



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Exploring the experience of grandparent childcare in a Chinese city a qualitative study

Ling, Jiatong

Award date:
2023

Awarding institution:
Queen's University Belfast

[Link to publication](#)

Terms of use

All those accessing thesis content in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal are subject to the following terms and conditions of use

- Copyright is subject to the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988, or as modified by any successor legislation
- Copyright and moral rights for thesis content are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners
- A copy of a thesis may be downloaded for personal non-commercial research/study without the need for permission or charge
- Distribution or reproduction of thesis content in any format is not permitted without the permission of the copyright holder
- When citing this work, full bibliographic details should be supplied, including the author, title, awarding institution and date of thesis

Take down policy

A thesis can be removed from the Research Portal if there has been a breach of copyright, or a similarly robust reason.

If you believe this document breaches copyright, or there is sufficient cause to take down, please contact us, citing details. Email: openaccess@qub.ac.uk

Supplementary materials

Where possible, we endeavour to provide supplementary materials to theses. This may include video, audio and other types of files. We endeavour to capture all content and upload as part of the Pure record for each thesis.

Note, it may not be possible in all instances to convert analogue formats to usable digital formats for some supplementary materials. We exercise best efforts on our behalf and, in such instances, encourage the individual to consult the physical thesis for further information.

Exploring the Experience of Grandparent
Childcare in a Chinese City:
A Qualitative Study

by

Jiatong Ling, BA, MSW

A dissertation submitted as the sole requirement for the Degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Sciences, Edu-
cation and Social Work

Queen's University Belfast

September 2023

Acknowledgements

I feel fortunate and grateful to have supervision from Dr Lorna Montgomery and Prof. John Pinkerton. They have both been my first supervisor at different stages of my PhD. I would like to express my great thanks to John who agreed to be my supervisor when I applied to study for a PhD. Without the offer and his support in applying for the funding, my experience as a PhD student would not have been possible. This study is funded by Queen's University Belfast and China Scholarship Council. Without this scholarship, this study would not have been possible either. In addition, this study would not have been completed without support from my participants.

First of all, I would like to thank Lorna, my first supervisor. She is not only supportive in my research, but also in daily life. In my research, she provided valuable advice and encouraged me by acknowledging the progress I had made. She is also a very caring person that made me feel her support when I met with difficulties in my daily life. She is tolerant, which makes me feel secure in expressing freely my real thoughts. Moreover, my special thanks go to John. He continued supervising my research after retirement. I appreciate his intensive involvement in supervision and the in-person meetings on campus. The discussions have been of great importance in developing the research. His patience for students and his attitudes towards research are role models for me if I work in academia in the future.

Studying and living abroad is a fascinating experience for me but is challenging as well. I would like to thank my Chinese friends who have graduated and who are in the same journey with me. Because of the shared experience of living abroad as a PhD student in Belfast, their support is of great importance to me. I would also like to express my thanks to other peer PhD students and Graduate School, who provided generous advice on how to develop research skills. My thanks go to Peter who proofread the thesis.

My parents have shown great patience and tolerance throughout. They are always tolerant about my negative emotions. They have always supported me unconditionally to pursue my studies. In addition, they provided valuable materials on my maternal grandmother's family, and also the pictures in this thesis. Thank you, baba (dad) and mama (mum).

Abstract

Grandparent childcare is an international phenomenon, especially in families with children under three years old, which has been identified through quantitative research within China. To deepen the understanding of grandparent childcare, this research explores childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents, through their perceptions in families where grandparents are involved in childcare for children under three. The sample of families is from the city of Taonan, in north-east China.

Qualitative research methods were utilised to collect and analyse data. This research was designed to recruit one grandparent and one parent from each family. Four recruitment approaches were utilised: online recruitment, recruitment in community healthcare centres, personal networking and snowballing. In total, 30 participants were recruited, including 15 grandparents and 15 parents. In-depth, one-to-one interviews were conducted with all participants. Four themes have been developed using thematic analysis. They are perceptions of childcare, perceptions of grandparent childcare, childcare arrangements, and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents.

An Integrated Family Model has been constructed in order to understand the findings. Four theoretical perspectives contribute to the construction of the Integrated Family Model: mosaic familism, intergenerationality in neo-familism, the ecological framework of human development, and family support. Grandparents' involvement in childcare is interpreted as family support in the model. Three aspects of the internal drive of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system are identified: grandparents' perceptions of obligations, intimate ties between maternal grandmother and her daughter, and ties between grandparents and grandchildren.

The Integrated Family Model innovatively locates the symbiosis system within a macrosystem and a chronosystem. The one-child policy, as one component of the macrosystem, is found to have strengthened the ties between grandparents and their only adult child. It is also found to be the strong internal drive of the symbiosis system. The model provides a comprehensive and integrated way to understand childcare arrangements and interactions between grandparents and parents in families where grandparents are involved in childcare.

On the basis of the findings as articulated in the model, recommendations are made for policy makers to rethink the role of family as the sole provider of childcare for children under three. Support programmes need to be developed for families that recognise the way that informal support works, and the varying needs of those involved, including grandparents. Recommen-

dations are also made for future studies on childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions, to include focusing on outcomes for child development, the role of fathers and grandfathers, and support provided later in the lifecycle from parents to grandparents.

Contents

List of Figures	I
List of Tables	II
Abbreviations	III
Chapter One: Grandparenting as a Global Phenomenon but with Chinese Characteristics...	1
1.1 My Maternal Grandmother's Family	2
1.2 China	4
1.3 Grandparenting	8
1.4 Clarification of Terms and Phrases	9
1.5 The Overview of the Forthcoming Chapters	11
Chapter Two: Changing Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Contexts of Grandparent Childcare in China	- 14 -
2.1 Childcare Policies	- 14 -
2.2 Population Policies	- 17 -
2.3 Families and Relations in the Changing Sociocultural Contexts	- 20 -
2.4 Conclusion	- 24 -
Chapter Three: Research Review Towards an Understanding of Grandparent Childcare-	26 -
3.1 Research Review of Grandparent Childcare Globally	- 26 -
3.2 Review of Empirical Research on Grandparent Childcare in China	- 30 -
3.3 Conclusion	- 38 -
Chapter Four: Constructing the Theoretical Framework	- 39 -
4.1 Mosaic Familism	- 39 -
4.2 Intergenerationality in Chinese Neo-Familism	- 42 -
4.3 The Ecological Framework of Human Development	- 46 -
4.4 Family Support	- 50 -
4.5 Constructing the Integrated Family Model	- 53 -
4.6 Conclusion	- 56 -
Chapter Five: Developing a Qualitative Design to Explore Grandparent Childcare for Children Under Three in a Chinese City	- 57 -
5.1 Philosophical Position	- 57 -
5.2 Research Questions, Research Design and Ethical Considerations	- 58 -
5.3 Data Collection	- 63 -
5.4 Data Analysis	- 75 -
5.5 Quality of Qualitative Research	- 83 -
5.6 Reflection	- 84 -
5.7 Conclusion	- 87 -

Chapter Six: Perceptions of Childcare.....	- 88 -
6.1 Perceptions of Parental Childcare	- 89 -
6.2 Childcare Over Time.....	- 94 -
6.3 Perceptions of Having a Second Child.....	- 96 -
6.4 Conclusion.....	- 97 -
Chapter Seven: Perceptions of Grandparent Childcare.....	- 99 -
7.1 Grandparents' Motivation.....	- 99 -
7.2 Grandparents' Roles.....	- 102 -
7.3 Good Grandparent Childcare.....	- 104 -
7.4 Parents' Expectations of Grandparents	- 106 -
7.5 Grandparent Childcare Taken for Granted?.....	- 109 -
7.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Grandparent Childcare.....	- 112 -
7.7 Conclusion.....	- 114 -
Chapter Eight: Childcare Arrangements.....	- 116 -
8.1 The Decision on the Caregiver	- 116 -
8.2 Living Arrangements.....	- 122 -
8.3 Future Childcare Arrangements.....	- 125 -
8.4 Conclusion.....	- 127 -
Chapter Nine: Intergenerational Interactions between Grandparents and Parents	- 128 -
9.1 Disagreements between Grandparents and Parents	- 128 -
9.2 Ways to Deal with Disagreements	- 129 -
9.3 Contradictions between Involvement in Childcare and Grandparents' Freedom ..	- 131 -
9.4 Intergenerational Identity	- 132 -
Summary of Findings Chapters	- 133 -
Chapter Ten: Understanding Grandparent Childcare Assisted by the Integrated Family Model.....	- 138 -
10.1 Review of Research Contexts and Methodology.....	- 138 -
10.2 Theorising and Contextualising Grandparent Childcare.....	- 140 -
10.3 Understanding Grandparents' Involvement in Childcare from the Perspective of Intergenerationality in Neo-Familism	- 151 -
10.4 Summary of the Chapter.....	- 161 -
Chapter Eleven: Conclusion and Recommendations	- 163 -
11.1 Theoretical Implications	- 163 -
11.2 Implications for Practice and Policy	- 166 -
11.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research.....	- 168 -
11.4 Reflections on the Research Journey	- 170 -
References	- 172 -
Appendices.....	- 183 -

Appendix 1 – Participant Information Sheet in English.....	- 183 -
Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheet in Chinese	- 186 -
Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Form	- 189 -
Appendix 4 – The Interview Guide for Grandparents in English.....	- 192 -
Appendix 5 – The Interview Guide for Parents in English	- 199 -
Appendix 6 – The Interview Guide for Grandparents in Chinese.....	- 206 -
Appendix 7 – The Interview Guide for Parents in Chinese	- 213 -
Appendix 8 – The Recruitment Letter in English	- 220 -
Appendix 9 – The Recruitment Letter in Chinese.....	- 221 -
Appendix 10 – Distress Protocol.....	- 222 -
Appendix 11 – An Example of the Visual Model	- 223 -

List of Figures

Figure 1 Life Expectancy in China and UK.....	5
Figure 2 Total Fertility Rates (TFRs) in the UK and China.....	6
Figure 3 A Residential Compound in Taonan, Jilin Province, China (Source: author's mother's photograph taken in February 2023, permission obtained)	7
Figure 4 A bilateral, intergenerational and multinuclear symbiosis mosaic family model (as translated from a Chinese language article)	- 41 -
Figure 5 The Structure of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model	- 48 -
Figure 6 The Integrated Family Model.....	- 54 -
Figure 7 Relationships between family members	- 82 -
Figure 8 The Adapted Version of the Integrated Family Model.....	- 141 -

List of Tables

Table 1 Result of Searching and Screening	- 30 -
Table 2 Information on Grandparents.....	- 67 -
Table 3 Information on Parents	- 69 -
Table 4 Themes and Sub-Themes.....	- 88 -

Abbreviations

BAZ	Bmit-for-Age Z Score
Covid-19	Coronavirus Disease
HAZ	Height-for-Age Z-Score
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
PRC	The People's Republic of China
TFR	Total Fertility Rates
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WAZ	Weight-for-Age Z Score

Chapter One: Grandparenting as a Global Phenomenon but with Chinese Characteristics

Grandparents' involvement in childcare is a wide-spread phenomenon globally (Timonen and Arber, 2012; Glaser *et al.*, 2013; Furstenberg, 2020). There are several phrases to describe grandparenting or grandparent childcare in Mandarin Chinese, such as *ge dai fu yang* (隔代抚养), *ge dai fu yu* (隔代抚育), *ge dai jiao yang* (隔代教养), and *ge dai zhao liao* (隔代照料). China is facing an increasingly ageing population and a continuing low fertility rate, although population policies have been shifted to the three-child policy. Childcare seems a central issue in fertility decision-making which underlines the importance of exploring grandparent childcare for early-years children.

In a family where grandparents are involved in childcare, family members from at least three generations are involved: the child, the parents and the grandparents. However, less is known about how the arrangements with grandparents' involvement in childcare are made and the intergenerational interactions involved. This study aims to provide new insights into grandparenting by exploring childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions. What are grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare and grandparent childcare? How are grandparents involved in childcare for children under three in families in China? What are the intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents in these arrangements? In order to explore these questions, a range of theory is drawn on to develop an Integrated Family Model applicable to the Chinese context. Assisted by the Integrated Family Model, the objectives of this research are: (1) to explore grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare and grandparent childcare; (2) to analyse how childcare arrangements are made; (3) to understand the interactions between grandparents and parents in these arrangements; (4) to examine the impacts of social and cultural shifts on grandparents' and parents' perceptions and on childcare arrangements. It is hoped that this research will help inform policy and practice to recognise the complexity of informal childcare arrangements and rethink the role of family in childcare for children under three. Moreover, this research will provide an integrated approach with practitioners who work on supporting families.

In this chapter, firstly my maternal grandmother's family is described to illustrate the scale and speed of change affecting family life across the generations today. Secondly, relevant information about China is introduced. Chronologically, this account mainly focuses on the time period after 1949, the year the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded. Thirdly, grandparenting in the wider context including China is presented. It shows that although grandparenting is a world-wide phenomenon, the macro contexts in which it lies is of great importance.

Following this section is clarification of relevant terms and phrases. The final section of this chapter provides an overview of forthcoming chapters.

1.1 My Maternal Grandmother's Family

My maternal grandmother is 85 years old. She was born in the countryside of Taonan, Jilin Province, China. She was a daughter of a landlord and is illiterate. She married my maternal grandfather, a blacksmith, when she was about 19 in urban Taonan. They have six children, three sons and three daughters. They all lived in the urban area. The three daughters left their parental home on marriage. The sons got married and had children, but did not leave the parental home as the daughters did. My maternal grandparents and the families of their three sons shared one courtyard. After my maternal grandmother was widowed and her youngest son got married in the late 1990s, she lived with his youngest son's family. My maternal grandmother never re-marries. They lived in a single-storey house that was semi-detached with the house of the middle son's family. The eldest son's household was in a detached single-storey house and had a small private courtyard. The composition of my maternal grandmother's large family is a typical form of the patriarchal family compared to the contemporary family. In the traditional patriarchal family in China, sons lived with their parents on marriage. Daughters normally moved away from their family of origin after getting married to live with their parents-in-law.

In the patriarchal family in traditional Chinese culture, ranking and classification of individuals are by generation, age and gender (Yan, 2021). Older generations ranked higher than younger generations; males ranked higher than females; older people ranked higher than younger people from the same generation. At Spring Festival, namely Chinese New Year, all the family members gathered in my maternal grandmothers' household for a dinner. There were two dining tables. My maternal grandmother, her three sons, her three sons-in-law and her oldest daughter who is also her oldest child, had dinner at the main table. All her younger daughters, daughters-in-law and her grandchildren had dinner at the side table. My maternal grandmother's oldest son has two children, while all her other children each have only one child. My mother told me that one day she sent me to my maternal grandmother's home and asked my maternal grandmother to help her with childcare when I was around one year old. My maternal grandmother was mainly involved in caring for the two children of her eldest son.

In the 2010s, there were huge changes in my maternal grandmother's family. The middle son's family bought a single-storey house and later bought an apartment. They were the first family to move out of the courtyard houses. Following them, the youngest son's family moved to an

apartment which was in the same residential compound as the middle son's family. The youngest son went back to his single-storey house and lived with his mother on a regular basis. The family of the eldest son bought an apartment, but the eldest son lives mainly in his own single-storey house, while his wife lives mainly in the apartment with her children. All three households have been waiting for demolition of their houses, part of the urbanisation process, but not my maternal grandmother. There is a nationwide tide of demolition and reconstruction in this rapid urbanisation; this is explored in detail in the following section. The single-storey houses are normally demolished for a new residential compound to be built in the same place. Families are allocated apartments in the residential compounds.

There used to be a gathering at Spring Festival, and all family members attended, reflecting the solidarity in the family. However, currently, the solidarity of the extended family seems to be declining, but the close relationships inside each nuclear family remain strong. I went to the courtyard and played with my cousins a lot during my childhood. I saw the complex family dynamics in the extended family which was like an ocean undercurrent. The courtyard seems literally big in my memory, but now it looks smaller and less vibrant than it once did. In the late 2000s, the eldest daughter, my mother's eldest sibling, who could be described as *lao san jie* (老三届), migrated to a city in the far south of China where her son lives. She went there to take care of her grandchild.

The term *lao san jie* (老三届) was introduced in a lecture, 'Introduction to Sociology', when I was an undergraduate. *Lao san jie* is literally used to describe people who were middle or high school students in 1966, 1967 and 1968, and who graduated together in 1968. They were born roughly in the late 1940s and early 1950s. However, this term, and the life courses of these people, involve more meanings. This generation was born and grew up at a time when China suffered from famine. At the time when they should study at school, the cultural revolution started and *shang shan xia xiang* (上山下乡, the 'Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages' movement) was implemented. The urban youth had to go to the rural areas to do farm work instead of studying at schools in urban areas. When they got married and could have a child, the one-child policy was enforced. During the reform of state-owned enterprises, many people lost their jobs, which had been guaranteed as permanent. Their experience was new to me at the time my teacher introduced this generation of people, but when the teacher mentioned their birth years, I realised that they are not far from my own life. Both my mother's and father's older sisters are *lao san jie* (老三届). Their life course in the past was full of challenges compared to people of my parents' and my generations. They experienced ups and downs within the macro contexts of Chinese society.

1.2 China

China is located in Asia geographically. It is not enough to label China simply as ‘an Asian country’ because Asia is a large geographical area, and society, culture and so forth could differ among different countries – for example, between China and India. The PRC was founded in 1949, one of the most important years in Chinese history. From the outbreak of the first opium war in 1840 to 1949 is defined as *jin dai shi* (近代史, modern history) (The Central People’s Government of People’s Republic of China, 2020). Since 1949, when the PRC was founded, is defined as *xian dai shi* (现代史, contemporary history) (The Central People’s Government of People’s Republic of China, 2005). The following introduction to China focuses mainly on contemporary China since 1949.

From 1949 to 1978, China was in its socialist period. The *dan wei* (单位, work unit) system was a typical product of that period. ‘*Dan wei* is a generic term denoting the Chinese socialist workplace and the specific range of practices that it embodies’ (Bray, 2005, p.3). The *dan wei* system provides guaranteed permanent employment and social welfare services for employees. My parents worked in the state-owned factories, namely the *dan wei* system. My mother sent me to the nursery in her *dan wei* after her maternity leave ended. However, according to my mother, I always got sick in the nursery, so she stopped sending me there. My father applied to work on night shifts so that he could look after me during the day. My mother came back from work and looked after me at night.

Since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy in 1978, China has been transforming from the socialist period to a marketisation period (Ji, 2017). During this transition, the *dan wei* system collapsed and the guaranteed permanent employment and social welfare services provided under *dan wei* has declined dramatically. During the reform of state-owned enterprises in the late 1990s, six million workers lost their jobs (Angang, 2007), used to be described as ‘iron rice bowl’, referring to the job security protected by *dan wei*. North-east China as an old industrial base with a considerable number of state-owned enterprises, accounts for a large percentage of the total number of laid-off workers in China (Angang, 2007).

In terms of life expectancy, according to data from World Population Prospects (United Nations, 2022), decennial data for life expectancy at birth from 1950 to 2020 in China and the UK is shown in Figure 1.

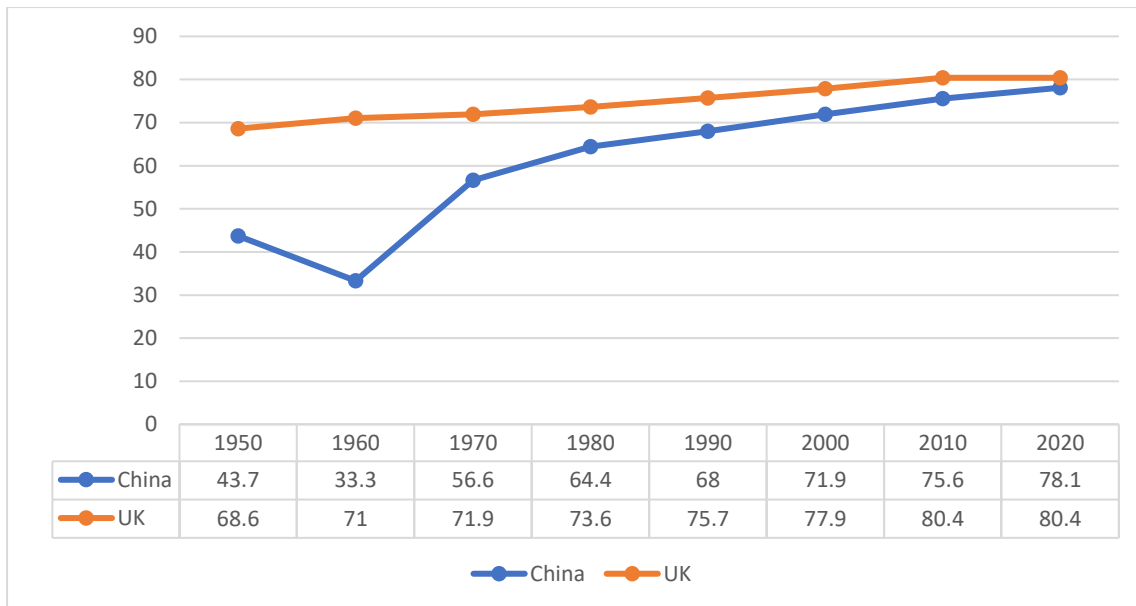


Figure 1 Life Expectancy in China and UK

The gap between life expectancy in China and the UK before 1980 is nearly more than 15 years. In 1960, life expectancy in China was 33.3 – less than half the UK’s figure of 71. People in China have, especially those born before 1960, have experienced a huge change in life expectancy. The life expectancy in China in 2020, 78.1, is significantly more than double that of 1960 in China, when it was 33.3.

Compared to data about life expectancy, total fertility rates (TFR) show a rather different scenario. A total fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman is regarded as being able to ensure a broadly stable population (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). TFR 2.1 is called ‘replacement fertility rate’. TFR in the UK were below replacement fertility rate in 1980; TFR in China was below 2.1 in 2000. United Nations (2022) decennial data of TFR from 1950 to 2020 in China and the UK are shown in Figure 2.

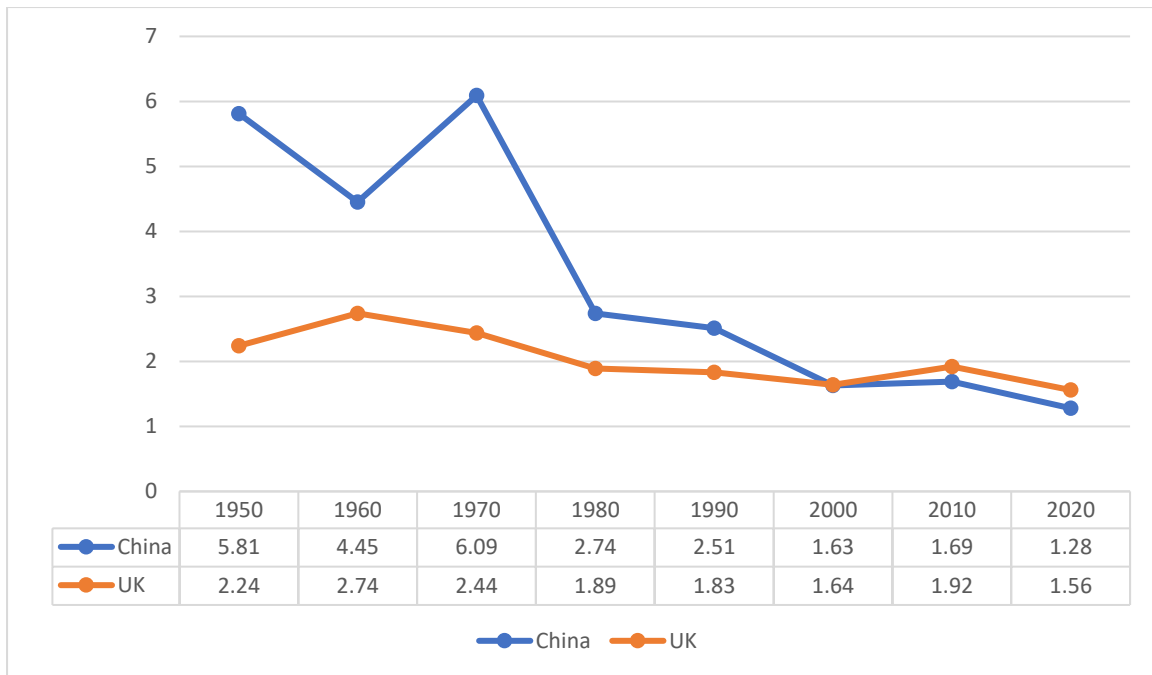


Figure 2 Total Fertility Rates (TFRs) in the UK and China

In China, TFR declined dramatically from 6.09 in 1970 to 2.74 in 1980 and 2.51 in 1990, due to the implementation of the one-child policy and related measures in the 1970s. The outcomes of the policy varied in different areas of China. In the north-east including Liaoning Province, Jilin Province and Heilongjiang Province, the outcome of the one-child policy was significant. TFRs in the three provinces were 1.70, 1.87 and 1.91 in 1990, and 0.98, 0.84 and 0.88 in 2000, 0.74, 0.76 and 0.75 in 2010, lower than the national average (Hou, 2018). Although gradual decline is shown in TFRs in the UK from 1950 to 2020, UK rates seem more stable compared to those in China. The above two figures are clearly in line with the world's population trends of increasing number of older people and the declining fertility rate (Harper, 2016). In the context of declining fertility rate and longevity, the two-child policy and the three-child policy were implemented nationwide in 2015 and 2021 respectively.

In terms of the urbanisation process mentioned in the previous section, urban residents who lived in courtyard houses normally move into the residential compounds in the process of demolition and reconstruction. *Xiao qu* (小区, residential compounds) refers to gated urban housing which is common in urban China. Qian and Hanser (2021, p.58) explain residential compounds as follows.

Most residential compounds are made up of clusters of multi-storey apartment buildings (loudong) surrounded by walls and with gated (through often unstaffed) entrances at ground level, a physical form with origins in work unit-based housing during the socialist era (Bray, 2005) ... each ground-level building entrance, known as a danyuan, leads to a stairwell that gives access to the apartments on each floor, but there is no internal access between stairwells.

A residential compound in Taonan, Jilin Province, is pictured below in Figure 3.



Figure 3 A Residential Compound in Taonan, Jilin Province, China (Source: author's mother's photograph taken in February 2023, permission obtained)

During the urbanisation process, villages where farmers live have become new urban districts; these farmers become urban residents; their way of life transformed from farming to urban (Dai, 2019). According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2012), the urban population in 1978 accounted for 17.9 per cent, but in 2021 it accounted for over 50 per cent, indicating that the urban population surpassed the rural population for the first time. Moreover, urban development lead to China's largest internal migrations, with many rural residents migrating to urban areas to work (Fan, 2007). However, due to the *hu kou* (户口, household registration) system in China, rural residents are not entitled to welfare benefits, and their children cannot attend school in the urban areas where they work (Baker and Silverstein, 2012). These migrant rural residents are called *liu dong ren kou* (流动人口, floating population). Their children are left behind to live with grandparents and other relatives who take care of them in rural areas. These children are called *liu shou er tong* (留守儿童, left-behind children). In 2018, the number of left-behind children in China was nearly 6.97 million (United Nations

Children's Fund and China Philanthropy Research Institute, 2019). However, whilst this phenomenon is a major manifestation of the socio-economic changes that have occurred in contemporary China, it is important not to ignore the impact of those changes on urban families who have their children living with them.

1.3 Grandparenting

There is increasing recognition of grandparenting as a growing worldwide phenomenon (Timonen and Arber, 2012; Glaser *et al.*, 2013; Furstenberg, 2020). According to a report examining grandparenting, 63 per cent of grandparents in Britain had ever taken care of a grandchild under 16 in the past 12 months, and 44 per cent in the SHARE countries including Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland (Glaser *et al.*, 2013). According to Generations United (2015) cited by Hayslip *et al.* (2017), nearly three million grandparents are raising their grandchildren in the United States. A similar figure was found in a survey conducted in five Chinese cities (Ma *et al.*, 2011). It reports that 53 per cent of grandparents have provided childcare. A survey of families in urban and rural areas reports that childcare provided by grandparents for children under two was around 70 per cent in 2014, and 30 per cent of those children were cared for solely by grandparents (National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China, 2015). Grandparents in 77.7 per cent of urban families in China are involved in taking care of children under three, according to the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China (2019), cited in Wang *et al.* (2021). Most care providers for children under three are mothers and grandparents (Chen *et al.*, 2000). The considerable number of grandparents involved in childcare across Britain, Europe, America and China suggests that grandparenting is a global phenomenon. This reflects the increasing importance of the interdependent relationships between grandparents and parents, and the saliency of family support from grandparents to parents. However, there are differences in the levels of intergenerational dependence between the United States and in China.

Baker and Silverstein (2012) explore grandparenting in the United States and in China. They find that in the United States, grandparents' involvement in caring for grandchildren is mainly under the most critical family circumstances whereas in China grandparenting is a strategy to strengthen the economic status of the extended family. Furthermore, the increase in multigenerational families reflects social inequality in American society (Yan, 2021). Yan argues that the nuclear family in middle-class Americans remains unchanged, but a higher proportion of children living in multigenerational families among African American and Hispanic American

communities. Conversely, in China multigenerational families – especially where grandparenting is a family strategy – are universal among people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, ranging from lower status to the middle class.

There is little research exploring grandparenting and family dynamics in north-east China, where the fertility rate remains below the replacement fertility rate mentioned in the previous section. Research on grandparenting among families in a city in north-east China may fill this gap in the literature. In addition, a qualitative approach may provide insight into childcare arrangements and family dynamics around grandparenting in these families through their perceptions. Grandparenting has been described as the core of contemporary intergenerational dynamics (Yan, 2021) and the fulcrum of family relationships (Arber and Timonen, 2012). Therefore, this qualitative research offers important insights into childcare arrangements and family dynamics, as well contributing to a deeper understanding of grandparenting in Chinese families.

1.4 Clarification of Terms and Phrases

In this section, terms and phrases in this thesis are clarified: multigenerational and intergenerational; grandparent childcare and grandparenting; theories about children's development are addressed at the end.

1.4.1 Grandparent childcare and grandparenting

As identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter Three, *grandparenting* and *grandparent childcare* are used interchangeably. In addition to grandparent childcare and grandparenting, other terms commonly used in the literature, such as grandparent child care and grandparental care, are also used to describe the role grandparents take in helping their adult children to look after grandchildren. Moreover, as noted at the start of this chapter, the terms utilised within Mandarin Chinese that are used to describe grandparents' involvement in childcare could be translated into grandparent childcare as well as grandparenting. In this thesis, my position is that *grandparenting* and *grandparent childcare* share similar meaning.

1.4.2 Multigenerational and intergenerational

It is necessary to distinguish the terms: *intergenerational* and *multigenerational*. Researchers hold different views on the meaning and usage of the two terms. Davis (2007) proposes that these two terms be regarded as synonyms as they underline different generations' participation and interactions between and among generations. Davis also suggests putting focus on

similarities of the two items instead of underlining differences. In contrast, Brownell and Resnick (2005) suggest that it is necessary to explore the similarities and differences between the two terms because they are used interchangeably in United Nations documents. They synthesised a proposal that ‘intergenerational relationships’ refers to relationships between members of different generations, whereas ‘multigenerational relationships’ generally appear to feature two or more generations together in a static system, and the term does not refer to the relationships between generations (Brownell and Resnick, 2005). Villar (2007) shares the viewpoint of Brownell and Resnick that the two terms have different meanings. *Intergenerational* can be described as the involvement of two or more generations in activities where different generations have the potential to understand different generations’ viewpoints; conversely, *multigenerational* frequently refers to shared activities and characteristics among generations without interaction or mutual impact.

Together these studies provide insights into the terms *multigenerational* and *intergenerational*, while highlighting the need to be explicit about the exact meanings of terms in this research. My position is that multigenerational and intergenerational have different meanings. In this thesis, the term *multigenerational* refers to a situation where each generation can be seen as a static unit with the individuals from this generation sharing similar characteristics, rather than interacting with other generations. For example, a multigenerational family system is one that involves families from different generations: maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents are from the grandparent generation; parents are from the parent generation. In contrast, the term *intergenerational* emphasises interaction between people from different generations. For example, intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents involve two generations. The term *relationship* is used widely, Brownell and Resnick (2005) offer a comprehensive and lucid exposition: to relate; to link; to connect; to communicate; to join in; to associate; to exchange; to unite; to do things together; to share; to get involved in joint projects; to establish partnerships; to build bridges; to bond; to cooperate; to interact; to team up; and to participate in mutually rewarding activities.

1.4.3 Children under three

This research focuses mainly on childcare for children under three. A consensual term in English to describe children of this age band is not found. According to the public health agency of the United States, ‘infant’ describes a child from birth to one year old, and a ‘toddler’ is a child aged between one and three years old (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). According to a UK government website, the term ‘early years’ covers the age from birth to five years old (Government UK, 2022). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) uses ‘early childhood’ to describe children from birth to eight

years old (The United Nations Educational, 2022). In Mandarin Chinese, *san sui yi xia ying you er* (三岁以下婴幼儿, children under three years) is employed to refer to children under three years (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019). In the literature, a consensual term has not been identified to describe children under three. In this thesis, 'children under three' is applied to refer to children in this age group.

A number of theories help to conceptualise and understand children's development, including Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Piaget's stages of development, Bowlby's attachment theory, and so forth. Erikson (1995) believes that personality develops through eight stages, and at each stage people experience a psychosocial crisis. The crisis can positively or negatively impact the development of psychological quality. For children between birth and one year old, the stage is trust vs. mistrust. For children between two and three, the stage is autonomy vs. shame and doubt. Piaget's theory had a substantial impact on the psychology of child development (Leonard, 2016). Piaget identifies four major stages of children's cognitive development (Piaget and Gabain, 1932; Piaget, 1953; 1954). Children from birth to two years old are in the sensory motor stage; children aged two to seven are in the preoperational stage. In addition to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and Piaget's stages of development, Bowlby's attachment theory provides insight about how the relationship between children and caregivers processes, which impacting children's development. Attachment can be described as a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Bowlby, 1969).

1.5 The Overview of the Forthcoming Chapters

Having explained the reason for this study, the next chapter, Chapter Two, focuses on the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of grandparent childcare in China. The *dan wei* (单位, work unit) system used to provide childcare services for urban families during the socialist period. Since the reform and opening-up in 1978, childcare has returned to family from *dan wei*. Families with dual earners have to face the challenge of childcare. Furthermore, the changing population policies are important macro contexts. The one-child policy was carried out in the 1970s and constitutionalised in 1982. The huge impact of the policy is not only on the national demographic but also on family life in China. Families and relations in Chinese culture are introduced in the following section.

Following the macro contexts, in Chapter Three, first, the review of empirical studies on grandparenting worldwide is presented. Second there is a review specifically on families in China. The search strategy of the reviews is clearly described. Evidence from empirical studies in

China is classified into five categories: grandparent childcare and children's health and development; grandparent childcare and grandparents' health and caregiving experiences; intergenerational support and intergenerational relationships; childcare arrangements; fertility decisions. However, previous studies have suffered from a lack of deep understanding of how Chinese families arrange childcare with grandparents' involvement, and interactions among family members in these arrangements.

Chapter Four is about the theoretical framework. Four theoretical perspectives of this research are mosaic familism, intergenerationality in neo-familism, an ecological framework of human development, and family support. Based on the mosaic family model and assisted by the four theoretical perspectives, the Integrated Family Model is constructed to provide an integrated and comprehensive way of understanding childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions in families in China where grandparents are involved in childcare.

The philosophical position and methods adopted are introduced and presented in Chapter Five. The philosophical position is stated at the start of this chapter. Following this section, research questions, sample, location, research methods and consideration of ethics are presented. The section on data collection includes preparation for data collection, recruitment of participants, participants' information, interviews, undertaking research during the period of Coronavirus disease (Covid-19). Following data collection is data analysis. Thematic analysis is used to analyse data. The process of analysis involves familiarisation, coding, generating initial themes and developing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing the report. In addition, the discussion about the quality of qualitative research is in the fifth section, with reflections about the whole research process to end.

In this thesis, findings and discussion of findings are written separately. Findings are presented in Chapters Six to Nine. At the start of Chapter Six, there is a table giving an overview of the themes and sub-themes. There are four themes developed using thematic analysis. Chapter Six presents the theme *perceptions of childcare*. It focuses on the grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare. Chapter Seven is devoted to present *perceptions of grandparent childcare*. This was a sub-theme of the theme *perceptions of childcare* during data analysis, but because of the quantity and importance of the material, it was re-defined as a theme instead of a sub-theme. Chapter Eight presents the theme *childcare arrangements*. The final theme *intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents* is presented in Chapter Nine. A summary of all the findings is at the end of Chapter Nine.

The findings are interpreted and theorised assisted by the Integrated Family Model in Chapter Ten. First, the research context and methodology are reviewed. In the following sections, the

findings are interpreted and theorised utilising the Integrated Family Model. The last chapter is a conclusion and recommendations. This chapter firstly offers a final restatement of research questions, research process and findings. Following this section, the implications and limitations are discussed, as well as recommendations for future work.

Chapter Two: Changing Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Contexts of Grandparent Childcare in China

Following the previous chapter's overview of the macro contexts in China, this chapter narrows the focus on the changing socio-economic and cultural contexts that are closely related to childcare, specifically in families. First, it draws attention to policies in relation to childcare. Second, population policies are reviewed, with the focus on the one-child policy. Just before this chapter's conclusion, families and relations in the changing sociocultural contexts are reviewed to explore how culture shapes perceptions and interactions within families.

2.1 Childcare Policies

Kammerman (1991) demonstrates that childcare policies contain government actions that have influence on the supply of and/or the demand for childcare and the quality of childcare. Xu (2009) claims that from the supporting family's perspective, childcare policies include parenting benefits, child and family services, and financial support. Utilising Xu's classification, childcare policies in China are discussed from these three aspects.

2.1.1 Parenting benefits

It has been argued by Kamerman (1991) that the development of parenting benefits, such as paid leave, is a method to limit the demand for childcare services. Parenting benefits are related to work welfare of parents, incorporating time for parenting and employment protection (Xu, 2009). Labour law enacted in 1994 in China prescribed that birth-giving women workers shall be entitled to no less than 90 days' maternity leave (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Maternity leave was expanded to 98 days by the Regulations Concerning the Labour Protection of Female Staff and Workers, promulgated in 2012 (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2012). Paternity leave is not set in law, but is covered by local government regulations. Length of maternity leave varies in different provinces in China. For example, in Jilin Province, the latest maternity leave is 180 days, which is longer than the 98 days, and paternity leave is 25 days, when it was 15 days under previous local policies (Health Commission of Jilin Province, 2021; The People's Government of Jilin Province, 2021). These are the latest amended policies, which are in line with shifts in national population policies.

2.1.2 Childcare and family services

Childcare and family services include nursery school and preschool, hygiene service, and community service (Xu, 2009). Nursery school provides caregiving services for infants and

early year children. Hygiene services provide children, mothers and pregnant women with services such as premarital health test and screening tests in pregnancy. Community services refers to prenatal education and family education. Issues around women in the labour force and childcare are widespread internationally (Canavan *et al.*, 2016). Women's participation in the labour force has been hugely encouraged by Chinese governments since the foundation of the PRC in 1949. The state encouraged women to get out of the household and into the labour market (Zuo, 2005). The size of the female labour force increased to 10.095 million in 1960, from 3.286 million in 1957 (Jiang, 2001). The earning power of women, and their education levels, have increased, which accounts for the rise in women's status and bargaining power with their husbands, parents and parents-in-law (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). However, mothers' participation in the labour force is in conflict with their role in childcare, especially when their maternity leave ends and they need to return to work.

In the socialist period, the state encouraged state-owned and non-state enterprises, government institutions, social organisations and so forth – namely the *dan wei* (单位, work-unit) system – to set up nurseries and preschools (Yue and Fan, 2018). These organisations and institutions were mainly in urban areas. Nurseries and preschools organised by enterprises, governmental institutions and mining institutions increased sharply from 500 in 1953 to 8,600 in 1957 (Shi, 1999). Although there were state-funded nurseries and preschools in the factories and in government organisations, many were poorly equipped and understaffed because the nurseries were set up in a short time and family still took the major role in childcare (Tang, 2017). Nevertheless, the *dan wei* system became the main childcare provider for children under three by setting up nurseries during the socialist period.

After the reform and opening-up policies carried out in 1978, the *dan wei* system collapsed during the transition from socialist economy to marketisation (Zhao and Zhang, 2019). Nurseries and preschools owned by governmental institutions decreased dramatically (Yue and Fan, 2018). In the era of marketisation, although the number of female individuals within the labour force in China is high, childcare policies in China seems ungenerous. In addition, Yue and Fan (2018) demonstrate that governments put more emphasis on preschools for children, while there is a shortage of private nurseries. Public kindergartens do not enrol children under three and there are no public childcare centres (Liu *et al.*, 2022). The provision of private childcare services for children under three falls short, and the quality of private childcare services varies (Yue and Fan, 2018; Xue and Wu, 2019). According to a study conducted in 13 cities in China, only 5.5 per cent of children under three have been enrolled in nurseries (Hong, 2020). Under the guideline issued by the State Council to improve childcare services for children under three,

family is defined as the main provider of childcare; childcare services focus on providing guidance to families and providing necessary childcare services for families in crisis (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019).

2.1.3 Financial support

Financial support refers to family subsidies and the family benefits system (Xu, 2009). A childbirth insurance system was created according to the Labour Insurance Regulations of the People's Republic of China carried out in 1951 (Yue and Fan, 2018). It prescribed maternal leave and maternal subsidies for female staff. The state introduced Trial Measures for the Childbirth Insurance for Enterprise Employees in 1994, providing economic support to female employees (Ministry of Labour of the People's Republic of China, 1994). Regulations Concerning the Labour Protection of Female Staff and Workers, promulgated in 2012, prescribed that female employees are entitled to childbirth subsidies (The Central People's Government of People's Republic of China, 2012). Xu (2009) concludes that policies related to the family benefits system incorporate childbirth subsidies and services, children's hygiene and services. Families receive childbirth subsidies, free vaccinations, and a partial health allowance. Apart from the foregoing welfare, there is financial support targeted at the disadvantaged families. But general families do not receive any financial support and need to pay the cost of food, clothes, accommodation, education and health on their own (Xu, 2009; Yue and Fan, 2018).

However, Personal Tax Deduction for Parents of Children under Three Years was announced in 2022, according to the State Council of the People's Republic of China (2022). It is the latest childcare policy that financially supports general families with children under three. Parents' taxable income could be reduced by 1,000 yuan monthly for one child. The policy aims to encourage fertility and promote the implementation of population policy by providing financial support to parents of children under three years old. There were policies carried out to provide financial support for single-child families in the 1980s following the one-child policy. Yue and Fan (2018) argue that the purpose of these policies in the 1980s was to promote the implementation of the population policy and, moreover, the amount of benefit was literally limited. The tax deduction shares a similarity with the policies of the 1980s in that purpose of the policies is to ensure the outcome of the population policy, instead of meeting the needs of family and providing family support to families.

In the socialist period, women were encouraged to participate in the labour force. The *dan wei* system provided childcare services, which helped to balance the conflict between working in the labour force and women's caregiver roles. However, childcare services decreased dra-

matically with the collapse of the *dan wei* system. The recent extension of maternity and paternity leave and tax deduction aim to encourage fertility and promote the implementation of the population policies. The support provided by these policies for families with children under three is limited. Universal families cannot obtain financial support, increased parenting benefits or sufficient childcare service (Yue and Fan, 2018). Moreover, the state explicitly declares that family is the main entity responsible for childcare, whereas formal services for families with children under three provide guidance for all families and provide necessary childcare services for disadvantaged families. There is a lack of childcare policies that support families in China, and limited formal childcare support (Zhong and Guo, 2017; Ji *et al.*, 2020). Grandparenting is employed as a family strategy to deal with these challenges (Zhong and Guo, 2017) and grandparents play the role previously played by *dan wei* (单位, work unit) (Ji *et al.*, 2020).

2.2 Population Policies

Discussion of macro contexts in China has to take population policies into account. In the context of increasing population and limited resources, family planning has been mentioned in government reports since the 1960s, according to Li and Zhou (2018). In 1982, the policy was constitutionalised and implemented nationwide (Yuan, 2012), and is widely known as the one-child policy. The policy brought an imbalanced gender ratio because of preference for sons and an ageing population in China as well as political costs and concerns over human rights (Zhang, 2017), and *shi du* families (失独 families, families losing an only child). Criticism of the policy has emerged domestically and internationally. However, criticism is not the only way to understand the policy; it is important to understand the context in which it was implemented.

The population of China increased dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s. The total fertility rate (TFR) was around 6 during that period, and the highest was 7.5 in 1963 (Yuan, 2012). The increasing population would consume resources intended to be used for economic growth (Guo and Yin, 2005). Given the limited material resources and the dramatically increasing population in the 1950s (Yuan, 2016), *ji hua sheng yu* (计划生育, family planning) was introduced in some cities in China from the 1960s, but was interrupted due when the Cultural Revolution (Guo and Yin, 2005) started in 1966. The state introduced a set of family planning guidance points called '*wan xi shao* (晚、稀、少, giving birth to children later; leaving longer intervals between having children; giving birth to fewer children)' in 1973 (Guo and Yin, 2005). In 1982, family planning, which is commonly known as the one-child policy, was constitutionalised as a national policy. As its name suggests, the policy restricted most couples to having

only one child. The restrictions varied between rural areas and urban areas, and between *han* ethnicity and ethnic minority groups. The one-child policy was stricter in urban areas than in rural areas, and stricter for people of *han* ethnicity than for ethnic minority groups. The largest ethnic group in China is *han* ethnicity. According to the 2020 Chinese Census, 91.11 per cent of the population in China is *han* ethnicity (Office of the Leading Group of the State Council for the Seventh National Population Census, 2022). In contrast, ethnic minority couples were allowed to have two children or more. The one-child policy limited couples in urban areas to only one child. Couples from rural areas were allowed to have two children if their first child was a girl. Nevertheless, based on a longitudinal study conducted in a village in north-east China, since the 1990s more and more couples in the village have decided to have a single child or no more than two children (Yan, 2016). The Government exercises more control over people living urban areas than people living in rural areas, because urban hukou (户口, household registration) entitles people to employment and welfare benefits (Cooney and Li, 1994). Their employee status and welfare benefits in the dan wei (单位, work unit) system would have been withdrawn for breaching the one-child policy. The outcome of the policy is significant and effective in that the TFR was below 2.1 in the early 1990s (Yuan, 2012), compared to 6.09 in 1970 (United Nations, 2022). There has been a particularly significant outcome of the policy in north-east China, where the TFR in the three constituent provinces remains lower than the average TFR for China; in one of them, Jilin Province, the TFR was 0.76 in 2010 (Hou, 2018). One reason is that the urbanisation rate remains high in the area, and the policy exercised more control over urban populations (Hou, 2018) – where the urbanisation rate is high, the outcome of the policy is significant.

The influence of the one-child policy has had more effect than simply controlling population. It has had a profound impact on Chinese family life. The one-child policy challenges patriarchal and patrilineal traditions. Parents must depend on and invest in their only daughter for their future economic welfare if their only child is a girl, whereas in the patrilineal tradition, parents normally invest in and depend on their son to care for them as they age (Deutsch, 2006); thus, the one-child policy promotes gender equality. Nevertheless, the findings of an empirical study suggest that a notable level of filial piety (a concept originating from Confucian culture that significantly impacts family dynamics – discussed in detail in section 2.3) is expressed by only children in families (Deutsch, 2006). They anticipate helping their parents in the future, feel responsible for the wellbeing of their parents, and plan to live near their parents in the same city. However, it needs to be understood whether the only children were motivated by emotional closeness with their parents or by filial piety. In addition to its impact in challenging patriarchal and patrilineal traditions, the one-child policy has also influenced fertility intentions. According to a quantitative study, parents who were the only child in their families of origin

were the least likely to intend to have more than one child themselves, which indicates that the one-child policy may alter the fertility norm of a generation (Wang *et al.*, 2022). In contrast, other research shows that no significant difference in fertility intentions is identified in couples, whether or not they are the single child in their families of origin (Jia and Feng, 2015). Moreover, 4-2-1 or 4-2-2 family structures are common in Chinese society, especially in urban China. Due to the increase in life expectancy noted in the previous chapter, four grandparents are in these family structures, and because of the one-child policy, two parents are each the single child in their families of origin. One or two children are in the child generation because of changing population policies.

In terms of the policy and family relations, the one-child policy influences the relations between parents and children. Due to the one-child policy and intense competition, parents have high expectations of their only children and invest generously in them (Fong, 2004). When their children become adults, they continue to provide financial and emotional support, caregiving, and help in domestic chores (Ji *et al.*, 2020). In the families with singleton daughters, maternal grandmothers' involvement in childcare for their daughters' children is increasing (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, sibship statuses of couples significantly impact the possibility of grandparents' providing childcare and the findings shows that having male siblings negatively impact the chance of grandparents' assistance in childcare (Zhao and Zhang, 2019). Zhang (2009) examines how the one-child policy shapes family relations between married daughters and their natal parents in rural Chinese families. His findings show that the one-child policy, which aimed to control population growth, unintendedly strengthens and reinforces the relations between married daughters and their birth parents in an unanticipated way.

With the influences discussed above, and the challenges of a low fertility rate and ageing population, the one-child policy came to an end in 2013. This allowed couples to have a second child if either one of them was an only child. In 2015, the universal two-child policy was instigated, and restrictions on couples were lifted. All couples could have a second child. However, the expected significant increase in the fertility rate did not happen (Li and Zhou, 2018). There was a slight increase of the TFR in 2016 and 2017, at 1.77 and 1.81 compared to 1.67 in 2015 (United Nations, 2022). After the slight increase, it dropped to 1.55 in 2018, 1.50 in 2019 and 1.28 in 2020 (United Nations, 2022). According to a survey in 2019, only 16.30 per cent of women who have only one child intended to have a second child in the northeast of China (Zhang, 2021).

With the continuing ageing population and the low fertility rates, the three-child policy was launched in 2020. Population policies have changed fast, reflecting the serious situation the state is facing with an ageing population and low fertility rate. Timonen and Arber (2012) argue

that increasing survival and declining fertility rates have resulted in an increased supply of grandparents and a decreased supply of grandchildren in the developed world. In China, the typical family structure – 4-2-1 or 4-2-2 consisting of four grandparents, two parents and one or two children – seems similar to what Timonen and Arber identified in the developed world. Furthermore, in China, the retirement age for a man is 60, for female civil servants it is 55 and for female workers it is 50. This early retirement age, especially for women, affects the supply of grandmothers for grandparenting in particular. Although the one-child policy has been terminated, the impacts of the one-child policy remain and are having long-lasting impacts on family life.

2.3 Families and Relations in the Changing Sociocultural Contexts

Whilst culture has many dimensions, values, ethics, morals and social norms, and is expressed in many ways, through many artefacts and behaviours, it needs to be addressed as a dimension of family life. In research on grandparent childcare in Chinese families in China and abroad, Confucian cultures are mentioned frequently (Schwarz *et al.*, 2010; Chen *et al.*, 2011; Yeh *et al.*, 2013; Low and Goh, 2015; Zhang *et al.*, 2019; Zhu *et al.*, 2019).

