married women, especially those with children. However, even when employed, women still bear most of the responsibility for their families. Women who are part of the paid work force continue to spend considerably more time than their spouses on unpaid domestic work, while their work pattern are much more likely than those of men to be affected by family demands. In this context, the provision of paid maternity leave and the availability of accessible affordable childcare are still very important issues for women" (p. 45).

immigrant women in China and Canada. The study has documented these women's cross-cultural learning experiences about mothering through immigration, with a particular focus on their reconstruction of ideas about motherhood and mothering. The study has added knowledge to the field of adult education in understanding how and in what ways these immigrant women reframed their ideas, and what forces shape this learning.

The immigrant women I interviewed reconstructed their conceptions of mothering in response to their changed social circumstances. The study supports Mezirow's transformation theory (1978, 1981, and 1991) in the way it has demonstrated that these women experienced a perspective transformation when they moved into a different culture and social context, and faced with dilemmas. In this transformative learning, they reflected how they had attached their meanings to their roles and relationships in China, and became critically aware of their previously unexamined conceptions of mothering. In this process, both old and new meaning schemes interacted with each other, and their conceptions of mothering became different from those they held in China, but were still not assimilated to those held by perceived dominant North American society. This supports Wolcott's suggestion (1991) that individuals create their own version of culture; as individuals acquire new cultural competencies, they do not necessarily abandon old ones. It seems that in their belief system, the core remained unchanged, that is: a woman should have other social roles instead of only being a mother. This firm belief was built in a complex of social forces shaping their life experiences. The majority of women in the Old Society of China (before 1949) did not have the right to education or employment (except for that domestic work). The newer generation of women gained some economic independence through employment. Their pursuit of employment is driven not only by their economic independence, but also by the desire to be a good mother. It is important for them to not only provide the child with care and

financial support for education, but also, by working outside the home, to provide a role model of independence. Even when they moved to a new social context, they maintained this belief.

Coming to Canada changed their attitude toward mothering. They began to appreciate their role as mother for several reasons. This is not only because of the cultural influence that the act of mothering is more appreciated in Canada. The more vital factor, I argue, is that they now had more time and space to devote to mothering. It is not that they did not recognize the benefit of mothercare to the child in China, but the time available for mothercare was constrained by institutionalized employment regulations. In addition, in China many children are cared for by their extended families and others so that mothercare was not seen to be as crucial as in Canada. I conclude that the women changed their conceptions of mothering for many complex reasons and not only because they were culturally assimilated as claimed by some studies about immigrants' learning (e.g. Gibson 1988; Kim 1988). This study supports the proposition that assimilation is only one among many adaptive responses (Berry, 1987). Not mere cultural exposure, but complex social circumstances made them change. From their descriptions of mothering, it is obvious that they want their children to be successful in this Canadian society, however this does not mean they want them to be completely assimilated to Canadian culture. They are very concerned about retaining their Chinese cultural values and identity. "Keep a cultural distance" is what I use to describe their attitudes toward cultural learning in Canada. In some way, this observation is similar to the described outcomes using constructs such as "biculturalism" and "constructive marginality" (Spindler & Spindler 1989) and "syncretism" (Pai 1990). They were active in learning the skills and getting education for survival, but they still showed strong resistance to cultural assimilation. They only accepted and adopted those Canadian values as suited them and their living circumstances. They were more active in learning *about* white Canadian culture rather than learning how to *become* a full-fledged member of Canadian society. The findings in this

study also supports Harper's (1994) claim that minority immigrants can deliberately choose to be marginal in a new society.

Needs for Adult Education Programs

The study contributes to the field of adult education by providing information about Chinese immigrant women's needs and issues concerning education and re-training in Canada. Recent immigrant women from China were very active in using various adult education programs to obtain social and professional competence. They felt a great need for further education and more training in Canadian society. They used adult education programs to develop a new identity and obtain credentials for being employed. Besides the two women who received Canadian higher education degrees, four of the participants in this study were enrolled in community-level training programs, and the other two planned to do so. This probably demonstrates a high participation rate in adult education programs among immigrant women from China. The issues reflected in this study, however, such as the low level of the job-training programs available for immigrants, were similar to those investigated in Butterwick's (1992) study. In her study, women's training programs were inadequate in meeting the needs of the participants. This indicates, on the one hand, a political implication in policy making, using immigrants, especially women as a low-ranking labour force; on the other hand, it shows that more attention should be given to these issues for research and practice in the field. It is also important for the field to give more understanding of immigrant women's learning needs in general and those Chinese women immigrants from China in particular because immigrant women, especially women from China, have not been given much attention in the field. Adult education programs should be altered to include members who have high educational backgrounds but inadequate English language skills. Adult educational programs run by the government or communities need to know more about the

felt needs of the potential program participants in order to make best use of the educational resources, and as well as these women's professional knowledge and skills.

