NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
SINGAPORE

# INTENSIVE PARENTING FOR SUCCESS: A STUDY OF NEW CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN SINGAPORE

**WANG JUN**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**2021**

# INTENSIVE PARENTING FOR SUCCESS: A STUDY OF NEW CHINESE IMMIGRANTS IN SINGAPORE

**WANG JUN**

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

A thesis submitted to the Nanyang Technological University in partial fulfilment of requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**2021**

## Statement of Originality

I certify that all work submitted for this thesis is my original work. I declare that no other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement. Except where it is clearly stated that I have used some of this material elsewhere, this work has not been presented by me for assessment in any other institution or University. I certify that the data collected for this project are authentic and the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

15 Dec 2020

. . . . . .
Date

. . . . . .
WANG JUN

## Supervisor Declaration Statement

I have reviewed the content of this thesis and to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain plagiarised materials. The presentation style is also consistent with what is expected of the degree awarded. To the best of my knowledge, the research and writing are those of the candidate except as acknowledged in the Author Attribution Statement. I confirm that the investigations were conducted in accordance with the ethics policies and integrity standards of Nanyang Technological University and that the research data are presented honestly and without prejudice.

15 December 2020

. . . . . .
Date

. . . . . .
Dr. Zhan Shaohua

# Authorship Attribution Statement

This thesis contains material from one paper published in the following peer-reviewed journal in which I am listed as an author:

Zhou, Min, & Wang, Jun. (2019). Challenges and Strategies for Promoting Children's Education: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Immigrant Parenting in the United States and Singapore. *Genealogy*, *3*(2), 20.

DOI: https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/3/2/20

The contributions of the co-authors are as follows:

- Professor Zhou Min was responsible for the theoretical and conceptual framing of the paper, and both authors contributed equally to data analysis.
- Professor Zhou Min provided the initial project direction and edited the manuscript drafts.
- I prepared the manuscript drafts regarding Singapore. The manuscript was revised Professor Zhou.
- I performed all the field work in Singapore. I also analyzed the data.

15 December 2020

. . . . . .
Date

. . . . . .
WANG JUN

# Acknowledgements

I wish to thank many people who have helped me through my graduate career as a doctoral student at the School of Social Sciences (SSS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU). First, I thank the participants of my doctoral research, who were willing to open themselves up to me and share with me their rich experiences. Without their participation, this research would have been impossible.

I could not have completed my Ph.D. journey and could not have written this thesis without the advice, guidance, and kind mentorship of Dr. Min Zhou, Professor of Sociology and Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), USA. Professor Zhou was the one who sparked my research interest in immigration and education and motivated me to take on the journey in pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology when she was Tan Lark Sye Chair Professor and Head of the Sociology Division at NTU. She took me in as her student when she launched a Singapore Ministry of Education (MoE) Academic Research Fund (AcRF) Tier 2 project on immigration and integration. Even after she returned to UCLA, Professor Zhou has continued to serve as my mentor and has never ceased to be a source of inspiration, sociological imagination, emotional support, constant encouragement, and role modeling, to which I owe my deepest gratitude. Also, my sincere appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Shaohua Zhan, Assistant Professor of Sociology at NTU. Professor Zhan has offered me his valuable advice, intellectually stimulating critiques, insightful suggestions, and patience in every step of my journey. I owe a special gratitude to him for his mentorship throughout my PhD study.

I wish to express gratitude to my Thesis Advisory Committee members, Associate Professor Sun Hsiao-Li Shirley at the School of Social Sciences (SSS) and Associate Professor Wong Yiik Diew at the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE), NTU, for their invaluable suggestions and support.

I am grateful to the sociology faculty Associate Professor Teo You Yenn, Associate Professor James Patrick Williams, Assistant Professor Laavanya Kathiravelu, Professor Kwok Kian Woon, and Associate Professor Premchand Dommaraju, who have imparted knowledge, advice, and support to me. I also thank the SSS for providing me with such an excellent research environment.

My PhD study has benefited greatly from an MoE AcRF Tier 2 research grant No. MOE2015-T2-2-027 (with Professor Min Zhou as the lead PI and Professor Shaohua Zhan taking over as the lead PI after Zhou's departure from NTU).

I am thankful for my fellow classmate and research assistants at the SSS, NTU, Mohamed Shahril Bin Mohamed Salleh, Chen Shiwei, Yang Wei, Yang Hui, Wong Boon Keng George, Chen Xingyan, Kwa Kai Xiang, Chen Jiayu, Fan Yunge, Assel Mussagulova, and Yuan Mengying, for their help, discussion, and friendship.

I am tremendously fortunate to have the kind support and unwavering friendship of Sam Guo Nan, Dr. Huang Lingli, Li Hui, Ruan Yang, Micelle Chen Tao, Li Chuanling.

Last but not least, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my family for their unconditional love and continued support and encouragement, without which this journey could not have been completed. I owe a debt of gratitude to my late father, Wang Guanghu, who always encouraged me to aim high and make the best efforts to achieve

my goal and believed that I could do whatever my heart desired. I am forever indebted to my mother, Li Yushu, who has offered reassurance and both tangible and emotional support to me, as well as around-the-clock care to my young children. My husband, Dr. Minmin Zhu, has always stood by me with trust, understanding, humor, and love and helped me put things in perspective when I was in doubt during my study. My two beautiful children—Zhu Ruilin, my 8-year-old son, and Zhu Yilin Joseph, my younger son who was conceived during the first year of my PhD study at NTU—both of whom have grown up with my graduate career, have pushed me through with endless energy, joy, and inspiration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ..... **i**
**TABLE OF CONTENT** ..... **iv**
**SUMMARY** ..... **vii**

**1. Introduction: Immigration, Education, and Parenting Practices……1**
1.1 The State of the Problem ..... 1
1.1.1 The Skilled Migration and Immigration for Children's Education ..... 1
1.1.2 New Chinese Immigration and Immigrant Education in Singapore ..... 3
1.1.3 Aim of the Study and Central Research Questions ..... 10
1.2 Literature Review: Immigration and Education ..... 11
1.2.1 Cultural Values of Chinese Parenting on Education ..... 11
1.2.2 Status Attainment and Education ..... 13
1.2.2.1 The classical Wisconsin status attainment model ..... 13
1.2.2.2 Other studies on education as key to immigrant integration and social mobility……..15
1.2.3 Segmented Assimilation and Immigrant Selectivity ..... 17
1.2.3.1 The importance of contexts of exit and reception ..... 17
1.2.3.2 Immigrant selectivity and ethnic capital ..... 20
1.2.4 The Role of Family in Children's Education ..... 23
1.2.4.1 Lareau's conception of class-based parenting: concerted cultivation vs. accomplishment of natural growth ..... 23
1.2.4.2 Other studies on the role of family ..... 25
1.2.5 Parenting to Promote Children's Education in the West and East ..... 26
1.2.5.1 Intensive parenting in the Anglo-sphere ..... 27
1.2.5.2 Intensive parenting on education in Asia ..... 29
1.2.5.3 Convergence of intensive parenting in the East and West ..... 31
1.2.6 Analytical Framework ..... 34
1.3 Methodology and Data collection ..... 36
1.3.1 In-Depth Interviews ..... 36
1.3.1.1 Research participant selection ..... 37
1.3.1.2 Data collection procedures ..... 39
1.3.2 Non-Intrusive Participant Observation ..... 40
1.3.3 Author's Position and Reflection ..... 42
1.4 Chapters at a Glance ..... 45

**2. New Chinese Immigration and Family Formation in Singapore……..…..49**
2.1 Earlier Chinese Migration to Singapore ..... 50
2.2 Contexts of Exit and Reception of Post-1990 Chinese Migration to Singapore ……..54
2.2.1 Context of Exit ..... 54
2.2.1.1 Economic and administrative context ..... 55
2.2.1.2 Social Environment ..... 57
2.2.2 Context of Reception ..... 59
2.2.2.1 Cultural Context of Singapore ..... 60

2.2.2.2 The Political and Administrative System ..... 60
2.2.2.3 Ideologies of Singapore ..... 61
2.2.2.4 Economic and social context ..... 62
2.2.3 The Shared Confucian Culture and Values ..... 64
2.3 New Chinese Immigrant in Singapore: Socioeconomic Characteristics, Family Formation, and the Community ..... 66
2.3.1 *Xinyimin's* Socioeconomic Characteristics ..... 67
2.3.2 Family Formation..... 72
2.3.3 New Chinese Immigrant Community ..... 76

**3. Challenges for New Chinese Immigrants in Raising Children in Singapore …..…….…..….80**
3.1 Language and Cultural Barriers..... 81
3.1.1 Language Barriers..... 81
3.1.2 Cultural Barriers ..... 85
3.2 Institutional Barriers ..... 83
3.2.1 The Singapore Immigration Policy..... 90
3.2.2 The High-stake Examination and Streaming Featured Education System.100
3.3 Social Discrimination……..111

**4. Intensive Parenting for Children's Success……....…118**
4.1 Home-based Intensive Parenting on Children's Education.....120
4.1.1 Government: "Every School A Good School"; Parents: "But Not Equally Good"…….. 121
4.1.2 Everything is about Reading.....130
4.1.3 Private Tuition and Self-Tutoring.....135
4.1.4 Enrichment Programmes .....142
4.1.5 A Structured Time Schedule for Learning .....148
4.2 School-related Parenting Practices .....156
4.2.1 Respecting Teachers and Schools.....156
4.2.2 Supporting and Cooperating with Teachers and School.....157
4.2.3 Division of Responsibilities between School and Parents .....158
4.3 Intensive Parenting Practices in the Community.....160
4.3.1 Practices in the *Xinyimin* Community.....161
4.3.2 Practices in the Larger Community .....164

**5. Immigrant Selectivity, Transnationalism, and Community Formation ..…171**
5.1 Immigrant Selectivity.....171
5.1.1 Components of Immigrant Selectivity: Human, Economic, and Cultural Capital…… 173
5.1.1.1 Human Capital .....173
5.1.1.2 Economic Capital .....176
5.1.1.3 Cultural Capital .....180
5.2 Transnationalism.....182
5.2.1 Transnationalism and Chinese Immigrant Parenting .....182

5.2.2 Transferable Resources in A Transnational Habitus .....184
5.2.2.1 English and Chinese bilingual competency .....184
5.2.2.2 Transnational social resources .....186
5.2.2.3 Transnational habitus and citizenship .....191
5.3 *WeChat*-Based Formation of *Xinyimin* Community .....193
5.3.1 The New Chinese Immigrant (*Xinyimin*) Community .....194
5.3.2 How Does WeChat Enhance the Formation of Xinyimin Community?...195
5.3.3 Resource Mobilization through WeChat-based Community .....197
5.3.3.1 Obtaining and sharing information .....197
5.3.3.2 Building and expanding social networks .....199
5.3.3.3 Value formation and peer pressure .....201

**6. Conclusion .....205**
6.1 Research Findings .....205
6.2 Implications of The Study .....209
6.2.1 Theoretical Implications .....209
6.2.2 Practical Implications .....211
6.3 Limitations and Future Work .....214

**7. References .....216**

**8. Appendix .....275**

# Summary

This doctoral thesis aims to explain the social phenomenon of intensive parenting on children's education among the new Chinese immigrants in Singapore. It addresses three central research questions: (1) What challenges do new Chinese immigrants face in raising children in Singapore? (2) What parenting strategies have they adopted to promote their children's education? and (3) What enables them to practise intensive parenting for the expected children's success? I argue that new Chinese immigrants (also referred to as *xinyimin* in Mandarin) in Singapore face challenges for their childrearing goals, despite their advantaged socioeconomic status upon arrival and a relatively familiar cultural environment in the host society, and that they respond to these challenges by adopting the strategy of intensive parenting on their children's learning and education, which affirms their self-identity. I also argue that what enables *xinyimin* immigrant parents to do so does not come merely from Confucian culture, nor merely from parental human, financial, and social capital within individual families, but also from the specific ways of resource mobilization that augment their family's middle-class advantages.

Based on the data collected through in-depth interviews, online participant observations, and content analysis of government policies and media reports, I find that firstly, highly skilled new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, where three-quarters of the population is of Chinese descent, face the challenges of language and cultural barriers, institutional barriers (mainly the immigration policies and education system), and social discrimination. Secondly, I find that in response to these challenges, *xinyimin* practise intensive parenting at home by intervening in children's learning activities, from which

these parents see themselves as a success or failure from how well he or she can parent on children's education. They also keep cooperative relationship with school while actively seeking support and resources in the *xinyimin* community as well as in the larger society. Thirdly, I find that *xinyimin* parents manage to mobilize resources through three interactive processes. Hyper-selectivity provides *xinyimin* parents with human, economic, and cultural capital not only at the individual level but at the group level. Transnationalism provides *xinyimin* parents with access to portable and transferable resources, i.e., bilingual competency, transnational social resources, and transnational habitus and citizenship(s), in a transnational field. And the *WeChat*-based formation of the *xinyimin* community enables these *xinyimin* parents to obtain and share useful information, rebuild, and expand social networks, and reshape their valuation of education.

My study contributes to the scholarly literature on immigrant education by going beyond the debate between structuralists and culturalists. I highlight that the enabling factors, i.e., hyper-selectivity, transnationalism, and community formation are not individual features functioning in isolation, but rather, these structural factors are considered as interactive processes formed or accumulated by structural forces in the contexts of immigration and resettlement. While *xinyimin*'s intensive parenting is influenced by their Confucian cultural traits and behavioral patterns, which are often essentialized from the culturalist perspective, it should also be understood as the result of immigrants' proactive response to structural constraints and their agentic mobilization of available resources through multiple ways.

# Intensive Parenting for Success:
# A Study of New Chinese Immigrants in Singapore

## Chapter 1

## Introduction: Immigration, Education, and Parenting Practices

> *'The idea that children's outcomes are almost completely under parental control is a seductive one. It holds out a guarantee of future happiness and success if parents have the time, resources and knowledge to make the correct inputs.'*
>
> ---- *Wall, Glenda (2010, p.258)*

## 1.1 The State of the Problem

### 1.1.1 The Skilled Migration and Immigration for Children's Education

International human migration is a 'systemic factor' of globalization (Castles, 2002, p.1144), broadening and deepening interconnections within social landscapes in the world (Held et al., 1999, p. 2; Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Since the late 1980s, the rapid growth of skilled migration as an important strand of immigrants has invited academic inquiries and examinations from different disciplinary perspectives. Scott (2006) argues that skilled migration has not been limited to a small number of economic elites but a "normal" activity among the middle class. The skilled immigrants, otherwise referred to as 'global middle class(es)' (Ball & Nikita, 2014; Yemini & Maxwell, 2018) or 'globally mobile professional(s)' (Erkmen, 2015; Beaverstock, 2018), play important roles in sustaining and advancing the economic and cultural globalization through providing knowledge and expertise transnationally (Beaverstock, 2005; Favell, 2008).

The skilled and middle-class migrants often migrate with their children and for their education. Past research has found that the middle-class immigrants cited 'better education for children' as a key reason for international migration (Friesen, 2001). This has also been observed among the middle-class migrants from the East to the West and/or from the South to the North (Lee & Johnstone, 2017). Notably, international students are also an important component of the internationally mobile population, particularly the highly skilled migrants (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003). They have the potential to become the highly skilled and middle-class immigrants who highly value education themselves (Wu, 2014). Notably, starting as a student to pursue education overseas can be the first step of a chain of events, which include acquiring access and residency, obtaining middle class status and forming their families, and upward mobility in the host country (King & Raghuram, 2013). For skilled immigrants, migrating for (children's) education is a chance to make 'new beginnings' available to themselves (and their children) (Beck, 2006, p. 341). The decision to migrate has been closely related to investments in learning and human capital development through education (Watkins, Ho & Butler, 2017), as there is strong association between access to education and social mobility in both local and international settings (Holdsworth, 2009).

Sociologists investigated international migration for education and social mobility in the recent years (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Thiem, 2009; Waters, 2006). The results have revealed that for middle class, i.e., the more affluent families and parents in Asian countries, such as China, India, and South Korea, educational migration for children's occupational and economic prospects, in turn the upward social mobility is of paramount importance (Lam, Huang, Yeoh, & Celero, 2018; Tran 2016; Huang & Yeoh, 2011;

Chew, 2010; Thiem, 2008; Kim, 2010; Fifield, 2008; Lam, Yeoh & Law, 2002;). The middle-class parents consider educational achievements in developed countries as a pathway for their children and family's future status (Zhou, 1998; Waters, 2010), and take migration for education as accumulation of capital and an investment to transmit and sustain their status (Katz, 2008; Bourdieu, 1984; Orellana et al., 2001). Following Bourdieu's (1973) class reproduction theory, researchers have also argued that education is instrumental in reproducing inequalities and stratification systems not only across generations, but also across national borders (Willis, 1977; Faist, 2013; Bowles & Gintis, 2009; Katz, 2008).

In view of the phenomena, I enquire about "how do immigrants realize their social mobility goal." Through a sociological lens, I examine how the skilled and middle-class immigrant families and parents seek to sustain their cultural and economic advantages through migration and education, which has inadvertently reproduced social inequality and has implications for not only immigrants and their diasporic community, but also the larger host society.

### 1.1.2 New Chinese Immigration and Immigrant Education in Singapore

The population of Chinese diaspora, including both first-generation emigrants and their offspring, has reached more than 45 million (Goodkind, 2019). Overseas Chinese communities exist in different corners of the Earth (Cohen & Zhao, 1997, p. 85-94), and their population varies by continent, with Asia accounting for the lion's share (73.3%) and North America coming the second (Poston & Wong, 2016, p. 362). "New Chinese immigrants" is a term that refers to the Chinese who emigrated from Mainland China to other locations of the world after China's economic reforms in 1978. As a distinction

from the long-settled Chinese diaspora, 'new Chinese immigrants' are often referred to as *'xinyimin'*, literally 'new immigrants' (新移民) in Mandarin. The main Western countries receiving new Chinese immigrants are the United States, Canada, the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand (Poston & Wong, 2016, p. 369). The developed countries in Asia, such as Japan and Singapore, are also preferred destinations for new Chinese immigrants (Zhou, 2017).

Existing studies on migration and education of new Chinese immigrants have predominantly focused on those immigrants resettled in Western countries, which have mainly investigated two interrelated phenomena: one is the stern parenting, such as the tiger mother style of parenting (Chao, 1996; Cheah, Leung & Zhou, 2013), the other is the educational excellence of children of Chinese immigrants, such as the 'model minority' and 'Asian effect' in the United States and similar situations in other Western countries (Kao, 1995; Zhou, 1997; Lee & Zhou, 2015; Ang, 2014; Ho, 2015; Brooks, 2017). The related literature has challenged previous theories and shed light on the significance of the effects of immigrants' culture, ethnicity, and class. For example, studies of parenting of the middle-class whites used to view parenting practices of ethnic minority groups to be dysfunctional and inadequate (Coll & Pachter, 2002), failing to explain Chinese immigrants' high achievements measured by educational and economic outcomes (Zhou, 2015; Lee & Zhou, 2014). Meanwhile, the traditional assimilation theory assumes that ethnic minority immigrants need to fully adapt to the dominant social principles and ideologies in the host society (e.g., the United States), but it fails to account for the fact that immigrants can economically integrate with mainstream society

with deliberately preserving their ethnic cultural values, norms, and practices, in particular with the support of ethnic community (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997).

It is notable that there has been enduring scholarly debates between culturalists and structuralist on educational excellence of children of Asian immigrants in the Western societies (Kao & Thompson 2003; Sakamoto, Goyette & Kim 2009). The culturalists emphasize the effects of an ethnic group's traits, qualities, characteristics, or behavioral patterns (Fukuyama, 1993; Steinberg, 1996; Sowell, 1981). For example, scholars put accent on influence of Confucian culture, e.g., hard-working, value of education, filial piety, individuals' responsibility to glory the family (Chao, 1994; Kelley & Tseng, 1992; Chua, 2001), to illustrate the underlying reasons of outstanding educational outcomes of the second generation of Asian (Chinese) immigrants. However, taken cultural mores as static, culturalists often fail to incorporate broader ecological conditions, i.e., the social, economic, and cultural, into the explanations of 'Asian effect'. The structuralists, in contrast, attribute the educational excellence of Asian immigrants to structural factors, such as parental socioeconomic background and broader social structural factors (e.g., an ethnic group's position and resources in the host society) (Portes & Hao 2004; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Zhou, 1997). However, the structural arguments have limitations in explaining the reason why children of low-skilled Asian/Chinese immigrant in the United States have been able to achieve the educational and economic success across the *class* line. It, therefore, should be highlighted that the 'model minority' and 'Asian effect' explained either by cultural or by structural argument (Sakamoto et al., 2009), has created a binary trap for scholarly research, whereas the phenomena are more dynamic and multifaceted than culturalists and structuralists have

respectively suggested. Besides, intra-Asia migration has so far been marginal to the model minority debate, therefore requiring research attention. Rather than taking sides in the debate between culturalists and structuralists, this study examined both agency and structure of Chinese immigrants' intensive parenting practices and their children's education in Singapore.

Singapore has been a historically long-established Chinese migration destination with a large Chinese diaspora population. The city-state has also emerged as a destination for new Chinese immigrants since 1980s, especially after the two countries established diplomatic relationship in 1990, due to its cultural similarity, economic prosperity, liberal immigration policies, geographical affinity to China. Mainland Chinese in Singapore has amounted to 388,800, or 18% of the 2,160,000 foreigners as of 2019 (UN, 2019). Developed a bifurcated immigration system that admits and regulates both highly skilled and low-skilled workers since independence in 1965, Singapore favors those young and intelligent international students, well-educated and highly skilled professionals, and affluent entrepreneurs to apply for permanent residency and citizenship. And this group of immigrants tend to be hyper-selected (i.e., a dual positive selectivity, for which an immigrant group boasts not only a higher percentage of college graduates compared with non-migrants from their country of origin, but also a higher percentage of college graduates compared with that of the general population in the host country) (Lee & Zhou, 2015), which are with high economic, human, and cultural capital alongside high aspirations and versatile coping strategies in processes of migration, adaptation, and mobility.

As abovementioned, Asians (Chinese) tend to link education to social mobility and success of life. For example, a higher educational attainment is considered ‘open doors’ to ‘top jobs’ (Lee 2001), or the pathway to higher status and good life (Zhou, 2000). The Asian culture, in particular Confucianism, values education highly and considers it a primary means for upward social mobility. The belief in education for personal advancement, wealth, respect, and social mobility, has led Asian/Chinese immigrants in different destinations of the world to take on broader parenting responsibilities and contribute to their children’s educational achievements (Dyson, 2001; Li, 2001). For the highly skilled and middleclass new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, they aspire for their children to achieve highly through education (Huang & Yeoh, 2005). A common concern and priority of their life is their children’s education, which has propelled these parents to invest heavily and act competitively in it.

Research has evidenced that children’s education is often a primary goal for Asian parents’ transnational migration (Lam, Huang, Yeoh, & Celero, 2018). The parents desire to sustain their status, transmit various capital to their children, or to move into higher strata in the society through migration and education. However, there are also risks of downward social mobility for them due to migration-related disadvantages, such as loss of social support and status. The tension between immigrant optimism (i.e., widespread accessibility to good education and the mobility connected to higher social status) and immigrant pessimism (i.e., immigration-related structural barriers, perceived social discrimination, etc.,) helps to illuminate this contradiction. Therefore, these immigrants on the one hand need to overcome or mitigate the migration created disadvantages and avoid the risks of downward social mobility, and on the other hand pursue the

educational goals as a reliable way for their children to thrive, thus can accumulate, transmit, and produce various capital, which facilitate to secure the whole family's future social status (Chang, 1996; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Fernández-Reino, 2016). The migration-related opportunities and challenges, therefore, propel new Chinese immigrants to intensify the emphasis on education brought forward by Confucian culture (Lee & Zhou, 2015) and to mobilize their human, cultural, and economic capital.

As a result, parenting on children's education for mobility have been widely intensified by the skilled and middle class new Chinese immigrant in the Singapore context, where 'intensive parenting' featured child-centered, attention-, time-, and resource-intensive, financially expensive, and emotionally absorbing characteristics (Hays, 1996; Lareau, 1999) is prevalently adopted. In the meantime, it is noted that this intensive investment of various parental resources on children's education by *xinyimin* in Singapore, shows that these parents acquire their sense of self-identity from how well they can parent for their children's education. That is, *xinyimin* parents affirms themselves as a success or as a failure directly as a result of their children's outcome in education, therefore, has intensifies the education competition and taking it to an extremely higher standard in the Singapore context. However, it must be said that *xinyimin's* intensive parenting is influenced both by parenting paradigm in China, where intensive parenting is a dominant style, and by Singapore's highly competitive education system and social environment. That is, Singapore also has an Asian, Confucian cultural context, where the local core group, i.e., the dominant Chinese Singaporeans, shares the similar Confucian cultural values to education with new Chinese immigrants. The intensive parenting, therefore, is also culturally meaningful for native-born Singaporeans

and has been prevalently practiced (Göransson, 2015). This situation has projected profound implications on parents, children, families, and the larger society of Singapore. Admittedly, intensive parenting among new Chinese immigrants has been discussed in literature (Lin & Fu, 1990; Chao, 2000; Kim et al., 2013), but much remains unknown with regards to the processes and consequences of how these parents have made their best endeavors to realize their expectations; how their interactions with the host society as well as the home country have shaped their intensive parenting, and how the intensive parenting has affirmed these parents' self-identity. This study, therefore, aims to examine these unexplored questions and fill the research gap.

The uniqueness of studying new Chinese immigrants in the Singapore context would be that Singapore is a favorable migration destination for new Chinese immigrants, due to its economic development, cultural similarity and geographic convenience to mainland China, and the preferential immigration policy for skilled immigrants (Zhou, 2017). Firstly, Singapore features the influence of Confucian culture, particularly about education, which provides an ideal context to study both the cultural and structural factors. New Chinese immigrants arguably share similar Confucian culture with the local core group. However, the co-ethnicity, or Chineseness, both facilitates *xinyimins'* adaptation and intensifies the migration related structural constraints and co-ethnic tensions. Secondly, the new Chinese immigrant in the Singapore context is an ideal case to study the issue of immigrant education. The Singapore state highly values education, links economic development to education, and propagates the ideology of meritocracy, which resonates with middleclass Chinese immigrant parents' expectation: they not only seize the opportunities offered by the system, but also are willing to invest their best

efforts and resources in children's education. The city-state features a highly competitive education system, a prevalent and well-established shadow education system (Bray, 1999), and a high-level social anxiety with education, where the phenomenon of 'education fever' is typical. Thirdly, the geographic affinity of Singapore to mainland China and China's economic development have drawn the two countries economically closer, which profoundly impact new Chinese immigrants' migration and remigration. For example, the fast-developing Chinese economy provides *xinyimin* with substantial transnational opportunities and resources in social, cultural, and economic domains, which equip *xinyimin* with a higher level of flexibility and mobility.

### 1.1.3 Aim of the Study and Central Research Questions

This doctoral thesis, therefore, zooms in on new Chinese immigrants' parenting on their children's education for mobility and success in the Singapore context. New Chinese immigrants in Singapore mostly are of middle-class status and they are mostly the immigration policies selected highly skilled immigrants, international students turned migrants, entrepreneurs, as well as the earlier arrived and successfully naturalized (from late 1980s to 2000s). New Chinese immigrants are more educated (with at least a 4-year university degree) and have brought with them to or built in Singapore their human, economic, and cultural capital (Mizrachi, Maxwell & Yemini, 2020). Highly valuing education and holding high educational expectations, these parents in the Singapore context tend to link their children's educational achievement to life success and upward social mobility.

In this study, I examine new Chinese immigrant's parenting in the arguably similar cultural and educational contexts of Singapore to show how these Chinese

immigrants practise parenting on their children's education for the parents' expected success and mobility. To this end, I address the following three central research questions:

1) What challenges do new Chinese immigrant parents face in raising children in Singapore?
2) What parenting strategies have they adopted to promote their children's education?
3) What enables them to practise intensive parenting for success?

In addressing these central research questions, I will base my study on intra-Asia migration, a group of new Chinese immigrants in Asian cultural context. I will first examine the challenges that the context and structural factors of the Singapore society have created for new Chinese immigrant parents, which have propelled them to conduct certain type of parenting. Then, I will explore the type of parenting strategies and practices that *xinyimin* parents adopt to promote children's education in Singapore. Thirdly, I will examine the process of resource mobilization supporting this type of parenting. Finally, I will conclude by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

## 1.2 Literature Review: Immigration and Education

The body of literature examining immigrants, their social and economic outcomes, and the culture value and role of education, is firmly rooted in both the migration and education literatures.

### 1.2.1 Cultural Values of Chinese Parenting on Education

Reviews of parental beliefs have shown that cultural groups vary in their views and understandings of parent's role and responsibilities (Okagaki & Bingham, 2005). For (immigrant) Chinese, the Confucian philosophy plays an essential role in formulating and

influencing their parenting. Research has shown that Chinese immigrant mostly hold strong cultural identification with that of the place of origin and retain their own cultural way of life (Bond & Hwang, 1986). First, the Confucian philosophical thoughts influence Chinese people to emphasize on education and pursue success in education (Chan, 1999; Lee, 1996; Zhou & Li, 2003). Research has found that the Chinese culturally signify education as the prime route to achieve a good life (Chao, 1994; Ochocka & Janzen, 2008). Chinese immigrant parents across classes tend to invest more (money and time) for their children to accomplish academically. They believe that educational achievement can reward the children with higher economic returns and upward mobility (Saran, 2015; Markose, 2007). Second, the cross-culture evidence has suggested that Chinese parents (of various SESs) commonly hold high educational expectations on their children (Goodnow, 2002). Migration literature also confirms that the high parental expectation on education has driven children of immigrant families to be outstanding in school (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Saran, 2015). Third, Confucian philosophy appraises one's proactive efforts and consistent practices (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). The Chinese deliberate that aspirations, perseverance, and hard work are the root cause of learning outcomes. For example, traditional Chinese proverbs have consistently accentuated the value of efforts. Putting such an emphasis on efforts in education is also the culturally unique characteristic of Chinese immigrants (Wu, 2008; Phillipson, 2006).

Research has suggested that the relatively stable cultural features of certain ethnic groups, in the case of this study, the Chinese immigrant, might be in tension with, stretched, or enhanced by emerging goals and ongoing changes of the receiving context(s) and individual life over time, which will lead individuals and groups to adjust their views,

strategies, and daily practices to respond to the challenges in the place of destination (Cheah *et al.*, 2013; Guo, 2013). In the Singapore context, new Chinese immigrants' original cultural values on education can be enhanced in parenting to cope with the migration created challenges and to realize their mobility goals. Meanwhile, researchers have suggested that Chinese are culturally highly homogenous (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004). In the Singapore context, Chinese immigrants arguably share the similar Confucian values with the local born Chinese Singaporeans. Thus, the Confucian cultural values on education would not be sufficient to explain why new Chinese immigrants adopt certain type of parenting, as these values and norms are also culturally meaningful and shared by Singapore's core group, i.e., the local-born Chinese Singaporeans.

### 1.2.2 Status Attainment and Education

#### 1.2.2.1 The classical Wisconsin status attainment model

Sociological literatures have documented for decades that parents' class status and human capital can be transmitted across generations (Behrman & Taubman, 1985, Björklund & Jäntti, 1997, Blanden & Gregg, 2004). The classical Wisconsin status attainment model contends that parental socioeconomic status (SES) is the most significant predictor that affects their children's educational achievements (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Haller & Portes, 1973; Kao, 1995; Haller, Portes & Lynch, 2011). It evidenced that the parents' status attainment, e.g., educational attainment, occupational attainment, family income, etc., would enable their children to achieve in life a combination of their parents' status with one's own efforts and aptitudes. The research of the Wisconsin school demonstrated a clear correlation between children's educational attainment and parental SES (Sewell & Hauser, 1975; Blau & Duncan, 1967). The early

status attainment model stresses the influence of family and parents' income and education on children's educational outcomes (Haller & Portes, 1973), while the later version model has added the social psychological variables, such as parents' educational aspirations and expectations, as potential mechanism to capture the effect of parental socioeconomic characteristics (SES) (Seginer, 1983). For example, parental encouragement can function as a mediator of the deep-rooted association between children's academic performance and the SES of their family and parents (e.g., Sewell & Hauser, 1980; Seginer, 1983).

As for immigrant children's educational outcomes, research has also evidenced that parental SES profoundly influences their educational achievement regardless of the effect of immigrant status. Research has shown that the low SES of an immigrant family and the parents is linked to the children's weak performance in school (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), while a middle or high socioeconomic status of an immigrant family will equip their children with the access to high-achieving schools, private tutoring, various education-related resources, etc., will positively boost the children's educational achievements (Krashen, 1996). Some empirical research of immigrant children has shown that parental SES is positively associated with parents and children's aspirations and educational expectations (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998), and their actual performance from middle school to college (Massey et al., 2003; Spenner & Featherman, 1978; Wigfield & Asher, 1984).

In sum, parents' status attainment (i.e., SES) significantly influences children's educational outcomes, a conclusion that also applies to immigrant parents and their children. The SES of immigrant parents predicts educational attainment of their children,

which in turn influences the adaptation and integration of the immigrant family in the host society. For this study, the status attainment model provides a theoretical perspective to inform that structural factors (i.e., parental SES) at individual level play a powerful role in mediating children and the family's social mobility through education.

#### 1.2.2.2 Other studies on education as a key to immigrant integration and social mobility

Education is often the goal of migration (Friesen, 2001; Tran 2016) and the pathway for social mobility (Breen, 2019). Immigrants pursue international education, often in Western countries, as they believe that the Western educational credentials would provide valuable cultural capital and increase their returns locally and internationally (Waters, 2006). Migration for children's education has been an important driver of contemporary migration (Brooks & Waters, 2011, p.1-22). Researchers have shown that to provide a good education to children incentivizes immigrant parents' intergenerational desire to migrate and helps to transmit their advantaged class status and various capital to their children in the destination country (Li, 2001; Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p.32). Much research has shown that migration for education were enacted by the family and parents for 'accumulation in children' (Katz, 2008), as noted earlier. It is well-known that the educational expectations and aspirations of immigrant parents, especially those of the middle class, are exceptionally high (Salikutluk, 2016; Kao & Tienda, 1995), which motivates their migration (Ryan & Sales, 2013). Immigrant parents from China and India, for example, have demonstrated higher educational expectations and aspirations than other ethnic groups (Aris, 2017; Watkins & Butler, 2017).

Furthermore, education attainment is closely related to immigrant integration and social mobility (Torche, 2011; Breen, 2019). Migration literature considers educational attainment as an indicator of integration, which manifests immigrant groups' pace and extent of assimilation as well as the cross-generation social mobility in the destination society (Waters & Jiménez, 2005; Alba & Nee, 2003). The importance of education in providing an individual with professional success and higher social status has long been widely recognized (Fuligni, 1997; Li, 2004; Song & Glick, 2004). Both in the West and in the East, education is a key determinant, a high-stakes process, and a means to future economic independence and success in life (Suárez-Orozco, et al, 2001; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). It is not only that education plays a critical role in reproducing intergenerational, social, and economic statuses (Bourdieu, 1984; Willis, 1977), education is also a way for children of immigrant to outperform their native-born peers despite disadvantaged backgrounds, which have been affirmed by studies in both the Western destinations and Singapore (Tran, 2018; Buriel, 2012; Cheng, 2017).

Migration and education are interrelated by numerous nexus at both micro and macro levels. Hence, a study integrating the micro-level culture and macro-level structure perspectives would facilitate the portrait of a more completed picture for understanding the related social phenomenon (Huang & Yeoh, 2005). The cultural perspective investigates education related migration through individual and familial expectations and motivations, which are shaped by values, norms, and customs (Ong, 1998; Waters, 2002, 2003). Studies on Asian Americans have evidenced strong associations between children's academic achievements and their parents' high educational expectations (Li, 2001; Chao & Tseng, 2002). With regards to the role of culture, some foreign-born

parents highly stressed the importance of doing well in school, and they attempted to inculcate such a value and attitude in their children (Yamamoto & Holloway, 2010).

By contrast, the structural perspective pays attention to social policies and institutions in both the home and host country. As far as the structure is concerned, governments around the world have been playing important roles in forming the immigrant population through policies, such as setting visa requirements and drawing foreign investment (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Skrentny et al., 2007). This has also been a reference point for this study. Research has suggested that government policies of some Western immigrant destinations have led to the formation of inextricable social phenomena which includes international education, transnational investment, housing market boom, and the requirement for citizenship (Robertson & Rogers, 2017). Meanwhile, many affluent investors and middle-class immigrants were attracted towards host countries during this process (Rogers, Lee & Yan, 2015, p. 731), which is a phenomenon that has also been observed in Singapore's context.

In this study, I will pay attention not only to new Chinese immigrant's original culture (valuing education and high educational expectations, etc.,), which has been enhanced in Singapore's structural context, but also the social and institutional environments of both home and host countries, zooming in on pertinent structural factors that have created challenges and barriers for new Chinese immigrants' adaptation in the Singaporean society.

### 1.2.3 Segmented Assimilation and Immigrant Selectivity

#### 1.2.3.1 The importance of contexts of exit and reception

The segmented assimilation theory argues that besides a unilateral straight-line assimilation into the dominant mainstream of the host society, i.e., the upward assimilation proposed by the classic assimilation theory, immigrants also adapt to the receiving society in the direction of 'selective' and 'downward' assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). The 'selective' assimilation means that immigrants deliberately preserve their ethnic values and culture when achieving economic integration and moving upward in the social ladder of the host society. The 'downward' assimilation means assimilating into a lower social class in the host society when immigrants fail to overcome the structural barriers, such as instances where children failed in education (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 51; Gans, 1992; Portes & Zhou, 1993).

A distinct feature of the segmented assimilation theory is that it incorporates both the context of exit and reception into analysis of the contradictory acculturation outcomes of children of immigrants (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997). Rumbaut (1994) has also argued that the divergent modes of incorporation, which include full assimilation, upward mobility with heightened ethnic awareness, and downward mobility and assimilation, are caused by the changes of context of exit and context of reception. This is a result of immigrants, who differ significantly in age, sex, national and class origins, language skills, forms of family, etc., embedding themselves in different structural and historical contexts (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001). Furthermore, changing institutional environments of both countries of exit and reception have impacts on the adaptation, assimilation, and mobility of immigrants (Zhou & Xiong, 2005), directing researchers to examine the contexts of home and host countries before investigating an immigrant's

assimilation and mobility. For example, the conducive immigration law and civil rights legislation in the United States since 1965 have created a favorable institutional environment for motivated immigrants and made the assimilation of these newcomers and their children less difficult as compared to that of their predecessors, despite the economic restructuring and pervasive racial discrimination (Alba & Nee, 2003).

Furthermore, the historical, sociocultural, and institutional contexts that immigrants originated from help to inform us of the immigrants' socioeconomic characteristics, educational attainment, motivations, a familial and financial well-being before and after migration, etc., which can create advantages and disadvantages for immigrants and their families' life in the host country. Research has suggested that socioeconomically advantaged immigrants, who immigrated from developing countries to developed countries, can achieve assimilation and upward social mobility relatively easily with their pre-migration educational and occupational attainments (Lee & Zhou, 2015; Ichou, 2014; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2017). Therefore, I am highlighting that the context of exit and context of reception are important elements in investigating immigrants and their family's adaptation and mobility in the destination country through education.

With the recognition of the importance of contexts of exit and reception, I am borrowing the segmented assimilation theory to explain that new Chinese immigrants enhance their cultural values and norms originated from China to conduct intensive parenting on their children's education, which helps them to achieve educational excellence and upward mobility, heightens their foreign "others" identity (though they

are co-ethnic Chinese to local Chinese Singaporeans), and might have prevented immigrant integration.

#### 1.2.3.2 Immigrant selectivity and ethnic capital

Scholarly debates between culturalists and structuralists regarding the root causes of the educational excellence of children of Asian immigrants in the United States has been enduring (e.g., Kao & Thompson, 2003; Sakamoto, Goyette & Kim, 2009). Culturalists emphasized on the impact of a group's characteristics, traits, qualities, or behavioral patterns (Fukuyama, 1993; Steinberg, 1996; Sowell, 1981) While it is the most popular interpretation of the phenomenon, it does not address several key themes, including historical contexts, generations, and class reproduction. In other words, the culture essentialists have overlooked the deep structural roots and broader ecological conditions of Asian American's excellent academic outcomes. By contrast, the structuralists stress on the socioeconomic characteristics (SESs) or social class status within and beyond the family, including a group's position in a society's status hierarchy (Portes & Hao, 2004; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Hsin & Xie, 2014; Zhou & Lee, 2014). Empirical studies have evidenced that structural factors, such as an immigrant's social class background, migration selectivity (i.e., nature or characteristics of immigrants that make them differ from their non-immigrant compatriots), the ethnic economy, ethnic capital (e.g., a quality ethnic environment, in which parents make inputs and investments, can increase skills and human capital of next generation) (Borjas, 1992), and immigrant's perception of the opportunity structure, play significant roles in supporting children of Asian (Chinese) immigrants to achieve educational excellence (Zhou, 2015; Zhou & Bankston, 1994; Zhou & Kim, 2006).

Confirming culture's significant role, Zhou and her colleagues have evidenced the persistent effects of structural factors, namely immigrant selectivity and ethnic capital on academic advantages of children of Asian immigrants (Zhou & Kim, 2006; Zhou & Lee, 2014; Chand & Ghorbani, 2011; Jang et al., 2015), which are particularly relevant factors to my study. Immigrant selectivity refers to the characteristics in which immigrants differ from their nonimmigrant peers (Gans, 2000). Debates on the nature of immigrant selectivity or what characterize immigrants have been persistent as indicators like age, gender, health, education, occupation, income, skills, motivation, etc., can all be measurements of immigrant selectivity (Borjas, 1990; Jasso & Rosenzweig, 1990; Chiswick, 2000). According to Feliciano (2005), the notion of immigrant selectivity refers to an immigrant's higher educational attainment in comparison with their homestayers in the sending country, which has been an influential view in migration studies. In recent decades, positive immigrant selectivity has featured the contemporary immigration to the main destination countries, such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, etc., (Feliciano, 2005a, 2005b; Zhou & Lee, 2017; Hatton, 2005; Jass & Massey, 2004; Hartwich, 2011; Richardson & Lester, 2004). Positive immigrant selectivity by education and skills is primarily desired by immigration policies in these countries (Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Richardson & Lester, 2004; Hartwich, 2011; Facchini & Lodigiani, 2014).

Based on the positive immigrant selectivity, Lee and Zhou (2015) developed the term "hyper-selectivity" to capture its effects on the educational excellence of children of Asian (Chinese) immigrants in the U.S. The hyper-selectivity is argued to be a key source of the Asians' educational and economic advantages, which is both an individual-level

and a group-level socioeconomic characteristic. At the group level, immigrant selectivity is consequential to the formation of the immigrant groups' ethnic capital (Zhou, 2008). Researchers suggest that for ethnic immigrant communities, members' high levels of human capital can create various forms of resources or be converted into ethnic capital, which benefits the immigrants' upward mobility (Zhou & Lee, 2017). Furthermore, the hyper-selectivity also has cultural, institutional, social, and psychological implications for the second generation and contributes to the cognitive construction of "Asian" as a racial group (Watkins, Ho & Butler, 2017).

As noted earlier, ethnic capital is conceptualized to be a quality ethnic environment for parental inputs and investments in children's human capital accumulation (Borjas, 1992). It is an interactive process of various capitals (i.e., the human, financial, cultural, and social capital) within the ethnic community (Zhou & Lin, 2005). Ethnic capital is an immigrant advantage that explains ethnic immigrant's economic and educational outcomes (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008). Ethnic capital involves factors, such as, community ambitions, role models, and peer effects, which constitute the closest social environment and have a strong impact on immigrants and their children's adaptation, education, work, and social mobility (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Ethnic capital includes not only intangible values, incentives, and social networks, but also tangible institutions, such as tuition centers, prep schools and Chinese schools within and beyond the Chinese ethnic community through ethnic entrepreneurship (Zhou, 2008). Researcher has long observed the effects of ethnic capital on immigrant children's educational achievements (Borjas, 1992, 1995). It is stressed that resources within the ethnic community affect explicitly the immigrants' eudcaitonal and

occupational opportunities (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). More specifically, it shows that cultural practices of the ethnic middle- and upper-class, i.e., their habitus, lifestyle, and respectable 'past', help to explain ethnic immigrant children's extraordinary educational attainments (Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008). The dense social networks within the ethnic community, i.e., social capital, reinforce immigrant parents' cultural value on education and boost children's educational achievements (Zhou & Bankston, 1994; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998).

*Xinyimin* in Singapore is a group of ethnic Chinese immigrants, which features positive immigrant selectivity, i.e., the policy required education, skills, and wealth background. A high-level human capital has enabled the *xinyimin* community to possess rich ethnic capital, i.e., economic, cultural, and intra-community social capital, which can play significant roles in supporting *xinyimin* parents to promote their children's education for upward social mobility in the host society. Referring to theoretical perspectives of immigrant selectivity and ethnic capital, I will examine the process of resource mobilization by *xinyimin* in support of their intensive parenting practices on children's education in my study.

### 1.2.4 The Role of Family in Children's Education

#### 1.2.4.1 Lareau's conception of class-based parenting: concerted cultivation vs. accomplishment of natural growth

The cultural capital theories have suggested that children acquire different cultural norms, intellectual skills, knowledge, and dispositions from parents and adults with different socioeconomic characteristics or class statuses (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p.114; Bourdieu, 1973; Sullivan, 2001). Extending Bourdieu's cultural reproduction work,

scholars developed theories to explore how parents' class-related cultural and emotional practices shape their children's outcomes (Lareau, 2003, 2006; Reay, 1998, 2005; Gillies, 2006; Vincent & Ball, 2007). Lareau's (2002, 2003) theory of intergenerational transmission suggests that the middle-class and working-class parents hold fundamentally different "cultural logics" in parenting and childrearing, i.e., the concerted cultivation and the accomplishment of natural growth, which lead to divergent outcomes of children's education (Lareau, 2003, 2011; Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Reardon, 2011). Specifically, Lareau found that middle class parents commonly hold the cultural logic of "concerted cultivation", from which they resourcefully plan and raise children as a 'social engineering' project (Vincent & Ball, 2007; Irwin & Elley, 2011; Carolan & Wasserman, 2015). They emphasize on their children's participation and practices in organized activities [1], and stress to develop children's social skills and cognitive abilities (Lareau, 2003; Vincent & Ball, 2007; Reay, 1998). For example, parents inspire and guide children to express their thoughts and feelings, and positively respond to children's misbehavior with discussions and explanations (Roksa & Potter, 2011; Cheadle & Jacob, 2008). In addition, parents value their children's sense and respect their rights within institutional settings, therefore, they urge institutions to recognize their children's individual demands (Lareau, 2003). The concerted cultivation of middle-class parents is not only a cultural logic, but a strategy and practice to improve their children's capabilities and skills, which is the accumulation and transmission of cultural and human capital (Lareau, 2003; Vincent & Ball, 2007). In stark contrast, the poor and working-class parents typically hold the logic of 'accomplishment of natural growth', which does

[1] Organized activities refer to activities that are characterised by structure, adult-supervision and an emphasis on skill-building (e.g., Eccles and Goodman, 2002), for example, the extracurricular activities, after-school programs, and youth organizations, etc.

not require much parental time and investment in developing their children's social and cognitive capabilities and vision for life, resulting in different outcomes for their children in education and development (Lareau, 2003, 2011; Gillies, 2007).

In sum, Lareau (2003)'s class-based conception of concerted cultivation moves beyond Bourdieu's cultural capital and points out that the middle- and upper-class parents and families' accumulation of cultural resources can be transmitted to their children and converted into their children's attitudes, knowledge, skills, and habits, enabling children to get rewards from institutions, such as schools (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008). In concerted cultivation, the middle- and upper-class parents' social, psychological, and cultural capitals enable their children to achieve educational success and obtain upward social mobility, whereas in the accomplishment of natural growth, parents' working-class position and its related socialization practices hold back their children's educational achievements, which translates into unequal outcomes for their children.