2.3.1 The traditional aspects of Chinese culture

Mencius (孟子, BC372-BC289) is a Chinese Confucian philosopher and his views have had profound and significant impacts on Chinese culture. He elucidates that there are five basic human relations: *fu zi you qin* (父子有亲, between parents and children there is affection), *jun chen you yi* (君臣有义, between ruler and minister there is rightness), *fu fu you bie* (夫妇有别, between husband and wife there are separate functions), *zhang you you xu* (长幼有序, between older and younger there is proper order), *peng you you xin* (朋友有信, between friends there is faithfulness) (Mencius, 2009). In addition to basic human relations, Mencius (2009) clarifies that family members play different roles. Parents need to be kind to their children and children need to perform filial piety to their parents.

As noted in Chapter One, in the patriarchal family in traditional Chinese culture, ranking and classification of individuals are by generation, age and gender (Yan, 2021). Similarly, Harrell and Santos (2016) propose a working model of Chinese classic patriarchal structures. It encompasses ‘two major axes of both prestige and power in domestic relations: a generational axis and a gender axis’ (Harrell and Santos, 2016, p.11). Older people had prestige over the young. Males had prestige over females.

Patriarchal tradition, filial piety and the status relationships in family all emphasise the authority of the older generation and the obedience of the younger generation. In terms of *xiao shun* (孝顺, filial piety), Yan (2016, p.249) demonstrates the concept from three aspects below.

Unconditional respect and obedience of the junior generation to the senior generation; financial support and affectual care by adult children for their elderly parents; perpetuation of the descent line through human reproduction and the provision of ritual services to ancestors. Self-sacrifice is necessary in all three aspects, and the ultimate goal is the security and prosperity of the kin group. Personal happiness is understood as being ancestral and parental happiness resulting from the filial actions and self-sacrifice of both decedents and the children, hence the importance of unconditional respect and subordination in filial piety.

Filial piety plays a role as a guideline in intergenerational interactions in family, especially parent-child interactions. In the classic Chinese patriarchy, it emphasises the absolute authority of the older generation and the unconditional obedience of the younger generation, as well as the upwards flow of resources from younger to older generations. Especially, sons are expected to look after their parents following the Confucian ethic of filial piety (Davies and Zhang, 1995; Sung, 2018). As the cornerstone of Confucian ethics, in the contemporary China, filial piety was promoted through laws and government policies (Yan, 2021). However, because of the shrinking family size, it is increasingly common that daughters look after their own parents (Yu and Xie, 2011).

In addition to the roles that children perform to their parents, according to Mencius (2009), older siblings need to take care of their younger siblings and young siblings need to appreciate their older siblings' care; a husband needs to support his family financially, make contributions to society, and assist his wife in childcare; a wife's job is to take care of children and domestic chores so that her husband can focus on his job. Shelton (2019) demonstrates that roles are a major component of culture and each culture contains typical roles and expectations for how to play those roles.

Shuming Liang (梁漱溟, 1893-1988), another Confucian philosopher, argues that roles that family members should play are clarified in Confucian culture (Liang, 2005). The roles also impact human relations beyond family in Confucian culture. All the relations in society are like the relations in one family (Liang, 2005). This shows the importance and the implications of understanding Chinese families. Liang (2005) illustrates how the system of family in Chinese society is salient in Chinese culture, and family life is the most important type of social life for Chinese people. The most important ethic in Chinese society is family. Chinese people call teachers *shi fu* (师父, *fu* means father) and call neighbours or friends *bo shu xiong di* (伯叔兄弟, uncle and brother), which reflects how all relations in society is like the relations within

one family (Liang, 2005, p.73). Chinese society is an ethics-based society. Liang (2005, pp.72, 78 & 80) explains ethical relations below.

Ethic relations are about emotional connections and duties. One person has relations with others such as parents, siblings and so forth since he or she was born. Chinese people live in the society where relations are related to ethics. ... Family members all make efforts for the possibly positive outlook of their whole family. They regard it as their duty. During this process, they find the truth and meaning of their life. ... They strive not only for themselves but also for their whole family members and even ancestors and offspring. In performing their duties, because of their emotional connections, they think more of others than themselves and make decisions based on others' benefits instead of themselves. This sort of family ethics strengthen intergenerational solidarity emotionally.

One article studying Chinese grandparents who moved to the United States to provide child-care finds that their motivation to come the US is a sense of duty and concern for their offspring's well-being and success (Zhu *et al.*, 2019). Research on Chinese grandparents in Singapore found that culturally connected grandmothers were compelled by the obligation to provide care, and motivated by the desire to maintain harmonious relationships and to *chuan zong jie dai* (传宗接代, continue the family lineage) (Low and Goh, 2015). The impact of Chinese culture on grandparents in China is that grandparents feel obliged to look after children while the parents of those children are at work (Xu and Xia, 2014). The findings of these researchers are consistent with the argument of Liang (2005) that family members prioritise others over themselves.

In addition to the aspects of Chinese culture above, there are three characteristics of Chinese behaviours identified by Eastman (1988) that influence interactions between family members. Although Eastman arrives at his findings through synthesising the consistency and change in China from 1550 to 1949, some aspects of the characteristics can be seen in contemporary Chinese society. The first is that China is a status-oriented society. The most characteristic of Chinese status relationships are found within the family. Interactions between family members, like husband and wife, mother and daughter, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, brother and sister, and brother and brother, display the vertical and unequal relationship between an authority figure and a dependant. This pattern of superior-subordinate, or authority-dependency relationships profoundly influences the way that Chinese people interact with one another. Eastman (1988) further explains that in terms of relationships between parents and their children, Chinese parents rarely consider that their children could cope with the world as independent individuals, and they even tend to shun their children's personal autonomy. Another significant characteristic of Chinese social behaviour is *guanxi* (关系), which means Chinese people are willing to establish networks of useful personal relationships (Eastman, 1988). The last characteristic Eastman (1988) illustrates occurs in terms related to *mian zi* (面子, face). They are *diu lian* (丢脸, losing face) and *yao mian zi* (有面子, having face). Losing face refers

to feeling shamed because of bad behaviours. If one person breaks the moral rules and performs immoral conduct, that person would lose face. If a child behaves in a bad way outside his home, others may think he is making his parents and himself lose face. Having face means enjoying the esteem of others. If the children of a family accumulate a large amount of wealth, are close to power, or study at a prestigious school or university, their parents have face.

2.3.2 The transforming of patriarchy

Harrell and Santos (2016) divide the social history of Chinese patriarchy from 1919 up to now into four periods. The first period is from 1919 to 1949. The context of my research focuses on contemporary China since 1949 and thus the first period is not presented here. The second period is from 1949, the foundation of the People's Republic of China, to 1979, the beginning of *gai ge kai fang* (改革开放, economic reform, known as reform and opening-up). The revolutionary social and political change transformed both the generational axis and gender axis of Chinese classic patriarchy.' Since the 1950s in rural China, parental authority has declined along with the increase in youth autonomy and freedom, and this has developed in urban China in the 1980s (Davis and Harrell, 1993). According to the patrilineal tradition in Chinese culture, intergenerational childcare support was almost always provided only for a son's children instead of a daughter's children, and it is the responsibility of the paternal grandparents – rather than the maternal grandparents – to take care of the grandchildren (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, a 'matrilineal bias' has been found in Western societies, where mothers have more interaction with maternal grandparents, especially mothers and maternal grandmothers, according to Hagestad (1985), Eisenberg (1988), Somary and Strieker (1998), Bhopal *et al.* (2000) and Chan and Elder Jr (2000).

A more gender- and generation-egalitarian family model emerged' (Harrell and Santos, 2016, p.16). The generational axis was effectively transformed while the other axis, the gender axis, changed more slowly. In the second period, namely the socialist period, women participating in the labour force has been hugely encouraged by Chinese governments since 1949. After the foundation of People's Republic of China, the state encouraged women to go out of households and get into the labour market (Zuo, 2005). The *dan wei* system provides childcare, health care centres, dining halls and laundries, which helped to reduce women's housework burdens (Ji *et al.*, 2017). The number of female labour force increased to 10.095 million in 1960, from 3.286 million in 1957 (Jiang, 2001). Nevertheless, the state retained patriarchy and traditional gender-role division in private sphere of family (Ji *et al.*, 2017). Women not only needed to work in the labour force but also undertake the unpaid family work.

The third period is the early reform era from late 1970s to the mid-1990s. The fourth period is the late reform era commencing from the mid-1990s. The following discussion encompasses the transformation of patriarchy in the third and fourth periods. In the reform era, namely the marketisation era since 1979, 'much more profound transformations have come to what was left of the classic patriarchal system. ... The result is that urban China no longer fits in any way our description of classic patriarchal structures and marital relations' (Harrell and Santos, 2016, p.18). In terms of the generational axis, older generation lost their power but filial piety is still considered seriously. Filial piety is no longer unconditional. The older generations must earn the filial support from their children through building emotional connections (Harrell and Santos, 2016). Meanwhile, the genderedness of the generational axis has been becoming less patrilineal and more bilateral. Zhang *et al.* (2019) has found that the pattern of childcare in Chinese families has shifted from the patrilineal pattern to a bilateral or matrilineal pattern. The greater involvement of maternal grandmothers in childcare in contemporary Chinese families, shows deviation from the traditional patrilineal tradition. In terms of the gender axis, the gender division of labour is nearly absolute in societies (Harrell and Santos, 2016). As most societies in the world, in Chinese society, women undertake more family work than man (Chen, 2005). With the state's retreat from welfare service providing and influence of traditional gendered roles in family in the marketisation era, women are facing increasing burden of unpaid family work.

In the first half of this section, the traditional aspects of Chinese culture are presented including family roles, ethnic relations and some general characteristics of Chinese behaviours. It is undoubtedly the case that the contemporary family relations and processes continue to be shaped by 'deep-seated gender and generational hierarchies, but these continuities are accompanied by radical transformations' (Harrell and Santos, 2016, p.4). There are huge changes of the sociocultural contexts since the 1949. In the second half of this section, the sociocultural changes and continuity are presented through the discussion of the transformation of patriarchy in the patriarchal matrix. As Harrell and Santos (2016) mentioned, it can be thought that their book 'Transforming Patriarchy' is simply about male dominance. But what they are actually arguing is that without putting the gender axis within the whole shifting Chinese patriarchal matrix within which it is embedded, containing both the intergenerational axis and the gender axis, it is impossible to understand the gender axis itself thoroughly.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the changing socioeconomic and cultural contexts of grandparent childcare, including childcare policies, population policies – especially the one-child policy – and families in Chinese culture.

In the socialist period, the *dan wei* (单位, work unit) system provided childcare services, which helped to balance the conflicts for women between working on the labour force and playing caregiving roles. However, childcare services decreased dramatically as the *dan wei* system collapsed. Both public and private childcare services for families with children under three are limited. There have been recent improvements in parenting benefits and financial support for universal families, including the extension of maternity and paternity leave and tax deduction. However, these initiatives are in line with population policies rather than aiming to support families. Although the one-child policy was terminated, the intended impact – and the unintended impact – of the policy remains. It effectively controlled the population and, in an unanticipated way strengthens relations between parents and their only child. Chinese culture has a profound impact on the roles of family members and family relations; yet whether it is in turn changed in family life needs to be explored. Together with limited support from childcare policies and strengthened family relations reinforced by the one-child policy and Chinese culture, understanding of grandparenting needs to be positioned within changing socio-economic and cultural contexts. The next chapter will review recent research in relation to grandparent childcare.

Chapter Three: Research Review Towards an Understanding of Grandparent Child-care

Concern about the declining of the kinship ties had been expressed by sociologists in the mid twentieth century; however, the findings of empirical studies during that period such as *Family and Kinship in East London* by (Young and Willmott, 1957), highlight the strength of generational ties . Bengtson (2001) foresees the increasing salience of the multigenerational bonds and multigenerational relationships in the 21st century. In China, grandparenting, is a vivid presentation of the powerful intergenerational ties, which are strengthened by the socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts presented in Chapter Two. In this chapter, grandparent child-care is explored through reviews of empirical research on the subject. The first section presents a review of research on grandparent childcare in a global context. The research review then narrows the focus to grandparent childcare in China. Here, five themes are identified from the empirical research in China: children's health and development, grandparents' health and caregiving experiences, intergenerational support and intergenerational relationships, childcare arrangements, and fertility decisions. The last section comprises the conclusion of this chapter.

3.1 Research Review of Grandparent Childcare Globally

Increasing attention is given to the role of grandparents in childcare globally. According to recent reviews on grandparent childcare, research has tended to be quantitative and focuses on problems, such as implications for the health and development of children in situations of grandparental care, or for the psychological well-being of the grandparents providing childcare (Kim *et al.*, 2017; Sadruddin *et al.*, 2019; Hoang and Kirby, 2020). Moreover, research on grandparents' involvement in childcare has tended to focus on grandparents providing childcare in families where adult children are unable to perform their parenting roles. For example, where parents are experiencing issues relating to mental health problems, are in prison or addicted to drugs (Timonen and Arber, 2012). To address the gap, it is necessary to understand grandparent childcare globally in families not identified as having specific problems that incapacitate parenting through qualitative research. This section presents a review of 21 qualitative studies worldwide.

3.1.1 Search strategy

The search strategy and screening for relevant research involved three steps. The first was a general overview of the literature to identify core concepts and use of language relating to grandparent childcare. In this process, the *Journal of Marriage and Family* and the *Journal of*

Family Issues were identified as leading and relevant international peer-reviewed publications with high journal impact factors (JIF). The JIF for the *Journal of Marriage and Family* were 3.896 in 2020 and 4.917 in 2021 (Clarivate, 2023). The JIF for the *Journal of Family Issues* were 2.072 in 2020 and 1.831 in 2021 (Clarivate, 2023). They were manually searched in order to identify relevant research articles. One article was found in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* and two were found in the *Journal of Family Issues*.

Criteria for identifying relevant articles were as follows: empirical research; conducted using qualitative methods (or mainly qualitative methods if multi-method); focusing on grandparent childcare in families where adult children were not identified as having specific problems that incapacitated their parenting such as mental health problems, imprisonment or addiction to drugs. At the early stage of this research, June 2017 to June 2020 was considered a sufficient timescale in which to find articles within the two selected journals and to help identify keywords to use in the database search.

In step two, articles were searched in four databases: the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS); Social Policy and Practice (SPP); PsycINFO; Sociological Abstracts. Keywords identified at the first step were used. The first cluster of keywords was 'child care' OR 'childcare' OR 'child-care' OR 'child rearing' OR 'child-rearing' OR 'child rear' OR 'family care' OR 'caregiving' OR 'skip-generation raising'. The second cluster of keywords was 'grandparents' OR 'ageing parents' OR 'aging parents' OR 'senior parents' OR 'grandparental'. All the keywords were searched within abstracts. Articles were limited to English language peer reviewed journals published between 1 June 2017 and 31 December 2020. In total, 333 articles were identified.

In step three, the articles were screened again using the following criteria: empirical research conducted using qualitative methods (or mainly qualitative methods if multi-method) and focusing on grandparent childcare within families where adult children are capable of performing their parenting roles. Articles were screened based on title, abstract and full text. In this process, it was found that most of the research pertaining to grandparental childcare has been conducted using quantitative methods rather than qualitative methods which is consistent with research reviews mentioned earlier. Through screening, 12 articles were selected from the 333 identified. Among these 12, one article was identified in both the *Journal of Family Issues* and the database Sociological Abstracts. Together with the articles identified in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 14 articles were identified in total. Among them, three focus on grandparent childcare in China. A supplementary search was conducted in March 2023 using the same strategy. Given the limited time, the search was conducted in IBSS. The timeline was limited to 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2023. Among the resultant 85 articles, 12 were identified,

among them, two articles focusing on grandparent childcare in China. Excluding five articles focusing on grandparent childcare in China from the two searches, 21 global articles on grandparent childcare are reviewed.

3.1.2 Presenting the results of the review

Across the range of circumstances researched it is clear that grandparents provide childcare as a support to their adult children when their adult children need assistance in managing the impact of social and economic change. Grandparents regard grandparental childcare as an extension of their responsibilities to their adult children. For example, grandparents in Thailand support their adult children in migrating to distant domestic cities for better lives through help with childcare in rural home (Ingersoll-Dayton *et al.*, 2018). Vietnamese grandparents migrate to Australia to help their adult children with childcare motivated by fulfilling obligations of family care (Thi Nguyen *et al.*, 2023). In a British study, 'baby boomers' who have been portrayed as selfish and individualistic provide unpaid childcare for their grandchildren (Airey *et al.*, 2021). Their provision of childcare is motivated by familial obligations to their adult children, underlining the importance of family-based childcare, and intergenerational solidarity.

Conflictual aspects can be seen in the interactions between grandparents and parents in relation to grandparent childcare. The expectation of parents towards grandparents' availability for childcare is evident in a study of French grandparents who had migrated to Spain. A daughter-in-law reacted with hostility when the grandparents decided to live abroad. She said: 'Yes, you won't be there when we have children, you only think of yourself' (Repetti and Calasanti, 2020). Dissatisfaction was also expressed by Latino grandparents in the United States in relation to grandchildren's leisure-time physical activity according to Xie *et al.* (2020). Grandparents expressed their opinions that parents did not support their children's involvement in physical activity but encouraged a sedentary lifestyle by purchasing toys and video games. They also disagreed with their adult children's overprotective parenting strategies which they saw as over-concerned with potential injuries in outdoor activities. It is clear from these studies that interactions between grandparents and parents around childcare are intense. Managing such interactions requires both parties to be sensitive to the other's needs, and proactive in avoiding upsets and conflicts.

Interactions in relation to grandparents and children are also identified. To a large extent, grandchildren appear to be a source of contentment for their grandparents across all cultures helping grandparents feel delighted and less lonely in their old age (Ingersoll-Dayton *et al.*, 2018). A grandmother in Thailand described her grandson as a person with whom she could have a conversation with laughter (Ingersoll-Dayton *et al.*, 2018). Cohabitation and migration

could impact positively on grandparent-grandchild relationships. Cohabitation in Czech families created direct ties between grandparents and grandchildren without the involvement of adult children (Souralová and Žáková, 2019). Reciprocal relationships were also reported; for example, a grandson said he had a wonderful relationship with his grandparents who were always there for him when he needed them. He hoped to take care of them and repay them for their care in the future. In contrast, in an Israeli study on grandparenting preterm infants, parents play a role as gatekeepers between grandparents and grandchildren, which is most significant when children are at young ages (Zafirir Priel *et al.*, 2022). It seems paradoxical that migration and distance can increase intimacy between grandparents and grandchildren (Ducu, 2020; Repetti and Calasanti, 2020). In Romanian transnational families, sharing a religion helped grandparents and grandchildren to build special relationships (Ducu, 2020).

Children's development plays a central role in how adult children perceive grandparents' involvement in childcare. In a Russian study, parents did not want their children to experience a repetition of their own experience, where their own parents' educational approaches influenced their self-esteem and abilities negatively (Sivak, 2018). The importance of ensuring positive outcomes was a source of guilt and lack of confidence for some grandparents. Language was an even bigger problem for a Romanian grandmother in her relationship with her grandchildren, because they spoke no Romanian (Ducu, 2020). To overcome the problem, the grandmother learned to speak some English. One grandmother in Thailand worried about her grandchildren's education not only because she thought her level of education was a problem, but also because the money the parents sent her was not sufficient to cover the school fees (Ingersoll-Dayton *et al.*, 2020). In a study on Turkish grandparents who are first-generation migrants in Germany, grandparent childcare is interpreted as intergenerational conflict rather than intergenerational solidarity, but because of the aim of achieving cultural continuity through the children's generation, grandparents maintain childcare provision (Tezcan, 2021).

Based on reviewing the 21 identified articles a range of issues emerged from the experiences of the three generations involved: grandparents, parents and children. These issues reflect the specific national and transnational circumstances of the particular families studied – circumstances marked by significant social and economic change. Both opportunities and challenges exist in the interaction between grandparents and parents, as well as between grandparents and grandchildren. It is within the dynamics of these more or less explicitly negotiated interactions that the involvement of grandparents in childcare occurs, and outcomes for children are achieved. In the following sections, a research review is presented on empirical research specifically in China.

3.2 Review of Empirical Research on Grandparent Childcare in China

This section comprises a review of empirical research on grandparent childcare in mainland China.

3.2.1 Search strategy

Three databases were searched: Social Science Citation Index (SSCI); the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS); Sociological Abstracts (SA). The first cluster of keywords was 'child care' OR 'childcare' OR 'child-care' OR 'child rearing' OR 'child-rearing' OR 'child rear' in all the databases above. The second cluster of keywords was 'grandparents' OR 'ageing parents' OR 'aging parents' OR 'senior parents' OR 'grandparental' searched in IBSS and SA – but not in SSCI, because a lot of the literature was not significantly relevant to grandparent childcare, but rather concerned care for older people. Instead, the cluster of keywords 'grandparents' OR 'grandparental' was searched in SSCI. The third cluster of keywords was 'Chinese' OR 'China'. All the keywords were searched in abstracts. Articles were limited to the latest articles in English published from 2017 to 2022. Peer-reviewed articles were searched in IBSS and SA. In SSCI, there was no function as there is in IBSS and Sociological Abstracts to for only search peer-reviewed articles. In the three databases, 83 articles were identified in SSCI, 28 in IBSS, and 24 in SA (Table 1).

Table 1 Result of Searching and Screening

Name	Result of Searching	Result of Screening
Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)	83	41
International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS)	28	14
Sociological Abstracts (SA)	24	12

Since this search concentrated primarily on literature that was significantly relative to grandparent childcare in China, the whole text of all the articles was screened based on this focus. After screening, 41 articles in SSCI, 14 articles emerged from IBSS, and 12 from SA. After

removing duplication within the three databases, 45 empirical articles were identified. Compared to a scoping study at the research design stage, the search strategy at this stage was more specific, so that articles that were significantly relative to grandparent childcare could be reviewed. Through this review, five themes were developed in relation to grandparent childcare in empirical studies: children's health and development, grandparents' health and caregiving experiences, intergenerational support and intergenerational relationships, childcare arrangements, and fertility decisions. The following review of the empirical research are presented according to the five themes.

3.2.2 Presenting the results of the review

Theme 1: Grandparent childcare and children's health and development

The literature on grandparent childcare focused on children can be classified into two categories: children's health and children's development. Most articles in relation to children's health in the recent five years focuses on the physical health of children. Sun and Yang (2021) use height-for-age Z-score (HAZ) and the frequency of being sick in the past four weeks as indicators to examine the effect of grandparenting on the health of children aged zero to 15 years old. They find that grandparenting impacts children's health negatively, but the negative impact declines if grandparents provided partial childcare. There are studies specifically focusing on children's weight or sleep in relation to grandparent childcare. Wei *et al.* (2017) investigate the relationships between feeding style and weight among children aged three to five years. It is reported that where grandparents are the main caregivers with independent relationships, the risk of obese and overweight children increases. The results of the study by Li *et al.* (2017) show that 12-month-old infants who are looked after by grandparents have higher rates of excessive weight and obesity. Due to the one-child policy and the deprivation that grandparents experienced in the 1960s, it has been shown that they overfeed and indulge their grandchildren (Li *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, it is also reported in this study that indulgent grandparents are barriers for parents to control their children's dietary intake and increase children's physical activities. A qualitative study by Wu *et al.* (2021) report that grandparents lack awareness of the weight status of children aged zero to six years, and some grandparents consider chubbiness in children as signs of good health, feeding competence, and good care. In addition, it is identified that where grandparents are primary caregivers, the risk of preschool children's sleep disturbance increases compared with parental care (Li *et al.*, 2021).

Compared to the findings above that grandparent childcare has a negative impact on children's health, the findings of studies by Liu *et al.* (2021) and Yu and Zhang (2021) identify a positive impact of grandparent childcare on children's physical health. A quantitative study by

Liu *et al.* (2021) examines the effect of grandparent childcare on the physical health of children. They utilise indicators including WHO height for age Z-score (HAZ score) and weight-for-age Z score (WAZ) for children under five years and Bmit-for-age Z Score (BAZ) for children aged six to 19 years. The results show that grandparents' involvement in childcare has a beneficial effect on children's physical development compared to the development of children whose grandparents are not involved in childcare. Similarly, the results of the study by Yu and Zhang (2021) show that grandparents' co-residence with children aged two to 18 years has a positive impact on children's health. In addition to the studies focusing on children's physical health, Yang and Liu (2020) examine the relationships between grandparenting styles and depression among left-behind children aged 11 to 18 years in rural areas, and the mediating role of food insecurity. They find that grandparental rejection had a positive association with childhood depression. Moreover, grandparental emotional warmth has a negative association with childhood depression. These studies indicate that grandparent childcare impacts children's health in different manners, positively or negatively. The following literature reports the role of grandparent childcare in children's development.

Grandparents play a determinant role in the psychological and behavioural outcomes of left-behind children aged 11 to 16 years (Song *et al.*, 2018). Tong and Kawachi (2021) find that children aged 1.6 to seven years whose grandparents are primary caregivers show more ADHD symptoms in preschool, and the association is more significant for children with siblings, and among children from rural areas. There are studies showing the negative impact of grandparenting on children's behaviours (Li *et al.*, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2019; Luo *et al.*, 2020). Li *et al.* (2018) find that parenting by a grandmother is significantly related to the internalising of problems among children aged six to 12 years. This view is supported by Li *et al.* (2019) who report that grandparenting negatively impacts children's behaviours; children in this sample were aged from 11 to 14 years. The results show that compared to children who are parented by their parents, children parented by grandparents exhibit more behavioural problems. Children in the study of Luo *et al.* (2020) were aged from 38 to 74 months and it reported that grandparents' involvement in looking after children negatively related to the children's behavioural problems. Zhang *et al.* (2021) find that the higher the quality of the grandparent and parent co-parenting, the more likely children are to learn how to control their behaviours and emotions. Zhang *et al.* (2021) and Li *et al.* (2017) present the impact of grandparent childcare on the development of children in early childhood children. Zhang *et al.* (2021) focus on the effects of parental care and grandparental care on development of children aged seven months to 59 months old. Their findings demonstrate that the development of children taken care of by grandparents alone is delayed in terms of walking, counting, toilet training and talking. Li *et al.* (2022) study the association between grandparent childcare and children's development.

Their results show that the physical and mental development of children aged six to 11 years looked after by grandparents are not as good as those of children looked after by parents. The studies show the impact of grandparents' involvement in childcare not only on children's physical and psychological health, but also on children's development.

Theme 2: Grandparent childcare and grandparents' health and caregiving experiences

Literature about grandparent childcare focuses not only on children's health but also on the health of grandparents involved in childcare. Wang *et al.* (2020) demonstrate that the following factors impact grandparents' health self-management negatively: taking care of children at night; assuming more than 50 per cent of childcare; taking care of children with poor behaviours; spending over six hours every day on childcare. The findings have similarities to the 'burned-out grandparents' phenomenon described in a qualitative study of grandparents with very busy daily routines, including household chores, personal business and sometimes taking care of more than one preschool child (Dai, 2019, pp.2399-2400). Conversely, Zhou *et al.* (2017) find that taking care of children has a positive impact on grandparents' perception of their health, in particular for repeated caregivers. Repeated caregivers refers to grandparents who have had previous experience of taking care of grandchildren.

In addition to investigating the role of grandparent childcare on grandparents' physical health, further literature focuses on the mental health of grandparents who take care of children. Zhang *et al.* (2021) explore the impacts of grandparent childcare on grandparents' loneliness and find that grandparents involved in childcare are less likely to feel lonely, compared to those who are not. Likewise, Tang *et al.* (2021) investigate the relationship between the intensity of caregiving and depressive symptoms among grandparents. Grandparents who have medium childcare involvement, namely ten to 40 hours a week, had better mental health than grandparents who did not get involved in childcare (Tang *et al.*, 2021). In contrast to Tang *et al.* (2021), for grandparents living in skipped-generation households – in which parents do not live with grandparents and children – financial support from parents plays a determining role in grandparents' emotional and cognitive health compared to the intensity of care (Silverstein and Zuo, 2021). The study by Choi and Zhang (2021) show that grandparents have a lower level of depressive symptoms in skipped generation households where parents are absent. In families where grandparents and parents co-parent children, it is found that children have fewer daily routines, but their caregivers show higher levels of depression symptoms. Moreover, the negative impact of caregivers' depression symptoms on child routines is from parents rather than grandmothers (Jiang *et al.*, 2021).

Yang (2021) has conducted a cross-national study including China, England and 13 European countries. The results show that in low-income countries like China, transitioning to grandparenthood lessens the depression scores of grandparents whereas it increases depression scores in higher-income countries like England. Luo *et al.* (2020) illustrate that, compared to parents, grandparents have less parenting behaviour for adolescents aged 12 to 14. It is also reported in this research that grandparents provide more support for girls while grandparents' scores on all parenting variables are the lowest. Overall, these studies focusing on the impact of grandparent childcare on grandparents' health and parenting are all quantitative. Both positive and negative impact are identified in the studies. In addition to quantitative studies, there is a small number of qualitative studies exploring grandparents' caregiving experiences in childcare.

Qi (2018) demonstrates the changing norms of family obligations in that grandparents travel a long way to help parents take care of children, whereas the traditional obligation of filial piety is that children should not travel far while their parents are still alive. As noted in the previous chapter, filial piety means respect for your parents, taking care of your parents when needed, and obeying your parents. Rural grandmothers in this study are innovative in terms of childcare arrangements, which is contrary to the dominant perceptions of grandmothers from rural areas – 'backward, passive, dependent and ignorant' (Qi, 2018, p.765). In terms of gender roles, in this study, the patriarchal tradition plays a dominant role in childcare in rural areas, where paternal grandparents involve themselves more in childcare. In contrast to this tradition that grandmothers help their sons with childcare, this study suggests that more maternal grandmothers help their daughters with childcare.

Hu *et al.* (2019) interviewed 23 caregivers of left-behind children in rural areas, including 22 grandparents and one uncle. They find that caregivers maintain a figure of authority to make children listen to them, while the caregivers are reluctant to discipline children because of their role as grandparents not parents. Caregivers feel they are responsible for taking care of children, although they feel stressed because of pressure from children's peers, other caregivers, relatives and school. They feel confident about their daily childcare, but not about education for the children. Caregivers perceive the support they receive from children, their relatives, children's teachers, and neighbours, so the factors that make caregivers feel stressed also are the sources of their support.

Grandparent childcare impacts grandparents' physical and psychological health (Zhou *et al.*, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2020; Zhang *et al.*, 2021), in different ways depending on the intensity of their involvement in childcare and on support from parents (Wang *et al.*, 2020; Silverstein and Zuo, 2021; Tang *et al.*, 2021). Grandparents' experiences were explored in the qualitative

research (Qi, 2018; Hu *et al.*, 2019; Huang *et al.*, 2020), especially the changing norms and roles of grandparents in the macro socioeconomic contexts, such as shifts in rural patriarchal tradition, and in grandparents travelling further to help their adult children in childcare, both outlined above.

Theme 3: Intergenerational support and intergenerational relationships

Xu and Chi (2018) explore the intergenerational support between grandparents and their grandchildren using quantitative methods. They examine the determinants of support exchange between grandparents and their grandchildren in rural China. Their findings show that grandparents are more likely to provide support for their grandchildren if they have taken care of grandchildren in the past – and children who are taken care of by grandparents are more likely to provide support to their grandparents, although the statistical significance is not strong. Besides, the parent generation is identified as a bridge between the grandparent generation and the child generation. Moreover, grandparents' emotional closeness with the parent generation is found in this study to have a positive association with support exchange between grandparents and children. Zhou *et al.* (2021) investigate the associations between the quality of the grandparent-grandchild relationship and both parties' subjective well-being, related to 'an individual's emotional reactions and cognitive judgements about the overall quality of life' (Zhou *et al.*, 2021, p.1890). The results show that grandparents' and grandchildren's levels of relationship quality are positively associated with grandparents' and grandchildren's subjective well-being. Qiu *et al.* (2022) conducted a qualitative study to explore the support exchange between grandparents and parents in rural China. Their findings show that the descending support from grandparents to parents outweighs the ascending support from parents to grandparents. They also find that the reciprocal support from parents to grandparents can be deferred, because grandparents who provide childcare are relatively young and not yet in need of elder care. In a qualitative study, when grandparents and parents have different opinions, mothers-in-law – namely paternal grandmothers – avoid confrontation with daughters-in-law – mothers – and these mothers-in-law adopt different strategies in the relationships with their sons than those they pursue with their daughters-in-law (Qi, 2018). Strong family obligation and affection for children motivate grandparents to migrate and help parents with childcare and they do not expect return from parents although they make sacrifices including financial loss and familiar lifestyles, friends and happiness in their hometown. Nevertheless, the norm that parents have a duty to support grandparents is still strong (Qi, 2018).

Theme 4: Childcare arrangements

A small number of articles focuses on childcare arrangements in relation to grandparent childcare. Dai (2019) utilises qualitative methods to investigate childcare arrangements in landless farmers' families in the context of urbanisation. Further to the impact of urbanisation noted in the previous chapter, this study draws attention to how it transforms childcare arrangements for landless farmers' families. In the past, gender-based care, with grandmothers and mothers as caregivers, was the norm. This transforms nowadays to generation-based care in which the grandparent generation, including both grandmothers and grandfathers, undertake the caregiver roles, while parents work in the labour force. However, the findings also show that having grandparents as main caregivers adds to mothers' guilt and anxiety because of their own absence from childcare. Mothers, however, have to work in the labour force and achieve family survival in an urban society.

Rather than focusing on families in the context of urbanisation, or families with left-behind children in rural areas, the qualitative research of Lin and Mao (2022) explores grandparent childcare in local families where parents are the only child in their original families in urban Tianjin, which is a municipality near Beijing, the capital of China. The findings demonstrate that grandparents are the natural and normative choice in relation to childcare arrangements in many families. Both the paternal and maternal grandparents perceive themselves as having the responsibility of taking care of children. Furthermore, the findings report that the negotiation of childcare arrangements is gendered because more childcare responsibilities are assumed by grandmothers and mothers than by grandfathers and fathers. Thus, conflicts in relation to childcare occur more frequently between grandmothers and mothers (Lin and Mao, 2022). Zhang *et al.* (2019) utilise mixed methods and explore the transformation of childcare arrangements from patrilineality to a bilateral or matrilineal pattern. Maternal grandmothers are more likely to be the caregivers when avoiding conflicts between paternal grandmothers and mothers is taken into consideration. Their findings report that maternal grandmothers' involvement in childcare is associated with renegotiated grandparent and parent relations, women's empowerment in their original families, and child-centred care.

Theme 5: Fertility decisions

Research that focuses on fertility decisions about having a second child in relation to grandparent childcare is mostly quantitative. Grandparent childcare plays an important role in increasing the fertility level (Gu *et al.*, 2021; Wang and Zhao, 2021; Wang and Zhao, 2022). Grandparents' availability significantly increases working women's fertility rates (Gu *et al.*, 2021). Wang and Zhao (2022) demonstrate that grandparent childcare positively impacts the

second birth, although grandparents' involvement in childcare could promote mothers' participation in the labour force, and thus limit second birth. They suggest that grandparent childcare should be encouraged in terms of policy intervention; however, this suggestion lacks consideration of individual's feelings, such as mothers' feelings of guilt and anxiety over absence mentioned in the childcare arrangements section above. Unlike the quantitative research, a qualitative study provides a new lens to help understand young women's motivations and intentions in having a second child in a small city. With the implementation of the two-child policy, parents took into consideration the grandparents' desires and the wellbeing of their children, as well as their own elder care in the future, before making fertility decisions (Ji *et al.*, 2020). Nevertheless, some parents with siblings are reluctant to have a second child because it would dilute quality of life and exclusive love for their single child (Ji *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, sibling status not only impacts parents' fertility intentions, but also dilutes grandparents' support in childcare. A quantitative study found that the mother's siblings or the father's siblings dilute childcare assistance from grandparents especially, when the father has brothers (Zhao and Zhang, 2019).

Overall, empirical studies about grandparent childcare are discussed based on the above five themes: children's health and development (Li *et al.*, 2017; Wei *et al.*, 2017; Yang and Liu, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2021; Liu *et al.*, 2021; Sun and Yang, 2021; Wu *et al.*, 2021; Yu and Zhang, 2021), grandparents' health and caregiving experiences (Zhou *et al.*, 2017; Qi, 2018; Hu *et al.*, 2019; Luo *et al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2020; Choi and Zhang, 2021; Silverstein and Zuo, 2021; Tang *et al.*, 2021; Yang, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2021; Huang *et al.*, 2022), intergenerational support and relationships (Xu and Chi, 2018; Zhou *et al.*, 2021; Qiu *et al.*, 2022), childcare arrangements (Dai, 2019; Zhang *et al.*, 2019; Lin and Mao, 2022), and fertility decisions (Zhang and Luh, 2018; Zhao and Zhang, 2019; Ji *et al.*, 2020; Gu *et al.*, 2021; Wang and Zhao, 2021; Wang and Zhao, 2022). Both positive and negative associations are identified between grandparent childcare and grandparents' health, between grandparent childcare and children's health, and between grandparent childcare and children's development. The third theme shows that the relationship between grandparents and parents impacts grandparents' involvement in childcare. The emotional closeness between grandparents and parents is positively associated with the support exchange between grandparents and grandchildren. Moreover, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren impact their subjective wellbeing. Most of these studies follow quantitative methods. Only a few studies explore grandparents' caregiving experiences and childcare arrangements using qualitative methods. Grandparents' experiences of caregiving show the changing trends of filial piety and patriarchal traditions in families where rural grandparents migrated to cities to help their adult children with childcare. In addition, caregivers experienced challenges in educating children. In terms

of childcare arrangements, the changing cultural aspect is shown in the transformation from gender-based care to generation-based care although gender-based care is still strong. Moreover, mothers' absence in childcare leads to their feelings of guilt and anxiety. In terms of fertility decisions, both quantitative and qualitative studies find that grandparents' assistance in childcare positively impact fertility decisions.

3.3 Conclusion

Grandparent childcare is a global phenomenon, common not only in China but also around the world. Based on the reviews of recent research globally and in China, childcare arrangements with grandparents' involvement and interactions between grandparents and parents during these arrangements has received inadequate attention. Moreover, little research has explored grandparent childcare in recent years in Jilin Province, where TFR remains low as mentioned in Chapter One. Public and private childcare services for children under three are limited as noted in Chapter Two. Grandparents' involvement in childcare for children under three is significant compared to that for children of other age groups. There is a need to draw attention to childcare arrangements in families where grandparents are involved in childcare for children under three and interactions within these families in this area. The subsequent chapter presents the theoretical perspectives of this research and the construction of the Integrated Family Model.

Chapter Four: Constructing the Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the four theoretical underpinnings of this research and the construction of an Integrated Family Model. At the research design stage, the initial theoretical framework selected the ecological framework of human development along with family support; they inform research design elements such as the design of interview guides – but not in a significant way. This research adopts a rather inductive approach which is presented in the following chapter. As research progressed to the stage of interpretation and discussion of findings, family support was found not to be sufficiently helpful in understanding childcare arrangements and interactions in families. Family support focuses on supporting families through integrated programmes. However, this research focuses on how grandparents' involvement in childcare as support is arranged, and on interactions within families, which is self-support within the family network. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework is not sufficiently sensitive to the Chinese context. Therefore, at the stage of interpreting and discussing the findings, mosaic familism and intergenerationality in neo-familism are added.

Mosaic familism is developed based on Chinese society, and its focus is on the family pattern and the interdependent intergenerational relationships between grandparents and parents embedded in that society. Intergenerationality in neo-familism draws attention to changes in Chinese family and in intergenerational dynamics within families. Because of their focus and the specific context – both closely relevant to my research – they were added as overarching theories. An Integrated Family Model was constructed based on the mosaic family model and developed assisted by the four theoretical perspectives. This is discussed in the fifth section of this chapter, which addresses components of the theoretical framework in turn: mosaic familism, intergenerationality in neo-familism, the ecological framework of human development, and family support. The construction of the Integrated Family Model follows, with the chapter ending on a conclusion.

4.1 Mosaic Familism

Mosaic familism is developed by Yingchun Ji (计迎春), a Chinese sociologist based in China, Ji (2017, p.8) identifies a distinct family pattern 'mosaic familialism'.

I thus call this distinct family pattern a mosaic familialism, characterized by a sequential symbiosis between parents and children facing financial constraints and unforeseeable uncertainties given a weak social welfare system. In this mosaic pattern, modernity and tradition stand side by side; men and women, parents and children, husband and wife live and work together, negotiate between traditional norms and modern desires, test and practice gender and generation boundaries, exchange love and money, and form a strong yet vulnerable safety net embedded in the intricate temporality of Chinese society.

The context in which this distinct family pattern is embedded, is Chinese society, described as 'a gigantic mosaic' by Ji (2017, p.2) as follows.

I refer to the ongoing, complex, institutional and cultural reconfiguration of Chinese society, driven by the transition from the socialist planned economy to marketization and its more recent, deep involvement in globalization and neoliberalism. In the reshaping of Chinese society – in this gigantic mosaic – tradition and modernity, the resurgence of Confucianism, the socialist version of modernity, the capitalist version of modernity, and the socialist heritage are interwoven, and all seem to play a role.

By reflecting on the Western family and demographic theories, including the classical family modernisation theory by American sociologist William Goode, the second demographic transition theory by two European demographers Ron Lesthaeghe and Dirk van de Kaa, and the fallacy of the developmental paradigm on family life pointed out by American sociologist Arland Thornton, Ji (2019) argues that it is necessary to develop localised family theories in China.

In a recent paper, Ji *et al.* (2020, pp.116-117) explained *mosaic familism* as below.

A mosaic family model emerges – a bilateral, intergenerational symbiosis system following a gendered pattern, where parents (on both sides, for married couples) and adult children are interdependent in terms of both finance and emotion, and modern practices and traditional norms concerning gender and family coexist, interweave, and clash at the same time (Ji, 2017; Ji *et al.* 2017; Ji, 2019; Ji, 2020). Parents handsomely and intensively invest in their children until they become adults and continue to provide financial and emotional help as well as providing care and housework. With a married couple, parental help is doubled into a bilateral package. Children respect their parents, are obligated by their parents' heavy sacrifices, and are expected to provide old age support. This intergenerational interdependence also shows a complicated yet subtle gender pattern, with caregiving, either of children or the elderly, disproportionately carried on by generations of women.

Ji argues that the interdependent intergenerational relationships between parents and their adult children are in a bilateral and intergenerational symbiosis system. The word symbiosis is a term from the subject of biology. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2022), symbiosis means 'a relationship between two types of animal or plant in which each provides for the other the conditions necessary for its continued existence'. The term here is to stress the interdependence between parents and their adult children. In the paper published in 2017, Ji puts emphasis on the macro context of the family pattern, the intricate temporality and the gigantic mosaic of Chinese society. In a more recent paper, Ji (2020) further develops mosaic familism and proposes for it five components based on her empirical research.

First, the re-institutionalisation of family and the macro regime in transitional Chinese society is embarked upon an intricate entanglement of tradition and modernity. Second, a bilateral, intergenerational and multinuclear symbiosis system following a gendered pattern has emerged in the Chinese family. The development of Chinese families does not follow the path of classic Western theories which emphasise an increase in nuclear families and a decline in

intergenerational relationships. Third, finance, emotion, care, expectation, obligation and responsibility flow through the parent-and-child symbiosis system. Fourth, women from different generations undertake caregiving and non-paid housework. Fifth, the entanglement of tradition and modernisation occur at different levels, including daily life, culture and macrostructure.

Ji (2020, p.81) has created a bilateral, intergenerational and multinuclear symbiosis mosaic family model (Figure 4) to illustrate the symbiosis system.

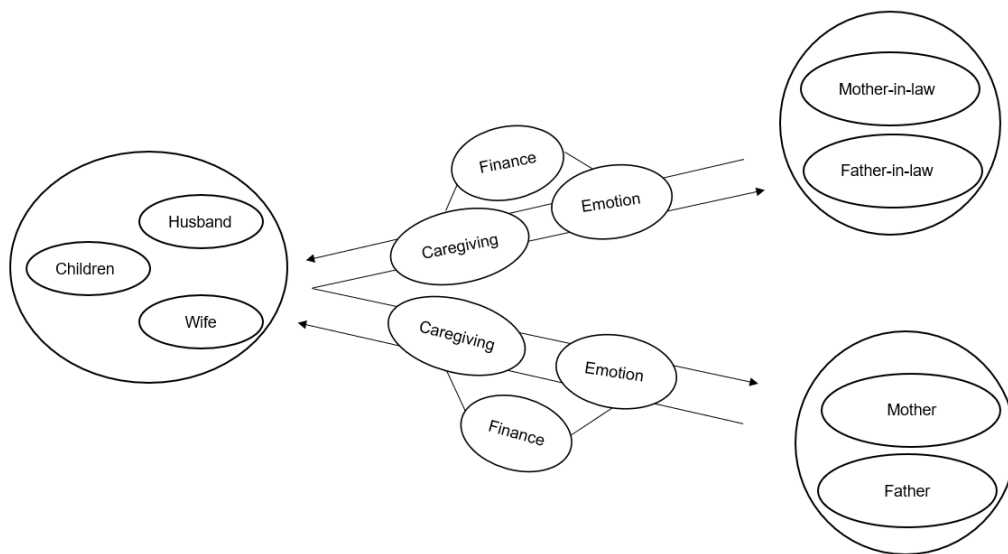


Figure 4 A bilateral, intergenerational and multinuclear symbiosis mosaic family model (as translated from a Chinese language article)

As the name of this model implies, the features include 'bilateral', 'intergenerational' and 'multinuclear'. The model encompasses three families: the family including the children, the wife and the husband; the family of the parents-in-law; the family of the parents. This reflects the multinuclear characteristics. The family of the parents-in-law and the family of the parents are identified from the perspective of the wife or the husband on the left. The wife is the mother of her children, the wife of her husband. She is also a daughter of her parents and a daughter-in-law of her parents-in-law. The feature 'bilateral' refers to the two sides involving parents and parents-in-law. Parents are interdependent with both sides in relation to finance, caregiving and emotion, which reflects the intergenerational interactions. The three features also interweave with each one another. For example, the intergenerational interactions are bilateral, including the husband-and-wife family with both the parents' family and the family of parents-in-law in the multinuclear family. Ji (2020) adds to the earlier explanation of mosaic familism the 'multinuclear' element in her description of the symbiosis system (Figure 4). In this model, the bilateral, intergenerational and multinuclear features are clearly shown. Ji (2020) argues

that the mosaic family model could also be utilised to explain some non-traditional families such as the single parent family, the cohabitating parents family, and same-sex parents family.

The terms Ji uses to identify the theory in English vary in her papers. In the paper published earlier, Ji (2017) uses *mosaic familialism* to name the family pattern. In her recent paper, Ji *et al.* (2020) use the term *mosaic familism* to name the theory. The term in Chinese is *ma sai ke jia ting zhu yi* (马赛克家庭主义, mosaic familialism/mosaic familism) (Ji, 2020). In this thesis, in order to make the terms used consistent and easy for reader to understand, the term *mosaic familism* is used to refer to this theoretical perspective. In the next section, intergenerationality in neo-familism, the other primary theoretical perspective, is presented.

4.2 Intergenerationality in Chinese Neo-Familism

In the article about developing localised family theories in Chinese society noted in the previous section, Ji (2019) emphasises the profound influence of Yan's research about Chinese family, on developing localised family theories in China. Yunxiang Yan (阎云翔) is a Chinese anthropologist based in the United States. He was one of the urban youths that went to villages and became a farmer in the *shang shan xia xiang* (上山下乡, the Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages Movement). This is a part of the life course of *lao san jie* (老三届) mentioned in Chapter One. His well-known longitudinal fieldwork for nearly three decades was conducted in Xiajia village where he worked as a farmer in the movement. Xiajia village is in north-east China, as is Taonan, where participants in my research were recruited. The difference between them is Xiajia village is in the rural area. Participants in my research were mostly recruited from the urban area of Taonan city. Nevertheless, the implications of Yan's research are strong because of the shared macro context where China's urban and rural families are embedded. Moreover, Xiajia village and Taonan share many similarities in terms of social and cultural dimensions, because of their geographical proximity in the north-east of China.

In 2021, the book *Chinese Families Upside Down: Intergenerational Dynamics and Neo-Familism in the Early 21st Century* was published. Yan is the editor of the book and the author of Chapters One, Ten and Eleven. In this book, Yan proposes using the notion intergenerationality as a conceptual tool to describe changes in family life and to theorise new patterns of intergenerational interactions. Compared to intergenerational relations, the notion of intergenerationality has three advantages, set out below (Yan, 2021, pp.12-14).

First of all, intergenerationality is a neutral term that has no preconceived meanings and thus may widen our vision. ... Moreover, the notion of intergenerationality draws our attention to interactions instead of relations across generational lines ... furthermore, the notion of intergenerationality

tionality highlights individual agency and thus does not overlook the subjective aspects of intergenerational interactions, such as intimacy, affection, and moral reasoning, which may counterbalance the existing bias in favor of the economic and political aspects of intergenerational relations in the literature on family studies.

The advantage of the notion of intergenerationality draws attention to intergenerational interactions instead of relations. Yan (2021) argues that the core of contemporary intergenerational dynamics is grandparenting where multiple generations are all involved including paternal and maternal grandparents, parents and children. It highlights the importance of exploring the intergenerational interactions in the context of grandparenting in Chinese families. Yet, this complexity would be overlooked if the dyadic interactions between two generations alone are emphasised; for example, intersecting generations like grandparents and grandchildren are overlooked in most current research (Yan, 2021). Furthermore, Yan argues that the post-patriarchal intergenerationality could be used as a conceptual tool to describe family changes and to theorise new patterns in intergenerational interactions (Yan, 2021).

In his previous paper, Yan (2016, p.250 & p.254) proposes descending familism where grandparents' and parents' hard work and meaning of life are attached to the happiness and success of the children's generation, which leads to a downward flow of care, love, family resources and tensions.

The functional benefits of intergenerational collaboration and the redefinition of filial piety (as well as associated behavioral changes) generate intergenerational solidarity. For old parents and their adult children alike, their ultimate goal of hard work and their meaning in life are fixed on the happiness and success of the children of the third generation, thus leading to a downward flow of tensions, care, love, and family resources in descending familism and paving the way to intergenerational intimacy... In traditional China, the great self (bearing the interests of a collectivity) was one's ancestors, but under Maoism it was replaced by the socialist nation-state, and today it is mostly embodied in the perfect children of the third generation, who carry the burden of realizing the dreams of their parents and grandparents.

The notion of descending familism indicates that the importance and meaning of family life have shifted from ancestors to children. According to his longitudinal research, Yan (2016) finds that intergenerational intimacy was mainly between married women and their own parents. As time goes by, he finds that the intergenerational intimacy has expanded from married women with not only their own parents, but also with their parents-in-law.

