Living in the cultural gaps of maternal employment - Chinese mothers' employment opportunities in Australia

Yuhan Ma
ID:2244006

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Glossary of Chinese terms

Daigou	Buyer who purchases commodities on behalf of clients in China and charges a commission for the service
Gāmsāangūng	Cantonese pronunciation referring to Chinese laborers from Guangdong Province who went overseas to seek employment opportunities in mining fields during the 19th century
Gāmsāanpòhx	Cantonese pronunciation refers to women from Guangdong Province in the 19th century whose husbands went overseas to work in mining fields
Xiagang	Refers to the loss of employment positions, specifically in China during the 1990s, when economic reforms forced workers to leave their jobs in state-owned enterprises
Kenlao	Refers to the behavior in Chinese society where adults continue to rely on their parents for financial support

Abstract

This thesis presents a historical perspective on the issue of first-generation Chinese immigrant mothers' employment in Australia and differences between China and Australia. A literature review of academic literature has revealed many studies in recent years considering the declining employment rate of Chinese immigrant mothers. However, most studies focus on immigrant mothers' identity or employment conditions, or the implications of potential racial discrimination, while ignoring the cultural and historical background which supports a mother's employment in Australian society.

This thesis reveals that the declining employment rate of Chinese immigrant mothers may be a result of cultural differences in the support provided to new mothers. Specifically, Chinese women are emigrating from a culture that actively supports and emphasises women's employment to the Australian culture that emphasises the importance of women spending more time with their children after childbirth provides inadequate support to women seeking employment after childbirth.

This thesis also focuses on the differences in cultural expectation between Australia and China. It was found that becoming a 'stay at home mother' or choosing 'part-time work' after giving birth is contrary to most Chinese mothers' expectations of 'good motherhood' practices. Further, this thesis also considers Chinese mother’s adaptations to the cultural conflicts faced after immigration to Australia.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Chinese people have a long history of coming to Australia to seek employment opportunities. People with Chinese heritage have consistently ranked in the top three largest ethnicies among immigrants in Australia since 2005(ABS 2023). Unlike earlier immigration waves which consisted mostly of unskilled, male Chinese migrant workers, the most recent data shows that the number of Chinese women has proportionally increased. In 2021, women accounted for 56.4% of Chinese immigrants to Australia, while males made up 43.6%. Chinese people with a bachelor's degree or above accounted for 43.3% of the total population of Chinese immigrants in Australia (ABS 2021).

For most Chinese immigrant women, Australia is an attractive choice for immigration as it promises a better way of life, balancing family and career responsibilities (Yu 2022). Chinese women regard women's parenting and family responsibilities after marriage as oppression consistent with China's culture prior to 1949 where women were expected to stay home and care for children (Leung 2003). After the founding of New China in 1949, Chinese women were pushed into the labor market in accordance with the women's liberation movement promoted by the government, and enjoyed the same income level and employment opportunities as men. During this period, the employment rate of urban women was almost equal to that of men(Tang & Parish 2000). Australia, as a Western country, currently has more open attitudes towards gender defined roles including parenting, however, it is still most common for women to take on greater responsibilities in caring for children. Hence, Chinese women's immigration to Australia effectively transports them back to a previous time in China instead of offering an opportunity to escape the gender norms and expectations of women in their original society (Martin 2017).

Despite expectations that women will be being the predominant carers for children in Australian culture (Ressia, Strachan & Bailey 2017), there remains an expectation by Chinese immigrant women that they can continue to achieve the same employment participation rate in Australia as they had in China (Satyen, Dort & Yin 2020). Hence, influenced by the cultural attitudes in traditional contemporary Chinese society, it is very natural to expect to continue to engage in full-time employment after childbirth. Most Chinese immigrant women report positive employment expectations in their postpartum planning after childbirth (Da 2003, Ho 2006, Satyen, Dort & Yin 2020). However, this expectation of sustained employment participation has not been realised for many Chinese women post-immigration causing a cultural clash in expectations and outcomes (Ho 2006, Cooke 2013).

A recent survey by De Alwis, Parr & Guo (2022) was conducted to find out compared to other Asian immigrant groups, Chinese-born female immigrants in Australia are the most likely to

experience a mismatch between their education and occupation and their situation in Australia,commonly referred to as ‘over-educated’. That is to say, on average, Chinese women have a the higher likehood to have taken a high academic qualification and take the low-skilled occupation than other immigrant group of women. This translates to a serious under realisation of the skills and opportunities for Chinese women in Australia.

In Australia, only 20.3% (ABS 2021) of Chinese immigrant families have both partners working full-time. This is a significant departure from the norm in China where the ‘dual income' family is most common. It is more common for Chinese families in Australia that one person works full-time, and the other person chooses not to work or to work part-time. In this arrangement, women are most often the ones taking on part-time jobs or having no independent income (ABS 2021).

From as early as the beginning of the 20th century, there have been studies on Chinese immigrants in Western countries considering the influence of cultural differences of gender roles on immigrants. Many of these studies report that Chinese women immigrating to developed countries such as the United States, Britain and Canada, experience difficulty in improving their gendered experience through time.

Zhou (2000) points out that it is difficult for Chinese mothers to rely on 'emigration' to gain better gender empowerment than in their host country. On the contrary, the lifestyle that Chinese immigrant mothers may experience in terms of gender empowerment and labour participation, may be considered a ‘backward approach’ in the context of modern societal views in China (Ho 2006).

A large number of related studies point out that Chinese immigrant women may experience a serious career decline in the process of immigration (Ho 2006a, Ho 2006b, Leung 2018, Li 2023, Satye et al. 2020). However, these studies explain this situation by focusing on the fact that Chinese women may face obstacles of language, education and racial discrimination in the Australian job market because of their gender, immigration and parental status (Butorac 2014, Syed 2009, Joseph 2013, Faaliyat 2021). Some also suggest obstacles may also come from the patriarchal traditions of Chinese families, where it is expected that women bear the main responsibility of childcare without childcare help (Zhou 2000, Yu 2014, Xu & Xie 2020). Compared with China, Australian child-care policy is less comprehensive, the child-care cost is high, and the child-care time is inflexible (Craig 2007, Craig 2011, Ho 2006a).

However, given the change of the demographic characteristics of Chinese immigrant women in recent years, this thesis considers the possibility that the previous research conclusions to beinsufficent to explain the current situation, especially the low employment rate of highly educated Chinese immigrant women. Many Chinese immigrant mothers with higher education, high language proficiency and good employment expectations still show low labour participation post-immigration and post-birth.

As an educated Chinese immigrant mother who has lived in both Australia and China in the last 15 years, my life experiences and that of my Chinese female friends is an excellent match to the study demographic. I will draw on this lived experience to analyze and compare the gap between the history and culture of the two countries in treating mothers' employment. This thesis aligns with intersectional feminist theory, arguing that the interplay of identities such as being a Chinese immigrant, a woman, and a mother creates additional contradictions and obstacles in the employment situation of Chinese immigrant mothers (Carastathis 2014, Ressia, Strachan & Bailey 2017b).

In this thesis, I use a qualitative research method and also I rely on second-hand data including relevant academic literature, websites, reports by government organizations, and historical documents from different fields, to compare the differences between Chinese and Australian maternal employment cultures.

This thesis has three main objectives. First, it attempts to emphasize the high employment expectations that Chinese immigrant mothers hold, influenced by Chinese socio-cultural norms and policies.

Secondly, it explores the cultural differences between Chinese and Australian society in employment after childbirth. There are totally different attitudes in China and Australia towards the post childbirth working status of 'stay-at-home mothers'. That is to say, in Australia, there is an environment of ‘supporting women as the primary caregiver’, regardless of their education level and an expectation that after giving birth they will return to the family or only take part-time jobs. Moreover, the parenting style of local Anglo mothers in Australia puts a strong emphasis on childcare. Chinese immigrant women are clearly influenced by this directly and indirectly.

Finally, this thesis explores the coping strategies employed by Chinese immigrant mothers in response to cultural differences in their host societies. Considers the decline in Chinese immigrant women's employment participation after childbirth may be an inevitable phenomenon of moving

from a culture that advocates ‘a good mother works to a culture that allows women to ‘take time off to raise children’.

Chapter 2. Historical Review of the Employment of Chinese Immigrant Mothers in Australia

This chapter introduces the changing identities, immigration intentions and employment trends of Chinese mothers in the past 170 years in Australia. In that time Chinese immigrant mothers have gone from being the wives of 'Golden Mountain Miners' to being well-educated only daughters from middle-class families. At the same time, for Chinese mothers' emigration is no longer just about increasing their income, but a way to escape from the patriarchy of China's labour market and the imprisonment of marriage. Despite this, they still face many obstacles in the Australian job market.

2.1 The First Stage: 'Gāmsāanpòhx' and 'Gāmsāangūng'

The first wave of immigrants from China to Australia was in the 1850s, when Australian settlers discovered gold mines in New South Wales and began to recruit workers, mainly from European countries, for gold mining (Inglis 1972, Reeves & Mountford 2011). A large number of workers were attracted to Australia. The first batches of Chinese workers arrived in Australian ports by boat and entered Australia under the so-called credit ticket system (Bagnall 2021), hoping to increase their income by mining gold. Most of these Chinese migrant workers were farmers from the Pearl River Delta, who were trying to pay off the cost of the ship tickets and earn some income, most of which they would remit to their hometown, providing the main source of income for their families. They were called 'gāmsāangūng', which means 'Golden Mountain Miners' in local villages in China; that is, workers who go to work in gold mines. Their wives were called 'gāmsāanpòhx' in local villages in China, which means 'Golden Mountain Miners' wives'. Gāmsāanpòhx lived according to the norms of Chinese women (Bagnall 2021, p.129). Their main job was to take care of their husband's parents, siblings and children while they went out to work (Bagnall 2021, Manying 2017).