#### 1.2.4.2 Other studies on the role of family

Research has shown that the role of family involvement is of importance to children's education (Finn, 1998). It is necessary to understand and examine the family's role in the study of educational achievements of Asian immigrant students (Zhang & Carrasquillo, 1995). Literature has documented that the family's background, including family structure, composition, socioeconomic status, tastes, and world views, significantly affects the children's home environment, quality of childcare, learning opportunities and wellbeing (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; McLoyd, 1998; Evans, 2004; Lareau, 2003). It shows that the families' different levels of socioeconomic resources produce the disparity of the children's educational

achievements (Magnuson & Duncan, 2006). A family's socioeconomic status (SES) (mainly family structure, education, income, conditions of neighborhood, etc.) determinates the children's access to social and economic resources, which is linked to varied social positionings, prestige, privileges, etc., (Hauser & Warren, 1997). A family's SES is consistent with the parents' SES in determining their children's education achievements as noted in the status attainment theory (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Ma, 2009). Similarly, a family's household income decides the family's living conditions, which includes the quality of goods and services, such as nutrition and health, learning environment, neighborhoods, opportunity in good school and college, etc., (Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1997; Guo & Harris, 2000; Evans, 2004; Magnuson & Duncan, 2002; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Similar to the effects of income and education, research also suggests that family structure related differences in children's education outcomes are large. For example, intact families provide various resources, especially economic and psychological ones, to develop their children's cognitive, social, and educational competencies (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). On the other hand, children from single-parent family have relatively lower levels of social and educational performance (Ginther & Pollak, 2004). Based on the above literature, I will examine new Chinese immigrants' socioeconomic characteristics and their family formation, including parental education, occupation, family structure, composition, family values and beliefs, etc., and I will argue that these factors significantly influence parenting on children's education and its outcomes.

### 1.2.5 Parenting on Children's Education in the West and East

Parenting is a key determinant of a child's educational, social, and psychological outcomes, especially in early childhood (Freeman, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993; Rubin & Chung, 2006). Parents play an essential role in fostering children's educational development (Feldman, 1999; Nugent, 2005). A focus of parenting on children's education in the migration context helps manifest how families and parents accumulate capital in children and pursuit upward social mobility (Liu-Farrer, 2016; Bodycott & Lai, 2012). Research shows that the middle class immigrants who raise their children out of their native homeland tend to adopt intensive parenting as a cultural norm and practice; these parents are determined to capitalize with their best resources in their children's education for success (Onishi, 2008; Huang & Yeoh, 2005).

The cultural norms about good parenting changes over time and transforms parenting practices accordingly (Bianchi et al., 2006; Zelizer, 1981). The demographic and economic changes, such as decreasing family sizes and increasing investments (e.g., parental attention, time, material resources) in childhood education, have led parents to involve themselves more in their children's education than before (Stearns, 2006; Le Vine, 2003; Koops, 2003). Amongst a variety of parenting practices, the intensive parenting, characterized by *child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive,* has been prevalent since the 1990s (Hays, 1996), has been accepted by parents to be a dominant model for child-nurturing (Ishizuka, 2019).

#### 1.2.5.1 Intensive parenting in the Anglo-sphere

The English literature has stressed that children are vulnerable as well as moldable, and that families and parents are critical participants of children's early childhood experiences. Parenting studies in Western countries since the 1950s have

shifted their focus from viewing parents as playing an ascriptive role into them being an informed and pre-active actor, underlining that parents should take care of children properly (Furedi, 2008; Nelson & Nelson, 2010). In the 1970s, "parent" as a verb has gained widespread attention in both academic and nonacademic discussions. A movement aimed at protecting children from physical harm in the 1980s has made popular the term "helicopter parenting," a parenting style in which parents supervise every aspect of their children's life.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, "intensive mothering" was first introduced, which is defined to be *"child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, and financially expensive"* (Hays, 1996). Academics also call it hyper-parenting (Hoffman, 2010), which is an emotion and time demanding social engineering project (Lee et al., 2010, p. 290), requiring parents to afford a higher standard and wider scope parental responsibilities. Intensive parenting is a parenting culture that inherently links to the "concerted cultivation" as both intensive parenting and concerted cultivation emphasize on parental investment of time, and intellectual, emotional, and financial resources in developing children as a project (Lareau, 2003; Vincent & Ball, 2007). Research has also noted that intensive parenting agrees with Baumlind's authoritative parenting style (Stone, 2007).[2] However, the former is a parenting ideology, paradigm and culture that links to actualized practices in a specific circumstance for training children to have certain behaviors and outcomes, while the latter is a parenting style with greater emphasis on parental philosophy and attitudes for childrearing (Xu, 2007). A longitudinal study that

[2] Baumlind's systematically classified parenting typology model, namely, the authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved parenting, are the most influential conceptual model that Western parenting study. Authoritative parenting features responsiveness and demandingness from authoritative parents to the child's needs.

lasts from 1960s to late 1990s found that both mothers' and fathers' time invested in childrearing and their children's activities increased substantially (Sayer, Bianchi& Robinson, 2004). With investing more attention and time on their children, those more educated parents tend to plan and spend time differently in comparison to their less educated peers (England & Srivastava, 2013; Kalil, Ryan & Corey, 2012). Popular accounts and scholarly discussions both have noted that this cultural shift to intensive parenting has led to a rising level of parental input in childrearing, particularly in the aspects of childhood learning and education (Hays, 1996; Lareau, 2003).

A review of literature shows that 'intensive parenting' was initially a middle- and upper-class Western culture, but the belief in intensive parenting has penetrated various social strata (Nelson, 2010; Senior, 2014). Not all parents are able to achieve this parenting approach, but a critical mass of families follows and advocates it, and the intensive parenting has increasingly been accepted as a social norm (Calarco, 2014; Weininger, Lareau, & Conley, 2015). As a result, parents of both lower and upper social classes hold similar aspirations to nurture and develop children's aptitudes (Chin & Phillips, 2004). Meanwhile, parents are expected by society to practise intensive parenting. The rise of parental investments shows that parenting has become much more demanding than it used to be, and children have a more structured daily schedule today than previous generations (Sayer, Bianchi& Robinson, 2004).

#### 1.2.5.2 Intensive parenting on education in Asia

Intensive parenting is also prevalent in Asian countries, such as China and Korea (Waters, 2015). Asian countries are of diverse and distinct cultures. In East Asia and parts of Southeast Asia, Confucian culture is vital to the understanding of Asian parenting

(Chao & Tseng, 2002). With the historically long-lasting influence of Confucian culture in Asia, a central theme of Asian parenting is the focus on children's educational achievement (Chao, 1996, 2000). Parental fixation on their children's educational achievements in Asian societies is rather clear. A fair amount of parental attention has been paid to their children's academic achievements, which has been studied from different perspectives, such as parents' educational expectations, parental involvement, and parental beliefs (e.g., philosophies about learning and development). Asian parents take their children's schooling and education as their primary parental responsibility (Chao, 1999). On many occasions, parental efficacy, i.e., the effectiveness that parent believes in him/herself as a parent, is evaluated by their children's school performance and learning outcomes (Chao, 1995), which coincides with Hays' (1996) insight that parents see their children's success as an affirmation of their own self through intensive parenting.

Intensive parenting on education in Asia is driven by unique cultural beliefs and practices. Firstly, 'cultivation' perspective is popular in Asian countries (Chen, 1996; Li, 1997). Confucian culture believes that children should be cultivated as plants over a long period of time and there are timings for their development and learning. For example, children below six years old are treated more gently by Chinese. The Confucian philosophies on learning and education emphasize that humans are malleable and can be developed (Li, 1997). Education and cultivation of individuals can be accomplished through schooling, which is regarded as the foremost pathway for character building, self-improvement, and social mobility, and the importance of success in school is reiterated (Hess et al., 1987). Secondly, Asian parents tend to expect for children's higher

educational attainment (Goodnow, 2013). They shared higher educational expectations in comparison to immigrants from other national and cultural origins (Goyette & Xie, 1999) and believe that their children can be more accomplished if they put in more effort (Chao, 1996; Hao & Bonsted-Bruns, 1998; Kao, 1995). Thirdly, Asian parents are willing to provide support to children's learning and schooling (Chao, 1996; Yao, 1985). They participate actively in children's home-based learning, send children to private tuitions and various interest classes, and create an enriching environment for them (Schneider & Lee, 1990; Keith et al., 1993).

#### 1.2.5.3 Convergence of intensive parenting in the East and West

Globalization has influenced and reshaped the cultural values and norms of parenting in both the West and East, where a child-centered, time- and investment-intensive and demanding parenting style has been prevalent (Chen, February 2017). [3] Growing evidence has shown that Western parents are increasingly concerned about children's academic achievements (Craig, Powell & Smyth, 2014). They also hold higher educational expectations and supervise children's activities more attentively than previous generations (Hoffman, 2010). An example is the style of "Tiger Mother" (Chua, 2011), which is popularized by an ethnic Chinese in the United States and has since attracted media and academic attention within the Western society (Guo, 2013; Juang, Qin & Park, 2013).

Industrialization and Westernization of the world have profoundly impacted on cultures in Asia and in other regions, where parents incline to adopt Western values and norms for child-nurturing (Chen, Rubin & Sun, 1992). For example, although Chinese

[3] Chen Xinyin, *Child and Family Blog*. https://www.childandfamilyblog.com/child-development/east-west-parenting/ Accessed on 21 November 2020.

parents still highly emphasized on children's academic performance, they were reported to be less authoritarian. Instead, they are more responsive to the emotional needs of their children and encourage greater autonomy and independence in them (Cheah, Leung & Zhou, 2013). In the Asian cultural context, the dominant form of parenting has converged to the Western middle class's intensive parenting, which underscores future success through controlling and planning various aspects of child's life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) and employing the approach of 'concerted cultivation' for 'making the child' (Vincent & Ball, 2007).

For the new Chinese immigrants, they are mostly of the middle-class status and believe in 'nurture over nature', who desire to make the right choices and decisions for children's future through intensive parenting. Notably, intensive parenting increases parental responsibility on childrearing and brings about pressures for parents (Henwood *et al.*, 2010). It believes in 'making' the child or shaping children's life through planning of many aspects of children's life (Wall, 2010; Fox, 2009; Vincent & Ball, 2007). Intensive parenting prominently stresses the future (rather than now and then) happiness (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), ideologically directing parents to aspire highly for their children's outcomes and success (Bowcock, 2007). However, parents need to take ultimate responsibilities when their autonomous choices do not ensure optimal outcomes for their children (Hays, 1996; Phoenix, 2004), which has contributed to how parents see their children's success as an affirmation of their own identity (Hays, 1996).

Immigrant parents' aspirations, anxieties and determinism on children's educational outcomes are compounded by their immigration status, and have reflected in their intensive parenting (Fox, 2009; Vincent & Ball, 2007). In addition, it is not only

demanding of high financial and social resources (Lareau, 2002; Pitt, 2002; Nadesan, 2002; Fox, 2006) and is hyper-materialism (Hays, 1996), but also intensifying the competition in the larger society. Current research has highlighted the negative and problematic side of intensive parenting culture, for example, the production of one generation of 'paranoid parents' (Furedi, 2001).

To sum up, the review of literature shows that the migration for education is a strategy of the contemporary middle-class immigrants for their children and families' mobility (Waters, 2005). Education plays a pivotal role, as both an end and a means, in migration and mobility. The intersection of migration and education facilitates immigrants to practise mobility. In the case of this study, the practice of intensive parenting, featured child-centered, labor intensive, emotionally absorbing, and financially expensive characteristics, is inherently consistent with Lareau (2003)'s class-based concerted cultivation, which emphasizes on parents and family's role in developing children as a social engineering project, in turn to promote children's education and life success. Meanwhile, this intensive parenting is also a process that defines immigrant parent's own identity, where immigrant parent affirms their own self as a success or a failure through their children's outcomes.

To study the social issue of migration and education, I found that, first, research has focused on immigrant's cultural value, norms, and emphasis on education achievement as a driving force for the success (e.g., Hsin & Xie, 2014). Second, the literature has suggested that structural factors, such as the level of incorporation (e.g., the selective assimilation), the context of exit and reception, family, and ethnic community, link to immigrants' integration and social mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Zhou &

Bankston, 1998). Yet, past scholarly attention has mainly focused on Asian immigrants, their education, and parenting in Western countries, such as the United States, Canada, UK, Australia, and New Zealand (Chao, 1996； Deepak, 2005; Chiang, 2008; Ho & Bedford, 2008; Wu, 2009; Waters, 2010; Guo, 2013; Lan, 2018). Research on immigrant parenting and how immigrants have practised mobility through education, in particular in the Asian context is inadequate (Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Guo, 2014).

Based on literature review, this study focuses on new Chinese immigrants' intensive parenting for their expected children's success and mobility in the Singapore context. New Chinese immigrants in this study, shaped by the receiving countries' selective migration policies, are mostly the highly skilled and/or socioeconomically well-equipped middle class (Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Feliciano, 2005a; Zhou & Lee, 2017). I apply the term 'intensive parenting' to explain the new Chinese immigrants and their children's education in Singapore.

### 1.2.6 Analytical Framework

Literature has suggested that education works through background determinants (e.g., human capitals, family structure, socioeconomic status, co-ethnic community) to promote upward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In this study, new Chinese immigrants' definition of children's success has three different emphasis, which links to these immigrant parents' different parenting practices. Firstly, new Chinese immigrant parents tend to construct a strict 'success frame', i.e., a specific educational pathway and a narrow set of elite universities and high-status professions, and they employ familial, institutional, and ethnic resources and strategies to reinforce this 'success frame' (Lee & Zhou, 2015). Secondly, many *xinyimin* parents include a new dimension, i.e., happiness,

into success, in addition to the educational and professional achievements. However, though *xinyimin* parents define children's 'success' to be with a broader meaning, they do not aim to replace children's educational achievements by happiness (such as having fun and achieving sense of success from the learning process that cultivates children's self and autonomy) (Warikoo, 2020). Rather, these parents try to combine happiness with educational achievements, which requires equivalent or even more parental investment. Thirdly, some *xinyimin* parents do expect their children to grow up with potential and capabilities unfolding spontaneously, in which they emphasize that parental responsibility, parental involvement and companion to be necessary.

Figure 1.1 sketches the analytical framework of this study.

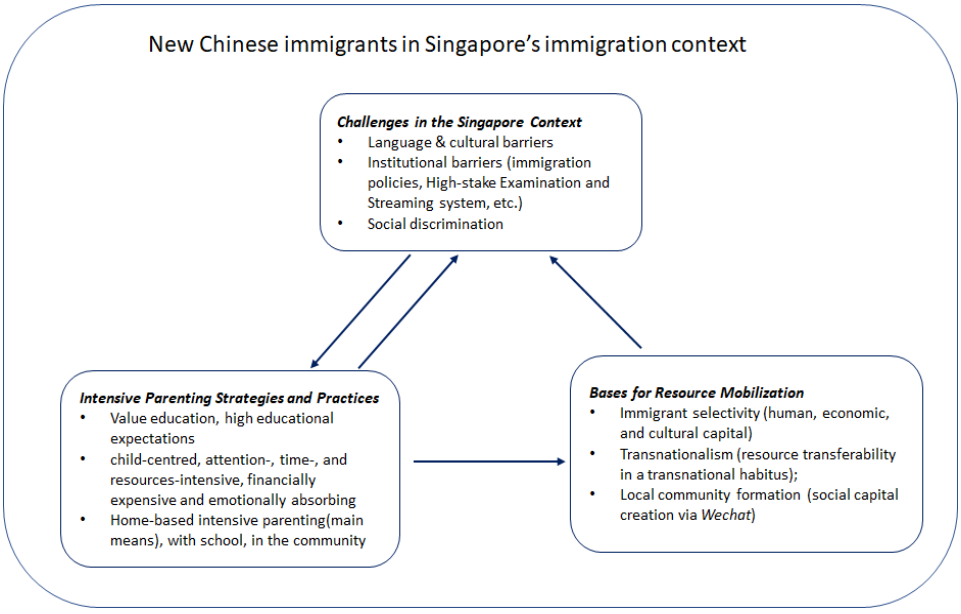



***Figure 1.1: New Chinese Immigrants and Intensive Parenting: An Analytical Framework.***

The box on top answers the question "what challenges do new Chinese immigrant parents face in raising children in Singapore?" (Chapter Three). The lower left box answers the question "what do new Chinese immigrant parents do to meet these

challenges? More specifically, what parenting strategies have they adopted to promote their children's education?" (Chapter Four). The lower right box answers the question "what enables them to practise intensive parenting for success?" (Chapter Five). The three boxes, guided by my three central research questions, illustrate that intensive parenting on children's education is a direct response to the challenges that *xinyimin* face in the Singapore context, and that both the enhanced cultural values, and the hyper-selectivity, transnationalism, and the community formation via *WeChat* enable *xinyimin* to mobilize various resources to support their intensive parenting strategies and practices.

## 1.3 Methodology and Data Collection

This study is based on the post-positivism paradigm, the interpretivism. The epistemological stance of interpretivism believes that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world; thus, reality is socially constructed and is a human construct (Mutch, 2005). As such, this research will try to access to "reality" through social constructions, such as language, culture and shared meanings, and aim to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind the social actions. Methodologically, this study primarily adopted meaning oriented research methods to collect data. One is qualitative in-depth interview, and the other is the non-intrusive participant observation.

### 1.3.1 In-Depth Interviews

This study attempts to examine new Chinese immigrants' parenting on children's education in the Singapore society. As there is a paucity of existing empirical data and literature on this concerned topic and group of people, this research will adopt qualitative approaches that favour an inductive mode of inquiry. Instead of isolating elements of

experience, qualitative studies focused on a holistic and constructionist approach, with which immigrants' storytelling and narratives could help researcher better capture their experience (McCarthy & Wright, 2005). Through qualitative in-depth interviews, I aim to understand participants' behaviour and practices (i.e., intensive parenting) from their own perspectives, as qualitative interviews are suitable for researcher to obtain detailed accounts of interviewee's views on complex phenomena (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The qualitative interviews have provided the study with detailed information about the immigrants' motivations, perspectives, strategies and practices on intensive parenting, the challenges, and the supporting mechanisms to overcome the challenges.

#### 1.3.1.1 Research participant selection

This study conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 50 new Chinese immigrants (*xinyimin*) in Singapore from mid-2018 to March 2020. Some participants were interviewed more than once. The interviewees include 17 males and 33 females, all of whom are first-generation immigrants and emigrated from Mainland China from late 1980s and early 1990s onwards, ranging from 29 to 54 years old. Most interviewees are naturalized Singapore Citizens (29) or Permanent Residents (PR) (18), with only a small number of Employment Pass (EP)[4] (2) or Dependent Pass holders (DP)[5] (1) (See Appendix 1 for a demographic table). These *xinyimins* have immigrated to Singapore in diverse ways, including through the international education scheme sponsored by Ministry of Education (MOE) scholarships, employment-pass scheme, and the entrepreneurs and investors schemes (such as, EntrePass and Personalised Employment

[4] Employment Pass: The Employment Pass allows foreign professionals to work in Singapore. Candidates need to earn at least $4,000 a month and have acceptable qualifications. Access on 22 November 2020, https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/employment-pass.

[5] The dependent's Pass allows spouses and children of EP or SP holders to join them in Singapore. Access on 22 November 2020, https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/dependants-pass.

Pass [6]), with most of them working in high-skilled occupations. I also selected a few dependent pass holders to participate in this study, as their spouses were often qualified Employment Pass (EP) holders or Permanent Residents (PR). Furthermore, female DPs are often the main actors of intensive parenting in the household. I will explain the immigration system of Singapore in Chapter Three in greater detail.

Our interview participants are mainly parents of primary school children, as Singapore's highly competitive education system have made primary school education the most important, competitive, and concerned stage of education (Liu, Wang & Parkins 2005). Only nine of them are parents of students in secondary school, Junior College, or tertiary institutions. To be eligible for this study, participants must have resided in Singapore for at least a year and have at least one schooling child in Singapore's education system. All interview participants were asked to sign the consent form before they were interviewed. This study also promised each participant that their information would be kept confidential, and all real names of parents and children would be pseudonymized.

The interview participants were firstly recruited from personal contacts, and then snowballing method followed to recruit most of the other interviewees. I have also intentionally chosen well-informed participants, who were able to share rich knowledge, experience, and insights on new Chinese immigrants' parenting on education. For example, I have deliberately approached and recruited "elite" mothers or fathers, who are parents of high-achieving children and known for the facts by their peers. I have also interviewed three tuition center managers/teachers, who are in the meanwhile *xinyimin* parents and run their own tuition businesses. In addition, four teachers from Singapore's

[6] Access on 22 November 2020, https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits.

public school system (who are *xinyimin* parents at the same time) were also interviewed. This method of purposeful sampling helped to collect relevant and critical information for the study.

**1.3.1.2. Data collection procedures**

Appendix 2 shows the specific items/questions in my interview schedules. The first section of the interview includes ten socioeconomic characteristic items, including age, gender, marital status, number of children, highest level of education, occupation, income, length of residence, residential status, housing type. The second section comprises open-ended questions to understand the parents' educational expectations on children, the parents' strategies, the challenges they face in parenting with regards to their children's education, and sources of support. Sixteen open-ended questions are designed, which inquires the reason(s) behind their decision to migrate and settle down in Singapore; their expectation(s) for their children's schooling and future; their perceptions of the cultural and practical differences between childrearing in China versus in Singapore; the opportunities and challenges for schooling and education in Singapore; their attempts at overcoming immigration related barriers; their home-based practices to promote their children's learning; their approach to mother tongue and English language acquisition and learning; their educational choices, such as choice of school, extracurricular schedules, tuitions and enrichment programs that their children have attended.

In summary, I have not only looked for generalizable themes and facts, but also tried to understand how participants perceive and interpret the new context, how they make adjustment, how they cope with immigration related challenges, and how they

promote children's education for integration and for upward mobility. Each interview was conducted either in person or by phone/video call with the participant. The interviews were conducted in Chinese and each interview lasted 1.5 to 2 hours. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The cited quotes in the following chapters were translated into English. The author repeatedly read interview transcripts and field notes, dissecting the transcripts into segments to compile for common themes, which helped to guarantee that all significant narrative aspects of the participants were captured and accounted for. All the names of interview participants and their children have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms. All identifying information are kept confidential. In addition, I have collected and analyzed government policies and newspaper reports that are related to this study, which serves to complement interview data.

### 1.3.2 Non-Intrusive Participant Observation

The other research method is the non-intrusive participant observation, which was used to collect data from the mobile online social media platform *WeChat,* to supplement the understanding of new Chinese immigrant's intensive parenting and to explore how the *WeChat* facilitated formation of virtual community has supported individual members with social relationships, networks, and social capital. While the open-ended questions can explore the reasons behind the answers about language and culture, immigration created challenges, parenting strategies and practices, and ways for resource mobilization related to migration and education, results from online participant observation were used to explain about how *xinyimin* have utilized *WeChat,* a mobile online social media platform, to enlarge and expand their social networks and social capital, through which the formation of *xinyimin* community and the group level social capital are strengthened.

The online participant observation also triangulated and supplemented the open-ended questions when there are discrepancies between interview participant's self-evaluations and results from the observation.

I focused on a couple of groups, where the participants were more active to share and discuss concerned schooling and education issues. After following these active groups for nearly two years, I found that the information about learning, education, schooling, after-school tuitions, etc., were abundant to supplement and triangulate my interview data. Being members of *WeChat* groups, my understanding of *xinyimin* parents' values, beliefs, strategies are substantially improved, which is beneficial to my exploratory study. I introduced myself to the *WeChat* group manager and some active group participants. But for those lurked or less-active participants, I had little chance to inform them that I am a researcher. I only put my identity and NTU IRB approved No. in my group name/alias. In the meantime, I passively stayed in the group and did not involve myself in the group discussions except for raising related questions. My main goal is to observe what themes, topics, issues, and problems are raised and discussed, what ideas and views are expressed, and how the group members' identity, authenticity, and socio-cultural backgrounds are reflected in the mobile online semi-public environment. In the *WeChat*, group members mainly communicate in (written) Chinese, therefore, it is convenient for me as a researcher to record, translate and fully understand the ideas, concerns and opinions expressed.

It should be noted that *WeChat* mainly works through private circles, semi-public or completely public communities. I, therefore, have obtained some participants' consent to have access to their "*Moments*" (the social networking function of *WeChat*, from

which the user's profiles and updates can be viewed and shared only by the user's permitted acquaintances in his or her contact list). In addition, I sought the participants' informed consent when I need to cite their information published in the virtual space (from "Moments" or from *WeChat* group(s)' discussions).

The use of *WeChat* satisfies new Chinese immigrants' culture, value, and language needs (Zhou, *et al.*, 2017). I found that Chinese immigrant professionals' *WeChat* use not only match their communication and content needs in the process of adaptation, but also facilitate a better understanding of Chinese identity and 'self' in the virtual but authentic cultural contexts. An example of this is that postings of concerned issues could be created and shared on the Chinese language technology platform, which are less likely to be miscommunicated and misunderstood, because the users' Chinese circles and connections have the shared language and culture to receive what are intended to communicate, therefore these immigrants' use of *WeChat* have been able to share deeper communications and richer information, which may not be equivalently realized in the English social media, such as Facebook.

### 1.3.3 Author's Position and Reflection

I, as the researcher of this study, share a common immigrant and ethnic experience with the interview and online observation participants, therefore, I understand the obtained data from an insider perspective (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). My experiences, firstly as an international student from China and an immigrant professional, then as a mother of young children and a naturalized citizen, have been in common and shared by several interview participants. As a first-generation immigrant, I have spent my tertiary school years in China, where I developed a fully established mainland Chinese

identity. However, started as a postgraduate student in Singapore, I experienced little pressure and tension to maintain my original identity while have kept close connections with the *xinyimin* community. I have also integrated into the local society thanks to the workday as a professional after graduation in Singapore. All these important formative years of my life have shaped my perspectives, experiences, and positions as an insider in both China and Singapore, which can be inevitably presented in my research approach and data analysis. Acknowledging the positionality in this study, first, I believe that my understanding of the participants and analysis of the data would be more pertinent and deeper than an outsider. Second, with the unique strengths, I am careful that my personal beliefs, worldviews, values and migration and life experiences, would restrain me to reach the "objective" interpretations. Therefore, I realize that it is important to face and address the challenges that I have as an insider.

Researchers have suggested that insider research is not problematic but respectable, as it provides important knowledge of the studied group of people and their world (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). There are acknowledged strengths of insider research, such as a stronger rapport between interviewer and interview participants, the shared reference frame (Mercer, 2007), ease to access and to establish trust, reduced resources requirements, and fewer problems in translation (Karra & Phillips, 2008). The same cultural background also facilitates researcher to solicit from participants about their real opinions, strategies, and practices (Given, 2008). In the present study, my Chinese language ability and cultural background were important for me to approach and get access to *xinyimin* parents in both the actual and virtual community, and to build relationship and rapport with the interview participants. In the interviews, the built-up

trust and understanding between me and participants helped participants to be more relaxed and feel ease at speaking their experiences, feelings and thoughts (Regmi & Kottler, 2009), which were valuable to the interview and research. I have also maintained my connection with these participants, which help to sustain the relationship and make myself informed about the long-term state and changes of these parents' thinking, strategies, and practices.

However, it is important to note the challenges brought to the study by an insider, which have been listed as lack of distance and objectivity, role conflicts, and making assumptions (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). Researchers have suggested to be mindful in using one's strengths and limitations as an insider and to overcome the challenges. First, an insider researcher needs to be willing to deal with the challenges. It is imperative to carefully consider and judiciously weigh up the strengths and limitations in any specific circumstance (Karra & Philips, 2008). Second, it is recommended that an insider researcher should utilise strategically rather than minimize his/er position to inform the work; in addition, s/he should consider more broadly to incorporate ethic and epistemological issues (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2013). Third, it has been pointed out that there is a dichotomy problem, which simplifies the position of insider versus that of outsider, as it assumes that membership denotes complete sameness and non-membership denotes complete difference (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Many researchers, therefore, emphasized on the roles of one's preunderstanding, the demand of dual roles as researcher and member, together with the practice of reflexivity (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). Reflexivity is a crucial component of research, in which researchers report their own values, beliefs, and biases that might have shaped their inquiry and reflect on the

diverse forces (e.g., the cultural, historical social, and institutional) that shape their understanding and explanations (Creswell & Miller, 2010). It is recommended that researcher's dual or multiple identities need ethical reflexivity to inform the study, and to recognize and deal with the tensions in the research work.

In this study, I situated the analysis of migration and education in Singapore's social and institutional context. I experienced the migration and witnessed the education competition among parents in Singapore. As a first-generation immigrant and a mother of two young children (who faces the gradually intense education competition as children growing up), I share the common anxieties and pressures for raising children as ordinary parents. To achieve an informed and ethical study, I beard in mind the importance of reflexivity and made efforts to practice reflexivity (Patton, 2002). For example, I consciously avoided imposing my own perspectives, experiences, (pre)understanding and circumstances upon the process of interview and observation; I continually evaluated my subjective responses in the interview, actual and virtual observations, and tried to keep a distance to understand the participants and data; in addition, I asked myself repeatedly about "how do I know it" to construct the knowledge. In the following chapters, I considered the ethics and epistemology of the position as an insider, practiced reflexivity, and have tried to utilise my strengths to inform my work.

## 1.4 Chapters at A Glance

Chapter Two gives an overview of the new Chinese immigrants in Singapore. I first review the Chinese migration history to Singapore, and then examine the context of exit and context of reception for the post-1990s Chinese migration to Singapore. These contexts give rise to cultural and structural factors that create opportunities and

challenges for the immigrants and their families in the new society. This chapter particularly highlights the shared Confucian culture between new Chinese immigrants and the Singaporean society. Next, I specifically describe the socioeconomic characteristics (such as composition, age, sex ratio, education, profession) of the new Chinese immigrants and their family formation, which reflect *xinyimin's* class status, mobilizable resources, and their ethnic group's position in the host society. In addition, I briefly describe how the new immigrant associations and the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) supported social media platforms play an important role in increasing the *xinyimin's* social networks and facilitating social support on their children's education.

Chapters Three to Five address the three research questions in turn. Chapter Three shows that new Chinese immigrants to some extent share similar traditional cultural elements (e.g., Confucian values and norms) with the core group of the Singaporean society. However, Singapore features a modern cultural hybrid of the East and the West, which provides a unique sociocultural setting. The encounter between traditional Chinese culture and the modern hybrid culture has created a set of challenges for new Chinese immigrants, including language and cultural barriers, institutional barriers (for example, the Singapore immigration policy created social hierarchy and the high-stake examination and streaming featured education system), and social discrimination. Through empirical analysis, I will show how these challenges have affected the view of the new Chinese immigrant parents on child nurturing and propelled them to adopt certain types of parenting strategies and practices. This then links my analyses to the next chapter on intensive parenting practices.

Chapter Four first examines the home-based intensive parenting on their children's education by the new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, which is the primary strategy and means adopted by *xinyimin* parents to promote their children's learning and education for the expected success and upward social mobility. I will then examine how *xinyimin* parents conduct education-related practices with schools and how they practise intensive parenting with tapping on institutional resources in the *xinyimin* community and the larger society. I will then conclude the chapter with effects of said intensive parenting and discuss its practical implications, in particular how the intensive parenting can define *xinyimin* parents' self-identity.

Chapter Five is the final substantive chapter, in which I address my third central research question: what enables new Chinese immigrant parents to practise intensive parenting for success? I will examine the process of resource mobilization in support of *xinyimin*'s intensive parenting. First, I identify how hyper-selectivity of new Chinese immigrants is conducive to resource mobilization, showing that high level human capital contributes correspondingly to high levels of economic and cultural capital within the *xinyimin* family and community, resulting in the reproduction of middle-class resources in support of intensive parenting on children's education. I will then identify transnational resources that are portable and transferable across nation-borders, which allow *xinyimin* to provide their children with diverse education-related opportunities and resources in two or more countries. Thirdly, I will explain how new Chinese immigrants utilize the online mobile social media platform *WeChat* to build and expand social networks and strengthen the *xinyimin's* community formation, which has been supportive of intense parenting.

Chapter Six is the conclusion of my thesis. The chapter summarizes main research findings, highlight the theoretical and practical implications of my study, and discuss research limitations and raise questions for future research.

# Chapter 2

## New Chinese Immigration and Family Formation in Singapore

Geographically located at the heart of the Malay Archipelago in Southeast Asia, Singapore is a republic city-state since 1965. Previously a British colony, Singapore gained independence from the British in 1963 and separated from Malaysia in 1965, after which it established an independent and sovereign nation-state. Singapore has been an immigrant society with a long history of migration (Kwok, 1999). Currently, Singapore is a multiracial and multiethnic society, which is comprised of a Chinese majority of 76 percent, 15 percent Malay, 7.5 percent Indian, and 1.5 percent others in 2019 (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2019).

"New" Chinese immigrants, or *xinyimin* in Mandarin, generally refer to the emigrants from Mainland China since the late 1970s, as noted in Chapter 1. New Chinese immigration to Singapore is a post-1990 phenomenon, emerging after Singapore and China normalized diplomatic relations. Unlike earlier Chinese immigrants to Singapore, the newcomers from Mainland China are predominately young with a balanced sex ratio. Most of these *xinyimin* are highly educated, proficient in English, and well-integrated into the middle class of the host society as scientists, engineers, educators, professionals, and entrepreneurs. As they strive to get resettled and get ahead in the labor market, many have formed families and raised children. A typical *xinyimin* family is made up of two full-time working parents and one to two young children with the occasional presence of transnational grandparent(s). One of the most urgent resettlement issues that concern Chinese immigrant parents is their children's education.

## 2.1 Earlier Chinese Migration to Singapore

The Chinese migration to Southeast Asia in general, and to Singapore in particular, is long and complex. Dated back to the 13th century, long before Western colonists landed on the region, Chinese traders and merchants from Fujian and Guangdong provinces of southern China had already established a significant presence in Southeast Asia through maritime trade. They created overseas Chinese communities to accommodate diasporic living and facilitate circular migration (Unger, 1944). In the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, driven abroad by natural disasters, famines, and sustained domestic unrests, and drawn in by labour demand for industrial and agricultural expansions of the new Western owned colonies, massive migration from South China to Southeast Asia had intensified (Ee, 1961; Wang, 1991, p.2). Research has shown that from the 1850s to 1920s, Chinese of peasant origin migrated in most significant numbers to Southeast Asia and other locations across the globe as they went overseas to work as indentured labor in plantations and mines (Wang, 1991, p.6). With hopes for survival and economic betterment, many headed for Singapore and Southeast Asian locations, aware of the potential risks of hardships and even death (Ee, 1961). The social networks that were built by Chinese traders and merchants, alongside connections with diasporic communities, facilitated the migration of Chinese laborers.

Singapore's population growth and economic prosperity since its beginnings as a colonial entrepôt in 1819 have been fundamentally intertwined with the Chinese immigration (Yeoh, 2007, p.1). In 1819, Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore as an entrepôt and a regional hub for British colonial interests in investment, trade, and industrial development. Under the control of the British East India Company, Singapore

was set as one of the three governing centres (Singapore, Malacca, and Penang) of the Straits Settlements from 1826 to 1867. Since then, Singapore established itself as a major city in the region, with rapid population expansion and rising importance in trade. Historical records showed that a large number of ships travelled to Singapore's waters between 1873 and 1913, facilitating the expansion of transnational trade in Singapore. Meanwhile, rubber plantations and exports also developed prosperously, adding to Singapore's potential to become a regional hub and entrepôt (Shinagawa & Jang 1998, p. 19).

It should be highlighted that the British colony adopted a laisse-faire economy and an unrestricted immigration policy that supported the recruitment of cheap labour, which further sped up emigration from southern China (Tan, 2007). During the Straits Settlement era, Chinese immigrants arrived in Singapore in large numbers, from both the Straits area in Southeast Asia and the traditional Chinese labours' hometowns in southern China. Research documented that from 1820 to 1860, the size of the Chinese population increased from about 3,000 to 50,000, constituting 61% of the population, in addition to that fact that Chinese ethnicity had started to outnumber their non-Chinese peers since the 1840s (Meagher, 2008, p.134). Singapore conducted its first census in 1871, which showed that Chinese accounted for 58% of the total population and was the largest ethnic group (Warren, 2003). This number rose to 70% by the end of 19th century, among which 90% were Chinese immigrants and only 10% were local-born Chinese (Freeman, 1960). In 1901, Chinese population in Singapore reached 525,000, which made up a majority at 72%. This number has remained at over 70% ever since, becoming a distinct demographic feature of the Singapore population (Freeman, 1960). After World War II,

the Chinese population in Singapore increased to 730,000, which is 78% of the total population (Ee, 1961), while from then to the 1980s, migration from mainland China was strictly controlled due to ideological and geopolitical reasons.

From the early 19th century to World War II, overseas Chinese communities created by early Chinese migration were primarily composed of able-bodied men. The situation in Singapore was similar, with a skewed sex ratio in the Chinese immigrant population, the male-to-female ratio being 14:1 in 1860 (Saw, 1969). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that female Chinese immigrants increased to form twenty percent of the total Chinese immigrant population. As mentioned earlier, most of the earlier Chinese immigrants hailed from southern China, who were traders and laborers. With the exception of a small number of merchant class, most of the earlier Chinese immigrants were impoverished and illiterate male peasants who worked as low-skilled indentured laborers, such as servants, porters, longshoremen, fishermen, etc., (Lai & Mak, 1992). Traditional Chinese clan associations based on locality or kin were ethnic institutions that socially bonded Chinese immigrants, providing these socially disconnected and impoverished men with an ethnic community (Lesley, 1992, p. 21). The traditional clan associations have been important ethnic institutions that organized these Chinese low-skilled peasants from southern China and supported them for settlement and survival (Carstens, 1975). Researchers have commented that voluntary associations built up by Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia are remarkable (Freeman, 1960). Today, these clan associations' missions have gradually evolved into preserving and transmitting Chinese heritage and culture, as many of them still function effectively based on dialects and localities (Cheng, 1995).

In the earlier years, Chinese women migration to Singapore was legal (Saw 1969). The number of female immigrants started to increase due to the effectiveness of the British Naturalization Law in 1852 (Turnbull, 2009). Early Chinese female immigrants were mainly "*samsui women*" who migrated from Guangdong and Fujian in China to Singapore and Malaya and worked as construction workers. There were also "Cantonese domestic maids", who came to Singapore to work as "*amahs*", of which a majority were "*majies*" that swore not to marry for life (Gaw, 1988; Kaye, 1960; Low, 2015). This unique pattern of Chinese immigration severely hindered the formation and growth of overseas Chinese families in Singapore. Records showed that the total population of Singapore in 1826 was 13,750, of which Chinese males were 5,747 and Chinese females were only 341 (Wright & Cartwright, 1908). However, the sex ratio was increasingly balanced, from 5 (males) to 1 (female) in 1891 to 2:1 in 1921, ultimately reaching 1:1 in 1947 (Saw, 1969). The balancing sex ratio attested to the significance of female migration to Singapore and implied a normal natural birth rate and family formation, which contributed to the continuously increasing number of nuclear families from the mid-19th century onwards (Saw, 1969; Freedman, 1957, p. 25). The formation of the ethnic Chinese community in Singapore was reported to be observed in mid-1950s (Yeung & Hu, 2018). Research data showed that from 1824 to 1947, both the absolute number of Chinese and their percentage as a proportion of the total population have gradually increased. Since 1945 (i.e., the end of World War II), the Chinese community has started the transition from a sojourning and diasporic community to a long-term settlement and native community (Zheng & Hu, 2018).

## 2.2 Contexts of Exit and Reception of Post-1990 Chinese Migration to Singapore

When China opened its door to the outside world in the late 1970s, massive waves of Chinese emigration have surged onto the shores across of the globe, with little signs of subsiding (Zhou, 2017). New Chinese immigrants, by the turn of the 21st century, have dispersed in various corners of the world, with the majority resettling in Western developed countries, e.g., the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, etc. Meanwhile, some new Chinese immigrants have flowed into the developed countries in Asia, such as Singapore (Zhou, 2017). New Chinese immigration to Singapore has emerged as a part of the aforementioned global phenomenon since the late 1970s. Immigration numbers were low in the 1980s, but it quickly rose since Singapore and China normalized diplomatic relations in 1990, driven by economic reforms in China and Singapore's immigration policy that favored and proactively recruited skilled Chinese of mainland origin.

In the following section, I will examine the context of exit and reception, of which the economic, social, political circumstances of the two countries explain the reason why Chinese nationals (mostly middle class) emigrate, what are their values and norms, socioeconomic status, , and what conditions they face in the new society (Portes & Rumbaut, 1990). In addition, it facilitates my exploration of the reasons why Chinese immigrants value education and believe that educational excellence can change one's life, and consequently adopt intensive parenting strategies and practices.

### 2.2.1 Context of Exit

The history of China is full of political turmoil and social changes, which profoundly impacts the values, norms, and practices of the Chinese people. Just like people elsewhere in the world, the Chinese have experienced cruelty and darkness of history, fully understanding the meaning of poverty, social inequality and political turmoil. Therefore, they have learnt to cope with difficulties and crises with certain beliefs, behaviors, strategies, etc. With regards to the context of exit for new Chinese immigrants, I pay attention to those more recent and relevant historical and social events.

#### 2.2.1.1 Economic and administrative context

Chinese emigration in 19th and 20th century was primarily a result of devastating natural disasters and social turmoil, which made the earlier Chinese migrants emigrate mainly for survival. For the new Chinese migration, economic and political circumstances have changed and are now fundamentally different from the earlier Chinese historical context. China's economic reforms since 1979 have created and developed many economically vibrant ports and coastal cities. With reduced bureaucratic interference, export-oriented enterprises and private enterprises were encouraged to develop in these places, providing opportunities for capital gains through foreign investment and cross-border trade (Xiang, 2003). China's socioeconomic transformation has led to the following structural changes, which sustained the continuous and high emigration rates of the Chinese people (Zhou, 2017; Wang, 1993, p. 6).

Firstly, the Chinese government eased restrictions on population migration by eliminating institutional obstacles (Zhou, 2017). The government undertook specific measures to liberate internal and international migrations, such as relaxing requirements

for obtaining passports, simplifying procedures for going overseas, and allowing Chinese citizens with diasporic relatives to legally emigrate (Zhou & Wang, 2019).

Secondly, the government implemented policies to support overseas studies and training to promote economic reforms and China's connection with the world. The government has sponsored college students and visiting scholars to study abroad for advance degrees or academic training since 1979. An increasing number of Chinese citizens were also allowed to study abroad by self-financing (Guerassimoff, 1998, p. 145).[7] Between 1978 and 2018, 5.85 million students have studied overseas, and more than half obtained employment and immigrant visas upon completion of their studies.[8] Students in China have been enthusiastic to pursue international education over the years, with annual numbers reaching twenty-five thousand (Liu, 2005, p. 294-96). Research showed that most self-financed students have returned to China (ibid., p. 150). Chinese emigration accelerated in the 1990s, as population pressure intensified competition for jobs, educational opportunities, marital partners, and social status in the emerging consumer society within Chinese urban communities.

Thirdly, the economic reforms have brought in substantial amounts of foreign direct investment, among which overseas Chinese diaspora's capital constitutes more than 75% (Zhou, 2017). This has not only contributed tremendously to the rise of China's market economy in the 1980s, but also revitalized the hitherto dormant transnational social networks between mainland China families and their diasporic familial connections.

[7] Self-financed students were mostly college students in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the late 1990s, many families in China, which have achieved upper-middle class status, have started sending their children to study abroad even at middle school and high school levels.

[8] See http://www.xinhuanet.com/2019-03/27/c_1124291948.htm, accessed on 12 Oct 2020. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, as of 2018, the population of Chinese, who study or undertake research overseas amounted to 5.86 million, of which 3.65 million had returned to China.

In addition, both Chinese state-owned and private-owned enterprises have increased investments in other countries. The increasing interconnections between China and the world economy further fueled Chinese emigration (Zhou, 2009).

In sum, China's internal relaxation of emigration control, its opening-up to the world, and the economic and cultural globalization have jointly constituted political and economic contexts of emigration that are fundamentally different from those prior to World War II.

#### 2.2.1.2 Social Environment

The famous College Entrance Examination in China, i.e., *Gaokao,* was restored in 1979. *Gaokao* is considered as a social ladder by which a young person will determine their life chance. The competition to obtain a good university degree was further intensified by the implementation of the one-child-policy from 1979 to 2015. Lasting over three decades, the one-child policy has profoundly shaped the Chinese urban parents' preoccupation with child nurturing and cultivation (Veeck, Flurry & Jiang, 2003). Since 1999, educational reforms aimed at cultivating students' all-round development and creativity were initiated and implemented by the Chinese government, who aspired to change the centuries-long traditional methods of talent selection and shift from an examination-oriented education to one that is quality-oriented. The education reforms emphasized on inspiring students to develop their all-round capabilities rather than merely passing down knowledge. However, although the reforms have the good intention to develop students' aptitudes through moral, intellectual, physical, and aesthetical activities, educational practices changed only superficially as the core mechanism of the

traditional education system, i.e., the (high-stake) examinations, has not been changed (Brown, 2000).

The education reforms did not achieve the expected results. The consequence is that both students and parents need to shoulder even more burdens than before as parents and students need to invest extra time, energy, and resources on the non-academic activities in addition to academic work. Since academic achievements are still considered as a priority and the criterion of success within the education system, parents and students need to keep a close eye on academic learning and performance besides developing non-academic skills. Therefore, the competition has been widened and further intensified (Yan, 2015).

In recent decades, a well-known saying among Chinese parents — "do not let your children lose (the race) at the starting line" (*buyao rang haizi shu zai qipaoxian shang* "不要让孩子输在起跑线上") exemplifies the fact that the Chinese put great importance on their children's education and its success, although many of them have no explicit idea about what they should compete for and what they should not lose out at the starting line. In fact, this belief has become a form of social control that reshaped parents' mindset and conformed many to participating in the education competition (Chen, 2003). It is not rare to see many Chinese parents investing heavily in various academic and non-academic programmes for their children, even though in some cases the family may be relatively less affluent. The starting line is also of a critical "timing" for many parents. Some parents began childhood education in utero, employing means such as listening to classical music, which is a case in point on how early such childhood education can be. More extracurricular programmes and activities, such as those in reading, second

language, reasoning, advanced math (e.g., Mathematical Olympiad) and chess, have also become part of the education agenda (Ji, Jiao & Jing, 1993). The development of talents and skills for children has gained fervent interests among parents in China. Admittedly, some poorer regions in China still have difficulties in implementing compulsory education, whereas parents in more affluent regions, especially top tier urban cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, have been experiencing an intense educational "arm race".

It should be noted that many Chinese immigrant parents in different parts of the world are also obsessed with the idea of competing at the "starting line". They have not only transferred native cultural values and beliefs to the new society, but also constantly refer to native social norms and practices for their children's education. Many of them do compare their children's academic capabilities with those who study in China's education system. Amazed at Chinese children's academic achievements, these immigrant parents have learnt to adopt similar practices and involve themselves more heavily in their children's education.

### 2.2.2 Context of Reception

Singapore has traditionally been a migration destination in Asia for Chinese immigrants due to its cultural affinity and geographical proximity to mainland China. The city-state is a British-style parliamentary democracy, with a culture that is a blend of the East and West. After independence in 1965, Singapore has developed rapidly into a developed economy and joined Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan to be Asia's newly industrializing "Four Tigers" in the 1980s. Today, Singapore is internationally recognized as a developed country.

#### 2.2.2.1 Cultural Context of Singapore

Singapore has a distinct culture which is a mix of the East and West, and the population consists of Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Others. At the national level, its culture is closely associated with the city-state's political stability and economic prosperity. Behind the frontage of a modern cosmopolitan city, ethnicities and races in Singapore are clearly discernable and bear distinct characteristics. The Singapore government encourages racial harmony and values each of the four main races' beliefs and traditional rituals. However, most Singaporeans consider themselves Singaporeans regardless of race and culture, as the national identification that recognizes and perceives Singapore as a wealthy and stable homeland supersedes differences of ethnicities. Furthermore, Singapore's religious landscape is also diverse and composed of beliefs and religion systems of various ethnic and racial groups (Welch & Freebody, 2005, p. 36-53). The young generations of Singapore find it difficult to sustain and develop a distinct Singaporean culture during its rapid modernization against the backdrop of economic and cultural globalization.

#### 2.2.2.2 The Political and Administrative System

Singapore's political system was borrowed from the British parliamentary democracy. The laws and principles established in British systems are still the foundations of the republic's political and administrative system today. As a republic, Singapore's political system is made up of the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Formed up on the principle of multiracialism in 1954, the People's Action Party (PAP) has been the only ruling party in power since 1959 (Lesley, 1992, p. 23). The aftermath of the failed merger with Malaysia and its colonial legacy have strongly

influenced the formation of Singapore government and its ideology (Chua, 1997, p. 1). Led by Singapore's founding father and first prime minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the Singapore government is highly centralized, semi-authoritarian, highly transparent and efficient (Ortmann & Thompson, 2016). The system is based on the principle of meritocracy, where government officials are appointed based on their performance, enabling the government to operate efficiently.[9]

#### 2.2.2.3 Ideologies of Singapore

The Singaporean government's ideological framework combines the philosophies and assumptions of capitalism, pragmatism, and communitarianism, which can be discerned from the constitution of the government and the state (Göransson, 2015; Tan, 2012; Chua, 1997, p. 1). Since independence in 1965, Singapore has been constantly searching for ways to promote economic development. The government adopted multiculturalism as an ideology to ensure racial harmony among its "founding races" (i.e., the Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Others), and to nurture a Singaporean national identity which unites the people and constructs a foundation for the city-nation's survival and prosperity (Yeoh, 2004). The government intervenes to mobilize various social groups to join voluntary rationalizations, so as to establish a new normative order and successful universalization based on common ideals. The more people's lives are improved with economic development, the more stable and solid this universalization and new order is (Chua, 1997, p. 1-2).