Canadian immigrants from many parts of the world, especially from China, have the potential to form a strong clientele for Canadian adult education. This study has indicated that Canadian adult education, both as a field of study and a field of practice, will meet new challenges in giving attention to new groups among immigrants as adult learners. Old categories of adult education clientele are changing. This group of Chinese women exemplifies those new immigrants from Asia and elsewhere, with high educational backgrounds from their original country, but low proficiency in the dominant languages in Canadian society. They are not satisfied to be treated as a low ranking labour force with low pay. Moreover, it is not fair and proper to see them as the people who need literacy education. Their inadequate dominant language skills (especially in oral English) do not mean they have missed an early stage of a life long learning process. The field should change its angle of seeing things and embrace more perspectives in its development in the right direction, especially not only hearing their voices, but also trying to feel as those in a disadvantaged position in this society. It is not only those non-white women immigrants from developing countries who need more attention, but also male immigrants with high education in other languages than English. A change of attitude and focus of attention in the field will influence public policy concerning adult education and its programming and implementation. In the long run, it will make the allocation of public or private resources more legitimate and effective; it will achieve more social justice.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research about Chinese immigrant mothering should be done to compare the mothering experiences of those married women who came here as landed immigrants, and women who came here as students. What would be the situation for those Chinese mothers who came

here independently as landed immigrants (not as spouses)? Would they consider their husband's career first? How might these differences influence their ideas about childcare and employment? It is also important to compare Chinese immigrants to other immigrant women, and to Canadian women as well. Studies also should examine Chinese women's mothering experiences in urban areas of China compared to rural women. Their lives are now based on very different economic situations, and are shaped by different social, cultural, and familial factors.

Research should ask Chinese men's/husbands' views of fathering and how that fits with their views on women's mothering and childcare issues. I believe that women's equality and social justice rely on women's continuous struggle in a male-dominated world. However, this cause can never be won without raising men's awareness of social justice. It is therefore important to investigate what men think about women's mothering and child care work. We must make efforts to understand and to challenge the social structures and cultural ideologies that devalue the meaning of mothering and child care. Moreover, in these social structures and ideologies, men still have more power in controlling women's destiny. If all of us, men and women, persevere in our struggle for social justice, the day will come when mothering is not toil, but meaningful engagement; not emotionally draining, but a happy devotion; not devalued and ignored by men as women's work, by women as the cost and sacrifice of women's other interests, but will be tended by all family members and the whole society.

Summary

When these eight Chinese women's mothering experiences in both China and Canada were examined, it is clear that their mothering conceptions were reframed under a new social context. The study shows that these Chinese women's conceptualizations of mothering are neither those they held in China nor those held by Canadian society. These women came to

value their mothering role more highly as they assumed more mothercare. However, they still see caring for children at home as having less social status than employment outside the home.

This study shows that the social conditions in China did not allow them to have as many choices in nurturing as Canadian mothers do. However, their awareness of equality is high, as is their desire to work despite obstacles. These women accept and incorporate parts of Canadian mothering ideology without surrendering all of their beliefs to what they perceive as the dominant Canadian mothering ideology. Mothering is not their primary and sole mission and chief source of satisfaction, but one part of it.

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Appendix A



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LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT
CHINESE MOTHERS AND CHILD CARE
(English translation, to be provided in Mandarin and English)

Date

Ms. xxxxx

Dear Ms. xxxx,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce you to the research project, "Chinese Mothers and Child Care" and to ask if you would be interested in being interviewed for this research. You do not have to participate in this research if you do not want to. You will not be affected by participating or refusing to participate in this research; it will not affect your ability to get child care services and it will not change the care your child gets. If you choose to participate in this research, you will be contributing to the understanding of what Chinese mothers expect and need from child care. We hope that our research will be read by people who train child care workers, people who provide funds for child care services and by child care workers themselves.

The purpose of our study is to learn more about the way mothers who have recently immigrated from China think about and look for child care. The name of this study is "Chinese Mothers and Child Care." This study is also part of a larger study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The larger study is named "Caring for Children: the meaning of women's work." Both studies are designed to increase understanding of what people believe it means to care for children by looking at the work of caring for children from a number of different perspectives. The "Chinese Mothers and Child Care" research will be the basis of Shu Ning's master's thesis in Adult Education. It will also be used for writing and discussions in the larger research project.