Yan develops the notion of descending familism and comes up with the notion of the inverted family and Chinese neo-familism. According to the first feature of the inverted family, unlike the traditional patriarchal familism where authority and power are defined by generation, age and gender, the youths gain more autonomy and freedom with the decline of parental authority and power (Yan, 2021). The second feature shows that the focus of family life has shifted from ancestors to children of the third generation. Although parents have gained power and support from grandparents, they have to prioritise their children over their personal interest. Due to the

elimination of ancestor worship, the decline in public life and early retirement age, for grandparents, their adult children are important emotional and spiritual attachments. The second feature is also an important element of neo-familism, which is presented later in this section. The third feature shows that the inverted hierarchy is also reflected in the demographic structure. More people are from the older generation, while fewer are from the younger generation. The mainstream family structures are 4-2-1 and 4-2-2. There are four grandparents are from both maternal and paternal sides, two parents and one or two children. Four grandparents are from the older generation, two parents in the middle generation and one or two children from the younger generation. These family structures are due to the population policies in China as well as the declining fertility rate and increasing life expectancy. The fourth feature is about the new patterns of conflict, especially the contradiction between individual happiness and family prosperity. The last feature argues that the inverted family is due to multidirectional or self-contradictory state policies.

Yan argues that the central role of intergenerational interaction indicates the rise of neo-familism which is 'an important social trend that is changing the identity of the individual, family life, and individual-state relationship in contemporary China' (Yan, 2021, p.15). An explanation of Chinese neo-familism, and a comparison between traditional familism and neo-familism are as follows. (Yan, 2021, p.15).

The notion of Chinese neo-familism refers to the new discourses and new practices since the early 2000s that invoke familism as the primary strategy to pursue both individual happiness and family prosperity through the collective efforts of a multi-generational domestic group. As such, it demonstrates both similarities to and differences from traditional familism. The similarities focus on the foundational idea that the interests of the family take precedence over the interests of the individual family members, but the balancing of family interests and individual interests diverges across generational lines that is a nuanced difference.

Neo-familism shares similarity with traditional familism that the collective interests of the family are prioritised over individual interests. Familism is the primary strategy within neo-familism to achieve family prosperity and personal happiness. Baker and Silverstein (2012) identify grandparents' involvement in childcare in Chinese families as a strategy to strengthen the economic status of the extended family. This shows the similarity between neo-familism and traditional familism in that collective interests are prioritised over personal interests. The difference is that the balancing of collective interests and individual interests is divergent across generations. Neo-familism exists and is raised based on the differences from and comparison with traditional familism. This can be seen in the description of the features of neo-familism proposed by Yan (2018); Yan (2021) develops the features of neo-familism further, as follows.

The first and second features are relevant to descending familism and inverted families. First, the focus of the ultimate goal of the family has changed from the ancestors to the youngest

generations. In the context of grandparenting, the children's generation is the youngest generation in the family. The ultimate goal of the family is attached to the happiness and success of the children. Second, the focus on children leads to diverse ways in family formation. Particularly, when it comes to grandparenting, the focus on children leads to diverse living arrangements. In Yan's previous paper, he identifies two emergent, unconventional forms of family structure in Xiajia village: the quasi-stem family and the skipped-generation family (Yan, 2016). In 2015, 26 per cent of the families in Xiajia village had apartments in the urban area. The quasi-stem family is a two-in-one unit where grandparents and parents have two independent households in the city. They closely interact with each other in everyday practice. For example, grandparents provide childcare and conduct household chores. The second form of the emerging family structure is the skipped-generation family which is common in rural areas. Parents migrate to the cities to work and their children are left behind to live with and be taken care of by their grandparents. In the household, there are children's generation and the grandparent generation, while parents of the middle generation are absent. Therefore, this family structure is called the skipped-generation family. Importantly, the features of the family structure are identified: flexible, complex and ever-changing.

The third feature of neo-familism emphasises the saliency of intergenerational dependence and solidarity, and the formation of intergenerational identity, as follows (Yan, 2021, p.16).

Intergenerational dependence and solidarity have gained a new saliency in both the pragmatic and emotional aspects of family life, so much so that a new intergenerational identity is in the making. The identity ties parents and adult children together as a unified whole, known as the 'integrated oneness of parents and children' (亲子一体) in family discourse as well as practice (Liu, 2016).

This feature is a new one compared to the three features in Yan's paper published in 2018. The new intergenerational identity ties parents and children as *qin zi yi ti* (the integrated oneness of parents and children, 亲子一体) in the pragmatic and emotional aspects of family life. The fourth feature is about the 'intimate turn' in family life, which is relevant to intergenerational intimacy in Yan's previous paper, demonstrated in detail in the forthcoming paragraphs. The fifth feature is the intense pressure that people face in order to achieve family prosperity in the amid hyper-materialism. The last feature is the conflict between individual interests and family interests.

The emergent intergenerational intimacy is as 'perhaps the most intriguing development in family life' (Yan, 2016, p.253). The rising importance of intergenerational intimacy is significant, particularly that between parents and their adult children (Bregnbæk 2016, Evans 2008, and Yan 2016, 2018 cited by Yan 2021). The definition of intergenerational intimacy is as follows (Yan, 2016, p.250).

By intergenerational intimacy, I refer to a new kind of mutual knowing, understanding, and emotional sharing across generational lines reflected through intensive communications, verbal expressions, and bodily displays of emotional attachment.

Traditional familism exists based on a hierarchy in both gender and generational relations constraining equality and intimacy (Yan, 2021). Aspects of the emerging intergenerational intimacy that differ from the traditional practice are as follows: communicative intimacy, emotional intimacy expressed through embodied practices and exchange of gifts, tourism as a way to increase intergenerational intimacy, and conflicts resulting from intergenerational intimacy. Yan (2016) argues that emerging intergenerational intimacy mostly happens between married women and their own parents, which reflects the gendered feature of intergenerational intimacy.

In terms of neo-familism, Yan (2021) claims that improvisation is the key to understanding the endless change of household configuration and reinterpretation of structural principles and family values, and the pragmatic arrangements of intergenerational relations. Improvisation is viewed as a strategy and behaviour pattern in response to the challenges of an increasingly precarious, insecure and competitive Chinese society (Yan, 2018). Ordinary people utilise whatever resources available and improvise their lives creatively, flexibly and persistently on an ad hoc basis to achieve happiness in family life (Yan, 2018; Yan, 2021). By drawing attention to improvisation in Chinese family life, the importance of individual agency, emotionality, and personhood are re-emphasised (Yan, 2018). Whilst Ji's and Yan's studies are clearly grounded in Chinese reality, they have a resonance with the theoretical frameworks initially chosen, in particular the attention to inter-relationships within and between family systems. The following section will present the theoretical perspective of an ecological framework of human development.

4.3 The Ecological Framework of Human Development

Urie Bronfenbrenner published a book *The Ecology of Human Development*, In 1979. In the book, Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.21) defines the ecology of human development as follows.

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

Rosa and Tudge (2013) describe the development of Bronfenbrenner's theory as occurring in three phases: phase 1 (1973-1979), phase 2 (1980-1993), and phase 3 (1993-2006). In different phases, Bronfenbrenner described his work as an ecological approach to human development, an ecological model of human development, the bioecological theory, and the bioecological model of human development. The terminology that Bronfenbrenner uses to refer

to his work is rich (Shelton, 2019) and 'he never quite succeeded in finding the right label for what he was trying to do' (Shelton, 2019, p.7). To keep consistency in the terms used, 'ecological framework of human development' is used here to refer to his work. The influential work in Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework comprises five interlocking and interdependent systems where a developing child is living, involving microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macro-system and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In the early phase, Bronfenbrenner did not involve chronosystem in the ecological model. In phase 2 (1980-1993) and phase 3 (1993-2006), he realised the absence of time in his model and added chronosystem (Rosa and Tudge, 2013).

The definitions of the five systems by Bronfenbrenner (1994, pp.39-40) are set out below.

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. Examples include such settings as family, school, peer group, and workplace.

A mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (eg., the relations between home and school, school and workplace, etc.).

The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives (eg., for a child, the relation between the home and the parents' workplace; for a parent, the relation between the school and the neighbourhood peer group).

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, lifestyles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems.

The chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (eg., changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence, or the degree of hecticness and ability in everyday life).

Shelton (2019, p.11) uses Figure 5 below to articulate the relationships among systems articulately.

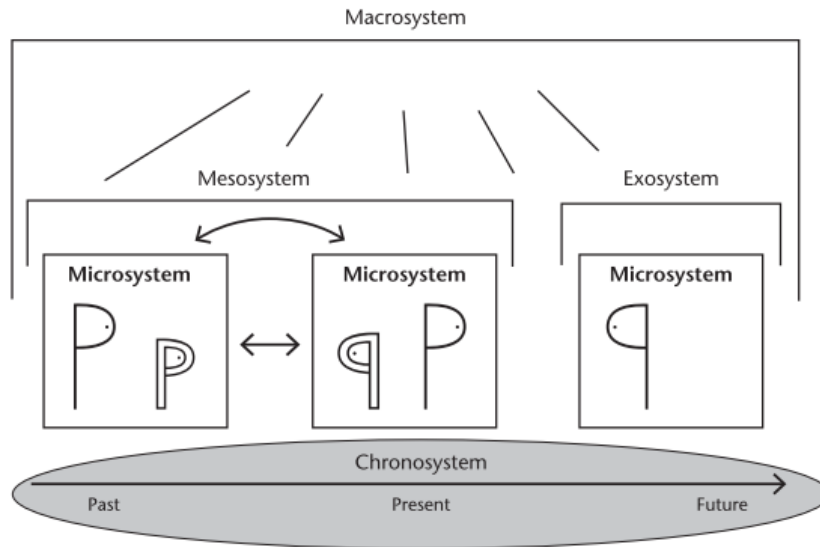


Figure 5 The Structure of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

P in Figure 5 refers to the developing person. According to the definitions of Bronfenbrenner, the developing person engages in activities, performs social roles and has interpersonal relations in different microsystems. The developing person is in two different microsystems in the diagram; these could be the developing person's family or peer group. For example, the developing person is a mother. The microsystem on the left-hand side is her family consisting of her husband, her children and her. The other person in this microsystem could be her husband. The microsystem in the middle in the figure is the mother's family of origin and the other person could be her mother. What Bronfenbrenner terms the mesosystem is the linking of those two microsystems as shown in Figure 5. The developing person is not in the third microsystem but it has indirect influence on the microsystems in which the developing person does not dwell. For example, the third microsystem is the maternal grandfather's workplace. The mother is not involved in this microsystem but could be indirectly affected by the influence of it as the exosystem. For the mother, the macrosystem could be the culture, childcare policies and population policies. The macrosystem has influence on microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems, and is in turn influenced by those other systems. The chronosystem could register change; grandmother's roles change over time; childcare style changes over time and shifts in population policies in the macrosystem take place in different time periods.

Furthermore, in phase 3 (1993-2006), Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007) highlight the power of the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (McGregor *et al.*, 2021). Processes, more specifically the proximal processes, are the most powerful engines of development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2007). The definition of proximal process by Bronfenbrenner (1994, p.38) is as follows.

Enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. Examples of enduring patterns of proximal process are found in parent-child and child-child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, studying, athletic activities, and performing complex tasks.

In the immediate environment or the microsystem, a developing person engages in activities, performs roles and has interpersonal relations. 'A relation obtains whenever one person in a setting pays attention to or participates in the activities of another' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.56). Three characteristics of relations are affect, power and reciprocity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Affect includes the feelings that the developing person experiences; powers means the strength of each person in the relationships and their influence on each other; reciprocity comprises the mutual sharing and transactional features of the activities and interactions in the relationship (Shelton, 2019). The affect of relations could be that people may feel positive, affectionate and warm; in contrast, they could feel negative, hateful or cold. In terms of the character of power, we are more likely to have more control as we develop and master more skills; the status of relationships would change from being unbalanced to being balanced and each party in the relationship would have equal power (Shelton, 2019). In terms of the third characteristic of relations, reciprocity could be understood as people talking in turn, sharing information with each other or performing roles alternatively (Shelton, 2019). Cutrona (2000) emphasises that with reciprocity, mutual assistance is necessary because people prefer to receive support while having the opportunity to reciprocate assistance.

'A role is a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society, and of others in relation to that person' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.85). For example, as noted above, when the mother is the developing person in Figure 5, her roles are 'mother', 'wife' and 'daughter' within the two microsystems she occupies. Role is a very important part of culture, and it involves the expected activities and activities not permitted (Shelton, 2019). 'The placement of persons in social roles in which they are expected to act competitively or cooperatively tends to elicit and intensify activities and interpersonal relations that are compatible with the given expectations' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p.101). Our expectations, reactions and behaviours towards others are guided by our understanding of how other people perform their roles (Shelton, 2019). Conflicts over the understanding of our roles may lead to conflicts with others – and to retain comfortable and familiar relationships is a basic human effort (Shelton, 2019). Thus, if one person changes how he/she plays a role, the other is likely to change how she/he plays the corresponding role in order to make the relationship comfortable, and to make it effective or adaptive within the social system in which they are playing out the roles' (Shelton, 2019, pp.44-45). Besides, roles can change over time. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, 'activities and relationships are embedded in roles' (Shelton, 2019, p.46).

In the next section, family support is introduced.

4.4 Family Support

It has been argued that family support is constructed from four theories, among which social support theory is an important theoretical underpinning (Canavan *et al.*, 2016). Social support is defined according to the assumption that 'people must rely on one another to meet certain basic needs' (Cutrona, 1996, p.3). Cutrona (1996) categorises the definitions of social support into two aspects: 'social support is the fulfilment by others of basic ongoing requirements for well-being'; 'social support is the fulfilment of more specific time-limited needs that arise as the result of adverse life events or circumstances' (Cutrona, 1996, p.3). Pierce *et al.* (1996) illustrate two broad views of social support: a situation-specific view and a developmental approach. The situation-specific view seems in line with the second aspect of Cutrona (1996) – that social support copes with needs resulting from adverse life events or circumstances. The developmental approach views social support from a developmental perspective, which is in relation with people's wellbeing in the first aspect of Cutrona (1996). Three components of social support are given by Pierce *et al.* (1996), including support schemata, supportive relationships and supportive transactions.

The first component is support schemata, which involve 'one's expectations about the forthcomingness of the social environment in providing aid should one need it' (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, p.5). It is necessary to introduce the term 'perceived social support' which means 'individuals' perceptions of the availability of others upon whom they can rely for support' (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, p.5). Supportive relationship is the second component. 'While individuals have support schemata that incorporate their expectations about how others, in general, will respond to them, they also have expectations about how specific supportive others are likely to respond should assistance be needed' (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, p.7). Individuals have expectations about general support and they also have expectations about how people with whom they have specific relationships respond to their needs (Pierce *et al.*, 1996). The third component of social support given by Pierce *et al.* (1996) is supportive transactions, which involve supportive behaviours, support seeking, support provision, and support receipt. Cutrona (2000) identifies four types of support behaviour: concrete support, emotional support, advice support and esteem support. 'There is little doubt that individuals who are able to seek out and elicit support fare better in life than those who are unable to garner assistance when they need it' (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, p.12). Family members are strongly obliged to provide social support to other

family members and individuals are assured of getting support from their family members; thus, the ability to seek support from family members is crucial (Pierce *et al.*, 1996).

In addition to supportive behaviours and support seeking, the third important element of supportive transactions is support provision. The first step of support provision is that the potential support provider perceives the desires or needs of another person; the potential support provider also needs to assess the nature of the challenge and the potential recipient's personal resources for coping with the challenge. The potential support provider then needs to decide what type of support to offer after determining to provide support, which could be due to the potential support provider's willingness (Pierce *et al.*, 1996). By providing support with others, the support provider can improve self-esteem and enhance the sense of reciprocal relationships (Pierce *et al.*, 1996). Similar to provision of support, the receipt of support involves several steps. The first step is that the support recipient perceives supportive behaviour from a potential support provider (Pierce *et al.*, 1996). An important insight about support receipt is as follows (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, p.17).

A recipient may be likely to recognize supportive efforts on the part of a provider when the recipient has requested assistance from that person or when he or she has received aid from that person in the past; the latter point makes clear that the fact that the recipient has not explicitly requested help does not mean that he or she will not be anticipating receiving support from others.

After perceiving the willingness of the potential support provider to enact supportive behaviour, the support recipient needs to decide whether or not to accept the assistance (Pierce *et al.*, 1996).

Support schemata and supportive relationships, the first and second component of social support given by Pierce *et al.* (1996), are discussed from the standpoint of an individual who needs support. For example, the important term in support schemata is 'perceived social support' which means 'individuals' perceptions of the availability of others upon whom they can rely for support' (Pierce *et al.*, 1996, p.5). The individual here refers to the person who needs support from others. The third component, supportive transactions, is discussed from an interactive perspective. It involves support seeking – support provision – supportive receipt. The individual who needs support seeks support from others. Family members are strongly obliged to provide support to other family members and the ability of an individual to obtain support from family members is foremost (Pierce *et al.*, 1996). The potential support provider perceives the needs of the individual and makes the decision whether or not to provide support based on assessment. Subsequently, the support recipient perceives supportive behaviour from the support providers, and makes a decision whether or not to accept the assistance. Thus, the process could be described as interactive.

In addition to social support theory, social ecology, resilience and social capital underpin family support theoretically. According to Dolan (2006, p.16), the definition of family support is as follows.

Family support is both a style of work and a set of activities that reinforce positive informal social networks through integrated programmes. These programmes combine statutory, voluntary, community and private services and are generally provided to families within their own homes and communities. The primary focus of these services is on early intervention, aiming to promote and protect the health, wellbeing and rights of all children, young people and their families. At the same time, particular attention is given to those who are vulnerable or at risk.

Family support focuses on integrated programmes provided to the family by a formal system outside the family, including statutory, voluntary, community and private services. In addition to professional support, it is likely that informal systems such as kin, neighbours and friends provide family support naturally (Gilligan, 2000). He suggests that kin in particular is probably an important source of family support; thus, it is important for professionals to identify the supportive family members and supportive relationships in the network of a person who needs support. However, it is easy for professionals to overlook informal sources, because professionals may assume unwillingness to help or incompetence among family members, friends and neighbours (Canavan *et al.*, 2016). Cutrona (2000, p.120) emphasises that 'support is most effective from those with whom we share close emotional bonds'.

Daly *et al.* (2015, p.8) compare family support to parenting support as follows.

Family support is broader, concerned with the family as a social unit and its ecological balance – the relationships and resource flows between members as well as how well the family is embedded within supportive networks. Hence, family support is oriented to family stability and general family functioning as against the more parent-centred objectives of parenting support.

The three families in the symbiosis system of the mosaic family model are the family of parents, the family of maternal grandparents and the family of paternal grandparents. The focus of this research is on family support provided by grandparents to parents. Family support flows between members in the family – or we could say within the symbiosis system of the mosaic family model shown in Figure 4. The symbiosis system plays a crucial role in a context where formal childcare service is limited for parents, especially in dual-earner families. Furthermore, Canavan *et al.* (2016) emphasise that key aspect of family support is to understand the way that informal support works, and the quality of the network in ensuring that services reinforce strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Having presented the four theoretical perspectives, the following section constructs the Integrated Family Model.

4.5 Constructing the Integrated Family Model

In the previous sections, four theoretical perspectives were considered. In this section, they are brought together into an Integrated Family Model (Figure 6 below) building on Ji's (2020) mosaic family model (Figure 4 above). Of the four theoretical perspectives reviewed, it is mosaic familism, and intergenerationality in neo-familism which offer most to this research. Both identify the intergenerational interdependence between parents and their adult children in the transitional Chinese society of today. The mosaic family model is helpful to understand the intergenerational, bilateral and multinuclear features of this family pattern. Moreover, mosaic familism provides a way of thinking about Chinese families taking account of macro structures and chronological development. The usefulness of intergenerationality in neo-familism as a perspective is that it sheds light on the nuanced changes within emerging diverse family norms, familial emotions and intergenerational intimacy. The Integrated Family Model brings these two Chinese-based perspectives together with Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework with its five interlocking and interdependent systems. Thus, the model provides an integrated and comprehensive way to understand childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions within the symbiosis system (mesosystem) and its interactions with the macrosystem in the context of grandparent childcare in Chinese families. Moreover, the chronosystem helps in understanding them from a perspective of change over time – past, present and future. In addition, there is a flow of resources, caregiving, emotions, obligations, expectations and tensions within families – described as family support.

The Integrated Family Model in Figure 6 is inspired by the mosaic family model and intergenerationality in neo-familism, assisted by Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework and family support. It innovatively locates the grandparent and grandparent symbiosis system within the macrosystem and the chronosystem. In the mosaic family model (Figure 4), family members are positioned from the perspective of parents in the family on the left. In contrast, in the Integrated Family Model, positioning of family members is from the perspective of children. In the family of parents and children in the middle of Figure 6, they are 'mother', 'father', and 'children' instead of 'wife', 'husband', and 'children'. In the family of maternal grandparents, they are maternal grandmother and maternal grandfather. In the paternal grandparents' family, they are paternal grandmother and paternal grandfather. This reflects the focus of this research on childcare and grandparents' involvement in providing childcare. Therefore, family members are positioned from the perspective of children. Moreover, in relations between the mother and the maternal grandparents' family, it can be seen that the maternal grandmother, the maternal grandfather and the mother comprise the mother's family of origin. The father, the paternal grandmother and the paternal grandfather comprise the father's family of origin. The

child's family of origin is the family of parents and children in the model consisting of the mother, the father and children. It is worth mentioning that the family members are presented in the model in the typical 4-2-1 or 4-2-2 family structure, made up of four grandparents, two parents, and one or two children, as noted in Chapter Two. However, due to the various formations of contemporary family structure, such as families with three children or more, single parent families, remarried families, same-sex parent families and so forth, the individuals in the Integrated Family Model can be modified depending on the specifics of the family.

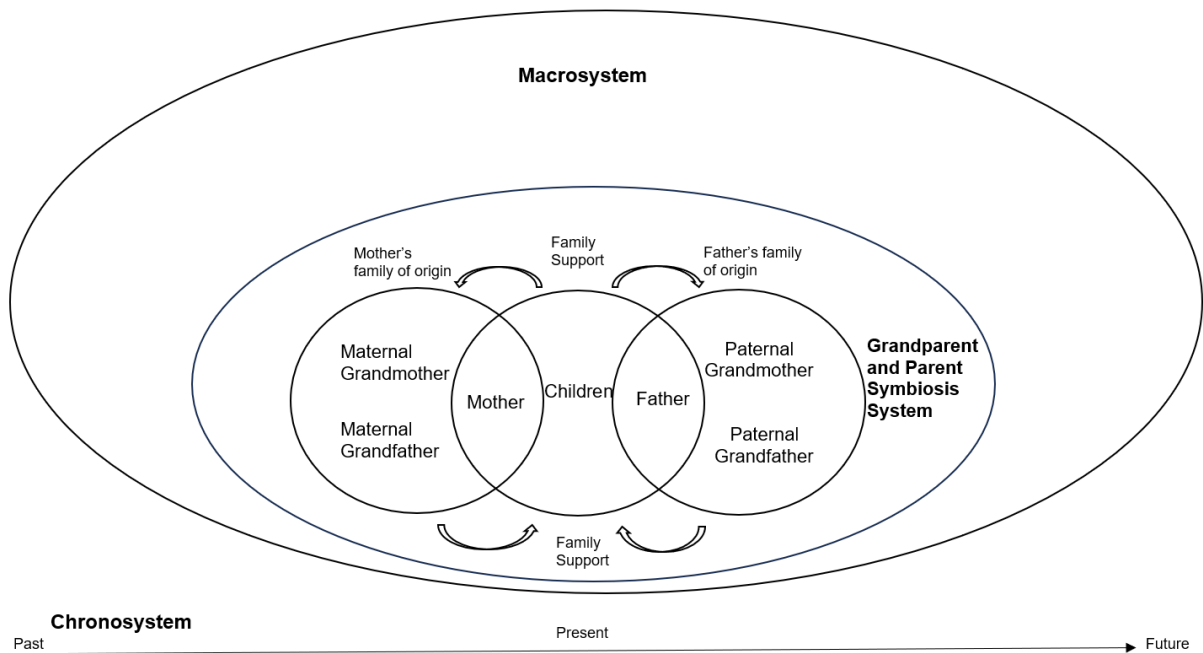


Figure 6 The Integrated Family Model

Figure 6 shows that parents, children, maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents comprise the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. That system contains the interactions between parents and children, grandparents and children, and parents and grandparents on both sides. Grandparent childcare is generalised as family support from grandparents to parents and children in this model. It involves bilateral, intergenerational and multinuclear interactions between grandparents and parents as indicated by the arrows in the diagram. Family support provided to the parents' family includes that from the family of the maternal grandparents' family and from the family of the paternal grandparents, which reflects the bilateral and intergenerational features of family support. Note too that a bidirectional arrow is innovatively added between the paternal grandparent family and the maternal grandparent family to reflect an additional complexity in the features of family support.

In addition to the mosaic family model and family support, Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework helps to build the Integrated Family Model. Each family could be regarded as a microsystem. The grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system could be described as a mesosystem. The mesosystem contains the family of parents and children, the family of maternal grandparents and the family of paternal grandparents, as well as the child's, the mother's and the father's families of origin. The microsystems and the mesosystem are included and embedded in the macrosystem. Meanwhile, the chronosystem at the bottom of the model presents a timeline from the past to the present – to the future. As noted earlier in this chapter, Ji (2017, p.2) describes Chinese society as a 'gigantic mosaic', and this can be explained as the macro context in which Chinese families are embedded. In Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, as explained in the third section of this chapter, there are five interlocking and interdependent systems. In the Integrated Family Model, the macrosystem is equal to the gigantic mosaic, Chinese society, where the microsystem, mesosystem and exosystem are embedded.

Chronosystem means 'the change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which the person lives' (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p.40). The individuals, microsystems, the mesosystem and the macrosystem in the model change or remain consistent over time. The chronosystem is helpful in explaining the shift not only in the macro system but also in the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. In addition to the microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem as already shown in the model (Figure 6), the exosystem refers to the linkages between the microsystems; the developing person is not in at least one of them but the events occur in the microsystem indirectly impact on the immediate setting where the developing person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)¹. For example, grandparents' retirement status depends on the decisions in the microsystems of their work places where parents are not contained. However, decisions on grandparents' retirement could indirectly influence their availability for childcare, and therefore impact the childcare arrangements in the microsystem and mesosystem where the parents live. Since this research focuses mainly on childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions in the microsystems and mesosystems, and their interactions with the macrosystem, the exosystem is not the focus of this research although it may impact the childcare arrangement process indirectly. Moreover, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is argued to be a united whole as shown in the model (Figure 6), which is in relation to the intergenerational identity in neofamilism, embedded in a wider macrosystem and chronosystem. A final point to note is that family in this research can refer not only to nuclear families, but also to the extended family. For example, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system could be regarded as a family.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, four theoretical perspectives that underpin this research and contribute to the construction of the Integrated Family Model have been introduced. The focus of the Integrated Family Model is the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system which is bilateral and intergenerational. These features will help in grasping the characteristics and interactions in families where grandparents are involved in childcare. I highlight the flow of family support – such as resources, caregiving, emotions and tensions in the system from grandparents to the family of parents and children. At the same time, the family dynamics and nuanced changes in families are also highlighted, including the focus on children, the familial emotions and intergenerational identity. Moreover, the indication of families of origin in the model underlines the importance of paying attention to the interactions between the mother/father and their families of origin and their impact on the symbiosis system. In addition, it is important to note that in Figure 6 the symbiosis system does not stand alone; its interactions with the macrosystem shape the family dynamics, family formation and family arrangements inside the system. Both the symbiosis system and the macrosystem require a chronological perspective. Overall, the Integrated Family Model is expected to help provide insight in a comprehensive and integrated way into childcare arrangements and interactions in families where grandparents are involved in childcare.

Chapter Five: Developing a Qualitative Design to Explore Grandparent Childcare for Children Under Three in a Chinese City

This chapter describes the philosophical position, research design, data collection and data analysis in sections one to four. Research questions are set out in the section on research design. In section five the quality within qualitative research is discussed. Reflective thinking about the process of conducting this research follows, with a summary of this chapter to end.

5.1 Philosophical Position

One day I was in my room at Queen's University accommodation. It was raining outside my window. I told my flatmate it was raining. My flatmate said no, because it was not raining outside her window. Our windows faced in different directions. What we said were all facts and realities, but from different perspectives. One of the assumptions of this thesis is that multiple realities exist.

The concern of ontology is about 'the nature of the reality and what there is to know about the world' (Ormston *et al.*, 2014, p.4). Two overarching ontological assumptions are realism and idealism. 'Realism assumes a knowable world, which is comprehensible through research – that the truth (and there is only one) is "out there" and can be accessed by the appropriate application of research techniques' (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.27). On the contrary, relativism argues that 'there are multiple constructed realities, rather than a single, pre-social reality or mind-independent truth ...' according to Cromby and Nightingale (1999) cited by Braun and Clarke (2013, p.27). Based on the above definitions of realism and idealism, the ontological assumption of this research is inclined to relativism – that multiple realities exist, rather than a single truth.

'Epistemology is concerned with ways of knowing and learning about the world and focuses on issues such as how we can learn about reality and what forms the basis of our knowledge' (Ormston *et al.*, 2014, p.6). In terms of obtaining knowledge, Ormston *et al.* (2014) demonstrate two ways: the inductive approach, which is a 'bottom-up' process; the deductive approach, which is a 'top-down' process. In the inductive process, knowledge is generated by collecting evidence first and then building knowledge based on that evidence. In contrast, in the deductive process, a hypothesis is developed first and evidence is collected in order to decide whether to accept or reject the hypothesis (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). It is difficult to say whether my research follows a pure inductive process or deductive process. The two ran through the whole undertaking, including research design, data collection, data analysis and

writing-up. If I have to describe this research as inductive or deductive across the whole process, it is inductive rather than deductive. The following discussion mainly presents the way theories have been used, as an example to illustrate this inductive approach.

Varpio *et al.* (2020) describe three ways in which subjectivist inductive researchers utilise theory: theory as the product of research (fully inductive theory development); one or more theories informing the entire research process (fully theory-informed inductive); and theory as an interpretive tool (theory-informing inductive data analysis). Based on these three ways, my research combines fully theory-informed inductive and theory-informing inductive data analysis. The fully theory-informed inductive method means theories can inform the entire research process (Varpio *et al.*, 2020). To some extent, theories impacted the formation of research questions and the questions within the interview guides at the research design stage. Yet theories did not play an important role in my data analysis. It is not consistent with the fully theory-informed inductive method to have theory inform the entire research process (Varpio *et al.*, 2020). A more inductive approach was adopted in data analysis. Codes, sub-themes and themes were developed from data itself, instead of being shaped and structured by existing theories. Furthermore, I did not finalise the theoretical framework until writing the discussion chapter, although at the research design and data collection stages, questions circled in my mind about which theories to use, and about the eventual form of the theoretical framework, and related topics constantly emerged in meetings with supervisors. From this perspective, my research is more like the third method – theory as an interpretive tool – which is to inform the final interpretations of the data (Varpio *et al.*, 2020).

To conclude, this research appears to be more inductive than deductive, especially in the process of data analysis, although the deductive process can be seen in the research design process. In the following section, a detailed account of research questions and research design is presented.

5.2 Research Questions, Research Design and Ethical Considerations

5.2.1 Research questions

The aim of this research is to gain new insights into grandparent childcare for children under three by exploring childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions. It describes and analyses in depth the perceptions of grandparents and parents providing childcare for children under three. The research questions are as follows:

(1) What are grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare?

- (2) How do grandparents and parents make decisions on childcare arrangements?
- (3) What are the interactions between grandparents and parents in arranging and providing childcare?
- (4) What are the impacts of social and cultural shifts on grandparents' and parents' perceptions and on childcare arrangements?
- (5) How does the Integrated Family Model help in interpreting the findings?

Assisted by the Integrated Family Model, the objectives of this research are: (1) to explore grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare and grandparent childcare; (2) to analyse how childcare arrangements are made; (3) to understand the interactions between grandparents and parents in these arrangements; (4) to examine the impacts of social and cultural shifts on grandparents' and parents' perceptions and on childcare arrangements.

5.2.2 Samples and location

Participants were recruited in Taonan, Jilin Province, in the north-east of China. Under the administrative divisions of China, cities are categorised into three levels: (1) provincial level cities, which include directly administered municipalities, capital cities of provinces and of autonomous regions; (2) prefectural level cities; and (3) county level cities. For example, Changchun, the capital city of Jilin Province, is a provincial level city. Baicheng is a prefectural level city in Jilin Province. Taonan is one of the four county level cities that administered by Baicheng. Taonan has an area of 5,107 square kilometres. The population is 460,000 including 180,000 in the urban areas and 280,000 in the rural areas (Taonan People's Government, 2020). I did not identify any literature studying grandparental childcare in this area, but as a researcher I wanted to explore local people's family stories in my hometown. This research fills the gap in grandparental childcare research in this area and contributes to the development of policy and practice. This study required a purposive population sample. According to the Chapters Two and Three, both public and private childcare services for children under three years old are limited. It is families that mainly provide childcare for these children and, moreover, data shows that 77.7 per cent of grandparents are involved in childcare for this age group according to the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China (2019), quoted by Wang *et al.* (2021). Thus, the study population comprises grandparents and their adult children with off-spring aged under three. This research recruited participants in the urban areas of Taonan using the following inclusion criteria: (1) grandparents who provide childcare for grandchildren under three; (2) parents whose children are cared for by grandparents;

(3) one grandparent and one parent from each family; (4) at least one participant in each family lives in the urban area of Taonan.

Working with local community healthcare centres was a way for generating samples. Community healthcare centres are mostly government-owned and publicly funded in urban areas (Xu and van de Ven, 2013). General healthcare services, community-based rehabilitation and health education are provided in community healthcare centres. For example, vaccination against coronavirus and other diseases can be obtained in healthcare centres. Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre (alias) is located in the urban area of Taonan. The child health care department provides healthcare services for children living within the centre's catchment area. The healthcare service, for example, provides children's clinics, health examinations, infant nutrition package handouts and so forth. The vaccination department provides vaccine services for both children and adults. Newly born children need health checks and regular vaccines in community healthcare centres. They are accompanied by their carers who are most likely to be parents, grandparents or other key carers. Therefore, community healthcare centres were suitable places to recruit participants who met the recruitment criteria above. Apart from working with gatekeepers, snowballing would be used to select samples. There are various reasons for the small sample size in qualitative research, one of which is that there is a point where hardly any new evidence is obtained by adding new samples into the research if the data are properly analysed (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014). This can be regarded as a saturation point. In this research, the above criteria ensured diversity among the samples. Based on a discussion by Ritchie *et al.* (2014) about sample size, approximately 30 participants from 16 families were recruited and interviewed.

5.2.3 The design of interviews

Interviews and focus groups are commonly used in qualitative research. The method of focus group is a form of group interview with interactions between participants (Bryman, 2016). Focus groups show interaction between participants and provide an opportunity to see how ideas are shaped, although they are commonly criticised on the grounds that participants feel stressed about expressing socially unacceptable views or experiences (Finch *et al.*, 2014). In contrast, in-depth interviews, especially face-to-face and one-to-one interviews, provide a strong basis for building rapport between researcher and participants, enabling participants to respond freely and fully (Lewis and Nicholls, 2014). This study utilised semi-structured, in-depth interviews with urban Chinese families. Lewis and Nicholls (2014) suggest that in-depth interviews, such as one-to-one interviews provide researchers with an opportunity to understand participants' lives, views, motivations and decisions in detail and in depth. The research was designed to conduct one-to-one interviews with a grandparent and a parent from the same

family. This enables triangulation in data collection, as well as reflecting the ontological assumption of this research from relativism – acknowledging that multiple reality exists.

Triangulation is used by conducting separate interviews with two participants from one family to see family life from different perspectives. Triangulation becomes a way of capturing the multiple ‘voices’ or ‘truths’ that relate to the topic, rather than being understood as a way to access the one right ‘result’ (Silverman, 1993). In this research, two interviews with each family were designed to collect data. This research design is in accord with triangulation. It is important to hear stories from different perspectives. Ussher (1999, p.43) uses a jigsaw metaphor to advocate ‘multi-methods’: ‘it is only when we put the different pieces of jigsaw together that we see a broader picture and gain some insight into the complexity of our research’. By interviewing two participants from the same family, both involved in childcare, their perceptions from different perspectives of the shared experience could help to gain more insight and see a broader picture of their family stories. When one grandparent/parent agreed to participate, the person would be asked to see if the other parent/grandparent was willing to engage in the research. The advantage of this design is to be able to recruit two participants from each family by snowballing. The disadvantage is that if one person refused to participate, the other person who was willing to participate was excluded. This put more challenges on recruitment.

A participant information sheet (PIS) in English (Appendix 1) was drafted to meet ethical requirements. A participant information sheet in Chinese (Appendix 2) was given to each participant, providing them with full and detailed information about the research. Participants gave their consent by signing the informed consent form (Appendix 3). Different stages of interview and principles are illustrated by Yeo *et al.* (2014): arrival and introductions; introducing the research; beginning the interview; during the interview; ending the interview; after the interview. Two interview guides were designed: one for grandparents and one for parents. The questions in the interview guides are the same, and the pronouns vary according to the person who answers the questions. Three trial interviews were carried out to see if the interview guides worked, but are not included in the dataset. The original interview guides were designed in English, then translated into Chinese. The interview guide for grandparents can be seen in Appendix 4 and Appendix 6 (English edition see Appendix 4 and Chinese edition see Appendix 6). The interview guide for parents can be seen in Appendix 5 and Appendix 7 (English edition see Appendix 5 and Chinese editions see Appendix 7). All participants were interviewed in Chinese, and all in-depth interviews were recorded during the process. Interviews were transcribed in Chinese. Ten transcripts were translated into English for supervision and writing-up purposes. Names of all participants are aliases.

5.2.4 Considerations of research ethics

As a researcher, it is essential to be open, honest and objective (Connolly, 2003). Researchers should behave well for the sake of the research community's reputation. Stigmatisation can easily be found in one particular field such as business, media and even an ethnic group simply because of the misbehaviour of a small number of people in the group. Therefore, as a member of the research community, it is my duty to follow research ethics.

Participants' time and efforts for the research deserve appreciation, and participants' rights to withdraw at any time during the research process are respected. Participants are protected and potential risks are reduced to a minimum. Firstly, the participant information sheet (Appendix 2) was given to potential participants. This provided them with an understanding of this research project as well issues in relation to confidentiality. If they wanted to participate in this research, they gave consent by signing the consent form (Appendix 3). After gaining their informed consent, I kept them informed that they were free to withdraw before a particular time period. Secondly, participants' privacy was respected and they had the right to share what they wished. I strove to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Thirdly, it was appreciated that participants gave their time and shared their stories and perceptions; at the end of each study, giving participants gifts was a way to show gratitude. Gifts included toys, cloth books and tote bags. Fourthly, I informed them of how their information would be used in the research. Finally, in terms of relationships between interviewers and interviewees, there are some terms such as reciprocal relationship or interviewer's roles. Types of interviewer-interviewee relationship vary, and researchers need to be conscious of their own values and assumptions underpinning these relationships (Yeo *et al.*, 2014).

The wellbeing of participants, or those likely to be affected by it, needs to be taken into consideration, and researchers must ensure their physical, social and mental health (Connolly, 2003). A distress protocol (Appendix 10) offers a response to possible stress that participants may face. Besides, ethical issues may arise in interviews with grandparents and parents, so information about safety nets is provided by the researcher. The residents' committee, which is the lowest level of administrative hierarchy in urban areas in China, provides support in terms of family relationships. In addition, there is potential support from the All-China Women's Federation, which is a non-governmental organization (NGO) and protects women's rights, and police posts, which are the lowest level in the system of public security bureaus. Although these safety nets are provided, in Chinese culture, there is a proverb: *jia chou bu ke wai yang* (家丑不可外扬), which means don't wash your dirty linen in public. Participants may not seek support from them.

5.3 Data Collection

In this section, preparation for data collection is introduced first. Following this, four ways of recruitment are presented: online recruitment, on-site recruitment, personal network and snowballing. A total of 30 participants from 16 families were recruited. In-depth one-to-one interviews were conducted with all the participants. The implications of Covid-19 are addressed at the end of this section.

5.3.1 Preparation

Data collection did not start until ethical approval was granted. In line with the research design, recruitment was conducted in community healthcare centres in person. However, due to the impact of Covid-19, online recruitment as an alternative approach was conducted first. Online recruitment was designed as an alternative in case in-person recruitment could not be conducted as planned.

The WeChat group *er tong jia zhang qun* (儿童家长群, group of young children's parents) was created by the director of the vaccination department at Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre. Permission was obtained from the director to join this group, which is a communication platform for parents of children and staff in the department. The staff regularly post information, such as whether or not vaccines are available, and when they will be available. In addition, another communication is in a Q&A style, with parents mostly asking questions regarding types of available vaccination and what times it would be administered. A small number of group members ask questions unrelated to children. The questions and answers are not limited to within working hours. Among the three community healthcare centres in the city, only one permission was obtained to publish the recruitment letter.

Hayes (2005) illustrates his long and winding road in negotiating with gatekeepers. It took him 18 months from his first contact with gatekeepers to starting interviews. This really requires patience and perseverance from the researcher, as Hayes mentioned in the article. However, this could hardly apply to my research, considering the limited time of my PhD programme and financial factors. Compared to what he encountered with gatekeepers, gaining access to parents and grandparents in Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre seems to have run smoothly, because only informal approval was needed to make it happen, whereas in Chang Ming Community Healthcare Centre (alias), there was the quite opposite scenario, and requests for publishing the recruitment letter online and recruiting on-site were rejected.

5.3.2 Recruitment

Four approaches were utilised to recruit participants: online recruitment, recruitment in Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre, personal networking and snowballing. The electronic edition of the recruitment letter in Chinese (Appendix 9) was published in the WeChat group of Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre. The recruitment letter in English is used to meet ethical requirements (Appendix 8). Although permission was not obtained from Chang Ming Community Healthcare Centre, one of the staff added me to a group named *jie yue bu lang fei* (节约不浪费, used goods selling group), which had 226 group members, and many of them mothers. A staff member also published the letter on her WeChat Moments, which is similar to the personal page on Facebook, where people can post information on their personal Moments. In addition to publishing letters in Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre group, I also published the letter in the residents' group where I lived. My family, friends and I posted the letters on our WeChat Moments – yet no responses came from online recruitment.

The face-to-face recruitment at Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre was conducted in early March 2021. Prior permission was obtained from the centre. The process of recruitment in Le Kang Community Healthcare Centre is set out below. When people showed willingness to participate in the research, I asked to scan their WeChat code and sent a friend request to them on WeChat. Under We Chat works operating procedures, I am not allowed to send people messages until they accept my friend request. As soon as the friend request was accepted, I sent them information about the research and confirmed with them whether they would like to participate in the research. If they agreed, I would send the PIS and arrange interviews. Meanwhile, I would confirm whether the other grandparent/parent in the family would participate.

Three people agreed to participate in the research, accepted the friend request on WeChat and responded to the message about interview arrangements. Two persons agreed to participate, accepted the friend request but did not respond to the message. One person did not show an attitude about whether to participate or not but accepted the friend request and removed me from WeChat later. The number of persons who agreed to participate but did not accept the friend request on WeChat was not recorded. Hayes (2005) contends that one weakness in research is that gatekeepers can filter participants. Back to my data collection: the healthcare centre, as gatekeeper, did not get involved in participant selection. They just granted me access to grandparents and parents in their workplace, and I recruited participants by myself.

The numbers of participants remained low, leaving a long way to reach the target number. During the recruitment process, my supervisors and I had meetings once a week on average. They said that although participants were not recruited online, what I had done was not in vain

in terms of the research process. They suggested that I contact domestic researchers to ask for advice, so I talked to a Chinese researcher, Prof. Gao, who supervised me during post-graduate study, and a PhD student, Ms Hao, who studied grandparent childcare in China and had completed data collection. They offered valuable advice in terms of recruitment. According to Prof. Gao, recruitment through personal connections such as friends and families was more feasible than using formal access, based on the different social contexts between Chinese society and societies in the UK. He emphasised it was necessary to recruit participants in person. Ms Hao shared her experience of the challenges of recruitment and provided detailed feedback on my recruitment letter, commenting on word count, style, font size, and so on. In addition to recruitment on site, personal social network plays an essential role in data collection. My personal social network was utilised to recruit participants along with online recruitment and recruitment in the community healthcare centre. My extended family and friends helped me to identify potential participants from their social networks and introduced my research to them. Lastly, snowballing was used to recruit participants.

Overall, 30 participants from 16 families were recruited as follows: 17 participants from nine families were recruited by personal networking; five participants from three families were recruited by snowballing, i.e. identified by the participants recruited by personal networks. Four participants from two families were recruited at the community healthcare centre. Four participants from two families were recruited by snowballing through participants recruited in the community healthcare centre. The large proportion of participants recruited with the help of personal networks bears out what Prof. Gao described: that recruitment through personal connections such as friends and families is more feasible than using formal access, and personal networking works better than formal access, based on the nature of Chinese society. Moreover, all the parents recruited were mothers. Other than one maternal grandfather, all the participants are women including 15 mothers and 14 grandmothers. This is in line with the point proposed by Ji (2020), that caregiving and non-paid housework are mainly carried on by women from different generations. It also implies that the findings of this research is more likely to reflect a female perspective.

5.3.3 Information on Participants

At the coding stage of data analysis, aliases are given to all participants and identifiable names of people, locations and so forth. Chinese names normally consist of two or three characters. All the anonymised names of participants are given two characters and these characters are chosen from *shi jing* (诗经, The Classic of Poetry) which is the earliest existing collection of Chinese poetry in which females are widely featured across the poems. Apart from one maternal grandfather, all participants in my research are female, and for this reason that I selected

characters from *shi jing*. In Chinese names, the family name comes first. For example, the grandparent in family No.1 is Zhao Jun which is an alias. Zhao Jun is the paternal grandmother. Zhao is her family name and Jun is her first name. In this research, family numbers come after the participants' name. They are based on the recruitment order, from earliest to latest. For example, the family of Zhao Jun was the first to be recruited and she is named [01G] – the grandparent from the family 01. Qian Lu is the mother in this family, and she is named [01P] – the parent from the family 01. Information on participants is presented in two groups: information on grandparents (Table 2) and information on parents (Table 3)

Table 2 Information on Grandparents

No.	Alias	Age of Participant	Age of Grandchildren (Months)	Role	No. of Children (Grandchildren)	Frequency of Care	Educational Level	Work Status	Marital Status	Living Status	Type Of Interviews
0101	Zhao Jun	63	19	PG	2 (3)	EDT	H	R	M	N	Face To Face
0201	Sun Qi	51	1	MG	1 (1)	ED	M	R	M	CP	Online
0301	Zhou Shu	51	24	PG	1 (1)	ED	M	R	M	N	Face To Face
0401	Zheng He	54	23	PG	1 (1)	AOE	H	FT	M	CP	Face To Face
0501	Feng Xi	61	18	MG	1 (2)	ED	M	R	M	N	Online
0601	Chu Ji	56	6	Elder Sister of MG	2 (2)	EDT	P	FT	W	CP	Face To Face
0701	Jiang You	57	36	MG	1 (1)	EDT	H	R	M	CG	Face To Face
0801	Han Shi	54	41	MG	1 (1)	EE	P	U	M	N	Face To Face
0901	Zhu Feng	53	24	MG	1 (1)	EDT	M	U	M	CG	Face To Face
1001	You Kuo	54	32	PG	1 (2)	ED	M	PT	M	CP	Face To Face

1101	Xu Feng	53	29	MGF	1 (1)	ED	M	FT	M	CG	Online
1201	Lv Xia	58	41	MG	1 (1)	EE	H	R	M	N	Online
1301	Zhang Yan	57	8	MG	1 (1)	EE	UU	FT	M	N	Online
1401	Cao Zhou	53	10	MG	1 (1)	ED	M	R	M	CP	Face To Face
1601	Jin Dong	57	11	MG	2 (1)	EDT	M	U	M	CP	Online

Role: MG maternal grandmother; PG paternal grandmother; MGF paternal grandfather

Frequency of Care: EDT every daytime; EE every evening; ED everyday including daytime and evening; W weekend; AOE afternoon or evening occasionally.

Education Status: P primary school; M middle school; H high school; C college; UU university undergraduate; UP university postgraduate

Work Status: R retired; FT full-time; PT part-time; U unemployed

Marital Status: M married; W widowed; D divorced

Living Status: N non co-residence; CP co-residence in parents' home; CG co-residence in grandparents' home.

Table 3 Information on Parents

No.	Alias	Age of Participant	Age Of Children/Grandchildren (Months)	Role	No. of Children (Grandchildren)	Frequency of Care	Educational Level	Work Status	Marital Status	Living Status	Type Of Interviews
0102	Qian Lu	31	19	M	2	EE	C	FT	M	N	Face To Face
0202	Li Wei	28	1	M	1	ED	UU	FT	M	CP	Online
0302	Wu Hua	31	24	M	1	W	UU	FT	M	N	Face To Face
0402	Wang Le	30	23	M	1	ED	UP	U	M	CP	Face To Face
0502	Chen Xiu	37	18	M	2	W	UU	FT	M	N	Online
0602	Wei Ning	30	6	M	1	EE	UP	FT	M	CP	Online
0702	Shen Sha	32	36	M	1	EE	UU	FT	D	CG	Face To Face
0802	Yang Mo	28	41	M	1	EE	M	FT	M	N	Online
0902	Qin Xi	31	24	M	1	ED	UU	U	M	CG	Face To Face

1102	He Hao	30	29	M	1	W	UU	FT	M	CG	Online
1202	Shi Yang	33	41	M	1	W	C	FT	M	N	Online
1302	Kong Yue	26	8	M	1	EE	UU	FT	M	N	Online
1402	Yan Jing	29	10	M	1	ED	UU	FT	M	CP	Face To Face
1502	Hua Qiao	24	11	M	1	EE	C	FT	M	CP	Online
1602	Wei Min	32	11	M	1	EE	C	FT	M	CP	Online

Role: M mother

Frequency of Care: EDT every daytime; EE every evening; ED everyday including daytime and evening; W weekend

Education Status: P primary school; M middle school; H high school; C college; UU university undergraduate; UP university postgraduate

Work Status: R retired; FT full-time; PT part-time; U unemployed

Marital Status: M married; W widowed; D divorced

Living Status: N non co-residence; CP co-residence in parents' home; CG co-residence in grandparents' home.

The following provides a description including age of participants, sides of grandparents (maternal or paternal), number of children, frequency of care, work status, marital status and living status. The participants consist of 15 grandparents and 15 parents. In terms of gender, except Xu Feng [11G] who is a maternal grandfather, all participants in the grandparent group are grandmothers. All 15 participants in the parent group are mothers. The ages of grandparents ranged from 51 years to 63 years. Most of the grandparents were age between 50 and 60, with only two grandparents aged over 60. The ages of mothers ranged from 24 to 37, with five mothers under 30, ten mothers over 30. With regard to the side of grandparents, four grandparents were from the paternal side and 11 grandparents from the maternal side. Maternal grandparents, especially maternal grandmothers, account for the major part of the grandparent group. In terms of the number of children, there are two grandparents who have two adult children, and all the other 13 grandparents have only one adult child. In the mothers group, two have two children, and all the mothers have only one child. In terms of work status, seven grandparents were retired, four had full-time jobs, one had a part-time job, and three did not have jobs. In the mothers group, two mothers did not have jobs, and the other 13 worked full-time. The grandparents' work status was more complex than that of parents – most of the mothers had full-time jobs.