Most Chinese workers who came to Australia at this time were male; the number of Chinese women was very small. Records show that in New South Wales in 1861 there were only two Chinese women, while there were 12,984 men. There were 24,724 Chinese men and eight women in Victoria (Bagnall 2006, p.37). The Australian government regarded all these single Chinese men as a threat to European women (Bagnall 2011). Chinese labourers were portrayed in the Australian media as opium addicts (Fei 2010) and were called 'opium smoking lechers' (Frances1996, p.137). Without suitable female companionship and a sexual outlet, homosexuality, drug abuse and prostitution grew among Chinese men (Fei 2010). Sexual behaviour between Chinese men and European women was considered immoral (Bagnall 2006).

‘The presence of Chinese men in Australian colonies, without their wives and families, was one of the most frequent complaints made by white politicians and social commentators against Chinese’ (Bagnall 2006, p.38). A large number of white colonists believed that Chinese men away from their wives were a great moral threat. The idea of balancing the number of Chinese men and women became the ‘most current idea’ and was discussed in various parliamentary debates. In 1855 the Victoria government began to debate encouraging Chinese workers to bring their wives and children with them when entering the country as a way to reduce this threat (Bagnall 2006, p.45). For instance, if Chinese men entered the country with their wives and children, they were exempt from the ten-pound poll tax imposed by the Victorian Act of 1855 on Chinese arrivals to limit their number. (Fung 2015).

It is worth noting that most Chinese workers refused to bring their wives to Australia (Bagnall 2006, p.43). In addition to the high cost of travel and the responsibility of wives to take care of parents and children in China, there was also racial discrimination. Chinese workers experienced abuse, were deprived of their rights, were exposed to racist and prejudicial social structures, and chose to avoid exposing their wives and children to the same ‘shameful treatment’ (Cheong 1879, p.19). Racial discrimination suffered by Chinese people came largely from competitors in the labour market. In order to pay off debts and support their families, Chinese workers often accepted lower wages and worse working conditions than European workers, who regarded this as a malicious conspiracy to depress market wages. This caused frequent attacks against workers from China by European workers on Australian goldfields (Fei 2010, p.118). The worst outbreak of anti-Chinese sentiment occurred in 1861 at a gold mine camp in Lambing Flat (Marczuk 2017). About 5,000 European miners came to Chinese miners' campsites and started assaulting them under the banner of 'No Chinese' (Schamberger 2017, p.437), burning their tents and cutting off their pigtails. After the attack, the colonial authorities in Australia began to enact laws to limit the influx of Chinese people.

Ultimately no effective policy of encouraging Australian women to enter Australia was implemented. Instead, the Australian government came to regard it as ‘a tolerable thing for there to be 60000 Chinese men with no natural companions in the colonies’ (Bagnall 2006, p.45, p.50-1) because they were concerned about Chinese people procreating. As John Dunmore Lang put it in his book Queensland Australia; A Highly Eligible Field for Emigration and the Future field of Great Britain (1864):

The fact is, we don't want them, we don't want the flat face, the pug noses, the yellow complexions, the small feet, and the long tails multiplied a thousand-fold among us, as they would very soon be if the Chinese ladies came to us as well as the gentlemen (Lang 1864, pp.233-4).

In 1881 the government of New South Wales prohibited Chinese people from entering the state by means of the Chinese Immigrants Regulation and Restriction Act. After the establishment of the federal government in 1901 the White Australia Policy was introduced, aimed at protecting the racial and cultural unity of the population and avoiding 'racial contamination' (Elias et al. 2021, p.66-7).

2.2 The Second Stage: 'Temporary Visa Holders' and 'Extra Family Labour'

The implementation of the White Australia Policy saw a significant decrease in Chinese immigrants. The number of Chinese immigrants living in Australia decreased from 29,672 in 1901 to 9,144 in 1947 (Inglis 1972, p.267). However, as the Chinese immigrant population experienced an overall decrease, the number of Chinese women increased steadily, from 474 in 1901 to 2550 in 1947 (Inglis1972, p.267). Under strict entry restrictions, these numbers were primarily attributed to the birth of Chinese girls born in Australia]. As Chinese couples in Australia produced an increase in children of Chinese ethnicity, the immigration policy for Chinese women became stricter.

The cancellation of permanent visas for Chinese wives and the consequent inability of Chinese immigrants living in Australia to reunite with their wives caused great dissatisfaction. Poon Gooey is the most famous case and is considered to be the first serious public challenge to the White Australia policy (Bagnall, 2021). It was widely reported on in the Australian media (Yarwood 1964). Poon Gooey was a Chinese fruit merchant who had lived in Australia for nearly 20 years and actively participated in the local church and charities. In 1910, Poon Gooey hoped to apply for a long-term visa for his pregnant wife who was in China, but the government refused. This incident caused a large number of Australian people to protest. The public believed a respected Chinese businessman did not deserve to suffer such unfair treatment. Various other social and political groups began to support Poon Gooney's effort to keep his family with him. 'Petitions were signed, meetings were held, delegations were excluded, and letters were written' (Bagnall, 2021, p.143-4). The Australian government replied that it refused to set a precedent for more Chinese women to

stay (Bagnall 2021). In the end, the Poon Gooey family sold all their businesses and houses and returned to then war-torn China (Bagnall, 2021, p.147).

A large number of Chinese women came into Australia only with the introduction of the Colombo Plan in 1950, which subsidised college entry for Chinese students (Oakman 2010). In 1961, the number of Chinese women in Australia was 6,145, just under one third of the total Chinese immigrant population (Kamp 2021, p.112). The female immigrant population came from at least 33 countries (commonly associated with the Chinese diaspora), indicating a diverse, complex society when compared to the wives of Golden Mountain Miners of the Pearl River Delta in the mid 19 centtury. The relaxation of naturalisation policies in 1956 enabled many Chinese mothers to permanently settle in Australia. Before that, Chinese women and girls could only be granted temporary entry permits, as wives and daughters of resident Chinese, or as students (Bagnall & Martínez 2021). Holders of visas valid for six months had needed to apply to the Australian government for renewal every year as appropriate, which meant immigrant mothers were plagued with the constant worry of repatriation in addition to the stress of doing housework every day (Kamp 2021).

In addition to the visa issue, during the period of the White Australia policy, Chinese women faced the challenge of a changing family lifestyle. During this period, the traditional family lifestyle in China was being challenged by the emerging concept of equality, which was influenced by the ongoing family reforms (Johnson 2009). The idea that men are the masters outside and women are the masters inside came to be considered outdated and backward. In the early twentieth century, the Chinese-language Australian press started to report increasing female participation in public life and Chinese newspapers began to promote women's equality, no longer holding fast to the old social norms imposed on women. Criticism of the idea that men were more important than women became more commonly voiced (Kuo 2021). At the same time, racial assimilation was advocated by Australian immigration policies, with the expectation that immigrants would integrate into a homogeneous Australian society (Yan & Zhang 2014).

During the White Australia policy period, Chinese immigrant families started accumulating funds, rising above the identity of labourers, and began to invest in their own businesses, including small businesses that did not require English proficiency and qualifications, such as fruit and vegetable shops, cafes, furniture factories, restaurants and laundries (Kamp 2018, p.150, Inglis 1972). Most

Chinese immigrant mothers not only took care of their children in the traditional Chinese way but also helped their husbands to run businesses (Kamp 2018). Participating in business management is considered a break from traditional Confucianism, but for immigrant mothers, it was regarded as a reasonable choice. Chinese immigrants faced unique economic obstacles, which showed that it was inevitable for Chinese women to have dual responsibilities between family and family business as mothers. Kamp (2018, p.10) found that the explanation given by immigrant women was ‘You must do this to maintain a balance of’.

2.3 The Third Stage: 'Migrant Trailing Spouses' and 'Housewives'

In 1973 Australia announced the abolition of the White Australia policy. The immigration scoring system adopted by Canada began to be used for reference in the screening of immigrants, and the focus of the scoring was on the technical level of immigrants (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2009). The scoring list stipulated the English level, age and vocational qualifications of immigrants to ensure that the arrival of immigrants could promote Australia's economic development. The idea behind this scoring system was to provide for the needs of specific industries and limit the people who entered Australia to those with a higher skill level or education (Yan & Zhang 2014). This made immigration easier for Chinese people. For the same management position, emigrating to Australia may mean getting ten times higher a salary than in China. Relaxed immigration policy ushered in the "tide of going abroad" (Gao 2017 P.214). The total Chinese population born in Australia increased from 17,601 in 1971 to 142,780 in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022). Among them, accountants, computer professionals, chefs, registered nurses and translators were the most popular occupations (DIAC 2010).

Most Chinese immigrant women entered Australia through visas related to family reunions or as a ‘trailing spouse’ with their husband as the primary applicant. The Skilled Immigration Program is considered to be based on masculinity (Boucher 2007). Although immigration standards are equally applicable to men and women, men are more likely to have the skills and experience needed than women (Ryan 2002). The female-focussed family reunion visa is criticised for not bringing economic benefits to Australia; however, it is considered the best way for new skilled immigrants to settle in Australia, as it helps them adapt to the living habits and racial discrimination (Collins1993). From this point of view, ‘the state's immigration policy [upheld and re-established] the subordination of women’. (Misztal 1991, p. 57). As the main source of income, men are

considered to be mainly looking for jobs by emigrating. Women had to adapt their families to the new country by arranging housing and education for their children and establishing social networks.

Chinese immigrant mothers who were employed before emigrating to Australia shifted their focus of life from career to family. It is very common for Chinese mothers to be stay-at-home mothers after giving birth in Australia (Ipv & Chui 2002 Chu 2005). According to a survey by Ho (2006) of highly skilled immigrant women coming to Australia, about two-thirds of Chinese professional women choose to give up their careers and become full-time housewives after emigration, while the employment rate of immigrant Chinese men does not change. In their daily lives, women have to cook, clean and take care of their children. These professional women feel isolated and out of touch with their previous occupations. Family obligations and unfriendly employment environments prevented women from going out and seeking jobs. Women who lost their jobs were also reduced in their status at home and thereafter regarded as having a supporting role (Raghuram & Kofman 2004, Cooke Zhang & Wang 2013).