Individualistic thinking has emerged with gains from capitalistic developments, resulting in a dwindling sense of national identity. Therefore, the government took on a

[9] Accessed on 16 Oct 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/25/world/asia/singapore-the-nation-that-lee-built-questions-its-direction.html?_r=0

series of policies to solve this problem. For example, the government published the "White Paper on Shared Values" in 1992, which brought communitarian ideologies into Singapore's democratic agenda and processes (Ibid, p. 32-33). The shared values represented a national ideology that advocates placing society and community above self, supporting individuals through societal efforts, and viewing families as the building block of society.

Meritocracy has been a principle in talent selection, leadership appointment, and human resource recruitment (Quah, 2010). Meanwhile, native-born ethnic Chinese population constitute the majority, and its core members dominate the political, social, and economic landscapes (Zhou & Liu, 2016). The government constantly makes efforts (such as the 1987 report "Towards Education Excellence") to reform the school system, equipping students with more resources and opportunities to be innovative and capable, which could produce more capable citizens for Singapore's interactions with the global economy. Maintaining economic momentum is always a point of deliberation for the reforms and improvements of Singapore's education system in terms of guidelines, curriculum, institutional design, etc. (Tan, 1986).

#### 2.2.2.4 Economic and social context

Singapore has few natural resources; thus it has emphasized on the importance of human resources. Manpower plays a significant role in Singapore's economic successes. After independence, the government first emphasized on resolving the problem of high unemployment and creating jobs through developing manufacturing industry immediately. Reaching full employment in the early 1970s, the government then aimed to increase the population of quality workers (both high and low skilled ones), an economic strategy for

promoting economic prosperity (Lesley, 1992, p. 27). On the one hand, the government invested to sponsor the development of manpower and its productivity. For example, the Skills Development Fund and the 1982 National Campaign to Improve Productivity were initiated to improve productivity and work ethics. On the other hand, the native population had become insufficient in supporting the economic development in the 1970s. Therefore, the government relaxed its immigration policy in 1968 and started to welcome capable workers who were expected to bring in valuable ideas and services from other countries (Foo-Law, 1994, p. 117).

Another important asset of Singapore is its geographical location, which has enabled the island nation to become an international hub and a lucrative entrepot for re-exporting goods and developing oil refinery. In addition, both passenger liners and commercial cargo vessels from various countries and port cities have frequently busied the Singapore's waters. With one of the world's most favorable business environments (such as the government's strong financial support and attractive tax incentives), Singapore was often the selected location by international corporations to set up their operational headquarters. Over the years, Singapore has been endeavoring to develop knowledge-intensive economy and integrate itself with the global economy. The value-added manufacturing (e.g., the precision engineering and electronics sector) and the service industry (e.g., the finance and insurance industries, and the info-communications industries) are the two key pillars of economic growth. Admittedly, Singapore's economic growth has not been without problems. For example, there has been a decline of extended families; capital gains have caused confusions among youths who struggle between maintaining their loyalty to traditional values and climbing the economic ladder

for their own benefit. Besides, women are caught in the dilemma of either resisting or succumbing to the government pressures and incentives to have children and contribute to the manpower pool. A highly competitive education system and social environment has also intensified and reproduced social inequality (Lesley, 1992, p. 46-53).

### 2.2.3 The Shared Confucian Culture and Values

The Confucian culture and values are shared in both China and Singapore. Originated from China, Confucianism has made profound impacts on not only China and the Chinese people, but also neighboring Asian countries, such as Japan, Korea, and Singapore. The non-exhaustive list of Confucian values includes filial piety, respecting the elderly, obedience to authority, grit, diligence, conscientious and pragmatic learning, and self-cultivation of morals (Chao, 1994; Huang & Gove, 2015). Moreover, Confucian culture values relationships between family members and wider kinship networks, in which familial obligations are respected and to be fulfilled through one's social successes and achievements. In Confucianism, individual family members are expected to take on the responsibility to practice the family's core values, preserve the family's image, and contribute to the family's honor and prestige by investing one's best efforts. An essential belief of Confucianism is that people should become good through *education*, which can cultivate one to be with virtue and honor to glory the whole family (Hieshima & Schneider, 1994), which is a central value and norms of the Confucian culture (Tweed & Lehman, 2002) that is relevant to this study.

For Chinese immigrants, Confucian culture and values provide them with ideas, beliefs, and coping strategies. Research has shown that Chinese parents who emigrated still retained traditional values, norms, and practices (Lin & Fu, 1990; Huntsinger et al.,

2000). For example, Chinese Americans preserve a highly discernible traditional pattern of Chinese practices, when adapt to the host society (Guo, 2006). Futher, Chinese immigrant parents believe that educational achievements will open doors to employment and self-sufficiency, which facilitate upward mobility (Katz, Juni & Shope, 1993, p. 771). Chinese immigrant parents transmit capital to their children to fulfil their educational expectations and aspirations. With comprehensive engagement with children's education, Chinese immigrants do not hesitate to invest with resources to support their children to achieve success in school (Ji & Koblinsky, 2009; Suizzo & Stapleton, 2007; Okagaki, 2001). They also sacrifice to equip their children with good education and a desirable social position (Chao, 1994; Peng, 1994).

In Singapore, the Confucian culture's inherent connections with the Singaporean society can be attributed to two main reasons. First, Confucian culture and traditions have been an essential part of Singaporean culture for almost two hundred years (Huat, 1989). Early Chinese migrants to Singapore during the 19$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ century, although having had little formal education, originated and grew up in China's Confucian society (Ee, 1961). They brought Confucian culture and traditions (such as filial piety, obedience to authority, grit, diligence, etc., as abovementioned) to Singapore and reinforced their traditional values for their survival, economic interests, and their contributions to the homeland (such as constructing ornate tombs, setting up schools, erecting ancestral temples) (Liu, 1998). Therefore, the Confucian culture has played a significant role in shaping and influencing the Singaporean society, a society where Chinese have been the majority.

Second, the economic successes of Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan in the 1980s have led researchers to investigate the effects of Confucian culture, of which the common cultural characteristics, e.g., hard work, thrift, respect for the elderly and the authority, independence, valuing education, etc., were found in the East Asian countries. For Singapore, the Confucian cultural norms and traditions are postulated to be crucial to the city-state's economic miracle (Hofheinz & Calder, 1982; Hicks & Redding, 1983). Besides, since independence, the Singapore government had be strong and far-sighted, which has advocated certain values of Confucianism, such as hard-working, family, collectivity over individuals, to create a sense of nationhood and increase the city-state's social cohesion (Krause, 1987, p. 110). Confucianism has been deliberated to be a positive force for economic growth when the right set of economic policies and structural conditions are present (Pang, 1998, p. 235).

The contexts of exit and reception inform us of the social background and conditions of the Chinese migration, which have created advantages and disadvantages for adaptation and integration of immigrants and their families in the new society. Furthermore, the contexts of exit and reception serve to provide or enhance certain cultural instruments (such as, valuing education), coping strategies, and approaches (such as, effortful working and intensive investment) used for migration, education, and mobility. In the case of the present study, the examination of parenting on children's education in the migration process requires an understanding of the pre- and post-migration contexts.

## 2.3 New Chinese Immigrant in Singapore: Socioeconomic Characteristics, Family Formation, and the Community

The socioeconomic resources that immigrant groups brought along from their home countries can support their adaptation and upward social mobility in the destination countries (Zhou & Lee, 2017). The pre-migration education, income, and profession that manifest the relative class position of the immigrant generation will significantly affect the family, community and ethnic capital formation, and the generational reproduction of class status (Lee & Zhou, 2015; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2017; Ichou, 2014).

### 2.3.1 *Xinyimin's* Socioeconomic Characteristics

New Chinese immigrants, i.e., *xinyimin* in Singapore, is a group primarily composed of highly educated international student-turned immigrants, emigrating professionals, scientists, engineers, educators, and entrepreneurs (Ou, 2019). Most of them are highly educated, English proficient, and well-integrated into the middle-class life of the Singaporean society; they are much younger than the native population and have a balanced sex ratio, thanks to the city-state's talent and immigration polies that focus on importing highly skilled and student migrants (Yeoh & Chang, 2001; Zhou, 2017).

This study focuses on the naturalized citizens, permanent residents (PR), and Employment Pass (EP) holders who are eligible to bring along their families and raise their children in Singapore. The new Chinese immigrants are different from early immigrants. Firstly, new Chinese native places are diverse. Early Chinese migrants can trace their ancestries back to coastal provinces Guangdong, Fujian, and Hainan, i.e., the traditional migrant hometowns (*qiaoxiang*, 侨乡) in Southern China, while original localities of new Chinese immigrants are geographically diverse and are different Chinese provinces and cities. The late Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew has

commented that Chinese immigrants of this era has come from both the north and south of the Yangtze, who are educated and skilled talents (Leong & Teo, 2011).

Secondly, early Chinese migrants to Singapore were mainly low skilled peasants with minimal or no education, whereas new Chinese immigrants in Singapore are well-educated and highly skilled professionals. Research has shown that the percentage of college graduates of *xinyimin* in Singapore (75%) (Zhou & Benton, 2017) is significantly higher than those of the general population both in China (6.5% in 2017) (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2019) and in Singapore (30.47% in 2015) (General Household Survey, 2016). The Singapore government has formulated and implemented a series of immigration-friendly schemes, especially during the 1990s, an example of such measures is "*Contact Singapore*"[10], aimed at importing foreign talent, including students, professionals, and entrepreneurs. China has been targeted as an important market to recruit young students. The Ministry of Education has sponsored outstanding Chinese students to study in Singapore.[11] The government has also successfully retained many excellent scholarship holders by bonding students through the six-year contractual work after graduation. The Ministry of Manpower has set "employment pass" (EP) procedures to facilitate eligible immigrants' application of permanent residency and other type of visas for their family members. In fact, many *xinyimins* have attained advanced (international) educational credentials beyond a bachelor's degree and

[10] Contact Singapore (Chinese: 联系新加坡) is a government agency of Singapore. Started by the Prime Minister's Office and then under the Ministry of Manpower in 1998, its function is to draw people from around the world to work, invest and live in Singapore, with the ultimate aim of boosting economic development. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contact_Singapore

[11] The government proactively recruited "foreign talents" and incorporated them into the citizenry by grant permanent residency status and naturalization. The government also implemented a policy to promote Chinese immigration by offering Chinese high-school and college students' full scholarships to study in Singapore's polytechnic and universities. A main string scholarship holder need to work a minimum of six years upon graduation in Singapore. This policy was proved effective (Yang 2014).

are mostly bilingual in Mandarin and English. In addition, a portion of the *xinyimin* population is also of upper middle class financial affluence. Since 2004, a business visa scheme, i.e., the Entrepass [12] was designed to welcome foreigners and immigrants who have the experience of doing business and the required start-up capital for immigration (Ministry of Manpower, 2016). These visas and immigration schemes (such as, Global Investor Program) specifically targets investors, businessmen, and affluent foreign nationals (Contact Singapore, 2015) who are favored by the government and therefore eligible to apply for permanent residency.

Thirdly, new Chinese immigrants have also shown diverse geographic patterns of resettlement. Earlier Chinese immigrants used to live in ethnic enclaves. In contrast, *xinyimins* in Singapore have assimilated into native neighborhoods. *Xinyimins* have mostly obtained permanent residency (PR) status, which enables them to benefit from government housing policies accordingly. For example, PRs are eligible to buy a second-hand public housing with much lower stamp duties compared to foreigners. Additionally, PR residents are encouraged by the government to apply for citizenship to benefit more from the government's housing policies.

Finally, new Chinese immigrants tend to settle down in Singapore. As it is well known, earlier Chinese immigrants often held a sojourning mind, worked hard, and emphasized on saving up for their eventual return to China. Nowadays, *xinyimins* tend to resettle and have a home in Singapore instead of returning to China. They seek to grow roots in their new homeland and integrate into the host society, even though many new immigrants have numerous opportunities to practice transnationalism to capitalize on economic opportunities in China (Zhou & Liu, forthcoming).

[12] https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/entrepass Accessed on 20 December 2020.

*Xinyimins* mostly are well-educated, possess "portable skills" and high incomes. They are overrepresented in higher education, and the research and development sector. A large percentage of this group are alumni of the best universities in Singapore. Therefore, they are often socially organized based on their professional fields and alma maters both in Singapore and in China (Liu, 2014). Although the government has set stringent criteria on education, professional experience, and salary level for granting permanent residency to foreign immigrants, research has shown that a sizable portion of permanent residents in Singapore are immigrants from mainland China. The official data of new Chinese immigrants are not published as it is considered as sensitive information for a multi-racial city-state. Therefore, researchers have estimated the population of new Chinese immigrants could be somewhere between 350,000 and 400,000 in 2008 (Zhuang & Liu 2009, p. 406). Regarding immigrants' amount and ratio to locals, Liu (2014) has made an analogy between *xinyimin* and the staff composition of one of Singapore's best Universities, which has shed light on the real situation and facilitated estimation and analysis. A later study has reported that the number could be 700,000–800,000 in 2010 (Yim, 2011, p. 284). On 27 July 2012, a *New York Times* report put the number as high as 'about one million' (Jacobs, 2012). [13] However, UNICEF reported that the number of immigrants from China in Singapore is 380,766 in 2013. [14] The government data has shown that new Chinese immigrants' numbers have surged in the 1990s and has sustained for two decades (Ou, 2019). However, due to new Chinese immigrant's influx and its backlash in late 2000s (Liu, 2014), the government has tightened immigration

[13] https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/27/world/asia/in-singapore-vitriol-against-newcomers-from-mainland-china.html Accessed on 11 Dec 2020.
[14] Migration Profiles. https://esa.un.org/miggmgprofiles/indicators/files/Singapore.pdf Accessed on 19 Dec 2020.

policies to contain the increase of new Chinese immigrants. [15] It also controlled the approval of PR and new citizen applications and made the immigration surge in 2000s with an abrupt finish in 2010 (an average increase rate of 8.4% for PR from 2005 to 2009 dropped to 1.5 percent in 2010) [16] (Ho & Foo 2017; Zhan & Zhou, 2019).

The arrival of *xinyimin* has helped Singapore to replenish the Chinese population, which has relieved the city-state's demographic woes caused by the declining natural growth rate and the aging population (Sun, 2012). However, a sizeable, highly visible, and socioeconomically mobile newcomer group has caused social backlash in the Singapore society and among Chinese Singaporeans in particular (Liu, 2014). Natives viewed *xinyimin* as unfair economic competitors, who took professional jobs and university places from the natives, and a cultural threat to dilute the cohesiveness of Singapore's "multicultural" society (Yeoh & Lin, 2013; Liu, 2014). They voiced their discontents and resentments towards *xinyimin* and even organized protest rallies in public. Participants of this study often evoked negative stereotypes that are related to new Chinese immigrants, such as study mothers and low-skilled work permit holders, which reflect the social prejudice commonly encountered by *xinyimin* when they interact with locals. Given Singapore's socio-political circumstances, *xinyimin* are relatively weak in collectively resisting the backlash because they are a group that lacks a well-organized ethnic community (Liu, 2014). Favorable reception has turned hostile since 2013 as the government has adopted a series of stringent measures to control Chinese immigration in response to popular discontents (Yeoh & Lam, 2016; Zhan & Zhou, 2019). *Xinyimin's*

[10, 15] https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/rapid-growth-singapores-immigrant-population-brings-policy-challenges Access on 19 December 2020.

lack of political power in making claims to their rights alienates them and prevents them from growing deeper roots in the Singapore society, therefore, many of them take advantage of the ease of internet communication and convenience of travel to rekindle ties with their native communities (Zhou & Liu, 2015).

### 2.3.2 Family Formation

New Chinese immigrants to Singapore are predominately young with a balanced sex ratio. They consist of mainly students-turned immigrants, highly educated professionals, entrepreneurs, and investors. The age structure is skewed toward younger cohorts of either those at working age or those born to new immigrant families (Zhou & Wang, 2019). As they strive to get resettled and move ahead in the labor market, many have formed families and raised children in Singapore. A typical *xinyimin* family is made up of two full-time working parents and one to two young children with the occasional presence of transnational grandparent(s). My data showed that among the 50 interview participants, all are married and in intact family, though some are in the form of transnational and split household. Their average age is 39 years old, and 33 interview participants have 2 children, a ratio of 66%.

Specifically, *xinyimin's* families can be categorized into three types, i.e., the nuclear family, the *quasi*-extended family, and the transnational family.

For most of the new Chinese immigrants, they tend to build an intact nuclear family after spending important formative years of their life as a foreign student or a professional, or sequentially both, in Singapore. In a nuclear family, a middle age young couple as naturalized and stable *xinyimins* live with their dependent children in one household. The nuclear family is the most common family type for *xinyimins*.

Singapore's immigration policy deliberately selects young talent, and favors those of Chinese descents (students, skilled workers, businessmen, etc.). Those arriving in Singapore after the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century have started to form families and have children, despite their significant delays in both marriage and childbirth compared to the native population. The majority of *xiyimin* families are transitioning from couple-only families to nuclear families with children. Data from my study showed that, as of 2018, the new millennium cohort (those arriving in Singapore in the 2000s) constituted the majority of *xinyimin*, mostly in their 30s and 40s (46/50, a ratio of 92%). Most got married in their late 20s to early 30s (average age of children of interview participants is 9.4 years). Both partners in *xinyimin* families are salaried professionals pursuing their own career development and have generally achieved higher socioeconomic status than those in native families. Because of their career, they also delayed childbirth. Earlier cohorts of Chinese immigrants mainly arrived in Singapore in early 1990s, who have children that have already transitioned into adulthood and entered the labor market.

The second type is identified to be the *quasi*-extended family. In a nuclear *xinyimin* family, *xinyimin* couple seldom have social support besides their co-ethnic social networks (their friends, colleagues, neighbors) and limited public institutions. As mentioned, our data showed that many *xinyimin* families are made up of two full-time working parents and one to two young children, with occasional or long-term presence of transnational grandparent(s) in Singapore (for all 29 citizen and most PR (11/18) interview participants), thanks to the older generation's transnational movement or migration (Zhou & Wang, 2019). I consider families with grandparents' presence as

*quasi*-extended families, where parents of *xinyimin* often joined the family on visitor visas (either short-term or long-term) to provide childcare for the immigrant generation (Chiu & Ho, 2020; Nedelcu & Wyss, 2019). *Xinyimin's* immigration status is one of the most important factors that influences the formation of extended transnational families in Singapore. Established *xinyimin* (mainly PRs and citizens) are entitled to apply for a short- or long-term visit passes, and even PR status for their parents and in-laws. As *xinyimin* are still young and have just built up their careers, with their children still in infancy or early childhood, they are often in need of social support in terms of early childcare. The *quasi*-extended transnational family, therefore, is an effective strategy for the immigrant generation to focus on their occupation and career future and to strive for a better status and life in the host society. It has functioned not only for childrearing, but also to facilitate the migrant generation's settlement and upward social mobility. All new citizen interview participants are from *quasi*-extended families, where grandparents held or used to hold long-term or short-term visas to help take care of their children. All new citizens and PRs of my interview participants got their parents approved to stay on a long-term (renewable on a five-year basis) or short-term visit by the government. While in a few EP holder cases, young immigrants who have just stepped up their careers and cannot meet the salary requirement for bring family were not successful in applying these visit visas. These *xinyimin*, therefore, send their children back to China to be cared for by the grandparents, forming a split extended household (Zhou & Wang, 2019).

Thirdly, I found there are transnational families among new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, which refers to a family that has adopted a split-household strategy to live in different countries for the sake of family members' educational and professional

advancement (Ho & Bedford, 2008). Research has shown that at least one of the parents in a transnational family is highly educated, skilled, and works in a global industry. The transnational member(s) of their family frequently travel for work, sustain close cultural, economic and social relationships through transnational ties, and intend to move again (Ong, 1999; Waters, 2005; Chan, 2018; Bartley & Spoonley, 2008). Research has reported the phenomenon of bi-local families in the early 1990s, such as "astronaut" families (e.g., Hong Kong (HK) Chinese immigrants doing business in HK and commuting between HK and their country of residence in the Western migration destination countries) (Ip, 2000, p. 4; Ong, 1999, p. 19). Studies on "parachute kid" and "satellite kid" have examined how immigrant children stayed in various destinations for overseas education, with their parents returning to their native countries for work (Zhou, 1998; Waters, 2005, p. 365).

*Xinyimins* are inclined to settle down in Singapore, while taking advantage of numerous opportunities to practice transnationalism and capitalize on economic opportunities back in China (Zhou & Liu, forthcoming). I found that the astronaut family strategy was employed by many new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, which facilitated the formation of transnational families among *xinyimins*. In the transnational family, the Chinese transnationals may leave for another country (e.g., China) for career development, while other family members reside in Singapore. In these families, at least one parent (usually the father) work and reside overseas, frequently commuting between the residing country and Singapore. From my interviews and observations, a transnational family often have the couple and children hold different citizenships for pragmatic reasons. According to my data and actual and virtual observations, some new Chinese

immigrant families have mixed citizenship statuses (as they tend to talk about how to cope or respond to this family situation when there are updated official news from Singapore and Chinese regarding migration), where either the wife or the husband retains Chinese nationality and the other family members (i.e., the spouse and children) obtain the Singapore citizenship. Parents make the rational choice for the family to split transnationally to facilitate their children to live with one parent (normally mother) and to be educated in Singapore's education system. This form of transnational family is deliberated as a strategy, either to cope with job insecurity or to ensure a better chance for career, providing parents with flexibility for their career and their children with good education for future status. The transnational way of family life has been a pragmatic approach to pursue various forms of capital, such as education, to facilitate the family's upward social mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Waters, 2005).

### 2.3.3 New Chinese Immigrant Community

Research suggests that ethnic Chinese communities in various locations of the globe have primarily relied on three important types of institutions to maintain a collective sense of Chinese identity, namely voluntary organizations (such as chambers of commerce and clan associations), Chinese-language education, and Chinese language media (Sun, 2005, p. 68). In Singapore, traditional clan associations organized on the basis of kinship and locality have played significant roles in organizing earlier Chinese low-skilled peasants from southern China and providing them with social support for their settlement and survival. For new Chinese immigrants, their associations share similar traits with their counterparts in other destinations, but are also fundamentally different from their predecessors'. The new associations in Singapore are more inclusive,

recruiting members from diverse localities of origin (Liu, 2012). For example, new associations, such as *Hua Yuan Association* (华源会) and *Tian Fu Association (Singapore)* (新加坡天府会) recruit *xinyimin* from both the north and south of China. Further, new Chinese immigrant associations are in line with the requirement of the Singapore government to facilitate *xinyimins'* integration into the local society. They also play a role in promoting bilateral economic and cultural relationships between China and Singapore. Based on ethnic commonalities, new associations work more in the realms of economy, culture, and business to support new Chinese immigrants' bilateral activities in China and Singapore, which are institutions and mechanisms that promote transnational social and economic communication and collaboration (Liu, 2012). In addition, *xinyimins* at the turn of the twentieth century are more educated, technology savvy, and mobile. They tend to form voluntary organizations based on alumni and professional networks that are different from the traditional forms of organizations that are based on kinship and locality (Zhou & Liu, 2016), as most of *xinyimins* are student migrants with advanced degrees obtained from distinguished universities in Singapore or Western developed countries and the Singapore immigration policies stress to recruit highly skilled immigrants (Yeoh & Chang, 2001). My data and actual and virtual observations also showed that interview participants tend to keep close relationships with their alumni through online social media platform.

It is noted that in recent years, the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) based social media, such as bulletin board systems (BBS) and social media platforms (such as *Facebook, Instagram, WeChat*, etc.), have increasingly played an instrumental role in connecting the diasporic Chinese and establishing wider social

networks among them. It has facilitated building social ties and connections (although often in the form of weak ties) and provided social support for immigrants to adapt in their host societies. Based on my interviews and observations, I find that the online mobile social media platform *WeChat* is the most widely used online mobile social media platform among the Chinese, including overseas Chinese. For example, without exception, all my interview participants have a *WeChat* account and use it with different frequency. The online *xinyimin* community promotes information sharing, proliferates social networks, and enhances social solidarity. It is particularly effective in providing social support when members have common goals, such as promoting their children's education. As an online mobile social media platform, *WeChat* can instantly connect users and facilitate communication. In its interactive environment, *WeChat* facilitates reciprocity between individuals through instant messages and group discussions, which can enhance interconnections and networks among *xinyimin* and their community based on their common interests and goals (Rheingold, 1993, p. 24; Liu, 2005, p. 306). In fact, new Chinese immigrants have formed virtual communities on the mobile online social media platform, which are often able to function similarly as offline voluntary organizations (Chen, 2011). Empirical research has suggested that new Chinese immigrants in Singapore actively sought for their community's advice and social assistance from online channels (Chen, 2010). In the following chapters, I will show how the online mobile social media platform *WeChat* has enabled *xinyimin* to build and enlarge their social connections and networks and how this formation of online community has provided social support to *xinyimin* for them to practice parenting on their children's education.

In summary, this chapter provides an overview of *xinyimin* in Singapore. With a brief review of Chinese migration history to Singapore, the profile of early Chinese immigrants and their community, I examined the context of exit and context of reception for new Chinese immigration to Singapore after 1990s. I noted that the two societies share similar Confucian culture and the contexts comprised of important cultural and structural factors that create opportunities and challenges for new Chinese immigrants and their families in the new society. With understanding the socioeconomic characteristics, family formation, and *xinyimin* community, I will examine in more details about the contextual challenges that new Chinese immigrant face in the Singapore society in next Chapter.

# Chapter 3

## Challenges for New Chinese Immigrants in Raising Children in Singapore

Singapore is a multiracial and multilingual society with a Chinese majority, which is composed of about 75% of the total population. Given its economic prosperity, political stability, cultural affinity, and geographical proximity to Mainland China, Singapore has been a preferred migration destination for *xinyimin*. As discussed in Chapter 2, new Chinese immigrants share similar cultural heritage, tradition, values, and norms, with the core group of the Singaporean society (Zhou & Wang, 2019). For example, both the Mainland Chinese and the Singapore native-born Chinese see education as the most important gateway to acquire personal advancement, and they particularly emphasise educational excellence to achieve social mobility (Dyson, 2001; Zhou, 2000). However, new Chinese immigrants have also displayed distinct demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, and had different educational and social experiences, which make them different from the native-born Chinese Singaporeans. In addition, Singapore society features unique language and cultural settings, highly Westernised institutional structures and social systems, and British-style parliamentary democracy, which have created a set of challenges and barriers to constrain *xinyimin's* efforts to fulfil their expectations for educational success and upward social mobility in the Singapore society.

In this chapter, I will address the research question: What challenges do new Chinese immigrant parents face in raising children in Singapore? Based on interview data and online participant observations, analysis of government policies and media reports, I identify the cultural and structural factors including the language and cultural barriers, the institutional barriers (mainly the immigration policies and education systems), and social

discrimination. I explain how these factors interact to create challenges for new Chinese immigrants in their host society. I then discuss how the challenges have affected *xinyimin* parents' views on childrearing, parenting strategies, and practices to promote children's education.

## 3.1 Language and Cultural Barriers

### 3.1.1 Language Barriers

Singapore features a unique East and West hybrid cultural setting. As a multiracial nation-state decolonised from Britain, Singapore's government, legal structures, and social systems are highly Westernised and basically modelled after the British parliamentary democracy (Bellows, 2009; Quah, 2010). Four main languages—English, Chinese, Malay, and Tamil—are officially recognized and used, however, Singapore's language landscape does not reflect its racial and ethnic makeup. The government implements a top-down language intervention policy and endorses the predominant role of the English language in the city-state's actual linguistic practices. English is used as the main medium of communication in politics, public administration, finance, and business, and as the medium of instruction in education (Chew, 2007). Currently, Singapore has presented itself to be a linguistically homogeneous society, in which English is commonly used among all races, especially young generations (Zhao & Liu, 2008). Therefore, although Chinese, Malay, and Tamil are widely used in respective racial and ethnic communities, English is the official language that functions to bridge the city-state's multiracial and multi-ethnic groups and connect the country to the world. However, the dominance of English presents a significant language barrier not only to non-English speaking foreigners, but also to natives who are not proficient in the

language. For new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, most of them either completed their third-tier education in Singapore or elsewhere in Western countries, especially English-speaking countries, e.g., the U.S., Canada, UK, Australia, etc. Familiar with Western culture, language, and ways of thinking, most of them are also fluent English-Chinese bilingual speakers. However, the languages that they speak, their cultural expressions, and behavioural patterns, still distinguish them from natives. They speak English with a Chinese accent and Mandarin with little rural accent, and their beliefs and behavioural patterns are based more on Chinese standards than Western standards (Wang & Lo 2005; Zhou & Wang 2019). Immigrants in Singapore grapple with how English is used by different ethnicities, and what locals really mean when they use certain expressions (Mathews & Zhang, 2016). In terms of education and parenting, our interview participants stated the following language-related challenges in their migration life.

Ms. Tian Weixin, a 36-year-old naturalized citizen, is a mother of a Primary Four girl and a new-born baby boy. She pursued and obtained her PhD in one of Singapore's best universities, she works in a university as a senior administrative staff. Though she is a well-educated and a skilled professional, she commented that according to her personal experience and observation, language weakness is one of the constraints or disadvantages for herself (and for *xinyimins*) to achieve a higher management position in the workplace.

> "…I am a good employee. In the past few years, I have worked for three different bosses due to the university's restructuring. During this process, I have been shifted to different departments, where my job and position have been indispensable. I am proud that all my bosses liked me, as I can work efficiently and help them to resolve critical problems. [When doing

annual performance evaluation for all staff], they all gave me best grading, i.e., A level on a scale of A to E. However, my work is mainly to conduct model simulation, which is more technical, and less people and management oriented. I know that *xinyimin*, like me, is strong in hard skills, such as research and development, technological ones, but weak in soft skills, such as speaking English, presentation skills, and so on. Language capabilities, including fluency, conventions, even accent, are significant challenges that constrain we *xinyimin* in social and professional life…"

"For children's education, I did not realize that English language and related abilities are such important criteria that can measure children's aptitudes until my daughter participated in the Gifted Education Programme (GEP) examination and screening in primary grade three. My daughter is very strong in Chinese and Mathematics, but comparatively weak in English. The primary reason for her to fail in the second-round GEP screening is that I did not pay enough attention to her English learning. I should have recognised earlier that the Singapore education has attached extremely high importance to English capabilities. We should always improve English skills and adapt well to the local English practicing environment, which reflects an essential difference between we *xinyimin* and local Chinese. This will have deep implications on our career and life chances..."

In addition, language barriers constrain *xinyimin* parents' school involvement, as the inability to speak fluent English impedes parental communication with teachers and participation in school activities. Some of our interviews reported that *xinyimin* parents were often not confident enough to communicate with school and teachers, especially in face-to-face meetings, due to the lack of English proficiency. *Xinyimin* parents who prefer to speak Chinese rather than English interact less with teachers and the school than others. They seldom attempt to be volunteers in school events and activities. Even with invitation, parents with limited English skills participate much less in school affairs (for example, the parents' association) compared to their native counterparts, which have also been reported by prior studies (Mapp, 2003; Constantino, Cui & Faltis, 1995).

Lin Meng is a Singapore PR and a housemaker. She came to Singapore three years ago. Her boy was in Primary One at the time of our interview. She stated that:

> "I hesitated to be a volunteer in school activities, such as the field trip to zoo and aquarium. Although I am willing to help out at the school event, I know that a parent-volunteer would need to have good English skills, and can at least communicate fluently and understand accented English (such as English spoken by Malay and Indian children) well. I am not confident in this regard really. I feel my English is not that strong and might not be able to handle well when some urgent things happen."

Liu Jing is a permanent resident and worked as a Chinese teacher in a private tutoring school. Lack of English proficiency has constrained her from communicating with her son's school and teachers. She stated,

> "I am really concerned about my child's school performance, and I would like to keep in regular touch with the teacher to know and monitor my son's progress. However, I feel frustrated when communicating with teachers, as both my oral and written English are not good. I cannot express myself and make teacher understand me well. So, I often feel that I made troubles for teachers during the phone call or messaging communications, though they have been patient and responsive to help explain about the relevant school matters and the status of my child. Currently, I seldom inquire with teachers about my son's situation in school …"

It should be noted that many new Chinese immigrants have intentionally retained the practice of Chinese speaking and promoted in-depth learning of Chinese history and culture for their children. Admittedly, Singapore's bilingual environment has provided a friendly host context for contemporary Chinese immigrants to communicate in the mother tongue and preserve the Chinese language, culture, and ethnic identity. Furthermore, Chinese language in Singapore has its unique meaning and significant functions (Pendley, 1983; Tan, 2006). The Singapore government has continuously put in efforts to encourage Mandarin speaking among Chinese Singaporeans (Tan, 2006), evidenced by the Speak Mandarin Campaign, which has been ongoing for forty years (Bokhorst-Heng, 1999), and the Promote Mandarin Council, which is devoted to advocating Chinese language (Teo, 2005).

### 3.1.2 Cultural Barriers

Singapore features a set of distinct cultures and traditions. Besides the legacies from the British rule, the civilizations of Southeast Asia, China, Islam and India synthesised and evolved throughout the Singapore's history (Sen, 2006; Wee, 2007). For new Chinese immigrants, a lack of understanding of Singapore's unique culture restrains their adaptation and contains their effective parenting practices on children's education.

Singapore's political, social and economic systems are established on the foundation of the British colonial regime. The city-state is led by the English-educated elites, and its institutions and rules are engineered based on Western nation-state theories and practices. It features an authoritarian, highly centralised bureaucratic administration system, which believes in rational, scientific, and managerial approaches of governance (Castells 1992; Rodan 2004). The highly centralised administration can be seen in Singapore's daily governance, commerce, and education practices. Many Chinese immigrants may find that the operation of the city-nation is essentially different from what they thought it would be. As Mr Lee Kuan Yew commented, although Singaporean and China Chinese are both Mandarin speaking, they differ in mental constitution, thinking modes, and working practices (*The Straits Times*, August 14, 2009). *Xinyimins* in Singapore are foreign-born and mostly arrived after completing formal education. Their language skills, value systems, and behavioural patterns have been shaped by their experiences in China. *Xinyimins* who are unfamiliar with Singapore's systems and institutions, have difficulties in communication with and access to the administrative, social, and health services (Zhou & Wang, 2019). When it comes to children's education, although some *xinyimin* parents command good English, they lack a deep understanding of Singapore's culture.

In the 1980s, the Singapore government started to introduce policies to formalise a set of guiding moral principles based on Confucian culture and values, which were to be instilled in schools, workplaces and homes. The government aimed to steer the country and people to retain their Asian cultural heritage and Confucian values (Huat, 1989). This was also an attempt to reduce the influence of Western values that stressed individualism and materialism. With the official endorsement, the Confucian values, such as respect for authority, filial piety, social harmony and order, thrift and hard-working, were reinforced and promoted in Singapore, and have arisen to be the national ideology.

Our interview participants have mentioned the following culture-related challenges, which have manifested cultural differences between the two countries.

Mr. Lee Jing is a 35-year naturalized citizen, and a father of two children. He worked in shipping industry as an engineer and has just started his own business related to shipping technology. Both Mr. Lee and his wife are concerned about their children's school performance and educational achievement. Lee Jing stated,

> "After my daughter entered into primary school, I started to learn and understand local school practices and the vision and expectation of teachers. I realise it is quite different from what we have learnt from our schooling experience in China. I got to understand how the Singapore government has invested and facilitated children's well-rounded development. It seems that we *xinyimins* only pay attention to children's learning of key subjects, such as Mathematics, English and Mother Tongue, but often neglect the cultivation of leadership, teamwork, presentation skills, and the ability to speak in front of audience. I realise

> that Singapore's Western-style education differs from our understanding about education, and as an immigrant parent. I should put in more effort to learn from the local culture and the education philosophy, which would not only benefit my children's education experience in Singapore, but also help my own adaptation in the society."

Ms. Lynn is a 33-year Chinese national and a Singapore PR who is married to a native Chinese Singaporean. Lynn has two children who are at Primary One and Primary Four, respectively. As a working professional, Lynn has a busy daily schedule and she seldom has time to involve herself in children's learning. Her narratives show that *xinyimin* and locals have very different mindsets and thoughts about children's education and learning.

> "…I understand that many new Chinese immigrants spend a lot of effort on children's academic and non-academic learning. I am not that kind of tiger mother [laugh]. I also have different opinions from my husband with regard to children's learning. My husband's thinking is that the school and teachers are the authority. He is very serious about children's school performance. He particularly requires children to follow what teachers ask students to do…. I disagree with him, but choose to respect his way. I can see that locals have strong belief in their education system and wish to follow the authority…"

The school system imparts knowledge and ideology and socialise children to be ideal social members and/or citizens. *Xinyimin* parents, who obtain formal education mainly from Chinese education systems, might find their own educational experience to

be of little reference for their children's study in Singapore. However, many new Chinese immigrants have international educational credentials (Yeoh & Chang, 2001). Their overseas education and personal experience allow them to understand and learn from Singapore's education and culture. Nevertheless, even for parents who do not have difficulties in language, their cultural capital is often not valued by institutions (such as schools and teachers) of the host society. Studies have found that immigrants' foreign educational and occupational credentials are not fully recognized in the host country and that the immigrants are disadvantaged with accented spoken English and non-English literacy practices (Guo, 2009).

According to my interview participants, in the Singapore education system, school and teachers are the authority, and parents only cooperate what school and teachers require children and parents to do, and it seems that they seldom get feedbacks that are to their concerns.

Xiao Wen is a naturalized citizen, and a technologist in a medicine company. She has two sons, one in Secondary One and the other in Primary Two. When talking about culture related issues in education, she commented that:

> "According to my personal experience, parents and teachers in Singapore school maintain mutual respect and a courteous relationship. Teachers play a role of informer, as they routinely tell parents what happen, what they do and are going to do. When I have some real concerns, for example, the criteria for class prefect selection and the year-end assessment and awards, I seldom obtain expected explanations from teachers. I hope to understand with more details about the standard, criteria or the process,

which will help parents to facilitate children to strive for a better chance. As you know, the school issued awards are always very encouraging for children, but the process seems not transparent. I do not know teachers' standard, and have little idea about how to improve. The only thing that parent can be sure is that you need to emphasize on children's academic performance and spend more time on learning at home."

## 3.2 Institutional Barriers

### 3.2.1 The Singapore Immigration Policy

Singapore has historically been an immigration society and migration is closely intertwined with its development (Yeoh, 2007, p. 1). Since becoming an independent republic, immigrants have been critical to the city-state's economic growth, which has kept increasing at an average rate of 8 percent per year from the year 1965 to 2015 (Leong, Rueppel & Hong, 2014). The liberal immigration and foreign talent policy have not only sustained the city-country's economic growth, but also enhanced its global competitiveness, as Singapore's industrial upgrading and economic transformation would not have been possible without foreign workers and talents' contributions.

In managing immigrants, the government categorises immigrants into two groups: the transient low-skilled labourers, and the highly skilled foreign talents. Since the economy transformed from labour-intensive to capital and skill-intensive manufacturing in late 1980s, the Singapore government has adopted this bifurcated immigration policy. The government issues different types of visas to foreign employees, such as Employment Pass (EP), S Pass (SP), and Work Permit (WP). Some special visas are

approved case by case for entrepreneurs, investors, and those extraordinary talents and experts in sports, arts, science, and education to migrate. The EP is for foreigners who have professional qualifications and work in a professional, managerial, executive, and technical capacity. The S Pass is for semi-skilled foreigners, who hold at least a diploma, or technical qualifications, and are employed as mid-level executives and frontline staff. The WPs are for low-skilled foreign labourers, such as workers in the construction industry and domestic helpers.

The Singapore immigration policy, foreign talent policy, and population policy are interrelated, and function to serve the city-state's human capital needs and economic development. The government has adopted a Singaporeans first principle (Bork-Hüffer, 2017; Leong, Rueppel & Hong, 2014), and made its immigration institutions function to form a social hierarchy, where the foreign immigrants and workers are categorised on various visas, and different residential statuses (such as short and long-term visitors, PRs, citizens) that can be correspondingly linked to different levels of rights, entitlements, and eligibility (for example, length of stay, rights to buy housing, children's school enrolment, etc.), which are elaborated below.

First, the visa type indicates one's eligibility for different lengths of residence in Singapore, and links to different levels of rights, entitlements, and eligibility (such as length of stay, rights to buy housing, children's school enrolment, healthcare subsidy, etc.). The government considers EP holders, i.e., the highly skilled and professional foreign talents, to be valuable human capital, and formulated immigration policy to incentivise EP holders to settle down. Although EP holders are not endowed with any form of national and social benefits and welfare, this group of non-resident population is

deemed to be at intermediate status and is exclusively accessible to permanent residency (PR). After being approved to be PRs, these foreigners are expected to sink their roots to become naturalised citizens.

Second, in more recent years, the volume of low to middle skilled immigrants has been strictly control and the approval of PR status are increasingly tightened. According to my interviews, it is believed that an individual or family's education background, socioeconomic status, potential to contribute to the economy, length of residence, cultural compatibility are the criteria to be considered in approving permanent residency. However, details of this reviewing process are kept confidential by the government. Many immigrants deem the criteria to be inconsistent, as applicants with similar backgrounds received different outcomes according to my interview participants. As the government has tightened the permanent residency granting since 2010, and the applications are several times higher than the planned annual quota, many applications are turned down yearly. The peak of permanent residency grant was in 2008, when 79,167 foreigners were approved as PR (Rikvin Pte Ltd, 2014). In recent years, around 30,000 foreigners are granted permanent residency each year since 2010 (PMP Strategy Group, 2018).

Third, "Singaporeans First" is a rule of thumb, and is used to differentiate the state and social benefits that are linked to different categories of groups, i.e., residents (citizens and PRs) and non-residents (EP, SP holders, etc.). Singapore citizens are prioritised with state subsidies and policy preferences over PRs, and non-resident foreigners are excluded from many benefits. The disparity has been enlarged to benefit the citizen population in the recent years. PRs are only entitled to a limited number of

social privileges and state support in areas such as educational and medical subsidies, and a tax-deductible purchase of public housing. In fact, "Singaporeans First" has been a ideaology and a strategy in Singapore, which is implemented and practiced in all public sectors, and across a wide spectrum of economic, educational, and social realms. The government gives an absolute advantage and priority to citizens over PRs and all non-residents. For example, the eligibility for a subsidised flat from Housing Development Board (HDB), children's enrolment to a preferred school, higher education and childcare subsidies, healthcare subsidies, and political right to vote in the general election. The distinction in favour of citizens not only serves a reward for Singaporean identity and reassures that citizens' interests lie in the core of policymaking, but also as incentives for eligible foreigners to embrace Singapore citizenship.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, my interview participants are primarily naturalised citizens (29), and PRs (18), and a small number of EP (2) and DP (1) holders, respectively. When they discuss the policy constraints and institutional barriers, these immigrant parents often refer to the specific and constantly adjusted rules of immigration policy to explain how institutional barriers have been created for their immigration life. The following narratives manifest the abovementioned intangible social hierarchy, and show that immigration policies categorise immigrants, and link them to different levels of benefits and opportunities.

The EP and SP holders' primary struggle is to meet the policy requirement of a minimum monthly salary, which is a prerequisite for the issuance of Dependent Passes (DP). For instance, in 2018, the minimum fixed monthly salary was increased to S$6,000 from S$5,000 in 2017 (Ministry of Manpower, 2018). As the monthly salary level

subjects to the government's periodic updates, many EP and SP holders find it hard to meet the increasingly high requirement for bringing in dependents (family members). In fact, even for visa holders who match the salary level, they face specific policy constraint, which prevents the family reunion or hinder immigrant's plan for settlement and remigration.

Hao Jiang, a 34-year-old EP holder, arrived in Singapore in 2016 and worked in a semiconductor company as an engineer. After working here for half a year, he decided to apply for dependent passes for his wife and six-year-old son. However, the results of the application disappointed him, as his wife's application was rejected while his son's visa application was approved. He described his experience to me.

> "I was very frustrated about this application result and feel it is ridiculous. It is not possible for me to bring my son to Singapore without his mother's presence. It would be very difficult for me to work as a full-time professional and take care of a young boy on my own ... however, I have no other choice except for working harder. I believed that striving for a handsome salary and a longer length of residence would be helpful for my future application ... This experience taught me that immigrants like me are subject to strict policy regulation and institutional constraints. As a junior professional, I lack the flexibility that is enjoyed by PRs. The EP pass is fixed to my current job and I cannot bring in dependents as expected…I plan to apply for PR, which will allow me to bring dependents."

Hu Yu is a dependent pass holder, and her husband is a University researcher and an EP holder. She is a mother of two children, a Primary One boy and a kindergarten girl. She expressed frustration about the uncertainty of her family's future work and life, or an uncertain and unstable social status. She stated,

> "My husband got a research job offer three years ago from his current boss at ABC university, then he came to Singapore on an EP visa. His current monthly salary is okay and matches the policy requirement to bring in dependents. However, as foreigners, we have a very high familial living cost. Though our boy studies in a public primary school, our daughter doesn't have chance to enrol in a government-subsidised childcare centre. We currently send her to a private childcare, which is very expensive. In the meantime, it is not easy for me to find an appropriate job. The reason is that my university degree is not recognized by local companies, and I lack English proficiency and local working experience. I hope this transient life can become more stable. We can either return to China or obtain PR status to continue to stay here. Currently, even though my husband has a stable job, our family income is not at a high level. With little chance to get our PR application approved, it is definitely disadvantageous for us to plan for long-term settlement in Singapore."

Even for highly skilled and high-income professionals, they also confront policy barriers that deeply influence their family decisions on children's education and life plan.

Li Mo is a 38-year-old housemaker and a mother of two children: a 9-year-old boy in Primary Two, and a 4-year-old girl in Nursery Two. Mo held a dependent pass

attached to her husband's EP pass. She arrived in Singapore in 2010, one year after her husband started working in the city-state. Since then, the couple has lived in Singapore and gave birth to their two children. By the time of our interview, the family's application for permanent residency was turned down twice in the past three consecutive years, which had made them feel frustrated. The couple found it difficult to decide whether to migrate again to other countries or continue this floating status. Mo said that:

> "… My husband is a management-level senior engineer in a German company. His monthly salary is much higher than the policy required level. We have lived here for more than eight years. We rent a condominium apartment. Our son studies in a neighbourhood primary school and his academic and non-academic performance are both excellent. Our son has been the only leadership and model-student award winner of the class for two consecutive years. In terms of our children's education, we invest heavily not only on children's learning and schooling, but also on children's all-round development, such as music instrument, drawing, sports, and so on. I think our belief and approach are in line with what the government advocates for education…I don't understand why our applications were turned down (twice).
>
> "…Since we are not accepted to settle down here, we have to make alternative plans, either migration again, or to return to China. A further migration to another country would definitely influence our children's schooling and our family's housing plans. Presently, we need to always bear in mind that we are foreigners and have to rely on ourselves to strive

for opportunities of good education, healthcare, and housing. We have totally different thinking compared to that of our PR and citizen friends."

As mentioned earlier, Singapore's immigration policy has the function to relieve the country's population woes, i.e., an aging population and a dangerously low fertility rate. The dependence on immigration requires the government to formulate sophisticated migration policies, which can both control and integrate immigrants. Although PRs receive more benefits than pass holders, such as the eligibility to enrol children in a public school they are at an apparently inferior social position when compared to Singapore citizens.

Ms. Xiong, a father of a 7-year-old Primary Two boy, is an IT engineer. He held an EP when arrived in Singapore eleven years ago. Three years later after arrival, Mr. Xiong, his wife and their young baby boy were granted permanent residency. At the time of interview, his wife has just given birth to their second child. He commented:

"(After the school fee subsidy reform last year) as PR, we do not have any government subsidy for childcare, thus we pay a 50% higher childcare fee than citizens do. In fact, the overall living cost for us is much higher than that for citizens. We pay higher childcare fee, higher tax for purchasing house, higher levy for a domestic helper, and so on. In more recent years, I can see and experience the widening disparities in social benefits between PRs and citizens. For example, a new policy is going to be implemented soon, which requires PRs to pay much higher school fees than citizens. The primary school fee for PRs would be $500 per academic year, while the fee for Singaporean student is only $6.5. I believe this is government's

strategy to incentivise PRs to obtain citizenship, as citizenship helps to reduce the financial burden."