With regard to marital status, in the grandparent group, 14 grandparents were married and one was widowed. In the parent group, 14 mothers were married and one was divorced. Most of the participants, including grandparents and parents were married. In terms of the frequency of care, five grandparents took care of children during the day. Three grandparents took care of children in the evening. Six grandparents took care of children the whole day. One grandparent took care of the child in the afternoon or in the evening. In the parent group, seven mothers took care of children in the evening. Four mothers took care of children during the day and evening. Four mothers took care of children on weekends. In terms of living status, six families did not co-reside. Seven families co-resided in the parent's home. Three families co-resided in the grandparent's home. In terms of educational status, two grandparents graduated from primary school, eight graduated from middle school and four graduated from high school. One grandparent graduated as an undergraduate. In the parents group, one mother graduated from middle school, four mothers graduated from college, with eight mothers holding a bachelor's degree, and two a master's degree. Although based on a small dataset, this suggests an increase in education level among the parents' generation compared to the grandparents' generation.

It should be mentioned that Chu Ji [06G] is the elder sister of Wei Ning's [06P] mother. She was hired by Wei Ning [06P], the mother, to take care of the child. Although they do not meet

the recruitment criteria, their perceptions help with understanding the research questions, so it was decided to retain their data in the dataset. Besides, the research is designed to recruit two participants from each family. Among the 16 families, in 14 one grandparent and one parent participated in the research. For the other two families, there is only one participant from each family. One is You Kuo [10G], a paternal grandmother, and the other is Hua Qiao [15P], a mother. The other possible participant in each family agreed to participate but withdrew after the interview had already been conducted with You Kuo [10G] and Hua Qiao [15P]. Since the interviews with them helped to answer the research questions, they were included in the dataset. In terms of age of children, the criterion is that children being looked after are under 36 months old. In two among the 16 families, the child was 41 months old. The grandparents from these two families were involved in childcare since the children were born, so the grandparents and parents in the two families were included in the dataset. In terms of the area where the participants are from, the criterion is that at least one participant in each family lives in the urban area of Taonan. Xu Feng [11G] and He Hao [11P] were recruited through snowballing, and they lived in the rural areas. The above six participants from four families did not meet the recruitment criteria but interviews with them helped to answer the research questions, so their interviews are included in the dataset.

To conclude, the above section provides a description of the demographic information on participants. Meanwhile, information in relation to care is also described, such as the frequency of care.

5.3.4 Interviews

Before the interviews, a participant information sheet was sent to each participant and consent was obtained by participants signing the informed consent form. Then 30 participants from 16 families were interviewed (see the explanation above in 5.3.3). Among them, there were one grandparent and one parent from each of 14 families. There was one participant from each of the remaining two families. Both online and in-person interviews were conducted, according to participants' preferences – 15 online and 15 face-to-face. Most of the face-to-face interviews took place at participants' home which was participants' preferred option. For example, the interview with Zhao Jun [01G] was conducted at her home. Zhao Jun [01G] and her son's family lived in the same *dan yuan* (explained in section 1.2 in Chapter One). I had the interview with Zhao Jun [01G] starting at 10.15am. The interview lasted about one hour and half. Zhao Jun [01G] said if we had not had the interview, she normally was busy with housework at that time. During the interview, Qian Lu [01P], her daughter-in-law, was back from work and came to say hello. I asked Zhao Jun [01G] if she needed to cook lunch first. She said we could continue the interview. When the interview with Zhao Jun [01G] was finished, I came upstairs

to interview Qian Lu [01P] at her apartment. At that time, Zhao Jun [01G] was preparing lunch for the family. During the interview with Qian Lu [01P], her daughter came in the room where we had the interview several times and was curious about our interview.

The online interviews were assisted by Tencent Meeting (Voov Meeting). Participants' non-verbal communication such as a frown or a glance could alert the researcher to ask what has not been said (Yeo *et al.*, 2014). However, in online interviews where the participant's camera was turned off, the researcher could not see the facial expressions. This could be seen as a limitation of online interviews. All the interviews were recorded. Interview guides (Appendix 6 and Appendix 7) were used for the interviews. The Chinese edition of the reminder below was printed out and helped to remind me of the important issues.

- Camera in online interviews. 'I will keep my camera on, and if it suits you, you are welcome to turn your camera on. If it is not convenient, you are free to turn off your camera.'
- Turn on the recording button for online interviews/recorder for in-person interviews.
- Show that you appreciate the participant's attending the interview.
- Give the participant the opportunity to close the interview.

The first bullet was to tell participants they could feel free to keep their camera on or off. The second was to remind me to record the interviews. The third and fourth were to remind me to finish the interviews. In terms of the format of interviews, in the research design stage, in-person interviews were designed as the main data collection method. Online interviews were as a backup plan in case in-person interviews were infeasible. It is because I believed the interviewer and the interviewee could have real interactions with each other compared to online interviews in the virtual environment. The interviewer could also be able to see non-verbal communication when they are in the same setting and environment. Therefore, the quality of in-person interviews could be better than online ones.

However, during data collection, I identified the strengths of online interviews. First, online interviews make the arrangement of time more flexible. When people are given the option of online interviews, there are more likely to get involved in the research and become a participant. It is very important for recruitment. Second, online interviews show little weaknesses especially when the interview is structured or semi-structured. My interview is semi-structured. Most questions are designed on the interview guides. I followed the guides during interviews. I may also ask other questions based on the flow of the interviews and the research questions.

Although I could not see the interviewees online when their cameras were off, I could obtain their perceptions, views and experiences.

In terms of the terms used in interviews, the term grandparent childcare in Mandarin Chinese could be ‘隔代抚养’, ‘隔代抚育’, ‘隔代照顾’, ‘隔代照料’, ‘隔代教育’, ‘隔代教养’, ‘祖父母照料’, ‘祖父母抚养’, ‘祖父母教养’ and so forth. The term I used was ‘隔代抚养’ which is more commonly used. Translated word for word into English, it means ‘intergenerational care’. However, public media tend to characterise this phrase adversely, emphasising the negative impacts of grandparent childcare. Another term I used is ‘老人带小孩儿’; the direct translation is ‘the elders take care of children’, but this term is inaccurate, since some grandparents are not the elders. Despite the above negative aspects of using the two terms ‘隔代抚养’ and ‘老人带小孩儿’, it is helpful for parents and grandparents to gain a quick understanding of the research focus during recruitment. In interview, I tried to replace ‘隔代抚养’ and ‘老人带小孩儿’ with ‘爷爷奶奶或者姥姥姥爷带小孩儿’ which means ‘children cared by paternal grandfather, paternal grandmother, or maternal grandmother and maternal grandfather’. This term is more neutral and does not indicate the age of grandparents although it is too long and there are too many words.

The transcription was conducted alongside the recruitment and interviews. Conducting the transcription work ‘forced’ me to review the interviews. Transcribing interviews conducted in February revealed how I strictly followed the interview guide. However, some questions in the interview guide did not fit the flow of interactions in the interview. This made both the participants and me feel awkward during the conversation. After the problem was identified, I asked questions based on the flow of the interactions between the participant and me, and the interviews became smoother and more fluent.

5.3.5 Implications of Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19)

In the early edition of the research timetable, data collection was designed to start in the second half of 2020. Due to the negative impacts of lockdown on my mental health and productivity at work, the research timetable had to be revised. The submission of the ethics application and data collection had to be delayed for approximately two months. The revised time for the ethics application was November 2020, and the start time for data collection was January 2021. I left Belfast for China on 26 November 2020. However, I could not conduct data collection as soon as I arrived in China. Based on the strict quarantine policies in China, I quarantined in two quarantine hotels and at home for 28 days in total – the pandemic was worse in winter than at other times. The recruitment was designed to be conducted in person at community healthcare centres, but the state policies and local policies on Covid-19 were tight and

the public became more alert to the pandemic, so it was infeasible and difficult to recruit participants on site as planned. In addition to the impacts of the pandemic, the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) Holiday, from 11 to 17 February 2021, delayed recruitment. Faced with the above difficulties in recruitment, an alternative way to conduct data collection was online recruitment. Although permission was granted from one healthcare centre during preparations for the ethics application in 2020, the rapidly changing Covid situation added more precarity to the permissions from gatekeepers, and I eventually obtained permission from only one community healthcare centre.

5.4 Data Analysis

5.4.1 Thematic analysis

Based on the chosen paradigmatic and epistemological positions and procedures, thematic analysis was clustered into three broad types: coding reliability approaches, reflexive approaches and codebook approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2019; 2021). Braun and Clarke (2019) classify their approaches as reflexive thematic analysis. They elucidate the six stages of thematic analysis as familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up (Braun and Clarke, 2019). They argue that the process is iterative and recursive rather than linear, which means it is necessary to move back and forth within the six stages (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In qualitative research, the processes of data collection, data analysis and writing up are not linear either, and are generally conducted simultaneously (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Since Braun and Clarke published their well-known article in 2006, they have been revising and improving the process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2021). The most recent process is as follows: familiarising yourself with the dataset; coding; generating initial themes; developing and reviewing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; writing up (Braun and Clarke, 2020; Braun and Clarke, 2022). The thematic analysis of this research was guided by this process.

Compared to quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis begins from research topics of interest and does not test hypotheses – it is a journey of discovery (Campbell *et al.*, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) explain two ways of identifying themes and patterns in thematic analysis, inductive – the ‘bottom-up’ way – and deductive way – the ‘top down’ way. In the process of inductive analysis, coding is driven by the data itself, instead of by theoretical frameworks or research interests. In contrast, deductive analysis is driven by theories and research interests (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, it is a misleading simplification to suggest that qualitative research is an inductive process (Ormston *et al.*, 2014). In terms of using theories in data

analysis, Campbell *et al.* (2017) advise that researchers could sensitise themselves to data through existing theory, rather than being limited by theories.

Terms such as 'coding' and 'themes' are commonly used in the thematic analysis process. Bryman (2016) identifies coding as the starting point for most forms of thematic analysis. Yet, it is more appropriate to say that coding is at the early stage of thematic analysis, since thematic analysis starts from a familiarisation of data. The structure of codes comes from the data instead of pre-existing theoretical framework (Campbell *et al.*, 2017). Codes represent 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998). By coding, data are reduced into pieces of meaning (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Clarke and Braun (2013) offer a vivid metaphor about the differences and relationships between codes and themes: 'If codes are bricks and tiles in a brick and tile house, then themes are the walls and roof panels'. This metaphor aligns with their articulation in a paper that states how, in reflexive thematic analysis, the process of coding is necessary to develop themes, and themes are the outcome of this process (Braun and Clarke, 2021). They argue that codes capture one facet of data, but themes display multiple facets, and are united by a central concept or idea (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2021). A theme is a representation of patterned response or meaning embedded in the dataset, and is significant about the data and relevant to the research question (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

5.4.2 Analysis process

Phase 1 – Familiarisation

Data analysis starts from familiarisation. Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Chinese. Transcribing recordings of interviews provides an opportunity to get familiar with the data. Spencer *et al.* (2014) suggest that tasks for familiarisation are finding topics or issues of interest and in relation to research questions, and that recur across the entire dataset. Most of the recordings were transcribed in chronological order based on the dates of interviews.

Transcripts were recorded in Chinese and data analysis were conducted using the Chinese transcripts. Ten transcripts were translated into English for supervision purpose. Three translation tools, Microsoft Translator, Google Translate and Youdao Translate, were tested to ascertain which performed better. The three tools were used to translate one transcript. The evaluation of the translation was conducted by me. My native language is Mandarin Chinese. I have been learning English for over 15 years. After I started my PhD study, I still keep learning by attending academic English courses and so forth. I chose excerpts of the translation

that translated by the three tools. After comparing the excerpts of the translation and the original Chinese excerpts, Google Translate was able to capture the meaning of the sentences better compared to other two translation tools but not too much. Therefore, Google Translate was employed as the primary tool to translate the remaining transcripts. Each translation was proofread and re-edited after translation to ensure that the meaning was conveyed as correctly as possible, the content was coherent and cohesive, and the grammar was correct. The translation elements of this proofreading and re-editing process were assisted by Youdao Dictionary. Although Google Translate performed slightly better, there were sentences which were not translated accurately. I revised those translation myself assisting by Youdao Dictionary. During the transcription and translation process, I noted important points: the topics that I had an interest in, significant views or attitudes of participants, and topics mentioned by other interviewees. I did not realise the need to take notes when I transcribed the No.6 family interviews, but otherwise. I handwrote summaries for cases, providing an outline of each interview structured by the important points, which helped in acquiring a sense of each case. Because of limited time, ten out of 30 transcripts were translated and ten case summaries were written, but important points from all 30 transcripts were noted down. At this stage of familiarisation, the analysis is non-cross-sectional, in order to obtain a sense of the distinctiveness of each case (Spencer *et al.*, 2014).

Phase 2 and Phase 3 – Coding and generating initial themes

Trials were conducted using MS Word and NVivo12 to see which software was more suitable for coding. MS Word was used to code the English and Chinese transcripts of the grandparent in family No.1. All codes are in parallel with the texts coded. The Chinese transcript was coded first, with the translation of codes edited on the transcript in English. The English transcript was used for supervision purposes. The coding process for analysis purposes was conducted on Chinese transcripts. NVivo 12 was used to code the parent transcript of family No.1. MS Word and NVivo have their pros and cons. With MS Word, codes can be placed just beside the coded text, so all the codes are presented directly instead of being invisible, and are labelled with numbers. Some lines belong to the same code, and it is easy to miscount the number of each code. When I reviewed the codes, it took extra time to renumber the codes. Furthermore, it is difficult to manage codes and themes. It is likely that MS Word could work well for a small dataset but my dataset consists of 30 interviews, which was difficult to manage in MS Word. In contrast, NVivo12 performs well in the aspects above where MS Word is limited. It can easily manage codes and themes – for instance, discarding codes. NVivo12 can boost efficiency in managing a relatively large dataset with 30 interviews. However, the codes are

not in parallel with the lines coded, and this could be seen as a limitation of NVivo12. Overall, NVivo12 was selected to assist in data analysis.

At the first stage of coding, almost all data were coded. The aim of doing this is to avoid loss of data at the early stage. This is similar to carrying out complete coding, the purpose of which is to identify anything and everything of interest or relevance to research questions in the entire dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2013). At this first stage of coding, not only data which were associated with research questions and of interest were coded; some data which were out of this scope were also coded. The reason for doing this is to not lose data at the early stage of data analysis, since data considered not relevant or of interest could become relevant and useful at a later stage of analysis. The names of codes were descriptive, not abstract, to avoid names that were distant from the data itself. The interviewer's questions and words were coded together with the participants narratives in most transcripts.

Stage two of coding was to review codes and group these descriptive codes under a sub-theme. A list of initial themes and sub-themes was generated. It was applied to the other transcripts, and within this process, the list of themes and sub-themes were reviewed and revised. The list was translated into English for supervision purposes. At this stage, codes were reviewed. Names of codes that did not reflect the content of data excerpts were modified. Codes which could be merged into one code were reorganised. Before starting the next stage, all uncoded data were reviewed and checked, and coded if necessary. The above two stages of coding and generating the list of themes and sub-themes are non-cross-sectional analysis. Data were analysed within each transcript.

The final stage of coding was to collate data excerpts of codes. At this stage, this is cross-sectional analysis. Data across the entire dataset were collated. For instance, under the theme *childcare arrangements*, sub-themes and codes were more structured and therefore easy to collate. However, it was difficult to collate codes which were presented in a scattered manner. I discussed this difficulty with a fellow PhD student who utilised qualitative research methods, and she recommended books on data analysis. Her sharing of information and knowledge helped me to get out of the low mood, while reading the books gave me some distance from the data so that I could refresh my mind. This experience paralleled a strategy to avoid being lost in a pool of disconnected ideas that is introduced in one of the above books:

Take regular time out from your data, walk right away from them (cleaning or weeding suddenly seem like remarkably attractive options!); give your brain a chance to move out of the rut and make fresh connections, and your unconscious creativity a chance to work (Bazeley, 2013).

The fellow PhD student found NVivo training sessions helpful and shared with me information about upcoming NVivo training. I used the functions learnt in the training to record the demographic information for each participant in a classification sheet. Codes were checked and reiterated, based on tips from Bazeley (2013).

Phase 4-6 – Developing and reviewing themes, refining, defining and naming themes, and writing the report

In terms of developing themes or identifying patterns across data, Braun and Clarke (2013) proposed that with the purpose that in order to discover similarity and overlap between codes, those codes and the collated data relating to them need to be reviewed. At the stage of developing themes, Braun and Clarke (2013) state three important points: (1) themes identified at this stage are candidate themes and can be refined and modified as the analysis progresses; (2) themes are identified across the dataset. It is not frequency that determines importance but meaningfulness that determines importance for answering research questions; (3) the themes should address research questions instead of covering everything in the data. An important part of qualitative data analysis is the ability to let go of coded material that does not fit the overall analysis.

Bazeley (2013) warns of the danger of losing perspective on cases if coding is relied on heavily. When I moved from coding to the stage of developing themes, 13 themes were developed. Themes and sub-themes were scattered and it was difficult for me to merge and collate them; I was lost in this process. Bazeley (2013) provides strategies in terms of working with cases, one of which is to create a visual model of a case or cases. Working on the visual model enabled me to step out of codes and go back to each case. Moreover, visual mapping can aid in discovering relationships between codes and themes, and themes, subthemes, and overarching themes (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Visual models of each case (Appendix 11 shows an example of a visual model) were drawn and analysis summaries written to describe them. In the process of drawing visual models and writing the analysis summaries, I immersed myself in the data again and became more familiar with the whole dataset. During this process, relationships between the scattered themes, sub-themes or codes were clear. Besides, reviewing each individual case helped me to identify the relevance, importance or significance of themes, sub-themes or codes in that case. After collating the themes and sub-themes developed from each case and analysing them across the whole dataset, four themes were developed.

As mentioned earlier in this section, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that the process is iterative and recursive rather than linear which means it is necessary to move back and forth within the six stages. During the process of writing the findings chapters, themes, sub-themes, and codes were refined and renamed. All sub-themes were listed in an Excel file. The original sub-themes were named based on the particular case, but in the writing process sub-themes were renamed using more general names that applied to the whole data set. A decision was made on whether or not to describe or illustrate sub-themes in the findings chapters. During this process, sub-themes and codes were refined and renamed, and the number of themes and codes reduced.

Take the theme 'childcare arrangements' as an example. The steps of this process were as follows:

Step 1: List all the sub-themes of each visual model in an Excel sheet.

Step 2: Refine the sub-themes and use a general name which can be applied to the whole dataset if possible. Refine them on the visual models as well.

Step 3: Record the refined names on the Excel sheet.

Step 4: List the names of sub-themes of this theme applied to the whole dataset in a new Excel sheet.

Nine sub-themes were developed: daily activities, decision on the caregiver, roles, sleeping arrangements, living arrangements, future arrangements, timelines of childcare, attending pre-school and preparation for childcare.

Step 5: Refine the sub-themes and decide which sub-theme or sub-themes will be described in the findings chapter.

The last sub-theme, 'preparation for childcare', appears in only one case and was not significant to answering the research questions, so was excluded from the list of sub-themes. The sub-theme roles were refined into aspects including parents' roles and grandparents roles. 'Parents' roles' comes under the theme 'perceptions of childcare'. 'Grandparents' roles' comes under the theme perceptions of grandparent childcare. Sleeping arrangements and living arrangements were merged into one sub-theme based on the amount of material. The subtheme 'attend preschool' was merged with 'future arrangements'. Timelines for childcare were discussed within the sub-theme 'decision on the caregiver'. In terms of daily activities, they were

mentioned across the findings and not as individual sub-themes. In addition, sub-themes developed in NVivo 12 were reviewed to see if there were relevant sub-themes missing on the visual models. This procedure was conducted on all the visual models.

Listing the sub-themes and refining them helped in identifying relationships among themes and the relationship with the theme 'childcare arrangements'. This helps in making decisions about whether to merge sub-themes, keep sub-themes under the theme 'childcare arrangements', move them to under other themes, or exclude them from the theme and sub-theme list.

Step 6: Record the final sub-themes described and illustrated in the findings chapter.

Finally, in the findings chapters, three sub-themes of the theme 'childcare arrangements' are described and illustrated: the decision on the caregiver, living arrangements, and future childcare arrangements.

As Braun and Clarke (2006) demonstrates, the six phrases of thematic analysis are iterative and recursive rather than linear. For example, at the stage of writing-up, the theme 'intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents' was reviewed and the sub-themes were redefined.

The relationships of the dyads are shown below in Figure 6. The 30 participants participating in this research comprised 15 grandparents and 15 parents. In the dataset, nine dyads were the maternal grandmother and the mother. Three dyads were the paternal grandmother and the mother. One dyad was the maternal grandfather and the mother. One dyad was a maternal great aunt and the mother. There was only one participant in two families.

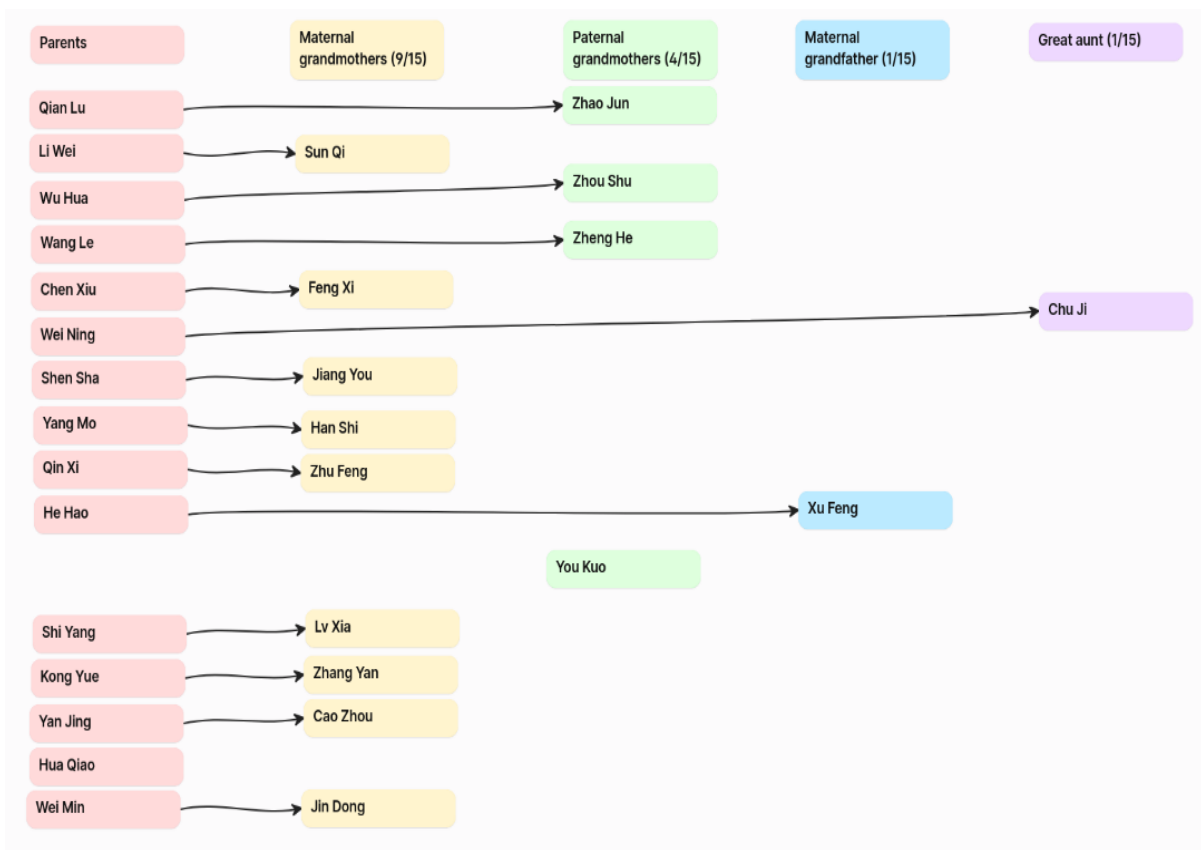


Figure 7 Relationships between family members

5.4.3 Chinese language in this thesis

In terms of phrases in Chinese, these include *pinyin* which is the phonetic alphabet for Chinese characters, Chinese characters, and the meaning of the phrase in English. This applies to all phrases including Chinese characters across the thesis. For example, in ‘zuo yue zi (坐月子, postpartum confinement)’, ‘zuo yue zi’ is the *pinyin* denoting the pronunciation of the phrase ‘坐月子’ and is italicised; ‘坐月子’ are three Chinese characters; postpartum confinement is the meaning of ‘坐月子’. Apart from Chinese phrases, names of places such as Taonan, and the pseudonyms of participants are denoted using *pinyin* without italics, for example, Zhao Jun [01G]. The construction of the pseudonyms of participants is explained in section 5.3.3 Key Chinese authors are denoted using *pinyin* (without italics) and Chinese characters, for example, Yunxiang Yan (阎云翔).

Data analysis is not a one-off and clear-cut process. In the process of writing-up, data analysis continues. Writing the report provides a last opportunity to refine your analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). The next section presents issues in relation to quality within qualitative research.

5.5 Quality of Qualitative Research

In terms of the quality of qualitative research, it seems inappropriate to apply to qualitative research criteria such as reliability that would be required in quantitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose evaluating qualitative studies using criteria which are different from those for quantitative studies. They have come up with trustworthiness and authenticity, which are the two main criteria for qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Trustworthiness consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Braun and Clarke (2013) demonstrate two quality criteria that are used in qualitative research: member checking and triangulation.

Member checking is one technique supporting credibility. Respondent validation or member validation is a process in which the researcher checks findings with participants. Member checking assumes that participants have the ultimate authority over their experience, and that they are fully aware of their experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2013). However, qualitative researchers understand and interpret participants' experience from different perspectives than the perspectives of participants themselves. Moreover, the objective of qualitative research is not to pursue one truth; the criteria for member checking seem problematic (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Triangulation is another technique for credibility from Lincoln and Guba (1985). In research, triangulation refers to using more than one method of data collection, or two or more sources of data, in the research process (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Member checking, triangulation and generalisation are within the criteria of trustworthiness in the quality of qualitative research. Bazeley (2013) outlines how transparency of process is one strategy to ensure trustworthiness. Authenticity is the other main criterion in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Five elements of authenticity are fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Bryman (2016) suggests that the criteria of authenticity have not been influential in social research and the impact on wider research is likely to be controversial.

In this current research, given the limited time to complete the project, member checking has not been adopted. Triangulation is adopted in this research, mainly concerning the sources of data. Apart from different pronouns, the questions in the two interview guides are the same. The purpose of this research design is to obtain data from different participants involved in shared activities; it is to obtain a rich picture of what happens in their families, and what their perceptions towards the same issues are. One reason why the design requires interviews with two participants from each family is to ensure that I could learn what had happened in the family, and to obtain a broader picture of the family. At that time, my assumption inclined me

to seek the only truth. However, as the research moves on and I read more literature about qualitative research, I realise that qualitative research does not aim at finding the only truth; instead, it sets out to explore why more than one truth exists. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the ontological assumption of this research is inclined to relativism – that multiple realities are acknowledged to exist.

Ritchie *et al.* (2014) discuss generalisation among findings, and suggest three types of generalisation: representational, inferential and theoretical. Representational generalisation refers to ‘whether what is found in a research sample can be generalised to, or held to be equally true of, the parent population from which the sample is drawn’ (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p.349). Inferential generalisation refers to ‘whether the findings from a particular study can be generalised, or inferred, to other settings or contexts beyond the sampled one’ (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p.349). Theoretical generalisations means ‘which draws theoretical propositions, principles or statements from the findings of a study for more general application’ (Lewis *et al.*, 2014, p.349).

Inferential generalisation is sometimes referred as transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), which is one criterion of trustworthiness. The characteristics of participants seem to suggest inferential generalisation. The demographic information on parents, including educational background, age and so forth, is varied. In contrast, in the grandparent group, the features of participants are homogeneous. In terms of educational background, only one grandparent has a bachelor’s degree, with all other grandparents educated to middle or high school level. This feature of the grandparent group might have an impact on their perceptions. The findings may not represent grandparents with different educational backgrounds. In terms of the age of grandparents, two were over 60 and 13 grandparents were aged between 50 and 60. Overall, given the homogeneity of the demographic features of these grandparents, the findings of this research are likely to have limited transferability.

5.6 Reflection

I have interest in families not only in research but also in my daily life. Working on a PhD provides an opportunity to know more about families beyond my own. For qualitative researchers, being aware of themselves can help them understand how their experiences and perceptions influence the research process. In my opinion, it is good to start the research journey by carrying out research in the place where I was born and grew up. Exploring families in my hometown helps me to answer the questions ‘who I was and am’ and ‘how I have become what I am now’. As for my thoughts about family, my family of origin has long-lasting impacts on my behaviours and thoughts, and my parents are the most important people in the world to me. However, although there are sweet moments when I feel love and gain support from

the family, there are also troubled moments which can hardly be observed from outside of the family. These perceptions and personal experiences shape my research interest on the complexities within families.

I have lived with my parents in my hometown, Taonan, since I was born. Since 2010, I have spent only about two months in my hometown annually, spending the other ten months in the city where I was studying. This kind of situation lasted until 2018, when I went back to live with my parents at home while I worked from home and prepared for PhD applications. In 2019, I started to study and live in Belfast. I believe that my experiences have been enriched since 2010 when I left my hometown and lived in different places. Dalian and Jinan are different from my hometown socially, economically, and culturally, although they are all cities in China. Furthermore, the experience of studying and living in Belfast helps me to shape my view of the world beyond the context of China. Living in different places and with people from different backgrounds enriches and refreshes the ways that I see the society and people in my hometown as an 'insider' and 'outsider'. Moreover, it also helps me to reflect on 'who I was and am' and how I have become what I am'.

During data collection, I have needed to adjust to people's different preferences in terms of arrangements for interviews. It took me some time to adjust to the concept of an 'appointment' in Belfast. When I am in Belfast, appointments are very common – booking GP appointments or vaccine appointments, for example. However, when I discussed arranging interviews with participants in my hometown, some thought the interview would be conducted immediately, or on the same day that I first spoke to them. Appointments in my hometown are not as common as they are in Belfast. This reverse cultural shock required me to shift flexibly from the 'appointment' mindset to communicating with participants in the local way. If the participants were free at that time, we would undertake the interviews on that day. It might be easier for me to get back to the 'fewer appointments' way in my hometown compared to adjusting to the appointments culture of Belfast.

In my personal life, it was difficult for me to ask questions in depth with people I meet for the first time, because I worried about whether this was impolite or if I was crossing a boundary. This may prevent me from getting closer to people. Carrying out interviews requires me to ask participants I have just met, questions in detail and in depth. However, after asking these in-depth questions, I found that they were not regarded as impolite by participants, some of whom shared many more stories about themselves than I had expected. This made me reflect that perhaps I was overcautious before. This experience gives me strength in my daily life to talk about topics with people or ask questions that I was not brave enough to ask before. Researching in my hometown enriches my knowledge about lives of my peers here. When I was

young, one motivation to study hard was to leave my hometown, and this motivation was encouraged by teachers and other adults. From this perspective, hometown was not positively accepted. My hometown is a small city and falls behind economically and socially. However, I was born and grew up in this place. Knowing myself and my hometown better helps me to accept and make peace with my hometown and myself.

In the process of carrying out this research, I have more understanding about the multiple roles of researchers in a research project. For my PhD research, I am a researcher, a recruiter, an interviewer, an analyst, a 'detective', an investigator and a writer. The writer seems a major role compared to other roles. In the process of a PhD application, writing a research proposal is an essential step. During the process of studying for a PhD, writing runs through the entire process. Since data collection, research logs were used to record process and reflections. In the research logs, information about recruitment and interviews were recorded. Moreover, 'fresh' reflections during data collection were also recorded. Research logs help to keep these reflections and information, in case they are forgotten when writing the thesis. During data analysis, research logs were more structured and organised. The content included: what to do this week, what has been done this week, what to do next week. By doing this, the work flow is tracked, which helps in managing the process. In the section *what has done*, challenges, reflections and other relevant contents were recorded. Overall, research logs not only helped to record the process of research but also acted as a research management tool.

At the writing-up stage – which is where I am while writing this paragraph – it is what I do every day. Rachael Frost, a mentor from the ERA Mentoring Scheme at the British Society of Gerontology, recommended me a book *How to Write a Thesis*, by Rowena Murray. I read the first and fourth editions, and it has been very helpful to me. First, the technique of freewriting helps to feel free to start writing without thinking about whether it is well-structured work or a piece of 'good quality' work. It is not that you have had a clear structure or a clear content in your mind before writing. Instead, you identify the structure and write a piece of 'good' work as you are writing. Second, the book provides advice for different stages of writing. For example, I am currently in the process of revising as I write this paragraph. I went back to Chapter Eight, 'Fear and Loathing: Revising', in the fourth edition of the book. Looking back over this chapter has helped me to check my thesis using the revising techniques, including repetition, forecasting, signalling, signposting, and conceptualising and reconceptualising (Murray, 2017). Moreover, the book is helpful in managing my relationships as a student with my supervisors, and has taught me how to make full use of supervisions or contacts with supervisors. In addition to reading literature about thesis writing, talking with fellow research students is a way to learn how to improve thesis writing, because we have shared experience. This also helps me to feel

less stressed and anxious, because writing is difficult not only for me, but also for other students.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter includes six main sections: philosophical position, research design, data collection, data analysis, reflection and quality of qualitative research. First, the process of this research could be described as more inductive than deductive. Second, in the research design process, research questions, samples and location, interviews and research ethics are introduced in this section. Third, multiple methods were utilised to recruit participants: online recruitment, recruitment in a community healthcare centre, personal networks and snowballing. Interviews were conducted with 30 participants. The implications of coronavirus on this research were demonstrated in this section. Fourth, the process of data analysis is illustrated in detail in this section. Overall, the process of preparation, data collection and data analysis are demonstrated in detail and rich accounts of the research process provided. The purpose is to make the process transparent, so that readers could make a judgement about the quality of the research. In the meantime, the rich accounts of the process – for example, the process of data analysis – could provide researchers with an instruction manual and sight into the possible challenges in conducting thematic data analysis. In the fifth section, the criteria of qualitative research are demonstrated in the last section. Finally, personal reflection is presented. The following four chapters, from Chapter Six to Chapter Nine, will present the four themes – and their sub-themes – developed utilising thematic analysis.

Chapter Six: Perceptions of Childcare

The following Chapters Six to Nine present the findings. Themes and sub-themes have been developed to answer the research questions. The four themes are developed: perceptions of childcare, perceptions of grandparent childcare, childcare arrangements, and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. Themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Themes and Sub-Themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Chapter Six: Perceptions of Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - perceptions of parental childcare - childcare over time - perceptions of having a second child
Chapter Seven: Perceptions of Grandparent Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grandparents' motivation - grandparents' roles - good grandparent childcare - parents' expectations of grandparents - grandparent childcare 'taken for granted'? - advantages and disadvantages of grandparent childcare
Chapter Eight: Childcare Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the decision on the caregiver - living arrangements - future childcare arrangements
Chapter Nine: Intergenerational Interactions Between Grandparents and Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disagreements between grandparents and parents - ways to deal with disagreements - contradictions between involvement in childcare and grandparents' freedom - intergenerational identity

The first theme *perceptions of childcare* (see Chapter Six) captures grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare, their views about features of childcare across generations, and the meaning of childcare for individuals on different life courses. An unexpected sub-theme, perceptions of having a second child, is presented under the last sub-theme of perceptions of

childcare. The theme *perceptions of grandparent childcare* (see Chapter Seven) covers grandparents' and parents' understanding of grandparent childcare. It explores grandparents' motivation and their roles in childcare and other multiple facets of grandparent childcare. The theme *perceptions of grandparent childcare* was a sub-theme of perceptions of childcare. Due to the large amount of material and the importance of grandparent childcare, this is defined as a theme and illustrated in the subsequent chapter. The theme *childcare arrangements* (see Chapter Eight) explores how childcare arrangements involving grandparents are made. In addition to current childcare arrangements, future childcare arrangements are explored. The last theme, *intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents* (see Chapter Nine), highlights conflictual aspects of interactions between grandparents and parents, and also involves intergenerational identity.

6.1 Perceptions of Parental Childcare

Perceptions of parental childcare involve mothers' roles, fathers' roles, parents' capabilities in childcare and better childcare by parents.

Mothers' roles in childcare vary across the dataset. Mothers' roles include being the main caregiver or playing the role as a buffer or bridge between grandparents who are caregivers and other family members. The mothers Wang Le [04P], Wei Ning [06P], Qin Xi [09P], Yan Jing [14P] and Wei Min [16P] described themselves as the main caregivers. Wei Ning [06P] and Yan Jing [14P] believed that they were the main caregiver, and the grandmothers' role was assisting them in childcare. Wei Ning [06P] involved herself a lot in childcare.

I put the kid on my king bed besides me... For example, breastfeeding at night, breastfeeding to sleep, these things ...Some people say mums would be very tired if they take care of their kids themselves at night. I don't think I'm tired. And I really enjoy myself in it. I think it's very good.

(Wei Ning [06P], Mother)

The perception of Jin Dong [16G], a maternal grandmother, was consistent with her daughter, Wei Min's [16P] view in terms of parents' main role in childcare. They both believed that parents should be the main caregivers.

Li Wei [02P] played a leading role in childcare as well. Li Wei [02P] told maternal and paternal grandmothers what to do based on the mother's needs and communication with professionals.

The pace of everyday life is nearly the same. And they would listen to (me). They would do something based on my needs.... Um, for example, when the baby should drink water every day, when the baby should drink breastmilk, when he should eat some nutrition supplements every

day, and has bath, something like the time of daily life. They would do based on my needs (requirements). Sometimes I would communicate with doctors. And based on this, we complete these tasks.

(Li Wei [02P], Mother)

Li Wei [02P] stated that she was in charge of the childcare work in her family. She told the maternal grandmother and paternal grandmother what they should do. Grandmothers completed childcare work based on her needs or requirements. Some of these requirements were guided by doctors. Sun Qi [02P] mentioned that she and her daughter learned childcare approaches from each other.

The baby chokes when drinking milk. I pat him. It's not difficult. My daughter didn't know what to do. Then I told her how to do. There is nothing special. ... Sometimes my daughter also taught me. After all, they are young people. (Their approaches) are better than our old approaches. We learn from each other. Whoever is right, we take the person's way.

(Sun Qi [02G], Maternal grandmother)

Both Chen Xiu [05P] and He Hao [11P] took care of their children at weekends. Chen Xiu [05P] focused on care for her older daughter on weekdays. Her younger daughter was taken care of by the maternal grandmother and they lived together during the week. At weekends, the child went back home and was taken care of by Chen Xiu [05P] and her husband. Similarly, He Hao [11P] lived with her son at weekends. She worked and did not live with her son on weekdays and went back to live with her son at the grandparents' home. During the winter and summer holidays, she took care of her son on weekdays and weekends.

Besides, when He Hao's [11P] husband and the paternal grandparents said unintentional words that made the maternal grandmother uncomfortable, she played a role as a buffer among family members. Maternal grandparents' feelings mattered to He Hao [11P] and she hoped her parents could be less stressed and much happier in childcare. She would talk with her husband and paternal grandparents about their opinions and their advice. She played a role like a buffer and bridge between the father, the paternal grandparents and the maternal grandparents. Chen Xiu [05P] played a similar role to that of He Hao [11P] in her family.

He (Chen Xiu's [05P] husband) will say it (his disagreement with the maternal grandmother) to me first. Then I analyse whether his requirements are reasonable or not. If it's reasonable, (I) think he's right, I will talk with maternal grandma in an implicit way. If I don't think it's reasonable, I reject it immediately.

(Chen Xiu [05P], Mother)

When the father, Chen Xiu's [05P] husband, disagreed with issues related to the maternal grandmother's childcare, Chen Xiu [05P] played a role as a buffer and bridge between them.

In terms of the role of fathers, Qian Lu [01P], Sun Qi [02G], Chu Ji [06G], Qin Xi [09P], Zhu Feng [09G], Cao Zhou [14G] and Hua Qiao [15P] reported that fathers were rarely involved in childcare.

My son-in-law isn't in charge of childcare and he doesn't need to take care of the kid. It doesn't involve him yet. ... You see they are busy. It is fine my daughter and I take care of kid. When they're available, they like the kid and sometimes hold the baby in arms.

(Sun Qi [02G], Maternal grandmother)

In contrast to Sun Qi [02G], Li Wei [02P] said as follows.

I think he (Li Wei's [02P] husband) did a good job. For example, He burped the baby after breast-feeding. Or he did the 'airplane hold' when he (Li Wei's [02P] son) had colic or stomach-ache, that is what he does. Or figure out ways when there are problems.

(Li Wei [02P], Mother)

Li Wei's husband participated in childcare while she and the two grandmothers were the main caregivers. Jin Dong [16G] said the child's father took care of the child at night. Across the whole dataset, fathers involved themselves little in childcare. Qin Xi [09P] said her husband was rarely involved in childcare. Yet, he played a role when Qin Xi [09P] suffered from mental and physical health problems after birth.

I have emotional highs and lows after delivery. I couldn't manage to control my emotions. ... At that time, he said 'everything I said was wrong'. Because I didn't have an exit to release those emotions. I couldn't release them to the kid or to her maternal grandma. My only exit to release emotions was the kid's dad.

(Qin Xi [09P], Mother)

Suffering from physical pain and negative emotions, Qin Xi [09P] released her negative emotions to her husband.

Some grandparents worried about parents' capabilities in childcare. Chen Xiu [05P] said that the maternal grandmother did not feel reassured about her childcare.

Her maternal grandma doesn't feel reassured about my care. Because take cooking as an example, I don't know how to cook. Her dad cooks and I can't. Moreover, for example, sometimes she played slide, I just watched. Her maternal grandma said you held her to ensure her not falling down. For this, she doesn't feel reassured about me.

(Chen Xiu [05P], Mother)

Similar to Chen Xiu's [05P] mother, Jin Dong [16G] had worries at the very first about parents' capability. However, she felt assured about childcare by parents later when she saw parents did a good job in childcare. Her attitudes towards parents' capabilities in childcare changed and acknowledged their capability.

At the very first, I had worry. ... After some time, I found they (parents) are doing a good job in childcare.

(Jin Dong [16G], Maternal grandmother)

Mothers reflected their capability in childcare as well. Li Wei [02P] said as a new mother, she worried that whether or not she could provide good childcare for her son. He Hao [11P] believed that childcare was a rather difficult process. Wu Hua [03P] said sometimes she was impatient and felt regretted after telling her son off. She praised the grandparents' patience and said she should learn from them. Wang Le [04P] hoped to develop her son's intellectual abilities by carrying out intellectual activities with her son. However, she said she was lazy and did not manage to do that.

Grandparents including Sun Qi [02G], Feng Xi [05G], Chu Ji [06G], Jiang You [07G] and You Kuo [10G] believed that childcare by parents was better. Chen Xiu [05P], Wei Ning [06P], Qin Xi [09P] and Shi Yang [12P] agreed that childcare by parents was better but they were unable to provide full-time childcare. Chen Xiu [05P] said as follows.

Companion by grandparents is different from that by parents. Parent could play lots of games that grandparents are not able to play with her. There are limitations in that her grandma could play with her. The toys are there. The ways of grandparents to play the toys is less than that of parents. ... Actually deep from my heart, if I don't have to work, I want to take care of my kid myself. But I'm not allowed to do that because of several reasons.

(Chen Xiu [05P], Mother)

Chen Xiu [05P] believed childcare by parents is better than grandparent childcare. However, she had to work and could not accompany her child as the grandmother did although she hoped to take care of her child herself. Shi Yang [12P] expressed her view on companionship as well.

People say that the best thing for children's growth is companionship. I think in the process of children's growth, accompanied by parents is the best. But don't we have to work? ... The most scientific childcare is by mothers. But I can't manage do that. Do you know?'

(Shi Yang [12P], Mother)

Shi Yang [12P] held the view that childcare by parents was better than that by grandparents. She had no choice but to have her child taken care of by grandparents instead of herself because she had to work. Shen Sha [07P] also mentioned that she did not accompany her son a lot because of work.

I go to work everyday and have to look after the side job (she is managing a restaurant as her side job). I don't have much time to accompany my son. I have no way. ... A lot of things you don't know whether he (Shen Sha's [07P] son) likes or not, but you should give him. ... For my generation, because of the limited financial condition, I couldn't try various out of school sessions. ... I always want to provide a well-off living condition for the kid.

(Shen Sha [07P], Mother)

The above three accounts of Chen Xiu [05P], Shi Yang [12P] and Shen Sha [07P] reflect the mothers' conflict between working in the labour force and their desired role in childcare. Qin Xi [09P] expressed the view that parents provide better childcare from the perspective of the development of children.

From I was pregnant, I read materials about scientific parenting. All of them said that children from birth to three years is better taken care of by parents. It is good for the development of personality. It will lay a good foundation for the development of personality and other aspects.

(Qin Xi [09P], Mother)

Guided by scientific parenting, Qin Xi [09P] believed childcare by parents is good for children's development. Not only parents but grandparents also agreed that childcare by parents is better.

I think childcare by parents is better than grandparent childcare after all. Why is it good? They have more knowledge than us. They learn and know new things. For example, her mum puts together an outfit. Same clothes. The kid looks fashionable if her mum puts together an outfit. When the grandmothers put together an outfit, they just consider whether it is warm and looks just ok.

(You Kuo [10G], Paternal grandmother)

You Kuo [10G] felt that childcare by parents is better because parents have more knowledge than grandparents and keep pace with trends. Parents and grandparents share their views on parents providing better childcare because this is seen as good for children's development; parents perform better in daily practice, such as playing games with children.

To conclude the first sub-theme perceptions of parental childcare, some mothers perceived themselves as the main caregivers or playing a leading role in childcare. Mothers who could not spend a large amount of time providing childcare, reported that they played a role as a buffer and bridge between grandparents who were caregivers and other family members. Although most fathers rarely took care of children, their role in childcare was discussed above, for instance, taking care of children and playing as 'an exit' for the mother's negative emotions. Finally, not only grandparents but also parents agreed that childcare by parents was better than that by grandparents. Grandparent childcare was described by some mothers as something they were resigned to because they had to work. Grandparents felt unassured about parents' capability in childcare. Similarly, mothers expressed their worry about their capability in childcare. Mothers reflected on their childcare and acknowledged that grandparents did a good job. Nevertheless, both grandparents and parents believed childcare should be undertaken by parents instead of grandparents.

6.2 Childcare Over Time

Participants expressed their views about childcare in the past compared to that in the present. This section contains views about childcare by grandparents on their different life courses, and childcare across generations.

In terms of childcare by grandparents on their different life courses, Zhou Shu's [03G] husband, the paternal grandfather, reported that he had more affection for his grandson than he had for his son when his son was young.

Like my mother-in-law said, my father-in-law didn't hold her son in arms a lot as what he does for her grandson. It may be relevant to age. People's thoughts change at different ages. Now he's old. Family is second to none for him. *Tian lun zhi le* (天伦之乐, family joy) is of top importance. After he has a grandson, he's happy deep from his heart. Very delighted.

(Wu Hua [03P], Mother)

Wu Hua [03P] explained that her father-in-law's greater affection for his grandson than that for his son was due to the importance of family on his current life course. In the interview with Zhou Shu [03P], her words also reflected the grandfather's deep affection for the child.

His grandad spoils him, always hold him in arms. Did you see? ...He never tells the kid off. The kid only likes staying with his grandad. ... Last night, his grandad's stomach didn't feel comfortable....He came to look for his grandad. His grandad had to carry him.

(Zhou Shu [03G], Paternal grandmother)

Lv Xia [12G] also expressed her stronger affection for her grandson than that for her daughter when her daughter was young.

My daughter, when she was young, I didn't like her so much as this kid. My daughter is jealous. She said 'Why didn't you treat me so well as this?' She said I treat his son well. It's *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren). Why do I like him so much and deep from heart?

(Lv Xia [12G], Maternal grandmother)

Feng Xi [05G] talked about her differences in childcare when taking care of her younger granddaughter compared to that for her younger granddaughter. Feng Xi [05G] was looking after her younger granddaughter when the interview was conducted. Feng Xi [05G] said that her physical strength was not as good as that it was when she took care of her older granddaughter. Chen Xiu [05P] agreed with the maternal grandmother, as stated below. She also identified the shift of the grandmother's attitudes towards differences between Feng Xi [05G] and herself in childcare.

After all, her ages are different when taking care of the older one compared to taking care of the younger one, isn't she? ... Grandma may be more open than the time when she was taking care of the older one. She isn't like before. For the older one, when I thought the kid wore too much

clothes and suggested to take off her clothes, it pissed her off. Now she thinks I may be right. In the past, if the older one caught a cold, if I just bathed her (instead of taking medicine which was grandma's way). My mum would get crazy. Now she just lets it go.

(Chen Xiu [05P], Mother)

Feng Xi's [05G] attitudes towards differences in childcare issues between her daughter and herself changed over time. She became softer than before and accepted the mother's way instead of insisting on her way.

In relation to childcare across generations, participants felt that living conditions nowadays were far better than those in the past, which impacted childcare. It was expressed by some participants that childcare was more careful and meticulous than before.

In the past, like my kid, after weaned, she ate the same food as what adults ate. We didn't cook food specially for the kids compared to what we do now (cook kid food). The living conditions get better nowadays. And your thoughts about childcare improve. ... We take care of the kid too meticulously. Her gross motor skills or something else is not developed very well. You have to let her to try but we didn't.

(Zhu Feng [09G], Maternal grandmother)

Childcare by Zhu Feng [09G] was more careful and meticulous than that for her daughter when her daughter was young. She believed that this was associated with the improvement in living conditions. However, she had worries that the careful and meticulous childcare resulted in the slow development of her granddaughter's gross motor skills. Similarly, Hua Qiao [15P] disagreed with careful and meticulous childcare.

I observed some people focus on making mashed food or powder. I didn't try these steps and pay attention to nutrition management. You must add what in this. I didn't try that. Because I think it's not good to be very careful and meticulous. I did this (making mashed food or power and paying attention to nutrition management) before. When I became a mom at the very first, I also wanted to try these things that other people did. Other people's kids eat this. I also wanted to cook for my kid. But later I found my son didn't like them. He was unwilling to eat. Other kids like to eat the yogurt melts sold in the shop, my son doesn't like them. Make something which was not easy to make. After made it, he didn't like it. Just play it by ear. It's random.

(Hua Qiao [15P], Mother)

Hua Qiao [15P] tried making special solid food for her son which was described as careful and meticulous care; yet her son did not like it. She had to adjust her cooking according to her son's preference for food.

The shifts in childcare across time reflect in childcare for different children when grandparents are on different life courses. It shows a change in grandparents at different life stages. Besides, childcare across generations is characterised by better living conditions, which sheds light on changes in the macro context, such as economic development.