This research is intended to produce research results that address the needs of Chinese people who want or are using any form of child care for their children. It is also intended to address issues in the fields of child care, the study of women's work, and the



Mandarin translation
of Appendix A

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初步联系函

"中国母亲和托儿"项目

日期

姓名

亲爱的 × × ×:

这封信的目的是向您介绍“中国母亲和托儿”这一研究课题,并征询您是否愿意接受马氏研究团队的采访。如果您不愿意,您可以不参与这项研究。您参与或不参与都不会对您有任何影响;不会影响你获得托儿服务,不会改变对您孩子在幼儿园所享有的照顾。如果您愿意参与这一研究,您将会对了解中国母亲对托儿服务的期望和需求作出贡献。我们希望通过我们的研究将提供考虑给幼儿教师、培训人员,为托儿服务提供资金的人以及托儿服务从业者。

我们这一研究的目的是要了解近年来从中国移民加拿大



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的母親是怎樣看待托兒工作的。這一研究的名称是“中國母親和托兒”。這一研究也同時是一個由社會科學和人文研究委員會贊助的一個更大項目的組成部分。這一更大的主標題的名称是“照顧兒童：婦女工作的意義”。這兩項研究都是通過從一些不同的观点來看待照顧孩子的工作以增加人們對照顧兒童的意義的看法的瞭解。

“中國母親和托兒”這一研究將是舒宇的成人教育變遷的碩士論文的基础。也同時將被用於上述主標題的寫作和討論。

這一研究旨在得出研究結果，探討需要或正在使用任何形式的托兒服務的中國人的需求。研究也同時將討論托兒領域里的一系列問題，對婦女的工作的研究，以及對研究方法之探討。我們將同托兒服務社區的人員一起共同工作以確保該研究能被用來加強中國父母同托兒服務社區之間的理解。

Appendix B



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INTERVIEW PERMISSION LETTER
CHINESE MOTHERS AND CHILD CARE
(English translation, to be provided in Mandarin and English)

date

M. xxxx

Dear M. xxxx,

As you may know, we are studying the way mothers who have recently immigrated from China think about and look for child care. The name of this study is "Chinese Mothers and Child Care." This study is also part of a larger study funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The larger study is named "Caring for Children: the meaning of women's work." Both studies are designed to increase understanding of what people believe it means to care for children by looking at the work of caring for children from a number of different perspectives. The "Chinese Mothers and Child Care" research will be the basis of Shu Ning's master's thesis in Adult Education. It will also be used for writing and discussions in the larger research project.

This research is intended to produce research results that address the needs of Chinese people who want or are using any form of child care for their children. It is also intended to address issues in the fields of child care, the study of women's work, and the study of research methods. We will be working with members of the child care community to ensure that this research is used to improve understanding between Chinese parents and the child care community.

If you participate in this study, we will not write about you in ways that will identify you to other people unless you see what we are writing and agree that we may. If we are unable to locate you when we want to use a quote, we will check with someone else in the Chinese community to see if they feel that your privacy is violated by the quote or if we have misinterpreted what you have said. When people cannot be identified or the quotes or

Mandarin translation
of "Appendix B"



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附件 B:

"中国幼教和托儿"研究
采访同意书

日期

姓名

尊敬的

正如您也许已知道的, 我们正在研究近年来移民加拿大的中国幼教是怎样看待和寻找托儿服务的。这一研究的目标是"中国幼教和托儿"。这一研究也是一个由社会科学和人文研究委员会资助的主课题的组成部分。这一主课题的名称是:"照顾儿童 如女工作的意义"。这两项研究都是设计来通过从一些不同的观点来看待照顾孩子的工作以增加人们对他们所认识的照顾儿童的意义的确证。

这一研究旨在得出研究结果, 探讨需要或正在使用任何形式的托儿服务的中国人的需求。研究也同时探讨



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托儿领域里的一系列问题, 对妇女工作的研究, 以及对研究方法的研究。我们将同托儿服务社区的人员一起共同努力。确保该研究被用来加强中国文同托儿服务社区之间的了解。

如果您参与这一研究, 我们不会以任何能被识别出来的方式写到您, 除非您看到我们写的内容并同意我们可以这样做。如果我们在想要使用原话时无法找到您, 我们将会同华人社区的另外一个人来查核, 问他们是否看到您的隐私权被摘引侵犯了。或是否我们曲解了您的话。当人的无法被辨出, 或者摘引和描述不超过两句时, 我们将尽早发表并尽量让您看到我们所写出的内容。