Another interview participant and her attainment of PR status helped to illustrates how education facilitates the family's mobility in the host Singapore society. Mdm. Ding is a PR, technology company sales, a mother of a polytechnic girl. She migrated for her daughter's education and arrived at Singapore in the year that her daughter was Primary Three. She said:

"My husband and I made the decision to come here when my daughter was 10 years old. I was influenced by my relative, who sent her child to Singapore to study in the public school, then I followed her practice…I am very proud that we have lived through all those difficulties, because at that time, we are foreigners, myself was a study mother and was not eligible to find a job. My husband was on one-year valid visa initially and earned very few monthly salary. My daughter also degraded one year (due to language problem) and read Primary Three again…the time is most difficult for my family. When my daughter entered into secondary two, she participated in an important Chinese language competition and won a gold medal. The school president appraised her highly for this honor and asked her what she expected for award, she said she want PR status, as daddy and mummy work hard for achieving this status…the result was that the president wrote to ICA officer, which had strongly supported our PR application, and helped us gain a successful approval."

Mdm. Ding's case may be an 'outlier', but it helps to explain how keen immigrants expect to obtain a stable status, and how important an opportunity for upward social mobility have facilitated the family to achieve a better life in the host society.

Even after becoming new citizens, *xinyimin* may still be subjected to the immigrant status constraint and lack of social connections and support. For example, the education system of Singapore has prioritised local Singaporean children through several registration phases to enrol in those good primary schools. Alumni status of a child's siblings, parents, and grandparents would endow a priority for their children's enrolment in a (good) school, which disadvantaged *xinyimin.* Mr. Sun Yang, a 35-year-old new citizen, is a father of two girls (Primary Grade Two and Kindergarten One), and an engineer in a Norway company. He stated:

> "Even we are bestowed with citizen status, we have little chance to access those best educational resources, such as an elite school. The reason is that you need to have social connections to win those priorities (e.g., siblings' enrolment, alumni parents, school staff, etc.,) or to own a near-school property, which is not only financially expansive, but also procedure-complicated. Unfortunately, I can accomplish neither in the near future… So, as a new citizen, I can only work hard and make more money to strive for a better chance for my children …"

Admittedly, new citizens and PR still have some chance to facilitate their children's education excellence. Other visa holders (i.e., foreigners) almost have no choice, for example in the school enrolment, foreign parents and their children can only wait for residual school vacancies in public schools. Such policy created social hierarchy, i.e., the different residential statuses and visas are directly linked to different social rights and benefits, impacts on these immigrants and children's life chance (Liu, 2014).

### 3.2.2 The High-stake Examination and Streaming Featured Education System

Education in the host society, as a key institution, determines how the context can facilitate or impede adaptation of children of immigrants (Crul & Schneider, 2010; CobbClark et al., 2012). For example, school as an educational institution can play a significant role through the tracking process (Tach & Farkas, 2006), and teachers of various capacities can shape students' academic outcomes (Phillips & Chin, 2004) and enlarge the educational attainment gaps (Gamoran, 1986). Singapore's education institution features high-stake examinations and tracking mechanisms, which are highly competitive and have created visible gaps in educational and professional opportunities for students.

Devoid of natural resources, Singapore attaches economic and socio-political importance to human capital. Education, as the primary system to plan and create human resources, is critical to Singapore's economic development and nation building. Over the half century after independence, the Singapore education system has been consistently reformed with changing patterns to serve the economy. The development of Singapore education system can be divided into three main phases (Goh & Gopinathan, 2006). First, the Survival Economy from 1959 to 1978 was associated with the Survival-Driven Education. During this period, Singapore emphasized export-oriented industrialisation (EOI), and developed the labour-intensive manufacturing. Therefore, the government created a viable national public education system, with an emphasis on primary education. It is noteworthy that the bilingual policy, i.e., the learning of both English and mother tongue was introduced in the survival phase. The government has believed that English

language would play an instrumental role in internationalising the country, while mother-tongue helps retain one's ethnic identity.

Second, the Sustainable Development from 1979 to 1996 was associated with the Efficiency-Driven Education (Tan & Phang, 2005). To upgrade the labour-intensive manufacturing industry to capital- and skill-intensive industries, Singapore introduced the New Education System in 1979, which designed multiple pathways for students of different capabilities and with different learning paces. The efficiency-driven education model substantially improved Singapore's education efficiency and quality, which has been evidenced by its exceptional performance in international mathematics and science tests (TIMSS, 1995; TIMSS, 1999).

Third, the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) (1997-2011) has been associated with Ability-Driven Education. The Singapore government was ambitious to develop a knowledge-based economy, which was believed to enhance Singapore's global competitiveness (Sharpe & Gopinathan, 2002). Targeted at serving the economic goals, the education system was reformed to develop the innovative, creative and research capabilities of human resources, aiming to address challenges rising in the 21st century. Accordingly, the ability-driven education system was structured to maximize individual's talents and aptitudes with the recognition of their disparities (Stewart, 2011).

In more recent years, the Ministry of Education of Singapore has introduced the value-driven and student-centric phase of education from 2012 to 2018, where the focus is to create conducive teaching and learning environments for students with different talents to achieve their respective full potential (Low, 2017). The primary goal of this new phase of education is to equip children with values, beliefs, knowledge, and skills for

future-readiness (MOE, 2018). Specifically, the government stresses to educate Singaporean to possess strong communication, collaboration and information skills and cross-cultural skills, and be an inventive, critical, and global awareness thinker (MOE, 2018). Since 2019, the Singapore education has moved into the latest phase, which is called the "Learn for Life: Remaking Pathways" education phase, aiming to deal with the uncertain and fast changing economic and industrial development. The lifelong learning ability is deliberated to be crucial in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and be necessary to balance with the strong attainment of literacy and numeracy skills (Tao & Liyanage, 2020).

To summarize, the establishment and reforms of the Singapore education system generally promote students' bilingualism, literacy, science, and mathematics, and the system is with two basic and distinct characteristics after the initial three phases' development. One is the high-stake examination, and the other is the streaming (Tan & Gopinathan, 2000). Firstly, various high-stake examinations, for example, the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) and the Gifted Education Programme (GEP), are designed to distinguish academically top students from others and to track students into different levels of schools. Since the screening results (i.e., outcomes of important examinations) would greatly impact on the subsequent academic route of a child, almost all families and parents prioritise children's academic outcomes in Singapore's school education (Ng, 2010). A major negative effect of pursuing excellent outcomes of these high-stake exams is that the education competition is intensified and both parents and students are under tremendous anxieties and pressures in the educational system and the wider social environment.

Secondly, the Singapore education system features the early streaming mechanism (at children's age of nine, twelve, and sixteen). Educational systems in different countries vary in the timing of selection. In Singapore, for example, since the 1980s, students have been streamed into the tailored education in different secondary schools after participating the nationwide PLSE at Primary Six (age of twelve). Currently, most primary schools in Singapore continue the practice of screening for differentiated education from Primary Three to Five. Though the streaming enables the government to use educational resources more efficiently, the drawbacks and implications should not be ignored. For example, research has shown that the early streaming mechanism in the education system has created social inequalities and disadvantages for immigrants and their children (Brunello & Checchi, 2007; Van de Werfhorst & Mijs, 2010). It can offset the effect of immigrant selectivity and undermines late developed advantages of children of immigrants (Waters et al., 2013; Griga & Hadjar, 2014). Early streaming also magnifies educational inequalities, as some of the second-generation of immigrants at disadvantaged starting positions are given little time to catch up (Cruel & Vermeulen, 2003, p. 979), which helps explain the reason why immigrant parents are concerned about their children's learning and schooling and invest more heavily and intensively in it.

It is seen that in the early education system construction and reforms, Singapore's governing elites believe that meritocracy embodies the value of efficiency and justice. The government emphasises recognising one's talent and capability and providing talents with equivalent level of opportunities and resources to maximise their aptitudes. The state and government endorse the use of superior educational resources to support individuals with natural talent and motivation, therefore it is highly compelling and rewardable for

high achievers. Although education institutions have intensified social stratification, the system's merit-based principle makes people believe that education is the fairest way to select talents and allocate resources. It is noted that both the state and society of Singapore value education success highly (Luo, Paris et al., 2011; Liem et al., 2008) and deem children's education and related investment as an asset and accumulation (Göransson, 2015), which are believed to bring symbolic and material returns. In view of this merit-based education system and social environment, *xinyimin* parents, who migrate for education and mobility and prominently value education opportunities in Singapore, strategically enhance their values and norms on education and intensify their parenting practices. They appreciate the merit-based education principle, and mostly invest their best efforts and resources to support their children's learning and education for future returns.

Admittedly, Singapore has developed a high-performing and high-achieving education system, which has functioned to select talents effectively, achieved great efficiency in resources utilisation, and motivated higher aspirations for academic success (Tan, 2008). However, the education system has also created teething problems, such as a spoon-feeding culture and the intense educational competition for superior educational resources (Gee, 2012), therefore, has generated tremendous parental anxieties, which have profound implications for the families and society. Both the public and media have been concerned about the intense education competition caused mainly by the high-stake examinations and the streaming mechanism in the education system. To resolve the problems, scholars has suggested the government to aim at a more holistic education and student's development to change the overloaded contents and to stress the character and

skills development, etc. (Ng, 2008), which have been the orientations of the two phases of educational reforms in more recent years (MOE, 2018). For example, the emphasis on academic results of the current education system will be reducing through the reforms of subject-based banding (SBB) system and the recalibration of examinations and assessments in terms of numbers and contents for students, which are the on-going education reforms and can go full wing by 2024. The nationally concerned PSLE has also received an overhaul and its T-score method will be replaced by the score banding method by 2021. However, whether the educational reforms and policy efforts can relieve the educational competition and address the social concerns needs review and revisions on due course (Tao & Liyanage, 2020).

According to my interviews, the Singapore education system is one of the major contextual challenges that constrain *xinyimin* parents' child nurturing goal and practices. First, although *xinyimin* parents may disagree on whether the highly competitive education system is the best way for children's education, they adjust to the situation. That is, *xinyimin* parents proactively adapt to, rather than challenge the Singapore's educational system. The intensive parenting on children's learning and education has been a primary means adopted by *xinyimin* parents, which will be described and discussed in more details in the next chapter.

Qin Zhen is a 37-year-old mother of PR status. Her husband and 8-year-old Primary Two boy are naturalised Singaporeans. Qin Zhen gave up her career as a business owner of a media and planning company in Shanghai, China, and came to Singapore for the purpose of accompanying her son for schooling and education. She expected to cultivate her son to become a Singapore elite, and held very high educational

expectation on her son's academic achievements. She not only enrols her boy in Singapore's best known (in terms of fame, fee, and stretched level) after-school tuitions, but learns together with her son for knowledge of different subjects. When I interviewed her for the first time (as six months later, I did a second interview with her) and asked her opinion and experience. She criticised Singapore's school education system and commented,

> "I feel that the education competition is so fierce that parents must spend sufficient time and money to help children to win an edge. It is too early for children to start this competition. In my opinion, I think children need childhood and happiness when they are young, but reality is that many Singapore children don't even have time for outdoor activities after school. They are earning more time for study at home. They immerse in different tuitions, enrichment programmes, and are loaded by various homework and tasks."

Interviewing her again half a year later, I find that, though she still criticised the system, she became fully involved in her children's study. For example, she sends her son to go to various tuitions and enrichment programmes, which are at every working day after school. She also learns Olympiad mathematics with her boy at home through a distant learning mode, as the professional coach is Qin Zhen's mother, who is a Chinese national and living in Shanghai. Through this way, Qin expects her son learn a stretched level math and medals in some targeted mathematics competitions. When talk about learning performance, Qin Zhen showed pride and confidence and stated that her son's learning aptitudes is far exceeded his schooling level. Qin Zhen's case evidenced that the

education competition has pushed *xinyimin* parents' aspirations for educational excellence to a higher level, which has led to intensified parenting strategies and practices for achieving expected children's success.

Second, although new Chinese immigrants are highly skilled, positively selected by policies and highly motivated, they show more anxieties and stresses, and tend to invest more heavily with attention, time, financial resources, and emotion in their children's education than most local even middle-class parents do.

Lin Yi, a 41-year naturalized citizen, came to Singapore on an EP visa in 2008, and has worked as an engineer in a semiconductor company. He obtained his PR status in 2013 and brought his boy to Singapore in 2015. His son was in primary grade four at the time of our interview. He stated,

> "As an immigrant, I used to face various constraints. We are the first-generation immigrants who are like pioneers. You know pioneers open ways for followers. From my point of view, *xinyimin* are pioneers for their children. I would say we need to invest with our best resources on our children's education. As we think education is equal for all, and in Singapore, meritocracy determinates how the educational resources and economic benefits are given to different people. Therefore, the more efforts we make, the better chance we will have. Since Singapore screens and tracks students from primary school phrase, parents like me need to explore children's potential and talents at an earlier stage, otherwise we will fall behind and lose many opportunities. Most importantly, this will have a chain effect. So, I need to take this very seriously… Obviously, we

> immigrants have more anxieties and pressures in the competition, since we lack social connections and lack experience in the education system. Compared with locals, we are disadvantaged at the starting point. Therefore, it is necessary to double our efforts to facilitate our children's achievement in education. All our efforts would be worth if our children can succeed and achieve highly in the education system."

Hong Jie is a teacher in a private tuition centre and a naturalized citizen. She has two daughters at Primary Two and Primary Five, respectively. She commented on Singapore's recent reforms to the education system. One is the cutting of the mid-year examinations for Primary Three and Five, and Secondary One and Three students for next three years from 2018, and the other is the removal of examinations and graded assessments for Primary One and Two from 2019. She stated that:

> "The education reforms aim at reducing student's workload and making learning a fun. However, the high-stake examinations, for example, the nation-wide PSLE is still there. This actually is a way to relieve school and teachers' burden rather than the parents'... it has in fact transferred the academic learning responsibility to family and parents. As we know that children are still young, and the performance disparity between children with extraordinary intelligence and those of average one would not be that large. And for children with similar capabilities, parents and family's support become an even more important factor that determinates a child's academic performance and outcomes. The reason is that the high-stake examination in Primary Three, i.e., the GEP, and the more important

> PSLE at Primary Six are such an early tracking that parent need to involve themselves in, which would be significant in influencing a child's academic outcomes. For example, parents' involvement might ensure an edge and change the outcome of the high-stake examinations and competitions. I would say that family and parents' support and resources are necessary and indispensable…"
>
> She continued,
>
> "…The education competition among young children, to a large extent, is a competition among parents... therefore, it intensifies parental anxieties. For me, as a working mother, I have to spend a lot of time on my children's learning. I have to say that the time and energy I spent on my children's learning and supervision come at the expense of sleep, time alone with friends, leisure and freedom…"

Third, the high-stake examinations and tracking mechanism leads to outcome-driven learning, which is not based on empiric social categories such as class or cultural identity, but rather were constituted according to one's educational priorities (Aris, 2017), i.e., the educational outcomes, which can be academic grades, standard examination scores, various competition medals and rankings, enrolment opportunities (in selective tuition center, in private or public schools), etc., that are expected to be achieved. The outcome-driven learning not only deepens the educational competition, but damages individual's autonomy and ability for self-learning. The interview participants tend to agree on the point that the current learning is more for outcomes, such as test scores, examination grades, or competition medals. The learning is pragmatic, which is an

instrument for goals rather than a process for understanding or for fun. In fact, it is the examinations and tracking mechanism designed with standard scores and grades have required parents to target for the outcomes.

Wang Li is a 45-year-old mother, a naturalized citizen, and a doctor in a public hospital. Her son was in one of Singapore's best secondary schools, and she has kept a close eye on her son's schooling process. She is also Christian and serves in a local church. Regarding her children's learning approach, she commented:

> "I think learning should be self-driven and parents can guide and stir up children's interest in reading and learning when they are very young. I believe that children are curious by nature and parents should inspire and facilitate their discovery. However, I noted that many parents follow popular practices, such as repeated practices and rote learning, which I think is not the right way, and is harmful…Many *xinyimin* parents stretch children to learn difficult knowledge and academic skills. Although this helps achieve beautiful scores in exams and even in international competitions, it gets children overburdened, and easily lost interest in learning, and might cause more severe problems, such as mental health problem. I have many local friends in church. I found that many of them send children to tuition classes. In my opinion, tuitions ask students to work on a lot of exercise books and its method is just to repeat. Understandably, parents expect children to score high in various examinations, as this is required by the system and the society... It is a pity that children's learning has focused on the outcomes rather than the

learning process to think and reflect. I think this is not good for children and can hinder their aptitudes development."

Wang Li's comments on the prevalent learning method, i.e., the stretching, and her reflection on the implication, i.e., the loss of children's interest and autonomy for learning, represent many *xinyimin* parents' concerns and anxieties. Even for parents who push their children to study hard through cram school and rote learning, they are aware the problem side of this process. However, it is noted that *xinyimin*, subject to policy and institutional constraints, tend to invest more efforts through education to address their disadvantages in the Singapore society. While for local parents, my interview participants have commented that sending children to tuition seems to be a part of their life, which supplement their educational demands for enhancing their children's performance at school. It is noted that both *xinyimin* and local parents do through their own way to improve children's academic performance and engage in the education competition.

**3.3 Social Discrimination**

Another structural factor as well as a source of tension that reinforces *xinyimin* parents' intensive practices on children's education is the social discrimination against immigrants, particularly new Mainland Chinese immigrants, in the Singaporean society. Research has shown that immigration is often associated with disadvantages in social evaluation of status (Tumin, 1967). A society's certain assumptions, prejudices, and behaviours towards immigrants, who are considered as "others", affect all aspects of the "other's" life. Research on Chinese immigrants in the Western cultural context finds that the social and racial discrimination exerts tremendous constraints on immigrants (Qin, 2008). Immigrant parents' attitudes and responses to social discrimination significantly

impacts children's well-being (such as self-esteem and response to stresses), as well as behaviour and performance in school (Coll & Pachter, 2002). In contrast to immigration policy and education system, which are actual structural conditions, social discrimination is a perceivable and intangible structural constraint.

Many Chinese immigrant parents are aware that they are in an immigrant society with a prevailing social hierarchy, which privileges the locals in racial categories and differentiate them based on the national origin. Although new Chinese immigrants came from a rising China with highly selective backgrounds and have been able to achieve a recognisable social status in Singapore, they face the challenge of social discrimination and a disadvantaged social status. The perception of discrimination overwhelms class differences among the Chinese immigrant parents, regardless of their educational background and occupational status. Many *xinyimin* parents stated that their children could be treated differently from local Singaporeans in the future due to social discrimination. These parents value education as a way to blunt the edge of social discrimination for their children (Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Thus, paradoxically, the Singapore's discriminatory social context has further motivated immigrant parents to practice intensive parenting to win the education competition.

New Chinese immigrants experienced co-ethnic tension and social prejudice from local Singaporeans including Chinese Singaporeans, for three main reasons. First, in early founding years, Singapore used to deliberately distance communist China due to the issue of ideology and global circumstances. Since then, the native-born Singaporeans have started to build up a complex of superiority, if not consciously (Sen, 2006). In a Westernised modern Singapore society, those who are strong in English language disdain

the Chinese-speaking people. They hold prejudices toward Mainland China due to its impoverishment, backward, and underdevelopment.

Second, the rapid influx of new Chinese immigrants into Singapore during the decades of 1990s and early 2010s has caused social backlash in Singapore. Available statistics showed that from the mid-1990s, thirty thousand permanent residencies were provided to foreigners every year (Koh, 1997). This annual increase is significant, since 30,000 is equal to roughly one percent of the citizen population in the 1990s. Due to the rapid influx of immigrants from 1990s to early 2010s, the demographic landscape of Singapore changed dramatically, as the ratio of citizens decreased substantially. For example, while the population of Singapore nationals multiplied by 1.7 times, the parallel increase of permanent residents together with various pass holders increased to 9.3 times in 2011 (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2012). This social change has aroused heated social debates about Singaporean identity, citizenship, and immigration. Social discontent, unease, and even xenophobia, have become prevalent among local Singaporeans, which have fermented and burst out through a wide range of channels, such as media reports, online forums, and opinion polls. A significant number of local Chinese Singaporeans complain that Mainland Chinese have taken away their jobs. Local parents and students grudge that a large number of scholarships and university enrolment opportunities are awarded to international students. Local Singaporeans also blame rising property prices, traffic congestion, and burden on education, healthcare and other public infrastructure on the immigrant influx.

Thirdly, on the socio-cultural front, native-born Singaporeans are concerned that their status of citizenship is diminished, and that society's bonding and cohesion is

weakened due to immigration. A deeper worry is that the influx and integration of *xinyimin* would dilute the Singaporean's national identity (Yeoh & Lin, 2013). Over the years, tensions between Singaporean and *xinyimin*, their perceived threatening "others", have simmered and increased subtly. Local Chinese tend to distinguish themselves from their co-ethnic *xinyimin* by emphasising and practicing distinct social norms and behaviours, which are used to differentiate themselves from those co-ethnocultural "*others"* (Liu, 2012). In fact, local Singaporeans have exerted political pressures on the government via general elections to make the immigration policy more stringent and tightened for Mainland Chinese applicants in recent years (Tan, 2014). Although the government's integration policies seek to bridge local Chinese Singaporeans and new Chinese immigrants, the intra-ethnic differences are distinct and highly visible. Under this circumstance, new Chinese immigrants can only appeal to what they see as the most equal instrument, the education system, to help their children's upward mobility.

When I asked interview participants about how they perceived the wider social environment, and local Singaporean attitudes toward immigrants, *xinyimin* in particular, they normally were willing to share issues and situations in the workplace and daily life about social discrimination.

Ze Han is a 43-year-old naturalised citizen, a mother of two boys and a senior research manager in a university. She arrived in Singapore 16 years ago. After obtaining her PhD degree, she has been doing research in the university. She worked as a manager for many research projects, including government-sponsored research projects. She described that she has already worked in the research sector for more than 10 years. Though she has made a lot of efforts to strive for broader responsibilities, she did not get

any opportunity for promotion to a higher management position. Her narratives below manifested how she as a naturalised citizen was marginalised in workplace by the local dominant Chinese group. It also illustrated that a parent's experience profoundly influences on how they educate children and conduct parenting practices for children's upward social mobility.

> "After working for 3 to 4 years in my lab, I found that citizenship would be necessary to help career progression. The reason is that all important projects are led by local Singaporeans, while we foreign researchers only play a supporting role. Since I have studied in Singapore for five years and have already adapted to the local environment. My husband and I made the decision to apply for the Singapore citizenship for our family (a couple and a child at the time) and settle down … However, I have to say that as new citizens, we still do not have the chance to be promoted to higher position even with sufficient research experience and contributions. Senior management positions are dominated by local Singaporeans. Although our *xinyimins'* working capability is strong, we are often tasked to focus on technical problems rather than management issues. Some *xinyimins* are marginalised due to their less fluent and accented Chinglish, and weak oral presentation skills ... however, based on my own experience, even you speak fluent Singlish, master good presentation skills, and local working style, you can be "recognized" by your words, your daily practice, or even by the spelling of your name."

She continued to explain how these experiences have affected her approach toward children's education.

> "Therefore, when it comes to our children's future in Singapore, I hope they can achieve academic excellence and stand out. We definitely teach them to be diligent, to attach importance to education, and to work with best efforts. My husband and I have discussed about this, for our children's education, we are very determined to use our best resources and efforts to overcome immigrant status-related disadvantages. I hope their generation could be accepted as they were born here and grew up here. They hold a deeper sense of belonging and Singaporean identity. I expect them to obtain solid skills and aptitudes in school, and then to have better chance to move upward in society."

For other interview participants, social discrimination is manifested through disrespect, misunderstandings, unequal salary levels in the workplace, and prejudice and neglect in daily life, which impact on how they conduct parenting practices with their children.

In summary, being immigrant presents both cultural and structural challenges for parents, which in turn affect their views, parenting strategies, and practices on childrearing. This chapter detailed cultural, institutional, and social challenges faced by *xinyimin*, which lead them to experience stresses and disadvantages in Singapore, even though they are equipped with the pre-migration middle class status and resources. The contextual challenges, social disadvantages and constraints have shaped *xinyimin's* beliefs and practices in children's education, propelling them to reflect on their values

and norms and adopt pragmatic and contingent parenting strategies (Reese, 2002). In the meantime, *xinyimin* experience parental anxieties and stresses, and struggle to maintain their identity when meeting the migration related contextual challenges.

The institutions (e.g., government, education, laws, etc.,) and their related processes in the host society have engendered and reproduced social inequities that disadvantage immigrants, leading the culturally and linguistically marginalised immigrants to experience struggles and challenges in the novel environment (Man, 1995, p. 309). For *xinyimin,* their interactions with Singapore's institutions (such as government agencies and schools), experience of loss of social status, and migration related social disadvantages, lead them to emphasise more on their already rigorous and stringent child-centred and resource-intensive parenting practices, which are believed to be effective to counter the social disadvantages and maximize children's education and future opportunities. My study has found that *xinyimin* invest even higher level of economic, cultural, and human resources than the local middle- and upper-class Singaporeans do. I argue that the institutional barriers have led to *xinyimin's* negotiations, interactions, and struggles as immigrant and as the co-ethnic "others" within the Singapore society. This has propelled *xinyimin* to practice intensive parenting to an extremely high standard, creating much parental anxieties and stresses.

# Chapter 4

## Intensive Parenting for Children's Success

This chapter examines the intensive parenting adopted by new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, which is characterized by child-centered, attention-, time-, and resources-intensive, financially expensive, and emotionally absorbing (Hays, 1996). As introduced in Chapter 1, 'intensive parenting' is an ideology and a dominant model understood by parents—regardless of their class status (middle-class or working-class) and whether they have actual resources to do so—about how children should be nurtured (Ishizuka, 2019). Intensive parenting as a pervasive gravitation is emerging with expanding range of parental activities and responsibilities, which is highly demanding and is practised as a good approach by parents in both the East and West (Hays, 1996; Lareau, 2002; Stevenson-Hinde, 1998). It is also found that intensive parenting has become a lens for parents to develop their own identity (Hays, 1996; Faircloth, 2013), as parents' affirmation of their own self is closely tied up to how well they can do parenting.

In this chapter, I examine the intensive parenting practices conducted by *xinyimin* parents on their children's learning and education in the Singapore context. *Xinyimin's* Confucian culture that highly values education has been enhanced to respond to a set of structural disadvantages and constraints (as described in Chapter 3) in the Singapore society, which also propel *xinyimin* to conduct intensive parenting as a coping strategy for their adaptation and mobility goals. Based on my interview data and online participant observation, I have found that *xinyimin* parents have their respective emphasis on their children's success, i.e., the strict 'success frame'; the inclusion of a new dimension into success, i.e., happiness; and the expectation for spontaneous development. My interview

data has shown that *xinyimin* parents' different emphases on children's success can lead to different practices. That is, 1) a strict success frame often leads to intensive parental involvement in children's learning and education at home and the heavy investment in tuition and after-school programmes; 2) the inclusion of a new dimension, i.e., happiness, makes parents emphasize on children's mental health besides educational achievements, learning for fun, and autonomy, in turn more parental attention and investment on children's well-rounded development, which may or may not coincide with parents' practices that focus on a narrow set of educational goals; 3) the parental expectation for children' potential and capabilities to unfold spontaneously is also associated with a strong sense of parental responsibility, which matches the intensive parenting that deems parental attention, presence, and companion for children to be important.

Based on in-depth interviews and actual and virtual observations, I found that although *xinyimins* parents have different emphases on children's success and consequently different parenting practices, their parenting strategies and practices can still be explained by the paradigm of intensive parenting. In the following, I summarized several themes emerged from my interview and observation data about how *xinyimin* parents practise intensive parenting on children's learning and education. I highlighted that there are various ways of home-based and after-school learning, which were adopted to facilitate parents' expected children's success. Parents' relationship with school and their exploration of resources in *xinyimin* community and the larger society also helped to manifest about how intensive parenting were conducted. Besides showing how *xinyimins* do intensive parenting to promote their children's educational, mental, and developmental

outcomes, I also discuss how intensive parenting conducted by new Chinese immigrants define their self-identify.

### 4.1 Home-based Intensive Parenting on Children's Education

Recent studies have paid increasing attention to parents' home-based involvement and shown its positive associations with their children's school performance (Duan, Guan & Bu, 2018; Park, 2006). Research suggested that Chinese parents, including immigrant parents, strongly believe the parental role in children's educational success (Chao, 1996), and they incline to directly engage in their children's learning at home (Li, 2001; Louie, 2001; Siu, 1994). They emphasized on skill-based teaching approaches and attempted to teach children using formal approaches at home, for example, assigning additional homework (Mapp, 2003). Moreover, putting an exceptionally high value on education, Chinese immigrant parents try to intensively involve in their children's learning and education and provide with various supports and resources, especially when their children are young (Markose & Simpson, 2016). Research has shown that parental interventions are significant determinants for children's educational success (Hidalgo, Siu & Epstein, 2004; Siu, 1998). When it comes to school learning, Chinese immigrant parents commonly expected school curriculum to be academically intensive and knowledge enriched. When these parents lack of confidence in school, they are likely to compensate for the school weakness with after school and home-based learning plan and activities (Pang, 1990).

In Singapore, I found that new Chinese immigrant's intensive parenting on children's education is mainly conducted during after-school time, is home-based and manifested as outcome-driven. *Xinyimin* parents, who tend to narrowly focus on

children's educational achievement and higher school performance, proactively and predominantly intervene in their children's academic and non-academic learning through home-based parenting practices. The following themes are summarized and explained to show the most frequently adopted home-based parenting practices on children's education by *xinyimin* in Singapore.

### 4.1.1 Government: "Every School A Good School"; Parents: "But Not Equally Good"

In Singapore, the primary school choice is one of the most important matters that parents are concerned about. The act of choosing the school is reflective of a parent's educational beliefs, desired goals in education as well as their socio-economic background (Sattin-Bajaj, 2011). In this study, I found that school choice is one of the important components that parents use to facilitate their children's education (Lim, 2002) and achieve their future mobility goals. Similar to that in other countries (Parker 2012; Gardner, 2001), the choice of school in Singapore is given heightened attention by both local and immigrant parents and is considered a key factor behind children's academic success. Parents generally believed that a good school could bestow children with a competitive advantage and contribute significantly to their children's educational success (Zhou & Li, 2003). My interviews showed that *xinyimin* parents made every possible effort to enroll their children in elite or higher-ranked schools. My study focuses on primary school choice due to its significant role in children's streaming and future educational opportunity (Ng, 2014).

The Singapore government has been conducting the school ranking exercise since 1992, aiming to advance the education system's academic standards. The ranking, based

on school's academic performances and achievements, has provided parents and the public with a reference for school choice, but in the meantime, it also intensified the competition among parents for good schools. To ease the intense competition and parental pressures and anxieties in the race for a good school, the Ministry of Education (MOE) of Singapore has advocated a well-known slogan *"Every School a Good School."* However, many parents doubted whether the vision is possible in Singapore's achievement-driven context (Mathews et. al, 2017).

The MOE expects schools to have different strengths, which will suit parents and children's different preferences. However, due to the existence of a nation-wide tracking system and high-stake examinations, such as the PSLE, parents always put children's academic competencies as their top priority. Consequently, they tend to pursue the measurable and quantifiable academic outcomes, such as ranking, scores, and grades. Therefore, to enroll children in a high-ranking and high-achieving school is oftentimes parents' top priority. A nationally representative survey on parents' views on the Singapore primary school system has shown that the majority of respondents (77.3%) reported that they did not actively secure a good school for their child. About 10% of other respondents had moved nearer to the school of their choice, while 12.2% had done volunteer work for school, which would help their child's enrollment in the school (Mathews, Lim & See 2017). The survey results revealed that nearly one quarter of the respondents (including both locals and *xinyimins*) are concerned with their children's school choices. It also suggested that *xinyimin* tend to put more emphasis on the value of a good/elite school and make more efforts to enroll children in good schools, though detailed data is not available. According to the MOE published annual school enrollment

data and the *Kiasuparents.com* statistics, many good schools (e.g., Nanyang Primary School, Rosyth School, Nan Chiau Primary School, Ai Tong, etc.) are over-registered in 2C phase, which make the balloting rate in the phase increase sharply in the past 2-3 years.[17]

Ms. Mei Qian is a private tuition teacher, 37 years old and a mother of two. She and her family have been naturalized and settled in Singapore. She commented,

> "…Yes, I agree with government that every school is a good school, but I like to supplement that schools are not equally good. You know that the elite schools, such as Nanyang (南洋), Rosyth (乐赛), Tao Nan (道南), Nan Hua (南华), even those newly emerged elite school, such as Ru Lang (孺廊), achieve excellent examination and academic competition outcomes annually. These school have a good track record of enrolment rates into elite secondary schools. They also won more competition medals compared to that of neighbourhood schools. Their achievements far exceed those of neighbourhood schools. It is widely known that a disproportionate number of civil servants, particularly the ministers, in various government agencies are alumni from elite schools, namely, Nanyang primary school … *Xinyimin* mostly expect children to be successful (出人头地), therefore, they would definitely strive for a better starting point, i.e., a good kindergarten and an excellent primary school, for their children,"

[17] Tables, trends, and risks. https://www.kiasuparents.com/kiasu/forum/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=91621 Accessed on 22 December 2020.

Susan Li is a 38-year-old mother, who migrated to Singapore eight years ago. She worked in a semi-conductor company and has become a naturalized citizen two years ago. Susan made a lot of efforts to enroll her six-year-old girl successfully into an elite primary school through balloting, which was within a two kilometers distance to her home address. Susan's efforts concentrated on making the balloting successful. According to government's guidelines and rules, parents need to participate in balloting if they wish to enroll child in a certain primary school within a certain residential area, but do not have any other priority conditions, such as earlier registered siblings, parental alumni, and parents' working affiliation. To have a good probability of the balloting result, Susan compiled available statistics and data obtained from various major websites, such as the MOE website, *Kiasu* parents, and *Huaxing* forum [18]. After that, she registered her child in a neighborhood primary school, in which her daughter would be guaranteed a position due to the girl's enrolment in a MOE kindergarten that was affiliated to the neighborhood primary school.

On the first day of the two-day annual public primary school enrolment practice, Susan submitted the application documents to the neighborhood primary school, where her daughter was prioritized as the phase 2A2 [19] child due to her kindergarten affiliation. However, she withdrew the application in the second day and sent the application to the targeted elite school at the last minute. The reason for this change and move was that she got to know the to-be-finalized vacancy numbers of the almost completed process in the second day afternoon, from which she estimated that the chance to be successful in the following phase C balloting would be high. The last-minute information has enabled her

[18] *Kiasu* parents: https://www.kiasuparents.com/kiasu/; Huaxing Forum: http://bbs.huasing.org/sForum/
[19] Registration phases and key dates for primary school enrollment: https://beta.moe.gov.sg/primary/p1-registration/registration-phases-key-dates/

to make the decision and change the registration. In the end, she successfully enrolled her daughter in the elite school. Susan commented,

> "School choice has been a top concern of our family, not only to my husband and I, but to my parents and in-laws. We all hope our girl can start the formal education in an elite school. However, it is not easy. We are *xinyimin*; we do not have any social connections or priorities that the locals have. We rented out our HDB flat and bought our current condo to live in a 2 km distance to our target school. This allowed us to participate in the balloting. But you know, the risk of balloting made us struggle. Everybody knows balloting outcome is fifty-fifty. We would be very sad if the result is negative. Though in the last minute we knew it was highly likely to be successful, we did worry a lot for a quite long time…therefore, we prepared an alternative plan to relieve our anxiety, as it helped us feel a bit assured. In the worst scenario, we could enrol in the relatively good school if the second day they released some unfavourable results for balloting. Luckily, we finally enrolled our child in the target school... I have consulted many friends about the reason why we need to enrol in a good school. They reasoned that from a short-term perspective, a good school provides better educational resources and opportunities. A good primary school would equip children with good academic foundation, a better understanding of Singapore's culture, and a better learning experience with good classmates. In the meantime, children will have many chances to meet great people and to participate in important events,

> and so on. And from a long-run, children's good school experience would contribute to their academic excellence, and make easier for them to access higher education, good jobs, and high social status in the future."

Susan's case shows that *xinyimin* parents have tried to explore possible ways and made tremendous efforts to enrol their children to study in a good school. They perceived these efforts as an integral part of parental responsibilities and their plan to help children achieve in education.

Prior research has found that parents purchase properties near good schools to facilitate children's enrolment (Grady, Bielick & Aud, 2010), as Susan did in her case. At least half (25/50) of my interview participants have considered possible resolutions for their children to study in a good school.

Hua Ning is a 36-year-old naturalized citizen, who used to be an undergraduate scholarship winner of one of Singapore's best universities. She has a 7-year-old girl and a 4-year-old boy (at the time of interview). After graduation, she has been working as an IT professional in Singapore. Hua commented,

> "Without any hesitation, we made the decision to buy a house that meets a distance required for children's school enrolment. In fact, our living area is near a few elite schools, thus the price is very high. We moved to this district and send our girl to her current school. The school would not be suitable for our son as it is a girl's school, but my husband and I are happy and satisfied with this decision. In fact, my husband and I have already made a plan for our son's school choice. We applied the parental voluntary work in another good primary school, which will give us a

better chance for enrolment, though it is still highly competitive. We are satisfied with our daughter's school as the people and learning environment are great there. I also learn from those parents, as they are capable and resourceful in cultivating children ..."

Not all *xinyimin* parents are successful in choosing a good school for children, but more rounds of efforts by intensive investment of time, money, and practices, would be made in the following years if they fail for the first try. Important tracking points and high-stake examination, such as the GEP exam, the Direct School Admission for secondary schools (DSA), and the PSLE, are all taken as opportunities that deserve efforts. The following cases show that the attempt to enroll in a good school would not stop until parents make it.

Zhou Li works as a Chinese teacher in a Singapore public primary school. At the end of primary grade two, her son was successfully transferred to a good primary school, which was a result of Li's efforts continually made in more than two years. Li had been kept on trying since her boy started the primary school education. The transfer was considered an advantage for her son to succeed in later stage education, such as the PSLE. Li loved to share this happiness with her friends as she assessed the successful school transfer to be an 'achievement' not only for her son, but also for herself, as a good primary school enrollment certifies parent's capabilities or even wealth in his/er circle and community. She commented,

"Children in neighborhood primary schools would not be able to compete with their peers in elite schools. A good school matters and means a lot. I was sad when his school enrollment balloting failed two years ago. Since

then, I have made determination to transfer my son to a good school. However, school transfer is not easy. School transfer highly depends on luck, because vacancies in good schools are very few and there is usually a long-waiting list. It is quite normal that students need to wait for years or get rejected immediately.

On top of all these difficulties, the student's school performance needs to be excellent. To present a beautiful report book for the school transfer, I made a lot of efforts to improve my son's learning outcomes, such as exam score. Throughout primary year one and year two, I have been accompanying my son to practice and review what he learned at school in order to gain an impressive record in the student's report book. For example, I ensured his dictation score to be full mark in every week's test. At the end of each academic term, I guided him to do reviews and spent a lot of time on revisions. My son works hard only when I can supervise him and involve in his study…I am so happy about the school transfer. It is a big reward for my son and my efforts. It helps ensure a good educational outcome for my son. Now I am more confident to help him achieve success in the PSLE. Our current school is very strong in the past several years' PSLE examination…"

Another case of a successful school transfer is also a Chinese teacher. Mr. Liao came to Singapore in the mid-1990s after winning the MOE scholarship. He has been a naturalized citizen since 1999. Liao is a father of two children. At the time of interview, his girl was at grade five and his boy was at grade three. He used to work as an engineer

and then shifted his career from industry to public education. Mr. Liao is satisfied with his current job, as "it is stable with good pay and prospect for promotion". As a public-school Chinese teacher, Mr. Liao commented that he totally agreed with MOE's saying of *"Every School A Good School,"* as he thought that there were many equal opportunities for children with different socioeconomic backgrounds in Singapore. In his opinion, every child, as long as she/he makes efforts, can make their dream come true through public education.

However, Mr. Liao also supplemented that:

> "Children's school education to a large extend depends on family and parents' involvement and investment. Families possess different levels of wealth and resources, which determine and cultivate children to be with different visions and capabilities. As such, parents should always try their best and invest as much as possible to boost children's education, and only those parents who are capable to cultivate educationally excellent children can be regarded as good or successful parents."

Regarding her daughter's school transfer, Liao said,

> "My daughter transferred from the prior neighborhood school to the current one at the end of primary three when she passed the first round of the Gifted Education Programme (GEP) screening. She had been the top student in her previous school. Even so, I believed that she could thrive and achieve higher if provided with better platforms and opportunities..."

As one interview participant has stressed, "a good primary school is the first step of children's academic road, which determines the chance in a good secondary school

and high school. All these will have chain effects on children's educational achievement, profession, and future status." The school choice is a highly concerned issue and has cost *xinyimin* parents' intensive investment of time, attention, and emotion (such as anxieties), as well as money. Regardless of the level of parental socioeconomic affluence and the children's school performance, most interviewed parents agreed that a good school is a good starting point for children to achieve success in education, profession, and future social status. It is found that this practice of school choice is an important manifestation of *xinyimins'* intensive parenting, as it facilitates the parents' control and the plan of children's educational and future outcomes. It is also a process that affirms parents' own identity, as whether parents can enroll or transfer children to study in a good school make them recognize self as a successful or unsuccessful parent.

### 4.1.2 Everything is about Reading

Reading ability and skills, particularly English reading, is considered by *xinyimin* parents to be fundamental and critical skills for educational excellence that should be developed at an early age. My finding suggests, as did prior research, that parents believe that they play an essential role in children's biliteracy learning (Huang & Mason, 2008; Chen, 2008), therefore, they intensively adopt parenting practices to develop and improve their children's reading competency.

Almost all parent participants mentioned the importance of reading and described their children's reading practices at home. They took literacy and reading levels as indicators and benchmarks for children's academic aptitudes and learn to improve children's reading ability. A common practice among *xinyimin* parents was purchasing books and assigning reading space. Some parents even designed a whole wall to be

bookshelves and store books. We also noted that the mobile online social media platform *WeChat* groups (themed on children's learning) discussed mostly about children's reading. Besides, parents loved to share about how they improved children's reading capability at home, indicating that parents were happy to make efforts and regard children's progress as a reward.

Research has suggested that leisure reading is a well-established way to improve one's overall reading skills. I found that *xinyimin* parents strongly support their young children's leisure reading.

Ye Lin is a PR and a mother of a 7-year-old girl, who was in Primary Two. Ye Lin narrated:

> "Well, I am proud that my child fell in love with reading when he was very young. Four years old only, he can read independently. It was home-based reading practice that made him love reading …when he was little, his father and I read to him every day, and often took him to libraries. I explained in detail about every interesting thing, for example, birds, insects, etc. I always encourage him to read widely."

Xiao Fan is an engineer in industry. She is a naturalized citizen and a mother of two children, one girl in Primary Two, and one boy in Kindergarten One. She is called "bull mother" (牛妈), who are good at cultivating accomplished children. Her daughter is called "dragon child" (牛娃) in five hundred *xinyimin* members *WeChat* group and is well-known for her extraordinary reading ability. According to the language ability assessment report, her Primary Two girl has achieved a reading level of secondary three, which is eight grades higher than her real school level. Her daughter has been taken as a

role model and both the mother and daughter are admired by her peer parents. The high achievement is attributed to Xiao, who did research and guide her girl to improve reading. Being called as an expert, Xiao is often consulted by other parents. When I asked about what she did to help children after school and the reason why. She replied,

> "Undoubtedly, reading is a foundation for deeper learning. Singapore children normally are with good English skills, especially reading ability. I do emphasize on inspiring children's interest in reading and promoting their curiosity for knowledge. I avoid forcing them to read. Rather, I spend a lot of time on understanding children's reading materials and evaluation systems. As a working professional, if calculated based on an hourly salary, I may have spent a lot of money on this matter [laugh]…The online resources save a lot of space, as you may know that there is no more space to store extra books in my house… I know that parents often set high standards for children to obtain extraordinary achievements... Our girl was born in the year of dragon, a cohort that has substantially more children than any other cohorts. Parents' expectations are high, and the competition is intense. I emphasize on developing their reading skills, which would be the utmost strength to help children stand out in the long run."

Some other cases show parent's anxieties and determination, and the intensity of the parenting practices when parents promote children's reading capability. Wang Qi is a PR and a public-school teacher; Tao Min and Ke Xin are citizens. All their children are in primary grade one, and they emphasized on the importance of reading:

Wang Qi complained,

"I am really speechless of my (P1) son's reading practices, recently he went back to read the K2 level books. And when I take him to library, he always chose children's books. I feel really worried and I decide not to take him to the library and will only allow him to read the books that I choose for him…I fully understand that children love to read for fun, but I cannot stand that he stopped at a certain reading level and was not able to progress. Sometimes, it is necessary for us to intervene as children are still young and they need a push on the back."

Tao Min remarked,

"To allow her more time to read books, I spoon feed my daughter during the dinner time. After the dinner, she would have two musical instruments to practice, which will use at least two hours of her time. After all that, it is time to go to sleep, I will not allow her to read books at the cost of sleep. I have to squeeze time for reading."

Ke Xin commented,

"All my friends have told me that children's English reading level is the most important skill for later stage learning. You see lower primary children usually get full mark for English tests. However, this will be totally different when they enter primary grade four onwards. When the level and depth of the English knowledge significantly increase, children could only score 70-80% of the full mark. So, the conclusion is that English capability cannot be overrated."

The value *xinyimin* parents placed on the Chinese language is as high as that on English. Chinese reading ability is also a big concern to *xinyimin* mothers and fathers. They are frustrated that children dislike learning Chinese. If their children's Chinese proficiency is limited, this would fundamentally constrain their abilities in reading and understanding complex issues in Chinese. However, the situation is difficult to change. The reason is that Chinese language is only the second language and one of the parallel school subjects with limited curriculum time. Therefore, Chinese immigrant parents seek to improve children's Chinese at home (Sohn &Wang, 2006; Klein, 2008). They tried to maintain Chinese as the first language and provide additional resources for children to learn and improve (Guo, 2011). *Xinyimin* parents value both languages and expect their children to balance English and Chinese aptitudes. However, as school years increase, children's level of Chinese ability would usually fall behind that of English's.

Below is a common view among *xinyimin* parents, expressed by Wang Qian, a mother of two children in primary school. She is also a naturalized new citizen and an engineer in semi-conduct industry. She said:

> "I hope my children to learn Chinese well. We are Chinese, and we still have a strong sense of belonging to homeland China and the traditional Chinese culture. I fully appreciate that Chinese language and culture are extensive and profound (博大精深), which would endow children with the ability of deep thinking and reflection. Meanwhile, Chinese language and culture help children to know their origin and identity. In the future, Chinese proficiency might also help to provide them with more chances beyond this island country..."

Intensive parenting on children's reading is one of the most important coping strategies for Chinese immigrant parents, which works to facilitate parents' realization of their respective expectation on children's education. The practice of reading promotion requires substantial parental efforts and various investment. My interview and observation data have shown that parents often overemphasize the study-related reading (for example, read for the purpose of schoolwork, examination, and research projects,) and ignore children's voluntary or recreational reading, especially when children enter higher schooling levels that need to face more academic workloads and education competition pressures. This emphasis on reading capacity manifests that parents take reading as a means and instrument to achieve their planned children's educational success. In the short run, it can help to achieve children's educational excellence, and in the long run, it can ensure educational attainment, in turn a good profession and related higher status. Research has pointed out that students in Singapore are willing to read, but numerous school-related reading constrain students to become a life-long reader (Cheah, 1998). From the parental perspective, reading is considered more a pragmatic means to facilitate achievement than an end of its own right.

### 4.1.3 Private Tuition and Self-tutoring

*Xinyimin* parents expect children to overcome language and cultural barriers in the host society and succeed in Singapore's education system. Their aspirations for a higher status and a better life, and their advantageous socioeconomic background propel them to invest heavily in the high-standard and quality private tutoring, which can give children a head start, as what have been reported by prior studies (Louie, 2001; Dunn, Kinney & Hofferth, 2003). The heavy economic investment in private tuition requires

and reflects parents' capability to practise the financially expensive parenting, which can create anxieties and distress in parents.

Singapore is called a tuition nation, because the shadow education, i.e. the private tuition industry is well-developed (Bray, 1999), supplementing the city-state's formal education system. Research finds that shadow education or tutoring, in Singapore, can meet educational demands of parents of different socioeconomic backgrounds (Yang, 2015). Parents are consumers and buyers of tutoring services, which facilitate the massification of tuition in Singapore (Barrett, DeWiele & Edgerton, 2016). For example, a survey conducted by *The Straits Times* and research firm Nexus Link (2015) showed 90% of all families (1.2 million families in total) have sent their children to after-school tuition in Singapore, including about 40 percent of preschoolers and 80 percent of primary school students.[20] Most students in primary and secondary schools attend private tuition classes on a daily or weekly basis. Research has showed that about 85 percent of children aged 13–19 study after school for more than 4 hours a week (Wise, 2016). My interview data also shows that sending children to after school tuition is a common family practice and that parents regard private tuition as affordable and helpful for improving children's school performance.

Meanwhile, my interviews and participant observation show that *xinyimin* parents tend to invest on those best rated and expensive after-school programmes to equip their children with a 'home advantage'. They took private tutoring as an arsenal that provides education outsourcing and specialized services to supplement or enhance children's school learning.