6.3 Perceptions of Having a Second Child

Questions about perceptions of having a second child were not designed into the interview guides. However, during interviews, due to the shifts of population policies from – the one-child policy to the two-child policy and the latest the three-child policy – the topic of having a second child was discussed by several participants. Among them, three pairs talked about their views on having a second child.

Chen Xiu [05P] was unwilling to have a second child at first. Her mother, Feng Xi [05G], encouraged her to have a second child by providing childcare. Chen Xiu [05P] said below.

I didn't intend to have a second kid. I didn't. First, considered who would be the caregiver. It (childcare) is exhausting. Second, bring a kid up, not like raising a cat or a dog, how many matters during it. I'm fed up with the tiredness. I didn't want to have a second child. But the older people, hoped me to have a second child especially. At that time, she always said I would take care of the kid for you, I would look after the kid for you.

(Chen Xiu [05P], Mother)

Feng Xi's [05G] willingness to look after the child impacted Chen Xiu's [05P] decision to have a second child. Feng Xi [05G] said below.

I was thinking two children, they can accompany each other. When (my daughter) getting old, they can reduce burden for my daughter. When she's old, they can take care of her. Both of them can take care of her.

(Feng Xi [05G], Maternal grandmother)

She believed two children could help her daughter Chen Xiu [05P] in elder care when she was old. Besides, the two children could support each other during the elder care. Feng Xi [05G] was motivated by her consideration not only for her daughter but also concern for her granddaughters. Conversely, Zhao Jun [01G], the paternal grandmother, disagreed with the mother, Qian Lu [01P], having a second child, but Qian Lu [01P] insisted on having a second child. Zhao Jun [01G] said below.

When I took care of my older granddaughter, her older kid, my husband worked outside. It was only me taking care of her. Um, it was very exhausting. You took care of this kid. You cleaned and cleaned (doing housework). It was really tired, very tired. I disagreed her (Qian Lu [01P]) to have a second kid. I said if you did, I wouldn't take care of the kid for you. I said it firmly. (However I) Have no choice. If I didn't (help in childcare), no one would do. Her mum (the maternal grandma) didn't take care of kids.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

Zhao Jun [01G] has two sons and was taking care of children for her younger son when interviewed. Her older son has one child. She had looked after her older grandson for her older son. Zhao Jun [01G] was unwilling to be the caregiver for her younger son's second child. She identified the negative impacts of having a second child as well. Zhao Jun [01G] found that

the mother having a second child impacted her older granddaughter's personalities conversely. The older one got angry easily after she had a little brother, which she didn't used to be. Zhao Jun's [01P] feelings for her granddaughter was complex. She felt upset for her, while it annoyed her as well. She stated that parenting methods for boys and girls were different. She did not know what to do with her granddaughter, which exposed her helplessness.

There are already two children in the above two families (01 and 05). In the families below, there was only one child in each family. Han Shi [08G] disagreed with the mother having a second child. He Hao [11P] did not intend to have a second child. Wei Ning [06P] wanted a second child. Yan Jing [14P] always had the idea of having a second child but this h changed by the difficult process of delivery – there were issues with childbirth. This information was received before interview was conducted. In addition, she suffered from severe symptoms in pregnancy. As the only child in her family, Yan Jing [14P] used to be determined to have a second child but her experiences in pregnancy and delivery shook her view about having a second child. As time went by, her desire to have a second child returned and she was willing to have a second child again. Shi Yang [12P] had only one child and she did not want a second child. However, Lv Xia [12G] shared different views about having a second child with Lv Xia [12G].

I like my daughter's son very much. If she has a second child, I'm glad to help her take care of the kid. ... Her grandpa had a dream about the kid was lost. He cried and felt scared. I had dreamed several times that the kid was lost. I woke up and found it was a dream.

(Lv Xia [12G], Maternal grandmother)

Lv Xia [12G] was willing to take care a second child because of her affection for her grandchild but Shi Yang [12P] didn't intend to have a second child.

6.4 Conclusion

Across the dataset, mothers are more involved in childcare than fathers. Mothers' roles in childcare include as being the main caregivers, or acting as a buffer or a bridge in the family when other family members have opinions about childcare provided by grandparents. It seems that parents and grandparents agree that childcare by parents is good for children's development. However, mothers could not accompany their children due to conflicts between work in the labour force and mothers' caregiver roles. In addition to perceptions of parental childcare, changes in childcare were identified. Childcare by grandparents varied when they are on different life courses. Grandparents show more affection in childcare for grandchildren than they did for their children when they were young. In addition, the quality of childcare is improved as living conditions change across generations. The last sub-theme presents grandparents' and

parents' views on having a second child. The next chapter presents findings in relation to participants' perceptions of grandparent childcare.

Chapter Seven: Perceptions of Grandparent Childcare

The theme *perceptions of grandparent childcare* describes and illustrates participants' perceptions of grandparent childcare. Six sub-themes are developed: grandparents' motivation, grandparents' roles, good grandparent childcare, parents' expectations of grandparents, 'grandparent childcare taken for granted?', and advantages and disadvantages.

7.1 Grandparents' Motivation

Helping and sharing the burden of parents is widely expressed as grandparents' motivation in childcare. Jin Dong [16G] said below.

Help her (Wei Min [16P]) take care of the kid is to reduce her burden. Her maternity leave ended. She had to go back to work. There should someone take care of the kid.

(Jin Dong [16G], Maternal grandmother)

Jin Dong [16G] was involved in childcare since the child was born. She took care of the child with Wei Min [16P]. Since Wei Min's [16P] maternity leave ended, Jin Dong [16G] took care of the child herself when Wei Min [16P] was at work. Zhu Feng [09G] explained below about the motivation.

I want to share their burden. ... She (Qin Xi [09P]) doesn't work now. The kid is not easy to take care of. If the kid is, she could go to work. I can help her take care of the kid myself.

(Zhu Feng [09G], Maternal grandmother)

Zhu Feng's [09G] involvement in childcare was to share her daughter's burden. She also mentioned that the child was not easy to look after. This was why Qin Xi [09G] was a full-time mother. In addition to helping or sharing the mother's burden, perceptions of obligation motivate grandmothers' involvement in childcare. Zhao Jun [01G], the paternal grandmother, and her husband, the paternal grandfather, took care of their grandchildren together. Zhao Jun [01G] believed taking care of her grandchildren was what she should do. It related to her perceptions of her role as a mother.

My son's business is my business. When he needs help, I should help him. As long as he asks for help, I could manage to do them all.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

Her role as a mother motivated her to be the caregiver. She was motivated by helping her son in childcare. This was explained by Qian Lu [01P] as duty, as follows. Furthermore, Qian Lu [01P] said grandparents' affection for children motivated them to be caregivers as well.

Perhaps they like children. This could be affection. Maybe it's duty. Their son can't take care of children. They take care of children for their son.

(Qian Lu [01P], Mother)

Qian Lu's perceptions about grandparents' motivation is consistent with the perceptions of Zhao Jun [01G], Qian Lu's [01P] mother-in-law. Jiang You [07G], Zhu Feng [09G], and You Kuo [10G] shared similar perceptions of motivation with Zhao Jun [01G]. They took care of their grandchildren because they believed they have a duty to help in childcare. When asked about motivation for childcare and how she was involved in childcare, Jiang You [07G] answered below.

I'm retired and stay at home all day. I just help my daughter and fulfil my duty. ... I have no motivation. I just fulfil my duty to take care of the child until he goes to preschool and then my task is completed.

(Jiang You [07G], Maternal grandmother)

Taking care of grandchildren was perceived by Jiang You [07G] as her duty, and this motivated her to take care of her grandson.

In addition to duty that motivates grandparents, another major motivation reported across the whole dataset is that grandparents cared much about their daughter or daughter-in-law, and mostly maternal grandmothers cared about their daughters. This can be seen in the interviews with Sun Qi [02G], Wu Hua [03P], Chen Xiu [05P], Yang Mo [08P], Qin Xi [09P], He Hao [11P], Lv Xia [12G], Zhang Yan [13G], Kong Yue [13P], Cao Zhou [14G], Yan Jing [14P], Jin Dong [16G], and Wei Min [16P]. Apart from the family of Wu Hua [03P], all the maternal grandmothers in the families were involved in childcare. Their original expression is *xin teng gu niang* (心疼姑娘, caring much about daughters). *Gu niang* (姑娘) means young women, and in the dialect of north-east China, it also means daughters. In terms of translation, in writing this thesis, I found there were no English words for some phrases and words in Mandarin Chinese. I had to translate these words according to their meanings or the meanings in specific contexts. The above phrase *xin teng* (心疼) is an example. *Xin* (心) in Mandarin means heart. *Teng* (疼) means feeling hurt or uncomfortable. In the context of grandparent childcare, grandparents would feel uncomfortable if their daughters undertook the exhausting childcare work without their help. They did not wish their daughters to be very tired. The translation of *xin teng* (心疼) therefore is caring much about their daughters.

Maternal grandmothers who helped in childcare were motivated by caring much about their daughters. They provided childcare to share their daughters' burden. Li Wei [02P] said helping her recover from delivery was the grandmother's motivation. Her mother Sun Qi [02G] said

her motivation was her daughter, and that the child could be in good health. When Lv Xia [12G] was asked about her motivation, she answered below.

Xin teng gu niang (心疼姑娘, caring much about my daughter). If it's a daughter-in-law, I won't help. You and I talk about this in private. I won't make myself so tired. You don't know. Now most grandparents who are looking after kids are maternal grandmothers. All of them are caring much about their daughter. If it's a daughter-in-law, I won't make myself so tired. I don't have to do that. We say it secretly. I definitely won't do that.

(Lv Xia [12G], Maternal grandmother)

Lv Xia's [12G] words reflect her care for her daughter. Lv Xia [12G] is a maternal grandmother of her grandson; meanwhile, she is also a mother of her daughter. She described her involvement in childcare as motivated by caring about her daughter through helping her in childcare. Han Shi [08P] was motivated to help her daughter in childcare. She said her motivation was 'Just help her (Yang Mo [08P]). Because my daughter, she's like a child that hasn't grown up.'

Grandmothers' perceptions of duty and caring about their daughters both reflect that their perceptions of the role as a mother motivate them to get involved in childcare. Affection for grandchildren and the ties between grandparents and grandchildren are another motivation for grandparents to provide childcare. *Ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren) was mentioned by lots of participants. Xu Feng [11G] is the only grandfather in the dataset and he showed his affection for his grandson, saying '*zen me chou zen me xi huan* (怎么瞅怎么喜欢, I like the kid all the ways he is).' Grandparents' affection for their grandchildren is stronger than that for their own children, according to Wu Hua [03G].

It is *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren). Like my mother-in-law said, my father-in-law didn't hold his son in arms so much as he did for his grandson. It may be relevant to the age. At different ages, people's thoughts change. Now he's old, family is second to none. *Tian lun zhi le* (天伦之乐, family joy between older generations and younger generations) is of top importance. After he has a grandson, he's happy deep from his heart. He's very happy.

(Wu Hua [03P], Mother)

Grandparents' strong affection for their grandchildren motivates them to be the caregivers. Qin Xi [09P] described *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren) as unconditional love. Grandparents rarely said no to the child and the child's not crying was treated as a principle. However, in some families *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren) leads to disagreement in the interactions between grandparents and parents, which will be discussed in the theme *intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents* in Chapter Nine. Moreover, the ties between grandparents and grandchildren could motivate them to continue caregiving. Zhu Feng [09G] said below.

I just put up with it (restless in childcare). After a while, I saw the kid is so cute. As long as she is fine, it is second to none.

(Zhu Feng [09G], Maternal grandmother)

To sum up grandparents' motivation, helping or sharing the mother's burden, perceptions about duty as a mother, caring much about daughters and grandparents' strong affection for their grandchildren motivate grandparents to participate in childcare. As a mother, help in childcare is perceived as a duty. Meanwhile, the emotional aspect reflected in *xin teng gu niang* (心疼姑娘, caring much about daughters) motivates grandparents, especially maternal grandmothers to involve themselves in childcare. In addition, *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren) motivates grandparents to undertake the caregiving roles.

7.2 Grandparents' Roles

Grandparents' roles consist of not only meeting the needs of children, but also of meeting the needs of mothers. Keeping the children safe, healthy and happy, and teaching them were mentioned when participants described grandparents' roles. Zhou Shu [03G] answered below when asked about her role as the caregiver.

You can't make the kid hurt. You have to take care of him carefully, don't you? The role is to take care of the kid well. In one sentence, it's taking care of the kid. You can't make the kid hurt. The responsibility is huge. I have to take care of him carefully....We're also meticulous in preparing food. His grandad prepares food very meticulously. Broccoli, carrots. All mashed. And beef is also mashed. Put them in the fridge to freeze.... (Zhou Shu took her grandson to swim sometimes) At the beginning, his mum said she would pay. Later I said I had money to pay it. Aren't we grandparents? I topped up the Clubcard for him.

(Zhou Shu [03G], Paternal grandmother)

For Zhou Shu, grandparents' roles were keeping the child safe and providing careful care. These roles were in relation to grandparents' responsibility. Her perceptions of grandparent roles not only made her careful in childcare but also made her feel obliged to provide financial support by paying for the child. Grandparents were reported to play an important role in sharing parents' burden and supporting parents mentally and physically. Qin Xi [09P] believed that the maternal grandmother's involvement in childcare helped her physically and mentally. She said below.

For the mental aspect, because she's my mum, I have a sense of safety mentally. For a newborn, I didn't know what to do with her.... It was my mum helped me to get familiar with childcare.... In terms of mental (), when the kid cried, I didn't know what to do. It was my mum who comforted the kid. She not only needed to comfort the kid, but also me. Because of the changes of hormone after childbirth, I have emotional highs and lows after delivery. I couldn't control my emotions at all. At that time, I also suffered from nipple vasospasm.... If without my mum's help, I guess I would be depressed and nearly had psychosis.

(Qin Xi [09P], Mother)

According to Qin Xi [09P], she suffered from serious nipple vasospasm which not only impacted her physical health but also her mental health. Her mother's involvement in childcare provide Qin Xi with physical and mental support. Mothers' experiences of pregnancy, labour and delivery, and postpartum varied across the dataset. According to Yang Mo [08P], she also depended on her mother emotionally and was accustomed to her mother's companionship. Although Yang Mo [08P] was married and became a mother, Han Shi's [08G] perception of Yang Mo [08P] was as a child not grown up.

Grandparents' roles involve taking the primary role in childcare or being the mother's helper in childcare. Zhou Shu [03G] perceived her husband and herself as the main caregivers. Feng Xi [05G], Jiang You [07G], the husband of You Kuo [10G], and the wife of Xu Feng [11G] were described as the main caregivers for their grandchildren. Cao Zhou's [14G] and Jin Dong's [16G] roles were to assist their daughters in childcare. The roles of grandparents are not fixed. The shift in grandparents' role includes transformation from main caregiver to helper of the mother, or transformation from being caregiver to exiting from the role.

Lv Xia [12G] and Shi Yang [12P] took care of the child together in the first nine months at Shi Yang's [12P] apartment. From nine months to 33 months, the child was taken care of by his maternal grandparents. From 33 months to 36 months the child was taken care of by the maternal grandmother and paternal grandparents in the parents' apartment, but the parents did not live there. Lv Xia's [12G] job was mainly about teaching the child, and her role changed from mother's helper to main caregiver to mainly teaching the child. Cao Zhou's [14G] grandchild was taken care of by a nanny in the first four months. Cao Zhou [14G] assisted the nanny in childcare at that time. After the nanny left when the child was four months old, she assisted her daughter in childcare. Jin Dong [16G], a maternal grandmother, used to help her daughter in childcare. In the first ten months, the child was taken care of by the maternal grandmother and the mother. Jin Dong's [16G] husband was ill when the child was ten months old; she had to stop taking care of the child and began to take care of her husband. After her exit from the caregiver role, the paternal grandmother came to help with childcare when the child was ten months old.

Although there is only one grandfather in the dataset, grandfathers in a few families actively participated in childcare with grandmothers. Zhao Jun [01G] said as follows.

I play with the kid less. His paternal grandpa plays more with him. ... I'm in charge of the cooking. I need to spend a large amount of time cleaning the kitchen. Man can't do the cleaning work well. He played with the kid. There are slide, blocks and so on. Different kinds of toys. He just plays.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

Zhou Shu [03G] described the way that her husband, the paternal grandfather, took care of the child below.

He (the paternal grandfather) cooks food meticulously. Like broccoli and carrots, are all grounded, as well as beef. Put them in the fridge. ... Actually, there is no need to ground them now. ... That's all. We just take good care of their kid. It's grandparents' obligation.

(Zhou Shu [03G], Paternal grandmother)

To conclude, grandparents' perceptions of roles contain two aspects: keeping children safe, healthy and happy; sharing parents' burden and supporting them by providing childcare. During performing these roles, daily activities such as cooking, cleaning, bathing the child and other daily practices are involved. Moreover, grandparents' roles are changing rather than fixed. These shifts include from being the main caregiver to assisting mothers to exiting from childcare.

7.3 Good Grandparent Childcare

When asked about what good grandparent childcare was, grandparents had rather positive comments about their childcare. They believed childcare they offered was good and they were satisfied with childcare they provided. Zhao Jun [01G], Jiang You [07G], Han Shi [08G], Zhu Feng [09G] and Lv Xia [12G] were satisfied with their childcare. Zhao Jun [01G] said below.

The way I take care of them, most mothers-in-law can't do like that ...If ask my son what he likes to eat, I would definitely cook the dish for my son. Which dish my daughter-in-law would like to have, I would definitely cook the dish for her. For our family, there are at least four dishes every morning.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

Mothers complimented the grandparents for doing a good job in the way they provided childcare. Qian Lu's [01P] words below are consistent with Zhao Jun's [01G] comments about her childcare.

(When I) take him back and forth to the swimming pool, the amusement park, and I just looked at childcare by other grandparents is not as good as my parents-in-law. ... It's just about the appearance, clean and tidy. ... I think if the kid makes mistakes, these mistakes should be pointed out explicitly. You could discipline him or could be stricter. It would be better.

(Qian Lu [01P], Mother)

Qian Lu [01P] considered childcare by her parents-in-law was better than that by other grandparents. However, Zhao Jun [01G] and Qian Lu [01P] had different views about how to improve childcare. Zhao Jun [01G] considered science-based childcare was good grandparent childcare. She learned childcare by searching information online on her phone. However, Qian Lu thought that good grandparent childcare was that grandparents could correct children's mistakes instead of spoiling them but she did not expect grandparents to do as she expected.

This was related to the patterns of their interactions. She would talk with grandparents if matters were serious; for example, when grandparents spoiled children seriously. In contrast, for small matters, she would just let it go, which was a feature of the interactions between Qian Lu [01G] and her mother-in-law, Zhao Jun [01G]. She believed that not being picky on small matters positively impacted their relationship. Qin Xi [09P] and He Hao [11P] share a similar view with Qian Lu [01P], that grandparents should correct children when they make mistakes and should not spoil them without principle.

In addition to discipline and education, participants discussed good grandparent childcare in relation to children's health. Sun Qi [02G] responded below when asked what good grandparent childcare is.

He is so young. It (good grandparent childcare) is to ensure he's healthy. That's all. It hasn't involved other things. He's so young.

(Sun Qi [02G], Maternal grandmother)

Sun Qi's [02G] replies imply that good grandparent childcare is defined according to children's age and different development stages. As for Sun Qi's [02G] grandson, who was one month old, the caregiver's primary job is to ensure the child's health. A similar account could be seen in Feng Xi's [05G] reply to what good grandparent childcare is.

Just the kid is well fed, could have good sleep and play well. ... As for learning and education, she's so young. How to educate her? There are few things to teach.

(Feng Xi [05G], Maternal grandmother)

However, Yan Jing's [14P] reply to what good grandparent childcare is shows disagreement with Feng Xi [05G].

I can only say that the kid is healthy. This is good. There are no specific definitions. But I think for bring up a kid, it should be parents bring the kid up. Teach her something. What she should learn at a specific stage. For example, when she's three months old, she needs to learn to grab things. And you need to train her and let her to grab things. When she's five months old, you need to let her crawl. You need to guide her and teach her. But for grandparents taking care of kids, they just make the kid fed well and wear warm cloths, and not make them ill. They think it's good.

(Yan Jing [14P], Mother)

Yan Jing [14P] considered good childcare as being good for children's development instead of simply meeting children's basic needs. However, Feng Xi [05G] perceived good grandparent childcare is to meet the children's basic needs. Although Yan Jing [14P] and Sun Qi [05G] are not from the same family, their views on good grandparent childcare reflect differences between the grandparent generation and the parent generation.

Besides, Feng Xi's [05G] daughter Chen Xiu [05P] responded from the perspective of interactions.

I don't think it should be described as good. It is to achieve balance. There is a critical point. It either inclines to maternal grandma or inclines to parents. There isn't absolutely good. We can't reach an agreement completely. After all we're from different generations. Our views on education are completely different. What we can do is to avoid rows. That would be good if we don't have rows because of the disagreements. All of us should compromise. I think parents make more compromise than grandparents. We have to achieve balance.

Feng Xi [05P] believed that good grandparent childcare achieves balance and avoids rows in interactions between grandparents and parents. In order to do that, both grandparents and parents need to make concessions. She believed that parents made more concessions than grandparents.

Wu Hua [03P]'s son had cleft lip surgery when he was approximately three months old. Wu Hua [03P] said he was timid and shy around strangers due to a lack of the sense of safety. She complimented her parents-in-law on doing a good job in childcare.

Grandparents did a good job in terms of his sense of safety. They love the kid unconditionally. ... Although the kid's development is slower than other children who are at the same age as him, grandparents don't compare their grandson with other kids and still take care of their grandson at their own pace.

(Wu Hua [03P], Mother)

Grandparents showed great patience in childcare, which Wu Hua [03P] could not do as well as grandparents. Wu Hua [03P] also said she was short-tempered and was not as patient as grandparents. Moreover, before the baby was due, the paternal grandmother attended sessions to learn how to take care of puerpera and the new-born.

To conclude, parents emphasise the importance of education and discipline as well as children's development when replying to the question about what constitutes good grandparent childcare in their views. Grandparents' description of good grandparent childcare is around meeting the children's basic needs, such as ensuring children's health. Parents and grandparents acknowledge that grandparents did a good job in this aspect. There is a considerable number of grandparents who had positive comments on childcare they provide. Parents also expressed their acceptance and appreciation of childcare by grandparents.

7.4 Parents' Expectations of Grandparents

As for expectations reported by participants, parents' expectations of grandparents in providing childcare include children's wellbeing, approaches to childcare, and grandparents' wellbeing. From the perspective of children, Zhou Shu [03G] said parents expected the child to be

healthy and happy every day under grandparents' care. Wang Le [04P] hoped paternal grandparents could be more careful about the child's safety.

From the perspective of approaches to childcare, Wu Hua [03P] hoped grandparents could control their emotions and treat the child rationally in terms of discipline. Childcare by grandparents would be better if they knew more about education. Chen Xiu [05P] encouraged her daughter to play on the slide whereas grandparents worried about the child's safety. Chen Xiu [05P] hoped the grandmother could let it go and let the child play freely. She further hoped that the grandmother could play with the child more, but she knew clearly that the grandmother did not have too much time because she was busy with housework.

In Shi Yang's [12P] family, both maternal and paternal grandmothers were involved in childcare. She said that the maternal grandmother was strict with the child whereas paternal grandparents spoiled the child and were not strict. Shi Yang [12P] worried that these two opposite styles of childcare could have a negative impact on the child. 'The kid behaves differently with different people', Shi Yang [12P] said. She believed that good grandparent childcare was to achieve balance between paternal grandparent childcare and maternal grandmother childcare. She hoped that her mother could maintain a balance in teaching and could be not too intense or strict in teaching.

Wu Hua's [03P] expectation was different from the expectation in most of the cases and it was stated from the perspective of grandparents' wellbeing. Wu Hua [03P] found that grandparents spent too much time and efforts on family. She hoped they could think more for themselves and pursue things about themselves. He Hao [11P] illustrated warmly her expectation of grandparents' wellbeing as well. She wanted grandparents to feel less pressured.

I hope they could be happier in childcare. I believe they have fun in childcare ... Sometimes, for example, the kid was ill, his paternal grandparents said something thoughtless ... Sometimes his dad said something about the kid's nails, clothes, hygiene and so forth. My mum reacted strongly. So I don't want them to feel stressed a lot One more thing is that about spending on my son, I try to buy the stuff what he needs and what the family needs.... When I'm not at home, I would post the stuff home. Try my best to be considerate about it.

(He Hao [11P], Mother)

He Hao [11P] tried her best to protect grandparents from feeling bad and spending too much money on the child. She bought daily supplies for the child and the family.

In contrast, six participants [01P, 02P, 06G, 07G, 07P, 13P] responded that parents did not have expectations of parents. Kong Yue's [13P] attitude towards expectations was as follows.

I don't have expectations. Sometimes I think I shouldn't have these expectations. You will be disappointed if people can't reach your expectations. So to avoid having these feelings, I don't have expectations . Just the kid is safe and not being injured.

(Yong Yue [13P], Mother)

Shen Sha's [07P] view on expectations is similar to Yong Yue [13P] that they believed that they should not have expectations of others.

Expectations. I don't have expectations of the older people. Everyone's ability is limited. I really appreciate that she helps me taking care of the kid. Actually I think I should not ask her to change. Occasionally I said to her that you take the kid to play outside, or read for him. Have interactions. And I don't want them to stay at home and the kid plays on his own and she did things on her own. ... The kid is older now and is not like before. He hopes someone could play with him. ... now I try to accompany him more myself. ... I think it's normal that grandma couldn't manage to do that. I think you can't request others. If you want the kid get better, you need to require yourself and accompany him more. You can't always have expectations of others. Maybe someone could help you. ... You give birth to the kid. She already helps you in childcare. You can't have too many requirements. Requirement is for yourself not for others.

(Shen Sha [07P], Mother)

Shen Sha [07P] answered 'no expectation' but later she mentioned that she hoped the grandmother could have more interaction with the child. She thought parents should not require grandparents. In this aspect, Shen Sha [07P] regraded expectations as requirements. As a mother, Shen Sha [07P] believed that she should not require her mother to do something that she expected, although she hoped the grandmother could have more interaction with the child. The deep reason for her thought could be found in her perceptions about duty. She believed it was not grandparents' duty to take care of children. Grandparent childcare was not taken-for-granted. Instead, it is the parents' duty to look after children. She believed that it was wrong to share the duty with others. Shen Sha [07P] might consider grandparent childcare as parents sharing the duty with grandparents – not something she thought she should do. This could also explain that she recognised the grandmother's limitation and did not expect her to make changes, follow the trend of new-style childcare or learn new approaches to childcare.

Divergence appears in the responses of a grandparent and parent from the same family. Zhao Jun [01P] said as follows.

They expect everything is satisfactory, but we can't manage to do that. ... They are satisfied about food. In education and discipline or sometimes the kid didn't wear right clothes. These are small matters. They are satisfied with big things, such as food, carefulness and patience in childcare. They are satisfied.

Zhao Jun [01P] said parents expected everything was satisfactory while Qian Lu [01P] stated that she did not have expectations of grandparents.

To conclude, for participants who reported that parents have expectations of parents, parents' expectations of grandparents were illustrated from the perspectives of children, approaches to childcare and grandparents. In some families, grandparents and parents responded differently in terms of parents' expectations of grandparents. In addition, participants like Shen Sha

[07P] reported no expectations at first, but later expressed her expectations. These were associated with her views about parents' responsibilities.

7.5 Grandparent Childcare Taken for Granted?

Only a minority of participants suggested that grandparent childcare was taken for granted. The majority of participants who responded to this question believed childcare by grandparents was not taken for granted. Participants who believed grandparent childcare was taken for granted were all grandparents. Zhao Jun [01G] answered as follows.

I think it is (taken-for granted) deep in my heart. ... If I did not look after the kid, no one would help in childcare.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

When asked about her motivation in childcare, her answer is similar to the above account. She believed it is what she should do. Zhou Shu [03G] expressed her perceptions about this from the perspective of culture.

I think it (grandparent childcare) is taken for granted. You see you have a next generation. You have to help them in childcare. I think I should do. It is our tradition. The older generation look after the younger generation. You must take care of this kid.

(Zhou Shu [03G], Paternal grandmother)

Zhou Shu's [03G] words reflect that individual's perceptions are relevant to their personal experiences. Zhou Shu' [03G] parents-in-law helped in taking care of her son when he was young. She believed that grandparent childcare was a tradition in China and the older generation should take care of the younger generation. She, as a grandmother from the older generation, should help her son look after his child. Feng Xi [05G] shared the same view with Zhao Jun [01G] and Zhou Shu [03G] that grandparent childcare was taken for granted.

It (grandparent childcare) is an obligation. ... It is taken for granted. ... We are older people. It is not a big thing for us to look after kids. Just take care of the kids. Help my children take care of kids. Help her reduce burden.

(Feng Xi [05G], Maternal grandmother)

Feng Xi's [05G] view is similar to Zhao Jun's [01G], that they all believe grandparent childcare is an obligation and what they should do to help their adult children. Zheng He's [04G] response to whether or not grandparent childcare was taken for granted was implicit.

In China, it is taken for granted.... Although I have disagreement, I have to take care of the kid. Few parents can be heartless in China to not help their children. It's not like that in the foreign countries.

(Zheng He [04G], Paternal grandmother)

In the previous conversation before answering this question, Zheng He [04G] believed parents played the main role in childcare. Parents should take care of their children and parental childcare was taken for granted instead of grandparent childcare. When asked whether grandparent childcare was taken for granted or not, her response was inconsistent with her earlier words. Although it was different, it showed her view that grandparents as parents of their adult children had to help them in childcare, while sometimes she disagreed that grandparent childcare was not taken for granted.

The way of Jin Dong's response [16G] was similar to Zheng He's [04G]. She perceived her role as to ensure safety of her granddaughter and teach her manners. She believed that parents played the main role in childcare. However, when asked whether grandparent childcare was taken for granted, she said grandparent childcare was taken for granted and 'Grandparents should help their children to take care of grandchildren when they are available'.

Apart from Shi Yang [12P], who was not asked whether or not grandparent childcare was taken for granted, all the mothers reported that childcare was grandparent childcare, and is not taken for granted. Most mothers believed that it was parents' duty rather than grandparents' duty to take care of their children. Wu Hua [03P] and Kong Yue [13P] expressed gratitude for grandparents' help in childcare. The conversation with Wu Hua [03P] is below.

It is not taken for granted of course. We must appreciate it. They finally retired and have worked for a lifetime. It's not easy for them to raise their son and their son gets married and has a career. Finally, they can feel a relief. Then you assign them a big task. It means they need to restart them all. It's frustrating.... If they think it's ok and they're happy, it's ok. If they're not the type of person, they'll be frustrated. Because in everyday life there're people who don't like looking after children actually.

(Wu Hua [03P], Mother)

Kong Yue [13P] believed that grandparent childcare was not taken for granted.

I think parents have obligations to their kids. I have an obligation to my son but I don't have an obligation to my son's kids.... Of course, when you're unable to take care of the kid, grandparents could come to help. But it's only help. You can't leave kids totally to grandparents. It's not good for children's growth and development.... I think we should feel grateful to grandparents that they come to help look after kids.... I think it's that they *xin teng* (心疼, care much about someone) their daughter. They don't hope their daughter are exhausted. It is the same that paternal grandparents help take care of kids. They *xin teng* (心疼, care much about someone) their son. They don't want their son to be exhausted. But I don't think it's grandparents' duties.

(Kong Yue [13P], Mother)

Wu Hua [03P] and Kong Yue [13P] believed that grandparent childcare was not taken for granted and it is parents' duty to look after their children. Both Wu Hua [03P] and Kong Yue [13P] felt grateful for grandparents' help in childcare.

He Hao [11P] shared the similar view with them and described childcare by grandparents was a choice she had to make.

Um, I think it's not taken for granted. It's parents' job... We have to make this choice. The better choice is taking care of the kid by ourselves.... Because they're in their 50s, it's not a job they must do. I remain it deep in my heart. But it's not easy for me to express (thankfulness) like always express gratefulness. But I remember it in my heart. It's an extra help from them.

(He Hao [11P], Mother)

Childcare by grandparents was a choice He Hao [11P] had to make because she and her husband had to work and could not take care of her son during weekdays. She felt grateful for childcare by grandparents and not only tried to support the childcare materially, as discussed in the subtheme *expectation* above, but also tried to express her gratitude to grandparents verbally, although this was not easy for her. She said, 'It's definitely difficult to say some cheesy words. But some simple words, say it. Express it simply.' Qin Xi [09P] felt grateful about her mother's help in childcare and it was difficult for her to express thankfulness verbally as well.

I try to take care of the kid myself whenever I can. Not leave it to my mum. My thought is when she's old enough to attend preschool. Because she can't speak well now. When she could express herself well, I will let my mum back (her home). I can take care of the kid myself. My mum will exit from childcare.

(Qin Xi [09P], Mother)

Lv Xia [12G] believed childcare for her grandchild is not taken for granted and she explained below.

'I don't have the legal obligation (to take care of the kid). However, from the aspect of *qin qing* (亲情, familial emotions), I like to do this, I'm willing to do this. I take care of his mum, it's my obligation. Her mum will take care of me when I'm old, it's her obligation. Both of them are relevant to legal obligation. But there is no legal obligation between the child and I. He doesn't have legal obligation to provide elder care for me. I don't have legal obligation to take care of him. I know all of them. But I'm willing to do that because I want to make my daughter relax a bit. Otherwise, my daughter would be exhausted. She has to work. All is for consideration of my daughter.'

(Lv Xia [12G], Paternal grandmother)

Overall, mothers all agreed that childcare by grandparents was not taken for granted, although a small number of grandparents considered childcare by grandparents as taken for granted. When answering questions about whether or not grandparent childcare is taken for granted, participants mainly talked about roles as grandparents or parents. As mothers themselves, some grandmothers felt they should help their adult children with childcare. It is their obligation to help their children. However, as grandmothers, some grandparents believed it is not their obligation to take care of their grandchildren, but that the child's parents are obliged for childcare. Mothers who agreed that grandparent childcare not taken for granted believed it was

parents' duty to take care of their children instead of grandparents' duty. Besides, as mentioned above, mothers appreciated grandparents' involvement in childcare, although it was sometimes to express their gratitude.

7.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Grandparent Childcare

In terms of advantages of grandparent childcare, Wei Ning [06P] identified that grandparents helped to develop the child's skills at a particular age according to their experience, although they were not guided by parenting courses or scientific parenting books.

Now lots of guidance for parenting is to teach children at the particular age. ... I think although grandparents don't ask children to learn a particular thing like in a curriculum on purpose, they teach something at each particular milestone. It is good for children when grandparents teach them at that age. ... for example, the kid throws something away. Grandparents pick it up. The kid throws it away again. Grandparents pick it up again. It is actually developmental exercise. They develop the kid's the skills not deliberately.

(Wei Ning [06P], Mother)

She stated that grandparents helped in developing the child's social skills. Grandparents encouraged children to greet and talk to others, which helped them to develop outgoing personalities and social skills. Her response was based on her perceptions of her friends' and relatives' experiences instead of her own childcare experience. He Hao [11P] had concern about her mother's capabilities for childcare because it was nearly 30 years since her mother took care of her. Both He Hao [11P] and the maternal grandmother need to learn how to take care of children currently, although her mother had experience in taking care of her. Her mother learned faster than she did, which may be due to her experience in childcare. He Hao [11P] and her mother learned current approaches to childcare together. Wei Min [16P] learnt childcare from her mother, although her situation was similar to He Hao's [11P] in that it was 20 or 30 years since her mother took care of her.

For example, the kid in particular age, when she should learn to crawl, matters to pay attention to when crawl. And matters to attention in particular development period. Matters to attention when eating solid food. What food you can't feed her. Sometimes my mum tells me. (Jiatong asked why your mum knows this? How she knows it?) Because she raised my younger sister and me [laugh]. It's about everyday and different periods.... I think they (maternal grandmother's experience in childcare) are helpful. After all, my sister and I were taken care of by my mum. Sometimes her experience, like the child crying and screaming, maybe uncomfortable or hungry. But my daughter is easy to be taken care of. She seldom cries.

(Wei Min [16P], Mother)

Wei Min [16P] believed her mother's experience in childcare was useful and she learned childcare from her mother. Wu Hua's [3P] mother-in-law, Zhou Shu [3G], attended classes designed to train nannies, and she learned how to take care of puerpera and the new-born before the child was born.

In terms of weakness of grandparent childcare, educating and disciplining children were significantly reported by participants. Most grandparents reported that they had limitations in educating children because they perceived themselves as less educated than parents. Jiang You [07G] said she lacked knowledge sometimes about what the child should do and should not do, and she was less educated. Spoiling children was described as a weakness of grandparent childcare, and was relevant to grandparents' limitations in education and discipline. Qian Lu [01P] suggested that grandparents who were teachers may know how to discipline children. During the data collection process, after the interview with Qian Lu [01P], Zhang Yan [13G], who was a teacher and not retired, was interviewed. She was the only grandparent who had a bachelor's degree, the highest educational level among the grandparents. I asked about her perceptions of the relations between grandparents who were teachers and performance of teaching and disciplining children. This question was asked based on the interview with Qian Lu [01P] who mentioned that grandparents who are teachers could perform better in teaching and disciplining. The questions are not designed within the interview guide.

How to say it. There are strengths definitely. Because for kids, you're working in (education sector). People like my age had already had educational careers for several decades. We work with children. It's just younger children or older children. So there are many experience definitely. So in educating the kid, we may pay attention to the approaches, the ways, and transmission of knowledge, education for thinking, growth, education for being a person and so on. There are advantages definitely.... For him now, you say impact (too early). Because he's rather young, but talking about interactions, very good. Because sometimes, the same thing, you do today, you repeat tomorrow, repeat the day after tomorrow, then he'll remember. Then you say this. He'll respond to you. Um, it's like this.

(Zhang Yan [13G], Maternal grandmother)

Zhang Yan [13G] talked of her thoughts about relations between being a teacher and good education for children. In her case, because her grandson was young when the interview was conducted, there was no teaching or disciplining required as there was for the older children in Zhao Jun's [01G] family and Lv Xia's [12G] family. Zhang Yan [13G] believed that being as a teacher had a positive impact on grandparent childcare in terms of approaches to teaching, transmission of knowledge and education for thinking and being a person.

Grandparents' ways of parenting could also reflect weaknesses in childcare. Zhao Jun [01G] scared her granddaughter, using something her granddaughter feared, in order to make her listen to her words. Zhao Jun's parenting approach could be described as scaring children. This kind of parenting could be seen in Lv Xia's [12G] ways of dealing with her grandson's unwillingness to study. Lv Xia's [12G] daughter Shi Yang [12P] expressed worries about her mother's approach.

I'm sure kids like to play, but that's not necessary (to be so strict). If you don't say that, I won't let you get out of the room (the maternal grandmother did not let the child exit from the room if the

child did not follow what the maternal grandmother said). He has to say. He's a little scared of the room where he studies, you know?

(Shi Yang [12P], Mother)

For Lv Xia [12G], scaring children is a 'simple' and 'effective' approach which could help grandparents achieve their purpose. However, this would negatively impact children's mental health and motivation to study. Besides, grandparent childcare may impact negatively on the ties between parents and their children resulting from children's dependency on grandparents, as reported by Wu Hua [03P] and Wei Ning [06P]. From the perspective of grandparents' personal life, grandparents' involvement in childcare negatively impacts grandparents' individual life. Han Shi [08G] said below.

I have little freedom. I can't go out when people asked me out because the kid is here. His parents don't have time. I'm the caregiver and had to refuse their invitation. There are lots of similar occasions.

(Han Shi [08G], Maternal grandmother)

Overall, grandparents' experiences in childcare could be explained as their advantages. Grandparents' experience in childcare helped them engage in childcare smoothly and they also taught mothers how to take care of children. In addition, grandparents' experience also helped to develop children's abilities at particular stages. In contrast, their limitations in teaching and disciplining children are reported significantly across the dataset as their weaknesses. This is associated with their spoiling children and their approaches to parenting. Grandparents' reduced freedom is regarded as an advantage in grandparent childcare.

7.7 Conclusion

The above sections present findings in relation to perceptions of grandparent childcare through six sub-themes: grandparents' motivation; grandparents' role; good grandparent childcare; parents' expectations of grandparents; 'childcare taken for granted?'; and advantages and disadvantages of grandparent childcare.

Grandparents' roles in childcare were found not only to meet the children's needs, but also to meet the mothers' needs. Some grandparents played a primary role and some grandparents were mother's helpers. In terms of good grandparent childcare, most parents believe that discipline is necessary in good grandparent childcare as well as in children's development. It also meets parents' expectations of grandparent childcare. However, either to maintain balance during interactions or to have been aware of the different views between the grandparent generation and the parent generation, parents stepped back and persuaded themselves not to have too many expectations of grandparents. They appreciate grandparents' help in childcare and acknowledge that they do good to ensure the children's health.

Childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents could be seen through participants' perceptions of grandparent childcare. For example, in the sub-theme of grandparents' motivation, grandparents' involvement in childcare was found to be motivated by obligations as a mother, caring much about their daughters, and by strong affection for their grandchildren. In addition, in the sub-theme good grandparent childcare, a balance in the intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents during grandparents' involvement in childcare is regarded as good grandparent childcare.

In the next chapter, the theme 'childcare arrangements' focuses on how decisions are made about involving grandparents in childcare and other specific arrangements.

Chapter Eight: Childcare Arrangements

In this chapter, the findings related to the theme *perceptions of childcare arrangements* are presented. The focus of this theme is how childcare arrangements are made and how grandparents are involved in childcare. In addition, living arrangements and future childcare arrangements are identified.

8.1 The Decision on the Caregiver

8.1.1 'Natural involvement'

Opinions as to whether or not there was a decision-making process varied across the dataset.

Han Shi [08G] talked about how she became the caregiver below.

We didn't have a decision-making process. There is only one kid. His paternal grandmother does farm work and his paternal grandparents grow rice. Sometimes she works in the chilli factory. She's busy. I'm available and stay at home. It's my daughter and I take care of her. We don't have a decision-making process.

(Han Shi [08G], Maternal grandmother)

Han Shi [08G] became the caregiver when her daughter Yang Mo [08P] was pregnant. Yang Mo [08P] said below.

It's about when I was pregnant, my mum had been accompanying me until he (Yang Mo's [08P] son) grows up and now is at this age. She is around most of the time. I'm accustomed to her companionship.

(Yang Mo [08P], Mother)

Some grandparents took care of the mother from when she was pregnant and they were involved in childcare without any decision-making process in the family. Zhu Feng [09G] took care of her daughter Qin Xi [09P] since she was pregnant, and therefore Zhu Feng [09G] took care of the child naturally. Cao Zhou [14G] began to take care of her daughter Yan Jing [14P] one month before the due date, and she took care of her granddaughter naturally without discussion.

For families where one or two grandparents were available, the grandparent(s) became the caregiver(s) naturally. Wang Le [04P] was the main caregiver normally but in special circumstances, such as her attending classes for job seeking, the paternal grandfather naturally became the main caregiver because he was the only person available. Similarly, in Xu Feng's [11G] family, there was no decision-making process. The caregiver role was automatically allocated to people who were available. Paternal grandparents had a business and were unavailable to be the caregivers. Only Xu Feng [11G] and his wife were available. During spring and autumn, Xu Feng [11G], the maternal grandfather, was busy with farm work. The maternal grandmother was the main caregiver in two seasons; in winter and summer, they took care of

the child together. The natural involvement without any decision-making process involves involuntary involvement in families. In Zhao Jun's [01G] family, they did not have a decision-making process regarding caregivers. Zhao Jun [01G] was involved in childcare involuntarily.

I said I won't help. But you can't do that. No one will take care of the child if you don't help. You have to take care of the kid. I need to take my son into consideration ... It can't be helped. It is what I should do'.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

This is relevant to her *perceptions of having a second child* in the theme *perceptions of childcare*. Zhao Jun [01G] disagreed with her daughter-in-law about having a second child because her experience in taking care of her older granddaughter was exhausting. Her daughter-in-law Qian Lu [01P] did not trust the maternal grandmother for childcare, which is discussed in the following section, *mothers' preference in the caregiver selection*. Zhao Jun [01G] had to be the caregiver.

In the families where there was no decision-making process, some grandparents took care of the mother from when she was pregnant. Those grandparents naturally got involved in childcare. Some grandparents were 'naturally' involved in childcare because of their availability.

8.1.2 Having decision-making processes

A number of grandparents and parents identified their decision-making processes. In Sun Qi's [02G] family, the maternal grandmother, the paternal grandmother and the mother had a talk with regard to caregivers. The outcome of the talk was that whoever was available came to take care of the child.

We don't have too much discussion. Just our family gathered together. Whoever is available come to look after the kid. All is for the kid. ... My daughter's mother-in-law, my daughter and I, we three (had a discussion).

(Sun Qi [02G], Maternal grandmother)

Li Wei [02P] responded about their decision-making process in relation to grandparents' involvement in childcare as follows.

We had discussion about it. They (maternal and paternal grandmothers) all have jobs. So they have to take care of their jobs and don't give up their jobs. So we make decisions about who come to look after the kid based on their availability. The maternal grandma had been working but recently she asked for leaves. She had more time. She will be back to work soon. ... The paternal grandma will come to look after the kid.

(Li Wei [02P], Mother)

In Li Wei's [02P] family, participants in the decision-making process are all women including the mother, the maternal grandmother and the paternal grandmother. The decision of the

caregiver is made according to grandmothers' availability. This means that whoever is available comes to look after the child. According to Li Wei [02P], this shows the relay race of caregiving by women on both sides – the maternal and the paternal.

In families where there is a decision-making process, there are also grandparents involved in childcare involuntarily. Jiang You [07G] said below.

At the beginning, I disagreed to come. I said it outside that I definitely would not be the caregiver. He has the paternal grandma. But his paternal grandma said she had to work and had business. What can I do? I have to come to help. I can't pass the buck. ... If you have a job and don't take care of the kid, no one can blame you. If you're staying at home (and not help in childcare), your adult children are busy, it is not good to be blamed by others.

(Jiang You [07G], Maternal grandmother)

People who were available in this family had to take care of the child. Jiang You [07G] was unwilling to be the caregiver because she thought the paternal grandmother should be the first-choice candidate. However, she had to take care of the child because she was retired and had spare time, while the paternal grandmother had to work. Jiang You's [07G] availability made her have to be the caregiver. In addition, she was worried about being judged by people that she was available but did not help her daughter to take care of the child. It seems that the social norm is that people who are available should help to take care of children. Availability could be defined as social pressure. One unexpected finding is that Lv Xia [12G] said her daughter asked her to help because her daughter did not know how to take care of the child while the response of Lv Xia's daughter Shi Yang [12P] was inconsistent with that. Her daughter Shi Yang [12P] said her mother was involved in childcare voluntarily.

Some grandparents became the caregivers involuntarily not only in families without decision-making processes, but also in families with decision-making processes. Moreover, when talking about potential caregivers, it is common across the dataset that participants normally talked about grandmothers in default.

8.1.3 Factors that lead to grandparents as caregivers

Grandparents' availability is one of the most common factors that grandparents and parents take into consideration in terms of the decision on the caregiver. This was mentioned by one or two participants in almost every family and impacted significantly on grandparents' involvement in childcare.

For example, in the following quotation, Hua Qiao [15P] answered the question about who was taking care of the child.

My mother-in-law lives with us. My father-in-law passed away. She is on her own. Now it is only her help me take care of the kid. When I'm at home, she doesn't need to do much because I can

look after the kid myself and I almost do everything. But it can't be helped when I go to work. I have to ask her to take care of the kid. ... My husband works on flexible shifts. But I'm also not feeling reassuring if he takes care of the kid. My dad and my mum work. my mum needs to look after my younger brother. So there is nobody but my mother-in-law. She is retired. She said it before she would come to help. She didn't say she wouldn't help. It is always like this. It's tacit decision that she looks after the kid.

(Hua Qiao [15P], Mother)

Hua Qiao's [15P] mother-in-law took care of the child when Hua Qiao [15P] was at work. Her mother-in-law lived with them and was the only person available to take care of the child. Jiang You [07G], the maternal grandmother, retired and was the only person who had time to take care of the child. The availability of some grandparents like Jiang You [07G] and Zhou Shu [03G], was due to their retirement. However, for some grandmothers, their availability resulted from giving childcare priority over their work. Zhu Feng [09G] stopped her business and prepared for being the caregiver from when her daughter got married.

Because I don't have a formal job (formal jobs in this context refer to full-time jobs with pensions after retirement). My home was in the rural area. I had been not working (formally). I had a small business. Since she (Qin Xi [09P]) got married, I stopped doing business. I knew she would have a kid. Her mother-in-law is working now. She can't help in childcare. My daughter (Qin Xi [09P]) can't take care of the kid herself. I prepared early to be the caregiver. I prepared well two years ago to help her in childcare. ... Because it's for kids, especially for the next generation. You can't leave them alone. She can't take care of the kid herself. I couldn't run the business at ease, could I? Moreover, she doesn't want a second child. It's only two or three years to take care of the kid. Can you leave her alone? You can't. No parents could leave their children alone. ... You can't focus on the business. You will be distracted by worrying about them. You can't feel reassured. I might as well give up the business and focus on childcare.

(Zhu Feng [09G], Maternal grandmother)

Zhu Feng [09G] gave up her work to help her daughter in childcare. She prioritised helping her daughter in childcare over her own business. Zhu Feng [09G] believed if she continued the business, she would be worried about the child and could not focus on her business. She decided to exit from the business and focus on taking care of her daughter and the child.

When talking about caregivers' availability, participants mainly refer to grandmothers' availability or mothers' availability. Feng Xi [05G], the maternal grandmother, believed the decision on the caregiver mainly depended on availability. The mother and paternal grandmother were unavailable. The mother had to work, and the paternal grandmother was taking care of the paternal grandfather. Only Feng Xi [05G] was available to be the caregiver. Han Shi [08G] is a maternal grandmother. The paternal grandmother was unavailable and Han Shi [08G] was the only grandmother available to be the caregiver.

In addition to availability, some grandparents are unable to be caregivers because of health problems, long geographical distance and work, and care for other family members. Instead, grandparents who have good health and accessible geographical distance are able to be the caregivers. Take Zhou Shu [03G] as an example.

Whoever is available come to look after the kid. We have a bit advantages. I was nearly retired. His maternal grandma wasn't in good health, so we didn't ask her to look after the kid.

(Zhou Shu [03G], Paternal grandmother)

Zhou Shu's [03G] availability and the maternal grandmother's health status led to Zhou Shu [03G] becoming the caregiver. Han Shi [08G] replied below about how the decision was made about her as the caregiver.

After my daughter got married, she lives nearby my home. Her mother-in-law lives 25 or 30 kilometres away in the countryside. ... She's on holiday now. When she's at work, she comes my home to have meals. When she was pregnant, I live with them in her apartment.

(Han Shi [08G], Maternal grandmother)

Earlier in this section, it was reported that Han Shi [08G] undertook the caregiver role because of her availability. According to the above account, living near her daughter was another factor contributing her involvement in childcare.