采访稿将全部使用化名。唯一能接近稿子和录音带的人会是参与主课题研究的其他研究人员以及被采访者。如果您同意接受采访, 您会得到一份中文采访稿, 以及有机会同采访人讨论该采访稿。如果您愿意, 可以要求删



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我同意采访被录音。

我同意研究小组的成员可以就此采访写作。

我有一份完整的同意书。

签名

致礼

阿丽森·汤姆

副教授

舒予

研究助理

Appendix C

Outline of Interview Questions

Face Sheet

Age, age of children, marital status, employment status, education background, number of years in marriage, number of years in Canada.

Your own story

Why do you want to have children? How did you make the decision?

Expectation of responsibility of childcare from yourself and husband and family?
How was the childcare decision made? What facts affected the decision?

What role does your husband play in caring for your children? Any different expectations when you came here? What does your husband play in arranging your children's care? Would you like your husband to take on a role that is different in any way from the role he takes on now?

What kind of thing did you do to care for your child/ren? (Such as breastfeeding, diaper washing/changing, food preparing, and basic health knowledge learning, other housework)?

What are the skills you think you need to care for children? How did you learn them or you know them naturally?

Mothering and work

How do you feel about mothering, which part does you like, which you don't?

What does "womanhood" and "motherhood" mean to you? Is motherhood the most important thing as women? What do you think a mother's responsibility? What are conflicts in being a woman and being a mother? How do you like your identity to be?

Who is the best person to care for your children? What makes you think this way?

How do you think that caring for children is respected by (Canadian/ Chinese) society? How do the people you know (such as your friends, relatives, colleagues) think? How do the people in your family think?

Your work experience in China? How did you deal with the requirement of mothering?

Can you talk about your experience of coming to Canada? Can you describe your any experience in looking for jobs in Canada? What access do you have to education and training opportunities? What are the obstacles for you in finding education and employment opportunities?

Would you think of giving up your work for caring for your children at home? Would you prefer not to work and be a full time mother if you don't have to work outside for living? Why?

How have you dealt with the "double job" situation (in China and in Canada)?

Canadian and Chinese child care experience

How do you think of using childcare services? What are the reasons for you to send your child/ren to day care?

If you have used any childcare services in China or in Canada, can you describe them?

- How did you learn about childcare services available in Canada?
Are they what you expect?
- What is important to you in looking for childcare in Canada?
- What services have you heard of? Why do you choose this one?
- Do you notice the difference between profit and non-profit centres? What does it mean to you?

Do you have different feelings and experiences when you use child care in China and in Canada? What do you see the differences and similarities between Canadian way and Chinese way? What is your explanation and reaction?

What is your general impression of the child care workers in China and in Canada? Any differences?

What knowledge and skills do you think the child care workers should have? Would you respect their treatment to your children? Do you have the experience that you prefer your own way? How do you do when you think that their knowledge is in conflict with what you expect?

Do you think that Chinese speaking and Canadian-born teachers have different conducts? What kind of teachers do you prefer to have for your children?

Ideas about childcare

Why do you want to use childcare services? Do you have any concern about what and when is good for your children to be at day care centre/home?

How do you understand children? What is the best way to bring children up? What do you think should be the quality of childcare?

In what way that a child belongs to society and in what way s/he is your private property? Can you see any difference between Canadian and Chinese thinking?

What should be the responsibility of society for childcare? What are the parents'? (Situations you found in China, Canada, and your ideal one)?

Have your ideas ever changed since you came here and used (or not able to used) services here? What are the reasons which have made these changes in your thinking, any disturbance when the ideas are in conflicts, how do you deal with them?

What is your opinion of childcare work as an occupation? How do you think they are respected? Any observations and feelings. Would you like to be a childcare worker? Why/why not?

Appendix D

Appendix D

Letter of Thanks
(in Mandarin)

Department of Educational Studies

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July 8, 1996

亲爱的

您好！此信特感谢您对我的“中国团亲和托儿”研究项目的支持。目前我已整理出中文的^{采访}录音，随此信寄给您，供您过目。如果采访稿中有任何您认为不妥之处或错误，请麻烦您同我联系，向我指出，以便改正。

同时有关子，希望您能在七月底之前同我联系。如果超过七月底仍无回音，我就以您已阅览过采访稿并同意此稿来处理。

再次感谢您之支持和合作！

敬礼！

此致

舒宁