[20] See "Tuition Nation." *The Straits Times*, 4 July 2015. "Improve their children's grades." https://www.asiaone.com/singapore/tuition-nation Accessed on 22 December 2020.

Mdm. Wang is a PR and a housemaker. Her Primary Two boy studies in an international school in Singapore. Her husband works transnationally between Singapore and China. When talking about private tuitions, Mdm. Wang said she has enrolled her son in ABC learning center to take English and Math tuitions since the boy's kindergarten year. On top of this, the boy also has Chinese language tuition on weekly basis in another famous center. It is well-known among parents that the two centers are of high quality and among the most expensive ones. Mdm. Wang commented that extra tutoring is necessary, as it helps to improve children's learning and performance for those important subjects.

Mdm. Xiang is in her mid-40s. She is a mother of two primary school children and a naturalized citizen. As a piano teacher, she has relatively flexible working time in weekdays. Xiang said she spends time to help her children's language and math study at home. However, she commented that it is also important to employ good tutors in certain subjects or areas, for example tutoring for English writing. She said her son's one-to-one writing tuition is hundred Singapore dollars per hour, which is expensive but effective to upgrade her son's writing skills.

Children do gain an edge over their peers through these highly structured value-added and skill-enhancing experiences. However, it is noteworthy that almost all good tuitions and training centers require parents' after-tuition involvement, meaning that a head start in learning not only needs financial investment, but also a lot of parental time and attention. As Nana, a PR and a mother of 7-year-old primary school boy, has commented,

> "It is not the situation that you send children to tuition then you feel rest assured. The situation is that the more tuitions, the more time and energy parents need to spend, since parents' involvement is directly linked to children's digestion of the learned knowledge. Actually, in most cases no parental involvement of private tutoring is just a waste of time and money."

Qin Zhen as earlier mentioned is a full-time mother, who fully involve in her child's various learning. Her aspiration is to help her boy to achieve admission in one of the world's best universities. Her son is sent to the most expensive English tuition centre besides various interesting enrichment programmes. She stated,

> "We are in a neighborhood primary school and the content taught at school is very simple. I deeply worry if my child can survive in the PSLE with the current school knowledge level. It is necessary to supplement the school education with home-based learning as well as private tutoring. I think the content of the tutoring is good and have improved my son's performance. In the entrance test organized by ABC private tuition center, my son was ranked top 1% in math and 10% in English. I am currently searching for good English tuition. My aim is to help him become the top 1% English student, which is the prerequisite for a child to succeed in the competitive high school and university enrollment…"

The above cases show that *xinyimin* parents not only heavily invest in children's tuitions, but emphasize the effects of the tuition, which help to explain that these parents have a clear goal for children to achieve through education. The education has been

strategically used as a pathway to facilitate their future goal, such as an educational credential, a high-return profession, and a respectable social status.

I also found that many *xinyimin* parents criticized the private tuitons. They opined that academic excellence does not lie in additional tutoring, but in the quality and nature of learning, which decides whether children can be highly achieving. Parents, who rely on their own cultural and human capital to guide and teach children, are generally more rational, and know more clearly about what their children need. They can do more intensive in-person guiding and teaching to provide children with a tailored learning package, which helps children to plan time and achieves the parents' expected goals more efficiently.

Mr. Xiao is a senior consultant of one of Singapore's public hospitals. His son is an excellent secondary school student, who studies in a top school in Singapore. Mr. Xiao said,

> "My Singaporean colleagues often say it is necessary to send children to tuition. I really cannot understand, and I totally disagree with them. Tuition is just repeatedly doing practices, which can be done at home. For my son, I guide him to do critical thinking and self-learning. And his mother takes the responsibility when he needs help on school learning … An example is that I allowed him to assemble his own computer. Though the parts and components cost much more money than buying a whole set computer, I believed he has learned a lot from this practice, which is what I expect him to learn and cannot be learnt from tuition… I am proud that he is still a top student in his current school."

It should be highlighted here that *xinyimin* shared the similar Confucian culture and values on education with local Singaporean parents, especially their Chinese Singaporean counterparts. It is widely known that local Singaporean parents also intensively engage and invest in their children's education. Based on my interview conducted informally with local Singaporean parents (deemed as a reference group for my study of *xinyimin*), I found that there are similarities in the definition of children's success between *xinyimin* and local Singaporean parents in the same social class. With different emphasis on success, such as educational excellence, happiness, natural growth, most middleclass local parents also highly value education and hold a high educational expectation for their children. For example, a local Chinese Singaporean mother has commented that:

> "Many of the local parents are very *Kiasu* (fear of losing out), a pity that parents have sacrificed a lot of children's childhood happiness for studying… middle class do tuitions like mad, but comes to older, they cannot make it… the top 10% of their kids who can make it mostly end up studying medicine and law, and I found the parents are very anxious and irritating… law and medicine are the two professions highly sought after by Asians… locals only small portion are very smart, in the end, it is gene that counts. The very rich ones are smarter and are not that *kiasu*…"

However, there are also differences in ways about how the two groups conduct intensive parenting. Firstly, the local Singaporean parents tend not to invest in children's education as heavily as *xinyimin* do, even they are sufficiently wealthy. My interviews and observations showed that the two groups displayed different levels of intensity in

parenting. As shown earlier, *xinyimin* parents invest heavily on those financially expensive private tuitions and spend substantial parental time and attention on children's after-school activities, which are not prevalent among local Singaporean parents.

Secondly, the two groups have different channels and sources to seek support for their children's education. While locals obtain support from family, kin, privileges as citizens, and publicly available tuition industry, etc., *xinyimin* parents mainly seek supports from the new Chinese immigrants constituted formal and informal community (e.g., friends, alumni, colleagues, neighbors, etc.,) besides the publicly available resources (such as private tuitions). The *xinyimin* community plays an important role in expanding individual and group's social networks, informing members with coping strategies, communicating, and sharing news and updated information, etc. For example, the burgeoning *xinyimin*-owned and run tuition businesses shed light on how *xinyimin* community has facilitated its members' educational goals. These Chinese speaking tuitions target at the most competitive as well as rewarding tracking programmes (such as GEP, DSA) and high-stake exams (PSLE, O' Level, and A' Level), therefore serve *xinyimin* parents to pursue their goal for children's educational excellence. Research has shown that children of immigrants in Singapore, of which mainland Chinese immigrant is a visible group, have performed significantly better in education than their native-born peers (Cheng 2017).

The differences of intensive parenting between the two groups can be explained by factors at various levels. At the macro-level, the immigration institutions disadvantage *xinyimin* and the education institution and social environment exert more pressures and constrains on *xinyimin* parents' childrearing compared to that afforded by local parents.

At the meso-level, the two groups, with different socioeconomic characteristics and status, seek support from their respective community, which have different mindsets, attitudes, and coping strategies. It is noted that *xinyimin* can only seek support from a narrow set of sources and rely predominantly on *education* for social mobility. At the micro-level, *xinyimin* families and parents, though with good education and profession backgrounds, confront with the migration-related disadvantages and challenges, such as loss of social support and a novel environment, therefore, they are more determined to work and invest harder through education to strive for a better life.

In sum, the immigration status is a main structural factor causing *xinyimin* to conduct parenting more intensively to address the strains between immigrant optimism and immigrant pessimism. The implication of this intensive parenting is that *xinyimin*, a group of population with a narrow set of resources, face difficulties in their adaptation (such as fulfilling of childrearing goals) in the host society, which can intensify their narrowly concentrated parenting practices. This process can be consequential for not only parents, children, the immigrant families, but the broader society. Further study is needed to explore and explain more thoroughly about the mechanism of the differences in intensive parenting between the immigrant and local groups.

### 4.1.4 Enrichment Programmes

As discussed earlier, children's success from a parental perspective does not exclusively emphasize on educational excellence. It has incorporated a new dimension, i.e., children's mental health, the happiness. Many *xinyimin* parents cultivate children to be versatile and well-rounded, which is also viewed as a children's success. Besides academic studies, parents enrol children in various arts and sports activities, which they

regard as added values for children. *Xinyimin* parents tend to be highly committed to those extracurricular activities, as they do not hesitate to pay extra costs and are willing to engage in children's activities. According to my interviews, some *xinyimin* parents agree that it would be good if children can be academically excellent, however, it is also expected that children can develop their own interests, potential, and to explore life. Many parents are quintessential examples of a 'concerted cultivator', investing emotions and efforts in organized activities (such as chess and sports) and try to offer children with various opportunities for their inherent competencies (Vincent & Ball, 2007, p. 1010).

Among all non-academic enrichment programmes, musical instruments learning (e.g., piano, violin), arts (e.g., drawing, ballet), and sports (e.g., swimming, tennis) are the most popular ones. Many children of *xinyimin* families were sent to play musical instrument(s), primarily piano, sometimes violin and a few others. Oftentimes, children were propelled by parents to learn two musical instruments since a very young age (even at three years old). In addition, it is common that *xinyimin* also invested in children's physical exercises through sports classes, such as badminton, football, and swimming. In most cases, parents, especially mothers, are the primary driver and supporter of these after-school extracurricular activities. Most primary and secondary school learners practice these talents and skills on daily basis, often with an aim to achieve various accomplishments. Parents in our interviews revealed the value of encouraging children's learning of various skills.

Based on my interviews, the most popular musical instruments learned by children of *xinyimin* was piano, violin, or both, and some Chinese musical instruments, such as pipa (琵琶) and Zither (古箏), were also favoured by parents. For example,

twenty-eight of my interview participants have their children learned piano, and at least five parents have their children learn two different musical instruments. Wenying is a new citizen. Her girl started to learn Pipa under the mother's plan at primary grade three. Wenying stated,

> "I had the idea to have my daughter to learn a musical instrument since her early childhood. I consulted with my classmate in Shanghai, who used to be a Pipa player and have achieved enrolment qualification in one of the best universities after *Gaokao* due to her specialty in Pipa…I was thinking to hire the best teacher to teach my daughter, since there is no point to learn something but not to achieve excellence. I do not think the learning of musical instrument as a hobby is good enough."

After one year of the interview, Wenying informed me that her daughter has successfully transferred from a neighbourhood primary school to Singapore's best primary school, because her daughter won a championship in the nation-wide Pipa competition.

Qian Hejing is a mother of three, the youngest boy was 5 years old (K2), the second child was a 10-year-old Primary Four girl, and the oldest daughter was in secondary two at the time of interview. All of them played piano under their mother's decisions and encouragement. Qian works as an accountant and a part-time *WeChat* businesswoman. To most of her friends, she is a "tiger mother", who has successfully boosted her children's education and is famous among the community of *xinyimin* parents. QHJ's first daughter played piano and achieved ABRSM grade 8 at primary five, and at the time of interview she was a secondary two student at an elite school. The second

daughter is even more excellent, who achieved an ABRSM piano grade-8 certificate at primary grade three and played violin during the same time. Besides, the youngest 5-year-old boy has started to learn ABRSM grade 3 exam pieces. The mother stated that she encouraged her children to learn and appraised children highly as encouragement. Apparently, musical achievements of Liang's children to a large extent can be attributed to the mother's ambition, plan and persistency. QHJ stated:

> "You should not expect young children to take initiative to learn and practice. Parents are an important force to drive them forward. I always use incentives. For my youngest son, a one-minute iPad (screen time) would make him practice piano happily for 30 minutes [laugh]…besides, I never hesitate to invest on children's learning. For piano we have already changed the old upright piano to a grand piano. You know my oldest daughter, after obtained the grade 8 certificate, she has found that her true love is playing piano… In my view, true love is not from the beginning. Some people say that children are not interested in learning something, then they let children go. I think it is not the right way… you do not know whether they love it or not unless you as a parent to keep trying and giving children enough time and opportunities to indulge in it..."

Parental support includes not only financial support but physical and emotional (e.g., time, attention, energy) support, and the latter is often the reason why parents are exhausted. In addition to covering the cost of instruments, materials, and lessons, home supervision and accompanying practices are the most time and energy consuming practices. Many parents highlighted their 'bad' experience of accompanying children to

practice musical instruments (the most often mentioned issue). In other cases, parents complained that children do not act to practice. Children's delaying tactics (such as drinking water, going to toilet, and pretending sleepy.) made parents angry and often ignited wars between children and parents that led to tears and bitterness.

Yan Ni is a Singapore PR, a mother of a seven-year-old girl. As a fulltime mother, Yan focused on searching resources and promoting children's education. Yan's daughter learned two different musical instruments, namely, piano and cello. She stated,

> "I hope she will achieve the piano grade 8 certificate as soon as possible, hopefully in the latter half of the next year. After that we can focus on learning cello. I am truly tired of accompanying her to learn two musical instruments. I send her to master class (learn from top music artist) every week, besides piano classes from two in-house teachers twice a week respectively. For me, I tried to find the best teachers and test which ones are suitable for my daughter. Most importantly, I need to arrange my daughter's time schedule, coordinate school learning and accompany her to practice, which are very time consuming and need perseverance. I did think about giving up many times, as my daughter does not like playing piano. Many tears and struggles during this process…so I have changed my mind and decided not to force her to practice too much. However, she still needs to take the exam and achieve "distinction" for grade 8, which would not be too difficult for her..."

Research has suggested that parental supports not only has positive effect on students' reading ability and mathematics achievement (Hawes, 2005; Cushenbery, 1988;

Shaver & Walls, 1998), but also significantly influences of children's leisure interests and values (Barnett & Chick, 1986; Hutchinson, Baldwin & Cladwell, 2003). Parental support and supervision have a positive influence on students' motivations, approach to practice, as well as their achievements (McPherson & Davidson, 2002). Overall, parents are important to young children's musical instrument learning (Suzuki 1973). My interviews showed that whether children of *xinyimin* can keep on learning and practicing depend on their parents', especially the mothers' insistency and determination.

However, parents do not always insist and desire children to keep on trying. An older generation has shown a relatively relaxed style of parenting. Mrs Liu, arriving in Singapore in late 1990s as an international student, is a mother of two and a naturalized citizen in her 50s now. Her son has just enrolled in a prestigious public university in Los Angeles, the USA and her younger girl is in Junior College year two. Mrs Liu has just decided to go to work in China when I interviewed her. The reason is that her husband had obtained a job offer in one of China's research institute. She herself is leaving Singapore soon and would work in a university library in the same Chinese city. She said she will let her daughter continue the study in Singapore, where the girl was born and grew up. Regarding the musical instrument learning, Mrs Liu commented that:

> "When our children were young, I didn't spend much time to accompany their learning at home. Their schoolwork and other activities are both completed by themselves. I also did not spend much money on private tuitions at that time, as it was not that popular among my friends… However, I can tell that the education competition in my children's days is not as intense as it is today… An impressed memory for me is that when

> my son was young, he had conflicts with me about playing piano…I finally let him, and he gave it up after two years' learning. I sometimes regret about this decision and think that I should have insisted a bit, as my son also mentioned that he expects to master an art skill after he entered university…"

Some parents reflected that playing piano requires a lot of time, which is an opportunity cost for learning, as children could have used this time to achieve progress in other areas. That is the reason why parents' involvement in learning musical instrument has decreased substantially as children grow older and enter higher level schooling. Parents' goal is still more on academic achievements, and they prefer children to devote more time to academic learning. Our interviews and observations showed that many parents tried to push children to pass high level (theoretical and practical) musical instrument examinations when children were at lower primary school, which is part of their plan and the designed path for their children to succeed in the long run. The reason is that lower school grades have less schoolwork and more leisure time, which allow children to practice musical instruments more intensively. It is agreed that musical instrument practicing is necessary for children to achieve certificates and competition medals, which are added values for obtaining opportunities in a broader field. Although many parents have reported frustrations and ambivalence, they continued the current strategies and seemed to under control of the prevalent practices.

### 4.1.5 A Structured Time Schedule for Learning

As above cases and discussions shown, *xinyimin* parents believed in their role in children's education and attempted to provide children with resources and supports to

intervene children's learning directly, particularly for parents holding a strict success frame. Many Chinese parents do not like children to hang around idly after school, and they prepare children to spend time wisely (Kelley & Tseng, 1992), which is also the situation of *xinyimin* in Singapore. Many parents devise a time schedule or at least a daily routine for children to attend various after-school programmes. A timetable helps to structure children's time and keep everything progress parallelly, which also reflects a high-level parental control. Our data show that it is common for a child to attend 2 to 3 enrichment programmes besides private tuitions on school subjects every week, therefore, a well-structured time schedule is necessary for these children and families.

In addition, as earlier described, parents involve themselves proactively in children's learning in after school and home-based time. The time-schedule, therefore, helps us to understand how long *xinyimin* parents participate in children's learning and activities daily or weekly. According to my interviews, *xinyimin* parents considered it important to take time with children, in particular on learning. And *xinyimin* parents of different occupations, from homemaker to full-time professional, tend to plan well and spend time on teaching their children at home, although these parents might spend time differently.

Lin is a Singapore PR and a mother of an 8-year-old girl. She used to work as an industry professional. While after her girl started primary school, she agreed with her husband and resigned to become a homemaker. Her primary task was to take care of their girl and promote the child's learning and school performance. Enrolling her daughter in six different classes (English, dancing, piano, taekwondo, drawing, and badminton), Lin

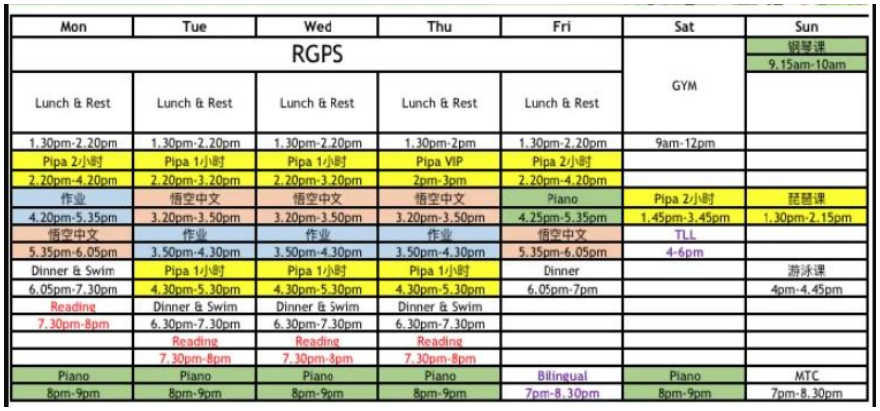
has a busy daily routine. On top of that, she conducted home-based math teaching. Lin stated,

> "Every afternoon I am very busy and tired. After picking up my daughter from school and having a simple lunch, I send her to different locations to attend classes. After returning home in the evening, we have some rest and then have to do different homework according to her timetable. For math and English, I can provide some help. I also accompany my daughter to practice piano an hour a day… I feel the daily schedule is very tight and not enough to handle all my daughter's stuff …"

Joanne, a fulltime mother and a PR shared similar experience.

> "My son is a very docile boy, and he will follow my instructions. I am good at praising him and encouraging him. Besides sending him to swimming class, English class, and robot programming class, etc., I spend much time with him to do exercise books every day. For reading, I encourage him to read for fun, but I also ask him to read loudly to me after his independent reading…I believe this learning approach would help him achieve fast progress."

Sha Li is a naturalized Singapore citizen, who came to Singapore with the MOE scholarship for university 14 years ago. Her career as an insurance agent is flexible with working time, which enable her to accompany her Primary One girl and Kindergarten One boy. The time schedule designed for her Primary One girl was highly compact, including English, Chinese, two musical instruments (pipa and piano on daily basis), swimming, dancing, etc. The timetable is as attached in the following:



| Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RGPS | | | | | GYM | 钢琴课 9.15am-10am |
| Lunch & Rest | Lunch & Rest | Lunch & Rest | Lunch & Rest | Lunch & Rest | | |
| 1.30pm-2.20pm | 1.30pm-2.20pm | 1.30pm-2.20pm | 1.30pm-2pm | 1.30pm-2.20pm | 9am-12pm | |
| Pipa 2小时 | Pipa 1小时 | Pipa 1小时 | Pipa VIP | Pipa 2小时 | | |
| 2.20pm-4.20pm | 2.20pm-3.20pm | 2.20pm-3.20pm | 2pm-3pm | 2.20pm-4.20pm | | |
| 作业 | 悟空中文 | 悟空中文 | 悟空中文 | Piano | Pipa 2小时 | 琵琶课 |
| 4.20pm-5.35pm | 3.20pm-3.50pm | 3.20pm-3.50pm | 3.20pm-3.50pm | 4.25pm-5.35pm | 1.45pm-3.45pm | 1.30pm-2.15pm |
| 悟空中文 | 作业 | 作业 | 作业 | 悟空中文 | TLL | |
| 5.35pm-6.05pm | 3.50pm-4.30pm | 3.50pm-4.30pm | 3.50pm-4.30pm | 5.35pm-6.05pm | 4-6pm | |
| Dinner & Swim | Pipa 1小时 | Pipa 1小时 | Pipa 1小时 | Dinner | | 游泳课 |
| 6.05pm-7.30pm | 4.30pm-5.30pm | 4.30pm-5.30pm | 4.30pm-5.30pm | 6.05pm-7pm | | 4pm-4.45pm |
| Reading | Dinner & Swim | Dinner & Swim | Dinner & Swim | | | |
| 7.30pm-8pm | 6.30pm-7.30pm | 6.30pm-7.30pm | 6.30pm-7.30pm | | | |
| | Reading | Reading | Reading | | | |
| | 7.30pm-8pm | 7.30pm-8pm | 7.30pm-8pm | | | |
| Piano | Piano | Piano | Piano | Bilingual | Piano | MTC |
| 8pm-9pm | 8pm-9pm | 8pm-9pm | 8pm-9pm | 7pm-8.30pm | 8pm-9pm | 7pm-8.30pm |

*Figure 4.1 Interview participant provided timetable.*

Sha Li commented,

"This compact time schedule enables children to spend time very efficiently. I often seek friends and those successful mothers' advice about how to cultivate children. In view of the highly competitive education system and streaming mechanisms, I hope my children can be as good as those dragon children. I make time schedule for my children, because I found out that those bull mothers all organize children's time very well. Many children waste their after-school time on playing, which I think they should have used this time to learn and practice something meaningful, such as playing musical instrument and reading books. Although initially we have difficulties in implementing this timetable, I held on and encouraged my children to make efforts to complete every task. Now we can complete everything every day."

Some interviewees have mentioned their struggles on how to adhere to the timetable and balance children's learning and playing. They are also deeply concerned that children need to complete a lot of things before going to sleep, thus depriving

children's sleeping time. Negative effects and implications of this intensive practices might need further investigation in future studies.

However, a well-structured time schedule does not necessarily lead to a child's educational excellence. He Jing's case represents a usual situation of *xinyimin* parents. He Jing is a PR and a mother of two primary school children. Doing an admin job, she has relatively sufficient time to look over children's learning and education. Her husband and children have naturalized to be citizens, while she retains the Chinese citizenship. Though having invested on children's education with much time and resources, the mother disappointed at her children's performance, and she spoke the following,

> "…I believe that I am one of the most diligent parents, who are fired up for promoting children's education. We have spent generously on children's education. Besides money, I use much time on daily basis to guide my children's literacy and math learning, school homework, tuition homework, etc. However, their performances are barely satisfactory. I am very sad and disappointed that my children just cannot achieve educational excellence as the top tier students do, in the condition that I have invested so much time and energy... My children even do not have a positive attitude to study… I can only admire those children who can progress with minimum parental investment. I especially admire their parents, as I am equal to be a failure compared with them, …"

As my data showed, *xinyimin* parents believe in an interventionist approach towards their children's education, which is the essence of the intensive parenting, i.e., exerting control to achieve the expected outcomes. Although parents admit that innate

ability is the most important factor that determines one's academic competency, they put equivalent emphasis on efforts and left no stone unturned to support children's learning and education. However, it is also found that parents do not always practise the 'interventionism'. On the one hand, it is because parents have different thinking about children's success, on the other hand, although most *xinyimin* parents are of middleclass status, some are not with sufficient financial resources or time, or both to engage with the intensive parenting practices, which can be seen from *xinyimin* parents' different strategies and practices. Firstly, according to interviews, actual and virtual observations, *xinyimin* parents wish to put in efforts and invest with their efforts and best available resources to facilitate their children's educational achievements, even this may be challenging for them. *Xinyimin* parents did not give up intensive parenting easily and sacrificed their own life for their children's education. When parents lack of financial resources, they rely more on their own human and cultural capital (e.g., their education, knowledge, middleclass habitus). They do self-tutoring for their children and tend to spend more after-work time with their children's learning at home. One of my interview participants, a working mother said that she spent three hours a day to teach her daughter math to prepare for a high-stake examination.

Secondly, my data showed that when parents lack of time to attend to children's needs, the mother might choose to work in a relatively less demanding profession, so that they can have more time to take care of their children. As elaborated in Chapter 2, *xinyimin* families in Singapore are normally composed of dual-earner parents with one to two (young) children, and they often lack social support, especially when children are young. Some interviewed *xinyimin* parents have mentioned that after children start

schooling, parents, in particular mothers, would need to invest more attention and efforts on children's learning and related matters. Two of my interview participants said that they have changed jobs due to concerns and issues of childrearing. There are also cases as shown earlier that the mother exited the work market to cover the childrearing responsibilities at home.

Thirdly, when parents lacked sufficient time and money, they also tend to exploit themselves and sacrifice more of their own time for relaxation, sleep, social life and other practices, which may lead to the decrease of parents' living quality. The parental sacrifices for children's learning and education have been emphasized by *xinyimin* regardless of their class status and socioeconomic affluence, and this is also distinct for families and parents with two or more children, where parents might face more strains of time, resources, and energy in childrearing. Besides investing with various available resources, *xinyimin* parents with more children are found to be more 'responsible' for their first child and tend to adopt a relatively relaxed method or less intensive parenting to cultivate the other children. The reason on the one hand is the time and resources constraints, and on the other hand is that parents have learned to adopt a relatively relaxed parenting and only invest when it is necessary. Besides, some parents try best to balance the work and children, as one interview participant has said,

> "I spend most of my energy on the older one, and found it is very difficult to spend the same amount of time and money on the younger one [laugh]... I often feel very tired and frustrated to handle the two children after work, especially when I need to accompany them to study. I don't blame my husband, because he is as busy as me. After work, we spend a lot of time

> on the two children at home. We couple guide and teach the two children about school and after-school learning, cook for them, send them to enrichment programmes, etc. We use fragmented time to wash and clean the house, and can only relax and deal with our own matters at midnight after children fall asleep…"

Last but not least, due to parents' expectation to support their children's education, the insufficient time and resources are often the primary reason that makes parents subjected to tremendous anxieties, pressures, and stresses, as they understand that parental input of time and resources is a competition, which is critical for children to gain a head start in the education. Therefore, when children fail in education (such as in high-stake examinations), some parents tend to blame themselves and may judge themselves to be a failure directly from their children's educational outcomes.

As the term 'parentocracy' has explained (Brown, 1990), the educational situation is that a child's educational outcome increasingly depends upon the *wishes* and *wealth* of parents, rather than the *ability* and *efforts* of pupils themselves (1990, p. 65). For example, parents can invest in the private tutoring, as it works in the interests of the wealthy or the advantaged (Angus, 2015, p. 26). The parental anxieties and stresses can be intensified in this situation, as those who lack capabilities and sufficient resources to support their children can be left behind and loss the competition. This process also makes parents derive their own identity and affirm themselves as a success or as a failure through whether they can do parenting well. In addition, parents are expected to take the responsibility and make ultimate decisions for children, which increases parents' pressures to optimize every decision and to plan for children's outcomes. However, this

also reproduces and intensifies the existing education competition, and perpetuates social and educational inequalities among different families and children.

### 4.2 School-related Parenting Practices

Our interviews showed that besides conducting home-based intensive parenting practices, *xinyimin* parents tried to cooperate with school and teachers on children's school related matters, as they perceive school related matters to be of importance to their children's educational outcomes and future status. According to interview participants' narratives, school is also considered to be the most important publicly available institution that immigrant parents can explore and seek support from for their children's education and mobility in the host society. The interview participants who spend more time and attention on children's school learning and matters tend to understand better about children's school performance and school's expectation on children. Although parents have different levels of interactions with school and teachers, they have expressed common beliefs regarding engagement with school and teachers, which include respecting school and teachers, supporting and cooperating as possible as they can, and taking parental responsibilities assigned by school.

#### 4.2.1 Respecting Teachers and Schools

It is noted that Chinese immigrant parents value schools and teachers as authority and professionals (Siu & Feldman, 1996) and limit their participation in the school system (Li, 2002; Siu & Feldman, 1996). Just like Chinese immigrant parents elsewhere, *xinyimin* agreed that schools are important institutions that develop children's cognitive, educational, social capabilities (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). Our parent participants mostly hold a positive attitude to teachers and school. They tend to value teachers' comments on

children's capabilities and performance and require children to meet teachers and school's expectations. In most cases, *xinyimin* parents are confident and satisfied with the work of teachers and schools. For example, parents have higher confidence in extracurricular activities organized by the schools than by external bodies.

Our interviews reveal that parents take the initiative to contact school and teachers only when children have real problems. In fact, only a few parents kept in close contact with teachers. Hui Qi is a naturalized new citizen and a mother of Secondary Two girl, she stated,

> "We respect our children's teachers and believe that they provide equal opportunity and quality education to our children. If everything goes well, we only meet teachers at the annual teacher-parent meeting. From there, we understand detailed progress of our children and pay attention to what our teacher highlight... Of course, I fully agree with what teachers have reviewed and commented about my son's strengths and weaknesses…"

In addition, *xinyimin* parents are concerned about children's behaviours in school. They expect children to respect teachers, abide by school rules, and get along well with classmates.

### 4.2.2 Supporting and Cooperating with School and Teachers

Besides being respectful to teachers and school, *xinyimin* parents tend to support and cooperate with teachers and school and make efforts to meet their requests. In contrast to the Chinese immigrant parents in Western destinations, who are less likely to involve in children's school matters (Shin, 2009, p. 33), many *xinyimin* parents in Singapore hold a more positive attitude and tend to participate school-based activities

actively. They are usually responsive and cooperative to school's requests, including attending Parent-Teacher meetings, volunteering at school, participating in class events, etc. My interviews showed that *xinyimin* parents attach importance to school organized activities and events and often make time to participate. They also respond to school and teacher's requests promptly. For example, Ling as a new citizen and a mother of a Primary One boy, stated her experience:

> "I take the initiative to be a school volunteer and help on school's events. I used to help on new student registration and parents briefing event for consecutive two days, and a one-day mid-autumn festival celebration. One of my friends has volunteered to conduct monthly Chinese storytelling…"

Some parents are involved deeply in school matters. For example, Feng Qian, a naturalized citizen, has sat on the parent associations to participate in school matters discussions and governance. She also participated in the school's year-end celebration and performed on stage. In short, *xinyimin* parents' support and cooperation can be seen from their attendance at children's celebration performances and prize-giving ceremony, and their participation in children's social homework, donations, recycling activities in the community, etc., through which parents engage themselves with their children's school matters and are ready for providing support to various occasions.

### 4.2.3 Division of Responsibilities between School and Parents

From *xinyimin* parents' point of view, school and parents have their respective work and responsibilities. Parents expect school to take the responsibility to develop children's academic and social skills, and they will support school's role and provide children with a conducive learning environment and a healthy emotional environment at

home. In terms of children's learning, *xinyimin* parents tend to supplement and enhance children's academic capabilities and progress through home-based learning, including private tutoring and in-person guidance. These parents prefer to leave the school-based learning and related matters to teachers. In other words, *xinyimin* parents tend to restrict their involvement to the home domain. Many parents choose to follow school decisions and seldom voice their own opinions. *Xinyimin* parents' primary attention is rested on providing supplementary educational support and help children achieve educational excellence.

Mrs. Wang Qing is a PR and works in a childcare center. Her son was in primary grade one. She commented,

> "The Singapore school system is a bit strange to me. The only common practice of education systems in Singapore and China is that we respect for teachers and school officials and just stand by for school and teachers' calling. As in China, parents normally cooperate with school and teachers, and follow what they require students and parents to do. Basically, there is no such thing that parents participate in school's governance. So even I am aware that there is a parent association in school, which invites parents to join, I feel it is not of my domain. What I should do is to focus my time on children at home."

*Xinyimin's* parenting practices related to school-based learning and matters seem not to be intensive. The first reason might be that the government has reformed the education system and made the school education and learning content to be simple and fun. It is known that the learning for young students have become easier, which seldom

need parents' involvement and after-school supervision. Second, school and teachers in the Singapore education system are thought to be the authority by parents. Parents' relationship with school can be described as unidirectional, which means that parents receive information and respond to requests from teachers and school. What parents expect to do and be required to do are usually support and cooperation. Parents and school do have their respective domains and responsibilities. Third, the real or perceived quality disparities between good (elite) schools and average (neighbourhood) schools might be another reason why parents leave children's school-based learning and matters to school. In a highly competitive education system, *xinyimin* parents, who assess their children to be disadvantaged by the school's position, often try to compensate for school's weakness with their own efforts, i.e., the home-based learning and private tutoring. It is noted that private tutors have gradually played the role of a formal schoolteacher, which is to take more responsibilities in teaching knowledge and enhancing learning skills, partly due to the educational reform and partly due to parents' anxieties and aspirations to improve children's learning.

### 4.3 Intensive Parenting Practices in the Community

*Xinyimin* parents not only do intensive parenting, i.e., invest heavily with parental attention, time, and money in their children's after-school learning at home, but also interact with the community to fulfil their parenting responsibilities and help children achieve educational excellence (Zhou & Kim, 2006), which has implications for these parents' self-identity. Research has shown that ethnic groups with embedded community forces can affect the group in ethnic-specific ways and provide cultural beliefs and coping strategies for the group to deal with the disadvantaged social environment

(Fordham & Ogbu 1986). In this study, the "community" firstly refers to the *xinyimin* community, which provides social capital (intra-community social networks) and ethnic institutional support (such as private tuitions owned and run by *xinyimin*, etc.) to individuals and the *xinyimin* group. Secondly, the "community" also refers to the larger Singapore society, in which *xinyimin* parents rebuild social networks and tap on publicly available resources, such as the private tuitions and the non-profit residential committees organized supplementary classes.

Immigration disrupts pre-migration social networks. Immigrants, therefore, seek to build extra-familial networks as social resources to support families and foster children's development (Portes, 1998). For *xinyimin* parents in Singapore, they build networks in and beyond the *xinyimin* community. Those who are able to rebuild social networks in the new society (with informed native friends, educators, colleagues, and neighbors, in particular), benefit more from such resources in comparison to those whose networks are mainly composed of fellow immigrants (Ho & Foo, 2017). In addition, *xinyimin* parents tap on publicly available resources (such as tuitions) for supplementary education and interact with educational institutions on their children's behalf. In the following sections, I first describe *xinyimin's* intensive parenting practices in the *xinyimin* community. And then I elaborate on *xinyimin's* activities and practices aimed for benefits for children's education in the larger Singapore society.

### 4.3.1 Practices in the *Xinyimin* Community

According to our interviews and observations, new Chinese immigrant parents conduct intensive practices in the community that centers on children's learning and education. They actively integrate into the diverse social networks within the *xinyimin*

community and benefit from it with obtaining education-related information, experience, and coping strategies. The reason is that with few local connections, immigrants primarily rely on ethnic social networks for social support and resources (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). *Xinyimin* parents also tap on the formal immigrant organizations, such as clan associations, for social support. For example, *xinyimin* who are members of certain clan associations, bestow their children the priority in the clan association affiliated primary school enrollment. Moreover, *xinyimin* parents select and benefit from the *xinyimin* community generated economic institutions, such as the high-standard (measured by outcomes and fees) tuition businesses and private tutoring, to satisfy their demands of tailored supplementary education, for example, the GEP tutoring, writing center, and PSLE prep schools, just like the situation in the United States (Zhou, 2009). As this chapter focuses on how the intensive parenting is conducted by and implicates on new Chinese immigrants, more details about how *xinyimin* mobilize resources in the community will be discussed in the next chapter.

The following interview narratives show how *xinyimin* conduct intensive parenting in the community to support their children's education.

Yang Ling is a naturalized Singapore citizen in her forties and a mother of three children. Ling conducted a *WeChat* business in the circle of *xinyimin* women, which is to sell a wide range of beauty products (imported from China) through the *WeChat* platform. Her customers are primarily *xinyimin*, in particular women. Asked how she made acquaintance with friends and gathered education related information, such as tuition, Ling replied,

> "I am initially a well-informed mother, who share and communicate children's education-related issues with a lot of *xinyimin* friends. Benefited from the social networks, I started my *WeChat* business, which allows me to know more friends and an important topic among us is always children's learning and education. I share and learn more information and experience about how to choose private tutoring, promote musical instrument learning, prepare and participate academic competitions, etc. With keeping in mind that education determines a child's future, I am ready to explore more from my relationship networks and organizations with investing money, time, and energy, from which we build our confidence as parents and recognize our own abilities."

*Xinyimin*-owned private tuitions are a form of ethnic institutions that serve students' educational needs. Our data showed that within the *xinyimin* community, the tuition and prep schools are started in response to parents and children's educational demands.

Mr. Qi is a naturalized citizen, a father of two boys, who have both entered the GEP programmes. Qi had worked as a professional in investment industry for several years. Currently, he run his own GEP tuition. At the time of the interview, Qi's first son was in Primary Six at the time of interview, which is a significant transition year for Singapore students in their education path. Therefore, Mr. Qi resigned from his company and aimed to prepare his son for the PSLE examination. In the meantime, he promptly started the GEP tuition, as he had the experience of training his two sons, who had both successfully passed the GEP examination. In Qi's classes, most children were from

*xinyimin* families and the parents were confident in Qi's capability. In the interview, Qi stated,

> "Yes, most of my students are children of *xinyimin* families. They are recommended by friends and acquaintances. I really appreciate these parents' trust since this is my first-year class and no prior exam pass rate for reference. As we know, the GEP prep market is highly competitive, and there have been a bunch of successful GEP tutoring classes. It is not easy to cut a share in the market. Therefore, I will make best efforts to help children succeed. I am confident and experienced since I started as a parent, and I have been doing research on GEP related issues in the past consecutive years. Both of my sons have passed the exams successfully in different years. Besides, four children of my friends, who studied together with my boys have also been selected."

Qi's experience indicated that the social relations and networks in the *xinyimin* community are tightly knitted. *Xinyimin* parents seek resources to satisfy their educational demands in the community, and this in turn also produces the economic institutions or business to meet group member's demands.

### 4.3.2 Practices in the Larger Community

In the Singaporean society, educational attainment and school success are considered crucial to securing good jobs and higher social status. *Xinyimin* parents have effortfully aligned their education strategies and practices to the mainstream society's expectations. Like the locals, *xinyimin* parents seek publicly available resources in the society to facilitate children's learning and education.

First, as mentioned earlier, *xinyimin* parents invest heavily in publicly available private tuitions for their children to achieve satisfactory education outcomes. Second, *xinyimin* parents actively recreate social networks not only with fellow immigrants, but with native-born friends (including educators, neighbours, colleagues, etc.), who can provide education and learning information and resources. Third, *xinyimin* parents tap on public institutions, such as non-profit institutions and residential committees, to obtain free or low-cost tuitions for students.

Many *xinyimin* parents spend time on understanding various private tuition centers (e.g., their teachers, teaching materials, difficulty level, fees, etc.), which reflect the parents' keenness to invest and close monitoring of the private tutoring market. At critical points, such as GEP and PSLE, parents tend to invest heavily on tuitions and take it as an effective means to win children a competitive advantage.

Cai Feng is a naturalized Singapore citizen and a mother of two girls. She is very concerned about her children's learning and education. While guiding children's learning at home every day, she also sends her children to various tuition centres. For GEP preparation, she has enrolled her girl in two different (successful) GEP prep centres. Cai Feng's extremely high educational expectation and willingness to invest on private tutoring is not an exception among *xinyimin*. In fact, our interviews and observations have confirmed that many *xinyimin* parents adopt similar practices and do not hesitate to pay high economic costs. An example is that the monthly average spending on children's tuition in Singapore is S$88.4 in 2017/8 [21], and the median is S$205 for a primary student,

[21] Tuition has ballooned to a S$1.4b industry in Singapore. Should we be concerned? https://www.todayonline.com/commentary/tuition-has-ballooned-s14b-industry-singapore-should-we-be-concerned Access on 18 Dec 2020.

which is shown in the earlier mentioned survey [22], while the GEP tuition fee of a popular center (run by a *xinyimin* owner) is S$160 per session (meaning $S640 per month) in 2019, and this fee has been raised to S$190 per session in 2020, meanwhile the enrollment doubled (information retrieved from the center website).

Seeking to build social relationship and networks in the new society is another way that *xinyimin* parents adopt to fulfil their educational expectation. Sun Mulan is a Singapore PR and a mother of a primary three girl. She arrived in Singapore with his husband 10 years ago. Mulan expressed that she and her husband did not intend to become citizens, but the PR status is relatively a disadvantage for their child's education. Therefore, the couple chose to work for the community as volunteers, which would help to earn a better chance for their girl to study in a good primary school. Mulan stated,

> "We took initiative to join the neighborhood Residential Committee (RC) and volunteered to help on RC's events, such as National Day celebrations and racial harmony day celebration. The involvement helped us know many local friends, who would like to share with us something new and helpful. Importantly, this volunteer work might allow our daughter to enroll in a good school. Therefore, it was a good try for us."

Some *xinyimin* joined church groups in Singapore. They participate in religious activities and service the church regularly as Christians, who can build close relationships and companionships with diverse social groups. And this helps them establish social connections and networks with the larger community.

Chris Li is a naturalized Singapore citizen, who came to Singapore with her husband in 2008. In her mid-40s, Chris is a mother of two boys, a business owner, and a

[22] Tuition Nation. https://www.asiaone.com/singapore/tuition-nation Access on 20 December 2020.

Christian. Chris owns and runs a well-known and established bilingual language learning center in Singapore. With building diverse social relationships with both *xinyimin* and the larger community, Chris benefited from the accumulated social capital, which has facilitated her son's school enrolment. Chris told me that her service to the church has helped her to get a referral letter from the priest, which secured her older son a position in the church affiliated primary school. Chris's case showed that active involvement and interactions with social institutions in the larger society can help to build social capital and obtain social support.

To conclude, building on Hays' (1996) insights and work, I found that *xinyimin* in Singapore tend to conduct the intensive parenting, and the sociocultural contexts of Singapore require these parents to do so. *Xinyimin* parents have their respective emphasis on their children's success, as they focus not only on educational excellence, but happiness and natural growth, however, their parenting practices still can be explained by the model of intensive parenting, which has the logic that parents hold full responsibility for their children's outcomes, that is, either successes or failures, parents' involvement and investment are significantly associated. *Xinyimin* parents, mostly of middleclass status and often with a migration goal for their children's education and family's mobility, consciously assume the parental responsibilities to plan, control, and optimize their children's outcomes in the host society. The discussed intensive parenting, therefore, is a strategy both to address the contextual challenges created by immigration and to proactively support their children's mobility and future status. As shown in this chapter, *xinyimin* parents have adopted various strategies and practices to intensively parent on their children's education to achieve the expected success, including the home-based

intensive parenting, working with school and teachers, and actively tapping on the *xinyimin* as well as the larger community resources. This process also leads parents to define their own success and identity (Hays, 1996), as they see themselves as a success or as a failure directly as a result of their children's success or failure. The belief and practices of parent's deterministic role in children's outcomes have impact on parents' subjectivity and self-identity.

In addition, the inflation of the parenting role can have more negative implications on the broader society. First, it both encourages over-involvement in children's lives and corrodes the bonds between children and parents themselves (Faircloth, 2014). Second, it makes parents subject to tremendous anxieties due to the parenting competition. Researchers have suggested that the middle class tends to share 'a set of context-specific desires, aspirations, and anxieties, which is a state referred as 'longing to secure' (Heiman, Liechty & Freeman, 2012, p. 20). In Singapore, the middle class's context-specific aspirations and anxieties are particularly in relation to children's schooling and education (Göransson, 2015). With doing the intensive parenting, parents suffer from the intensified anxieties and stresses, which comes not only from the education competition, but also from the competition among parents about how well he or she can do in parenting, as this requires actual and sufficient investment of attention, time, money, resources, and emotion, thus is highly demanding.

Third, the culture of intensive parenting can be a social control (the "rule enforcement" produced by interconnected social networks among parents, families, local communities, neighborhood, and schools) (Portes, 1998) that conforms parents to conduct the intensive parenting through shaping their beliefs and values. Some of the

interview participants particularly mentioned their anxieties during the process of learning from their peers' intensive parenting. Research has also shown that intensive parenting has forced both local and immigrant parents to invest more time, attention, and money (Göransson, 2015), although it can equip parents with effective coping strategies and facilitate children to achieve highly.

Fourth, *xinyimin's* intensive parenting may have inadvertently intensified the competition and reproduced the social inequalities along the line of class and ethnicity, which can result in local Singaporean's emotional distancing and resentment to *xinyimin*. This process can serve to deepen and produce the native-migrant divide and educational inequality in the broad context of nativist backlash against new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, therefore can potentially produce conflicts between the *xinyimin* group and the larger society.

# Chapter 5

## Immigrant Selectivity, Transnationalism, and Community Formation

In the previous chapters, I have described the challenges that new Chinese immigrants face in the Singapore society, the specific ways that they practise intensive parenting for children's success and mobility, and how the intensive parenting has affirmed parents' self-identity. I have shown how socioeconomic resources, including human, economic, and culture capital, which these highly skilled Chinese immigrants have brought with them to or built in Singapore, have played a critical role in intensive parenting. However, these resources should not (only) be regarded as the features of individual immigrants. Rather, they are formed and accumulated as a result of structural forces. This chapter examines the structural processes through which various resources are mobilized in support of *xinyimin's* intensive parenting practice. This is an attempt to go beyond the debate between structuralists and culturalists, as discussed in Chapter 1. I argue that *xinyimin's* parenting practices cannot be fully understood only by focusing on structural factors or individual cultural traits. Rather, it is the result of immigrants' agentic mobilization of available resources under their enhanced Confucian culture and through the interactive processes of immigrant selectivity, transnationalism, and community formation.

Based on in-depth interviews, participant observations, and prior research, I have identified three bases or interactive processes of resource mobilization that intersect to provide support. The first is immigrant selectivity (Feliciano, 2005a; Lee & Zhou, 2015). Chinese immigrants are a hyper-selected group, and they immigrate to Singapore due both to their personal motivations and the city-state's talent and immigration policy. The

second is the transnationalism. Highly selective new Chinese immigrants in Singapore have access to transferable and portable values, knowledge, education, and experience, and are able to mobilize and reproduce these resources in a transnational habitus to facilitate actions in general (Carlson, Gerhans & Hans, 2017), and to support intensive parenting in particular. The third is the formation of *xinyimin* community via the mobile online social media platform *WeChat*. Based on the Chinese language and culture, *WeChat* has played an instrumental role in strengthening the formation of *xinyimin* community and creating ethnic social capital in the Singapore's context.

## 5.1 Immigrant Selectivity

Recent migration policy studies have highlighted that migration regimes in destination countries have become not only more "restrictive", but "selective" in new ways (de Haas, Natter & Vezzoli, 2016). For example, education has been an important indicator of positive immigration selectivity in contemporary migration (Feliciano, 2005a). Research findings from some country case studies have demonstrated that education attainment of emigrants is significantly higher than that of homestayers (e.g., Belot & Hatton, 2012; Feliciano, 2005a; Ichou, 2014). Scholars have argued that changes in immigration policies and laws are the deep structural roots that have fundamentally altered the socioeconomic profiles of contemporary immigrants, which are closely associated with immigrants' cultural manifestations and achievements in the host society (Zhou & Lee, 2017).

Based on Feliciano's (2005a) positive selectivity of immigrant education, Lee and Zhou (2015) developed the concept of hyper-selectivity to show the *dual* positive selectivity of immigrant, which compares the rate of university degree holders among

immigrants with those in both sending and receiving countries. The hyper-selectivity not only shows immigrants and their family's socioeconomic status (SES) and relative position in the original social systems, but also links to a higher level of human capital, and creates ethnic capital (i.e., a quality ethnic environment and ethnic economic, cultural, social resources) in the host country. Such hyper-selectivity, therefore, reintroduces or reproduces *class* and social inequalities into the receiving society.

Contemporary immigrants in the main destinations (e.g., the U.S., Canada, the UK, Australia) have been subjected to immigrant selection, and are characterised by higher education level, high income, and skilled professions (e.g., Zhou & Lee, 2017; Hatton, 2005; Feliciano, 2005a, 2005b; Jass & Massey, 2004). These immigrants often possess the receiving country's ideologically and socioeconomically preferred collective characteristics in terms of cultural, economic, and human capital (Zimmermann, Bauer & Lofstrom, 2000; Facchini & Steinhardt, 2011). In other words, immigrant selectivity represents an immigrant group's possession of human (skills and knowledge), economic (wealth), and cultural (e.g., value, norms) capital.