2.4 The Fourth Stage: 'The Privileged Daughters' and 'The Escapers'

This stage concerns immigrants born between 1985 and 2015, who had the new identity of 'only children'. Girls born in this stage were also called 'the privileged daughters' in China (Tu & Xie 2020). As the only child in the family, the only daughter benefited from more investment in their education. At this time, China experienced rapid economic development (Gao 2023). Chinese immigrant girls born at this stage were mostly only-children, from middle-class or wealthier families and these families often decided to send their daughters abroad to study. Their parents could afford two to three times the tuition fees of local students. This trend made China the world's largest exporter of international students, and also Australia's largest source of international students (Guan 2021). The amount of Chinese international students in Australia increased, reaching 29.7% of the total number of international students in Australia in 2019 (Department for Education, 2024).

In addition to this increase in the amount of Chinese international students, Chinese immigration during this period has two remarkable features. The first is that the academic qualifications held by Chinese people increased significantly. University students now make up 22%of all Chinese-born people in Australia. The second feature is that the proportion of female immigrants gradually outnumbered males, reaching 55.9% in 2022 (ABS 2022). From 2010 to 2015, Chinese women

held 38,353 family immigrant visas and 51,812 skilled visas (DIBP 2016). Chinese immigrant women with high academic qualifications and skills have become the main group in this immigration process.

In terms of immigration intention, immigrants have come a long way since the first batch of China immigrants tried to accumulate wealth through their own efforts. Under the influence of the one-child policy, emigration is often the result of parents deciding what is best for their children. These parents believe that their children will have better employment prospects if they have a degree from a Western university. At the same time, families hope to avoid the risk to mental health of poor performance in the highly competitive college entrance exam in China, as well as pressure from educational and employment institutions there. Since opening up in 1978, China's society has not achieved gender equality. On the contrary, it has experienced re-genderization. Between 2010 and 2020, China's ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report dropped from 61st to 106th out of 153 countries (World Economic Forum 2020). Because recruiters think women will leave the workplace to start a family, which will cause economic losses for employers, they ask for men in job advertisements. High-quality overseas education can improve the natural ability of young women, and they hope to balance the structural gender disadvantage (Martin 2017).

For young Chinese girls, immigration is a way to provide ta 'zone of suspension' (Martin 2018). 'Re-genderization' means they may be pressured to get married and have children. After marriage, they also have to take care of housework and children. Emigration means the opportunity to be exposed to new lifestyles and avoid the traditional lifestyle, if only temporarily (Li 2024). Emigrating to Australia, one of the most popular destinations among Chinese migrants, also offers greater gender rights, equal pay and the possibility of having a career (Yu 2022, p.32).

Chapter 3. Factors influencing the downward career mobility of immigrant mothers from China in the Australian job market---Literature review

This chapter is a review of the literature on the decline of Chinese mothers' employment in Australia. It is divided into three parts. The first part is about the internal family issues of Chinese immigrant families. After immigration, the responsibilities of family and parenting become obstacles in the employment path of immigrant mothers, pulling them back into the responsibility of looking after the family. The second part focuses on the unfair treatment of Chinese mothers in the Australian job market because of their language and skin colour, difficulties in human capital transfer, and the burden of childcare. The third part focuses on the influence of Australian native culture on motherhood and the choices immigrant mothers make after childbirth.

3.1 Family Factors

In the Confusionist culture of China, women are required to take care of their children, which means that a mother needs to devote time and energy to parenting (Satye et al. 2020). The use of this energy has a negative impact on the mother in the job market (Leung et al. 2018). Immigrant mothers usually face huge family responsibilities and must find a balance between employment and parenting. It is common for Chinese mothers to leave the workplace after immigration or shift from full-time employment to part-time employment (Ho 2006a, Leung 2018, Li 2023, Satye et al. 2020).

Zhou (2000) found that Chinese low employment status contributes to a mother's subordinate position in the family. Zhou believes that, at the beginning of the founding of New China, from 1949 to 1966, there was a 17-year-long liberation movement to encourage women to participate in the work (Limin 2013, p.94). The women's liberation movement pushed women into employment under the call of the state, not because women were oppressed in the family. Although there were important improvements in women's independence, this shift did not change women's subordinate position in the family. Women's employment was supported by national policies. During this period, national policies and public services promoted working motherhood.Immigrants are separated from all support at once, resulting in women having to return to home and family in China after emigration.

Ho (2006a) believes that the immigration process leads to professional women taking on more domestic ‘feminine’ roles upon emigrating. In an interview with Chinese immigrant mothers, Ho found that for a family who emigrated to a new country, the husband, wife, and children faced the loss of friends, relatives, and social networks they had at home. An unfamiliar environment led to a sharp increase in family demands for emotional support. At this time, mothers became the main candidates to provide additional emotional support. In addition, they needed to spend more time to help family members adapt to the new environment and ensure the daily operation of the family in the new environment.

Immigration means that Chinese mothers lose the family support network they have in China. Chinese mothers can work full-time in China as they receive help from relatives (such as childcare help from grandparents), can hire a babysitter for a low price, and can access affordable childcare institutions. Immigration separates Chinese women from this support. Ho (2006a) pointed out that the traditional division of labour in Chinese families is the main reason for female immigrants' employment problems after immigration. This outsourcing childcare to grandparents or babysitters does not eliminate their ultimate responsibility for housework. Mothers are still the overall managers in charge of housework, and immigrants have not changed this gender role division. Australia's domestic arrangement exposes this gender inequality.

Cooke (2013) found that immigrant women would ‘re-build’ their careers after losing the support of grandparents. The process of ‘re-build’ would lead them to fall into the gender norms of traditional Chinese families, whereby the career of the husband is prioritised. Women choose to sacrifice their employment opportunities and return to the home, even if they have similar employment backgrounds as their spouses. Whether a woman is employed becomes a family issue, which is influenced by her husband's salary. When her husband's salary is higher, a woman's willingness to be employed is lower. If the cost of hired childcare outweighs the financial gain of employment the wife will stay at home.

Yu (2014) does not agree that Chinese immigrant women accept more traditional gender roles after emigration. On the contrary, Yu (2014) thinks that women choose whether to go work as a strategy to balance salary work and housework. When they are in China there is ‘relatively low demand in household chores’ and ‘available family support for childcare’ (p.46) so they can remain in the workforce. This is a family-oriented choice. Similarly, choosing to return to the home is a strategy to stabilise the family and keep the balance between the family and the job market when immigrant mothers are faced with insufficient parenting support and limited employment after immigration. Therefore, as a family-oriented choice, this return to the family has nothing to do with strengthening or ‘upgrading’ gender roles.

Tu and Xie (2020) examines the identity of immigrant Chinese women as 'only-child'. Chinese women chose to give up full-time work to take care of their families, which reproduced the traditional gender role in Chinese families. This traditional ‘gendered burden’ was spread through the close contact between the parents of the only-children transnationally (Tu & Xie 2020, p.68). Although the only- daughter had more boyish choices in the process of growing up, and has a stronger independent pursuit of work, the immigration process provided them with enough geographical distance to have certain freedom, but at the same time, because of the uniqueness of the 'only child' identity, the only child has a closer relationship with her parents than in the past, closer communication and more generous financial support. As a result, they are influenced by their parents more closely in their choice of lifestyle and work. Chinese parents in traditional families expect women to take the main responsibility of caring for their children after marriage. ‘Their close ties with their parents ensure the fulfilment of certain gendered expectations from China’s patriarchal family value system’ (Tu &Xie 2020, p.74).

3.2 Resistance from the Labour Market

Australia's job market is not neutral (Li 2019, Ressia, Strachan & Bailey 2017). Immigrant women suffer from ‘occupational downshifting’ (Venugopal & Huq 2022) and being guided into ‘‘low skilled’ jobs by racial discrimination in Australia (Hamilton et al. 2021, p.3062) Li’s Research (2019) shows that in the racially divided labour market, the top people are Australian natives with perfect English skills, who get the best positions with a good salary, followed by foreigners who speak English well, and then foreigners who do not speak English well. This last group will take jobs that the first two groups are unwilling to do. Syed (2009) shows that in the Australian market immigrants from English-speaking countries are preferred for their language ability. Chinese immigrants may be considered by employers to be unsuitable for occupations that require communication, such as sales and management roles, because of language difficulties. Butorac (2014) observes that poor English not only affects an immigrant’s productivity but also serves as a symbol of subordinate status. In the Australian market, although there are currently 240 languages spoken in Australia, a single-language model persists. This is the premise of Australia's economic unity and prosperity. European immigrants who can speak English can immediately remove themselves from the status of ‘the other’ and integrate into the Australian job market. Meanwhile most Chinese immigrants, who cannot quickly master English, face rejection and discrimination in their search for employment. Even with the same employment qualifications, white people who

speak English are more popular in the workplace. 'The language learner is seen as linguistically deficient in English, rather than as an emerging bi- or multilingual' person (p.234).

Li (2019) studied the experience of Chinese immigrants in Australia's job market and concluded that there is racial employment expectation which has devalued Chinese people. Li argues that employers link Chinese ethnicity with subordination and believe that they do not need to pay good wages or provide benefits. Joseph (2013) pointed out that immigrant women who were defined as high-skilled and middle-class professionals before immigrating to Australia, found their skills and qualifications depreciated when they entered the Australian job market. Immigrants who have lost their pre-migration higher education status and have no relevant local employment qualifications can only engage, without local professional qualification certification, in low-level occupations temporary jobs.