Overall, there are multiple subjective factors that lead to grandparents becoming caregivers: availability, accessible geographical distance, and good health. The findings show that normally there is more than one factor play in each family. Among them, grandparents' availability is foremost.

8.1.4 Mothers' preference in caregiver selection

For families where more than one grandparent was available and willing to be the caregiver, decisions were required on which grandparent should provide childcare. This is in relation to mother's preference.

Shen Sha [07P] believed that her mother as the caregiver was a good decision. Her mother was a tidy person, which resulted in her son being clean. Shen Sha [07P] also talked about the different ways of feeding between her mother and mother-in-law as follows.

His paternal grandparents run a business. And we share different living habits. The way his paternal grandma feeds him, I'm not accustomed to it. My mum would stop feeding him if he said he was full. His paternal grandma would continue feeding him even if he said he was full. She would feed him to the amount which she expected. ... Moreover, my mum is a tidy person.

(Shen Sha [07P], Mother)

Shen Sha [07P] agreed with her mother's way of feeding; moreover, her mother was tidy.

Chen Xiu [05P] preferred her mother as the caregiver and she did not adjust to the living habits of the paternal grandmother. The way she interacted with her mother was an important factor in her caregiver selection. Chen Xiu [05P] preferred her mother to be the caregiver, even

though the paternal grandmother expressed her willingness to take care of the child. Chen Xiu [05P] said below.

My living habits are different from her paternal grandma's. ... Before delivery, her paternal grandma said she would like to take care of the kid. But in fact, it's her maternal grandma takes care of her. Actually, deep in my heart, I prefer her maternal grandmother. Because it's easy to talk. After all, it's not easy to talk between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. It's not good to have rows because of small matters. So maternal grandmother takes care of her more. That's the arrangements.

(Chen Xiu [05P], Mother)

For Chen Xiu [05P], she worried that potential rows with her mother-in-law could impact their relationships negatively if the paternal grandmother was the caregiver. In contrast, she would have fewer worries about this with the maternal grandmother as the caregiver. It was likely that she would have rows with her mother as well, but she believed it was easier to talk with her mother.

Wei Min [16P] expressed her views about interactions with the maternal grandmother in her attitude to *zuo yue zi* (坐月子, postpartum confinement).

It is because I was in postpartum confinement. Postpartum confinement is very important. Sometimes I think it's inconvenient to say something to my mother-in-law, but I can talk with my mum about these things.

(Wei Min [16P], Mother)

The intimate ties between the mother and the daughter resulted in fewer barriers to communication compared to that between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. This leads to the tendency that, in caregiver selection, mothers prefer maternal grandmothers. Mothers agree with their mothers' childcare styles and share similar living habits with maternal grandmothers. In addition, potential rows have fewer negative impacts on their interactions with their mothers compared to those with their mothers-in-law. Moreover, the close relationships between mother and daughter mean fewer barriers to communication. However, there was a mother Qian Lu [01P] in the dataset who preferred the paternal grandmother to be the caregiver due to the paternal grandmother's careful approach to childcare, and she reported having less worry about potential rows in her relationships with her mother-in-law.

During data analysis, particularity of Qian Lu's [01P] was significant, which was not identified during data collection. Compared to other mothers who preferred maternal grandmothers as caregivers, Qian Lu [01P] preferred the paternal grandmother Zhao Jun [01G] as the caregiver. She thought the maternal grandmother was impatient and not as meticulous as the paternal grandmother. She considered childcare from her parents-in-law was better than from the other grandparents.

His paternal grandma is careful in everything such as making food. Some of us don't eat porridge or rice. Some of us want to eat red bean bun or steamed twisted rolls. She could meet every one's needs. She's meticulous. I'm accustomed to this. We have been living together. ...

As for my mum, if she made dishes for breakfast, we had to eat the dishes for lunch and supper. ... When taking him (Qian Lu's son) back and forth to the swimming pool, the amusement park, and I just looked at childcare by other grandparents is not as good as my parents-in-law. ... It's just about the appearance, clean and tidy.

(Qian Lu [01P], Mother)

Qian Lu's [01P] preference for, and compliments about the paternal grandmother as the caregiver showed her acceptance and approval of the paternal grandmother, which was also a positive factor in their relationship.

8.1.5 Changes of childcare arrangements

Changes of caregivers is reflected in the dataset. Lv Xia [12G], the maternal grandmother, had taken care of the child with her daughter in the first nine months. From nine months to 33 months, she took care of the child with assistance from her husband, the maternal grandfather. As the child grew older and could run, Lv Xia [12G] found she was overwhelmed and it was difficult for her to ensure the child's safety outside their home. She suggested the paternal grandparents take care of the child. The father talked with the paternal grandparents and involved them in childcare, as described by Shi Yang [12P]. Since the child was 33 months old, the paternal grandparents have taken over the childcare job from Lv Xia [12G] and her husband. It was mainly his paternal grandparents taking care of this child when the interviews were conducted. Lv Xia's [12G] job was teaching the child. Han Shi [08G] stopped taking care of the child for several months. Because of long-lasting marital conflicts with her husband, Han Shi [08G] went to a Buddhist temple, intending to become a Buddhist nun. She came back home several months later and helped in childcare again. Changes in childcare arrangements are also reflected in living arrangements and future childcare arrangements, which are the following sub-themes.

8.2 Living Arrangements

In terms of living arrangements, the three-generation cohabitation including grandparents, parents and children is reported in ten families among the 16 recruited. Sun Qi [02G] said below.

Living together is convenient for taking care of the kid and cooking meals, isn't it? It's exhausting back and forth from my home to come here.

(Sun Qi [02G], Maternal grandmother)

The family of Sun Qi [02G] made pragmatic living arrangements to take care of the child. The child slept with Sun Qi [02G], his maternal grandmother, at night. Li Wei [02P], the mother, said as follows.

He sleeps with his maternal grandma at night. I can have a good rest so that the milk is with more nutrition.

(Li Wei [02P], Mother)

Wang Le [04P] lived in a two-storey house. Her mother-in-law ran a business on the ground floor and lived there. Wang Le [04P], her husband and her child and her lived on the first floor. She was dissatisfied with the living arrangement.

Good grandparent childcare should be in a family with good not noisy environment. My house is a bit messy. Not the sanitary aspect. It's there are always people come. It's not quiet. And people coming here to buy products are miscellaneous. ... It would be better living a residential compound and there are lots of children. ... My kid could have more interactions with them.

(Wang Le [04P], Mother)

The above quotation is from when Wang Le [04P] answered the question about what constitutes good grandparent childcare. She related the living arrangement to her views on good grandparent childcare. She thought it was not good for her child.

For the other six families, grandparents and parents lived in different households and grandparents took care of children either in the grandparents' home or in the parents' home. For example, Qian Lu's [01P] apartment and the paternal grandparents' apartment were in the same residential building. Qian Lu [01P] and her husband lived upstairs, and the paternal grandparents lived downstairs. Her son, the younger child, slept with Qian Lu [01P] at night. Her daughter, the older child, slept with the paternal grandmother at night. In Chen Xiu's [05P] family, she worked on weekdays. Her daughter lived and slept with grandparents during the week. Chen Xiu [05P] had meals with the child at the grandparents' home on weekdays. At weekends, Chen Xiu's child lived and slept with her at their apartment. Feng Xi [05G] said her daughter did not leave, even though she got married. They lived together and her daughter went back to her home at night. This is a two-in-one unit arrangement, where grandparents and parents have two independent households in the city and they closely interact with each other in everyday practice. Findings show there are two forms of the two-in-one unit arrangement: the household of maternal grandparents and the household of parents (Feng Xi [05G] and Chen Xiu [05P]); or the household of paternal grandparents and the household of parents (Zhao Jun [01G] and Qian Lu [01P]). However, findings show that living arrangements are ever-changing instead of fixed.

In Wu Hua's [03P] family, the original living arrangement was grandparents moving to live with parents in the parents' apartment. The great grandmother, who is the mother of the paternal grandmother, lived alone in the grandparents' apartment. The paternal grandfather went back to cook for the great grandmother every day. This arrangement of three-generation cohabitation, including grandparents, parents and the child, was discussed and agreed by the family members, including the great grandmother. But according to Wu Hua [03P], the great grandmother missed her daughter and was sick. The family had to change the living arrangement. Because of the good heating system in the parents' apartment, they swapped living places. Paternal grandparents, the great grandmother and the child lived in the parents' apartment. The parents lived in the grandparents' apartment instead, and moved back and forth to see the child every day. As the child grew older, the grandparents, the child and the great grandmother moved back to their apartment. The grandparents took care of the child at their home. When the interviews were conducted, the paternal grandparents, the great grandmother and the child were living together in the grandparents' apartment. Wu Hua [03P] said below.

Why we live separately now? Actually, after the childbirth, we lived in my apartment with paternal grandparents. But my husband's maternal grandma was old. She felt sad and very sad. She always asked us how long she would live. 'I can't live to next year.' She always said like that. Because she had anxiety of separating with her daughter. My parents-in-law took care of me and my son at my home. All the emphasis was on the kid. She had the feeling of being abandoned. Because she was alone in the apartment all day.

(The paternal grandfather went back to cook for the great grandmother everyday) It might be with her son-in-law. He is her son-in-law after all, not her own daughter. She is like lack of the sense of safety. She always had illness during that time. We brainstormed many ways. For example, renting an apartment near my home. Because of financial reasons, it was unrealistic. I said we (she and her husband) make compromise. The kid lived with grandparents and the great grandma. So grandparents could take care of both the young and the old. The kid's dad and I run back and forth.

(Wu Hua [03P], Mother)

The feature of the household was still three-generation, but the family members in the household had changed. The family members had been grandparents, parents and the child, and this then changed to the great maternal grandmother, grandparents and parents. Moreover, the location of the grandparents taking care of the child was also changed. The grandparents lived in the parents' apartment with parents and the child. Because of care for the great grandmother mentioned in the direct quotation above and good heating system which was mentioned in other parts of the interview with Wu Hua [03P], the grandparents had lived with the great grandmother and taken care of the child in the parents' apartment. The parents lived in the grandparents' apartment. Later, the grandparents moved back to their home with the great grandmother, and the child lived with them. The parents also moved back to their home as well. In addition to considering the mothers' and children's health, and convenience – like Li Wei's [02P] family in terms of living arrangements – Wu Hua's [03P] family had to consider

elder care for the great grandmother. Given the physical and mental health of the great grandmother, they had to adjust the living arrangements. The living and sleep arrangements in Wu Hua's [03P] family show the tendency for change of childcare arrangements.

Overall, living arrangements in families are diverse and vary across the dataset. In terms of family members living in three-generation households, these can consist of grandparents, parents and children, or grandparents, great grandparents and children. In terms of three-generation households, they either lived in the grandparents' apartment or the parents' apartment. In families where parents and grandparents did not cohabit, grandparents took care of the child either in their home or in the parents' home. Moreover, living arrangements keep changing, and this changing tendency is also identified in future childcare arrangements.

8.3 Future Childcare Arrangements

The findings about future childcare arrangements are unexpected. There were no questions about future childcare arrangements designed in the interview guides, but the issue emerged during interviews. Future childcare arrangements involve two aspects: change of living arrangements and change of caregivers. In terms of future living arrangements, Qian Lu [01P] had been living with her parents-in-law since she was in a relationship with her husband. She was accustomed to this living arrangement. However, the living arrangements would change. The future childcare arrangement was that they would have dinner together as before, but lived separately, not in the same building. Qian Lu [01P] would take care of the children by herself. Zhao Jun [01G] also mentioned future childcare arrangements as follows.

The kid would be enrolled in the nurseries and mothers would take care of kids by herself at night. ... It will be much relaxing compared taking care of the kids all day.

(Zhao Jun [01G], Paternal grandmother)

In Wu Hua's [03P] family, the child would be sent back to his parents' home and live with Wu Hua [03P] and her husband. Wu Hua [03P] had proposed taking the child back home, but this proposition was opposed by both paternal and maternal grandparents. Wu Hua [03P] said they worried that Wu Hua was too strict with the child. Recently, the paternal grandparents voluntarily raised the idea to send the child back, although they were loath to part with him.

We four older people disagreed to send him back. We think the kid would *shang huo* (上火, a term in traditional Chinese medicine and means body is in disharmony). It is spoiling the kid. ... I'm reluctant. I wept when they said they would take him back home. I *shang huo*, had toothache and my throat was painful. He has to go back sooner or later. His parents could teach and discipline him. Their approaches are different from ours, aren't they? ... They are different from us. Now he needs to listen to songs when having meals. It is a habit that we develop. Now we also try not to play songs for him when eating meals. His mum said you have to develop good eating

habits. Her mum has already bought a highchair, and barriers because I worry if he falls off from the bed when sleeping. The barriers have already been set. In a few days, he will be back.

(Zhou Shu [03G], Paternal grandmother)

Zhou Shu [03G], the paternal grandmother, would accompany the child living in his parents' apartment for some days to help him adapt to the new arrangements. In addition to the change of living arrangements, change of care arrangements in the future is significant. It includes the change of grandparents' roles and the transition of childcare from informal to formal, for example, kindergartens.

Qin Xi [09P] said that as the child grew older, she would become the main caregiver because of grandmother's health situation and capability for childcare. Qin Xi [09P] would take care of her child herself when the child went to preschool and the grandmother would no longer take care of the child. Zhao Jun [01G] said she would feel much more relaxed if the children attended preschool. Some grandparents, like Jiang You [07G] and Han Shi [08G], shared the same idea with Zhao Jun that they would be less tired when children attended school. However, Zheng He [04G] said no less childcare would be needed for the child when he grew older. Grandparents needed to send him to school and pick him up. Zheng He's [04G] different views from other grandmothers could be explained by their roles in childcare. Zheng He [04G] was not the main caregiver. She had business and she took care of the child occasionally whereas the grandparents who thought it would be less tiring were the main caregivers, or even full-time caregivers. When children attending preschool, grandparents do not need to immerse themselves in childcare as they used to do.

Jiang You [07G] disagreed with the child being sent to preschool at a younger age when she was available to take care of him. This could explain her reluctance to her grandson attending preschool. Another reason for her reluctance was that she had fun with childcare and enjoyed her grandson's company. Likewise, Han Shi [08G] had complex feelings about her grandson attending preschool.

I have little freedom. I can't go out when people asked me out because the kid is here. His parents don't have time. I'm the caregiver and had to refuse their invitation. There are lots of similar occasions.... He's not at home. Although I feel bothered when he's at home, I feel bored when he's not here.... I feel helpless. My niece said 'Aunt, you don't know what to do when the kid isn't at home.' It's ok I stay at home alone. I feel peaceful.

(Han Shi [08G], Mother)

For grandparents whose grandchildren had attended preschool, their attitudes and feelings were complex, as shown above, like those of Han Shi [08G]. Childcare restricted her freedom to engage in social activities. Yet she missed her grandson's company when she stayed at

home alone. She had to adjust herself to the change of childcare arrangements. Future childcare across the dataset is mainly about change of living arrangements and change of caregivers. In future childcare arrangements, grandparents will involve themselves less in childcare, or will exit from the role as caregivers. Instead, parents and formal childcare services take over the caregiver roles.

8.4 Conclusion

The above sections present findings about how grandparents are involved in childcare as well as living arrangements and future childcare arrangements. Grandparents become caregivers or not according to multiple factors. Among them, availability is the primary factor that leads to grandparents' voluntarily and involuntarily becoming the caregiver. In terms of living arrangements, cohabitation and two-in-one units are significant in the findings. Moreover, the feature of change is identified in living arrangements as well as in future childcare arrangements. The following section presents the findings on interactions between grandparents and parents in childcare.

Chapter Nine: Intergenerational Interactions between Grandparents and Parents

In the previous three themes, although the findings are not about interaction in particular, intergenerational interactions could be seen implicitly in grandparents' and parents' perceptions and in childcare arrangements in the families. In this chapter, the theme *intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents* mainly addresses conflictual aspects in grandparent and parent interactions, and intergenerational identity. Four sub-themes were developed: disagreements between grandparents and parents, ways to deal with disagreements, contradictions between involvement in childcare and grandparents' freedom, and intergenerational identity. The interactions between grandparents and parents are mainly about mother-and-daughter interactions, and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law interactions.

9.1 Disagreements between Grandparents and Parents

Disagreements in grandparenting between grandparents and parents fall into two aspects: daily routines, and teaching and discipline of children. In terms of daily routines, they shared different opinions about feeding, dressing, cleaning, and responses to children crying. Li Wei [02P] believed that the child did not need to drink water every day, but both the maternal and paternal grandmother believed that the child should drink water every day.

Another one (about disagreements) is feeding water every day. I searched online the baby doesn't need to drink water.... But their (maternal and paternal grandmothers') ideas are drinking water every day. Later I talked with nutritionists, they thought now the room was relatively dry and the baby needed to drink water sometimes every day indeed. ... When the baby cries, he will be quiet if you give him water. Perhaps he needs to drink water.

(Li Wei [02P], Mother)

Kong Yue [13P] bought baby water for her son while Zhang Yan [13G] could not understand her. She said 'Like people from my generation think you use particular water. We can't understand'. Zhang Yan [13G] believed that their different attitudes towards drinking baby water represented intergenerational differences. In addition to feeding, grandparents and parents had different views on dressing. Grandparents tended to put more clothes on children than their mothers did. As Chen Xiu [05P] said, 'There is a type of coldness is your maternal grandma believes you feel cold'. Grandparents and parents had different senses of beauty about clothes. In terms of cleaning, the child's cleanness was very important to Hua Qiao [15P].

My mother-in-law is a carefree person. I only expect the kid is clean. Because I'm like a clean freak. I hope the kid's clean before I go to work or am after work. During work, it's ok because I can't see. But after I come back I hope he's clean. His clothes is clean. His face and hands are all clean.

(Hua Qiao [15P], Mother)

Moreover, Hua Qiao [15P] changed her son's clothes and washed them often, which her mother-in-law thought she did not need to do. Hua Qiao [15P] insisted on her attitudes and habits about cleaning and did not change. In terms of children crying, Zhang Yan [13G] was likely to hold the child in her arms as soon as the child cried. In contrast, Kong Yue [13P] disagreed with her mother and said 'He (the child) will think you hold me in arms as soon as I cry, he will develop habits of cry.'

Second, disagreements with respect to teaching and discipline were widely expressed across the dataset. This includes two aspects: parents disagreeing with grandparents' teaching and discipline, and vice versa. Shen Sha [07P] said Jiang You [07G] scared the child by saying 'your mum is coming' when the child did not behave. Shen Sha [07P] disagreed with her mother's approach to discipline through scaring the child. The approach of scaring children was adopted by Zhao Jun [01G] and Lv Xia [12G] when their grandchildren did not follow their words. Shi Yang [12P] disagreed with her mother's strict approach towards teaching and worried that it would make her son dislike learning.

My mum is quite strict. She thinks learning is very important. She wants the kid could learn Chinese characters earlier. Now the kid already has memorised ancient poems and idioms. I think it's a little early. ... Learning is ok. But if it's too intense, it's not good for the kid's mental and physical wellbeing. I think it's too strict. I think she doesn't have to be so strict. She doesn't allow to have a break on weekends. It's too strict. I worry he will dislike study and hate study someday.

(Shi Yang [12P], Mother)

Shi Yang [12P] believed it was too early for the child to learn what Lv Xia [12G] taught. Moreover, she disagreed with Lv Xia's [12G] teaching approach because it was too strict. She worried it would have a negative impact on the child in terms of study. Yan Jing's [14P] daughter liked to scratch people's face and Yan Jing [14P] stopped her daughter from doing that. 'She's perhaps at this stage. She may practise her fingers' flexibility or something. She always stretches out her hands and scratch you.' Yan Jing [14P] believed the child was aware of what she was doing although she was so young. In contrast, Cao Zhou [14G] did not stop the child because she thought the child was young and did not understand much, and that you could ignore it.

9.2 Ways to Deal with Disagreements

As identified in the previous section, disagreements between grandparents and parents occur in daily routines and teaching and discipline. Ways to deal with disagreements include asking advice from professionals, working out by practice, having rows and the child making decisions.

Li Wei [02P] worked out the disagreement about whether or not the baby should drink water every day by consulting professionals. When Zhu Feng [09G] and her daughter Qin Xi [09P]

disagreed with each other about dressing the child, they would dress the child according to the weather, or the child selected clothes herself. Ineffective communication happens in interactions between Yan Jing [14P] and Cao Zhou [14G]. Yan Jing's [14P] daughter scratched people's faces using her hand. Cao Zhou [14G] did not stop her from doing this. Yan Jing [14P] talked with her mother and asked her to stop the child. However, Yan Jing's [14P] mother did not pay attention to what she said, and did not listen to her.

Zhang Yan [13G] disagreed with her daughter buying baby water for the child. She chose to not insist on her opinions and respected her daughter's way of parenting, because she believed it was the child's parents who were in first place in terms of parenting.

But what I do (with this disagreement), I keep silent. Because now the way they parent kid is different from ours in the past. Their thoughts are a bit newer. So I feel I may be out of date. ... For the kid's education, they're at the first place. So mostly I don't give opinions. I respect their choices and ways.

(Zhang Yan [13G], Maternal grandmother)

Zhang Yan [13G] thought grandparents' thoughts about parenting were out of date. Moreover, she believed that parents should be in the first place. In other words, Kong Yue [13P] had the final say when she and her mother had different opinions. This is consistent with what Kong Yue [13P] said below.

At the end, she followed my way. I think my mum thought I gave birth to the baby. It is not her bear the baby. She thought I could make decisions about what I want. However, after rows, she said she was very sad and I should not treat her like that. But when the baby is fussy, it's difficult to talk with my mum calmly. After that, we would have a conversation again.

(Kong Yue [13P], Mother)

Kong Yue's [13P] mother talked about her feelings after rows. However, it was difficult for Kong Yue [13P] to stay calm and talk with her mother when the baby was fussy.

Shen Sha's [07P] response to disagreements is different from that of Kong Yue [13P]. Shen Sha [13P] would not have a row with her mother or correct her mother immediately. After a while, she talked with her mother Jiang You [07G] about it. Her mother did not express agreement with Shen Sha [07P], but she actively corrected her approach.

Shi Yang [12P] disagreed with her mother's approach in teaching the child as identified in the previous section. She talked with her mother Lv Xia [12G] about her worry, but the outcome has been that Lv Xia [12G] did not change her ways.

I talked with her. ... At last, she won. ... Because I'm not living with the kid. She has the final say. She can do whatever she wants.

(Shi Yang [12P], Mother)

The interactions between Kong Yue [13P] and Zhang Yan [13G] are quite different from those between Shi Yang [12P] and Lv Xia [12G]. Zhang Yan [13G] did not insist on her way because she thought that Kong Yue [13P], as the mother of the child, had the final say. In contrast, Shi Yang [12P] did not have the power that Kong Yue [13P] had in intergenerational interactions.

Qian Lu's [01P] talked about her interactions with her mother-in-law in relation to her she preferring her mother-in-law as the caregiver, as mentioned in Chapter Eight.

Problems in relationships between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are common. My relationship with my mother-in-law is uncommon. ... It's in relation to personality probably. My mother-in-law has good personality and so do I. I always have rows with her. But things work out after rows. We make up with each other soon. We get along well with each other anyway.

(Qian Lu [01P], Mother)

Qian Lu [01G] had rows with her mother-in-law but having rows was the way they dealt with disagreements. Qian Lu [01G] also expressed her opinions on disagreements between grandparents and parents.

You correct this but there are numerous issues waiting to be corrected. Disagreements always exist. ... Otherwise, you look after kids yourself. If you ask the elders to take care of kids, you can't and had better not have too many opinions.

(Qian Lu [01P], Mother)

This shows Qian Lu's [01P] retreat and compromise in her interactions with grandparents when disagreements happened. Retreat is more common for grandparents in their interactions with parents when disagreements occur, especially towards parents' approaches to teaching and discipline. Some grandparents disagreed with parents' approaches to teaching and discipline. Some of them felt *xin teng* (心疼, unwilling to see children being treated strictly). Some grandparents' ways of dealing with such disagreement was to stay away from the scene when parents disciplined children – these included Jiang You [07G], Zhu Feng [09G], You Kuo [10G] – even though they disagreed with the strict method parents utilised in discipline.

9.3 Contradictions between Involvement in Childcare and Grandparents' Freedom

Grandparents' involvement in childcare restricts them from participating in social activities. Zhao Jun [01G] said she hoped she could go out play *ma jiang* (麻将, a Chinese board game) occasionally but she could not because she did not have spare time. Involvement in childcare also limited opportunities for Han Shi [08G] to attend social activities.

I have little freedom. I can't go out when people asked me out because the kid is here. His parents don't have time. I'm the caregiver and had to refuse their invitation. There are lots of similar occasions.

(Han Shi [08G], Maternal grandmother)

Hua Qiao [15P] said the involvement of her mother-in-law in childcare limited her freedom. Limitation of her mother-in-law's freedom led to Hua Qiao's [15P] guilt.

After I started to work (Hua Qiao [15P] took care of the child with her mother-in-law before she went back to work), I know my mother-in-law couldn't be free as she used to be. She could leave whenever she wanted by electric bike before. Go to someone's home or anywhere. I feel ashamed of this definitely. We don't have disagreements in other aspects. I don't have other choices.

(Hua Qiao [15P], Mother)

Although Hua Qiao [15P] felt guilty that the involvement of her mother-in-law in childcare resulted in little freedom, she had no choices because she had to work.

9.4 Intergenerational Identity

Yi jia ren (一家人, a family) was mentioned across the interviews when the questions in different sections in the interview guides were asked. When Qian Lu [01P] described what she did for the grandparents, she said 'sometimes we have a family tour, have a holiday, play *ma jiang* (麻将, a Chinese board game), have dinner in a restaurant, that's what *yi jia ren* (a family) can do.' When Sun Qi [02G] talked about childcare arrangements in the family, she said 'We didn't discuss a lot, just *yi jia ren* (a family) gathered together, whoever available come to look after the kid, all is for the kid'. The family that Sun Qi [02G] referred to included Li Wei [02P], the mother Sun Qi [02G], the maternal grandmother, and the paternal grandmother. When Zhou Shu [03G] answered the question about the impact of intergenerational relationships on grandparenting, she said 'No impact. ... We are *yi jia ren* (a family). There is only one kid in the family. You must look after the kid well'. Wu Hua [03P] said living arrangements in the family were due to the collective interest of the family. She demonstrated the collective interest of the family as 'The family are harmonious. As *yi jia ren* (一家人, a family), we shouldn't fuss too much. We shouldn't against one person or don't let things go. As long as the family is harmonious and things go well.' Zhu Feng [09G] described her work as being in charge of the basic needs of *yi jia ren* (a family). Qin Xi [09P] responded to the question about disagreements with grandparents and said 'After all we are *yi jia ren* (a family). It is difficult to say something is exactly right or wrong. ... So just try to balance.' Overall, their perceptions of the intergenerational identity as *yi jia ren* (a family), a united whole, have impact on interactions when disagreements happen and also influence childcare arrangements.

The theme *intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents* focuses on the conflictual aspects in grandparenting and intergenerational identity. The conflictual aspects cover disagreements between grandparents and parents and ways to deal with these disagreements. Moreover, grandparents' involvement in childcare compromises their freedom.

However, the aspects of their interactions are more than that. It could be seen implicitly in childcare arrangements and grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare and grandparent childcare. This is discussed in the following chapter.

Summary of Findings Chapters

In Chapters Six to Nine, four themes and their affiliated sub-themes are presented. Themes are *perceptions of childcare*, *perceptions of grandparenting*, *childcare arrangements* and *intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents*. These themes answer the research questions about grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare, childcare arrangements, and interactions between grandparents and parents in the families where grandparents are involved in childcare. The following sections summarise the findings presented in the previous chapters.

Theme 1: Perceptions of childcare

Three sub-themes were developed: perceptions of parental childcare, childcare over time, and perceptions of having a second child.

In relation to perceptions of parental childcare, this includes the mother's role in childcare, the father's role in childcare, parents' capability in childcare, and better childcare by parents. Some mothers and grandparents perceived mothers to be the main caregivers. Grandparents' role was to assist them in childcare. Furthermore, a mother's leading role is reflected in childcare arrangements. In addition to the leading role in childcare, mothers play a role as a buffer and bridge between family members. The father's role was mentioned by participants and fathers' involvement is less than that of mothers. Despite this, there were fathers whose childcare was complimented by mothers. They believed the fathers did a good job in childcare. Grandmothers had been unassured about parents' capability in childcare, and mothers had lacked confidence about themselves in childcare. However, grandmothers' views changed as they saw parents were capable of taking care of children. It was also reported by mothers that they were not as patient as grandmothers. In spite of mothers' lack of confidence and the grandparents' worry about parents' capability, their views are in accord with each other that childcare by parents is better than that by grandparents. The childcare norm 'intensive mothering' is supported by mothers and grandparents based on the findings. However, mothers' participation in labour force makes it impossible for them to invest the time they had expected in childcare.

The second sub-theme of *perceptions of childcare* is childcare over time. This is mainly about the shift of grandparents' childcare over time, and is reflected in childcare for children from different generations. Compared to childcare for their own children when they were young,

grandparents show stronger affection for their grandchildren. This is described by participants as *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren). The shift is also reflected in childcare for children from the same generation. A maternal grandmother reported that her attitude towards differences from her daughter about childcare became softer compared to her attitudes several years ago when she took care of her younger granddaughter. In addition to grandparents' personal change in childcare, the overall condition of childcare has improved. Grandparents and parents stated that childcare at present is more meticulous and careful than that of the past. They held different views towards meticulous and careful childcare. One mother believed that childcare should adjust according to the child's preference instead of focusing on the meticulousness and carefulness. The emphasis and focus on the meticulousness require more time and financial investment in childcare. This finding is consistent with Ji *et al.* (2020) – that parenting and childcare now are more expensive and time-consuming than before.

One unexpected finding was about perceptions of having a second child. These findings are consistent with the changing population policies, although questions about having a second child were not designed into the interview guides. In 2015, the two-child policy was introduced, which meant the termination of the one-child policy, implemented for over 30 years. The birth rates have remained low during the relaxation of the population policy. In 2021, the third-child policy was introduced just six years after the two-child policy. Under the context of changing and relaxation of policies, whether to have one more child is a trending topic among families. In the dataset, among the 15 grandparents, 12 have only one adult child and three have two adult children. Their fertility decisions were made in the context of the one-child policy. The number of grandparents' children or parents' children is not an inclusion criterion in terms of participant recruitment. However, according to the number of grandparents' children, it could be seen that the majority of grandparents have only one adult child.

Theme 2: Perceptions of grandparent childcare

Six sub-themes in relation to *perceptions of grandparent childcare* were developed: grandparents' motivation, grandparents' roles, good grandparent childcare, parents' expectations of grandparents, 'childcare taken for granted?', and advantages and disadvantages of grandparent childcare. Grandparent childcare is explained as helping and sharing the mother's burden. Grandmothers' motivation to be the caregiver is closely related to perceptions of obligation. However, for maternal grandmothers, their motivation is relevant to their role as a mother. *Xin teng gu niang* (心疼姑娘, caring much about my daughter) were reported significantly as their motivation to be the caregiver. Maternal grandmothers show they care about and love their

daughters by helping them with childcare and sharing their burdens. In addition to obligations and the role as a mother, it is found that *ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' strong affection for grandchildren) is the major motivation. Grandparents were reported that their affection for grandchildren was more than that for their own children. Grandparents are motivated by the strong affection for their grandchildren. In terms of grandparents' roles, two aspects are identified: keeping children safe, healthy and happy; sharing parents' burden and supporting them by providing childcare. However, their roles are not fixed but change at different stages of childcare.

In terms of good grandparent childcare, it is widely agreed by grandparents and parents that what grandparents had done in childcare was good. Grandparents tried their best to be good caregivers. Mothers agreed with grandparents that grandparents did a good job. The findings about parents' expectations of grandparents could be classified into three aspects: children's wellbeing, grandparents' wellbeing, and approaches to childcare. Parents expected that grandparents could keep the children healthy and clean. Grandparents' wellbeing also matters to parents. In contrast, some participants said that parents did not have expectations of grandparents. Almost all the mothers agreed that childcare by grandparents was not taken for granted. They stated that it was parents' duty to take care of children instead of grandparents' duty. Mothers also expressed their gratefulness to grandparents, yet they were shy to express it to grandparents.

The last sub-theme of *perceptions of grandparent childcare* highlights advantages and disadvantages of grandparent childcare. The strengths of grandparents' involvement in childcare are reported. Grandparents are helpful in developing children's social skills by encouraging them to greet and talk with others. Moreover, grandparents' experience in childcare helped them to get familiar with childcare fast and help mothers in transit to motherhood. Weakness of grandparent childcare is reported as well. This is mainly about discipline and education for children. Grandparents were significantly reported to have spoiled children, which is identified as grandparents' weakness in discipline and education. In addition, grandparents stated that they were not well educated as parents and were worried they had limitations in disciplining and educating children. In addition to approaches to parenting and limitations in discipline and education, the large amount of time spent on childcare also impacts grandparents' personal lives. Grandparents are not as free as before; for example, they could not attend social activities with friends whenever they liked, because of their involvement in childcare.

Theme 3: Childcare arrangements

The research question ‘how do grandparents and parents make decisions on who provides childcare?’ is answered in the theme *childcare arrangements*. This includes three sub-themes: the decision on the caregiver, living arrangements, and future childcare arrangements. In terms of decisions on caregivers, findings show that whether or not grandparents taking care of children is discussed varies among the families recruited. There are grandparents who were involved in childcare naturally; there was no discussion about their involvement in childcare as caregivers in the family. Some maternal grandmothers took care of their daughters from when they were pregnant. Therefore, they took care of their grandchildren after childbirth. In families where there were decision-making processes, women were regarded as caregiver candidates in default. Grandparents become caregivers involuntarily in families both with and without a decision-making process. Availability is one reason that enforces grandparents to be the caregivers, even though they are unwilling to do so. In addition to availability, other factors such as grandparents’ health condition, geographical distance, work status and care needs of other family members are identified as having impact on whether or not grandparents become caregivers. Among them, grandparents’ availability is the primary factor. When there is more than one grandparent and normally both the maternal grandmother and the paternal grandmother’ are willing to be the caregiver, the mothers’ preference is important. It was found that mothers prefer maternal grandmothers to be caregivers because of similar living habits. Moreover, the potential disagreements between mother and daughter would have fewer negative impacts in their relationships than that between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

The second sub-theme of *perceptions of childcare arrangements*, is about living arrangements. Three-generation cohabitation and two-in-one units are identified. There are families where grandparents, parents and the child live together. For other families, grandparents and parents live in separate households. Grandparents take care of the child in their household or come to the parents’ home to take care of the child. Factors such as convenience or care for other family members affect living arrangements. However, living arrangements are complex, flexible and ever-changing in families.

The last sub-theme of *perceptions of childcare arrangements* is about future childcare arrangements. This finding is unexpected because a question about future childcare arrangements was not designed in the interview guide, but was discussed significantly by participants. Future childcare arrangements include grandparents’ exit from childcare and parents taking over their roles. Children enrolling in nurseries is the other arrangement, which means formal childcare services take over grandparents’ and parents’ roles during the day.

Theme 4: Perceptions of intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents

Four sub-themes were developed: disagreements between grandparents and parents; ways to deal with disagreements; contradictions between involvement in childcare and grandparents' freedom; intergenerational identity. Apart from one participant – a paternal grandfather – all the participants are female. The findings could be discussed based on two pairs of interactions: interactions between maternal grandmother and mother (mother and daughter), and interactions between paternal grandmother and mother (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law).

Disagreements lie in daily routines and in teaching and disciplining children. Ways to deal with the differences vary among families. Communication, asking professionals for advice, and by practice are the approaches when disagreements occur. The outcome of communication could be listening to the mother or the grandmother. Ineffective communication was also identified. Moreover, making decisions based on the child's preference is found to be a way to deal with disagreement between grandparents and parents about dressing the child. The conflictual aspects are not only reflected in disagreements between grandparents and parents; they are also shown in grandparents' involvement in childcare and their freedom. Grandparents report being – or were reported to be – restricted because of grandparenting. Intergenerational identity is the last sub-theme. The perceptions of viewing the family as a united whole not only influence intergenerational interactions but also childcare arrangements in the families.

The main findings are reiterated and summarised above. The four themes developed answered the research questions about grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare, how childcare arrangements are made, and interactions between grandparents and parents. The next chapter is devoted to presenting discussion of findings utilising the Integrated Family Model.

Chapter Ten: Understanding Grandparent Childcare Assisted by the Integrated Family Model

Having presented the findings in Chapters Six to Nine, these findings are theorised in the current chapter utilising the Integrated Family Model. The model is constructed and illustrated in Chapter Four. In the first section of the current chapter, research contexts and methodology are restated. Sections two and three are the core of this chapter. The Integrated Family Model provides an integrated and comprehensive way to understand childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions that have been described by reference to the theoretical framework. Grandparents' involvement in childcare is described as a form of family support in the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. This is not a stand-alone system. It is embedded in the macrosystem that is characterised by limited support from childcare policies, population policies and Chinese culture. The chronosystem provides a chronological dimension for discussing and conceptualising childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions. It furthermore shows the strength of the Integrated Family Model providing an integrated and comprehensive way to understand childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions.

Discussion in section three focuses on the nuanced aspects within the symbiosis system including the internal drive, contradictions, emotions, power and intergenerational identity. Findings are conceptualised using the conceptual tool of intergenerationality and neo-familism. Grandparents' motivation is identified as the internal drive of the symbiosis system. There are contradictions between grandparents and parents in everyday practice. Conflicts between individual happiness and family interest are also identified. In childcare arrangements such as decision-making on caregivers and daily practice, mothers have more power, while grandparents show a tendency to lose agency. Moreover, emotional aspects of intergenerationality emerge as important. This is one of the most important motivations for grandparents, especially maternal grandmothers, to get involved in childcare. It is also related to mothers' preferences in caregiver selection. The final point to note is intergenerational identity in the context of grandparent childcare. This underlines the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system, which should be viewed as a united whole, and both parties' perceptions of intergenerational identity shape childcare arrangements and intergenerational relationships in contemporary Chinese families. The first section is a review of the contexts and methodology of this research.

10.1 Review of Research Contexts and Methodology

Given the limited formal childcare service provided, grandparent childcare is considerably common across China, especially for children under three years old. The two-child policy introduced in 2015 represented the termination of the one-child policy after more than three

decades. Although there was a brief baby boom after the two-child policy, the birth rate declined for four consecutive years after the baby boom, especially in north-east China. Given this situation, the three-child policy was instigated in 2021, five years after the two-child policy, to tackle the declining birth rate and ageing demographic. Childcare is an essential issue that a family takes into consideration when making fertility decisions. It is also a challenge that the state faces in boosting the birth rate. Thus, it is crucial to understand grandparent childcare, a wide-spread phenomenon nationwide in China.

This study set out with the aim of exploring the perceptions of grandparents and parents providing childcare for children under three, childcare arrangements, and their interactions in these childcare arrangements. As set out in Chapter Five, the research questions are as follows:

- (1) What are grandparents' and parents' perceptions of childcare?
- (2) How do grandparents and parents make decisions on childcare arrangements?
- (3) What are the interactions between grandparents and parents in arranging and providing childcare?
- (4) What are the impacts of social and cultural shifts on grandparents' and parents perceptions and on childcare arrangements?
- (5) How does the Integrated Family Model help in interpreting the findings?

In terms of research design and data collection, participants were recruited in Taonan, Jilin Province. The city is in the north-east China, where the birth rate remains low, as noted in Chapter Two. Two participants were recruited from each family to obtain both the grandparents' and parents' perceptions. This design helps in seeing a broader picture of childcare in families via multiple voices or realities, as noted in Chapter Five. There were four inclusion criteria in participant recruitment: (1) grandparents who provide childcare for grandchildren under three; (2) parents whose children are cared for by grandparents; (3) one grandparent and one parent from each family; (4) at least one participant in each family lives in the urban area of Taonan.

Four approaches were employed to recruit participants, online recruitment, recruitment in a community healthcare centre, personal networking and snowballing. 30 participants from 16 families were recruited. Over half were recruited through personal networks, which reflects how the informal approach was productive. Participants could decide the form of the interview – online or face-to-face. There are 15 online interviews and 15 face-to-face interviews. Most

of the face-to-face interviews were conducted at participants' homes. Recruitment of grandparents and parents were not restricted to gender. Among the participants recruited, all parents recruited are mothers. Apart from one maternal grandfather, all the grandparents are grandmothers. The gender of parents and grandparents recruited is in line with Ji (2020), that women from different generations undertake caregiving and unpaid housework. In terms of data analysis, Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is used. The data analysis followed their most recent six-phase process: familiarising yourself with the dataset; coding; generating initial themes; developing and reviewing themes; refining, defining and naming themes; writing up (Braun and Clarke, 2020; Braun and Clarke, 2022).

10.2 Theorising and Contextualising Grandparent Childcare

As presented in Chapters Six to Nine, four themes were developed: perceptions of childcare, perceptions of grandparent childcare, childcare arrangements, and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. The findings are discussed in this section and in the following section, which are the core of the current chapter. The contemporary Chinese theories of mosaic familism and intergenerationality in neo-familism, linked to theories of ecological framework and family support, were employed to help build the Integrated Family Model in Chapter Four. To date, it would appear that the combination of mosaic familism and intergenerationality in neo-familism has not been used to explore grandparent childcare in Chinese families. Accordingly, this thesis hopes to not only provide empirical findings on grandparent childcare in China but also to make a theoretical contribution to understanding the complexities of the contemporary Chinese family.

10.2.1 An overview of the Integrated Family Model

As noted in Chapter Four, the Integrated Family Model is built based on the mosaic family model. Bringing together mosaic familism and intergenerationality in neo-familism with Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework with its five interlocking and interdependent systems, the model provides an integrated and comprehensive way to help understand the findings of this research on childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions within the families studied. Based on Figure 4 in Chapter Four, an adapted version of the model is constructed according to the empirical findings.

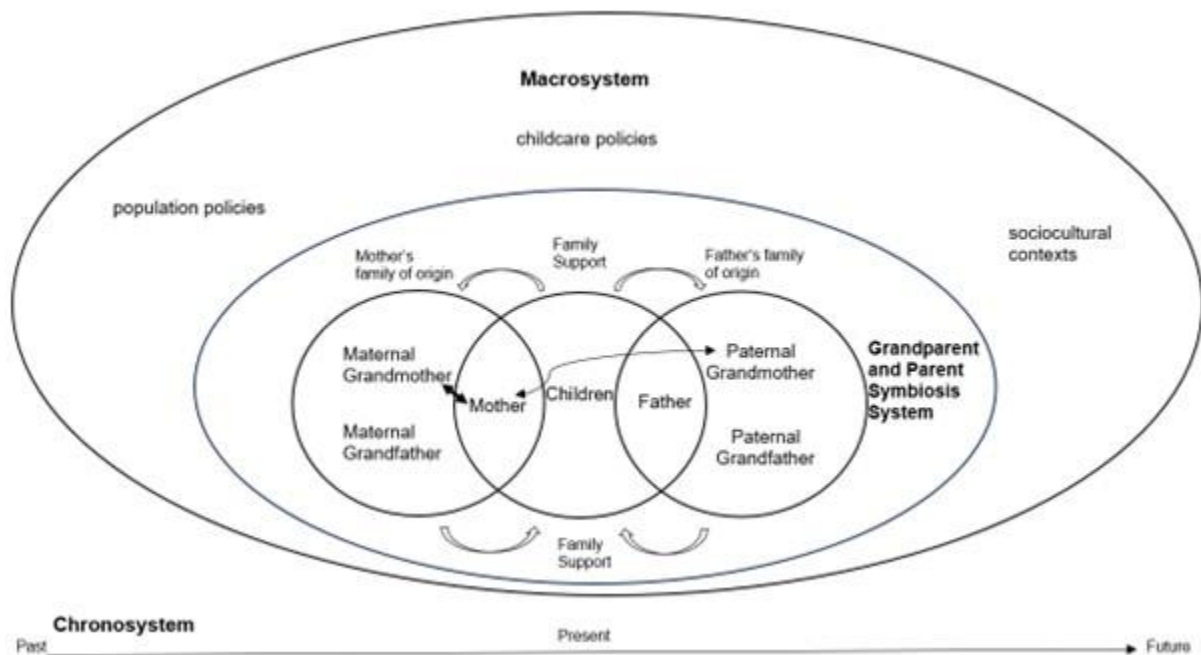


Figure 8 The Adapted Version of the Integrated Family Model

In this model, there are at least seven persons, including the maternal grandmother, the maternal grandfather, the mother, the child, the father, the paternal grandmother and the paternal grandfather. The family of maternal grandparents, the family of parents and children, and the family of paternal grandparents, as well as the three families of origin, can be regarded as microsystems. These microsystems comprise the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system, which could be regarded as the mesosystem. Both the microsystems and the mesosystems are embedded in the macrosystem and chronosystem. 'Family' in this research refers not only to the nuclear family, but also to the extended family. Grandparents, parents and children in the family of participants who participated in this study constitute a 'grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system'. Care normally refers to the relationships between two individuals (Tronto, 1993) but grandparent childcare in this research is more than the relationships between two individuals. It includes the flow of family support in the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. It involves the complex intergenerational interactions inside the symbiosis system. For example, the interactions between grandparents from both sides and parents. Moreover, it contains the interactions between the symbiosis system and the macrosystem; both of them are embedded in the chronosystem. The flow of resources, emotions, caregiving, advice, obligation and expectation, are represented by the arrows and generalised as family support.

In the figure above, it could be seen that family support flows between maternal grandparents' family and parents' family, and between paternal grandparents' family and parents' family. There is support from grandparents' family to parents' family indicated by the arrow from grandparents' families on both sides to parents' family at the bottom of the symbiosis system.

Three types of support are identified according to the findings, containing concrete support, emotional and advice support from grandparents to parents presented in section 10.2.2. Support from grandmothers to mothers is significant, especially the strength of support from maternal grandmothers to mothers, which are indicated in the model. In addition to support from grandparents to parents, concrete support and advice support from parents to grandparents is also identified according to the findings. It is indicated in the figure through the arrow from parents to grandparents, which shows the bidirectional feature of family support.

Childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions are driven by the macrosystem, the mesosystem and the interactions between the two systems. Three important components of the macrosystem are: childcare policies, population policies and the sociocultural contexts, which is discussed in section 10.2.3. The Integrated Family Model is helpful in understanding childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions from a chronological perspective. It is presented in section 10.2.4. The nuanced aspects of intergenerational interactions in neo-familism are presented in section 10.3. The internal drive within the symbiosis system on childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions is powerful and strong. Other aspects of intergenerational interactions are the conflictual aspects, power relations, emotional aspects and intergenerational identity. Family support within the symbiosis system is discussed as follows.

10.2.2 Family support in the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system

In the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system, it can be seen that there are bidirectional arrows between parents' family and maternal grandparents' family, and between parents' family and paternal grandparents' family. These show interactions between the parents' family and the grandparents' families on both sides. Within those interactions, resources, caregiving, emotions, obligations, advice and expectations flow between the parents' family, and the maternal grandparents'/paternal grandparents' families.

Grandparents' involvement in childcare can be regarded as an important form of family support from grandparents to parents. Four main types of support are concrete support, emotional support, advice support and esteem support (Cutrona, 2000). In the flow of resources, emotions, caregiving and advice from grandparents to parents, concrete support, emotional support and advice support are identified in the theme *perceptions of grandparent childcare* in Chapter Seven.

Concrete support is in relation to practical acts of assistance (Cutrona, 2000). Care for the child and the mother that grandparents provide, and the domestic housework that grandparents conduct, could be described as concrete support. It also includes cooking and cleaning for the child and for parents, bathing the child, doing laundry, playing with the child, teaching the child to speak and protecting the child from risk. These activities are grandparents' everyday activities when they are involved in childcare. They are the source of grandparents' joy during the interactions with grandchildren and their adult children, but also the reason for grandparents' upset and exhaustion. In addition, financial support as concrete support is identified in this research, such as grandparents' purchase of goods, entertainment and so forth for children.

Emotional support is also identified, especially between maternal grandmothers and mothers. The transition to motherhood challenges mothers physically and psychologically. According to findings in relation to grandparents' roles in Chapter Seven, there are mothers who suffered from disease and pain during pregnancy, delivery and postpartum. The presence of their mothers and assistance in childcare are of great importance and emotionally support them. The importance of the deep and enduring emotional bond between the mother and the daughter could not be easily replaced by professionals, neighbours and so forth. 'Support is most effective from those with whom we share close emotional bonds' (Cutrona, 2000, p.120). This shows the substantial strength of the support and the high quality of the support provided by family members who have intimate relations with the person. In addition to concrete and emotional support, advice support is identified. Grandparents teach mothers how to take care of children, as identified among the advantages of grandparent childcare in Chapter Seven. However, advice support is identified as bidirectional. It is found that grandparents and parents exchanged methods of taking care of children, not just in one direction, from grandparents to parents.

The following features of family support are discussed: bilateral, intergenerational, ever-changing, flexible, bidirectional and gendered. In addition to the features identified in the mosaic family model, which are bilateral and intergenerational, according to the findings, ever-changing, flexible, bidirectional and gendered features are identified. The bilateral aspect of family support is reflected in the support for parents from both maternal and paternal grandparents. In the families recruited, there are four families where grandparents from both sides were providing childcare or had provided childcare. Parents could obtain dual family support from maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents. Family support that parents receive is doubled, and meanwhile the elder care and support parents provide to grandparents is doubled as well. In terms of the intergenerational feature, grandparents' involvement in childcare

in this research is mainly in relation to the grandparent generation and the parent generation; family support features intergenerational interactions and dynamics between grandparents and parents. The grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is not a permanently stable system; 'ever-changing' is found to be a characteristic of the system which impacts family support.

Canavan *et al.* (2016) argue that it is important to recognise changes in the family network. The caregiver could alter support due to other demands or life-changing events (Canavan *et al.*, 2016). As identified in Chapter Seven, Jin Dong [16G], a maternal grandmother, stopped helping in childcare because she had to take care of her husband who was ill. This reflects how the needs of people to care are in conflict. For Jin Dong [16G], the need of care for the child was in conflict with the need of care for her husband, the maternal grandfather. The need of care for other family members made the family re-negotiate childcare arrangements. Later, the paternal grandmother took over Jin Dong's [16G] caregiver role and looked after the child. In the family of Zhou Shu [03G], her caregiving for her grandson was in conflict with the need of care for her mother, the great grandmother in the family. The care needs of other family members impact grandparents' involvement in childcare and childcare arrangements in the family. In addition to the need of care for other family members, there are other factors that could alter childcare arrangements. A crisis in the grandparents' marriage is reported to impact grandparents' involvement in childcare as identified in Han Shi's [08G] account. In terms of the change in childcare arrangements, the case of Jin Dong's [16G] family reflects that a relay race took place within the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. In the families of Qian Lu [01P] and Wu Hua [03P], the change of childcare arrangements would be shifted from grandparenting as informal support to nurseries as formal support.