In the case of Singapore, the immigrants' hyper-selectivity (refers to the ratio of bachelor's degree holders of *xinyimin* in Singapore amounts to 75%) (Zhou & Benton, 2017) is also produced by the city-state's immigration policies. Notably, the hyper-selectivity and its associated capital are consequential for *xinyimin* and their children's adaptation and mobility as well as for the larger host society (Zhou & Lee, 2015). In the following, I analyse the effects of *xinyimin's* immigrant selectivity or hyper-selectivity on their intensive parenting of children's education in Singapore. I decompose the immigrant

selectivity to be economic, cultural, and human capital and showed how *xinyimin* mobilize these forms of capital for intensive parenting.

### 5.1.1 Components of Immigrant Selectivity: Human, Economic, and Cultural Capital

#### 5.1.1.1 Human capital

Human capital in this study refers to education (Schultz, 1961), the embodied aspirations, vision, knowledge, insight, skills, capabilities, methods, expertise (Colman, 1988) and entrepreneurship (e.g., Shane, 2000; Ardichvili, Cardozo, & Ray, 2003). Human capital can be acquired from education, training, and working experience, which are important selection criteria of Singapore's immigration policies (Rahman & Kiong, 2013). It is relatively intangible but can be as beneficial as economic capital. Within a family, human capital refers to parents' education, skills, knowledge (Kao, 2004). Parents' human capital is linked to more resources and social capital that would benefit their children (Lareau, 2000; Ream & Palardy, 2008).

In Singapore, the selectivity of human capital for *xinyimin* can be observed from *xinyimin's* high educational attainment. As mentioned in Chapter 2, research data has shown that the ratio of the university degree holders of *xinyimin* in Singapore was 75% in 2017. In contrast, the number of the population aged 25+ years and with a completed bachelor's or equivalent degree in Singapore was reported to be 30.5% in 2015 (General Household Survey, 2016), and the number of college graduates in mainland China population was merely 6.5% in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2019). My interview data also shed light on the education level of *xinyimin*. Among the 50 interview participants, there are 4 diploma holders (8%), 19 bachelors (38%), 17 Masters (34%),

and 10 PhDs (20%), showing a ratio of holders of bachelor's degree to be as high as 92%. The visible disparities in the ratios of university graduates among *xinyimin*, Singapore's general population, and China's general population show that *xinyimin* is a hyper-selected group, which can be with a very high level of human capital.

The effects of *xinyimin's* human capital, i.e., their education and its related knowledge, insights, visions and experience, on their intensive parenting and children's educational outcomes can be seen from how they plan and guide children's after-school learning and how a full-time mother has selected tuitions. A good example is the aforementioned case of Xiao Fan, who spent much time to do research on children's reading materials and online learning programmes. However, Xiao Fan is not an uncommon case. *Xinyimin* parents, both fathers and mothers tend to pay close attention, invest their intelligence, and plan with visions to parenting on children's learning.

Li Juan is a full-time professional, holding master's degree, and a naturalized citizen. She is a mother of two boys. Her first boy has been admired by many peer parents, as he was selected by the Ministry of Education to participate the GEP (gifted education program) programme. When the younger boy entered into Primary Three, a transition year for GEP selection, the mother used her knowledge, capabilities, and experience to realize her dream for the second son.

> "Having the experience of guiding and teaching my older son, I know that the GEP screening is highly competitive and tough. It is designed particularly for fast learners and talented children rather than normal ones. However, in recent years, the GEP students become less gifted, as most of them went to GEP tuitions before participating in the screening

examination. Therefore, I think it would be fair that I prepare my second son and give him a chance to try. Indeed, children are with different capabilities…my younger one is not as intelligent as his brother [laugh]…. I need to invest much more efforts to help him. On the one hand, I guide him to learn the required math knowledge, stretching him to the higher level; on the other hand, I push him to improve English language, which is a prerequisite for GEP student…"

Li's younger son finally passed the exam with her support and efforts. Li's case showed that additional support from parents' knowledge, experience, and know-how is consequential for children's educational achievement. *Xinyimin* parents' high educational attainment has given their children an edge in the competition in this regard.

An Jie is a PR and a full-time mother. She is in her early 30s and has two children (the older boy was in Primary Two and the younger girl was in Kindergarten One). Her husband and their two children have become naturalized Singapore citizens in 2017. An Jie came from Beijing and earned a bachelor's degree in an Australia University. She became a housemaker after having the second child. She said that the time would allow her to be fully involved in children's growth and development.

Regarding learning plans and tuition selection strategies, An Jie shared a typical view among *xinyimin* parents.

"My children's learning and education is one of our primary concern. After they started schooling, I have invested many efforts, attention and money to help improve their academic performance. Besides the home-based supervision on their study, I try to find good education resources,

such as tuitions, books, and online learning programmes. For different subjects, I choose different sources. I enrol them in Singapore's best English tuition centre for English learning. I have bought them a series of online math and logical training courses. I also employed tutors to help improve my children's Chinese reading and learning ability and hired the prestigious piano teacher and violin teacher for our children. All these require a lot of thinking, planning and efforts."

An Jie's case showed that *xinyimin* parents apply their educational experience, knowledge, and thoughts in their children's schooling and learning. Even being a housemaker, the mother has obtained an international education credential and can use her knowledge and vision to support her children's education.

#### 5.1.1.2 Economic capital

In this study, economic capital refers to new Chinese immigrant families' income and wealth, including the possession and command of financial resources (e.g., cash, assets, real estate, and businesses, etc.) (Bourdieu, 1986; Andersen et. al., 2010). As noted earlier, besides entrepreneurs and businessmen, *xinyimin* are primarily comprised of the policy-selected highly skilled professionals and student turned migrants, whose starting salary has been set by the government's requirement on Employment Pass application (Zhan & Zhou, 2019). For example, the EP salary criterion has been increased from $3600 in 2018 and 2019, to S$4500 in September 2020 and then to S$5000 in December 2020 (the last salary requirement update before this was an increase from S$3300 in 2016 to S$3600 in 2017) (Zhang, 2020). This periodic update of salary criterion by the government shows a high requirement on foreign skilled professionals'

economic ability (Ministry of Manpower, 2012). Moreover, for EP holders who wish to apply dependent pass for their closest family members, they needed to earn a minimum fixed monthly salary of $6,000 in 2018 (a 20% increase from S$5000 in 2017); besides, the salary requirement for Long Term Visit Passes (LTVP) application for immigrant's parents increased accordingly from S$10,000 in 2017 to S$12,000 in 2018 (equals to a 20% increase). As noted in Chapter 2, LTVP is a required precondition for transnational grandparents' migration, which facilitates to form the *quasi*-extended family and provide the family with social support. These salary requirements were much higher than the median household income of the host society, S$9,293 in 2018 (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2019), making *xinyimin*, particularly those who can bring family members, a hyper-selective group.

As it is difficult to find official statistics and scholarly research that provide national origin and ethnicity-based breakdown information of Singapore immigrants (Yeoh & Lam, 2016), I based my arguments on my interview data and actual and virtual observations. For the 50 interview participants, I have intendedly selected parents who understood well about their children's learning and schooling and about the tuition industry in Singapore, such as teachers, tuition business owners, parents of educationally excellent children. Among the 50 interview participants, 5 are housemakers, and 45 are of the professional, management, executive, and technician (PMET) occupation, comprised mainly by business owners (5), engineers (12), skilled professionals (15) (e.g., doctor, accountant, financial planner, senior manager, researcher), teachers (7), and others (6) (e.g., property agent, admin staff, sales). In terms of annual income, only 40 interview participants provided their answer, of which 15 interviewees earned an annual income

between S$84,001-120,000 and 4 interviewees earned above S$120,000, which are significantly higher than Singaporean's average annual income of S$53,244 in 2018 (Department of Statistics Singapore, 2019).

The high economic capital not only enables individual *xinyimin* parent to purchase children's education-related products, services, and even properties, but also manifests *xinyimin* parents' group level economic capability to invest in their children's education.

Mdm. Qian Hejing is a naturalized citizen. She is a well-known elite mother, who has cultivated three 'dragon children' (Secondary Two, Primary Three, Nursery Two, respectively). She is a full-time professional and runs a *WeChat* business. The *WeChat* platform has also facilitated her image and prestige as an elite mother. She spoke to me that various investments, especially monetary ones, are indispensable to the cultivation of children:

> "…You know, children are money-shredders. Parents need to invest heavily to facilitate their excellence. We are a dual-income family, and we spend roughly S$6,000 on various after-school learning sessions for our three children monthly. I think parents need to invest their best resources on children's education, such as private tutoring, piano teacher, holiday camps. For me, I will definitely try the best as this will save our children's valuable time. Indeed, good resources always cost much higher than average ones, but the investment is worthwhile and rewardable..."

In fact, the monthly spending of $6,000 on children's private tuitions is at the extreme high end. The online participant observation showed that *xinyimin* parents

commonly accept S$500 monthly fee for tuition, and the Singapore family's average spending on children's tuition is S$88.4 in 2019, increased from S$79.9 in 2013 (Cheng, 2019).

Mr. Lin is a PR, and a father of two children (a 9-year-old boy in Primary Three and a 14-year-old daughter in Secondary Two). He used to do business in shipping and catering industries, and recently has just started his tuition business in Singapore through a social media platform. His wife and their first child came to Singapore earlier than him, as they applied student visa to study in Singapore's public-school system. Lin's narratives help to show the economic strengths of *xinyimin.*

> "…Singapore has a meritocracy-based high quality education system, which is why we decided to migrate here for our children's education. My business background allows me to invest heavily in my children to facilitate their educational excellence in Singapore's system and environment. I spend on various education resources, particularly those good and expensive private tuition sessions. For example, to help my daughter prepare for the PSLE, we spent 200K SGD solely on private tuitions… through hiring in-home tutoring, we saved a lot of precious time for our daughter, since she did not have to commute. Of course, the financial spending is far from enough to win in the education competition; another important factor is their mother's in-person involvement. In fact, since arriving here ten years ago, my wife has been a full-time mother. Her mission is to boost children's learning and education and promote their academic success. She was my university classmate and used to be

an excellent accountant. She has done extensive research on Singapore's education system, tuition market, and even higher-level educational opportunities in various world prestigious universities."

Mr Lin's case shows that economic strengths associated with immigrant selectivity, particularly those supported by entrepreneurship, can afford not only the economic costs of various expensive tuition sessions, but also a full-time mother's intensive involvement in children's education, which provides their children with strong additional support.

#### 5.1.1.3 Cultural capital

The highly skilled new Chinese immigrant are selected by the immigration policy of Singapore, and they have brought their middle-class cultural frames and education-related values and norms to the Singapore society. For example, the *"success frame"* of Asian immigrants in the U.S. has contributed to their children's educational excellence (Zhou & Lee 2017). *Xinyimin's* ingrained Confucian values, such as beliefs in education, hard-working, respect for authority, education related habits and dispositions, match the Singapore government's cultural requirements on immigrants (Rahman & Kiong, 2013), as the Singapore government has ideologically and pragmatically advocated meritocracy and rewarded educational excellence (Quah, 2010). In such an institutional and social environment, *xinyimin* tend to validate and enhance their original values and norms, including the firm beliefs in education and their control and engineering of children's learning and education. Moreover, *xinyimin* tend to collectively hold an upbeat view, which is called the "immigrant optimism" in the literature (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Feliciano & Lanuza, 2017; Fernández-Reino, 2016). For example, *xinyimin* hold high

educational aspirations that can be translated into ambitious educational choices and stimulate achievements.

Han is a naturalized citizen and an engineer in semi-conductor industry. Her Secondary One girl is in an elite secondary school. She noted,

> "In Singapore, educational success is highly valued, and very similar to China. Therefore, the education competition is intense. And the competition exerts great pressures and anxieties on both local and immigrant parents. As *xinyimin*, we do need to put in more efforts. We are determined and willing to invest more time, attention as well as money to help children succeed… My education philosophy is based on my education experience. As you know, we all have survived from China's education system, and experienced the fierce education competition, namely, *Gaokao*. We all believe that education can change one's life, so we work very hard to achieve educational excellence. In Singapore, as immigrant, we also need to go the extra mile. Therefore, I often tell my children that to get a good education you need to use best efforts."

Besides the beliefs in hardworking and efforts, another value that is widely shared among *xinyimin* parents is respect for the authority. They believe that people in the authority have broader visions and can make better choices for the society. This is reflected in their education philosophy that parents should and can make the best decision for children. Mrs. Xia Rui is a naturalized Singapore citizen, a mother of two children, and an insurance agent. She arrived in Singapore after graduation from a Chinese university. She obtained her master's degree from one of the top universities in Singapore

in 2012. Currently, Xia Rui and her family have settled down in Singapore. Regarding education philosophy, she commented,

> "The competition for good education opportunities, e.g., good secondary school, scholarship, etc., is very fierce. Therefore, I believe that parents need to plan well and make necessary choices and decisions for our children. The reason is that the situation does not allow you to relax. It is ideal to give children more freedom and choices, but the competition does not allow. The good thing for children is parent's support. Don't waste the time and opportunity when children are young and need you."

In summary, immigrant selectivity is a dimension of *class* in the migration context, which has played a significant role in *xinyimin*'s intensive parenting on children's learning and education in Singapore. Immigrant selectivity contributes group-level socioeconomic characteristics, which are derived from structural forces such as immigration policy. The hyper-selectivity of Chinese immigrant parents in Singapore has shaped *xinyimin* parents as a group who can mobilize economic, educational, and cultural resources to achieve their expected children's success.

## 5.2 Transnationalism

### 5.2.1 Transnationalism and Chinese Immigrant Parenting

Migration studies have widely employed the concept of transnationalism to analyse immigration issues (Huang & Yeoh, 2005; Levitt, 2001; Zhou & Liu, 2015; González Bareaa et al., 2010; Spoonley, 2008). In a transnational analytical framework, migrants' social positionings and relationships in more than one society are considered

fluid and hybrid (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, p. 8). Immigrant's cultural, societal, and economic activities are not confined to the host society, and the economic and social status achieved by immigrants in one national setting can be translated into social, economic, and political capital in another national setting through the transnational spaces (Glick Schiller et al., 1992, p. 12). The distinct feature of multi-locality and mobility of contemporary transnational immigrants have attracted scholars to theorise its influence on immigrants' family life, parenting, and children's education (Mau, 2010; Vertovec, 2009). "Transnational families" have become a new form of family life, in which the ideologies, activities, networks, and living patterns in both their home and the host society are sustained and spanned (Basch, Schiller & Blanc 2005, p. 4). In transnational families, members site in more than one country and parents mobilize resources in the different countries to work towards the family and their children's survival or optimization (Huang & Yeoh, 2005). As noted in Chapter 1, East Asian parents increasingly migrate for child's education in the past thirty years, for which the family members are required to relocate and split, and the immigrant parents need to sustain their family's coherence and mobilize cross-national resources to maximize the effectiveness of their parenting (Waters, 2015).

New Chinese migration to Singapore emerged after China implemented open-door policy in the late 1970s, and it has increased rapidly since 1990 when the two countries established the bilateral foreign diplomatic relationships, as noted earlier. A distinct characteristic of new Chinese immigrants to Singapore is their high transnational mobility, which has manifested in the patterns of connections, communications, and interactions with their homeland societies (Liu, 2012). *Xinyimin* in Singapore practise

transnational family life is not uncommon, and they take advantage of the internationalisation of education and professions, and the developments in communication and transportation technologies to facilitate their transnational work and life (Zhou & Liu, 2015). According to my interview participants, *xinyimin* and their families in Singapore tend to construct themselves as actors in the transnational space and are proactive to take transnational opportunities for profession and development.

To the end of immigrant or transnational parenting on children's education, my interviews and observations showed that *xinyimin* parents actively mobilize available cultural, economic, social, and institutional resources in both Singapore and China. In the following sections, I explain how new Chinese immigrant parents strategically deploy, transform, and convert their transnationally portable resources, namely, their English and Chinese bilingual competency, transnational ties, and citizenship privileges across the national borders and in a transnational habitus to support their resource-intensive parenting on their children's learning and education.

### 5.2.2 Transferable Resources in A Transnational Habitus

#### 5.2.2.1 English and Chinese bilingual competency

Language is a form of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991). Multi-linguistic competency is of importance to immigrants in a transnational context, as one's accumulation of linguistic skills predetermines his or her position in both the sending and receiving society. In Singapore, the English language is the medium of instruction in schools and the most important official language. It is widely used in government, education, business, trade, and international affairs and has bridged the city-state to the

globalized world. The Chinese language and culture occupy a special position in the country's multicultural and multilingual context. The Chinese language is not only a pillar of Singapore's bilingual education policy, but an ethnic mother tongue that is officially emphasised. The government has constantly reiterated the cultural values of Chinese language to the dominant ethnic Chinese Singaporeans. The government also promotes Chinese speaking and makes it a constructive instrument to connect Singapore to Chinese speaking countries and regions.

For *xinyimin* parents, both English and Chinese language are valuable cultural capital, which bridge them to the original Chinese society and facilitate their transnational ties. As well-educated middle-class professionals, *xinyimin* parents usually hold high educational expectations on their children and are fully aware of the importance of multilingual competency in the globalised world. They consider that children who can be proficient in both English and Chinese would have a linguistic advantage over their competitors both in education and future occupation.

My interviews have generally shown that *xinyimin* parents promote the learning of both English and Chinese languages through transnational practice. The *xinyimin* parents in this study expressed their concerns about children's learning and proficiency of both English and Chinese languages and developed transnational strategies to achieve high standards of their children's bilingual literacy and skills. Jiang Han is a private Chinese tutor, who is a mother of two young children, and has been a naturalized citizen in Singapore for four year. For her profession as well as for teaching her own children, Jiang Han resorted to the educational resources developed by both Chinese educators and institutions, and English educators and publishers. She remarked:

> "I strive to offer my students with the culture-rich and authentic Chinese language study. I aim to immerse students in the Chinese culture and connect the Chinese language study to Chinese customs, traditions, and various cultural practices. Therefore, I refer to a vast collection of Chinese history, culture and language resources primarily in Chinese but also in English. The reason is that I need to inform myself with Chinese studies in the English literature. …"

Jiang Han's case revealed that the bilingual competency in English and Chinese has equipped her with the knowledge and skills basis, which can be mobilized as means to serve her educational ends. In fact, *xinyimin* in different professions, be it educators, researchers, or other professionals, the bilingual capabilities allow them to explore more (economic, social, cultural) resources to facilitate their actions and activities in the transnational social fields (Carlson, Gerhans & Hans, 2017).

#### 5.2.2.2 Transnational social resources

Transnational migrants maintain social ties with their countries of origin and people in other countries when they integrate into new society (Waldinger, 2008). Transnational ties are cross-national social relationships and connections, which allow interactions at a distance. *Xinyimin* in Singapore are mostly of middle-class status, and generally have resourceful family, kinship, and professional networks in the country of origin. Their social ties with China account for an important share of their social relationships and networks, which contain social, cultural, economic resources for children's education.

According to prior research and my data, I categorize *xinyimin's* transnational ties with contacts in China into two types, the first type involves immigrants' family and kin members. A majority of transnational ties fall into this category. I find that most family and kin based social networks offer tangible social support to *xinyimin*. The second type transnational ties are linked to memberships in various institutions in both Singapore and China.

The first type of transnational ties provides *xinyimin* parents with three sources of support. Firstly, *xinyimin* invite their parents to Singapore to them with childrearing. The social phenomenon of the parents of new Chinese immigrants (temporarily) migrate to Singapore to fulfil grandparenting and other familial duties has been a subject of scholarly research (Chiu & Ho, 2020; Ho & Chiu, 2020). Transnational grandparents can provide early childhood education, such as numbering and literacy (of mother tongue), to grandchildren. They also inform their immigrant children about the socioeconomic development and current situation of their homeland society.

Transnational grandparenting of *xinyimin* families is prevalent in Singapore (Chiu & Ho, 2020). My interview participants have talked about their *quasi*-extended family life in Singapore. In fact, all my new citizen interview participants have the experience of inviting their parents to Singapore. They described similarly about how they sought parents' support to take care of their young children and appreciated that grandparents can guide and supervise children's learning and progress. For example, Micelle is a new citizen, a mother of two and a working profession. She remarked:

> "My father regularly came to Singapore when my daughter (first child) was young. He is a retired university professor and loves to help me take

> care of our children. He enjoys teaching them interesting Chinese stories and related knowledge. I think it is the best way for them (children) to immerse in Chinese culture and language. After having two children, my father suggested that I should balance childrearing and work. He stressed that children's education is important, and asked me to spend sufficient time on taking care of my children's growth and learning ..."

Secondly, some Chinese immigrants maintain a transnational form of family life, educating children in Singapore while earning the main source of income in a booming Chinese economy. These *xinyimin* families often have one parent (generally father) working overseas but maintain close ties with family members in Singapore. This leads to the transnational financial support, as well as more transnational opportunities for the family in the future. The following case illustrates this type of transnational family, and its ties that support *xinyimin's* family life and future opportunity.

Ms. Xia Wen earned a doctoral degree from one of Singapore's best universities in 2012. She is a naturalised citizen and a mother of three children. She runs a small trading company, and her husband, a Singapore PR and a Chinese national, had remigrated to China for career development five years ago. Her husband is an excellent scholar and has been awarded the title of "Thousand Young Talents (青年千人)" by the Chinese government. He took up a faculty position in a college of Peking University, based in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. He decided to change his job three years ago and became a General Manager in a state-owned enterprise in a southwest province in China. Later, the husband has been able to transfer to work in Shanghai under the same enterprise. The couple preferred to maintain the current transnational family life. The

primary reason is that children need to study in a good education system. Xia Wen explained to me,

> "My husband's job has exposed him to China's highly dynamic and changing social environment. His career prosperity would be good in China. However, he is also deeply concerned about the fierce education competition in China. We discussed and decided that the children and I would live in Singapore, where the education system is quite fair and merit based. Maybe in the future, we will reconsider our arrangement when our children go to university, but currently, we would prefer to maintain this split family life, as my husband can take holidays to come back and we can visit him frequently as well… The father is quite confident to achieve economic success and save his children from the educational arm race…[laugh]"

Thirdly, *xinyimin's* familial transnational ties also motivate them to frequently visit their homeland with their children, which provide the children with opportunities to immerse in the Chinese language, values, customs, social activities and learn from Chinese culture. Qing, a new citizen, and a mother of a Secondary Two girl and a Primary Two boy, stated that:

> "When we visit and stay in China, my children often regard themselves as Chinese and have a strong sense of belonging, I think our regular visits, especially when they are in holiday and have a relative longer stay, they become more familiar with China's interesting things, for example the well-known mountains and rivers, historical interest. They become more

curious and gain more than knowledge, which is what we expect them to learn and experience."

The second type of transnational ties are linked to social (e.g., professional associations), cultural (e.g., culture communication organizations, university), and economic (e.g., businesses, trading) institutions in both countries, which can be mobilized to facilitate *xinyimin's* transnational work and life in both Singapore and China. My interview data and observations showed that *xinyimin* tend to maintain active transnational social networks that centre on careers or professions, which can equip them and their families with flexibility and multiple choices related to their children's education.

An example is Mdm. Xia, who was a 43-year-old Permanent Resident of Singapore. She used to study in a good university in Singapore and obtained a master's degree in 2013. Having worked in Singapore for three years after graduation, she decided to return to China, as she got a job position that allowed her to work for a Singaporean University in its Beijing office, where her family was based. Xia thought this was a good opportunity, as it not only facilitated her family reunification, but sustained her working experience that is required for the PR status renewal. After working in Beijing for a couple of years, Xia remigrated to Singapore in 2018, as she needed to renew her PR status (which requires sustained physical attendance for a certain period of time). In the meantime, Xia also expected to enrol her 6-year-old son in a public school in Singapore. As Xia stated, only her PR status' successful renewal can facilitate her son's PR application in Singapore, which is a prerequisite for the boy to be eligible for enrolment in a public school. Xia considered this oversea education opportunity to be an ideal

strategy for her boy and her family to escape from the extremely competitive education system in Beijing.

Xia's institution-based transnational ties, i.e., her occupational affiliation to the University, has facilitated her cross-nation movement and provided her child an international education opportunity, which would be very difficult or costly if without the transnational parent's ties.

#### 5.2.2.3 Transnational habitus and citizenship

Immigrant parents' transnationalism creates a transnational habitus, which can be understood as a product of socialisation (such as the transnational and cosmopolitan skills) that reproduces past behaviours with incorporating innovations in the new context in an increasingly globalised world (Bourdieu, 1990; Kelly & Lusis, 2006; Nedelcu, 2012). Immigrant parents' transnational lifestyles help children accumulate transnational cultural capital, and construct a cosmopolitan and transnational skills, which is considered a strategic edge in the education and profession competition (Harris, 2019). I have found that parents' cross-cultural and transnational life experiences provide children with chances to access (multiple) citizenship(s), to obtain opportunities and exposure in more than one culture, and to learn new language in a foreign nation setting. Children of immigrants often live, grow up, and learn to adapt to their parents' destination society, which is a field that children can experience and learn from 'the rules of the game' (Coe & Shani, 2015), thereby understanding what is achievable and what will be rewarded through their family and parents' life practices.

Singapore citizenship can be viewed as important transnational capital for children of new Chinese immigrants, though the parents who live a transnational life

often think of themselves as contingent resident in the country. Most parents see the opportunities available for their children to be greater than their own, of which the Singapore citizenship takes a substantive weight (Sun, 2012). Oftentimes, *xinyimin* parents decide to naturalize and settle down because they feel that their children would be able to acquire transnational capital (e.g., (multi-)linguistic skills, transnational ties, access to citizenship) as well as a better chance for upward social mobility with the citizenship in a new society.

Ling, in her 30s, is a naturalized citizen and a mother of two children (one is Primary Two, the other is Kindergarten Two), and works as a professional in the banking industry. Ling and her two children applied for the Singapore citizenship and got approved five years ago, while Ling's husband kept his Chinese nationality. Regarding the decision to naturalize, Ling explained,

> "I won the MOE scholarship and came to Singapore to read the bachelor's degree after my high school. I have been a PR for many years, as I still have the plan to return to China. However, after getting married and giving birth to our two children, I started to change my thinking. My husband and I agreed that Singapore would be a good place for children's education, as it is of good quality and gives children a better chance to step into the world's best universities. Therefore, we made the decision to apply for the citizenship, which not only allows the children to study in Singapore's education system, but also give them a better chance to study in those good schools, as I have understood from my friends that PR would have no chance to get enrolled in those best primary schools."

In fact, Ling's deliberation is quite common among *xinyimin* parents. My interview participants have expressed that the Singapore citizenship has made their children accessible to more educational opportunities and resources, such as to study in the GEP programme and to be recruited in various teams (sports, math, music, etc.) for training and learning. The parents who were of PR status had talked about their children's disadvantages as PR, for example, higher school fees, and little chance in good schools.

In summary, transnationalism plays important roles in new Chinese immigrants' intensive parenting on children's education. Transnationalism enables Chinese immigrant parents to mobilize transnational resources, including bilingual linguistic skills, transnational ties, a transnational habitus, and privileges of (multiple) citizenships, for children's education. Due to Singapore's geographic affinity to and socioeconomic and culture relations with China, *xinyimin* in Singapore have the propensity to practice transnational work and life, a strategy that scholars call "dual embeddedness" (Liu & Ren, 2015). In the case of children's education, parents' transnational way of life and its related resources will have a profound impact, not only through material and cultural support, but also in terms of psychology, experience, and identity.

## 5.3 *WeChat*-Based Formation of *Xinyimin* Community

*WeChat*, the most popular Chinese language and ethnicity-based mobile online social media platform, has connected and bonded *xinyimin* parents and contributed to the formation of the *xinyimin* community. This section explains how *xinyimin* parents have mobilized resources in the *WeChat*-based *xinyimin* community, i.e., intentionally seeking

to build, enlarge, and diversify their social networks and increase their social capital through and in the *xinyimin* community, which have provided strong social support for these parents to conduct intensive parenting on children's education.

### 5.3.1 The New Chinese Immigrant (*Xinyimin*) Community

Researchers have shown that ethnic (immigrant) community is a social site, in which the intangible "community forces", i.e., the cultural heritage, shared beliefs, values, coping strategies and behavioural standards interact with the tangible "ethnic social structures", i.e., ethnic institutions and interpersonal networks (Zhou & Kim, 2006). As described in Chapter 2, the traditional kinship and locality based Chinese clan associations, such as *Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan* (福建会馆), and the new Chinese immigrant associations, such as *Hua Yuan Hui* (华源会) and *Tianfu Hui* (天府会) have functioned as ethnic institutions to support Chinese immigrants' social adaptation and integration in the Singapore society. Both traditional and new associations seek to build social relationships with local Singaporeans, and to harmonise intra-ethnic differences between Chinese immigrants and Chinese Singaporeans, which are in line with the government expected integration. However, many of my interviewees have little awareness of and rarely participate in these new and old associations. When asked about the sources that they resort to for helping children' education, my interview participants have primarily mentioned friends, classmates, neighbours, colleagues, tuition centres, and the Internet (e.g., online forums, social media platforms) as sources for supports (Chen, 2011).

Based on in-depth interviews and online participant observations, I find that the *xinyimin* community in Singapore has formed dynamic and interconnected social

relations and networks, which provide important social capital and support (as well as social control) to *xinyimin* individuals and groups (Chen, 2010). Particularly, new Chinese immigrant parents are able to connect to more social contacts and larger *xinyimin* social networks by taking advantage of *WeChat*, the most widely used mobile online social media platform. The *WeChat*-based *xinyimin* networks and communities are more informal and seemingly loose in comparison to the traditional forms of ethnic Chinese organization, but it allows members to interact more frequently and timely, and both physically and virtually.

### 5.3.2 How Does *WeChat* Facilitate the Formation of *Xinyimin* Community?

Nowadays, social interactions are no longer between those in close vicinity or confined to face-to-face interactions but are carried out through information and communications technologies (ICTs) facilitated mobile devices. These new forms of communication and interactions have reconfigured our social relationships and affected our daily lives profoundly (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Shen & Williams, 2011).

In Singapore, *WeChat* is the most widely used mobile online social media platform that connects *xinyimin. WeChat* as a platform has provided much more informal and convenient opportunities (compared to formal ethnic organizations, e.g., clan associations) for users to interact and communicate with each other. The two types of connections in *WeChat's* mobile online social space are personal ties and group ties. Personal ties (strong and weak) in *WeChat* are much like one's contacts that are reserved in a handphone or 'friends' in Facebook, which might be of different levels of interaction frequency, closeness, and intimacy (Shen, Monge, & Williams, 2014). Personal ties, including both strong ties and weak ties, provide the potential to increase *WeChat* users'

communication, interactions, and connections, therefore, benefit them with increased social networks and social capital.

Group ties, supported by *WeChat's* group chat function, are embedded in various *WeChat* groups. *WeChat* groups provide mobile online social space, in which multiple users (who may or may not be reciprocal personal contacts in *WeChat*) can interact with each other. The group members can share information and content freely and instantly in groups. A user can participate in multiple *WeChat* groups. Strangers in the *WeChat* group are 'latent ties' that have potential to be activated and become (strong) ties (Haythornthwaite, 2002, p. 385). As network privacy of *WeChat* constrains users to search new contacts in the space, *WeChat* groups become the only means for user to explore latent ties and build networks. For relatively close groups, for example, international immigrants in the same receiving city, such as Singapore, group ties can be established among the frequently interacted individuals. In the *WeChat* social space, one's ties with individuals and with groups can be both interconnected and overlapped.

Based on my interviews and observations, I have found that the *WeChat* plays an instrumental role in building and expanding *xinyimin's* social networks in terms of size, diversity and heterogeneity. The personal ties and group ties that *xinyimin* established and maintained through *WeChat* not only keep *xinyimin* in closer contact with each other and enable them to share values, knowledge and strategies, but also have dynamically activated (not only the virtual but also face-to-face) social connections and networks embedded in the *xinyimin* community. This gives them the access to a larger and resourceful *xinyimin* community and allows them to mobilize resources in the community for children's education. This dynamic process has also created or increased the social

networks and social capital at a group level, therefore enhancing group cohesion (Lien & Cao, 2014) and contributing to the formation of the *xinyimin* community.

### 5.3.3 Resource Mobilization through *WeChat*-based Community

This section details how *xinyimin* parents have mobilized resources to support their intensive parenting on children's education. I divide this section into three themes. The first theme is related to obtaining and sharing information through *WeChat* among *xinyimin* parents. The second theme deals with how these parents build and expand social networks using the *WeChat* platform. The third theme centres on value formation and peer pressure in the online community, that is, how the online community has shaped parents' values on children's education and how the online community increases peer pressure and intensifies the education competition.

#### 5.3.3.1 Obtaining and sharing information

The primary benefit of the membership in the *WeChat*-based *xinyimin* community is its rich information. There are various education-related *WeChat* groups organized by capable parents, tuition business-owners, same-grade parents, etc., in which individual *xinyimin* parent can gain and share valuable information. Zhu Yi, a naturalized citizen in her thirties, is a mother of two and works as a childcare teacher. She joined an active *WeChat* group themed on children's school learning, from which she has gained important information and advice from those successful mothers and knowledgeable insiders. For Zhu Yi, her social network is short of ties and connections with those successful parents and education professionals. She stated,

> "In that *WeChat* group, I lurk most of the time but learn from those tiger mothers (牛妈). … they are well informed through doing research,

> learning from friends or some other private channels. I trust them because they are excellent academic achievers, highly educated, and capable to do research on the Singapore school system. Some of them have children who are doing extremely well at school. … some have GEP children, big four (the *xinyimin* listed Singapore's four best secondary schools) children. These mothers are very confident and generous to share with novice mothers. They often advise us about how to engage with kids' learning at home and promote children's learning at school. … I get a lot of information and knowledge about children's language learning, math, and others."

The above case shows that an ordinary mother as a *WeChat* user can obtain valuable information on children's education. The following case reveals the role of an opinion leader in publishing new information, raising issue for discussion and sharing important resources in a *WeChat* group. This not only benefits group members with information and resources but strengthens the relationships among the group contributes to the formation of local community.

Mr. Bo Lin, a case mentioned earlier, is a PR and a father of two children. Lin has just started his tuition business as an agent (both recruiting students for tuition centers and selecting teachers for parents) through the *WeChat* platform. Lin's idea to start a tuition business came from his experience as a father of two school children. Initially, he built a *WeChat* group, in which members are his close contacts, including friends (both in Singapore and in China), tuition teachers, neighbors, and some *WeChat* friends invited by him from related groups. Lin frequently (daily or several times a day) shared free

information and resources, covering the issues such as preparation of a high-stake examination, standard examination or various competition results (scores and rankings), and public talks by good educators. He also raised those parents' commonly concerned questions for group members to discuss. He articulated his own opinions and sought members' participation and sharing. The discussions often center on choice of tuition, parental view on GEP programme, children's school choice, etc.

The sharing and interactions in *WeChat* groups help motivate group members to participate, increase parents' awareness about the education-related matters and trends, and make the group members informed about parenting strategies, common concerns, and available resources. After two to three months, Lin's group has reached the maximum member size, i.e., 500 *WeChat* users, and he had also obtained information about parents and children's expectations, concerns, demands, and requirements, besides the understanding of the tuition market and related issues. Being an opinion leader has benefited his business. Half a year after my interview, Lin has run tuition classes on many different school subjects, such as youth programming, math, and science, at different school levels. This case also demonstrates the information sharing in *WeChat*-based groups and the *xinyimin* community has played a positive role in the expansion of the market for educational resources.

#### 5.3.3.2 Building and expanding social networks

The *WeChat* platform provides the benefit for users to build new personal and group ties and increase their social networks both virtually and actually. Yu Xian is a naturalized citizen, a childcare centre teacher, and a mother of two. When asked about if

she used *WeChat* and what is the role that *WeChat* has played in her parenting on children's education, she remarked,

> "Nowadays, it is normal that one joins a lot of *WeChat* groups… I found that the multiple *WeChat* group memberships make me well-informed. For those parents who are members of many groups, oftentimes they are also capable ones, very good at cultivating children. … I have made many new friends through these *WeChat* groups. We share information and often discuss education related issues Some of these online friends have also become my offline friends, as we take children to meet each other and play together. Besides, we seek mutual help to make more friends and join more active groups, from which our circles are enlarged. So, I would say it is very important to keep yourself updated and informed through making new friends and enlarging your circles."

Lisa is a naturalized Singapore citizen, who is a mother of two children (a Primary Two girl and a Kindergarten One boy). She is currently an administrative staff in an industrial enterprise. Lisa was awarded the MOE scholarship and graduated from one of Singapore's best universities. She used to work as an industrial engineer, but due to the required overtime work schedule, she changed her job to the current one, which allowed her to balance work and life and take better care of her two children. I knew Lisa from a *WeChat* group, in which she is an active member and often express her opinions and share her thoughts. Lisa stated,

> "The participation in discussion enables me to have a better idea about what I should do and how to proceed with regard to helping on children's learning.... I have joined more than sixty *WeChat* groups, which theme on different topics and subjects of children's academic and non-academic learning. I am an active member in some of those groups. I have made a lot of new friends through WeChat, maybe more than a hundred. In fact, the long-term group memberships, for example, a two-year or three-year membership, have made many group members familiarized with each other, which make the group more stable and reliable."

Lisa holds her own views on children's education. She advocates for giving children more freedom and autonomy for learning, and debates with those tiger mothers on whether it is good to push children hardly. However, she is also an active contributor, frequently sharing her knowledge and methods in the *WeChat* groups.

Based on my data and observations, I have found that *WeChaters* like Lisa have played a central role in connecting different group members and individuals. Their participation and contribution enlarge the *xinyimin* community's social networks and social capital and strengthen cohesion of the community.

#### 5.3.3.3 Value formation and peer pressure

The *WeChat*-based *xinyimin* community has also been a structural space that shapes its members' values and exerts social control. In active and high-volume resources *WeChat* groups, the discussions of members tend to form a trend or create peer pressure that forces individual member to act in certain ways. The following is an example of my

online participant observations, and it shows that a *WeChat* group's repeated discussions of GEP programme have reshaped the group parents' values, belief, and strategy.

I have closely followed a Primary One group, where the parents are very active. Some group members are actual friends with each other, and they tend to share and communicate more frequently compared to other groups. Another reason to focus on this group is that there are several successful parents who wish to talk and share in this group. They often chat about the methods to promote children's learning, strategies to choose books and tuitions, the performance and achievements of excellent children, and exemplary parents (their methods, strategies, practices) for group members' reference and discussion, which often attract the attention and admiration of other group members. Importantly, *WeChat* groups like this one not only benefit group members with information, knowledge, and strategies, but also influence the group members' thinking and valuation. Sometimes, the group's opinion creates peer pressures for its members.

During my observations from mid-2018 to early 2020, the group had repeatedly discussed about the GEP screening, which is an important streaming examination designed for the Primary Three students in Singapore's education system. As the group is solely comprised of parents of Primary One student, I have been confused about the reason why they are concerned about the GEP screening so early. Therefore, I paid special attention to these parents' views and thoughts. After an extended period of observations, I have made three findings. Firstly, GEP represents the government's best educational resources and investment. The future of GEP students is promising, as most of them would enter the best secondary schools and high schools and various national academic and non-academic teams. And parents believe that GEP students would have a

greater chance to become the city-state's elites and step into the top social strata in the future. This might have motivated many parents to discuss and make plans for GEP screening early.

Secondly, a dominant view of the group members is their strong belief in the parental role in children's learning. As for GEP screening, those highly capable fathers and mothers, and parents of high achievers, are confident and tend to articulate their aspirations and plans. This has influenced and motivated their peers to learn and imitate, but it has also created peer pressure that forces every parent in the group to target the exceptionally high-achieving GEP programme.

Thirdly, the group members can be subjected to the group's direct influence and control, which reshape their values, attitudes and behaviours. Although parents wish to invest (with efforts, time, and money) in their children's preparation for the screening, the GEP progamme is extremely hard for average achievers, as the enrolment rate is only one percent. Thus, the raised high aspiration often creates anxieties and pressures for these parents, compelling them to seek opinions, find methods, and search available resources to support their engagement in this matter.

To sum up, this chapter has identified three bases or interactive processes for resource mobilization, namely, immigrant selectivity (hyper-selectivity of *xinyimin* in particular), transnationalism, and the formation of the *WeChat*-based *xinyimin* community. I have examined how *xinyimin* parents mobilize resources through the three bases to support their intensive parenting on children's education. I argue that *xinyimin's* cultural value on education and parental socioeconomic status do not function in isolation; rather, it is embedded in the process of immigrant selectivity and context of immigration,

where *xinyimin* parents use their agency to mobilize various resources under the structural opportunities and constraints.

*Xinyimin's* resource mobilization is consequential for themselves and the larger society. The hyper-selectivity due to the immigration policy decides *xinyimin* group's socioeconomic capability and provides conditions for the creation of ethnic capital in their community. *Xinyimin's* intensive parental support and high investment on their children's education have created tremendous anxieties, pressures, and social control among *xinyimin* parents and their community. Furthermore, it might have intensified education competition and perpetuated the host society's educational inequalities, which potentially lead to resentments, tension, and conflicts between *xinyimin* and the native Singaporeans (Watkins, Ho & Butler 2017).

# Chapter 6

# Conclusion

This doctoral thesis has examined the new Chinese immigrants' intensive parenting for their children's education in Singapore. I have addressed three main research questions: (1) What challenges do new Chinese immigrants face in raising children in Singapore? (2) What parenting strategies have they adopted to promote their children's education? and (3) What enables them to practice intensive parenting for expected children's success? In this chapter, I first summarize the main research findings, followed by a discussion of theoretical and practical implications. Then I address the limitations of this study and raise questions for future research.

## 6.1 Research Findings

New Chinese immigrant, (i.e., *xinyimin*), as a group of highly skilled and middle-class immigrants, face challenges for their childrearing efforts in the Singapore society. They have different emphasis on their children's education, which are 1) a strict 'success frame'; 2) the inclusion of a new dimension of mental health, i.e., the happiness; 3) the expectation for children' potential and capabilities to unfold spontaneously. In response to the challenges and fulfil the migration goal for mobility, *xinyimin* practise the intensive parenting, which features child-centered, attention-, time-, and resource-intensive, financially expensive, and emotionally absorbing characteristics, on their children's learning and education through proactive resource mobilization, which facilitates their children to achieve the parents expected success and affirms these parents' self-identity. I argue that *xinyimin* parents' resource mobilization should not only be understood at the

individual level, i.e., the cultural values, traits, and socioeconomic status, but also need to be seen as a result of structural forces.

Through in-depth interviews, actual and virtual participant observations, and analysis of media reports and government policies, I firstly find that new Chinese immigrants, despite their advantaged socioeconomic status upon arrival and a relatively familiar cultural environment in the host society, face contextual challenges in the Singapore society. The challenges are language and cultural barriers, institutional barriers (i.e., the immigrant policies and the education system), and social discrimination, which constrain *xinyimin* parents' efforts of child nurturing and have influenced new Chinese immigrants to change their views, strategies, and practices for parenting, especially on their children's education.

Secondly, new Chinese immigrants practise the intensive parenting on their children's learning and education to address the contextual challenges and strive for upward social mobility. Specifically, *xinyimin* parents tend to focus on after-school time and engage in their children's learning at home, where they emphasize on academic (e.g., language, math, science) or non-academic learning (e.g., arts, music, sports), invest heavily in enrichment programmes and private tuitions, and plan their children's time schedule, though they are with different emphasis due to their respective defition of children's success. With school, *xinyimin* parents maintain supportive and cooperative relationships. And in the community, they proactively tap on available resources in the *xinyimin* community as well as in the larger society to promote their children's education excellence.

*Xinyimin* in intensive parenting are conscious of parents' responsibility for their children's outcomes, therefore, they are willing to invest with attention, time, money to optimize their children's opportunities and outcomes, in turn to help children achieve their expected success or mobility (Vincent & Ball, 2007). This process defines the parents' self-identity, as the children's outcome, either a success or a failure, reflects their parents' abilities and resources to do the intensive parenting, which has implications on the parents' subjectivity and leads parents to see themselves as a success or as a failure directly as a result of their children's success or failure.

Thirdly, hyper-selectivity is identified as an interactive process and an important basis for *xinimin's* resource mobilization, which features *xinyimin* at group level and is a result of the selective immigration policy. My research shows that hyper-selectivity does not function at the individual or family level solely. Rather, it has served as an important basis for *xinyimin* parents' resource mobilization, through which the human, economic, and cultural capital are activated or reproduced to support these parents to conduct intensive parenting on children's education.

Fourthly, transnationalism provides another important basis or interactive process for resource mobilization, through which bilingual competency, transnational ties, and (multiple) citizenship(s) become transferable and portable cross-national resources to facilitate *xinyimin*'s intensive parenting on children's education. Parents' transnational way of life has profoundly impacted on children's education and life, in terms of not only material and cultural support, but also psychology, experience, and identity (Zentgraf & Chinchilla, 2012).

Fifthly, the *WeChat*-based *xinyimin* community, formed virtually through the mobile online social media platform *"WeChat,"* serves as a third important basis for resource mobilization. It supports *xinyimin's* intensive parenting with providing them the access and resources to obtain and share information, build, and expand social networks, and reshape their valuation on education under the peer pressures.

In summary, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting that the new immigrant parents adopt intensive parenting and proactively mobilize resources to support their children's expected success. Different from the existing cultural and structural arguments, I found that the enabling factors of intensive parenting of *xinyimin* include not only the arguably similar Confucian cultural values, which have been enhanced due to the migration created challenges in the Singapore society, but also the structural factors, i.e., the individual level socioeconomic status and the group level hyper-selectivity and the selectivity-related transnationalism and community formation, which are interactive bases created by the structural forces in the process of migration. Therefore, I highlight that *xinyimin*'s intensive parenting cannot be fully understood solely by cultural traits and behavioral patterns of the immigrant group, which are often essentialized from the culturalist perspective, nor solely by focusing on individual family's socioeconomic status, which is the key determinant specified in the classical status attainment model (one of the most powerful structuralist perspective). Rather, it should be understood as a result of immigrants' proactive response to structural constraints and their agentic mobilization of available resources through multiple ways. Therefore, this study has shifted away from the binary trap and goes beyond what structuralists and culturalists have respectively argued.

## 6.2 Implications of the Study

### 6.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study has three theoretical implications for research.

First, my study has explored the enabling factors of *xinyimin's* intensive parenting on children's education and offers an account that goes beyond the debate on immigrant education between the culturalists and structuralists. My study has shown that *xinyimin*, featured hyper-selectivity, are with a high-level human, economic, and cultural capital, and their intensive parenting was supported by their agentic mobilization of resources in the process of migration, where the cultural values, such as Confucian appreciation of education, and structural bases, such as hyper-selectivity, transnationalism, and community formation, are both mobilized to play a supporting role.

The classic status attainment theory has argued that parental social class status plays a powerful role in children and family's social mobility through education (Behrman & Taubman, 1985; Blau & Duncan, 1967; Haller & Portes, 1973; Kao, 1995). However, hyper-selectivity should not be understood only as individual status, but also a structural outcome embedded in the process of immigrant selection and context of immigration. Further, hyper-selectivity is also associated with transnationalism and the *xinyimin* community, as it creates access to transnational habitus and resources for *xinyimin*, and (potentially) build a group level human, economic, and cultural capital for the *xinyimin* community. Therefore, as argued earlier, the three bases or interactive processes, i.e., hyper-selectivity, transnationalism, and the *WeChat*-based formation of *xinyimin* community have been mobilized by *xinyimin* for various resources to augment

family's middle-class advantages, which goes beyond the debate between the structuralists and culturalists.

Second, intensive parenting on education through resource mobilization defines a parent's self-identity. That is, parents see their own self through how well he or she can do in intensive parenting. Intensive parenting emphasizes on the plan and control of different aspects of children's life for future success and happiness, in which an assumption is that parents have the abilities to determine a child's outcomes (Wall, 2010). Parents have been expected by the society (through education institution, social environment, etc.,) to hold increasing responsibilities for their children's life planning and outcome ensuring (Hoffman, 2010). They believe that they should and are supposed to learn and adopt 'best practices' and to deploy sufficient resources to support their children's cultivation. However, these highly demanding strategies and practices, though equipping children with crucial advantages to achieve the desired outcomes, create tremendous pressures for parents (Wall, 2010; Sayer et al., 2004). In the meantime, parents need to take ultimate responsibilities for their autonomous choices, whether the choices can ensure optimal outcomes for their children influence the parents' subjectivity. That is, it leads parents to see their own self as a success or a failure directly from their children's outcome (Hays, 1996).