Faaliyat (2021), when studying the employment of immigrant women in Australia, found that 'failure of national institutions to recognise overseas qualifications' (p.10) is a way to reduce the power of immigrant women in the employment market, to ensure that immigrant women are guided to lower-level jobs. Faaliyat's (2021) research shows that the devaluation of immigrant women's employment rights shows itself in 'employer's expectations' as well as in the national system of skills recognition. 'The national system of skills recognition is a macro phenomenon, but the practice of skill recognition is done by employers, at the meso level' (p.16). The study finds that even if the immigrant's skill is formally recognized, most employers in the Australian job market only pay attention to local employment experience. Employers do not believe in the skills and professional knowledge of immigrants, so it is difficult for immigrants to convince employers that their overseas employment is similar to Australia. Most immigrants including Chinese mother find that local employment experience is highly valued in the Australian job market, even for low-level jobs. Most immigrants think this is unfair to them because they did not have the opportunity to work in Australia in the first decades of their lives. In other words, highly educated Chinese mothers may not be able to find suitable jobs in Australia.

Ressia (2017) found that mothers are more affected than men by retraining. After the immigrant suffers difficulties in transferring human capital, they try to improve their language skills, to meet the requirements of Australian qualifications. However, family responsibilities and lack of childcare services reduce women's ability to obtain additional training and attend courses. Male immigrants only need to focus more on work. Men are more likely than women to have the necessary work experience and be able to show a record of career progress because they have not spent time away

from work to raise their children. Mothers in Chinese immigrant families will also face the same problem.

Carangio (2021) claims that ‘whiteness is an invisible system of Australian Anglo-centric power that secures hegemony through its social structure and its dominant regime’ (p.81). Carangio (2021) has studied the obstacles encountered by immigrant women in the workplace, interviewing skilled immigrant women from different ethnic backgrounds, to understand how ‘white privilege’ affects the Australian employment market. Carangio found that women from the UK have privileges in the Australian job market that they do not realise. White privilege is perpetuated through ‘white British bodies’ (p.84). Unlike immigrant women from other countries, almost all British respondents admit that their British accent and education are highly regarded in Australia. Carangio (2022) analysed the racialization of the Australian workplace in a broader sense, arguing that ‘the Australian labour market developed from illegal dispossession’ (p.1204). Carangio concluded that immigrants not only face difficulties because of race, gender, class and ability but also enter a ‘white Anglo space’ (p.1204), which is not neutral because it is formed by colonialism and rooted in the white patriarchal regime, whose interests are safeguarded by excluding indigenous sovereignty. It is too easy to attribute racial and gender inequality to perceived characteristics, rather than social history and the practices of white Anglo-Saxon men, which is the fundamental reason for the long-standing occupational inequality.

3.3 Australian Culture

The new country exposes migrant mothers to a different culture of motherhood which can alter the values and practices they grew up with (Liamputtong 2006). Unlike China's current culture, which supports mothers' employment (Zhou 2020), in Australian motherhood culture there is a conflict between parenting and employment (Goodwin & Huppatz 2010, Bugden, McKenzie, Hanna & Graham 2021). In this culture, even white women who can speak fluent English choose to quit their jobs after giving birth (Coombe, Loxton, Tooth & Byles 2019, Lee 2020). Intensive parenting culture (Baxter 2023), and the relaxed attitude towards stay-at-home mothers (Ho 2006b) affect the post-natal employment choices of Chinese mothers in Australia.

Lee (2020) found that the parenting culture in Australia influences mothers' employment choices. Comparing a sample of nearly 10,000 mothers in Australia from 2001 to 2016, who were from

Europe, Asia, and Australia (Lee 2020, p.6), Lee analysed the influence of ‘motherhood penalty’ on mothers with different cultural backgrounds. ‘Motherhood penalty’ means women's pay decreases once they become mothers (Budig et al. 2012). Lee found that in the intensive parenting culture in Australia, white native-born mothers s ‘are more likely than Asian mothers to reduce employment to provide direct care, in part because they are judged more harshly for violating intensive mothering norms by outsourcing childcare’ (lee 2020, p.2). Lee’s research found that Australian mothers receive the highest motherhood penalty in postpartum employment, whereas Asian women receive the smallest motherhood penalty. In subsequent intergenerational research, Lee examined the employment choices of Asian and European immigrants and second and third-generation white Australians and found that second-generation Asian Australian women experienced the same level of motherhood penalty as white Australian mothers, due to being ‘shaped by the host country. ‘A greater reduction in working hours after childbirth among second generation women may reflect a distinctive feature of the Australian welfare state, where mothers exhibit high rates of part-time employment following childbirth’ (Lee 2020, p.13).

Al-deen (2017) pointed out that after immigrant mothers came to Australia, the decrease in employment rate was related to the depreciation of their mothers' culture. The highly respected practice of immigrant mothers in treating their children in their original countries may not be recognized in Australia. Similarly, it is not applicable to children who grow up in the Australian environment. Therefore, immigrant mothers will adopt the mainstream approach of Australian mothers and make adjustments in parenting. Al-deen believes that Australian-style child-rearing is related to the rising education investment of the middle class, which requires a family member to sacrifice their career to spend more time on their children. Therefore, immigrant mothers choose to give up their careers and return to their families, to take on the responsibility of child-rearing after emigration, which is regarded as giving up employment as a way to become a good mother

As for Chinese mothers, Ho (2006b) pointed out that Chinese immigrant mothers regard returning to their home as a means to reduce family conflicts. Most Chinese working couples in China both work. Parenting stress and household labor makes them feel depressed with each other, and neither one wants to compromise and work fewer hours. However, after immigration, women become housewives, which makes their families and marriages more stable. Most immigrant mothers believe that they can enjoy a high-quality family life. In Australia, they see the difference in opportunities and lifestyles: lowered economic status and professional value, but more time to spend with their family and pursue their hobbies. Ho (2006b) found that some immigrant Chinese

mothers did not regret the postponing of their careers. They began to appreciate Australia's less materialistic lifestyle and the freedom to enjoy life.

Yan (2011) believes that, for most immigrant Chinese mothers, the local culture strengthens the concept of male breadwinners. The attitude towards stay-at-home women in Western countries is not as negative as in China. Chinese women living in Chinese cities agree that housewives have become seen as ignorant or uneducated women, and ‘housewife’ has become a word with negative implications. Being a housewife means that one is isolated from the outside world and has no value to Chinese society. Immigrant Chinese mothers can choose to be full-time mothers like local women. In other words, social and cultural factors encourage Chinese wives to stay at home and let their husbands support their families.

Leung (2019) argues that the choice of Chinese immigrant mothers to return to their homes after emigrating is an act of resistance to the patriarchy in China. The culture of Chinese families imposes a strict double burden on women. The Chinese government advocates women's employment without effectively relieving women's responsibility for child-rearing. Immigrant mothers find that they have escaped this double oppression. They have the right to refuse to work and raise children at home.

Chapter 4. Chinese Mothers' Employment Consciousness

Since the founding of New China in 1949, China's unique maternal culture, with high labour force participation, has been regarded as a part of a legacy socialist ideology’ (Short et al.2002 p.31). In China’s current socio-economic culture, it is taken for granted that mothers should return to full-time work shortly after giving birth (Mu & Tian 2022, Shu 2012, Sun 2008, Zhou 2020, Zhang 2023). This chapter analyzes how women's continued participation in full-time work after childbirth has gradually become an important part of China's "good mother" discourse under the influence of changes in national economic systems and policies in different periods since the founding of New China and has become a maternal consciousness generally recognized by women

in China. This chapter will also analyze the marginalization and stigma faced by mothers who do not participate in market labour or have no stable income source.

This chapter is divided into three parts in accordance with the transformation and development of the economic and social system since the founding of New China. The first part concerns the founding of the republic of China in 1949 and how, with the promotion of national communism, being a worker became the collective identity of mothers. The second stage concerns China's transformation into a market economy, starting in 1978, and how, under the neoliberal discourse, the standard to measure a good mother became whether she could provide economic income for her children and family. The third stage addresses how from 2000 to now, under the one-child policy, education and employment have become the family's primary expectations for daughters.

4.1 The First Stage: 'Hero Mother' and 'Selfish Mother'

In 1949, new China was founded with farmers as the mainstay (Andreas 2016, p.22). The communist leadership established China as a socialist economic system with central planning throughout the country (Hu 2014, p.157) and advocated for 'an equal society for everyone, regardless of class and gender, and a modern nation' (Guo 2021, p. 274).

Everyone was part of an employment unit and had their work and economic benefits allocated to them (Andreas 2016, pp.22-3, Hu 2014 p.158). During this period, proletarian workers became the largest group in China. The proportion of people from the 'poor or lower middle peasant' class reached 76.8%. People from the 'upper middle peasant or small entrepreneur' class only made up 11.5% (Andreas 2016, p.31). In the early days of the country, workers' participation in industrial and agricultural production was regarded as the main contribution to the construction of a new China. Under a strong patriotic ideology, the people took it as an honor to participate in national collective production (Guo 2021, p.276).

Before 1949, under the influence of Confucianism, Chinese women were the main undertakers of family responsibilities and did not participate in any public formal occasions. They mainly engaged in taking care of children and the elderly (Zhou 2003). After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, a nationwide "women's liberation movement" was launched at the call of the government, and women were encouraged to be liberated from domestic labour. Under the slogan "women hold up half the sky" and "boys can do it, so can women" (Zhong 2010.p.227, Short et

al.2002, p.34), they participated in the industrial and agricultural development of China (Limin 2013, p.95-102). During this period, ‘it was socialism that uniformly “de-housewived” women in China, regardless of regional differences’ (Ochiai 2008, p.158). Women engaged in domestic work were described as oppressed (Leung 2003). ‘Women will not achieve true independence until they become economically independent”, Participation in employment was regarded as the ultimate way to liberate women in the early days of New China (Yu 2015, p.123, Zheng 1998, p9-10, Zuo, & Bian, Y 2001, p.1125). In order to promote women's employment, the state offered women who joined employment a series of benefits. The first was equal pay for equal work (Cooke 2001, p.325). Women were regarded as having the same status as men in employment. In terms of occupational classification, there was only full-time employment; there was no part-time employment. This ensured that men and women had the same salaries (Andreas 2016, Xu 2005). At the same time, women were encouraged to be involved in non-traditional female occupations. The image of 'iron girls' symbolized labour heroes who participate in non-traditional female occupations (Short et al. 2002, p.34). Meanwhile, the needs of women’s childcare were recognized. China’s government believed that when women participate in employment the task of childcare should be collectivized (Leung 2003, p. 365). A system was established for the care of children of a few months old up to primary school age (Du & Dong 2013, p.133). This welfare support was also regarded as an important tool to encourage mothers to participate in labour. In the regulation for kindergartens implemented in 1952 (Hu 2014, Du & Dong 2013, p.133), it was clearly stipulated that the purpose of kindergarten was to ensure that mothers could participate in social production and cultural life with peace of mind.