Flexible and bidirectional are significant features of grandparent childcare as family support. When grandparents and parents have different opinions about childcare, their ways of dealing with the differences can show the feature of flexibility. Zheng He [04G] chose to retreat when she had disagreements with her daughter-in-law, Wang Le [04P], even though Zheng He [04G] believed herself to be right. The retreat is identified not only in the grandparents' way of dealing with disagreement, but also in the parents' way. Qian Lu [01P] chose to leave the matter alone when she did not agree with her parents-in-law. Grandparents' retreat also occurred when they disagreed with mothers' ways of disciplining. They stayed away from the scene where the mother disciplined the child. In addition to retreat, other ways to deal with disagreement are consulting professionals, positive communication, listening to the preference of the child and so forth. These reflect the feature of flexibility in interactions between grandparents and parents.

In addition to support by grandparents for parents, support by parents for grandparents is also identified. This shows the bidirectional feature of family support in this research. Advice support, mentioned earlier, is demonstrated where grandmothers were reported to teach mothers how to take care of children, based on their experience. Mothers also shared information about how to look after children, which helped improve grandparents' competence in childcare. In addition, concrete support flows from parents to grandparents. Qian Lu [01P] said she bought groceries so grandparents did not need to worry about them. Sometimes she also organised trips or family dinners outside for the family. He Hao [11P] expressed her concern that grandparents were more generous to the child than to themselves when purchasing products. He Hao [11P] would try to buy whatever grandparents and the child needed, or ask for delivery when she was not home, to reduce the financial burden on grandparents.

A final point to note is that family support from grandparents to parents is gendered. This research did not specifically examine gendered decisions relating to grandparents' role. One aspect of the inclusion criteria for recruitment, was that in each family there should be one grandparent and one parent. There are no criteria for the gender of participants. In the grandparent group, there are 14 grandmothers and one grandfather interviewed. However, whilst it was apparent that grandmothers were the main caregivers in most of the families in the dataset, grandfathers in at least six families were reported actively involved in childcare but they did not participate in this research. For example, Zhao Jun's [01G] husband and her took care of their grandchildren together. It was similar in Zhou Shu's [03G], You Kuo's [10G] and Lv Xia's [12G] families. Zheng He's [04G] and Cao Zhou's [14G] husbands also helped in childcare. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the case that grandmothers are the main caregivers in most of the families in the dataset. As noted in Chapter Two, as most societies in the world, in Chinese society, women undertake more family work than men (Chen, 2005). With the state's retreat from welfare service providing and influence of traditional gender role in family in the marketisation era, women are facing increasing burden of unpaid family work. Moreover, the findings show that the decision making on caregivers is mainly depending on grandmothers' availability. The intergenerational interactions that participants talked about are mostly the interactions between mothers and grandmothers.

The findings in the family of Jin Dong [16P] are consistent with what Ji (2020) describes – the familial relay race of caregiving by women from different generations along the bilateral line. This shows the gendered feature of family support. However, the empirical findings of this research suggest that some grandfathers involve themselves in childcare as helpers of grandmothers, although the number of grandfathers involved in childcare in families recruited is limited. The relay race is found not only just by women but also by men along the bilateral line,

according to the findings identified within Lv Xia's [12G] family in Chapter Eight. Both the paternal grandmother and the paternal grandfather took over the childcare job from Lv Xia [12G] and her husband, the maternal grandparents. In Lv Xia's [12G] family, the paternal grandparents' involvement is not reflected by the number of paternal grandparents' involvement. In Sun Qi's [02G] family, the paternal grandmother is not reflected in the number of paternal grandmothers' involvement in childcare.

Although it is reported that women account for a large number of the caregivers compared to men in this research, grandfathers' involvement in childcare is significantly mentioned compared to fathers' involvement. Within the four families where paternal grandmothers were interviewed, the paternal grandfathers were also actively involved in childcare but did not participate in interviews. For example, Zhao Jun [01G] described her daily activities which involved the activities of the paternal grandfather. Having no paternal grandfathers as research participants does not mean paternal grandfathers are not involved in childcare. Grandfathers' involvement in childcare is more than that of fathers, according to the empirical data. Nevertheless, the data shows that childcare is carried out mostly by mothers and grandmothers.

In the Integrated Family Model, it can be seen that family support flows between grandparents on both sides to parents and children. This research focuses mainly on support from grandparents to parents, although that from parents to grandparents is also found. Three types of family support are identified in this research: concrete support, emotional support and advice support. According to the above discussion of the features, it can be seen that these features interweave with one another rather than standing alone, which implies the complexity in families where grandparents are involved in childcare.

10.2.3 Contextualising the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system

This section discusses the macrosystem in which the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is located. Three main components of the macrosystem are set out below. First, limited support from childcare policies is the first component of the macrosystem. According to mosaic familism, the collapse of the *dan wei* (单位, work unit) system during the transition from the socialist era to marketisation plays a crucial role in reshaping the family institution (Ji, 2017; Ji, 2020). *Dan wei* used to provide childcare services for families, which was how families previously functioned (Ji, 2017). In contrast to Ji (2017), Tang (2017) demonstrates that family still played a major role in terms of childcare in the socialist era, since many nurseries and preschools provided by *dan wei* were of low quality. As the system collapsed, the number of nurseries and preschools owned by government institutions declined dramatically (Yue and Fan, 2018). Care and reproductive services provided by *dan wei* came back on to families

(Cook and Dong, 2011). This shows that childcare shifted from formal to informal institutions. In addition, parenting benefits and financial support provided for parents are limited. As identified in Chapter Six, mothers and grandparents believe that the quality of childcare provided by parents is better than that by grandparents. However, mothers cannot provide full-time childcare because they have to go back to work, given the limited support from childcare policies.

The second component of the macrosystem is the population policies. The one-child policy was implemented in the 1970s in some provinces in China, and implemented nationwide in the 1980s. For the families of grandparents in this research, their fertility decision was in the context of the strict one-child policy. There are 13 grandparents with only one adult child, and two grandparents with two adult children in this research. The one-child policy led to the small size of the nuclear family, while strengthening the ties between parents and their only child found by Zhang (2009) noted in Chapter Two. The one-child policy has impacted Chinese families in various ways, creating a solid basis for the emergence of intergenerational intimacy (Yan, 2016). Generous resources from parents are invested in their only child. After this only child gets married and becomes a parent, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is formed. The generous investment from parents to their only child continues and they extend the investment not only to their only adult child but also to their only grandchild. The handsome and intensive investment from parents to their children ranges from financial help and emotional help, caregiving and housework, no matter whether their children become adults or whether or not they have income (Ji, 2017; 2020). Such intensive investment is generalised as family support in the Integrated Family Model. Three types of family support and its features are discussed in the above section. However, the population policies are not stable and changed from the one-child policy to the two-child policy, then to the latest three-child policy within only six years from 2015 to 2021.

The third component of the macrosystem is changing sociocultural contexts. In the classic Confucian traditions, the roles of family members are defined as: parents should be kind to their children and children need to perform filial piety to their parents (Mencius, 2009). This cultural tradition clarifies the roles of parents and grandparents, and expectations of how to play the roles. Liang (2005, p.72) argues that 'Chinese society is an ethic-based society and the most important ethic is family ... ethic relations are about emotional connections and duties'. The Confucian tradition shapes the role that family plays and also shapes family members' expectations for the family. In the classic patriarchy, the husband's role is to support the family financially and make a contribution to society. The wife's role is to undertake domestic chores and take care of children in order to make her husband focus on his job. According to

the findings, it is mainly grandmothers and mothers that undertake childcare work, although grandfathers were reported to be more involved in childcare than fathers. This shows that caregiving is undertaken disproportionately by women from different generations (Ji, 2020; Ji *et al.*, 2020). The findings show that the gender division of labour within the household in classic patriarchy still plays a role in the contemporary Chinese families. According to the findings of this research, decisions on childcare arrangements mainly depend on grandmothers' availability. This finding is consistent with that of Lin and Mao (2022), that negotiation of childcare arrangements is gendered because more childcare responsibilities are assumed by grandmothers and mothers than grandfathers and fathers. However, as noted in Chapter Two, the revolutionary social and political change transformed the classic patriarchy both the generational axis and the gender axis (Harrell and Santos, 2016). According to the patriarchal tradition, paternal grandparents should take care of children rather than maternal grandparents. Yet, among the 15 grandparents participating in this research, there are 11 on the maternal side, including ten maternal grandmothers and one maternal grandfather. This maternal grandfather's wife was also the main caregiver. It shows that the generational axis of patriarchy is becoming less patrilineal and more matrilineal.

According to Confucian culture, family members feel obliged to make efforts for the positive outlook of the whole family. They prioritise the family over themselves. The impact of this aspect of Confucian culture varies in families. The findings show that a small number of grandparents feel obliged to help their adult children look after grandchildren, which shows the deviation from the traditional views of obligation. Most grandparents and all the mothers insist that parents instead of grandparents are obliged to look after children. Liang (2005) argues that ethical relations are relevant to emotional connections and duties, with family members considering others more than themselves. This equates to the similarity of traditional familism and neo-familism argued by Yan (2021), where familial interests are prioritised over individual interests. However, the difference between traditional familism and neo-familism lies in a nuanced difference across generational lines with regard to the balancing of familial interests and personal interests. According to the findings of this research, from the viewpoint of grandparents' motivation in childcare, they perceived their involvement in childcare as their duty as mothers; for example, Zhao Jun [01G] and Jiang You [07G]. Although Zhao Jun [01G] and Jiang You [07G] were unwilling to take care of the child and expressed their unwillingness before the child was born, they undertook the caregiver roles after childbirth. The significant difference between balancing family interests and personal interests across generational lines is not identified in this research. However, in the account of Lv Xia [12G], her daughter Shi Yang [12P] sent her son to Lv Xia's [12G] home when the child was nine months old because she was overwhelmed by childcare. Shi Yang [12P] felt relieved and had a meal in a restaurant

with her husband. In this case, it seems the parent generation prioritises its own personal interests.

As seen in the Integrated Family Model, the symbiosis system is embedded in the macrosystem that affects the way that the symbiosis system works as well as its function. Support from childcare policies is limited for families with children under three – as noted in Chapter Two, family is positioned as the main care provider for children under three in a central government document. Given these contexts, grandparent childcare has been a phenomenon nationwide in China. According to the findings in Chapter Seven, grandparents' motivation in childcare is to help and share the burden of parents. The intimate ties between grandparents and their adult children, are strengthened by the one-child policy, and motivate grandparents' involvement in childcare. This also shapes the intensive interactions between grandparents and parents. The last aspect in the macrosystem, the changing sociocultural context – has influence on grandparents' motivation in childcare, childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. The influence also varies in different families. In addition to the macrosystem, the chronosystem helps in highlighting the symbiosis system from a chronological perspective.

10.2.4 The chronosystem, where the symbiosis system and the macrosystem are embedded

The chronosystem reflects the perceptions of grandparents and parents regarding childcare as well as childcare arrangements in families. It also reflects the change of perceptions over time on an individual's different life course. It conveys changes in childcare itself. As mentioned above, the ties between grandparents and their grandchildren motivate grandparents to take care of children. *Ge bei qin* (隔辈亲, grandparents' affection for grandchildren) is the term reported across the dataset. Some mothers reported that grandparents' affection for grandchildren is stronger than the affection they felt for their adult children when they were young. Wu Hua [03P] explained the paternal grandfather's stronger affection for his grandchild than his son, was in relation to his age. This reflects changes in the paternal grandfather over time, which impacts his involvement in childcare.

In addition to individuals' changes on different life courses, the features of childcare change over time. Its quality has been improved, with a major feature being meticulous childcare, widely mentioned and discussed by grandparents and parents. The empirical finding of this research supports the argument of Ji *et al.* (2020) that parenting and child-rearing norms are more expensive and time-consuming than before. Moreover, she argues that 'the Chinese way of intensive mothering is somehow ironically built upon selfless intensive grandmothering, or more precisely, on a familial relay race of caregiving provided by different generations of

women along bilateral lines (Ji, 2020, p.133).’ This tendency identified in the families of Sun Qi [02G], Lv Xia [12G] and Wei Min [16G].

Living arrangements identified in Chapter Seven, shows a tendency for change. Three-generation cohabitation occurs when adult children need assistance in childcare and their parents are competent to help (Ji, 2019). Ji also suggests that the cross-section data is not able to show changes in living arrangements on different life courses. In the latest national population census, data shows that three generation households account for 13.26 per cent of the total households, while the figure for urban areas is 11.04 per cent (Office of the Leading Group of the State Council for the Seventh National Population Census, 2022). In this research, three-generation cohabitation occurred in ten families at different stages of childcare among the 16 families in the small dataset. For example, in Lv Xia’s [12G] family, she lived with her daughter’s family from the child’s birth to nine months old. When the interview was conducted, Lv Xia [12G] lived with the child, but the parents did not live with them. This supports Ji’s argument that cross-section data cannot show a change of living arrangements across different life courses, although the dataset in this research is small. According to the findings, the space of cohabitation includes living in the grandparents’ home and living in the parents’ home.

In the other six families, grandparents and parents lived in their own households separately. Grandparents took care of children either in their household or in the parents’ household. This form of family structure is named as the two-in-one unit by Yan (2016). Grandparents and parents live in two different households but in key areas of everyday practice they work together – for example, grandparents take care of children and undertake household chores (Yan, 2016). The strength of the two-in-one unit is that the independent families could have conjugal independence as well as the benefits of labour division and economy of scale (Yan, 2016). However, the living arrangements show a tendency for change not only in the past but also in their future childcare arrangements. The change of childcare from grandparents as main caregivers to parents as main caregivers or to formal institutions like nurseries, will change living arrangements. The three-generation households will transform into two-in-one units. Parents will live with their child in their home, while grandparents are back to living in their own home. The separation of living did not mean grandparents’ non-involvement in childcare; it is reported that grandparents will pick up children from school and undertake cooking. The two-in-one unit is a living arrangement replacing the three-generation household. The three-generation household would operate as a two-in-one unit or as two individual families. However, this living arrangement is not permanent, and will either be consistent or change. The living arrangements could transform from cohabitation to a two-in-one unit, or vice versa. This shows that on different life courses, the symbiosis system may function differently (Ji,

2017). The living arrangements highlight the features of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system: complex, flexible and continuously changing. Not only the living arrangements, but also the caregiver changes, as discussed as a feature of family support in the above section. The chronosystem in Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework not only involves change but also includes consistency.

The above discussion focuses on changes, including personal change on different life courses, and changes in childcare arrangements, especially living arrangements. However, the chronosystem encompasses not only change, but also consistency over time in a person's life, or in the environment the person lives in. Some aspects of traditional culture around perceptions and childcare arrangements make a consistently strong impact. For example, it is mainly women that undertake caregiving work, according to the patrilineal tradition. In addition, there are grandparents who feel obliged to take care of children, which reflects the strong impact of traditional culture. However, the impact seems weak in other grandparents' perceptions. Although most grandparents believed that it is not their obligation to take care of children and childcare is not taken for granted, they did not exit from childcare when they were exhausted, or when they felt childcare impact negatively on their involvement in social activities. Their perceptions seem to deviate from tradition, but their actions do not follow their perceptions.

In this section, the Integrated Family Model throws light on grandparent childcare by types and features of family support. Moreover, the established interactions between the macrosystem and mesosystem in the Integrated Family Model are borne out in the findings. Last but not least, the chronological perspective sheds light on the changing feature of childcare arrangements, particularly alongside changes in people's life courses. The next section focuses on the nuanced interactions in the symbiosis system. This is not a stand alone system; instead, it relates closely to the macrosystem and chronosystem in which it is located. The population policies, as an important aspect of the macrosystem, are discussed in this section together with the internal drive. Inside the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system, the function of the system is driven by the ties between grandparents and their adult children. The internal drive of the system is impacted by the interweaving of the mosaic pieces in Chinese society. Both the external drive and internal drive therefore reshape the family institution.

10.3 Understanding Grandparents' Involvement in Childcare from the Perspective of Intergenerationality in Neo-Familism

This section mainly discusses childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents from the perspective of intergenerationality in the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. First, three main motivations are regarded as the internal

drive of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system: grandparents' perceptions of obligation to the family; intimate ties between grandparents and parents, and the ties between grandparents and children; the shared goals of grandparents and parents. Following this, the conceptual tool of intergenerationality is used to understand the intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. This is discussed from the emotional aspects of intergenerationality, intergenerational identity and intergenerational interactions.

10.3.1 The internal drive of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system

The internal drive of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system are grandparents' perceptions of obligation, intimate ties between grandparents and parents, and ties between grandparents and grandchildren, and shared goals of grandparents and parents. Inside the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system, grandparents' perceptions of obligation to the family is the strong internal drive for grandparents' involvement in childcare, as could be seen in the accounts of Zhao Jun [01G] and Jiang You [07G]. In terms of the childcare arrangements, it is found that grandparents' availability plays a main role in the decision on caregivers. On the one hand, grandparents' availability enables them to be the caregiver; on the other hand, their availability obliges them to be the caregiver. Most participants, including both grandparents and parents, presumably believed that it is unacceptable if grandparents are available but do not help with childcare. Liu (2013) argues that there is a special closeness among family members and kin who are linked by blood ties; they bear unconditional and unlimited responsibilities and obligations for each other in terms of care and support. Grandparents' motivation of caring much about their daughters identified in the empirical data, shows the closeness among family members, but the unconditional and unlimited responsibilities and obligations are not significant in this research. Most participants disagreed that grandparent childcare was taken for granted. They believed that taking care of children is the parents' duty instead of the grandparents' duty. Grandparents' involvement was described by mothers as an extra help from grandparents to parents. Mothers felt grateful about what grandparents did. Grandparents' involvement in childcare, therefore, strengthens and reinforces the intimate intergenerational relationships between grandparents and parents.

Second, the intimate ties between grandparents and parents (parents and their adult children) and the intimate ties between grandparents and their grandchildren are an important and powerful driver of grandparents' involvement in childcare. The ties are understood as intergenerational intimacy in this research. Yan (2016, p.250) accounts for the emerging intergenerational intimacy in Chinese families as 'a new kind of mutual knowing, understanding, and emotional sharing across generational lines reflected through intensive communications, verbal expressions, and bodily displays of emotional attachment'. According to the empirical findings,

mothers and grandparents have shared experiences in daily practice. The involvement of grandparents, especially maternal grandmothers, in childcare is identified as motivated by their caring much about their daughters. Mothers also felt grateful for grandmothers' support in childcare. When disagreements occurred, they found ways to deal with the differences in childcare as presented in Chapter Nine.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one aspect of ethical relations in Chinese society is emotional connections, according to Liang (2005). These emotional connections could be understood as the ties between parents and their adult children, especially the ties between the mother and the daughter in this research as indicated in Figure 8. Because of the emotional connections, family members think more of others than themselves and make decisions considering benefits to others instead of to themselves (Liang, 2005). For paternal grandparents, Zhao Jun's [01G] motivation could also be explained as the ties between Zhao Jun [01G] and her son. She was motivated by helping her son. *Xin teng gu niang* (心疼姑娘, caring much about my daughter) is the most common motivation for maternal grandmothers. *Xin* (心, heart) and *teng* (疼, hurt) vividly articulate the emotional connections and the intimate ties between mother and daughter. Childcare was reported by grandparents as very exhausting, especially childcare for infants and toddlers. In spite of the tiredness, exhaustion and upset resulting from childcare, grandparents continued performing their roles, motivated by caring about their daughters. In addition to the intimate ties between grandparents and parents, it is found that grandparents' emotional connections with their grandchildren support them in going through those times of burnout. The intimate ties between grandparents and their grandchildren not only supports grandparents to get through the difficulties in childcare, but also motivates them to get involved in childcare.

The phrase *qin qing* (亲情, familial emotions) was mentioned when Lv Xia [12G] talked about whether or not grandparent childcare is taken for granted in Chapter Seven. Lv Xia's [12G] words not only show her perceptions about whether or not grandparent childcare is taken for granted, they also demonstrate what drives her involvement in grandparent childcare. Grandparenting for children under three is not just providing childcare for children, it also involves care of the mother. It shows that the nature of grandparent childcare for children of different age groups could be different. The finding of this research is inconsistent with Yan's argument that the focus of family life is on the children from the youngest generation, and the ultimate goal in family life is on the happiness and success of the children (Yan, 2016; Yan, 2021). As discussed precedingly, grandparents' involvement in childcare for children under three years is taking consideration of both the child generation and the parent generation. According to Lv Xia [12G], caring about her daughter is the strongest motivation for her. It is in relation to the

second internal drive the intimate ties between grandparents and parents or, it could be said, the ties between parents and their adult children. This shows the saliency of emotional aspects and the intergenerational intimacy in grandparents' involvement in childcare.

Yan (2016) explains the deep root of the intergenerational intimacy in Chinese culture and Chinese society by comparing it with that in Western culture and societies. Unlike in Western societies, where intimacy is built on the assumption of a freestanding inner self and cannot be achieved without equality, the self of the relational individual is divided, consisting of a small self which focuses on personal desires and interests, and a great self which carries the interests of the family or other collectivity in Chinese society (Yan, 2016). According to Fei (1992), the Chinese individual is a relational individual whose self exists only in interpersonal relations where there are hierarchical ranks. Liang (2005) proposes that Chinese society is an ethic-based society and the most important ethic in Chinese society is family. Liang (2005) emphasises the importance of ethic relations, which supports the argument of Fei (1992) that the Chinese individual is a relational individual. As a relational individual, when the small self and the great self are in conflict, the small self must submit to the great self. In childcare arrangements, grandparents' availability is identified as one of the most important factors leading to grandparents' involvement in childcare. In the meantime, grandparents' availability forces them to become caregivers even when they are unwilling. Participants expressed it as unacceptable that for grandparents not help with childcare if they were free. This shows the norm that the collective interest of the family is more important than the interest of the individual. The small self has to submit to the great self.

The third important internal drive is the shared goal of grandparents and parents. Grandparent's involvement is a vivid illustration of descending familism. They undertake caregiving and housework. Care, love and family resources flow downwards from grandparents to parents and children. Grandparents' goal is to achieve the wellbeing of the children meanwhile parents who work hard in the labour market share the same goal with grandparents. Their shared ultimate goal enables grandparents and parents to understand each other's hard work and ensure the sustainable, effective functioning of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system. Shen Sha [07P] had a full-time job and a side job which resulted in her limited time in childcare. Her hard work was to provide better resources for her son which she was unable to have when she was young.

However, Shen Sha's [07P] motivation is not to make her son achieve success. Shen Sha [07P] worked hard to be well-off condition enough to provide educational resources to her son. She just wanted to provide abundant resource to her son, and did not want to make him stressed. The success of the third generation in Yan's descending familism was not mentioned

by Shen Sha [07P]; instead, she hoped her son felt less stressed in relation to study. You Kuo [10G], the paternal grandmother talked about her son and daughter-in-law working hard. The parents in this family are dual-earners and You Kuo [10G], the paternal grandmother, and her husband, the paternal grandfather, helped in childcare. She acknowledged the parents' hard work which motivated her to support them by taking care of the child.

However, in terms of maternal grandmothers' involvement in childcare, caring about their daughters considerably motivates maternal grandmothers. This is not consistent with Yan (2016) – that grandparents' ultimate goal is focusing on the wellbeing and success of the children from the third generation. The intergenerational intimacy between maternal grandmothers and their daughters is reported to motivate them significantly in childcare. Lv Xia [12G] said that if it was her daughter-in-law rather than her daughter, she would leave it alone and would not bear the tiredness. She added that most of the caregivers were maternal grandmothers and they all *xin teng* (心疼, cared about) their daughters. This reflects the significantly important role of the mother-daughter intimate ties in grandparents' motivation in childcare for children under three. In different families, the role of the three internal drives varies. In families where the maternal grandmother was involved in childcare, it is mainly the intimate ties between the maternal grandmother and the mother that plays the significant role in grandparents' involvement. Sometimes, the three forms of internal drive may work together in one family. Moreover, the internal drive can vary when the children are at different ages. In this research, for children under three years, or especially when they are new-born, mothers are going through a transition period physically and psychologically. After the process of labour and delivery, not only the newborn but also the mother herself needs care from others. At this time, grandparents' involvement is significantly motivated by the need of care for not only the newborn but also for the mother. As the child grows older, grandparents' main motivation in childcare may be consistent or changes, for example, shifting from motivated by the intimate ties between grandparents and parents to enjoying the joy of spending time with children.

10.3.2 Contradictions in grandparent and parent interactions

Contradictions in the interactions between grandparents and parents occur in two aspects. First, grandparents and parents hold different opinions in everyday practice. Second, there are contradictions between individual happiness and family interest which are about the relations between the person and the symbiosis system (mesosystem). Conflict seems an everlasting topic when talking about intergenerational interactions. During daily practices, differences between grandparents and parents were identified in daily routines and teaching and discipline for children. In terms of daily routines, grandparents and parents had difference

about feeding, dressing, cleaning and other aspects of care for children, as identified in Chapter Nine. Multiple ways were utilised by grandparents and parents to deal with the differences. Grandmothers' retreat is one way to deal with the difference, a common grandparents' strategy when there are conflicts between grandparents and parents (Yan, 2016; Qi, 2018). In addition to grandmother's retreat, consulting professionals is a way to deal with the difference in relation to daily routines. As for disagreement about teaching and disciplining children, this includes grandparents disagreeing with the parents' way and parents disagreeing with the grandparents' way. Communication is a way to deal with differences when mothers disagree with grandparents. Retreat was also adopted when grandparents disagreed with parents' way of teaching and discipline, although they felt *xin teng* (心疼, unwilling to see the child being treated strictly) for their grandchildren.

In addition to conflict relevant to different opinions, contradiction between individual happiness and family interests is found in this study, demonstrated as the new pattern of conflict and family life in neo-familism (Huang, 2021; Yan, 2021). The findings in relation to disadvantages of grandparent childcare suggest that grandparents' freedom was restricted due to their involvement in childcare. Contradictions between grandparents' individual desires and grandparent childcare are recognised by grandparents and parents. Grandmothers including Zhao Jun [01G], Han Shi [08G] and You Kuo [10G] reported that their time was occupied by childcare and housework. They had little freedom to meet friends or engage in social life. Parents like Hua Qiao [15P] felt guilty that her mother-in-law could not be as free as before she was involved in this childcare. In the comparison of traditional familism and neo-familism, Yan (2021, pp.15-16) argues as follows.

The differences between traditional familism and neo-familism become much more apparent in social practices because many people who claim to be followers of traditional values actually find themselves in today's competitive and risky social environment unable to practice what they believe, whereas many others employ familism merely as a resource to pursue their individual happiness.

However, grandparents' awareness of pursuing individual happiness stays at only the ideological level. At the practice level, they still perform family duties by taking care of children and conducting housework. As identified in Chapter Nine, Han Shi [08G] realised that her involvement in childcare restricted her freedom and she could not attend social activities when she was invited because of her role as the caregiver. In the case of Hua Qiao [15P] mentioned above, the contradiction between the paternal grandmother's happiness and performing a familial role resulted in her guilt for her mother-in-law.

10.3.3 Mothers' gain in power and grandparents' loss of agency

The findings of qualitative research with urban middle-class families in Beijing shows that mothers play the role of manager and take full charge of issues relating to childcare, while grandparents play the role of a helper (Xiao, 2021). The roles of grandparents and parents in this thesis partially support the notion of manager role for mothers and a helper role for grandparents. In the families where grandparents described their role as the mother's helper in my research, their role was to assist the mother and the mother played the leading role in childcare. In terms of the power relations, mothers exercise more power and grandparents lack power in terms of childrearing (Xiao, 2021). Mothers seem to play the role of taking care of, which means 'undertake responsibilities for the perceived need and make decisions about how to respond to it'; grandparents are persons who provide caregiving, which means 'the direct meeting of needs for care' (Tronto, 1993). In the study of Xiao (2021), the 'old experience' of grandparents in childcare was described as out of date by grandparents themselves, and not adopted in childcare. This also reflects grandparents' marginalised power status. In contrast to the finding of Xiao (2021), grandparents' 'old experience' is not devalued but adopted by some families in this research. As identified in Chapter Nine, Li Wei [02P] adopted both the maternal and paternal grandmothers' approach of giving the child water every day. This grandmothers' way was supported by professionals. Moreover, the baby stopped crying after drinking water.

In childcare arrangements, findings show that mothers have power in decision-making about childcare arrangements and caregiver selection. The selection of caregivers happens when multiple grandparents are available to be caregivers, which is in relation to one feature of the inverted family (Chapter Four). In these families where mothers have choices, the family structure is normally the 4-2-1 family where a large number of family members is from the older generation. The candidates for caregiving are mainly referring to females, grandmothers. In the selection of caregivers, mothers have more power over grandmothers. They prefer to choose their mother, the maternal grandmother, to be the caregiver. This shows the inverted power allocation compared to the traditional family, in which the older generation has more authority and power over the younger generation. The findings suggest that parents in this research have autonomy and agency in terms of decision-making about caregivers. In contrast, the involuntary involvement of some grandparents indicates grandparents' autonomy and agency is undermined. Why did these grandparents involve themselves in childcare even though they were unwilling? The findings help to answer this question.

Mei ban fa (没办法, It cannot be helped or that is just the way it is) is what participants said even though they were unwilling to take care of the child. If they did not come to help in childcare, no one would come to help, due to availability and personal willingness. Zhao Jun [01G]

believed involvement in childcare was what she should do because of her son. For Jiang You [07G], her availability made her have to be the caregiver. The social norm Jiang You [07G] believed is that people who are available have to help in looking after children. This forced Jiang You [07G] to get involved in childcare. The ties between Zhao Jun [01G] and her son is explained as obligation that forces Zhao Jun [01G] to help in childcare. For Jiang You [07G], it is the social norm that plays a significant role in her involvement in childcare. In the cases of Zhao Jun [01G] and Jiang You [07G], this suggests that the cultural aspect of the priority of family interest plays a role in their sense of there being no alternative.

Mei ban fa (没办法, It cannot be helped or that is just the way it is) is not only the response from grandparents who were unwilling to take care of children, but is also mentioned by other participants when talking about childcare arrangements. Sun Qi [02G], the maternal grandmother, described the flexible arrangements that the paternal grandmother and she – whoever was available looked after the child – as ‘It can’t be helped. That’s just the way it is.’ Wang Le [04P] preferred the maternal grandmother to be the caregiver, but the maternal grandmother was unavailable. The child was taken care of by the paternal grandfather because of availability. She described this arrangements as *mei ban fa*. Feng Xi [05G] expressed her tiredness and exhaustion in childcare but she *mei ban fa*. However, she also said that tiredness passed away quickly and the happiness of involvement in childcare was more than tiredness. *Mei ban fa* indicates the feeling of helplessness and limited agency for both grandparents and parents in childcare arrangements.

The above discussion is consistent with features of inverted family that the youth, the parent generation, especially the mothers, has gained autonomy and power in decision-making on caregivers. In contrast, grandparents seem in a passive position in childcare arrangements, which is a significant difference from traditional patriarchal familism, where authority and power are defined by generation, age and gender (Yan, 2021). Their involvement in childcare could not be based on just their own preference. The familial obligation and social norm force them to participate in childcare, which is in opposition to their preference. Overall, the parent generation possesses power and has gained autonomy in childcare arrangements, whereas grandparents’ power is limited and agency is restricted by the familial obligation and social norm.

According to the finding, mothers’ role as a bridge between maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents is identified. He Hao [11P] performed a role like a buffer and bridge between the paternal grandparents and maternal grandparents. Her role is to reduce the stress from paternal grandparents to maternal grandparents, which reflects concern about her parents. In the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system mainly focuses on the interactions between

parents and paternal or maternal grandparents. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of family life, the interactions between paternal grandparents and maternal grandparents should not be overlooked. In the complex interactions in the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system, the parent generation plays a crucial role in maintaining the function of the system. Furthermore, parents are reported to play a role as a bridge between the grandparent generation and the child generation according to a quantitative study (Xu and Chi, 2018). Examining the role of the parent generation seems important in understanding the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system.

10.3.4 Emotional aspects of intergenerationality

However, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is not just functionally oriented. There are emotions flowing within the system. Emotional closeness is one major reason that mothers choose their mother to be the caregiver. According to mother's preference in caregiver selection in Chapter Eight, the emotional closeness in relation to caregiver selection reflects from: the style of maternal grandmothers' childcare is more acceptable, such as the feeding style and the cleanliness; the compatible living habits between maternal grandmothers and mothers; the quality of communication between them; fewer foreseeable conflicts and less negative influence that conflicts could lead to. This is consistent with the finding of Zhang *et al.* (2019) that maternal grandmothers are more likely to be the caregivers because of avoiding conflicts between paternal grandmothers and mothers. When the parent generation has more autonomy and power in family life, their decision-making shows the salience of intergenerational intimacy in childcare arrangements.

The ties between grandparents and their adult children shows the intergenerational emotional closeness between them. This is supported by a quantitative study that the emotional closeness between grandparents and parents has a positive association with the support exchange between them (Xu and Chi, 2018). One of the main features of neo-familism is that 'intergenerational dependence and solidarity have gained a new saliency in both the pragmatic and emotional aspects of family life, so much so that a new intergenerational identity is in the making. The identity ties parents and adult children together as a unified whole ...' (Yan, 2021, p.16). This seems to be borne out by the findings as intergenerational dependence between grandparents and parents. Intergenerational solidarity is significantly evident between parents' family and maternal or paternal grandparents' families by the intensive family support from grandparents to parents. The intensive family support from grandparents to parents mainly includes concrete support, emotional support and advice support. The features of family support are bilateral, ever-changing, intergenerational and flexible.

Xin teng gu niang (心疼姑娘, caring much about my daughter), the important internal drive of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system (See section 10.4.1), is a significant emotional aspect of intergenerational dependence. It is from the family of origin, which could be seen in the Integrated Family Model. The phrase *qin qing* (亲情, familial emotions) was described as the ties between the mother and the daughter and also an opposite term to legal obligation. Besides, the emotional dependence reflects in the long-lasting impacts of the mother-daughter relationship from the family of origin (Figure 8) even though the daughter's role has been not only a daughter but also a mother.

10.3.5 Intergenerational identity

Yan (2021, p.16) argues that 'intergenerational dependence and solidarity have gained a new saliency in both the pragmatic and emotional aspects of family life, so much so that a new intergenerational identity is in the making. The identity ties parents and adult children together as a unified whole ...' The grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is viewed as an integration of the maternal and paternal grandparents' family and the parents' family. The united whole could also be reflected from participants' account *yi jia ren* (一家人, a family). The phrase literally means people from the same family.

According to participants' account in relation to *yi jia ren*, in the family where two sides of grandparents were involved, it seems that *yi jia ren* includes all the family members in the symbiosis system as shown in the Integrated Family Model. The grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system could be seen as an integrated whole. In the family where one side of grandparents is involved in childcare, *yi jia ren* in the context of conversation mainly referred to either maternal or paternal grandparents' family and the parents' family. The question is raised whether grandparents' involvement in childcare could contribute to the closeness between one side of grandparents and parents; whether it will negatively impact the closeness between grandparents who are not involved in childcare, and parents. This reflects the complexity of intergenerational dynamics in the context of grandparenting. Moreover, Ji (2020) claims that the importance of intergenerational relationships is equal to the importance of conjugal relationship (features of mosaic familism in Chapter Four). In some cases, the intergenerational relationship between grandparents and their adult children outweighs the conjugal relationship and redefines the meaning of family life (Yan, 2021). The more grandparents involve themselves in their adult children's lives, the more they feel their adult children and themselves are as an integrated whole (Yan, 2021).

10.4 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, the research context and methodology are reviewed in the first section. Given the limited formal childcare services, childcare by grandparents is common nationwide in China. The birth rate remains low and declines, even though population policies have shifted from one-child policy to two-child policy and to the latest three-child policy. Childcare which impacts family fertility decisions has been a trending topic among the public and is a focus of policy-makers. In this context, the qualitative research set out to explore childcare arrangements and grandparent childcare in Chinese families. Four themes were developed: perceptions of childcare, perceptions of grandparent childcare, childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions.

By identifying the key components and the internal drive behind the role of grandparenting care in changes underway in the families, the Integrated Family Model helps interpretate the findings. Furthermore, it helps in understanding childcare arrangements and interactions in these families in an integrated and comprehensive way. Grandparents' involvement in childcare is not only about caregiving, but there are also emotions, obligations, resources and expectations flowing in the interactions between parents' family and grandparents' family, and among family members. They are generalised as family support in the model and understood from its types and features.

The grandparent symbiosis system is embedded in the macrosystem and the chronosystem in the model. The internal drive of the symbiosis system implies the interactions between the symbiosis system and the macrosystem where it is embedded. One of the internal drives is the grandparents' perceptions of obligation, which is influenced by the cultural aspect in the macrosystem. Moreover, mothers' caring about their daughters, an emotional aspect in intergenerationality, was identified as a strong motivation related to the one-child policy. The emotional aspects of intergenerationality are proved to be salient, which is the strong drive for grandparents' involvement in childcare and mothers' selection of caregivers. This also shows the importance of understanding the symbiosis system by positioning it in the macrosystem. The feature of changes in childcare arrangements and in individuals' perceptions on different life courses emphasises the strength of the model by merging the chronosystem. Furthermore, intergenerationality in neo-familism noted in Chapter Four, throws light on nuanced aspects in the interactions between grandparents and parents within the symbiosis system in depth. Contradictions in grandparenting involve different opinions between grandparents and parents in daily practice, conflict between grandparents' freedom and parents' freedom, and the contradiction between individual happiness and family interest. The intergenerational identify shapes

the actions and perceptions of family members. The next chapter is the conclusion chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Eleven: Conclusion and Recommendations

This research set out to explore childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions in families where grandparents are involved in childcare, through exploring their perceptions. Four themes were developed, presented in Chapters Six to Nine: perceptions of childcare, perceptions of grandparent childcare, childcare arrangements, and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. The Integrated Family Model has been developed to help understand and explain the findings. Family support within the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system in the model, especially that from grandparents to their adult children, underlines the interdependence between grandparents and their adult children. Through examining the internal drive of the symbiosis system, the intimate ties between grandparents and their adult children are identified as a strong and powerful motivation for grandparents, especially for maternal grandmothers. Moreover, it was necessary to position the symbiosis system in the macrosystem and chronosystem, so that childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions could be understood in an integrated and comprehensive way.

11.1 Theoretical Implications

Four theoretical perspectives contribute to the construction of the Integrated Family Model: mosaic familism, intergenerationality in neo-familism, Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, and family support. Compared to the mosaic family model, the Integrated Family Model innovatively locates the symbiosis system within the macrosystem and chronosystem. The flow of caregiving, emotions and finance between grandparents' families and the family of parents and children in the mosaic family model is generalised as family support in the Integrated Family model. Grandparents' involvement in childcare is interpreted as family support in this research. Family support in the Integrated Family Model is helpful for understanding grandparent childcare through the types and features of family support. Three types of family support are identified: concrete support, emotional support and advice support. The features of family support are revealed: bilateral, intergenerational, ever-changing, flexible, bidirectional and gendered. By investigating types and features of family support, activities that grandparents and parents conduct in daily practice remain in sight.

To understand childcare arrangements and interactions between grandparents and parents, intergenerationality in neo-familism is important in placing those elements into the symbiosis system. In the mosaic model, the family of parents and children, the family of maternal grandparents and the family of paternal grandparents are separated. Internationality in neo-familism throws light on understanding the family consisting of parents, children, maternal grandparents

and paternal grandparents, as a whole, as shown in the Integrated Family Model. As discussed in Chapter Ten, the notion of '*yi jia ren* (一家人, a family)' reflects the intergenerational identity, which is identified as having an impact on their interactions. The intergenerational identity implies that the family members perceive the symbiosis system as a family in a united whole. Moreover, the united whole status is more significant when positioning the symbiosis system within the macrosystem and chronosystem. Family support flows within the 'united whole' rather than from the families of grandparents on both sides to the family of parents and children. Family support in this research is found to go beyond the boundaries of nuclear families and flows within the symbiosis system. The identity of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system as a whole seems more significant than the identity of the nuclear family as a whole, because of the intergenerational dependency between grandparents and parents in the research. The Integrated Family Model is created based on research particularly into Chinese families. Perceptions of family in the Chinese context, where intergenerational dependence is highlighted, seem different from those in the Western context, where independence of the nuclear family as a whole is highlighted. Therefore, the model has strength in exploring the Chinese family, but could be further developed for other socioeconomic and cultural contexts.

Yan (2021) argues that the core of contemporary intergenerational dynamics is childcare where multiple generations including paternal and maternal grandparents, parents and children, are all involved. This highlights the importance of examining intergenerational dynamics in the context of grandparenting. Through drawing on intergenerationality in neo-familism with the other three theoretical perspectives in the model, it is found that intergenerationality in neo-familism is helpful in examining intergenerational interactions and in capturing the nuanced aspects of those interactions in families where grandparents are involved in childcare. As discussed in Chapter Ten, the intimate ties between maternal grandmothers and mothers are identified as a strong and powerful motivation for maternal grandmother's involvement in childcare. *Xin teng gu niang* (心疼姑娘, care about my daughters) was expressed by maternal grandmothers about their motivation. The intimate ties between the maternal grandmothers and mothers (mothers and daughters) play a role in caregiver selection when more than one grandparent is available to be the caregiver. As noted in Chapter Eight, mothers are found to prefer the maternal grandmother to be the caregiver because they are compatible with their mother in relation to living habits and childcare styles. Moreover, they do worry about the negative impacts on their relationships of rows, while it would be a worry if they were to have rows with paternal grandmothers – their mothers-in-law. The intimate ties are closely associated with the emotional aspects of intergenerationality. This also reflects grandparents' perceptions of *qin qing* (亲情, familial emotions). The emotional aspects play a significant role in

grandparents' involvement in childcare. This highlights the saliency to take the emotional aspects into consideration when examining childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions in families where grandparents are involved in childcare.

Contradictions should not be overlooked and aspects of contradictions are identified: grandparents and parents hold different opinions; individual happiness and family interest are in conflict with each other. In daily practice, grandparents and parents could have different opinions about daily routines, teaching and disciplining the child. In childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents, mothers seem to have more power when they have different opinions, such as in caregiver selection and daily practice. In contrast, grandparents' *mei ban fa* (没办法, it cannot be helped or that is just the way it is) in childcare arrangements when they were involved in childcare involuntarily. Grandparents' retreat when they have different opinions with mothers reveals their loss of agency.

However, without positioning the grandparent-and-parents symbiosis system in the macrosystem and the chronosystem, childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions could not be understood thoroughly and in depth. In this research, three important components of the macrosystem are limited support from childcare policies, the population policies and aspects of Chinese culture. One important component of the macrosystem is the one-child policy. Due to the one-child policy and increased life expectancy as noted in Chapter One, the 4-2-1 family structure accounts for a large number of families. In the 4-2-1 family structure, there are four grandparents – the maternal grandparents and paternal grandparents – two parents including the mother and the father – and one child. This family structure indicates that the supply of grandparents is abundant for the only child. However, it does not mean that all four grandparents are available to be caregivers. Grandparents' availability is identified as a significant aspect in childcare arrangements and the cultural norm impacts grandparents' involvement in childcare, which is in relation to another important aspect of the macrosystem: Chinese culture. The patriarchal tradition defines the gender roles within families. Women from different generations undertake the caregiver roles. In addition to gender roles, Confucian traditions in Chinese culture underline ethical relations and the importance of family. The norm of prioritising the collective interest of the family over personal desires forces grandparents to be caregivers based on their availability, and in spite of their unwillingness.

The chronosystem provides a dimension to view the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system from a chronological perspective. As identified in Chapter Eight, living arrangements reflect the features of complexity, flexibility and continuous change. There are two main forms of living arrangement in the families where grandparents are involved in childcare: the three-

generation household and the two-in-one unit. The living arrangements also show the tendency of changing. For example, in the future arrangements of families where a three-generation household was adopted, they would live in a two-in-one unit which meant parents and grandparents would live in their own household but work together in key areas of every day practice such as childcare or domestic housework. This also reflects the feature of complexity and flexibility. In addition to living arrangements, the involvement of grandparents shows the ever-changing feature, due to other family members' demands of care and so forth. Besides, grandparents' perceptions of childcare change over time, which is relevant to their involvement in childcare. Overall, the feature of continuous change in childcare arrangements indicates the importance of the chronological perspective in examining childcare arrangements in families.

Grandparents' and parents' perceptions, childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents are impacted by limited support from childcare policies, population policies and the changing sociocultural context, in the broader macrosystem. The ever-changing feature of family support and childcare arrangements underlines the necessity to locate the grandparent and parent symbiosis system within the chronosystem in the Integrated Family Model. Since the three important components in the macrosystem are shared by most families and the shared family structure can be found in most families in China, the Integrated Family Model could be tested more widely for its usefulness in describing and understanding families in the changing world of contemporary China, beyond the city of Taonan where data was collected.

11.2 Implications for Practice and Policy

The Integrated Family Model offers the following aspects for practitioners who work on supporting families. First, it can draw practitioners' attention to informal sources of family support within the extended family network, which could easily be overlooked by professionals (Canavan *et al.*, 2016), as noted in Chapter Four. In the model, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system could be regarded as an extended family network. Grandparents' involvement in childcare is regarded as an informal form of family support from grandparents to parents. Moreover, findings show that because of the close ties between mother and daughter (maternal grandmothers and mothers in the model), maternal grandmothers support in childcare is of great importance for new mothers experiencing labour and delivery, and transition to motherhood. Support from their mothers could not be easily replaced by others, which shows that 'support is most effective from those with whom we share close emotional bonds' (Cutrona, 2000, p.120). This further underlines the importance of identifying family support within the extended family network.

Second, the Integrated Family Model is helpful for professionals in terms of understanding the way that the informal support works. As noted above, the close ties between mother and daughter ensure the quality of support. The close ties, moreover, impact the way the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system works. As discussed in the previous chapter, the intimate ties between mother and daughter (maternal grandmother and mother) is identified as an important motivation for maternal grandmothers' involvement in childcare. It also impacts mothers' preference in caregiver selection, when both the maternal grandmother and the paternal grandmother are available to be caregivers. Family support in the model among the three families is helpful in understanding the flow of resources, emotions, caregiving and advice through categorising types of family support and identifying their features. Moreover, professionals could utilise the Integrated Family Model to understand how informal support works through an integrated and comprehensive way. As shown in the model, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is positioned within the macrosystem and chronosystem, so that the understanding of the symbiosis system could be achieved through its interactions with the macrosystem, including the childcare policies and the changing population policies in China. As discussed in the previous chapter, the three aspects of the internal drive of the symbiosis system are impacted by the macrosystem, the Chinese society, where they are located. According to the ever-changing feature of family support identified in this research, it is necessary to take account of the chronological perspective to understand the way the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system works.

Third, the Integrated Family Model is also helpful for identifying family members who need support. According to the findings of this research, support for grandparents would be a key aspect in programmes about resourcing and supporting families. In the families where grandparents are involved in childcare, grandparents, especial grandmothers, provide support for parents, children and the whole family. However, grandparents, who are motivated by obligations and caring about their daughter, have to face physical and emotional challenges when providing support for the family. This shows the necessity of supporting grandmothers. In addition, the role of fathers who have obligation to look after children should not be overlooked. In the current research, fathers' involvement in childcare was noted by some participants. While not as many fathers as mothers and grandparents involved themselves in childcare, but it is necessary for practitioners to encourage fathers' involvement in childcare and reinforce their childcare abilities when designing programmes on supporting these families.

According to the guideline issued by the State Council to improve childcare services for children under three as noted in Chapter Two, family is defined as the main provider of childcare; childcare services focus on providing guidance to families and providing necessary childcare

services for families in crisis (The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2019). In the current research, 13 mothers worked full-time and two mothers did not work. Given the large proportion of working women, in the context of limited maternal leave and limited formal childcare services for children under three, family support provided by grandparents within the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system is of great importance for parents. However, according to the findings, grandparents' involvement in childcare includes providing care for the child and the mother, and carrying out domestic housework for the family. It was expressed by grandparents and parents that childcare and the related work were exhausting. According to the findings, grandparents are overwhelmed and exhausted in this childcare arrangement, which is consistent with another qualitative study identified in Chapter Three where grandparents are described as 'burnt out' with busy routines. It is important for policy-makers to reconsider 'family as the main provider of childcare' and expand the state's responsibility for the family beyond 'crisis' situations to support its more routine functioning in universal families.

Although these grandmothers are motivated by their obligations as mothers and maternal grandmothers are especially motivated through caring about their daughters, involvement in childcare is a physical and emotional burden for them. There are grandparents who have taken care of a child, but who refused to look after a second child. Facing the challenge of low fertility rate, as noted in Chapters One and Two, and the central role of childcare in fertility decision-making noted in Chapter Three, policymakers should rethink whether family should be defined as the main provider of childcare for children under three. Affordable and reliable formal and informal childcare services such as nurseries and out-of-family day care need to be on the agenda to enable the 'burnt-out grandparents' to be liberated from childcare. Moreover, programmes provided to families in China are identified by Daly *et al.* (2015), including 'Child Friendly Spaces', 'the Child Welfare Director Project' and 'the Integrated Early Child Development Project'. However, all the programmes target families with vulnerable children and families in impoverished areas. It is necessary to develop support programmes for universal families where grandparents are involved in childcare. Overall, as noted above, the state should expand its policy on families beyond families in crisis to universal families.

11.3 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In the Integrated Family Model, one feature of family support is bidirectional. It implies the nature of reciprocity in family support. In this research, it predominantly focuses support from grandparents to parents whereas support from parents to grandparents is not significant and is underexplored. The support from parents to grandparents could be elder care. The grandparents in this research are mostly under 60, and in good health, according to participants' accounts. The reciprocity feature of the support could be explored when elder care is needed.

Future research could be undertaken to explore support from parents to grandparents within the symbiosis system in the Integrated Family model.

Another feature of family support is gendered. Childcare work is undertaken by women from different generations. In terms of the gender of participants, apart from one maternal grandfather, all participants are female, comprising 14 grandmothers and 15 mothers. This results in data likely to present accounts of grandmothers and mothers, while lacking grandfathers' and fathers' perspectives. The findings lack fathers' and grandfathers' perceptions of childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. According to data, grandfathers in a small number of families involved themselves in childcare as much as grandmothers. However, one grandparent in each family was interviewed. Grandmothers in these families were involved in childcare as well and volunteered themselves for interviews. Although grandfathers' perceptions about childcare were reported by mothers and grandmothers, accounts from grandfathers themselves are lost in this research. Future work might explore involving grandfathers as participants and explore their perceptions of childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions. Moreover, the other individual in the parents and children family in the Integrated Model is the father. However, fathers' perceptions of childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between fathers and grandparents are under-explored. Therefore, further research could encourage fathers' participation in research and involve them in research to explore their perceptions of childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions. Moreover, grandfathers' involvement in childcare is found more than fathers' involvement and more than for their own child when they were fathers. It would be an interesting topic to explore grandfatherhood and fatherhood from a life course perspective.