Third, intensive parenting on education through resource mobilization can reproduce social inequalities and stratification across not only generations but also national borders. Under Singapore's highly selective immigration policy, *xinyimin* tend to engage in the high standard, intensely competitive, and resources demanding parenting, which is not only consequential for *xinyimin* parents, children and their community, but

also inadvertently (re)produces educational and social inequalities in the larger society (Bonizzoni, 2018). There are far-reaching implications beyond the immigrant family. For *xinyimin* as a group, extraordinary achievement held the group up to different (higher) standards while setting it apart from other Singaporean for prejudiced views and treatment as the situation in Western cultural context (Zhou 2004; Chou and Feagin 2008). *Xinyimin's* intensive parenting and high investment of time, money and attention for educational goals can make them both admired and resented (Watkins, Ho & Butler 2017). Their intensive parenting and investment inadvertently affect native Singaporean parents who are ambivalent about the competitive education system—highly critical of the system while going along with it so as not to let their children lag behind. This process serves to deepen and produce the native-migrant divide and educational inequality in the broad context of nativist backlash against new Chinese immigrants in Singapore. Research has shown that new Chinese immigrant parents who are predominantly highly educated are perceived as posing a real threat to natives in education competition and creating social inequalities. This can lead to increasing tensions between *xinyimin* and locals, as the lower-class Singaporeans may face more risks of social position downgrading. Further, a more severe backlash can intensify local Singaporean's discontents and resentment to *xinyimin* and propel *xinyimin* to adopt further migration or returned migration.

### 6.2.2 Practical Implications

My study has the practical implications for different stakeholders.

Firstly, intensive parenting is subjected to an ideology that deems children as highly malleable and are with full potential, which regards children as social projects that

need parents to activate and develop (Hays, 1996; Liss et al., 2013). However, though develop children's potential, intensive parenting tends to take children as a site or vessels for capital accumulation (Katz, 2008). That is, though children are central to many cases of migration and intensive parenting, they are positioned as passive, lacking agency, and vulnerable (Caputo, 2007). In other words, parents' views and motives have been the determinants and children only play a dependent role (Rosier & Kinney, 2005; Rosier, 2009). Past research has shown that intensive parenting produces negative social and psychological outcomes in children, which are detrimental to their health and development. For example, children raised up with excessive parental involvement have decreased levels of well-being (LeMoyne & Buchanan, 2011; Schiffrin et al., 2014), high anxieties and depressions (Kim et al. 2013), and inadequate coping skills (Segrin, et.al, 2013). It is reported that when parents constantly solve problems, anticipate and plan future for children, the children will have difficulties in entertaining themselves, be time-stressed, lack of competence and social ties (Schiffrin et al., 2014).

In this study, I also find that *xinyimin's* intensive parenting has created anxieties and stresses among children and led to physical problems. A couple of parents, who self-reported intensive parenting, have mentioned their children's sleeping problem, growth (e.g., height) problems, and loss of autonomy and interest for learning, which are highly likely associated with their parenting practices. I would suggest that parents who tend to be hyper-involved, reserve space and time for children's unsupervised and non-control activities, where they can naturally develop various capabilities and build cognitive, social, functional skills.

Secondly, in a context of globalization and growing (Asian) middle-class migration (constituted mainly by highly skilled professionals, international students, entrepreneurs, and technopreneurs) in not only the West but the East, the intensive parenting of immigrants on education has been prevalent, as it is essentially an approach and coping strategy for migrant parents to address the structural constraints and strive for their children's upward mobility. However, this has also produced tremendous anxieties and pressures for parents. As discussed in Chapter 4, my interviews and observations have shown that *xinyimin* parents invest high parental attention, time, financial resources, and emotion to promote their expected children's success, which has intensified education competition and inequality among them and the broader social context. In addition, believing that intensive parenting is a good parenting, whether possessing the abilities and resources to parent well also produce anxieties and pressures for parents and their family.

Thirdly, parents do the intensive parenting due both to their own aspirations and the social control, or the 'rule enforcement'. On the one hand, my study confirmed that *xinyimin* parents, with high aspirations and expectations, actively mobilize various resources for children's education, on the other, it is the Singapore immigration institutions and education system created social context that propels *xinyimin* parents to engage in the educational competition and do the intensive parenting. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Singapore education system has achieved double-edged outcomes, which are the appealing high-standard and high-quality educational outcomes (PISA, 2015) and the paralleled intense educational competition and social anxieties. The policy practitioners, therefore, have implemented the on-going educational reforms, for example,

changing the grading method for PSLE to reduce the emphasis on academic results. However, the pressing issues of high-stake examinations and streaming of the education system remain. Doing this study, I have noted the prevalent parental anxieties, which can profoundly impact on the parents, children, families, and the larger society. I suggest that the government and policy practitioners should make more efforts to understand parents' concerns and integrate them into the educational reform initiatives. The future education policy initiatives should deliberate and put parents, including immigrant parents, as one of the centers.

### 6.3 Limitations and Future Work

This study has the following limitations. First, there is little official and scholarly research data about details of new Chinese immigrant in Singapore (such as, age, occupation, income, and other nuanced criteria and breakdown information). The unavailability of comprehensive demographic data has limited the generalizability of my descriptions and analyses. Therefore, future studies need to include more and diverse Chinese immigrants in Singapore.

Second, this qualitative study takes in-depth interview as the primary data collection method, and it mainly relies on interview data to understand *xinyimin* parents and their practices. However, the interview participants' self-reports might be affected by their emotional and psychological experiences, which make their perceptions and interpretations subjective and biased. Besides, it is possible that interview participants have described their parenting experiences and practices inaccurately due to their immigrant status, which can produce inconsistencies between what they truly think and do and what they report to me. Research has suggested that observations can be

combined with interviews to do triangulation and facilitate a more nuanced picture (Carter et.al, 2014). In this study, I did the online participant observations in focused *"WeChat"* groups, which has allowed me to gain a more accurate understanding of how parents perceive their role in children's education, what they do, and how they proceed. However, the virtual environment of the *"WeChat"* groups is semi-public or public, and the information obtained might not be fully authentic. As such, it will be necessary to enlarge the sample size of interview participants and/or adopt mixed methods to obtain generalizable conclusions in the future study.

As for future work, further research should be conducted to investigate the mobility outcomes of *xinyimin* and their children in the host society. Further studies are necessary to investigate more about the role and function of the *xinyimin* community, as it is an important, if not the most important, institution and structural condition for immigrants' resource mobilization. In addition, more work can be done to explore how parents' self-identity is shaped during the intensive parenting process, and how it will impact on parents' future behaviors and strategies. Besides, more attention should be paid to the social and psychological consequences of this intensive parenting for both *xinyimin* parents and their children, as it is imperative to study about how the intensive parenting might have generated the long-term and delayed effects on children's cognitive and socialization development and induced even more severe social and psychological problems. Finally, it would be necessary to study about how *xinyimin's* parenting is perceived by the local Singaporeans and society, and how this parenting has impacted on the larger society.

## References:


Alba, R., & Nee, V. (2003). Remaking the American mainstream: Assimilation and contemporary America. *Cambridge: Harvard University Press.*

Anderson, A. R., Dodd, S. D., & Jack, S. (2010). Network practices and entrepreneurial growth. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *26*(2), 121-133.

Ang, I. (2014). Beyond Chinese groupism: Chinese Australians between assimilation, multiculturalism and diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *37*(7), 1184-1196.

Ardichvili, A., Cardozo, R., & Ray, S. (2003). A theory of entrepreneurial opportunity identification and development. *Journal of Business venturing*, *18*(1), 105-123.

Aris, S. (2017). Indian tigers: what high school selection by parents pursing academic performance reveals about class, culture and migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *43*(14), 2440-2455.

Arzubiaga, A. E., Noguerón, S. C., & Sullivan, A. L. (2009). The education of children in immigrant families. *Review of Research in Education*, *33*(1), 246-271.

Bach, D., & Christensen, S. (2017). Battling the Tiger Mother: Pre-School Reform and Conflicting Norms of Parenthood in Singapore. *Children & Society*, *31*(2), 134-143.

Basch, L., Schiller, N. G., & Blanc, C. S. (Eds.). (2005). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*. Routledge.

Barglowski, K. (2015). "Polish migrants in Germany: challenges and inequalities in raising children in transnational social spaces". (COMCAD Working Papers, 131).

Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, Fak. Für Soziologie, Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD).

Barr, M. D., & Skrbiš, Z. (2008). *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, ethnicity and the nation-building project* (No. 11). Nias Press.

Barrett DeWiele, C. E. B., & Edgerton, J. D. (2016). Parentocracy revisited: Still a relevant concept for understanding middle class educational advantage? *Interchange, 47*, 189-210.

Bartley, A., & Spoonley, P. (2008). Intergenerational Transnationalism: 1.5 Generation Asian Migrants in New Zealand 1. *International Migration*, *46*(4), 63-84.

Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995). *The Normal Chaos of Love*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Behrman, J. R., & Taubman, P. (1986). Birth order, schooling, and earnings. *Journal of Labor Economics*, *4*(3, Part 2), S121-S145.

Bellows, T. J. (2009). Meritocracy and the Singapore political system. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, *17*(1), 24-44.

Belot, M. V. K., & Hatton, T. J. (2012). Immigrant selection in the OECD. *The Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 114(4), 1105–1128.

Bernoff, J. and Li, C. (2008), Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies, Harvard Business Press, Boston, MA.

Bianchi, S. M., Robinson, J. P., & Milke, M. A. (2006). *The changing rhythms of American family life*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Björklund, A., & Jäntti, M. (1997). Intergenerational income mobility in Sweden compared to the United States. *The American Economic Review, 87*(5), 1009-1018.

Blair, S. L., & Qian, Z. (1998). Family and Asian students' educational performance: A consideration of diversity. *Journal of Family Issues, 19*(4), 355-374.

Blanden, J., & Gregg, P. (2004). Family income and educational attainment: a review of approaches and evidence for Britain. *Oxford review of economic policy, 20*(2), 245-263.

Blau, P. M., & Duncan, O. D. (1967). *The American occupational structure.* New York: Wiley.

Bloom, B. S. (1985). Generalizations about talent development. In B. S. Bloom (Ed.), *Developing talent in young people* (pp. 507–549). New York: Ballantine.

Bodycott, P., & Lai, A. (2012). The influence and implications of Chinese culture in the decision to undertake cross-border higher education. *Journal of studies in International education, 16*(3), 252-270.

Bodovski, K. (2010). Parental practices and educational achievement: Social class, race, and habitus. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 31*(2), 139-156.

Bodovski, K., & Farkas, G. (2008). "Concerted cultivation" and unequal achievement in elementary school. *Social Science Research, 37*(3), 903-919.

Bokhorst-Heng, W. (1999). Singapore's Speak Mandarin Campaign: Language ideological debates in the imagining of the nation. *Language ideological debates, 2*, 235-265.

Bond, M. H., & Hwang, K. K. (1986). *The social psychology of Chinese people*. Oxford University Press.

Borjas, G. J. (1990). Self-selection and the earnings of immigrants: reply. *The American Economic Review*, *80*(1), 305-308.

Borjas, G. J. (1992). Ethnic capital and intergenerational mobility. *The Quarterly journal of economics*, *107*(1), 123-150.

Borjas, G. J. (1993). The intergenerational mobility of immigrants. *Journal of Labor Economics*, *11*(1, Part 1), 113-135.

Bork-Hüffer, T. (2017). The Mobility Intentions of Privileged and Middling Migrant Professionals in Singapore: A Cross-Cultural Comparison, and the Effects of the "Singaporeans First" Strategy. *Asien*, *143*, 64-92.

Bowcock, H. (2007) Just the One? Parents' experience of having only one child. Paper presented at Monitoring Parents: Childrearing in the age of 'intensive parenting' (21st May 2007).

Bowles, S., Gintis, H., & Groves, M. O. (Eds.). (2009). *Unequal chances: Family background and economic success*. Princeton University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In J. Karabel and A.H. Halsey (Eds), *Power and Ideology in Education,* pp. 487-511. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). *The forms of capital.* In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education: 241–258. New York: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). Structures, habitus, practices. *The logic of practice*, 52-65.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture (Vol. 4)*. Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2002). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual review of psychology*, *53*(1), 371-399.

Brannick, T., & Coghlan, D. (2007). In defense of being "native": The case for insider academic research. *Organizational Research Methods, 10*(1), 59–74.

Bray, T. M. (1999). *The shadow education system: Private tutoring and its implications for planners*. UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning.

Brooks, R. (2017). Representations of East Asian students in the UK media. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *43*(14), 2363-2377.

Brooks, R., & J. Waters. (2011). Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalisation of Higher Education. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Brown, J. D. (2000). University entrance examinations: Strategies for creating positive washback on English language teaching in Japan. *Shiken: JALT Testing & Evaluation SIG Newsletter, 3*(2).

Brunello, G. & D. Checchi. (2006). "*Does School Tracking Affect Equality of Opportunity? International Evidence"*. IZA Discussion Paper No. 2348.

Brücker, H., & Defoort, C. (2009). Inequality and the Self-selection of Migrants: Theory and New Evidence. *International Journal of Manpower, forthcoming*.

Butler, R., Ho, C., & Vincent, E. (2017). 'Tutored within an inch of their life': morality and 'old'and 'new'middle class identities in Australian schools. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *43*(14), 2408-2422.

Byrne, B., & De Tona, C. (2012). 'Trying to find the extra choices': migrant parents and secondary school choice in Greater Manchester. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *33*(1), 21-39.

Carlson, S., Gerhards, J. and Hans, S. (2017). Educating Children in Times of Globalisation: Class-specific Child-rearing Practices and the Acquisition of Transnational Cultural Capital. *Sociology*, *51*(4), pp. 749–765.

Carolan, B. V., & Wasserman, S. J. (2015). Does parenting style matter? Concerted cultivation, educational expectations, and the transmission of educational advantage. *Sociological Perspectives*, *58*(2), 168-186.

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A., J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41, 545–547.

Carstens, S. A. (1975). *Chinese associations in Singapore society: an examination of function and meaning* (No. 37). Institute of Southeast Asian.

Castells, M. (1992). Four Asian tigers with a dragon head: A comparative analysis of the state, economy, and society in the Asian Pacific Rim. In R. Appelbaum & J. Henderson (Eds.), *States and development in the Asian Pacific Rim*, pp. 33–70. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Chan, A. (2018). Transnational parenting practices of Chinese immigrant families in New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *19*(3), 219-230.

Chan, S. (1999). The Chinese learner–a question of style. *Education+ Training*, 41(6/7), 294-305.

Chand, M., & Ghorbani, M. (2011). National culture, networks and ethnic entrepreneurship: A comparison of the Indian and Chinese immigrants in the US. *International Business Review*, *20*(6), 593-606.

Chang, E. C. (1996). Cultural differences in optimism, pessimism, and coping: Predictors of subsequent adjustment in Asian American and Caucasian American college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *43*(1), 113.

Chang, L., Mak, M. C., Li, T., Wu, B. P., Chen, B. B., & Lu, H. J. (2011). Cultural adaptations to environmental variability: An evolutionary account of East–West differences. *Educational Psychology Review, 23*(1), 99–129.

Chang, W. C., & Wong, K. (2008). Socially oriented achievement goals of Chinese university students in Singapore: Structure and relationships with achievement motives, goals and affective outcomes. *International Journal of Psychology, 43*(5), 880-885.

Chao, R. K. (1994). Beyond parental control and authoritarian parenting style: Understanding Chinese parenting through the cultural notion of training. *Child development*, *65*(4), 1111-1119.

Chao, R. K. (1996). Chinese and European American mothers' beliefs about the role of parenting in children's school success. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *27*(4), 403-423.

Chao, R. K. (2000). The parenting of immigrant Chinese and European American mothers: Relations between parenting styles, socialization goals, and parental practices. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *21*(2), 233-248.

Chao, R. K., Kanatsu, A., Stanoff, N., Padmawidjaja, I., & Aque, C. (2009). Diversities in meaning and practice: The parental involvement of Asian immigrants. In N. E. Hill & R. K. Chao (Eds.), *Families, Schools, and the Adolescent: Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice* (pp. 110–125). New York: Teachers College Press.

Chao, R., & Tseng, V. (2002). Parenting of Asians. In M. H. Bornstein (Series Ed.), *Handbook of parenting: Social conditions and applied parenting* (2nd ed., Vol. 4, pp. 59-93). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Chan, A. (2018). Transnational parenting practices of Chinese immigrant families in New Zealand. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, *19*(3), 219-230.

Cheah, C. S. L., Leung, C. Y. Y., & Zhou, N. (2013). Understanding "tiger parenting" through the perceptions of Chinese immigrant mothers: Can Chinese and U.S. parenting coexist? *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, *4*(1), 30–40.

Cheadle, Jacob E. 2008. "Educational Investment, Family Context, and Children's Math and Reading Growth from Kindergarten through the Third Grade." *Sociology of Education*. 81(1):1–31.

Cheah, C. S., Leung, C. Y., & Zhou, N. (2013). Understanding "tiger parenting" through the perceptions of Chinese immigrant mothers: Can Chinese and US parenting coexist?. *Asian American journal of psychology*, *4*(1), 30.

Chen, L. A. (1998). From the boat to the melting pot: A contextual examination of parental ethnic socialization and children's ethnic attitudes and knowledge among

immigrant Chinese families, (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). New York University.

Chen, S. C. and Stevenson, H.W. (1995). Motivation and mathematics achievement: A comparative study of Asian-American, Caucasian-American, and East Asian high school students. *Child Development, 66,* 1215-1234

Chen, S. J. (1996). Positive childishness: Images of childhood in Japan. In C. P. Hwang, M. E. Lamb, and I. E. Sigel (Eds.), *Images of childhood* (pp. 113–128). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Chen, S.-Y. (2008). Who is the avid adolescent reader in Taiwan? The role of gender, family, and teacher. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52*(3), 214–223.

Chen, X., Rubin, K. H., & Sun, Y. (1992). Social reputation and peer relationships in Chinese and Canadian children: A cross-cultural study. *Child development*, *63*(6), 1336-1343.

Chen, Xuefeng. (2003). The social impact of China's one-child policy. *Harvard Asia pacific review*, *7*(1), 74-76.

Chen, W. (2010). Internet-usage patterns of immigrants in the process of intercultural adaptation. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *13*(4), 387-399.

Chen, W., & Choi, A. S. K. (2011). Internet and social support among Chinese migrants in Singapore. *New media & society*, *13*(7), 1067-1084.

Cheng, Kelvin Seah Kah (2019). Tuition has ballooned to a S$1.4b industry in Singapore. Should we be concerned? https://www.todayonline.com/commentary/tuition-has-ballooned-s14b-industry-singapore-should-we-be-concerned

Cheng, L. K. (1995). Chinese clan associations in Singapore: Social change and continuity. *Southeast Asian Chinese: The Socio-Cultural Dimension*, 67-77.

Cheng, S. H., & Kuo, W. H. (2000). Family socialization of ethnic identity among Chinese American pre-adolescents. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 31, 463–484.

Chew, P. G. L. (2007). Remaking Singapore: Language, culture, and identity in a globalized world. *Language policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts*, 73-93.

Chew, P. G. L. (2010). Linguistic Capital, Study Mothers and The Transnational Family in Singapore. *Globalization of Language and Culture in Asia: The Impact of Globalization Processes on Language. London, England: Continuum*, 82-106.

Chia A, Costigan CL. Understanding the multidimensionality of acculturation Among Chinese Canadians. 2006;38(4):311-324. Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science.

Chin, T., & Phillips, M. (2004). Social reproduction and child-rearing practices: Social class, children's agency, and the summer activity gap. *Sociology of education*, *77*(3), 185-210.

Chiswick, B. R. (2000). Are immigrants favorably self-selected. *Migration theory: Talking across disciplines*, 61-77.

Chiu, L. (1987). Child-rearing attitudes of Chinese, Chinese American, and Anglo-American mothers. International Journal of Psychology, 22(4), 409-419.

Chiu, T. Y., & Ho, E. L. E. (2020). Transnational care circulations, changing intergenerational relations and the ageing aspirations of Chinese grandparenting migrants in Singapore. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*.

Chong, T. (2014). "Stepping Stone Singapore." In *Migration and Integration in Singapore: Policies and Practice*, edited by Yap Mui Teng, Gillian Koh, and Debbie Soon, 214–229. New York: Routledge.

Chua, B. H. (1997). *Communitarian ideology and democracy in Singapore* (Vol. 9). Psychology Press.

Clark, B. A. (1990). Comparison of the Achievement of Students Taught by Full-time versus Adjunct Faculty in the Chemistry of Hazardous Materials Course: Governance and Management.

Cobb-Clark, D. A., Sinning, M., & Stillman, S. (2012). Migrant youths' educational achievement: The role of institutions. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 643(1), 18–45.

Coe, C., & Shani, S. (2015). Cultural capital and transnational parenting: The case of Ghanaian migrants in the United States. *Harvard Educational Review, 85*(4), 562-586.

Cohen, W. I., & Zhao, L. (Eds.). (1997). *Hong Kong under Chinese rule: the economic and political implications of reversion*. Cambridge University Press.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American journal of sociology*, *94*, S95-S120.

Constantino, R., Cui, L., & Faltis, C. (1995). Chinese parental involvement: Reaching new levels. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *28*(2), 46–50.

Cooke, F. L. (2007). 'Husband's career first' renegotiating career and family commitment among migrant Chinese academic couples in Britain. *Work, employment and society*, *21*(1), 47-65.

Craig, L., Powell, A., & Smyth, C. (2014). Towards intensive parenting? C hanges in the composition and determinants of mothers' and fathers' time with children 1992–2006. *The British journal of sociology*, *65*(3), 555-579.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2010). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, *39*(3), 124-130.

Crul, M., & Schneider, J. (2010). Comparative integration context theory: Participation and belonging in new diverse European cities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 33,* 1249–1268.

Crul, M., & Vermeulen, H. (2003). The second generation in Europe. *International Migration Review,* 37, 965–986.

Da, W.W. (2003) Transnational grandparenting: Childcare arrangements among migrants from the People's Republic of China to Australia, *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue De Lintegration Et De La Migration Internationale* 4(1): 79–103.

Deepak, A. C. (2005). Parenting and the process of migration: Possibilities within South Asian families. *Child Welfare*, *84*(5), 585.

De Haas, H., Natter, K., & Vezzoli, S. (2016). Growing restrictiveness or changing selection? The nature and evolution of migration policies. *International Migration Review,* 1-44.

Department of Statistics Singapore. (2012) "Singapore Census of Population 2010," www.singstat.gov.sg, accessed October 1, 2012.

Doherty, C. (2018). Keeping doors open: transnational families and curricular nationalism. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, *27*(2-3), 200-216.

Duan, W., Guan, Y., & Bu, H. (2018). The effect of parental involvement and socioeconomic status on junior school students' academic achievement and school behavior in China. *Frontiers in psychology*, *9*, 952.

Duncan, G., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (1997). *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York: Russell Sage.

Dunn, J. S., Kinney, D. A., & Hofferth, S. L. (2003). Parental ideologies and children's after-school activities. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *46*(10), 1359-1386.

Dustmann, C. (2008). Return migration, investment in children, and intergenerational mobility comparing sons of foreign-and native-born fathers. *Journal of Human Resources*, *43*(2), 299-324.

Dwyer, D. J., & Hecht, J. B. (1992). Minimal parental involvement. *School Community Journal*, *2*(2), 53-66.

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Institute for Qualitative Methodology*, *8*(1), 55-63.

Dyson, L. L. (2001). Home-school communication and expectations of recent Chinese immigrants. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *26*, 455-476.

Ee, J. (1961). Chinese migration to Singapore, 1896-1941. *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, *2*(1), 33-51.

Engle, P. L., & Black, M. M. (2008). The effect of poverty on child development and educational outcomes. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1136*, 243.

England, Paula, and Anjula Srivastava. 2013. "Educational Differences in U.S. Parents' Time Spent in Child Care: The Role of Culture and Cross-spouse Influence." Social Science Research 42(4):971–88.

Evans, G. (2004). The environment of childhood poverty. *American Psychologist, 59*, 77–92

Facchini, G., & Lodigiani, E. (2014). Attracting skilled immigrants: An overview of recent policy developments in advanced countries. *National Institute Economic Review, 229*(1), R3-R21.

Facchini, G., & Steinhardt, M. F. (2011). What drives US immigration policy? Evidence from congressional roll call votes. *Journal of Public Economics, 95*(7-8), 734-743.

Faist, T. (2013). The mobility turn: a new paradigm for the social sciences?. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 36*(11), 1637-1646.

Faircloth, C. (2014). Intensive parenting and the expansion of parenting. In *Parenting culture studies* (pp. 25-50). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Faircloth, C., Hoffman, D. M., & Layne, L. L. (Eds.). (2013). Introduction. In C. Faircloth et al. (eds). *Parenting in global perspective: Negotiating ideologies of kinship, self and politics*. pp. 1-19. New York: Routledge.

Feldman, D. (1999). *Nature's gambit: Child prodigies and the development of human potential* (J. Limei, Trans. to Chinese). Taipei, Taiwan: Guiguan Press. (Original work published 1991)

Feliciano, C. (2005a). Educational selectivity in US immigration: How do immigrants compare to those left behind? *Demography, 42*(1), 131-152.

Feliciano, C. (2005b). Does selective migration matter? Explaining ethnic disparities in educational attainment among immigrants' children. *International migration review*, *39*(4), 841-871.

Feliciano, C. (2020). Immigrant Selectivity Effects on Health, Labor Market, and Educational Outcomes. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *46*.

Feliciano, C., & Lanuza, Y. R. (2017). An immigrant paradox? Contextual attainment and intergenerational educational mobility. *American Sociological Review*, *82*(1), 211-241.

Fernández-Reino, M. (2016). Immigrant optimism or anticipated discrimination? Explaining the first educational transition of ethnic minorities in England. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, *46*, 141-156.

Fifield, A. (2008). "Korea's Divided Families Count the Cost of a Good Education." Financial Times, December 27.

Findlay, A. M., King, R., Smith, F. M., Geddes, A., & Skeldon, R. (2012). World class? An investigation of globalisation, difference and international student mobility. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *37*(1), 118-131.

Finn, J. D. (1998). Parental engagement that makes a difference. *Educational Leadership*, *55*(8), 20-24.

Fix, M., & Zimmermann, W. (2001). All under one roof: Mixedstatus families. *International Migration Review, 35,* 397–419.

Flanagan, A., & Metzger, M. (2001). Internet use in the contemporary media environment. *Human Computer Research, 27,* 153-181.

Ford, D. Y. (1996). Unraveling the "Model Minority" Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth. *Journal of Negro Education, 65*(2), 248-250.

Fong, J. C. (2003). Complementary education and culture in the global/local Chinese community. San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals.

Foo-Law C., Rocha, J., & P. V. Tay. (1994) Singapore 1994. Singapore: Ministry of Information and the Arts, 1994.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *The urban review, 18*(3), 176-206.

Freeman, J. (2001). Giftedness, responsibility and schools. *Gifted Education International, 15*(2), 141-150.

Freedman, M. (1957). *Chinese family and marriage in Singapore* (No. 20). Johnson Reprint Corp.

Freedman, M. (1960). Immigrants and associations: Chinese in nineteenth-century Singapore. *Comparative studies in society and history, 3*(1), 25-48.

Fukuyama, F. (1993). Immigrants and family values. *Commentary, 95*, 26-32.

Fuligni, A. J. (1997). The academic achievement of adolescents from immigrant families: The role of family background, attitudes, and behavior. *Child development, 68*(2), 351-363.

Fuligni, A. J., & Yoshikawa, H. (2003). Socioeconomic resources, parenting, and child development among immigrant families. In M. Bornstein & R. Bradley (Eds.), *SES, parenting, and child development* (pp. 107 – 124). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Fuller, B., Elmore, R. & Orfield, G. (1996). Policy-making in the dark: illuminating the school choice debate. In B. B. Fuller, R. Elmore & G. Orfield (Eds) *Who chooses? Who loses?,* 1–21. New York, Teachers College Press.

Furedi, F., & Füredi, F. (2002). *Paranoid parenting: Why ignoring the experts may be best for your child*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press.

Gamoran, A. (1986). Instructional and institutional effects of ability grouping. *Sociology of Education*, 185-198.

Gans, H. J. (1999). Filling in some holes: Six areas of needed immigration research. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *42*(9), 1302-1313.

Gardner, H. (2001). Paroxysms of choice. *Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology, 1*(3), 320–337.

Gaw, Kenneth (1988). *Superior Servants: The Legendary Cantonese Amahs of the Far East*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Gee, Christopher (2012). *The Education's Arms Race: All for One, Loss for All*. IPS Working papers No. 20. https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/ips/wp-20_the-educational-arms-race-all-for-one-loss-for-all.pdf

Gibson, M. A. (1988). *Accommodation without assimilation: Sikh immigrants in an American high school*. Cornell University Press.

Ginther, D. K., & Pollak, R. A. (2004). Family structure and children's educational outcomes: Blended families, stylized facts, and descriptive regressions. *Demography*, *41*(4), 671-696.

Gillies V (2006) Working class mothers and school life: Exploring the role of emotional capital. *Gender and Education* 18(3): 281–93.

Gillies, V. (2006). *Marginalised mothers: Exploring working class experiences of parenting*. Routledge.

Ginther, D. K., & Pollak, R. A. (2004). Family structure and children's educational outcomes: Blended families, stylized facts, and descriptive regressions. *Demography*, *41*(4), 671-696.

Given, L. (2008). The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods (Vols. 1 & 2). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Goh, C. B., & Gopinathan, S. (2006). The Development of education in Singapore since 1965. Background paper prepared for the Asia Education Study Tour for African Policy Makers, June 18-30.

Goodkind, A. (2019). The Chinese Diaspora: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Trends. *United States Census.*

Goodnow, J. J. (2002). Parents' knowledge and expectations: Using what we know. *Handbook of parenting*, 3, 439-460.

Goodnow, J. J. (2013). Cultural perspectives and parents' views of parenting and development: research directions. *Parenting Beliefs, Behaviors, and Parent-Child Relations: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, 35.

Goyette, K., & Xie, Y. (1999). Educational expectations of Asian American youths: Determinants and ethnic differences. *Sociology of Education*, 22-36.

Göransson, K. (2009). The binding tie: Chinese intergenerational relations in modern Singapore. University of Hawaii Press.

Göransson, K. (2015). Raising successful children: children as accumulation strategy and the renegotiation of parenting arrangements in Singapore. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, *16*(3), 211-226.

Gordon, M. (1964). *Assimilation in American life: The role of race, religion, and national origins.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Grady, S., Bielick, S., & Aud, S. (2010). Trends in the use of school choice: 1993 to 2007 (NCES 2010-004). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education.

Green, A. G., & Green, D. A. (1995). Canadian immigration policy: The effectiveness of the point system and other instruments. *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 1006-1041.

Griga, D., & Hadjar, A. (2014). Migrant background and higher education participation in Europe: The effect of the educational systems. *European Sociological Review*, *30*(3), 275–286.

Guarnizo, L. E. (2003). The economics of transnational living. *International migration review*, *37*(3), 666-699.

Guerassimoff, C. (1998). Legal and Illegal Mainland Chinese Emigration Durin the 1990s. *New developments in Asian studies: An introduction*, 140-57.

Gutiérrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(5), 19–25.

Guo, K. (2006). Raising children in Chinese immigrant families: Evidence from the research literature. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, *31*(2), 7–13.

Guo, K. (2013). Ideals and realities in Chinese immigrant parenting: Tiger mother versus others. *Journal of Family Studies, 19*(1), 44-52.

Guo, K. (2014). For a better life: The aspirations of Chinese immigrants in parenting. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *12*(3), 293-310.

Guo, G., & Mullan Harris, K. (2000). The mechanisms mediating the effects of poverty on children's intellectual development. *Demography, 37*, 431–447.

Guo, S. (2009). Difference, deficiency, and devaulation: Tracing the roots of non-recognition of foreign credentials for immigrant professionals in Canada. *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 37-52.

Guo, Y. (2011). Beyond deficit paradigms: Exploring informal learning of immigrant parents. *The Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education, 24*(1), 41-59.

Hage, G. (2012). *White nation: Fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*. Routledge.

Harris, K. (2019). Transnational Parenting and Cultural Capital: A qualitative study on cultural capital and parenting strategies of English-speaking migrants in Sweden.

Hatton, T. J. (2005). Explaining trends in UK immigration. *Journal of Population Economics*, *18*(4), 719-740.

Haller, A. O., & Portes, A. (1973). Status attainment processes. *Sociology of education*, 51-91.

Haller, W., Portes, A., & Lynch, S. M. (2011). Dreams fulfilled, dreams shattered: Determinants of segmented assimilation in the second generation. *Social forces*, *89*(3), 733-762.

Hampton, K. N., Lee, C. J., & Her, E. J. (2011). How new media affords network diversity: Direct and mediated access to social capital through participation in local social settings. *new media & society*, *13*(7), 1031-1049.

Hatton, T. J. (2005). Explaining trends in UK immigration. *Journal of Population Economics*, *18*(4), 719-740.

Hao, L., & Bonstead-Bruns, M. (1998). Parent-child differences in educational expectations and the academic achievement of immigrant and native students. *Sociology of education*, 175-198.

Harris, A. L., Jamison, K. M., & Trujillo, M. H. (2008). Disparities in the educational success of immigrants: An assessment of the immigrant effect for Asians and Latinos. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *620*(1), 90-114.

Hartwich, O. M. (2011). Selection, migration and integration: why multiculturalism works in Australia (and fails in Europe). *A 'Sustainable' Population? — Key Policy Issues*, 211.

Hastings, J. S., Van Weelden, R., & Weinstein, J. (2007). *Preferences, information, and parental choice behavior in public school choice* (No. w12995). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Hatcher, R. (1998) Class differentiation in education: rational choices? *British Journal of Education,* 19(1), 5–24.

Hatton, T. J. (2005). Explaining trends in UK immigration. *Journal of Population Economics*, *18*(4), 719-740.

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. Yale University Press.

Haythornthwaite, C. (2005). Social networks and Internet connectivity effects. *Information, Community & Society, 8*(2), 125-147.

Hauser, R. M., & Warren, J. R. (1997). Socioeconomic indexes for occupations: A review, update, and critique. *Sociological methodology*, *27*(1), 177-298.

Hess, R. D., Chih-Mei, C., and McDevitt, T. M. (1987). Cultural variations in family beliefs about children's performance in mathematics: Comparisons among People's Republic of Chinese, Chinese American, and Caucasian American families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *79*, 179–188.

Henwood, K., Shirani, F., & Coltart, C. (2010). Fathers and financial risk-taking during the economic downturn: insights from a QLL study of men's identities-in-the-making. *Twenty-First Century Society*, *5*(2), 137-147.

Hicks, G.L. and Redding, S.G., "The Story of the East Asian Economic Miracle Part I: Economic Theory be Damned", *Euro-Asia Business Review*, Vol. 2 No. 3, July 1983, pp. 24-32; "Part II: The Cultural Connection", Vol. 2 No. 4, October 1983, pp. 18-23.

Hidalgo, N. M., Siu, S. F., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Research on families, schools, and communities: A multicultural perspective. In J. Banks & C. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.), (pp. 631-655). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hieshima, J. A., & Schneider, B. (1994). Intergenerational effects on the cultural and cognitive socialization of third- and fourth-generation Japanese Americans. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *15*, 319–327.

Hill, N. E., Ramirez, C., & Dumka, L. E. (2003). Early adolescents' career aspirations: A qualitative study of perceived barriers and family support among low-income ethnically diverse adolescents. *Journal of Family Issues, 24*, 934-959.

Ho, C. (2015). "People like us": School choice, multiculturalism and segregation in Sydney. *Australian Review of Public Affairs*.

Ho, E., & Bedford, R. (2008). Asian transnational families in New Zealand: Dynamics and challenges. *International Migration, 46*(4), 41-62.

Ho, E. L. E., & Foo, F. Y. (2017). Debating integration in Singapore, deepening the variegations of the Chinese diaspora. In *Contemporary Chinese Diasporas* (pp. 105-125). Palgrave, Singapore.

Ho, E. L. E. and T.Y. Chiu (2020) Transnational ageing and "care technologies": Chinese grandparenting migrants in Singapore and Sydney, Population, Space and Place: e2365.

Ho, E. S., Bedford, R. D., & Goodwin, J. E. (1997), 'Astronaut' families: A contemporary migration phenomenon. In W. Friesen et al. (Ed.), *East Asian New Zealanders: Research on new migrants*, New Zealand migration research network, Paper No. 3 (pp. 20–41). Albany: Aotearoa/Massey University.

Ho, J. T., Ang, C. E., Loh, J., & Ng, I. (1998). A preliminary study of kiasuism behavior - is it unique to Singapore?. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 13*(5/6), 359-370.

Hoffman, D. M. (2010). Risky investments: Parenting and the production of the 'resilient child'. *Health, Risk & Society, 12*(4), 385-394.

Hofheinz, R. and Calder, K.E., *The East Asian Edge*, Basic Books, New York, 1982, pp. 41-7.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., A. C. Battiato, J. M. Walker, R. P. Reed, J. M. DeJong, and K. P. Jones. 2001. "Parental Involvement in Homework." *Educational Psychologist 36* (3): 195–209.

Hsin, A., & Xie, Y. (2014). Explaining Asian Americans' academic advantage over whites. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 111*(23), 8416-8421.

Hu, S. (2018). Continuity and change in Singapore's population and families. In *Family and Population Changes in Singapore*, 1-26, edited by W. J., J. Yeung & S. Hu. London and New York: Routledge.

Huang, G. H. C., & Gove, M. (2015). Confucianism, Chinese families, and academic achievement: exploring how Confucianism and Asian descendant parenting practices influence children's academic achievement. In *Science education in east Asia*, 41-66. Springer, Cham.

Huang, G. H.-C., & Mason, K. L. (2008). Motivations of parental involvement in children's learning: Voices from urban African American families of preschoolers. *Multicultural Education, 15*(3), 20–27.

Huang, S., & Yeoh, B. S. (2005). Transnational families and their children's education: China's 'study mothers' in Singapore. *Global networks*, *5*(4), 379-400.

Huat, T. C. (1989). Confucianism and nation building in Singapore. *International Journal of Social Economics*.

Hudson, C. (2013). *Beyond the Singapore girl: Discourses of gender and nation in Singapore*. Nias Press.

Huntsinger, C. S., Jose, P. E., Larson, S. L., Krieg, D. B., & Shaligram, C. (2000). Mathematics, vocabulary, and reading development in Chinese American and

European American children over primary school years. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 92*, 745-760

Ichou, M. (2014). Who they were there: Immigrants' educational selectivity and their children's educational attainment. *European sociological review*, *30*(6), 750-765.

Ishizuka, P. (2019). Social class, gender, and contemporary parenting standards in the United States: Evidence from a national survey experiment. *Social Forces*, *98*(1), 31-58.

Irwin, S., & Elley, S. (2011). Concerted cultivation? Parenting values, education and class diversity. *Sociology*, *45*(3), 480-495.

Izzo, C. V., Weissberg, R. P., Kasprow, W. J., & Fendrich, M. (1999). A longitudinal assessment of teacher perceptions and parent involvement in children's education and school performance. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27, 817-839.

Jambunathan, S., Burts, D. C., & Pierce, S. (2000). Comparisons of parenting attitudes among five ethnic groups in the United States. Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 31, 395– 406.

Jang, Y., Park, N. S., Chiriboga, D. A., Yoon, H., An, S., & Kim, M. T. (2015). Social capital in ethnic communities and mental health: A study of older Korean immigrants. *Journal of cross-cultural gerontology*, *30*(2), 131-141.

Jass, G., & Massey, D. S. (2004). *Immigrant health: Selectivity and acculturation* (No. 04/23). IFS Working Papers.

Jasso, G., & Rosenzweig, M. R. (1990). Self-selection and the earnings of immigrants: Comment. *The American Economic Review*, *80*(1), 298-304.

Ji, C. S., & Koblinsky, S. A. (2009). Parent involvement in children's education: An exploratory study of urban, Chinese immigrant families. *Urban Education*, *44*(6), 687-709.

Ji, G., Jiao, S., & Jing, Q. (1993). Expectancy of Chinese parents and children's cognitive abilities. *International Journal of Psychology*, *28*(6), 821-830.

Juang, L. P., Qin, D. B., & Park, I. J. (2013). Deconstructing the myth of the "tiger mother": An introduction to the special issue on tiger parenting, Asian-heritage families, and child/adolescent well-being. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, *4*(1), 1.

Kalil, Ariel, Rebecca Ryan, and Michael Corey. 2012. "Diverging Destinies: Maternal Education and the Developmental Gradient in Time with Children." Demography 49(4):1361–83

Kao, G. (1995). Asian Americans as model minorities? A look at their academic performance. *American journal of Education*, *103*(2), 121-159.

Kao, G. (2004). Social capital and its relevance to minority and immigrant populations. *Sociology of Education*, *77*(2), 172-175.

Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1995). Optimism and achievement: The educational performance of immigrant youth. *Social science quarterly*, 1-19.

Kao, G., & Thompson, J. S. (2003). Racial and ethnic stratification in educational achievement and attainment. *Annual review of sociology*, *29*(1), 417-442.

Karra, N., & Philips, N. (2008). Researching "back home": International management research as autoethnography. *Organizational Research Methods*, *11*(3), 541-561.

Katz, B., Juni, S., Shope, C., & Tang, L. (1993). The values of Chinese students: At home and abroad. *International Journal of Psychology, 28*(6), 761-773.

Katz, C. (2008). Cultural Geographies lecture: Childhood as spectacle: relays of anxiety and the reconfiguration of the child. *cultural geographies, 15*(1), 5-17.

Kaye, Barrington (1960). *Upper Nankin Street, Singapore: A Sociological Study of Chinese Households Living in a Densely Populated Area*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press.

Keith, T. Z., Keith, P. B., Troutman, G. C., Bickley, P. G., Trivette, P. S., & Singh, K. (1993). Does parental involvement affect eight-grade student achievement? Structural analysis of national data. *School Psychology Review, 22*(3), 474-496.

Kelley, M. L., & Tseng, H.-M. (1992). Cultural differences in child rearing: A comparison of immigrant Chinese and Caucasian American mothers. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 23*(4), 444–455.

Kelly, P. & Lusis, T. (2006). "Migration and the transnational habitus: evidence from Canada and the Philippines". *Environment and Planning*, Volym 38, pp. 831-847.

Kim, J. (2010). 'Downed' and stuck in Singapore: Lower/middle class South Korean wild geese (kirogi. In *Globalization, changing demographics, and educational challenges in East Asia*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Kim, H., Rendon, L., & Valadez, J. (1998). Student characteristics, school characteristics, and educational aspirations of six Asian American ethnic groups. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 26*(3), 166-176.

Kim, S. Y., Wang, Y., Orozco-Lapray, D., Shen, Y., & Murtuza, M. (2013). Does "tiger parenting" exist? Parenting profiles of Chinese Americans and adolescent developmental outcomes. *Asian American journal of psychology*, *4*(1), 7.

King, R., & Raghuram, P. (2013). International student migration: Mapping the field and new research agendas. *Population, Space and Place*, *19*(2), 127-137.

King, R., & Ruiz-Gelices, E. (2003). International student migration and the European 'year abroad': effects on European identity and subsequent migration behaviour. *International Journal of Population Geography*, *9*(3), 229-252.

Kins, E., Beyers, W., Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2009). Patterns of home leaving and subjective well-being in emerging adulthood: The role of motivational processes and parental autonomy support. *Developmental Psychology*, *45*, 1416.

Kwok, K. W. (1999) "Singapore." In Lynn Pan (ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas* (pp. 200-217). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Krause, L. B. (1987). The Government as an. *The Singapore economy reconsidered*, *73*, 107. in Krause, L.B. *et al., The Singapore Economic Reconsidered*, Institute of South-east Asian Studies, Singapore, 1987.

Kraut, R., Lundmark, V., Patterson, M., Kiesler, S., Mukopadhyay, T., & Scherlis, W. (1998). Internet paradox: A social technology that reduces social involvement and psychological well-being? American Psychologist, 53(9), 1017-1031.

Krashen, S. D. (1996). *Under attack: The case against bilingual education*. Language Education Assocs.

Koops, W. (2003). Imaging childhood. In W. Koops & M. Zuckerman (Eds.), *Beyond the century of the child. Cultural history and developmental psychology* (pp. 1–18). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Lai, H. M., & Lau-Fong, Mak (1992). Occupational Structures of Chinese Immigrants in Early Malaya and North America. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, *20*(1), 43-66.

Lai, Y., & Ishiyama, F. I. (2004). Involvement of immigrant Chinese Canadian mothers of children with disabilities. *Exceptional children*, *71*(1), 97-108.

Lan, P. C. (2018). *Raising global families: Parenting, immigration, and class in Taiwan and the US*. Stanford University Press.

Lam, T., Yeoh, B. S., & Law, L. (2002). Sustaining families transnationally: Chinese-Malaysians in Singapore. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, *11*(1), 117-143.

Lareau, A. (1987). Social class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital. *Sociology of education*, 73-85.

Lareau, A. (2000). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Lareau, A. (2002). Invisible inequality: Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. *American sociological review*, 747-776.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lareau A (2006) Invisible inequality. Social class and childrearing in black families and white families. In: Sadovnik AR (ed.) *Sociology of Education. A Critical Reader*. London: Routledge

Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life, 2nd ed*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Larmer, B. (2014, December 31). *Inside a Chinese test-prep factory*. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/magazine/inside-a-chinese-test-prepfactory.html

Layton Lesley, *Cultures of the World: Singapore*. N. Y., London, Sydney: Marshall Cavendish, 1992.

Lee, E., & Johnstone, M. (2017). A production of education migrants: A case study of South Korean transnational families in Canada. *International Social Work*, *60*(2), 307-320.

Lee, E., Macvarish, J. and Bristow, J. (2010) 'Editorial: risk, health and parenting culture', Health Risk and Society, 12(4), 293–300.

Lee, J., & Zhou, M. (2015). *The Asian American Achievement Paradox*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Lee, S. J. (1996). *Unraveling the "model minority" stereotype: Listening to Asian American youth*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

LeMoyne, T., & Buchanan, T. (2011). Does "hovering" matter? Helicopter parenting and its effect on well-being. *Sociological Spectrum*, *31*(4), 399-418.

Leong, C. H., Rueppel, P., & Hong, D. (2014). Managing immigration and integration in Singapore. *Migration and Integration: Common Challenges and Responses from Europe and Asia*, 51-72.

Leong, F. T. L., Chao, R. K., and Hardin, E. E. (2000). Asian American adolescents: A research review to dispel the model minority myth. In R. Montemayor (Ed.), *Advances in adolescent development* (Vol. 9.). Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Lesley L. (1992). *Cultures of the World: Singapore.* N. Y., London, Sydney: Marshall Cavendish, p. 17.

Le Vine, R.A. (2003). *Childhood socialization. Comparative studies of parenting, learning and educational change.* Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.

Levitt, P., & Schiller, N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: a transnational social field perspective on society 1. *International migration review*, *38*(3), 1002-1039.

Li, F. L. N., Findlay, A. M., Jowett, A. J., & Skeldon, R. (1996). Migrating to learn and learning to migrate: A study of the experiences and intentions of international student migrants. *International Journal of Population Geography*, *2*(1), 51-67.

Li, J. (1997). The Chinese heart and mind for wanting to learn (hao-xue-xin): A culturally based learning model. Doctoral dissertation. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Li, J. (2001). Expectations of Chinese immigrant parents for their children's education: The interplay of Chinese tradition and the Canadian context. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 26, 477-494.

Liem, A. D., Lau, S., & Nie, Y. (2008). The role of self-efficacy, task value, and achievement goals in predicting learning strategies, task disengagement, peer relationship, and achievement outcome. *Contemporary educational psychology*, *33*(4), 486-512.

Lim, M. (2002). *Exploratory investigation of choice of secondary school by parents and pupils in a Singapore girls' secondary school*. Doctoral Thesis, NIE, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Lin, C. C., & Fu, V. R. (1990). A comparison of child-rearing practices among Chinese, immigrant Chinese, and CaucasianAmerican parents. Child Development, 61, 429-433.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2017). Qualitative communication research methods. Sage publications.

Liu, H. (1998). Old linkages, new networks: The globalization of overseas Chinese voluntary associations and its implications. *China Q.*, 582.

Liu, H. (2005). New migrants and the revival of overseas Chinese nationalism. *Journal of Contemporary China, 14*(43), 291-316.

Liu, H. (2012). Transnational Chinese sphere in Singapore: Dynamics, transformations and characteristics. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, *41*(2), 37-60.

Liu, H. (2014). Beyond co-ethnicity: The politics of differentiating and integrating new immigrants in Singapore. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *37*(7), 1225-1238.

Liu, W. C., Wang, C. K. J., & Parkins, E. J. (2005). A longitudinal study of students' academic self-concept in a streamed setting: The Singapore context. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *75*(4), 567-586.

Louie, V. (2001). Parents' aspirations and investment: The role of social class in the educational experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Chinese Americans. *Harvard Educational Review*, 71(3), 438-474.

Low, Kelvin E. Y. (2015). *Remembering the Samsui Women: Migration and Social Memory in Singapore and China*. Singapore: National University Singapore Press.