A large number of services were set up to support mothers' employment. For example, the government stipulated that every factory or workshop must have a kindergarten supported by the state (Du & Dong 2013). In rural areas, the government encouraged the implementation of village daycare (Jing 2017). Children of working mothers had priority in admission. In order to accommodate mothers’ working schedules there were no winter and summer holidays for the childcare services. Childcare services ran until six o'clock, which allowed time for mothers to pick up their children after work (Hu 2014, p.161). Special caregivers were ordered to take care of any sick children to ensure that their mothers could continue working. The most important thing was that high-quality childcare was free at the point of use and employee welfare expenses were borne by the government (Hu 2014.p.160).

Childcare institutions were regarded as supporting the industrial and agricultural construction of the country (Guo 2021). It also changed the traditional Chinese mother's parenting mode at home. The increase in the employment of mothers was accompanied by the active use of childcare institutions (Zhou 2020). This scheme created a parenting mode where mothers did not have to be the only full-time parent. Mothers can leave their children in the care of institutions when they are working, in another word, share their parenting responsibilities with nursing institutions during their work.

Under the active promotion by the government of the "women's liberation movement", the employment rate of women greatly improved. According to records, before 1949 the employment rate of married women was 29.1% but from 1950 to 1965 the employment rate reached 91.7% (Zhou 2000). The increase in employment greatly improved women's economic status, and women gained the equal right as men to earn income in a market economy. (Zuo & Bian 2001, p.1122). However, this women's liberation movement only focussed on the economic value created by women's participation in collective production, without acknowledging the value of women's remaining childcare and family duties (Limin 2013). Domestic services, such as cooking and washing clothes, in which women were the persons in charge, became an 'invisible' job. Moreover, in the policy of encouraging women to participate in labor, ‘women were expected to put production first and the needs of their families second’ (Leung 2003 p.363). Collective labor was regarded as good and glorious and a contribution to the country; individual labor was regarded as selfish and lazy. The domestic chores and childcare traditionally done by women were classified as individual labor. In other words, mothers who took part in collective labor were regarded as good mothers and ‘revolutionary icons’ (Shu & Zhu 2012, p.1102), while mothers who put their labor into their own family services were regarded as ‘selfish' mothers’ (Short et al. 2002, p.34 Jacka 1997).

4.2 The Second Stage: ‘Working Mothers with double Burdens’ and ‘Xiagang Mothers’

After 1978, China began to transform into a market economy (Hu 2014, p.162). Government enterprises that were not for profit gave way to private enterprise, with the state encouraging citizens to participate as individuals rather than as members of the collective. Influenced by neo-liberalism, the state advocated that individuals become independent and responsible for their own actions. In terms of childcare benefits, the support for social reproduction provided by government enterprises came to be regarded as the cost of economic production after the economic

transformation responsibility shifted to the new private sector. The government gradually reduced the support for children's welfare, and most state welfare institutions, such as kindergartens and canteens, were closed. Instead, a large number of private childcare institutions were set up and operated for profit (Du & Dong 2013, p.134).

The drastic reduction of child-rearing support brought housework back to women to a great extent (Mu & Tian 2022, Zhou 2020). Most Chinese mothers chose to bear the 'double burden' of domestic work and employment (Zuo & Bian 2001). At the same time, mothers who took on more household duties began to see domestic work as their primary responsibility. Mother's equal status in the family during the communist period began to recede, and their attitude towards responsibility for family income began to change. Although wife and husband were both engaged in full-time work, in most dual-income families, women began to regard their husbands' income as the main income and their own income as their family's secondary income. At the same time most mothers in dual-income homes started to regard their husbands' careers as more important than their own (Zuo 2003).

It is worth noting that China adopted the strategy of "low wage but universal employment" (Yu 2015, p.34). Most Chinese families needed two salaries to cover normal expenses. 'Low wages in China did not really allow the luxury of one breadwinner in most circumstances.' (Zhou 2000, p.448). Reduced government support caused a small decline in the employment of women during the period of transition to a market economy. The dual-employee family was still the main model of Chinese families (Xu 2005, p.5)., The economic demands of families necessitated women's employment (Zhou 2020, p. 25). Women's employment after childbirth was still regarded as a 'necessary' choice (Zuo & Bian 2001, p1125).

At this time, having a stable job was considered integral to being a good mother (Zhou 2020). Under the discourse of neoliberalism, a mother with income was regarded as having the ability to improve the living conditions of her family and children. Most women took an active part in employment with the purpose of improving the economic conditions of their families. Strong intergenerational communication ensured that employment became integral to mother consciousness in China (Zhou 2020, p.25). Most girls born after 1978 were the daughters of women who had participated in the socialist economy, and these girls grew up to believe that this professional experience helped their mothers to raise them and had a positive impact on their childhood and growth (Zhou 2020.p14).

From 1990 to 2000, changes in national economic policy put women's employment in crisis. The state allowed enterprises to dismiss employees who had been employed with tenure, and the non-profit-oriented tenure system ended (Du & Dong 2013, p.136). A large number of state-owned enterprises started layoffs. According to records, about 35 million employees were laid off from their jobs during this period (Zuo 2016). Among these were mothers who had lost the protection of socialist gender equality policies, who had no education and who bore responsibility for childcare. They were regarded as ‘troublesome employees’, as the group that used the most enterprise benefits and were least productive and were the first group to be laid off (Leung 2003, p.368). They were the ‘main losers’ of change in policy (Martin 2017, p.709).

The social status of women was related to their employability in the economic market. Chinese mothers' domestic service was still 'ignored' (Zuo & Bian 2001, p.1131). Mothers who lost their jobs returned to their families to be mainly engaged in childcare and domestic services and did not get respect for this (Zuo & Bian 2001, p.1132). These unemployed mothers were marginalized (Zhou 2000, p.449). Women who returned to their families were not labelled "housewives", which would refer to mothers who were mainly responsible for domestic service (Tian & Chen 2023); mothers who lost their jobs were called "xia gang" mothers, which means people who are laid-off by enterprises (Jaeyoun 2005, pp.191-2). In China, as a country with abundant labor resources, young workers without family pressure were more popular in the job market. Women laid off by state-owned enterprises were considered to lack working ability, personal ability and labour competitiveness. They could only engage in some low-income, low-security temporary jobs (Cook & Dong 2011, p.951).

4.3 The Third Stage: Privileged Daughters and Stay at Home Mothers

Since 2000, the market economy has allowed for the economic development China has experienced. The poverty rate has decreased, and a new middle class has emerged, known as 'new rich’ families (Soong 2022, p.207). Mothers' consciousness during this period has mainly been influenced by family expectation and the one-child policy. The one-child policy, instigated by China in 1982, was originally used to control the population growth of the country. However, once the policy was in place, it also had the effect of promoting social equality between men and women (Fong 2004). The one-child policy has replaced the original model where a family could have multiple children. Implementing the one-child policy has enabled daughters in many patriarchal families to enjoy all

the investment and care from their families that might otherwise be shared with a son, who would be more valued in a patriarchal family (Tu & Xie 2020, Zhou 2020, p.9). The enrolment and completion rates of girls in higher education have soared (Lee 2012, Fong 2004).

Most mothers in this period grew up as ‘the only child’ or ‘privileged daughter’ (Tu & Xie 2020) and had a lot of educational resources invested in them by their parents. Parents expected girls to be the same as boys, and to find employment after completing their education (Zhang 2020). In terms of the job market, with the disappearance of the "iron rice bowl" of the socialist lifelong employment system (Ding, Goodall & Warner 2000, p.217), individual employability and academic qualifications have become more important. Chinese families have invested more into their children's education (Gu 2021, p.562) and the successful employment of children is regarded as being important not only for their personal happiness and independence but for the family as a whole (Chen, Xu & Chen 2023). Children who are unable to secure employment are regarded as failures, lacking personal competence, and their behaviour is considered 'kenlao': being dependent on their elderly parents for financial support (Xiao 2016).

Parents in urban families in China expect their daughters to postpone childbearing after marriage and concentrate on consolidating their careers first (Zhou 2020, p21). Parents of only-daughters have tended to help with caring for their grandchildren to ensure that their daughters can continue to focus on their careers.As for raising children, China has three types of childcare agent other than the mother: grandparents, childcare centers and babysitters (Ochiai 2008). In China, grandparents’ caring for grandchildren has traditionally been a core component of family support (Chen et al. 2011). In a health and nutrition survey from 1991 to 2004, 45% of grandparents coresided with children ages 0-6 (Chen, Liu & Mair 2011). They are making up for the reduced child-rearing resources available since the ending of communism and ensuring that their daughters can find jobs. During the one-child era a unique 4+2+1 model developed in China; that is, a family consisting of four grandparents and two parents who raise one child (Jiang & Sánchez-Barricarte 2011). In addition, in response to demand there are a large number of affordable childcare institutions and domestic institutions in the Chinese market (Sun 2008). The employment rate of Chinese women after marriage has consistently remained at a high level. In a couple's family, there are often some relatives who can be employed to take care of the children. Mothers who have full-time jobs in cities need to coordinate these three forms of assistance, balancing support from the family, formal childcare and domestic service agencies (Zhang 2022).

Due to the reduction of government welfare, the increase of middle-class families and the increased importance of children's education, the proportion of mothers who choose to return to their families has increased (Guo 2021). ‘The stay-at-home mother is an emerging group in urban China’ (Tian & Chen2023, p.4). It is worth noting that becoming a full-time wife means facing stigma in China. For women, not going to work is interpreted as a lack of motivation, which is a sign of backwardness (Zhou 2020, p. 14). The rejection of stay-at-home wives in Chinese society continues. In addition to being an individual with no financial ability, stay-at-home wives are also accused of being 'people with low education' and 'people with insufficient employability'. An unpaid stay-at-home mother could be perceived as inferior and socially undesirable (Tian & Chen 2023, p.9). A study of stay-at-home mothers in China found that almost all stay-at-home mothers are inclined to identify as mothers rather than stay-at-home mothers. Women who have become full-time wives are often unwilling to admit to having left their jobs. According to Li's survey, most China women who choose to be full-time mothers, believed that their status as full-time mothers is temporary, and most of them have positive plans for rejoining the workplace or increasing part-time income in the future as their strategy to relieve their experience of society's expectation for women's employment.

In the changing social culture and policies in China, mothers who have different understandings of maternity and employment in different times have been constructed. The first generation of liberated mothers live in the early days of the People's Republic of China expected the state to help with their employment and were patriotically contributing to the national infrastructure. In the subsequent neoliberal market economy, employment became the family's economic expectation for women, and mothers needed to bear the double burden of parenting and work. For modern women working after childbirth is closely related to individual independence and meeting family expectations.

Chapter 5. The Employment of Australian Mothers and Chinese Mothers

This chapter focuses on the history, culture and policies that Australian and Chinese mothers have experienced with different attitudes in the choice of employment after childbirth since 1950. This chapter is divided into three parts and horizontally compares three different periods, from 1950 to

1970, from 1970 to 1990, and from 1990 to the present. It is found that the complicated historical background between Australia and China has shaped completely different attitudes towards women's participation in employment after childbirth.

5.1 The First Stage, 1950-1970: White, Middle-Class Full-time Housewives in a Capitalist Society

During the period from 1950 to 1970, Australia developed completely different gender norms from New China. In the early days of the People's Republic of China, there was a nationwide attempt to 'de-housewife' (Ochiai 2008, p.158), establish gender equality and push women into the labour market while collectivising childcare (Leung 2003). At the same time, Australia continued the division of traditional gender responsibilities of Western capitalist countries (Routledge 1990); married women in Australia were isolated from the job market, and raising children was viewed as a private responsibility (Gilding 1991, Folbre 1994).

This division of labour among men and women in Australia stemmed from the fact that, when the Western capitalist countries entered the industrial revolution, men left their family workshops and joined factories. The market economy began with a gendered separation within families, and there was a strict division between the commercial, public sphere and the domestic, private sphere. Men were regarded as the labour force, part of the public sphere, participating in economic activities and becoming breadwinners, while women were part of the private sphere of the family, taking on all the childcare and domestic services (Hays 1996, Gilding 1991). Capitalist countries have refused to recognize the value of women's social reproduction, allocated the responsibility of child-rearing to women in the private sphere and think that raising children is the responsibility of the family rather than a social responsibility (Folbre 1994). This ideology includes the idea that women care for children out of sacred care and love, and this word is excluded from the value related to economic interests (Hays 1996).

Apart from the influence of the capitalist system, motherhood in Australian society is underpinned by a unique colonial history, which is closely related to Western European history (Pascoe 2019). In the early 20th century, some white settlers in Australia were worried about 'racial suicide' caused by middle-class women having no children while 'other' women – that is, immigrants, Aboriginal women and working-class women – had too many children (De Souza 2013). They saw it as a

patriotic and political obligation to breed white citizens in the colonies (Bartlett 2004). Anglos and Nordic women were considered to be at the top of the racial hierarchy, and to be the only women able to be good mothers, as they shouldered the responsibility for the future of the country and the continuation of the white race (De Souza 2013).

Bowlby attachment theory has also influenced the way Australian mothers raise their children to some extent (Vered 2008). According to attachment theory, full-time mothers are important for young children. The companionship of a mother in the first few years of a child's growth is very important for their mental health development (Bowlby 1969). Women in middle-class families began to worry about the 'disturbing effect' of using servants on children's behaviour (Gilding 1991, p.15). Women in middle-class families in Australia gradually gave up the practice of hiring one or two 'nurse girls' to take care of their children and became the main caregivers (Routledge1990, p.25).

In the mid-20th century, 'middle-class' meant that one income could sustain the family (Coombe et al. 2019, p.108). Trade unions ensured that a salary could support a man, his wife and three children (Vered 2008). This kind of parenting is regarded as the best arrangement for children, and it is portrayed as integral to the identity of middle-class mothers (Goodwin & Huppatz 2010, p.16). Family life and suburban life became synonymous and idealized (Coombe et al. 2019). Motherhood was seen as the natural role for women and brought respect and the right to speak. It was seen as a source of satisfaction, not just a responsibility (Coombe et al. 2019, p.109).

However, working-class, aboriginal, immigrant and single mothers, who lacked resources and choices, were marginalized by the middle-class parenting standard (Goodwin & Huppatz 2010). For example, working mothers were seen as unable to give their children enough companionship and emotional support because they had to work. A mother's employment time and income impact her children's health (Gilding 1991), is regarded as 'deficient or inactive' mother' in the words of regulating motherhood (Wright, Maher & Tanner 2015, p.424).

It is worth noting that the establishment of early childcare institutions in Australia was based on an assumption that working-class families cannot provide a good lifestyle for their children. The purpose of the child-care institutions was to expose working-class children to two to three days each week of child-care, with the aim of allowing children from working-class families to have access to the 'middle class values such as cleanliness, courtesy, industriousness and thrift' (Greenhalgh 2022,

p.341). There was also a difference between Australian and Chinese society as to whether mothers who participated in employment after childbirth met the definition of 'good mother'. In China in the 1950s, a woman who participated in postpartum employment was hailed by the regime as a ' liberated woman' (Guo 2021, p.276), while such behaviour was frowned on at that time in Australia. In terms of a mother's parenting methods, unlike in China, where working-class mothers were "good mothers" in the post 1949 period, iIn Australia, middle-class, heterosexual, married, monogamous, white mothers,, dependent on their husbands for income, were regarded as "good mothers" (Goodwin & Huppatz 2010, p.6).Married women were not allowed to participate in the civil service until 1966, when the Marriage Bar still prohibited women from participating in employment after marriage (Mosca & Wright 2022)., Australian women as a whole only took part in employment briefly, during World War II, and were called to return home soon after the war (Strachan 2010). Women who went out for employment could be regarded as selfish and disorderly women who were abnormal and did not conform to social morality (Gilding 1991).

5.2 The Second Stage, 1970-1990: Second-Wave Feminism

The women's liberation movement which arrived in Australia in the late 1960s, promoted women's entry into the job market. The women's liberation movement in China was initiated by the state but continued beyond the communist era due to economic pressure and family expectations. From the late 1960s the second wave of the feminist movement arose in Australia and internationally. The Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) promoted women's participation in employment.

Radical feminists regarded the traditional housewife role in Australian families as the persecution of women under the patriarchal capitalist system, and advocated that women gain economic independence. Feminist campaigns advocated 'equal pay for equal work', the elimination of allegedly pervasive gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, community-based childcare, the recognition of women's unpaid housework and childcare work, and the equally distribution of domestic work with men. Unlike women in China who were participating in employment because of economic pressure, for women in middle-class families, employment was regarded as a new form of self-realization, and women who participated in employment were regarded as icons of modernization and liberation. 'Female subjectivity was no longer tied so inextricably to maternity' (Pascoe Leahy 2019, p.115).

The women's liberation movement and other movements called for social change. In response to this activism the Labor Party, in power from 1972, led by Gough Whitlam, initiated comprehensive legislative reform. The Sex Discrimination Act, passed in 1984 (Magarey 2004), and the Practice of Affirmative Action of 1986 and 1990 were intended to ensure that women have equal rights in the public sphere (Strachan & Burgess 2000).

With the legislative changes, increased opportunities in the job market and increasing opportunity for women to become educated (Van Egmond et al. 2010), a growing number of women in Australia had jobs (World bank group 2024).

The percentage of women participating in the labour force increased from 29% in 1953 to 54.4% in 1988 (ABS 1998). The term "working mother", rarely used before 1970, gradually appeared in Australian society (Grimshaw, Warne & Swain 2005, p.21).

Feminism encourages women to ‘have it all’ (Campo 2005, p.64). Feminists argue that women do not have to give up their domestic roles but can arrange for their children to be taken care of by other caregivers while they work. Women can have a career, children and marriage, be independent in the economy and society while maintaining their femininity. In fact, while women participate in employment, the expectations of society for women are also changing (Timmins 2019, p.54). At the same time, a large number of women entering male-dominated industries found themselves facing gender discrimination and the pressure of 'good mothering'(Campo 2005, p.69). Although the public sphere opened to women, in the private sphere women were still in charge of children and family. Women who chose to participate in the workforce realised that 'having it all’ is a ‘great lie' (Campo 2005, p.63). Women began to face the contradiction between their love for their children and desire to participate in the public sphere. Mothers who work were still seen as putting their personal needs above the needs of their children and could be considered ‘selfish’, ‘bad mothers,’ (Lupton & Schmied 2002, p.98).

From 1980 to 1995, the women's liberation movement faced division (Campo 2005). Joining the workforce was no longer seen as a liberation but an oppression of women. In 1996, the federal government implemented a series of policies, which 'regarded the main role of women as caregivers, not paid employees'. This undid the achievements of the feminist period, especially in terms of wage rates and childcare. Australia's female employment rate remained stagnant from 1996 to 1999 (World bank group 2024).

5.3 The Third Stage, from 2000 to the Present: Choice and Part-time Mothers.

After second wave feminism received serious criticism in regard to women's employment, a discourse combining neoliberalism and post-feminism, characterised by 'freedom of choice' and 'preferences,' began to emerge in Australian society (Wilton 2017). It became the primary guiding discourse for women in the 21st century regarding their participation in the workforce after childbirth.Post-feminists claim that women have gained enough gender equality due to second-wave feminism, no further political change is needed, and support women in regaining their femininity (Archer 2019). At the same time, neoliberals advocate that the state reduce welfare, and that individual be responsible for themselves. They advocate that one's life can be meaningful through their own personal choices and interests (De Souza 2013, Timmins 2019, Wilton 2017). Whether women participate in employment after childbirth was no longer seen in terms of traditional gender norms, as in 1950, or in terms of second-wave feminism, but simply as a 'choice' made by a woman who has equal rights to a man. Women can choose whether to work according to their own needs and preferences (Wilton 2017).