Luis, E. G., & Michael, P. S. (2017). The Locations of Transnationalism 1. In *Transnationalism from Below* (pp. 3-34). Routledge.

Louie, V. (2001). Parents‟ aspirations and investment: The role of social class in the educational experiences of 1.5- and second-generation Chinese Americans. *Harvard Educational Review, 71*(3), 438-474.

Luo, W., Paris, S. G., Hogan, D., & Luo, Z. (2011). Do performance goals promote learning? A pattern analysis of Singapore students' achievement goals. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 36*(2), 165-176.

Ma, Y. (2009). Family socioeconomic status, parental involvement, and college major choices—gender, race/ethnic, and nativity patterns. *Sociological Perspectives, 52*(2), 211-234.

Magnuson, K. A., & Duncan, G. (2002). Parents in poverty. In Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of parenting* (pp. 95–121). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Magnuson, K. A., & Duncan, G. J. (2006). *The role of family socioeconomic resources in the black–white test score gap among young children. Developmental Review, 26(4), 365-399.*

Mapp, K. L. (2003). Having their say: Parents describe why and how they are engaged in children's learning. *School Community Journal, 13*(1), 35-64.

Markose, S. (2007). Home literacy practices of immigrant families and cultural discontinuity: Two case studies. In Proceedings *from the 2007 January International Educational Research Conference*, Fremantle, Australia.

Markose, S. J., & Simpson, A. (2016). "I want them better than me": Pedagogical strategies employed by four immigrant parents in the face of perceived forms of exclusion by school authorities. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *19*(3), 659–682.

Matthew Boey. (2019) "Learning from the Best: Singapore and Education Reform." 18 Sep 2019. https://thepublicpurpose.com/2019/09/18/learning-from-the-best-singapore-and-education-reform/

Mathews, M., Lim, L., & See, T. S. (2017). *Parents' perceptions of the Singapore primary school system* (No. id: 11959).

Maxwell, C., & Yemini, M. (2019). Modalities of cosmopolitanism and mobility: Parental education strategies of global, immigrant and local middle-class Israelis. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *40*(5), 616-632.

Mathews, M., & Zhang, J. (2016). *Sentiments on immigrant integration & the role of immigrant associations*. Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

Mau, S. (2010). *Social transnationalism: Lifeworlds beyond the nation-state*. Routledge.

McLanahan, S., & Sandefur, G. (1994). *Growing up with single parent: What hurts, what helps*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

McLoyd, V. (1998). Socioeconomic disadvantage and child development. *American Psychologist, 53*, 185–20

Meagher, A. J. (2008). *The Coolie trade: the traffic in Chinese laborers to Latin America 1847-1874*. Arnold J Meagher.

Mercer, J. (2007). The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: Wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas. *Oxford Review of Education, 33*(1), 1-17.

Ming, Hai. 2001. "On Secondary School Students Studying Abroad to Avoid College Admission Exams." *Chinese Education & Society* 34(3):35–38.

Ministry of Education, Singapore (MOE). (2018). Framework for 21st century competencies and student outcomes. Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/education-system/21st-century-competencies.

Mizrachi, M., Maxwell, C., & Yemini, M. (2020). Buffered mobility: parenting strategies of religious Jewish global middle class families. *Education Inquiry*, 1-21.

Mu, Z., & Hu, S. (2018). Origin and transition of Singapore families. In *Family and Population Changes in Singapore* (pp. 27-52). Routledge.

Nedelcu, M. (2012). Migrants' new transnational habitus: rethinking migration through a cosmopolitan lens in the digital age. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *38*(9), 1339-1356.

Nelson, M. K., & Nelson, M. K. (2010). *Parenting out of control: Anxious parents in uncertain times*. NYU Press.

Ng, I. Y. (2014). Education and intergenerational mobility in Singapore. *Educational Review*, *66*(3), 362-376.

Ng, P. T. (2008). Educational reform in Singapore: From quantity to quality. *Educational research for policy and practice*, *7*(1), 5-15.

Ng, P. T. (2010). The evolution and nature of school accountability in the Singapore education system. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, *22*(4), 275-292.

Ní Laoire C, Carpena-Méndez F, Tyrrell N, et al. (2010) Introduction: Childhood and migration – mobilities, homes and belongings. Childhood 17(2): 155–162.

Nora Chiang, L. H. (2008). 'Astronaut families': transnational lives of middle-class Taiwanese married women in Canada. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *9*(5), 505-518.

Nugent, S. (2005). Affective education: Addressing the social and emotional needs of gifted students in the classroom. In F. Karnes & S. Bean (Eds.), *Methods and materials for teaching the gifted* (2nd ed., pp. 409–435). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Ochocka, J., & Janzen, R. (2008). Immigrant parenting: A new framework of understanding. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *6*(1), 85-111.

Ogbu, J. U. (1974). *The next generation: An ethnography of education in an urban neighborhood.* New York: Academic Press.

Ogbu, J. U. (1988). Diversity and equity in public education: Community forces and minority school adjustment and performance. *Policies for America's public schools: Teachers, equity, and indicators*, 127-170.

Ogbu, J. U., & Simon, H. D. (1998). Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with implication for education. *Anthropology and Educational Quarterly, 29,* 155-188.

Okagaki, L. (2001). Triarchic model of minority children's school achievement. *Educational Psychologist, 36*(1), 9-20.

Okagaki, L., & Frensch, P. A. (1998). Parenting and children's school achievement: A multiethnic perspective. *American Educational Research Journal*, *35*(1), 123-144.

Okagaki, L., & Bingham, G. E. (2005). Parents' social cognitions and their parenting behaviors. *Parenting: An ecological perspective*, *2*, 3-33.

Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Duke University Press.

Onishi, N. 2008. "For Studies in English, Koreans Say Goodbye to Dad." The New York Times, June 8.

Ou, Y. 17C: Chinese New Immigrants. In Kwa, C. G., & Ke, M. (Eds.). (2019). *A general history of the Chinese in Singapore*. Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations.

Orellana, M. F., Thorne, B., Chee, A., & Lam, W. S. E. (2001). Transnational childhoods: The participation of children in processes of family migration. *Social problems*, *48*(4), 572-591.

Ortmann, S., & Thompson, M. R. (2016). China and the" Singapore Model". *Journal of Democracy*, *27*(1), 39-48.

Pacini-Ketchabaw V (2007) Racialized migrant women's narratives on child care and citizenship: An antiracist, transnational feminist analysis. International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood 5(1): 69–88.

Pan, Y., Gauvain, M., Liu, Z., & Cheng, L. (2006). American and Chinese Parental Involvement in Young Children's Mathematics Learning. *Cognitive Development, 21*(1), 17-35.

Pang, E.F., "The Distinctive Features of Two City States' Development: Hong Kong and Singapore", in Berger, P.L. and Hsiao, M.H.H. (Eds.), *In Search of an East Asian Development Model*, Transaction Books, New Jersey, 1988, pp. 220-38.

Parker, S. (2012, October 31). Zip code is "destiny" for students in New York City. *TakePart*. Retrieved from http://www.takepart.com/article/2012/10/31/new-york-city-students-stillchoose-schools-based-race-and-zip-code

Patton, M. Q. (1999). Enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative analysis. *Health services research*, *34*(5 Pt 2), 1189.

Pendley, Charles (1983). Language policy and social transformation in contemporary Singapore. Southeast Asia Journal of Social Science 11, (2), 45–58.

Peng, S. S., & Wright, D. (1994). Explanation of academic achievement of Asian American students. *Journal of Educational Research, 87*, 347-352.

Perreira, K.M., Chapman, M.V., & Stein, G.L. (2006). Becoming an American parent: Overcoming challenges and finding strength in a new immigrant Latino community. Journal of Family Issues, 27, 1383–1414.

Phillipson, S. (2006). Cultural variability in parent and child achievement attributions: A study from Hong Kong. *Educational Psychology*, 26(5), 625-642.

Phoenix, A. (2004). Neoliberalism and masculinity: Racialization and the contradictions of schooling for 11-to 14-year-olds. *Youth & Society*, *36*(2), 227-246.

PMP Strategy Group (2018). https://theindependent.sg/foreigners-permanent-residents-and-new-citizens-now-make-up-over-40-of-singapores-population/.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual review of sociology*, *24*(1), 1-24.

Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2004). The schooling of children of immigrants: Contextual effects on the educational attainment of the second generation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *101*(33), 11920-11927.

Portes, A, and M. Zhou. 1993. The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants.*The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*530:74-96

Portes, A., & Fernández-Kelly, P. (2008). No margin for error: Educational and occupational achievement among disadvantaged children of immigrants. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, *620*(1), 12-36.

Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2004). The schooling of children of immigrants: Contextual effects on the educational attainment of the second generation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *101*(33), 11920-11927.

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation. Berkeley: University of California Press. States. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 25(3), 373-396.

Poston Jr, D. L., & Wong, J. H. (2016). The Chinese diaspora: The current distribution of the overseas Chinese population. *Chinese Journal of Sociology*, *2*(3), 348-373.

Portes, Alejandro, and Rubén G. Rumbaut. 1996.*Immigrant America: A portrait*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Qi, X. (2018) Floating grandparents: Rethinking family obligation and intergenerational support, International Sociology 33(6): 761–777.

Qin, D. B. (2008). Doing well vs. feeling well: Understanding family dynamics and the psychological adjustment of Chinese immigrant adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 37*(1), 22-35.

Quah, J. S. (2010). *Public administration Singapore-style*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Rahman, M. M., & Kiong, T. C. (2013). Integration policy in Singapore: A transnational inclusion approach. *Asian Ethnicity, 14*(1), 80-98.

Raghuram, P. (2013). Theorising the spaces of student migration. *Population, Space and Place, 19*(2), 138-154.

Ream, R. K., and G. J. Palardy. 2008. "Reexamining Social Class Differences in the Availability and the Educational Utility of Parental Social Capital." *American Educational Research Journal* 45 (2): 238–273.

Reardon, S. F. (2011). The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations. *Whither opportunity*, *1*(1), 91-116.

Reay D (1998) *Class work. Mothers' Involvement in their Children's Primary Schooling*. London: UCL Press.

Reay, D., David, M. E., & Ball, S. J. (2005). *Degrees of choice: Class, race, gender and higher education*. Trentham Books.

Regmi, K., & Kottler, J. A. (2009). An epistemologist learns grounded theory. In V. Minichiello & J. A. Kottler (Eds.), *Qualitative journeys: Student and mentor experiences with research* (pp. 71-87). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Reitz, J. G. (1998). Warmth of the welcome: The social causes of economic success for immigrants in different nations and cities. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ren, N., & Liu, H. (2015). Traversing between transnationalism and integration: Dual embeddedness of new Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Singapore. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, *24*(3), 298-326.

Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier* (Vol. 32). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Richardson, S., & Lester, L. (2004). A comparison of Australian and Canadian immigration policies and labor market outcomes. Report to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs.

Riches, C., & Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2010). A tale of two Montréal communities: Parents' perspectives on their children's language and literacy development in a multilingual context. *Canadian modern language review*, *66*(4), 525-555.

Rivkin Pte Ltd. (2014). *5-Year Singapore PR & Citizen Trends*. Retrieved from https://www.rikvin.com/download/singapore-permanent-resident-and-citizen-trends.pdf

Robertson, S., & Rogers, D. (2017). Education, real estate, immigration: Brokerage assemblages and Asian mobilities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *43*(14), 2393-2407.

Rodan, G. (2004). *Transparency and authoritarian rule in Southeast Asia: Singapore and Malaysia*. Routledge.

Rogers, D., Lee, C. L., & Yan, D. (2015). The politics of foreign investment in Australian housing: Chinese investors, translocal sales agents and local resistance. *Housing Studies*, *30*(5), 730-748.

Roksa, J., & Potter, D. (2011). Parenting and academic achievement: Intergenerational transmission of educational advantage. *Sociology of education*, *84*(4), 299-321.

Romo, H. D., & Falbo, T. (1996). *Latino high school graduation: Defying the odds.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Rubin, K. H., & Chung, O. B. (Eds.). (2006). *Parenting beliefs, behaviors, and parent-child relations: a cross-cultural perspective.* New York: Psychology Press.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1994). The crucible within: Ethnic identity, self-esteem, and segmented assimilation among children of immigrants. *International migration review*, *28*(4), 748-794.

Ryan, L., & Sales, R. (2013). Family migration: the role of children and education in family decision-making strategies of polish migrants in London. *International Migration*, *51*(2), 90-103.

Ryder A. G., Alden L. E., Paulhus D. L. Is acculturation unidimensional or bidimensional? A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 2000; 79(1):49-65.

Sakamoto, A., Goyette, K. A., & Kim, C. (2009). Socioeconomic attainments of Asian Americans. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *35*, 255-276.

Saito, N. T. (1997). Model minority, yellow peril: Functions of foreignness in the construction of Asian American legal identity. *Asian LJ*, *4*, 71.

Salikutluk, Z. (2016). Why do immigrant students aim high? Explaining the aspiration–achievement paradox of immigrants in Germany. *European Sociological Review*, *32*(5), 581-592.

Saran, R. (2015). Social Production/Reproduction: Second-Generation Asian Indian Youths as Sources of Upclassing. *The Oriental Anthropologist*, 15(2), 345.

Sayer, L. C., Bianchi, S. M., & Robinson, J. P. (2004). Are parents investing less in children? Trends in mothers' and fathers' time with children. *American journal of sociology*, *110*(1), 1-43.

Sattin-Bajaj, C. (2011). Informing immigrant families about high school choice in New York City: Challenges and possibilities. In M. Berends, M. Cannata, & E. Goldring (Eds.), *School choice and school improvement: Research in state, district, and community contexts* (pp. 147–176). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Sayer, L. C., Bianchi, S. M., & Robinson, J. P. (2004). Are parents investing less in children? Trends in mothers' and fathers' time with children. *American journal of sociology*, *110*(1), 1-43.

Sattin-Bajaj, C. (2011). Informing immigrant families about high school choice in New York City: Challenges and possibilities. In M. Berends, M. Cannata, & E. Goldring (Eds.), School choice and school improvement: Research in state, district, and community contexts (pp. 147–176). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Schiffrin, H. H., Liss, M., Miles-McLean, H., Geary, K. A., Erchull, M. J., & Tashner, T. (2014). Helping or hovering? The effects of helicopter parenting on college students' well-being. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *23*, 548-557.

Schiller, N. G., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. *Annals of the New York academy of sciences*, *645*(1), 1-24.

Schneider, B., & Lee, Y. (1990). A model for academic success: The school and home environment of East Asian students. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *21*(4), 358-377.

Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American economic review*, 1-17.

Scott, S. (2006). The social morphology of skilled migration: the case of the British middle class in Paris. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, *32*(7), 1105-1129.

Sen, A. (2006). Democracy and its global roots: Why democratization is not the same as westernization. *Moral Issues in Global Perspective: Volume I: Moral and Political Theory*, *1*, 208.

Seginer, R. (1983). Parents' educational expectations and children's academic achievements: A literature review. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly (1982-)*, 1-23.

Sen, A. (2006). Democracy and its global roots: Why democratization is not the same as westernization. *Moral Issues in Global Perspective: Volume I: Moral and Political Theory*, *1*, 208.

Segrin, C., Woszidlo, G., Givertz, M., Bauer, A., Murphey, M. T. (2012). The association between overparenting, parent-child communication, and entitlement and adaptive traits in adult children. *Family Relations, 61,* 237-252.

Senior, J. (2014). *All joy and no fun: The paradox of modern parenthood*. Hachette UK.

Sewell, W. H., & Hauser, R. M. (1975). *Education, Occupation, and Earnings. Achievement in the Early Career*. New York: Academic Press.

Sewell, W. H., & Hauser, R. M. (1980). The Wisconsin longitudinal study of social and psychological factors in aspirations and achievements. In A. Kerckhof (Ed.), *Research in the sociology of education and socialization* (Vol. 1, pp. 59—100). Greenwich, GT: JAI.

Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. *Academy of management review*, *25*(1), 217-226.

Sharpe, L., & Gopinathan, S. (2002). After effectiveness: New directions in the Singapore school system?. *Journal of Education Policy*, *17*(2), 151-166.

Shen, C., & Gong, H. (2019). Personal ties, group ties and latent ties: connecting network size to diversity and trust in the mobile social network WeChat. *Asian Journal of Communication*, *29*(1), 18-34.

Shen, C., & Williams, D. (2011). Unpacking time online: Connecting internet and massively multiplayer online game use with psychosocial well-being. *Communication Research*, *38*(1), 123-149.

Shen, C., Monge, P., & Williams, D. (2014). Virtual brokerage and closure: Network structure and social capital in a massively multiplayer online game. *Communication Research*, *41*(4), 459-480.

Shin, H. J. (2004). *Parental involvement and its influence on children's school performance: A comparative study between Asian (Chinese and Koreans) Americans and Mexican Americans* (Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University).

Shinagawa, L. H., & Jang, M. (1998). *Atlas of American diversity*. Rowman Altamira.

Skrentny, J. D., Chan, S., Fox, J., & Kim, D. (2007). Defining Nations in Asia and Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Ethnic Return Migration Policy 1. *International Migration Review, 41*(4), 793-825.

Shinagawa, L. H., & Jang, M. (1998). *Atlas of American diversity*. Rowman Altamira.

Singapore, Department of Statistics Singapore (2012) "Our population, our future." https://www.strategygroup.gov.sg/images/PublicationImages/PDFs/issues-paper-our-population-our-future.pdf

Singapore, Department of Singapore Statistics. (2019). *Available online:* https://www.singstat.gov.sg/media/files/publications/population/population2019.pdf

Singapore, Department of Singapore Statistics. (2018) Statistics Singapore-Key Household Income Trends, 2018. *Available online:* https://www.singstat.gov.sg/-/media/files/publications/households/pp-s25.pdf

Siu, S. F. (1994). Taking no chances: A profile of a Chinese-American family‟s support for school success. *Equity and Choice, 10*(2), 23-32

Siu, S.-F., & Feldman, J. A. (1996). Patterns of Chinese American Family Involvement in Young Children's Education. Final Report. Report No. 36: Center on Families, Communities Schools and Children's Learning

Song, C., & Glick, J. E. (2004). College attendance and choice of college majors among Asian-American students. *Social Science Quarterly, 85*(5), 1401-1421.

Sowell, T. (1981). *Ethnic America: A history*. New York: Basic Books.

Spenner, K. I., & Featherman, D. L. (1978). Achievement ambitions. *Annual review of sociology, 4*(1), 373-420.

Stark, O., & Bloom, D. E. (1985). The new economics of labor migration. *The american Economic review*, *75*(2), 173-178.

Steinberg, L. (1996). *Beyond the classroom: Why school reform has failed and what parents need to do*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Stewart, V. (2011). Singapore Rapid improvement followed by strong performance. *Lessons from PISA for the United States: Strong performers and successful reformers in education*, 159-175.

Stevenson-Hinde, J. (1998). Parenting in different cultures: Time to focus. *Developmental Psychology*, 34, 698–700.

Stevenson, H. W., Lee, S. Y., Chen, C., Stigler, J. W., Hsu, C. C., Kitamura, S., & Hatano, G. (1990). Contexts of achievement: A study of American, Chinese, and Japanese children. *Monographs of the society for research in child development*, i-119.

Stolle, D., Soroka, S., & Johnston, R. (2008). When does diversity erode trust? Neighborhood diversity, interpersonal trust and the mediating effect of social interactions. Political studies, 56(1), 57-75.

Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M.M. (2001). *Children of migration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sue, S., & Okazaki, S. (1990). Asian American educational achievement: A phenomenon in search of an explanation. *American Psychologist*, *45*, 913-20.

Suizzo, M. A., & Stapleton, L. M. (2007). Home-based parental involvement in young children's education: Examining the effects of maternal education across US ethnic groups. *Educational Psychology*, *27*(4), 533-556.

Sun, S. H. L. (2012). Social reproduction and the limits of a neoliberal approach: the case of Singapore. *Citizenship Studies, 16*(2), 223-240.

Sun, S. H. L. (2012). *Population policy and reproduction in Singapore: Making future citizens*. Routledge.

Sullivan, A. (2001). Cultural capital and educational attainment. *Sociology, 35*(4), 893-912.

Swartz, D. (2012). *Culture and power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.

Swee-Hock, S. (1969). Population trends in Singapore, 1819–1967. *Journal of Southeast Asian History, 10*(1), 36-49.

Tach, L. M., & Farkas, G. (2006). Learning-related behaviors, cognitive skills, and ability grouping when schooling begins. *Social Science Research*, *35*(4), 1048-1079.Tai, L.C., "Confucianism in an Industrial and Commercial Society", *Institute of East Asian Philosophies News,* October 1986, pp. 4-6.

Tan, C. (2006). Change and continuity: Chinese language policy in Singapore. *Language Policy*, *5*(1), 41-62.

Tan, C. (2008). Globalisation, the Singapore state and educational reforms: Towards performativity. *Education, Knowledge & Economy, 2*(2), 111-120.

Tan, Charlene. (2012). "Our shared values" in Singapore: A Confucian perspective. *Educational Theory*, *62*(4), 449-463.

Tan, J., & Gopinathan, S. (2000). Education reform in Singapore: Towards greater creativity and innovation?. *NIRA Review, 7, 3*, 5-10.

Tan, K.Y.T. (1986, July). *Economic change and the formulation of education policy.* Speech delivered at the Nanyang Technological Institute Forum.

Tan, K. S., & Phang, S. Y. (2005). *From efficiency-driven to innovation-driven economic growth: Perspectives from Singapore*. The World Bank.

Tan, N. (2014). The 2011 general and presidential elections in Singapore. *Electoral Studies*, *35*, 374-378.

Tan, T. (2007) "Port Cities and Hinterlands: A Comparative Study of Singapore and Calcutta." *Political Geography* 26: 851-865.

Tao, W., & Liyanage, I. (2020). *Multilingual Education Yearbook 2020*. Springer International Publishing.

Teo, P. (2005). Mandarinising Singapore: A critical analysis of slogans in Singapore's 'Speak Mandarin' campaign. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *2*(2), 121-142.

Thiem, C. H. (2009). Thinking through education: the geographies of contemporary educational restructuring. *Progress in Human Geography*, *33*(2), 154-173.

Tong, G., Persons, E., & Harris, A. L. (2020). Getting ready ahead: socioeconomic status and parenting strategies among Chinese adolescents with emigration intentions. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-23.

Tweed, R. G., & Lehman, D. R. (2002). Learning considered within a cultural context: Confucian and Socratic approaches. *American Psychologist*, 57(2), 89.

Tumin, M. M. (1967). *Social stratification: the forms and functions of inequality* (No. HT609 T8).

Turnbull, C. M. (2009). *A history of modern Singapore, 1819-2005*. NUS Press.

Unger, L. (1944). The Chinese in Southeast Asia. Geographical review, 34(2), 196-217.

Useem, E. L. 1992. “Middle Schools and Math Groups: Parents’ Involvement in Children’s Placement.” *Sociology of Education 65 (4):* 263–279.

Van de Werfhorst, H. G., & Mijs, J. J. B. (2010). Achievement inequality and the institutional structure of educational systems: A comparative perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology, 36,* 407–428.

Veeck, A., Flurry, L., & Jiang, N. (2003). Equal dreams: The one child policy and the consumption of education in urban China. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, *6*(1), 81-94.

Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism*. Routledge.

Vincent, C., & Ball, S. J. (2007). Making up the middle-class child: Families, activities and class dispositions. *Sociology*, *41*(6), 1061-1077.

Villenas, S., & Deyhle, D. (1999). Critical race theory and ethnographies challenging the stereotypes: Latino families, schooling, resilience and resistance. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *29*(4), 413-445.

Wall, G. (2010, May). Mothers’ experiences with intensive parenting and brain development discourse. In *Women’s Studies International Forum* (Vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 253-263). Pergamon.

Waldinger, R. (2013). Immigrant transnationalism. *Current Sociology*, *61*(5-6), 756-777.

Wang, Gungwu (1991) *China and the Chinese overseas.* Singapore: Times Academic Press.

Wang, Gungwu (1993). “Greater China and the Chinese Overseas.” *The China Quarterly*, *136*, 926-948.

Wang, S., & Lo, L. (2005). Chinese immigrants in canada: Their changing composition and economic Performance1. *International Migration*, *43*(3), 35-71.

Wang, Shuguang, and Lucia Lo. 2005. Chinese immigrants in Canada: Their Changing Composition and Economic Performance. *International Migration* 43: 35–71.

Wang, Y., Li, Y., & Tang, J. (2015). Dwelling and fleeting encounters: Exploring why people use WeChat - A mobile instant messenger. Paper presented at the proceedings of *the 33rd annual ACM conference* extended abstracts on human factors in computing systems, Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Warikoo, N. (2020). Addressing Emotional Health while Protecting Status: Asian American and White Parents in Suburban America. *American Journal of Sociology*, *126*(3), 545-576.

Warren, J. F. (2003). *Rickshaw coolie: A people's history of Singapore, 1880-1940*. Nus Press.

Waters, J. L. (2002). 'Flexible Families? 'Astronaut' Households and the Experiences of Lone Mothers in Vancouver, British Columbia', *Social and Cultural Geography 3*(2): 117–34.

Waters, J. L. (ed.) (2003). *Satellite Kids in Vancouver: Transnational Migration, Education and the Experience of Lone Children*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Waters, J. L. (2005) Transnational family strategies and education in the contemporary Chinese diaspora. *Global Networks* 5(4): 359–377.

Waters, J. L. (2006). Geographies of cultural capital: education, international migration and family strategies between Hong Kong and Canada. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *31*(2), 179-192.

Waters, J. L. (2010). Becoming a father, missing a wife: Chinese transnational families and the male experience of lone parenting in Canada. *Population, Space and Place*, *16*(1), 63-74.

Waters, J. L. (2011). Time and transnationalism: a longitudinal study of immigration, endurance and settlement in Canada. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *37*(7), 1119-1135.

Waters, J. (2015). Educational imperatives and the compulsion for credentials: family migration and children's education in East Asia. *Children's Geographies*, *13*(3), 280-293.

Waters, M. C., & Jiménez, T. R. (2005). Assessing immigrant assimilation: New empirical and theoretical challenges. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.*, *31*, 105-125.

Waters, M. C., Heath, A., Tran, V. C., & Boliver, V. (2013). Second-generation attainment and inequality: Primary and secondary effects on educational outcomes in Britain and the U.S. In *The children of immigrants at school: A comparative look at education in the United States and Western Europe, edited by* R. Alba & J. Holdaway. New York: NYU Press.

Watkins, M., Ho, C., & Butler, R. (2017). Asian migration and education cultures in the Anglo-sphere.

Wee, C. L. (2007). *The Asian modern: culture, capitalist development, Singapore* (Vol. 1). Hong Kong University Press.

Weininger, E. B., Lareau, A., & Conley, D. (2015). What money doesn't buy: Class resources and children's participation in organized extracurricular activities. *Social Forces*, *94*(2), 479-503.

Welch, A. R., & Freebody, P. (2005). *Knowledge, culture and power: International perspectives on literacy as policy and practice*. Routledge.

West, J. (2001). Fathers' and mothers' involvement in their children's schools by family type and resident status. *U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics*, Washington, DC.

Wigfield, A., & Asher, S. R. (1984). Social and motivational influences on reading. *Handbook of reading research*, *1*, 423-452.

Wilkinson, S., & Kitzinger, C. (2013). Representing our own experience: Issues in "Insider" research. *Psychology of Women Quaterly*, *37*(2), 261-255.

Willis, P. E. (1977). *How working class kids get working class jobs*. University of Birmingham.

Wise, Amanda. 2016. Behind the World's Best Students Is a Soul-Crushing, Billion-Dollar Private Education Industry. December 12. Available online: https://qz.com/860356/pisa-singapores-competitive-private-tuitionsystem-helps-students-ace-the-worlds-biggest-education-test/

Wright, A., & Cartwright, H. A. (Eds.). (1908). *Twentieth century impressions of British Malaya: Its history, people, commerce, industries, and resources*. Lloyd's Greater Britain publishing Company, limited.

Wu, B. (2009). *"Whose culture has capital?": Chinese skilled migrant mothers raising their children in New Zealand* (Doctoral dissertation, Auckland university of technology).

Wu, B. (2014). Chinese student migration and integration in the UK: An exploration of links to and engagement with local communities in Nottingham. *COMPAS working papers*, (118).

Wu, E. H. (2008). Parental influence on children's talent development: A case study with three Chinese American families. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 32(1), 100-129.

Wu, Y. L. and Wu, C. H., *Economic Development in South-east Asia: The Chinese Dimension*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1980.

Xiang, Biao (2007). How far are the left-behind left behind? A preliminary study in rural China. *Population, Space and Place, 13*(3), 179-191.

Yamamoto, Y., & Holloway, S. D. (2010). Parental expectations and children's academic performance in sociocultural context. *Educational Psychology Review, 22*(3), 189-214.

Yan, C. (2015). 'We can't change much unless the exams change': Teachers' dilemmas in the curriculum reform in China. *Improving Schools*, *18*(1), 5-19.

Yang, C. (2015). The Straits Times - Ensuring less well-off kids are not left behind. The Straits Times, Dec 7. Retrieved from: http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/ensuring-less-well-off-kidsare-not-left-behind

Yan, W., & Lin, Q. (2005). Parent involvement and mathematics achievement: Contrast across racial and ethnic groups. *Journal of Educational Research, 99*(2), 116-127.

Yao, E. L. (1985). Adjustment needs of Asian immigrant children. *Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 222-227.*

Yeoh, B. S. (2004). Cosmopolitanism and its exclusions in Singapore. *Urban Studies, 41*(12), 2431-2445.

Yeoh, B. S. (2007). Singapore: Hungry for foreign workers at all skill levels. Retrieved from https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/singapore-hungry-foreign-workers-all-skill-levels

Yeoh, B. S., & Lam, T. (2016). Immigration and its (dis) contents: The challenges of highly skilled migration in globalizing Singapore. *American Behavioral Scientist, 60*(5-6), 637-658.

Yeoh, B. S., & Chang, T. C. (2001). Globalising Singapore: debating transnational flows in the city. *Urban Studies, 38*(7), 1025-1044.

Yeoh, B. S., & Lin, W. (2013). Chinese migration to Singapore: Discourses and discontents in a globalizing nation-state. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 22*(1), 31-54.

Yeoh, B. S. A., and A. Huang. 2010. "Mothers on the Move: Children's Education and Transnational Mobility in Global-city Singapore." In *The Globalization of Motherhood: Deconstructions and Reconstructions of Biology and Care*, edited by J.-M. Maher and W. Chavkin, 31–54. London: Routledge.

Yeoh, B. S., & Chang, T. C. (2001). Globalising Singapore: debating transnational flows in the city. *Urban Studies, 38*(7), 1025-1044.

Yim, C. C. (2011). Transnational social spaces and transnationalism: A study on the new Chinese migrant community in Singapore. *HKU Theses Online (HKUTO)*.

Zelizer, V. A. (1981). The price and value of children: The case of children's insurance. *American Journal of Sociology*, *86*(5), 1036-1056.

Zentgraf, K. M., & Chinchilla, N. S. (2012). Transnational family separation: A framework for analysis. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *38*(2), 345-366.

Zhan, S., & Zhou, M. (2019). Precarious Talent: highly skilled Chinese and Indian immigrants in Singapore. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1-19.

Zhang, J. (2020). Minimum salary for first-time Employment Pass applicant. https://mothership.sg/2020/09/employment-pass-history-explained/ Accessed on 20 December 2020.

Zhang, S. Y., & Carrasquillo, A. L. (1995). Chinese parents' influence on academic performance. *New York State Association for Bilingual Education Journal*, *10*(1), 46-53.

Zhou, M. (1997). Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual review of sociology*, *23*(1), 63-95.

Zhou, M. (1997). Segmented assimilation: Issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation. *International migration review*, *31*(4), 975-1008.

Zhou, M. (1998). "Parachute kids" in southern California: The educational experience of Chinese children in transnational families. *Educational Policy*, *12*(6), 682-704.

Zhou, M. (2008). The ethnic system of supplementary education: Nonprofit and for-profit institutions in Los Angeles' Chinese immigrant community. *Toward positive youth development: Transforming schools and community programs*, 229-251

Zhou, M. (2009). *Contemporary Chinese America: Immigration, ethnicity, and community transformation*. Temple University Press.

Zhou, M. (2000). Social capital in Chinatown: The role of community-based organizations and families in the adaptation of the younger generation. In M. Zhou & J. Gatewood (Eds.), *Contemporary Asian America: A multidisciplinary reader*. New York: New York University Press.

Zhou, M. (2015). 4 Ethnicity as social capital: Community-based institutions and embedded networks of social relations. In *Ethnicity, social mobility, and public policy: Comparing the USA and UK*, edited by Glenn C. Loury, Tariq Modood, Steven M. Teles, 131-159. London: Cambridge University Press

Zhou, M. (Ed.). (2017). Contemporary Chinese Diasporas. Springer.

Zhou, M. & Bankston, C. (1998). *Growing up American: How Vietnamese children adapt to life in the United States*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Zhou, M., & Bankston III, C. L. (1994). Social capital and the adaptation of the second generation: The case of Vietnamese youth in New Orleans. *International migration review*, *28*(4), 821-845.

Zhou, M., & Kim, S. (2006). Community forces, social capital, and educational achievement: The case of supplementary education in the Chinese and Korean immigrant communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, *76*(1), 1-29.

Zhou, M., & Lee, J. (2014). Assessing what is cultural about Asian Americans' academic advantage. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *111*(23), 8321-8322.

Zhou, M., & Lee, J. (2017). Hyper-selectivity and the remaking of culture: Understanding the Asian American achievement paradox. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 8*(1), 7.

Zhou, M., & Lin, M. (2005). Community transformation and the formation of ethnic capital: Immigrant Chinese communities in the United States. *Journal of Chinese overseas, 1*(2), 260-284.

Zhou, M., & Li, X.-Y. (2003). Ethnic language schools and the development of supplementary education in the immigrant Chinese community in the United States. *New Directions for Youth Development, 2003*(100), 57–73.

Zhou, M. and Kim, R. (2003) 'A tale of two metropolises: immigrant Chinese communities in New York and Los Angeles', in Halle, D. (ed.) Los Angeles and New York in the New Millennium. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 12449.

Zhou, M., & Kim, S. (2006). Community forces, social capital, and educational achievement: The case of supplementary education in the Chinese and Korean immigrant communities. *Harvard Educational Review, 76*(1), 1-29.

Zhou, M., & Liu, H. (2016). Homeland engagement and host-society integration: A comparative study of new Chinese immigrants in the United States and Singapore. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology, 57*(1-2), 30-52.

Zhou, M., & Wang, J. (2019). Challenges and Strategies for Promoting Children's Education: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Immigrant Parenting in the United States and Singapore. *Genealogy, 3*(2), 20.

Zhou, M., & Xiong, Y. S. (2005). The multifaceted American experiences of the children of Asian immigrants: Lessons for segmented assimilation. *Ethnic and racial studies*, *28*(6), 1119-1152.

Zhou, R., Wen, Z., Tang, M., & DiSalvo, B. (2017, June). Navigating media use: Chinese parents and their overseas adolescent children on WeChat. In *Proceedings of the 2017 conference on designing interactive systems* (pp. 1025-1037).

Zhuang, Guotu., & Wang, Wangbo. (2010). Migration and trade: The role of overseas Chinese in economic relations between China and Southeast Asia. *International Journal of China Studies*, *1*(1), 174-193.

Zimmermann, K. F., Bauer, T. K., & Lofstrom, M. (2000). Immigration policy, assimilation of immigrants and natives' sentiments towards immigrants: evidence from 12 OECD-countries.

# Appendix 1:

**Interview Schedule**

[This interview schedule is meant to be a general guide for the in-depth interviews (face-to-face or by (video) phone). I as the interviewer will moderate and improvise questions to probe into more detailed responses and deeper insights from the interviewees.]

**Eligibility**

Chinese immigrant father or mother ages from 25 to 64 years old, who are new Singapore citizen, Permanent Resident, or Employment Pass holders, and Dependent Pass holders, who bring up child(ren) based in Singapore. (If S Pass (SP) holders who are eligible to bring family and children to live together with them in Singapore, the SP holders also belong to the targeted group of this study).

**Section 1**

1. **Age:_____**

2. **Gender:_____**

3. **What is your marital status (choose one answer only)?**
   1) Single
   2) Widowed
   3) Divorced or separated
   4) Married or in a domestic partnership

4. **How many children do you have and stay with you currently? _____**

5. **Highest level of education you have completed.**
   1) No formal education
   2) Elementary school (1-6 years of schooling)
   3) Secondary school (7-12 years of schooling – no diploma or certificate)
   4) High school diploma (12 years of schooling with diploma including A levels)
   5) Polytechnic diploma
   6) Bachelor's degree or equivalent
   7) Master's degree or equivalent
   8) Ph.D. or equivalent

6. **What is your occupation?_____**

7. **Your annual income from all sources (in the local currency)**
   1) Less than $12,000
   2) $12,001 – 24,000
   3) $24,001 – 36,000
   4) $36,001 – 60,000
   5) $60,001 – 84,000
   6) $84,001 – 120,000
   7) Above $120,000

8. **Length of your residence in Singapore? _____**

9. **Your residential status (SP holder/EP holder/PR/Citizen) _____**

10. **What kind of residential properties do you or your family own in Singapore? Include all properties, including investment property and the property you live in (Check all that apply).**

    1) One-bedroom flat
    2) Two-bedroom flat
    3) Three-bedroom flat
    4) Flat with four or more bedrooms
    5) Landed property (e.g., freestanding house)
    6) Commercial property (e.g. store or business property)
    7) Not applicable
    8) Other_____

**Section 2**

**A. Views, Perceptions, and Life Experience in Singapore**

1. Please tell me your migration journey from where you started to where you are now? Did your family migrate together? What is your purpose of migration?

   Probe: Where were you from originally? And your country of destination? What kind of immigration visa category did you come here on? What is your current residential status? How much your migrating to Singapore is for the purpose of children's education?

2. How do you perceive Singapore's social and cultural environment? Any challenges or disadvantages are related to language, culture, the wider social environment? How do you feel local Singaporean's attitude toward immigrants, in particular *xinyimin*?

   Probe: please talk about your life in Singapore. For example, family, work, interactions with local Singaporean, your community, etc. What are the impact of immigration?

3. How do you perceive Singapore's immigration policy? (For example, employment migration policy, family reunion policy, education policy for immigrants, etc.)

   Probe: What is your experience and views from an angle of parent? What opportunities and challenges do you think that the policies have for immigrants and their children?

4. Are you in any social roles or transnational activities (business, academic, communication, commercial, professional ones, etc.) currently or previously in China or other countries?
   Probe: what are the opportunities and challenges of these transnational connections and activities? How does it impact on your family life?

5. What do you think about family members of different nationalities in one household? What do you think of the transnational family?

6. What is your long-term plan? If possible, do you intend to settle in Singapore permanently? Why or why not?

   Probe: Would you want your children to grow up and develop in Singapore? Why or why not?

**B. Education related Parenting Issue**

7. What do you think that children should succeed in Singapore?
   Probe: please give an example of success that you think is an expected one in Singapore and beyond.

8. What do you think is a good education? Are you familiar with Singapore's education system? how do you evaluate this system? What opportunities and challenges do you know about Singapore's education system?
9. Do you think that Singapore's education is meeting your expectation? How do you think about that in China and in some Western countries (the US, UK,

Australia, etc.) in comparison to Singapore's education? Does your educational expectation change after migration?

10. What do you think are the changes in parenting, in terms of strategies and practices, since immigration? Are they due to immigration and your adaptation to the Singapore society?

    Probe: In what respects, are these changes happened? What are the factors that you think affect these changes to happen? How do these changes impact on the education of your children, now and future?

11. What do you think the best approaches or ways for children to achieve the expected educational success in Singapore? What do you think parents' role during this process? What are the practices that you do to help children to achieve educational success in Singapore?

    Probe: what do you do at home, with school, and in the community to promote children's academic and enrichment learning during the after-school time?

12. What do you think are the best parenting in Singapore? What's your parenting strategies and practices on children's learning and education?

    Probe: What are the resources and opportunities, and the constraints? What are the differences when compared to situations in China?

13. Please talk about differences in culture (e.g., values, attitudes, behavior patterns, mindset, etc.) and in strategies, practices, and behaviors between parenting of *xinyimin* and that of local-born parents.

C. **Ethnic Community and A Group-based Parenting Practices**

14. Have you interacted with your own ethnic community in Singapore society? How much and in what way? How do you seek support for children's education, schooling or related issues, especially when you meet challenges (like school choice, etc.)?

    Probe: At what level do you interact with them? (Simply saying "hello", doing things together, inviting them to your home, and/or participating in community activities, or by other means?) What kinds of help have you received from your own ethnic community? Do you think that the place you are located is good for networking with members of the ethnic community? Do you regret being in this locality for lack of connection with members of your ethnic community? Which

locality would you think would be the best in this regard? Please give example of how to seek help and support on education related parenting (referral opinions, resources, practices, referral group, etc.)

15. Do you think that *xinyimin* community have influenced (support and control) your parenting practices in Singapore?

    Probe: Any coping strategies, approached, and information that you learn from co-ethnic community in Singapore for parenting, especially on children's education? Is it effective or helpful? How much and in what ways you learn or interact with co-ethnic immigrants for parenting?

16. Do you use *WeChat*? How do you use *WeChat* to promote children's learning and education? How do you think these education-related *WeChat* groups have influenced your parenting in Singapore? What do you think *WeChat's* role in your parenting on children's education?

    Probe: are you members of "WeChat" groups composed mainly by Chinese ethnicity and concerning children's education-related matters? Do you establish social connections/ties with *WeChaters* for a common goal, such as children's literacy, math learning, piano learing? How many new contacts you gain from WeChat for the purpose of children's learning? How many groups you joined are related to children's education?

## Appendix 2:

### Demographic Table of Interview Participants

| NO. | Gender | Age | Occupation | Residential status | No. of child ren | child 1 age& grade | child 2 age& grade | child 3 age& grade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | M | 44 | Doctor in Public Hospital | New citizen | 2 | S2 | P1 | |
| 2 | M | 36 | Engineer in semi-conductor | New citizen | 2 | P1 | N2 | |
| 3 | M | 45 | Property agent | New citizen | 2 | P3 | P1 | |
| 4 | M | 34 | Engineer & Insurance agent | New citizen | 2 | P1 | K1 | |
| 5 | M | 33 | IT engineer | New citizen | 1 | P2 | N1 | |
| 6 | M | 40 | Chinese teacher | New citizen | 1 | P5 | P2 | |
| 7 | M | 38 | Senior Engineer | New citizen | 2 | P1 | N1 | |
| 8 | M | 36 | Engineer and business owner | New citizen | 2 | P1 | K1 | |
| 9 | M | 42 | Tuition Center Owner | New citizen | 2 | P6 | P4 | |
| 10 | M | 33 | Engineer in electrical industry | PR | 1 | P1 | K2 | |
| 11 | M | 32 | Engineer | PR | 1 | P1 | K2 | |
| 12 | M | 50 | Tuition Businessman | PR | 2 | S2 | P2 | |
| 13 | M | 38 | Researcher | PR | 2 | P2 | K1 | |
| 14 | M | 36 | Google Engineer | EP | 2 | P1 | N1 | |
| 15 | M | 33 | GM of Chinese state-owned enterprise | PR | 3 | P3 | K2 | N2 |
| 16 | M | 29 | University Researcher | PR | 2 | K1 | 1 year | |
| 17 | M | 35 | IT engineer | PR | 2 | P1 | newbor n | |
| 18 | F | 36 | IT Engineer | New citizen | 2 | P1 | K1 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | F | 34 | Chinese teacher secondary school | New citizen | 2 | K2 | newborn | |
| 20 | F | 35 | Private financial planner | New citizen | 2 | P4 | P2 | |
| 21 | F | 35 | Insurance Agent | New citizen | 2 | P2 | K1 | |
| 22 | F | 36 | Process auditor | New citizen | 2 | P1 | K2 | |
| 23 | F | 43 | Admin staff | New citizen | 3 | S1 | P1 | 1 year |
| 24 | F | 36 | Administrative staff | New citizen | 2 | P1 | N2 | |
| 25 | F | 32 | Childcare Chinese teacher | New citizen | 2 | P2 | K1 | |
| 26 | F | 37 | Private business | New citizen | 3 | P4 | K2 | 3 years |
| 27 | F | 40 | Researcher | New citizen | 2 | P4 | P2 | |
| 28 | F | 34 | Professional | PR | 1 | P1 | | |
| 29 | F | 41 | HR | New citizen | 3 | S2 | P3 | N2 |
| 30 | F | 42 | Professional | New citizen | 2 | S2 | P2 | |
| 31 | F | 36 | Chinese teacher in public school | New citizen | 2 | P2 | N2 | |
| 32 | F | 37 | Private tuition teacher | New citizen | 2 | P1 | K1 | |
| 33 | F | 36 | IT engineer | New citizen | 2 | P1 | K1 | |
| 34 | F | 39 | Tuition Business Owner | New citizen | 2 | P4 | P1 | |
| 35 | F | 38 | Engineer | New citizen | 1 | P1 | | |
| 36 | F | 40 | Manager | New citizen | 2 | S1 | P5 | |
| 37 | F | 54 | Senior Manager | New citizen | 2 | University Freshman | JC 1 | |
| 38 | F | 43 | Piano Teacher | New citizen | 2 | P4 | P1 | |
| 39 | F | 35 | Housemaker | DP | 2 | P1 | K1 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 40 | F | 34 | Internal designer | EP | 1 | P1 | N2 | |
| 41 | F | 46 | Sales in Oil and Gas | PR | 1 | Polytech 3 | | |
| 42 | F | 40 | Housewife/ "WeChat" business | PR | 3 | P3 | K2 | N2 |
| 43 | F | 35 | Housemaker | PR | 1 | P1 | | |
| 44 | F | 29 | Administrative staff | PR | 1 | K2 | | |
| 45 | F | 49 | Senior Manager | PR | 2 | University Freshman | JC 1 | |
| 46 | F | 35 | Preschool teacher | PR | 1 | P1 | | |
| 47 | F | 34 | Professional | PR | 2 | P1 | K1 | |
| 48 | F | 39 | Administrative staff | PR | 1 | P1 | | |
| 49 | F | 38 | Housemaker | PR | 2 | P1 | N2 | |
| 50 | F | 37 | Housemaker | PR | 2 | P1 | K1 | |

* N=Nursery (children 3-4 years old), K=Kindergarten (children 5-6 years old), P=Primary school (start from age of 6-7, e.g., P1 children is 6-7 years old), S=Secondary school, Secondary 1 children are 12-13 years old.[23]

[23] Education in Singapore: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Singapore Accessed on 12 December 2020.

## Appendix 3:

### Publication List

1. Wang Jun, Zhou Min. (2021) "Family formation and parenting practices among new Chinese immigrants in Singapore". In Routledge *Handbook of Asian Diaspora and Development*, edited by Ajaya K. Sahoo. London and New York: Routledge.

2. Reprint. Zhou, Min and Jun Wang (2021). "Educational Expectations, Challenges, Institutional Constraints, and Social Support: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Immigrant Parenting in the U.S. and Singapore". *Sociology of Ethnicity《民族社会学研究通讯》* Vol. 320 (CSSCI Journal).

3. Zhou Min, Wang Jun (2019). "Educational Expectations, Challenges, Institutional Constraints, and Social Support: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Immigrant Parenting in the U.S. and Singapore". *Journal of Overseas Chinese History Studies*, Dec 2019, No. 4. (In Chinese)

4. Zhou Min, Wang Jun (2019). "Challenges and Strategies for Promoting Children's Education: A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Immigrant Parenting in the United States and Singapore. *Genealogy*, 3(2), 20."

5. Wang Jun, Liu Hong (2015). "From 'Garden City' to 'A City in A Garden': Singapore Environmental Governance", *Urban Insight*, (2).

6. Wang Jun (2013). How city-level predictors determine public education satisfaction? An empirical study based on Lien Surveys panel data. *"2013 Lien Conference on Public Administration"*. Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 2013.

7. Wang Jun (2012). An empirical study on city level predictors of public education satisfaction, paper presented at *"2012 International Symposium on Public Service, Local Governance and Performance"*. Nov. 2012. Shanghai.

8. Wang Jun, Lin Tingjin, Wu Wei, Yu Wenxuan. (2011). Citizen's satisfaction with public education service in china: an empirical study based on 2010 lien public service excellence index for Chinese cities. *Fudan Education Forum*, (《复旦教育论坛》2011) 9(4), 49-53.

9. Wang Jun (2010). Public Satisfaction Survey and Its Analysis on Chinese Cities Public Education Service — an Empirical Study Based on 2010 Lien Chinese Cities Public Service Quality Evaluation Survey Data. *Building Service-Oriented Government—Lessons, Challenges and Prospects*, ed. by Wu Wei, World Scientific 2013, pp 163-175.