According to the conservative writer Cathera Hakim, choice can be divided into three types: work-centred, home-centred, or both(Hakim 2000). However, the decision of whether to return to work after childbirth is still subject to significant constraints from society, family, and personal factors for women (Garvan 2014 Coombe 2019). On personal expectations, women focus more on education, self-realisation and career (Lupton & Schmied 2002). With the economic pressure of parenting in Australia and the rising cost of living (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017), an Australian family increasingly needs two incomes to maintain a normal standard of living. In terms of societal expectations, when Australia's welfare policy began to be reshaped in 1999, parents who received welfare support were regarded as unmotivated, instead of being valued for their childcare efforts (Goodwin & Huppatz 2010). Women's participation in employment consistently increased (ABS 2021). Employment became more integrated with the idea of a good mother and women increasingly continued to work after childbirth (Cartwright 2008).

Although views on mothers' employment have changed, the discourse that a 'good mother' should stay at home with her young children has continued during this period (Bugden, McKenzie, Hanna & Graham 2021, Lupton& Schmied 2002). The idea that the mother's company is important in the infant's childhood still affects the family parenting model in Australia, and parents feel uneasy about outsourcing their care (Boyd, Thorpe & Tayler 2010, Baxter 2013b). For instance, in China, children usually grow up in state-run nurseries while their mothers are at work, and most families

think this is normal. While many Australian parents think that childcare services are harmful to children, and that family parenting is better. It is often assumed that only parents who have nothing to do with their children will use the childcare service (Boyd, Thorpe & Tayler 2010). The profit-driven childcare institutions are considered to be characterised by a 'lack of attention, increase in exposure to illness and poor quality of care' (Boyd, Thorpe, K & Tayler 2010.p.10). Some women who send their children to childcare centres because of work feel guilty, thinking that they have sacrificed their children's childhood in order to realise their economic value. Even without guilt, the high cost of childcare centres and their inflexible hours can make it difficult for women to work full-time (Brady & Perales 2016). The fees for childcare institutions in Australia are completely different from those in China. The expenditure of Australian families with two children on full-time childcare ranks second in the world (OECD Family Database). Subsidies are linked to the mother's salary and working hours (Craig, Mullan, & Blaxland 2010). The government adopts different levels of welfare support for families with different incomes so mothers with full-time income often face high childcare costs. A 2018 report in Australia found that for some mothers returning to the workforce, after deducting taxes and childcare expenses, there was almost no remaining income from their wages. In other words, mothers are paying for the opportunity to work (Khadem 2018). Many parents say that if they go to work, they may not be able to afford the high cost of childcare (Garvis, Pendergast & Kanasa 2012).

Under economic pressure and the expectation of taking care of children, more and more women choose to continue to work after childbirth and assume the responsibility of being the main caregivers of children (Craig 2007, Craig 2011 Richardson, Cook, Breitkreuz & Wu 2024). 71% of families with children in Australia are dual income (Baxter 2023). 'The optimal arrangement' for most Australian families is that the husband takes a full-time job, and most women choose to give up full-time jobs and choose part-time jobs after childbirth (Baxter 2023). In China part-time jobs are seen as low-income and insecure positions. In Australia, part-time jobs are regarded as an important tool to increase the participation rate of women in the workplace. In China, the policy is to adjust the working hours of childcare institutions and schools to women's working hours while, in Australia, women need to adjust their employment hours to adapt to school policy. Out of 1.5 million Australian families with children and working parents, almost half (48%) choose this way of reducing the mother's working hours (Baxter 2023, p.6). Part-time work is widely regarded as a way for women to combine paid work with family (Pocock 2005, Thornthwaite 2004, Parr 2012).

Chapter 6. The Adaptation Strategies Adopted by Chinese Mothers in Order to Cope with Their Cultural Differences

This chapter focuses on the coping strategies adopted by Chinese immigrant mothers in Australia in the face of the different expectations around mothers' employment in the two countries. According to the Australian census in 2021, the employment situation of Chinese couples in Australia is that only 20.7% of Chinese families have two full-time incomes. Couples with one member in full-time employment and the other unemployed are 19.3%; couples with one full-time member and one part-time are 13.6%; couples with one member in part-time employment and the other unemployed are 7.8%; couples where both have part-time jobs are 4.9%; couples where both not working are 24.2% (ABS 2021). In most Chinese immigrant couples the women are the ones who give up their jobs to take care of their children (Satyen, Dort & Yin 2020). Based on my own experience as an immigrant mother and other documents, I have organized the coping styles adopted by Chinese women in Australia in regard to parenting and work into the following five types.

1. Seeking help from grandparents
2. Satellite babies (Sending children back to China)
3. Mompreneurship
4. ‘Daigou’ or Playbour
5. Stay-at-home mother

6.1 Transnational Grandparents

In Australia, depending on grandparents is the most popular way to raise children (Hamilton,Hill, & Kintominas 2022), as they are considered the most suitable caregivers after the parents (Craig & Jenkins 2015). In 2017, there were 864,500 children form family with parents in paid work in

Australia who were being cared for by grandparents, which is typical and far exceeds other forms of childcare services (Hamilton,Hill, & Kintominas 2022,p.382). Most Australian parents said that home care is far better than using professional care institutions (Baxter 2013). Compared with other childcare services, bringing grandparents to Australia for help does not require paying extra fees and is more flexible than employing professional caregivers (AIFS 2022, Craig & Jenkins 2015).

Seeking help from grandparents is also the main mode of childcare in Chinese immigrant families where women are inneed active employment. When the grandparents in China are healthy and able-bodied, they can choose to come go to Australia live in their children's homes and do family work such as child-rearing and cooking. In recent years, Chinese immigrants have always been the main recipients of parent visas for permanent residence (Hamilton,Hill, & Kintominas 2022). The number of Chinese families in Australia applying for visas to reunite with their parents is ranked at the top of the listhas been ranked first (Department of Home Affairs 2022). Da (2003) thinks that for Chinese immigrants, this kind of childcare is 'neither traditional nor modern', but a strategy adopted by immigrants to meet family needs and provide timely help. For grandparents, their task is to play an important role in supporting the work of adult children (especially daughters or daughters-in-law) (Da 2003). Providing opportunities for adult children to participate in paid work and improve economic security is a manifestation of parents' care.

However, having grandparents help take care of children in imgrant families can requires a transnational journey, which means going through additional complicated changes under cross-cultural conditions. Most Chinese grandparents are not familiar with English. For grandparents, the language barriers they face in the process of life require their children to assist in translation. At the same time, when grandparents come to Australia, they give up their leisurely retirement life in China to take care of their grandchildren and have to overcome the challenges of social and cultural isolation and lack of access to social services. For many grandparents, their limited English level means that they will be isolated socially and physically (O'Callaghan et al. 2023). Grandparents usually live in their children's houses, which means that the family living mode has changed from the nuclear family to a two-couple family. (Da 2003) For small families the problem of caring for children is made more complicated cause they may encounter more contradictions arising from the differences in life between the two generations and the concept of parenting.

Taking care of children is not simply a matter of deciding whether grandparents are available but requires meeting the demands of Australian immigration policy (Hamilton, Hill & Kintominas 2022). Australia's current immigration policy restricts the arrival of grandparents and does not relieve the parenting pressure of immigrant women well. The number of children taken care of by grandparents in Australian immigrant families is more than that of non-immigrant families (Hamilton, Hill & Kintominas 2022). Due to Australia's high visa threshold, grandparents are the only relatives who can apply for visas in most Chinese families regardless of skills and income. For decades, the immigration system has become more and more limited. Companies are allowed young and skilled immigrants, but stricter measures for family reunions limit the ways to obtain permanent residency (Stevens 2019). In other words, if Chinese families want relatives other than grandparents to help with childcare or other professional baby nurses in China with more reasonable price, it is almost impossible for them to apply for a valid visa to come to Australia because of their low-skilled occupations or lack of qualifications.

The duration and reasons for Chinese grandparents to visit their families are strictly regulated by the immigration system. For example, in 2019, the Australian government introduced a new temporary visa sponsored by parents, allowing citizens and permanent residents to bring their parents to Australia (The Department of Home Affairs 2019). Each visa is valid for three to five years. During the stay, the holder cannot enjoy public medical care or social security and is not allowed to participate in paid work. For a permanent parent visa, a waiting period of nearly 31 years is required (Department of Home Affairs 2024). Generally speaking, these groups of visas determine the cost of immigration, which families can be taken care of by grandparents, and what activities grandparents can participate in during their stay in Australia (Hamilton, Kintominas & Adamson 2024).

6.2 Satellite babies

Satellite babies, also known as 'China Satellite babies', refers to the children of Chinese immigrant mothers who have been sent back to China to be taken care of by grandparents or other relatives (Bohr & Tse 2009, Hui, Stevenson & Gallego 2019, p.16). It is considered to be 'a variation' of traditional grandparents' parenting (Bohr & Whitfield 2011, p.164). This practice is common in the United States, Canada and Australia among Chinese immigrant families that do not have the conditions for grandparents to come and take care of them and can't bear the high cost of localoverseas childcare, while both husband and wife need to have enough energy to work (Da 2003). In the health center in Chinatown, New York, which responsible for the delivery activities of

Chinese immigrant women, about 20% of the 1,500 babies born every year are sent away (, Sengupta1999).

This practice is in line with the Chinese parenting habits, but it is generally condemned by European and American countries (Bohr & Whitfield 2011, p.170). In China, it is accepted that the mother is not the only person responsible for childcare, and childcare is usually the responsibility of the whole family. This parenting style is questioned by Western mental health research and attachment theory (Bowlby 1969, Goodwin & Huppatz 2010, Bohr & Whitfield 2011). It is believed that separating a child from its parents to stay with various other family membersalienated substitutes will have a negative impact on children's emotional development causing jealousy. Migrant children who are separated from their parents are more likely to become depressed and have self-esteem and behavioral problems, so it is claimed (Bohr & Tse 2009, Hui, Stevenson & Gallego 2019). Only one piece of research analyses 19 children from 16 China immigrant families in Sydney who were separated from their parents in their early years found that children would have a series of health and behavioral challenges after being reunited with their parents. For example, decision-making difficulties, food dependence, shyness, sleep problems, etc. FurtherAt the same time, immigrant mothers will be regarded as 'bad mothers' (Bohr & Whitfield 2011) because they want to continue their careers and be separated from their children.

6.3 Mompreneurs

There are many definitions of ‘mompreneur’ : women who balance the roles of mother and entrepreneur, women who become entrepreneurs after giving birth, mothers who work at home, and mothers who run their own businesses and leave home while taking care of their children or mothers who runs a services that focuses on providing goods to other mothers (Wilton 2017, p.197). In Australia, mother entrepreneurship reflects the constant struggle of women to earn enough income and meet their needs and social expectations. It is also a way to 'have it all': children, a rewarding career, and a stable family life, while maintaining traditional gender roles. In other words, this way meets the economic expectation of Australian mothers in neoliberalism where they takeand takes full responsibility for the unpaid care of their children (Archer 2019, p.151). In Australia, one third of small businesses are owned by women (Collins & Low 2010). For many Australian mothers, becoming a mother entrepreneur helps them in balancing work and child-rearing. The most obvious benefit is that they have more flexible time arrangements without being beholden to an employer’s schedule.

According to records, the proportion of Australian Chinese women setting up small businesses is twice that of local Australian women (Patrickson & Hallo 2021). Most Chinese women who come to Australia start their own small businesses with the support of their husbands or families (Patrickson & Hallo 2021). Engaging in small businesses can not only help women better balance the problems of childcare and employment. Other benefits for Chinese immigrant women in becoming an entrepreneur include the development of income and skills in local community (Patrickson & Hallo 2021) and avoiding thebeing restrictionsed ofby the 'accent ceiling' in the employment market (Collins & Low 2010).

6.4 Playbour & 'Daigou'

In recent years, the newly emerging 'daigou' industry has become the main industry for the employment of Chinese immigrant women (Yu 2021). 'Daigou' has a literal translation of 'buying on one's behalf' (Ding 2024, p.22). Chinese women in Australia use the online platform WeChat to sell to people in China Australian goods that are cheaper or better than their Chinese equivalents, as well as goods that are not available in China, such as Australian health care products and milk powder (Martin 2017). This work is done by mobile phone most of the time. It is similar to the 'playbour' (Archer 2019, p.149). That is, unstable workers combine play with labor. Many Australian mom bloggers are raising children and taking care of their other responsibilities.

Compared with Mompreneurs, 'Daigou'work is more flexible. Mothers can earn an income while taking care of their children, because they can work from any location. Chinese immigrant mother can make better use of their customer base in China and their geographical advantages in Australia. 'Daigou' is regarded as feminine labor, centered on women's gender capital in digital commerce (Martin 2017, p.11). The most popular Australian products sold to China in this way are infant formula, beauty products and health care products. The seller group and the buyer group are almost all women. The scale of this informal trade is very large. At the end of 2015, a courier company in Melbourne Central Business District reported that nearly six tons of goods in Australia are transported back to China by these 'purchasing agents'(Martin 2017, p.8).

6.5 Stay-at-Home Mothers

For most Chinese immigrant mothers, becoming a full-time mother is not an 'active' choice (Yu 2022), meaning that becoming a full-time housewife is their only option, one mother interviewed for research project said.

'I have no other option than to take care of my children at home. ' (Interviewee, cited in Satyen, Dort & Yin 2020, p.55).

In China, the status of women is derived from their contribution to the family income (Yang 2014). However, most Chinese immigrants find that the burden of household labor in Australia is much heavier than in China due to a lack of suitable help paid or unpaid family (Ho 2006a). Being a stay-at-home mother is easier choice for most Chinese immigrant mother compared with becoming a working mother after they immigrant to Australia (Ho 2006b, Yu 2022). In terms of employment, immigrant women who stay at home don't have to consider the discrimination against of immigrant women in employment and the difficulty of finding a part-time job suitable for childcare time (Ressia 2017). In terms of parenting, it can ensure that women become mothers who devote all their energy to their children and meet the standards of' good mothers' in Australia (Al-deen 2017, Satyen, Dort & Yin 2020). Economically, there is no need to increase the burden of grandparents in China or bear the extra cost of babysitting. When the family becomes a single income unit, with childcare a man with the only income, it means that the family can enjoy a nursery with more reasonable fees under a better government welfare policy than a double-income family (Craig, Mullan, & Blaxland 2010).

It is worth noting that, influenced by the Chinese culture of the 'good working mother,' women's independence is equated with economic independence (Yang 2014). Mothers with an income are seen as having social status. Similarly, leaving the workforce may imply a decline in social status (Cooke et al. 2013, Yang 2014, Zhou 2020). In China, the stigmatization of full-time housewives still exists (Yang 2014). Most women will hardly admit that they have become full-time wives. For this reason, most women will claim that they will return to employment when their children can be left unattended (Satyen, Dort & Yin 2020).

Chapter 7. Conclusion

This thesis has concluded that the cultural differences between China and Australia have had a negative impact on Chinese mothers' employment choices. The demographics of Chinese immigrant mothers in Australia has gradually evolved to be dominated by highly educated women, driven by the social development of China and immigration policy of the Australian government, which favour skilled and well-educated migrants. Differences in attitudes towards the role of new mothers mean that Chinese mothers are likely to face a complicated employment situation in Australia.

Cultural expectations of mothers in Australia being the primary carer, cause social and workplace barriers for new Chinese immigrant mothers in Australia, even when the mother prefers to work full time. These restrictions make it more difficult for Chinese immigrant mothers to find ideal jobs, which increases the likelihood of highly employable Chinese women working in low-paid and low-skilled jobs for an extended period of time. The childcare burden, racial and language differences, as well as difficulties transferring overseas qualifications, education or work experience, accentuate the issues for Chinese immigrant mothers in Australia wanting to secure permanent and well-paid work which utilises their existing skills, education and expertise. Cultural differences between Australia and China, where women's employment is supported, also mean that childcare is much more expensive in Australia than China, further increasing immigrant mothers' financial burden.

This thesis finds that the image of New China, where it is expected that a mother should be fully employed, is completely different from the image of a mother portrayed in Australian culture and even has the opposite attitude. The universal recognition of working mothers in Chinese society has been passed down by at least three generations since the founding of the People's Republic of China and has become the standard for Chinese mothers. In order to ensure their employment rate, women have very affordable access to childcare, compared with Australia, and they have substantially more childcare support from their family and society.

Australia has not experienced the same national socialist transformation as in China, which advocates the stage of pushing women into the job market nationwide and socialising their childcare responsibilities to the greatest extent. To the contrary Australian mothers still retain the main responsibility for childcare, despite the employment rate of women in Australia rising this year. Under the influence of this culture, mothers' occupations are mainly part-time jobs. Almost all public facilities in Australia revolve around part-time mothers, such as expensive childcare centres and financial punishments triggered by dual-parent incomes.

This thesis has considered the question of what is influencing Chinese mothers with high academic qualifications and high employment expectations to choose to give up full-time jobs? From the analysis presented, it is concluded that efforts to culturally assimilate into Australian society systematically decrease immigrant Chinese mothers' opportunities to maintain employment which recognises their skills, expertise and wage expectations. Instead, they adopt the methods employed by Australian women, seeking help from their grandparents, becoming part-time workers, finding more flexible employment hours and so on. It is also concluded that giving up full-time employment and becoming a full-time mother is a choice by immigrant Chinese mothers which is strongly influenced by government policies, cultural expectations and workplace restrictions.

7.1 Limitations of this thesis

This thesis does not consider individual difference between Chinese immigrant women. In a socialist country that advocates class equality for all, there is no class judgment similar to that experienced in a capitalist country. Despite the development of China today widening the gap between the rich and the poor, it is uncommon to discuss class in Chinese society. This leads to widespread perceptions of belonging to an equal class society, where all are families are classified as ordinary, or equal. There is no way for Chinese mothers to define their identity by class, as in European and American countries.

In this study, Chinese mothers can only be divided into academic qualifications through some data related to education. Therefore, it may be overlooked whether there is a huge gap between Chinese mothers' employment choices according to different family economic backgrounds. For example, perhaps mothers from low-income families are more willing to work than mothers from higher income families. This failure to differentiate between the background or financial situation of Chinese immigrant mothers in Australia is considered to be the most significant limitation of this thesis. However, it is perhaps also appropriate, considering the lack of individual differentiation which Chinese mothers are used to in their home country.

7.2 Future research

Future research should consider that the lowered employment standards of Chinese women who have emigrated to Australia may not be a problem of employment opportunities, racial

discrimination, skills, language barriers, education or work experience. Instead, it may be a product of cultural differences regarding the expectations of mothers being the primary caregiver, with this responsibility overriding the expectations of full-time employment.

From the perspective of an immigrant mother, the cultural differences experienced by Chinese immigrant mothers are not only related to their economic income and family status, but also contrary to their cultural expectations. Hence, Chinese women's expectation of getting a better 'everything' in life through immigration, has become a bubble. The mothering culture respected in Australia is a significant failure for Chinese women. Therefore, in addition to overcoming the obstacles to employment, Chinese immigrant mothers have to face the pain of disappointing in their expectations and the challenges of cultural differences.

For Chinese women who are expected to immigrate to Australia, it is necessary to consider Australia's parenting culture and parenting support attitude when evaluating their employment chances, not just their employment qualifications, such as language and diploma.

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