As argued in Chapter Ten, the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system in the Integrated Family Model is not simply a function-oriented model. It includes emotion, flowing intergenerationally and multigenerationally. The current study reveals the significant impact of the ties between maternal grandmothers and mothers on maternal grandmothers' motivation in childcare and mothers' selection of caregivers. In the dataset, 11 grandparents are on the maternal side and four grandparents are on the paternal side. However, it lacks information on paternal grandparents, who are an important component of the grandparent-and-parent symbiosis system in the model. Further study is needed to involve paternal grandparents. In the Integrated Family Model, family members are named from the child's perspective because the focus of this research is childcare provided for children. The Integrated Family Model is created assisted by Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework. It is worth mentioning that the child's development is the core of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework. However, the

developmental outcome of children is not explored in this research. Further research on grandparent childcare could explore the developmental outcomes of children in utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework.

Yan (2021) argues for the interactions in family; when we put emphasis on only the dyadic interactions between two generations, the complexity is likely to be obscured or overlooked. This research focuses on the interlocking and dyadic interactions between grandparents and parents. According to a research review relating to grandparenting worldwide, by Ling *et al.* (2022), relationships and interactions between grandparents and grandchildren is under-explored, and most of the recent research focuses on the relationships between grandparents and parents. The current research is set out to explore childcare arrangements and intergenerational interactions between grandparents and parents. This lacks examination of the interactions between the intersecting generations – grandparents and children – and the interactions between the interlocking generations – parents and children. Future research could draw attention to the interactions between grandparents and grandchildren, and parents and children when exploring grandparent childcare, helping to reveal further the complexity of interactions in families.

11.4 Reflections on the Research Journey

Conducting this PhD project will definitely be an unforgettable experience in my life. For me, it is the start of the research career. From revising the research proposal, designing the research, obtaining ethical approval, collecting data, analysing data and writing the thesis, the whole process is an integrated training project for a PhD student to become a researcher. Conducting the research in more than three years has provided me with an opportunity to know whether working as a researcher suits me. I had work experience before becoming a PhD student. Compared to my previous work experience, I enjoyed the multiple and various roles that I undertook during conducting this research. I was a recruiter, interviewer, analyst, writer and so forth. The various roles make the journey interesting. I enjoyed the flexible working time, instead of nine to five, Monday to Friday. This qualitative research gives me the opportunity to step out of my family and reach families and interview family members in the wider social world, which I would not have done if I had not been conducting this research. I found diversity among Chinese families that I did not expect. I enjoyed the process of self-reflection to develop a deep understanding of myself, something I would not have been able to do by conducting a repetitive and tedious job. However, writing seems the most important component of academic work.

This research experience also makes me realise that my perceptions are based on my experience and restricted by my experience. However, the journey was not enjoyable all the time. There were various difficulties when undertaking the different roles. The flexible working time obscures boundary between work time and break time. Besides, it was intense and mentally exhausting after too much self-reflection. At the writing-up stage, I found it difficult to find happiness in writing. During this time, support from supervisors, peer students, friends, and family were very important to me.

References

- Airey, L., Lain, D., Jandrić, J. & Loretto, W. (2021) 'A selfish generation? 'Baby boomers', values, and the provision of childcare for grandchildren'. *The Sociological Review*, 69(4), pp.812-829.
- Angang, H. (2007) *Economic and Social Transformation in China : Challenges and Opportunities* London: Routledge.
- Arber, S. & Timonen, V. (2012) Grandparenting in the 21st century: New directions. In: Arber, S. & Timonen, V. (eds.) *Contemporary Grandparenting: Changing Family Relationships in Global Contexts*. Bristol: Policy Press. pp.247-264.
- Baker, L. & Silverstein, M. (2012) The wellbeing of grandparents caring for grandchildren in China and the United States. In: Arber, S. & Timonen, V. (eds.) *Contemporary Grandparenting: Changing Family Relationships in Global Contexts*. Bristol: The Policy Press. pp.51-70.
- Bazeley, P. (2013) *Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies* London: Sage.
- Bengtson, V. L. (2001) 'Beyond the nuclear family: The increasing importance of multigenerational bonds'. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63(1), 1-16.
- Bhopal, K., Brannen, J. & Heptinstall, E. (2000) *Connecting Children: Care and Family Life in Later Childhood* London: Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1969) *Attachment and Loss (Vol. 1)* New York: Basic.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998) *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development* London: Sage.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013) *Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners* London: Sage.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2019) 'Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis'. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), pp.589-597.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2020) 'One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, pp.1-25.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2021) 'To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales'. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 13(2), pp.201-216.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2022) *Thematic Analysis : A Practical Guide* London: Sage.
- Bray, D. (2005) *Social Space and Governance in Urban China* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994) Ecological models of human development. In: HuséN, T. & Postlethwaite, T. N. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Education*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Pergamon/Elsevier Science. pp.1643–1647.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. & Morris, P. A. (2007) The Bioecological Model of Human Development. In: Damon, W. & Lerner, R. M. (eds.) *Handbook of Child Psychology: Theoretical Models of Human Development*. New Jersey: Wiley. pp.793-828.
- Brownell, P. & Resnick, R. P. (2005) 'Intergenerational-multigenerational relationships: Are they synonymous?'. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 3(1), pp.67-75.
- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods* (5th ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (2022) Symbiosis [Online]. Available: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/symbiosis> [Last accessed 2 October 2022].
- Campbell, A., Taylor, B. J. & Mcglade, A. (2017) Qualitative data analysis. In: Campbell, A., Taylor, B. J. & Mcglade, A. (eds.) *Research Design in Social Work: Qualitative, Quantitative & Mix Methods*. London: Sage. pp.66-79.

- Canavan, J., Pinkerton, J. & Dolan, P. (2016) *Understanding Family Support : Policy, Practice and Theory* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021) Positive parenting tips [Online]. Available: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/index.html> [Last accessed 28 September 2022].
- Chan, C. G. & Elder Jr, G. H. (2000) 'Matrilineal advantage in grandchild-grandparent relations'. *The Gerontologist*, 40(2), pp.179-190.
- Chen, F. (2005) 'Employment transitions and the household division of labor in China'. *Social Forces*, 84(2), 831-851.
- Chen, F., Liu, G. & Mair, C. A. (2011) 'Intergenerational ties in context: Grandparents caring for grandchildren in China'. *Social Forces*, 90(2), pp.571-594.
- Chen, F., Short, S. E. & Entwisle, B. (2000) 'The impact of grandparental proximity on maternal childcare in China'. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 19(6), pp.571-590.
- Choi, S.-W. E. & Zhang, Z. (2021) 'Caring as curing: Grandparenting and depressive symptoms in China'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 289(2021), 114452.
- Clarivate. (2023) Journal of Family Issues [Online]. Available: <https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr-jp/journal-profile?journal=J%20FAM%20ISSUES&year=2021&fromPage=%2Fjcr%2Fsearch-results> [Last accessed 1 March 2023].
- Clarivate. (2023) Journal of Marriage and Family [Online]. Available: <https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr-jp/journal-profile?journal=J%20MARRIAGE%20FAM&year=2021&fromPage=%2Fjcr%2Fbrowse-journals> [Last accessed 1 March 2023].
- Clarke, V. & Braun, V. (2013) 'Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning'. *The Psychologist*, 26(2), pp.120-123.
- Connolly, P. (2003) Ethical principles for researching vulnerable groups. Commissioned by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.
- Cook, S. & Dong, X. Y. (2011) 'Harsh Choices: Chinese Women's Paid Work and Unpaid Care Responsibilities Under Economic Reform'. *Development and Change*, 42(4), pp.947-965.
- Cooney, R. S. & Li, J. (1994) 'Household registration type and compliance with the "one child" policy in China, 1979-1988'. *Demography*, 31(1), pp.21-32.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018) Data analysis and representation. In: Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (eds.) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. 4th ed. London: Sage. pp.181-224.
- Cutrona, C. E. (1996) *Social Support in Couples: Marriage as a Resource in Times of Stress*: Sage.
- Cutrona, C. E. (2000) Social support principles for strengthening families. In: Canavan, J., Dolan, P. & Pinkerton, J. (eds.) *Family Support: Direction from Diversity*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp.103-122.
- Dai, H. (2019) 'Embracing urbanity: Child care arrangements and motherhood anxiety in China's urban transition'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 40(17), pp.2389-2411.
- Daly, M., Bruckhauf, Z., Byrne, J., Pecnik, N., Samms-Vaughan, M., Bray, R. & Margaria, A. (2015) Family and parenting support: Policy and provision in a global context. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti.
- Davies, J. B. & Zhang, J. (1995) 'Gender bias, investments in children, and bequests'. *International Economic Review*, 36(3), 795-818.
- Davis, D. & Harrell, S. (1993) *Chinese Families in the Post- Mao Era* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Davis, M. (2007) 'Are the terms intergenerational and multigenerational synonymous?'. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 5(1), pp.119-121.
- Deutsch, F. M. (2006) 'Filial piety, patrilineality, and China's one-child policy'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(3), pp.366-389.

- Dolan, P. (2006) Assessment, intervention and self appraisal tools for family support. *In: Canavan, J., Pinkerton, J. & Dolan, P. (eds.) Family Support as Reflective Practice.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp.196-213.
- Ducu, V. (2020) 'Displaying grandparenting within Romanian transnational families'. *Global Networks*, 20(2), pp.380-395. English.
- Eastman, L. E. (1988) *Family, Fields and Ancestors : Constancy and Change in China's Social and Economic History, 1550-1949* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eisenberg, A. R. (1988) 'Grandchildren's perspectives on relationships with grandparents: The influence of gender across generations'. *Sex Roles*, 19(3), 205-217.
- Erikson, E. H. (1995) *Childhood and Society* (Rev. ed. ed), New York: Vintage.
- Fan, C. C. (2007) *China on the Move: Migration, the State, and the Household* Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Fei, X. (1992) *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Finch, H., Lewis, J. & Turley, C. (2014) Focus group. *In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students & Researchers.* London: Sage. pp.211-242.
- Fong, V. L. (2004) *Only Hope: Coming of Age Under China's One-Child Policy* Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Furstenberg, F. F. (2020) 'Kinship reconsidered: Research on a neglected topic'. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), pp.364-382.
- Gilligan, R. (2000) Family support: Issues and prospects. *In: Canavan, J., Dolan, P. & Pinkerton, J. (eds.) Family Support: Direction from Diversity.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. pp.13-34.
- Glaser, K., Price, D., Montserrat, E. R., Di Gessa, G. & Tinker, A. (2013) Grandparenting in Europe: Family policy and grandparenting in providing childcare: Summary. London: Grandparents Plus.
- Government Uk. (2022) Early years foundation stage [Online]. Available: <https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage#:~:text=The%20early%20years%20foundation%20stage,nurseries%20and%20school%20reception%20classes.> [Last accessed 28 September 2022].
- Gu, H., Bian, F. & Elahi, E. (2021) 'Impact of availability of grandparents' care on birth in working women: An empirical analysis based on data of Chinese dynamic labour force'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 121(105859).
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994) Competing paradigms in qualitative Research. *In: Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research.* London: Sage. pp.105-117.
- Guo, X. & Yin, J. (2005) 'Rethinking of the family planning policy in China 对我国计划生育政策的反思'. *Theory Monthly*, 11), pp.68-74. Chinese.
- Hagestad, G. O. (1985) Continuity and Connectedness. *In: Bengtson, V. L. & Robertson, J. F. (eds.) Grandparenthood.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Harper, S. (2016) *How Population Change Will Transform Our World* (First ed): Oxford University Press.
- Harrell, S. & Santos, G. (2016) Introduction. *In: Santos, G. & Harrell, S. (eds.) Transforming Patriarchy: Chinese Families in the Twenty-First Century.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Hayes, D. (2005) 'Gaining access to data sources in statutory social work agencies: The long and winding road'. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 35(7), pp.1193-1202.
- Hayslip, B., Jr, Fruhauf, C. A. & Dolbin-Macnab, M. L. (2017) 'Grandparents raising grandchildren: What have we learned over the past decade?'. *The Gerontologist*, 59(3), pp.e152-e163.
- Health Commission of Jilin Province. (2021) Population and family planning regulations in Jilin Province 吉林省人口与计划生育条例 [Online]. Available:

- http://wsjkw.jl.gov.cn/zfxxgk/fdzdkgknr/qtxx/zcfg/202111/t20211129_8302919.html [Last accessed 8 February 2023]. Chinese.
- Hoang, N.-P. T. & Kirby, J. N. (2020) 'A meta-ethnography synthesis of joint care practices between parents and grandparents from Asian cultural backgrounds: Benefits and challenges'. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29(3), pp.605-619.
- Hong, X. 2020. How to speed up the construction of childcare service system under the universal two-child policy - Based on the research from 13 cities in China 全面二孩政策下如何加快构建托育服务体系——基于全国十三个城市的调研与思考. *China Education Daily*. Chinese.
- Hou, L. (2018) 'An analysis of the reasons for long-term low fertility rate in northeast China 东北地区长期低生育水平形成原因探析'. *Population Journal*, 40(02), pp.96-104. Chinese.
- Hu, Y., Burton, J. & Lonne, B. (2019) 'Informal kin caregivers raising children left behind in rural China: Experiences' feelings' and support'. *Child & Family Social Work*, 25(3), pp.497-505.
- Huang, C. (2021) Families under (peer) pressure: Self-advocacy and ambivalence among women in collective dance groups. In: Yan, Y. (ed.) *Chinese Families Upside Down: Intergenerational Dynamics and Neo-Familism in the Early 21st Century*. Netherland: Brill. pp.123-142.
- Huang, Y., Zhao, Q., Reynolds, N. R., Tang, S., Yan, F., Wang, Y. & Sun, M. (2022) 'The experience of grandparenting young children'. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 65(3), pp.305-319.
- Huang, Y. P., Wang, S. Y., Kellett, U. & Chen, C. H. (2020) 'Shame, suffering, and believing in the family: The experiences of grandmothers of a grandchild with a developmental delay or disability in the context of Chinese culture'. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 26(1), pp.52-64.
- Ingersoll-Dayton, B., Punpuing, S., Tangchonlatip, K. & Yakas, L. (2018) 'Pathways to grandparents' provision of care in skipped-generation households in Thailand'. *Ageing and Society*, 38(7), pp.1429-1452.
- Ingersoll-Dayton, B., Tangchonlatip, K. & Punpuing, S. (2020) 'A confluence of worries: Grandparents in skipped-generation households in Thailand'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 41(2), pp.135-157.
- Ji, Y. (2017) 'A mosaic temporality: New dynamics of the gender and marriage system in contemporary urban China'. *Temporalités. Revue de sciences sociales et humaines*, 26), pp.1-19.
- Ji, Y. (2019) 'Thoughts on developing localized family theory in the context of transitional Chinese society 社会转型情境下的中国本土家庭理论构建初探'. *Journal of Chinese Women's Studies*, 2019(5), pp.9-20. Chinese.
- Ji, Y. (2020) 'Mosaic familism: Daughters providing for parents and reinstitutionalization of Chinese family 马赛克家庭主义：从女儿养老看中国家庭制度变迁'. *Twenty-First Century*, 2020(8), pp.77-97. Chinese.
- Ji, Y., Wang, H., Liu, Y., Xu, R. & Zheng, Z. (2020) 'Young women's fertility intentions and the emerging bilateral family system under China's two-child family planning policy'. *China Review*, 20(2), pp.113-142.
- Ji, Y., Wu, X., Sun, S. & He, G. (2017) 'Unequal care, unequal work: Toward a more comprehensive understanding of gender inequality in post-reform urban China'. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 77(11-12), 765-778.
- Jia, Z. & Feng, X. (2015) 'Bearing the second child desire of urban separate only-child couples based on a survey of 558 youths in 5 kinds of industry in Nanjing and Baoding City 城市“单独夫妇”的二胎生育意愿——基于南京、保定五类行业 558 名青年的调查分析'. *Population Journal*, 2015(03), pp.5-15. Chinese and English.

- Jiang, Y. (2001) *A Review of and Reflections on Chinese Urban Women's Employment in Half Century 50 年中国城市女性就业的回顾与反思* Beijing: Contemporary China Publishing House. Chinese.
- Jiang, Y. (2001) *Reviews and Reflections of Chinese Urban Women's Employment in 50 Years, Women's Development in Half Century* Beijing, China: Contemporary China Publishing House.
- Jiang, Y., He, T., Lin, X., Zhou, Q. & Wu, Q. (2021) 'Caregivers' joint depressive symptoms and preschoolers' daily routines in Chinese three-generation families: Does household chaos matter?'. *Current Psychology*, pp.1-9.
- Kamerman, S. B. (1991) 'Child care policies and programs: An international overview'. *Journal of Social Issues*, 47(2), pp.179-196.
- Kim, H.-J., Kang, H. & Johnson-Motoyama, M. (2017) 'The psychological well-being of grandparents who provide supplementary grandchild care: A systematic review'. *Journal of Family Studies*, 23(1), pp.118-141.
- Leonard, M. (2016) *The Sociology of Children, Childhood and Generation* London: Sage.
- Lewis, J. & Nicholls, C. M. (2014) Design Issues. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.47-76.
- Lewis, J., Ritchie, J., Ormston, R. & Morrell, G. (2014) Generalising from qualitative research. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.347-366.
- Li, H., Hiilamo, H., Zhu, Y. D. & Lin, K. (2022) 'Exploring the association between grandparental care and child development: Evidence from China'. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, pp.1-11.
- Li, J., Ahemaitijiang, N., Han, Z. R. & Jin, Z. (2018) 'Grandparents' parenting on children's internalizing symptoms: The serial mediation of parents' psychological control and children's emotion regulation'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(17), pp.3996-4018.
- Li, J. & Zhou, L. (2018) 'Population Policies and Population Structure, and the Future Development 中国人口政策与人口结构及其未来发展趋势'. *Economic Perspectives*, 12(4), pp.17-36. Chinese.
- Li, Q., Liang, F., Liang, W., Zhang, J., Niu, M. & Han, Y. (2017) 'The influence of different caregivers on infant growth and development in China'. *Frontiers in pediatrics*, 5(243).
- Li, W., Wang, G., Yu, Z., Ip, P., Leng, Y., Zhang, Y., Zhao, J., Zhang, J., Jiang, Y., Deng, Y., Wu, Y., Meng, M., Zhu, Q. & Jiang, F. (2021) 'Grandparental Care and Sleep Disturbances in Preschool Children: A Population-based Prospective Cohort Study'. *Sleep Medicine*, 82(2021), pp.165-171.
- Li, Y., Cui, N., Kok, H. T., Deatrick, J. & Liu, J. (2019) 'The relationship between parenting styles practiced by grandparents and children's emotional and behavioral problems'. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 28(7), pp.1899-1913.
- Liang, S. (2005) *The Substance of Chinese Culture 中国文化要义* Shanghai: Shanghai Century Publishing Group. Chinese.
- Lin, Q. & Mao, J. (2022) "'A new job after retirement": Negotiating grandparenting and intergenerational relationships in urban China'. 2022(1), pp.47-56.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry* London: Sage.
- Ling, J., Pinkerton, J. & Montgomery, L. (2022) Research Review towards a Global Understanding of Grandparental Childcare. (Unpublished manuscript).
- Liu, C., Abdul Rahman, M. N., Wang, X. & Mao, Y. (2022) 'Parental demands for childcare services of infants and toddlers in China under the three-child policy'. *Child Care in Practice*, pp.1-25.
- Liu, H., Li, Y., Tisdell, C. A. & Wang, F. (2021) 'How does childcare by grandparents affect the health of children in China?'. *Economics & Sociology*, 14(4), pp.11-30.
- Liu, W. (2013) 'The group difference of attitudes towards intergenerational support in contemporary families: Discussion on the cultural basis changing of feedback model

- 当代家庭代际支持观念与群体差异——兼论反馈模式的文化基础变迁'. *Contemporary Youth Research*, 2013(3), pp.5-12. Chinese.
- Low, S. S. H. & Goh, E. C. L. (2015) 'Granny as nanny: Positive outcomes for grandparents providing childcare for dual-income families. Fact or myth?'. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 13(4), pp.302-319.
- Luo, N., Van Heel, M. & Van Leeuwen, K. (2020) 'Perspectives of early adolescents, parents, and grandparents on parenting behaviors in China'. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 40(8), pp.1244-1274.
- Luo, Y., Qi, M., Huntsinger, C. S., Zhang, Q., Xuan, X. & Wang, Y. (2020) 'Grandparent involvement and preschoolers' social adjustment in Chinese three-generation families: Examining moderating and mediating effects'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 114(2020), 105057.
- Ma, C., Shi, J., Li, Y., Wang, Z. & Tang, C. (2011) 'Family Change in Urban Areas of China: Main trends and latest findings 中国城市家庭变迁的趋势和最新发现'. *Sociological Studies*, 2011(2), pp.182-216 & p.246. Chinese.
- Maguire, M. & Delahunt, B. (2017) 'Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars'. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9(3), pp.3351-33514.
- Mcgregor, C., Devaney, C. & Moran, L. (2021) 'A critical overview of the significance of power and power relations in practice with children in foster care: Evidence from an Irish study'. *Child Care in Practice*, 27(1), 4-18.
- Mencius (2009) *Mencius* translated by Irene Bloom, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Murray, R. (2017) *How to Write a Thesis* (4th ed), London: Open University Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics of China (2012) *China Statistical Yearbook 2012 中国统计年鉴 2012* Beijing: China Statistical Press. Chinese.
- National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China (2015) *China Family Development Report 中国家庭发展报告* Beijing: China Population Publishing House. Chinese.
- Office of the Leading Group of the State Council for the Seventh National Population Census (2022) *China Population Census Yearbook 2020 中国人口普查年鉴*. Beijing: China Statistics Press. Chinese.
- Ormston, R., Spencer, L., Barnard, M. & Snape, D. (2014) The foundations of qualitative research. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students & Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.1-26.
- Piaget, J. (1953) *The Origin of Intelligence in the Child* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Piaget, J. (1954) *The Construction of Reality in the Child* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Piaget, J. & Gabain, M. (1932) *The Moral Judgment of the Child*: Rouledge.
- Pierce, G. R., Sarason, B. R., Sarason, I. G., Joseph, H. J. & Henderson, C. A. (1996) Conceptualizing and assessing social support in the context of the family. In: Pierce, G. R., Sarason, B. R. & Sarason, I. G. (eds.) *Handbook of Social Support and the Family*. New York: Springer. pp.3-24.
- Qi, X. (2018) 'Floating grandparents: Rethinking family obligation and intergenerational support'. *International Sociology*, 33(6), pp.761-777.
- Qian, Y. & Hanser, A. (2021) 'How did Wuhan residents cope with a 76-day lockdown?'. *Chinese Sociological Review*, 53(1), pp.55-86.
- Qiu, F. X., Zhan, H. J., Liu, J. & Barrett, P. M. (2022) 'Downward transfer of support and care: Understanding the cultural lag in rural China'. *Ageing and Society*, 42(6), pp.1422-1447.
- Repetti, M. & Calasanti, T. (2020) 'Retirement migration and transnational grandparental support: a Spanish case study'. *Global Networks*, 20(2), pp.308-324.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Elam, G., Tennant, R. & Rahim, N. (2014) Designing and selecting Samples. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative*

- Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.111-146.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (2014) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers* London: SAGE.
- Rosa, E. M. & Tudge, J. (2013) 'Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development: Its evolution from ecology to bioecology'. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 5(4), pp.243-258.
- Sadrudin, A. F. A., Ponguta, L. A., Zonderman, A. L., Wiley, K. S., Grimshaw, A. & Panter-Brick, C. (2019) 'How do grandparents influence child health and development? A systematic review'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 239(2019), 112476.
- Schwarz, B., Trommsdorff, G., Zheng, G. & Shi, S. (2010) 'Reciprocity in intergenerational support: a comparison of Chinese and German adult daughters'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(2), pp.234-256.
- Shelton, L. G. (2019) *The Bronfenbrenner Primer: A Guide to Develceology* New York: Routledge.
- Shi, H. (1999) 'A chronicle of events for 50 years of early childhood education in China 中华人民共和国幼儿教育 50 年大事记(二)'. *Early Childhood Education*, 1999(12), pp.13-15. Chinese.
- Silverman, D. (1993) *Interpreting Qualitative Research: A Practice Handbook* London: Sage.
- Silverstein, M. & Zuo, D. (2021) 'Grandparents caring for grandchildren in rural China: Consequences for emotional and cognitive health in later life'. *Aging & Mental Health*, 25(11), pp.2042-2052.
- Sivak, E. (2018) 'Managing grandparental involvement in child-rearing in the context of intensive parenting'. *Sociological Research Online*, 23(4), pp.830-846.
- Somary, K. & Strieker, G. (1998) 'Becoming a grandparent: A longitudinal study of expectations and early experiences as a function of sex and lineage'. *The Gerontologist*, 38(1), pp.53-61.
- Song, J., Ma, C., Gu, C. & Zuo, B. (2018) 'What matters most to the left-behind children's life satisfaction and school engagement: Parent or grandparent?'. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27(8), pp.2481-2490.
- Souralová, A. & Žáková, M. (2019) "'Everybody takes care of everybody": Care circulation and care relations in three-generation cohabitation'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 40(17), pp.2628-2657.
- Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., O'connor, W., Morrell, G. & Ormston, R. (2014) Analysis in practice. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.295-346.
- Spencer, L., Ritchie, J., Ormston, R., O'connor, W. & Barnard, M. (2014) Analysis: Principles and processes. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.269-294.
- State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2022) China reduces personal income tax for parents of children under 3 [Online]. Available: http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/latestreleases/202203/28/content_WS6241aaf5c6d02e53353285ee.html [Last accessed 23 December 2022].
- Sun, N. & Yang, F. (2021) 'Grandparenting and children's health-empirical evidence from China'. *Child Indicators Research*, 14(3), pp.1105-1120.
- Sung, S. (2018) 'Gender, work and care in policy and practice: Working mothers' experience of intergenerational exchange of care in South Korea'. *Critical Social Policy*, 38(3), 589-608.
- Tang, F., Li, K., Jang, H. & Rautkis, M. B. (2021) 'Depressive symptoms in the context of Chinese grandparents caring for grandchildren'. *Aging & Mental Health*, pp.1-7.
- Tang, X. (2017) 'Urban 'trans-generational parenting': Institutional arrangements and its restrictions on the young generations' parental role and emotion 城市“隔代抚育”: 制

- 度安排与新生代父母的角色及情感限制'. *Hebei Academic Journal*, 37(1), pp.160-164. Chinese.
- Taonan People's Government. (2020) Geographical Information of Taonan [Online]. Available: <http://www.taonan.gov.cn/zjtn/> [Last accessed]. Chinese.
- Tezcan, T. (2021) 'First-generation circular migrants involved in the upbringing of their grandchildren: The case of Turkish immigrants in Germany'. *Ageing & Society*, 41(1), pp.77-100.
- The Central People's Government of People's Republic of China. (2005) The Contemporary History 现代史 [Online]. Available: http://www.gov.cn/test/2005-07/27/content_17515.htm [Last accessed 6 February 2023]. Chinese.
- The Central People's Government of People's Republic of China. (2020) The Modern History 近代史 [Online]. Available: http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2020-10/29/content_5555766.htm [Last accessed 6 February 2023]. Chinese.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development. (2022) Fertility rates [Online]. Available: <https://data.oecd.org/pop/fertility-rates.htm#:~:text=Assuming%20no%20net%20migration%20and,of%20economic%20and%20social%20developments.> [Last accessed 11 January 2023].
- The People's Government of Jilin Province. (2021) The plan on improving family planning policies to promote long-term balanced population 关于优化生育政策促进人口长期均衡发展实施方案 [Online]. Available: http://www.jl.gov.cn/szfzt/zcfg/swywgwj/202112/t20211223_8331737.html [Last accessed 24 March 2023]. Chinese.
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2019) Guidelines on the improvement of childcare services for children under three issued by the State Council 国务院办公厅关于促进3岁以下婴幼儿照护服务发展的指导意见 [Online]. Available: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-05/09/content_5389983.htm [Last accessed 28 September 2022]. Chinese.
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2019) Guidelines to Improve Childcare Services for Children under Three Years Old 国务院办公厅关于促进3岁以下婴幼儿照护服务发展的指导意见 [Online]. Available: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2019-05/09/content_5389983.htm [Last accessed 28 November 2022]. Chinese.
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2012) Regulations concerning the labour protection of female staff 女职工劳动保护特别规定 [Online]. Available: http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2012-05/07/content_2131567.htm [Last accessed 14 January 2020]. Chinese.
- The United Nations Educational, S. a. C. O., .. (2022) Early childhood care and education [Online]. Available: <https://www.unesco.org/en/education/early-childhood> [Last accessed 28 September 2022].
- Thi Nguyen, H., Baldassar, L. & Wilding, R. (2023) 'Care visits: Obligations, opportunities and constraints for Vietnamese grandparent visitors in Australia'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(4), pp.996-1013.
- Timonen, V. & Arber, S. (2012) A new look at grandparenting. In: Arber, S. & Timonen, V. (eds.) *Contemporary Grandparenting: Changing Family Relationships in Global Contexts*. Bristol: Policy Press. pp.1-26.
- Tong, L. & Kawachi, I. (2021) 'Factors moderating the link between early childhood non-parental care and ADHD symptoms'. *Heliyon*, 7(12), e08562.
- Tronto, J. C. (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* New York: Routledge.
- United Nations Children's Fund & China Philanthropy Research Institute (2019) China child welfare - Stocking report 2011 中国儿童福利政策报告. Chinese.

- United Nations, D. O. E. a. S. A. (2022) Revision of world population prospects 2022. New York: United Nations.
- Ussher, J. M. (1999) 'Eclecticism and methodological pluralism: The way forward for feminist research'. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 23(1), pp.41-46.
- Varpio, L., Paradis, E., Uijtdehaage, S. & Young, M. (2020) 'The distinctions between theory, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework'. *Academic Medicine*, 95(7), pp.989-994.
- Villar, F. (2007) 'Intergenerational or multigenerational? A question of nuance'. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 5(1), pp.115-117.
- Wang, P., Zhan, H. J., Liu, J. & Barrett, P. M. (2022) 'Does the one-child generation want more than one child at their fertility age?'. *Family Relations*, 71(2), pp.494-512.
- Wang, X., Zhang, M., Yu, Y., Hu, B. & Yang, X. (2021) 'Extending the theory of planned behavior to examine Chinese parents' intention to use child care services for children under age 3'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 129(2021), 106208.
- Wang, X. L., Cheng, J., Guo, C. Y. & Xu, X. R. (2020) 'The implications of childcare on grandparents' health self-management in a Chinese elderly population'. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, 35(1), pp.280-289.
- Wang, Y. & Zhao, X. (2021) 'Grandparental childcare and second birth in China: Evidence from a dynamic model and empirical study'. *Complexity*, 2021(2021), 6693853.
- Wang, Y. & Zhao, X. (2022) 'Grandparental childcare, maternal labor force participation, and the birth of a second child: Further knowledge from empirical analysis'. *Journal of Business Research*, 139(2022), pp.762-770.
- Wei, X. T., Ma, Y. A., Hu, J. J., Lin, W. J., Zhao, Z. Y. & Wen, D. L. (2017) 'Predicting weight status in Chinese pre-school children: Independent and interactive effects of caregiver types and feeding styles'. *Public Health Nutrition*, 21(6), pp.1123-1130.
- Wu, Y., Ma, X., Fraser, W. D., Li, M., Wang, W., Huang, H., Landry, M., Hao, Y., Liu, H., Semenic, S., Zhang, Y., Wang, H., Zhang, J., Yu, J., La, X., Zhang, C., Marc, I. & Jiang, H. (2021) 'Caregivers' perceptions, challenges and service needs related to tackling childhood overweight and obesity: A qualitative study in three districts of Shanghai, China'. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1), 768.
- Xiao, S. (2021) Intimate power: Intergenerational cooperation and conflicts in childrearing among urban families. In: Yan, Y. (ed.) *Chinese Families Upside Down: Intergenerational Dynamics and Neo-Familism in the Early 21st Century*. Leiden: Brill. pp.143-175.
- Xie, H., Caldwell, L. L. & Loy, S. (2020) 'Latino grandparents' perception of disagreements with parents in children's leisure time physical activity'. *Health Education Journal*, 79(5), pp.543-555.
- Xu, A. Q. & Xia, Y. (2014) 'The changes in mainland Chinese families during the social transition: A critical analysis'. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 45(1), pp.31-53.
- Xu, L. & Chi, I. (2018) 'Determinants of support exchange between grandparents and grandchildren in rural China: The roles of grandparent caregiving, patrilineal heritage, and emotional Bonds'. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(3), pp.579-601.
- Xu, W. & Van De Ven, W. P. M. M. (2013) 'Consumer choice among Mutual Healthcare Purchasers: A feasible option for China?'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 96(2013), pp.277-284.
- Xu, Z. (2009) 'Chinese family policies on early childhood development (1980-2008): From 'family support' to 'supporting family' 我国关于儿童早期发展的家庭政策(1980-2008)——从“家庭支持”到“支持家庭”?. *Youth Studies*, 2009(4), pp.47-59 & p.95. Chinese.
- Xue, Q. & Wu, R. (2019) 'Research on the status quo and social policy on childcare services for children under three in Shanghai 上海市 0—3 岁婴幼儿托育服务供给现状与社会政策研究'. *Urban Management*, 2019(03), pp.78-83. Chinese.
- Yan, Y. (2016) 'Intergenerational intimacy and descending familism in rural north China'. *American Anthropologist*, 118(2), pp.244-257.

- Yan, Y. (2018) 'Neo-familism and the state in contemporary China'. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 47(3/4), pp.181-224.
- Yan, Y. (2021) Introduction: The inverted family, post-patriarchal intergenerationality and neo-familism. In: Yan, Y. (ed.) *Chinese Families Upside Down: Intergenerational Dynamics and Neo-Familism in the Early 21st Century*. Leiden: Brill. pp.1-30.
- Yang, F. & Liu, X. (2020) 'Grandparenting styles, childhood food insecurity, and depression among Chinese rural left-behind children: A structural equation model'. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 119(2020), 105648.
- Yang, Y. (2021) 'A multilevel analysis of the impact of transitioning to grandparenthood on individuals' depression in England, Europe and China'. *Aging & Mental Health*, pp.1-9.
- Yeh, K.-H., Yi, C.-C., Tsao, W.-C. & Wan, P.-S. (2013) 'Filial piety in contemporary Chinese societies: A comparative study of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China'. *International Sociology*, 28(3), pp.277-296.
- Yeo, A., Legard, R., Keegan, J. & Ward, K. (2014) In-depth interviews. In: Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. & Ormston, R. (eds.) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage. pp.177-210.
- Young, M. & Willmott, P. (1957) *Family and Kinship in East London*: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Yu, J. & Xie, Y. (2011) 'The varying display of 'gender display''. *Chinese Sociological Review*, 44(2), 5-30.
- Yu, J. & Zhang, Z. (2021) 'Does living with grandparents affect children's and adolescents' health? Evidence from China'. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(22), 11948.
- Yuan, X. (2012) 'Review and rethinking of family planning policy 计划生育政策的回顾与反思'. *People's Tribune*, 7), pp.6-8. Chinese.
- Yuan, X. (2016) 'The changes of family planning policy and the balanced development of population in China 我国生育政策演进与人口均衡发展：从独生子女政策到全面二孩政策的思考'. *Population Journal*, 2016(05), pp.5-14. Chinese.
- Yue, J. & Fan, X. (2018) 'Childcare policy in China: Review, reflection and reconstruction 中国儿童照顾政策体系：回顾、反思与重构'. *Social Sciences in China*, 2018(9), pp.92-111 & p.206. Chinese.
- Zafirri Priel, A., Possick, C. & Even-Zohar, A. (2022) 'Boundary issues in the experience of grandparenting a preterm grandchild'. *Family Relations*, 71(4), pp.1817-1833.
- Zhang, C., Fong, V. L., Yoshikawa, H., Way, N., Chen, X. & Lu, Z. (2019) 'The rise of maternal grandmother child care in urban Chinese families'. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 81(5), pp.1174-1191.
- Zhang, H., Jiang, L. & Hong, X. (2021) 'Family process and young children's social adaptation: Conditional process analyses across child-care experiences'. *Early Child Development and Care*, pp.1-15.
- Zhang, J., Appleton, S., Song, L. & Liu, B. (2021) 'Who looks after the kids? The effects of childcare choice on early childhood development in China'. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 83(3), pp.619-640.
- Zhang, J., Fokkema, T. & Arpino, B. (2021) 'Loneliness among Chinese older adults: The role of grandparenthood and grandparental childcare by gender'. *Journal of Family Issues*, pp.1-22.
- Zhang, J. S. (2017) 'The evolution of China's one-child policy and its effects on family outcomes'. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(1), pp.141-160.
- Zhang, L. (2021) 'Study on the low-fertility trap in north-east China 东北地区低生育率陷阱问题研究'. *The Northern Forum*, 2021(04), pp.65-75 & p.167. Chinese.
- Zhang, W. (2009) "'A married out Daughter is like spilt water"? Women's increasing contacts and enhanced ties with their natal families in post-reform rural north China'. *Modern China*, 35(3), pp.256-283.

- Zhang, Y. & Luh, Y.-H. (2018) 'Grandparents' health and family fertility choice: Evidence from Taiwan'. *China Economic Review*, 51(pp.294-308).
- Zhao, M. & Zhang, Y. (2019) 'Parental childcare support, sibship status, and mothers' second-child plans in urban China'. *Demographic Research*, 41(pp.1315-1346).
- Zhong, X. & Guo, W. (2017) 'Shift in population policies and view childbearing from childrearing: Grandparent childcare in the context of the universal two-child policy, and childcare 人口政策议题转换：从养育看生育——“全面二孩”下中产家庭的隔代抚养与儿童照顾'. *Exploration and Free Views*, 2017(7), pp.81-87 & p.96. Chinese.
- Zhou, J., Mao, W., Lee, Y. & Chi, I. (2017) 'The impact of caring for grandchildren on grandparents' physical health outcomes: The role of intergenerational support'. *Research on Aging*, 39(5), pp.612-634.
- Zhou, Y., Yu, N. X., Dong, P. & Zhang, Q. (2021) 'Dyadic associations between grandparent–child relationship quality and well-being in Chinese left-behind families: Mediating role of resilience'. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 22(4), pp.1889-1904.
- Zhu, M., Keene, D. E. & Monin, J. K. (2019) "'Their happiness is my happiness" - Chinese visiting grandparents grandparenting in the US'. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 17(3), pp.311-326.
- Zuo, J. (2005) 'Women's liberation and gender equality: Urban married couples' experiences in the 1950s in urban China'. *Society*, 2005(1), pp.182-209.
- Zuo, J. (2005) 'Women's Liberation and Gender Equality: Urban Married Couples' Experiences in the 1950s in Urban China'. *Society*, 2005(1), 182-209.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Participant Information Sheet in English



Study Title: Chinese Families' Perceptions of Childcare and Grandparents' Involvement.

Dear _____

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a study undertaken by Jiatong Ling for her PhD thesis. Before you decide whether or not to take part it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Ask Jiatong if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Background

This study is to describe and analyse in depth the perceptions of grandparents and their adult children providing childcare for children under three years (0-36 months). It will explore the intergenerational relationships between grandparents and their adult children in arranging and providing these childcare arrangements. It is funded by Queen's University and China Scholarship Council PhD Scholarships. This study has been reviewed by the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work Research Ethics Committee and the reference number is 021_2021.

Why am I selected?

Jiatong is asking you to get involved because you are a parent of a child under three years (0-36 months) who is looked after by the child's grandparent or you are a grandparent taking care of your grandchild under three years (0-36 months).

What do I have to do if selected?

Participation is completely voluntary – you can choose whether to participate or not. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form.

You will become involved in this research by an individual and face-to-face interview lasting approximately one hour. Given the precarity under the Covid_19 pandemic, Tencent Meeting (voov meeting) which is an online communication platform will be used as an alternative platform to conduct interview if face-to-face contact is restricted by government and face-to-face interviews pose risks to Jiatong's and your health. You will meet Jiatong in person at a place where both you and Jiatong feel comfortable and safe. For this research to have a successful outcome Jiatong will be asking you about your experiences and opinions.

You are free to change your mind and withdraw at any time without giving a reason. However, you are not able to withdraw your data once it has been anonymised, processed, or published, which will be four weeks after the research interview has taken place. Please inform Jiatong about your withdrawal by email, phone calls, messages, or face to face.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is difficult to envisage any such disadvantages and risks as the focus in this research is on hearing your views and experiences.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Your participation will help to improve understanding about grandparent care in Chinese contexts. It is unlikely there will be any direct benefit to you from taking part in the study, but Jiatong hopes that it is an interesting experience. Your views will inform the development of grandparenting in academia.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All data will be held securely and any identifiable information will not be used in publications. If you have agreed to the interview being recorded, it will then be written down and identifying information removed. The recording will then be deleted. No individual will be identified in the findings of the study. Nevertheless, another person from your family in this interview will probably recognise your story. Therefore, the confidentiality here is limited. The anonymised data will be available for authorized individuals from Queen's University Belfast to access and after the research ends, it will be kept by QUB for at least five years and then destroyed, in line with QUB data handling and security policy.

Privacy notice

In accordance with the GDPR regulation, Jiatong ensures that the ways in which she will be handling your personal data are compliant with GDPR guidelines on data collection and storage complies with the Information Commissioner's Office Code of Practice. Your personal data mentioned above will be name, gender, date of birth, mobile number, home address, marital status, job status, occupation, and your views and experiences about childcare arrangements and grandparent care. Your mobile number will be used by Jiatong to contact you about the research. Your other personal data will be used in data analysis in this research. Your personal data will be kept securely with password in Jiatong's laptop. After the research ends, your personal information will be kept for at least five years and destroyed by Queen's University Belfast. If the interviews are conducted online, Tencent meeting (voov meeting) which is an online communicate platform will be used to collect data. Privacy policy of Tencent Meeting (voov meeting) could be found in following link: <https://voovmeeting.com/df/en/privacy-policy.html>.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Jiatong will present findings of this research in her PhD thesis. If it is possible, she will wish to publish the findings in academic/peer-reviewed journals and present them at conferences both nationally and internationally. In reporting and publishing these results, your identify will always be kept anonymous and any quotes used from the interviews will also be anonymous.

Closing paragraph

Please let Jiatong know if you are willing to take part in this study. Should you require any information please do not hesitate to contact Jiatong.

Best wishes,

Jiatong Ling Email: jliling03@qub.ac.uk Tel: xxxxxxxxxxxx

PhD Candidate in Social Work at Queen's University Belfast

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheet in Chinese



研究项目标题：中国家庭对于儿童照顾和（外）祖父母参与照顾的认识

_____ 女士/ 先生

邀请

凌嘉彤邀请你参加到这项由她开展的研究中，完成她的博士论文。在你决定是否参加之前，需要了解这项研究开展的原因以及包括的内容。请花时间认真阅读下面的内容，也可以和他人讨论之后决定是否参加这项研究，是否参加完全取决于你的个人意愿。如果有内容不清楚或者你想获得更多的信息，请咨询嘉彤。请认真考虑是否参加这项研究。

背景

这项研究是描述和深入分析祖父母或外祖父母和他们的成年子女对于照顾三岁以下（0-36个月）儿童的认识，将深入探究在安排儿童照顾安排和提供照顾的过程中，祖父母或外祖父母和他们的成年子女之间的代际关系。这项研究由中国国家留学基金委和贝尔法斯特女王大学合作奖学金资助。这项研究已经由贝尔法斯特女王大学社会科学、教育和社会工作学院的研究伦理委员会审核，编号是 021_2021。

为什么我被选中？

嘉彤邀请你参加是因为你是三岁以下（0-36个月）儿童的父亲或母亲，或者你是正在照顾三岁以下（0-36个月）孙子女或外孙子女的祖父母或外祖父母。

我被选中之后要做什么？

是否参与这项研究完全取决于你的个人意愿。如果你决定参加，这份文件将会由你保存，同时你将会签署一份知情同意表。

你将会参加一个由嘉彤作为访谈者的面对面的一对一采访，时长大概一个小时。基于目前疫情状况，如果面对面访谈受限或者面谈会增加你和嘉彤的健康方面的风险时，腾讯会议可能会用来作为一种备选方案来开展线上访谈。为了让这项研究有一个成功的成果，嘉彤将会问你一些关于你的经历和你的观点方面的问题。

你可以在任何时间无需任何理由地退出这项研究，但是一旦研究数据匿名、处理或者发表，即访谈结束的四周之后，你的数据不能撤回。如果退出研究，请通过电话、信息、邮件或者面对面的方式告知嘉彤。

参加这项研究有哪些不利之处或者风险？

很难去设想有不利之处或者风险，因为这项研究的关注点是倾听你的经历和观点。

参加这项研究有哪些有利之处？

你的参与能够帮助了解中国的隔代抚养，通过参与这项研究不太可能带给你直接的好处，但是嘉彤希望这是一个有趣的经历，你的观点将会增加学术界关于隔代抚养的认识。

我参与这项研究将会保密吗？

所有的信息将会安全的保管，任何可识别出你的信息将不会发表。访谈的录音将会转录成文字，可识别信息将会移除，转录之后录音将被删除。在这项研究中，没有人将被识别出来。但是尽管如此，参与这项研究的你的家人可能会通过你的访谈内容识别出你。从这一点来看，保密性是有局限性的。匿名的数据将会被女王大学授权的个人查阅。研究结束之后，按照女王大学数据处理和数据安全政策，数据将由女王大学保管至少五年，之后由女王大学销毁。

隐私声明

依照《通用数据保护条例》，嘉彤保证她将会按照条例的要求在信息搜集处理你的个人信息，在信息保存方面，嘉彤保证在处理数据方面她将会按照信息保护的相关规定搜集和存储数据。上面提到的你的个人信息包括姓名、性别、出生日期、电话号码、家庭住址、婚姻状态、工作状态、职业、儿童照顾和隔代抚养的经历、以及看法。你的电话号码将用来帮助嘉彤联系你参加这项研究。你的其他个人信息将用来研究分析。你的个人信息将安全地储存在嘉彤设有密码的笔记本电脑里。研究结束之后，你的个人信息将由女王大学保管五年以上，之后将由女王大学销毁。如果采访在线上进行，线上沟通平台“腾讯会议”将用来搜集数据。腾讯会议的隐私声明详见下面的链接中的内容：<https://meeting.tencent.com/privacy-policy.html>。

这项研究的研究结果将会如何呈现？

嘉彤将会在她的博士论文里呈现这项研究的研究结果和发现。她还可能在学术期刊或同行审议期刊中发表这些研究成果和发现，以及在全国的或者国际的学术会议里汇报这些研究成果和发现。在学术文章和会议报告中，你的身份将会保密，任何从访谈中直接引用的话语也会保密。

结尾

如果对这项研究感兴趣，请联系嘉彤并且告诉她你愿意参加这项研究。如果有任何疑问，请毫不犹豫地联系嘉彤。联系方式如下：

凌嘉彤 英国贝尔法斯特女王大学博士生

电话号码/ 微信：xxxxxxxxxxx 邮箱地址：jling03@qub.ac.uk

祝好！



Appendix 3 – Informed Consent Form

中国家庭对于儿童照顾和祖父母或外祖父母参与照顾的认识

**Chinese Families' Perceptions of Childcare and
Grandparents' Involvement**

研究者：凌嘉彤

Researcher: Jiatong Ling

知情同意表——访谈

Informed Consent Form – Interview

请在每个方框内划“✓”表示您同意下面的每条声明：

Please mark with an '✓' to indicate that you agree with all of the statements below:

1. 我确认我理解这个研究项目的目的并且同意我有问问题的机会。

I confirm that I understand the aims of this project and agree that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. 我理解我的参与是自愿的，在研究数据匿名之前即在研究数据处理之前，我可以收回的同意。

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw my consent up until the point when the data becomes anonymised and has been processed.

3. 我理解所收集的信息将会严格地保密，在这项研究中我的身份将会保持保密。

I understand that the information gathered will be kept strictly confidential and that my identity in the study will remain confidential.

4. 我允许研究者对访谈全过程进行录音，我理解在研究报告或发表文章中可能有直接引用。

I allow the researcher to audio record the interview and understand that direct quotation may be used in publications.

5. 我保留拒绝回答我不想回答的问题的权利。

I retain the right to refuse to answer questions that I do not want to answer.

6. 我理解我所提供的信息可能会以报告的形式出版，这些信息将会做到保密和匿名，我将不会在这些发表文章中被识别出来。

I understand that the information I provide may be published as a report. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications.

7. 我同意这项研究将会用作研究者的博士论文中，未来可能作为文章发表或者在学术会议上展示。

I agree that this research will be used by the researcher in PhD thesis, further publications or presentations.

8. 我理解这项研究由来自贝尔法斯特女王大学的研究者开展，我的个人信息将会由贝尔法斯特女王大学安全保管，信息的处理将会遵守《2018年数据保护法》的规定。

I understand the study is being conducted by researchers from Queen's University Belfast and that my personal information will be held securely on University premises and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018.

9. 我理解这项研究所收集的数据将会被与这项研究相关的人阅览，这些人由贝尔法斯特女王大学授权查看这些数据。我允许这些个人阅览/使用这些信息。

I understand that data collected as part of this study may be looked at by authorised individuals from Queen's University Belfast where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to this information.

我同意下面各项，请在方框内划“√”表示同意

I agree to the following (please mark with an '√' to indicate approval)

是 Y

否 N

我同意参加访谈。

I agree to participate in an interview.

我同意访谈被录音或录像，研究成果将可能被发表，

在这些发表物中我不会被识别出来。

I agree to audio/visual recordings being made and reproduced within publications and dissemination of the research, where I am not specifically identifiable.

签名 Signature: _____

印刷体姓名 Printed Name: _____

日期 Date: _____

Appendix 4 – The Interview Guide for Grandparents in English

A: Grandparent Interview Schedule



Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed by me. As I think you know my name is Jiatong Ling and I am studying for a PhD at Queen's University in the UK.



The aim of my research is to describe and analyse in depth the perceptions of grandparents and their adult children providing childcare for children under three years. It will explore the relationships between grandparents and their adult children in arranging and providing these childcare arrangements.



So I am interviewing grandparents like you who are providing childcare for children under three years.



This interview is very much about you sharing whatever you feel is important for me to know about your perceptions of grandparent childcare in your family. There are no right or wrong answers.



Firstly, I will ask some questions to get some background information about you. After this, four sets of questions will be asked consisting of roles and routines, decision-making, perceptions and relationships.



To help me ensure we cover these questions I will be using this interview guide and will be taking notes as you talk. In addition, if you don't mind it would be very helpful if I could audio record the interview.



If at any time during the interview you no longer want to continue with it, please just say no.

The way in which information from this interview will be reported in my work will of course not disclose your identity.

'If all that seems OK let's start with the first area: background information.'

Grandparents

Location:

Date:

Interview start time:

Interview end time:

Reference code:

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND

Can you tell me what is your:

1.1 Relationship to child/ren being cared for: Mother Father Maternal grandmother Paternal grandmother Maternal grandfather Paternal grandfather

1.2 Year of birth:

1.3 Gender: Male Female

1.4 Marital status: Married Divorced Partnered Widowed

1.5 Education level? Primary school or under Middle school High school/ Secondary vocational school Post-secondary vocational education University

1.6.a Job status: Retired Full-time Part-time Unemployed

1.6.b Occupation: _____

1.7 Co-residence: Co-residence in adult children's household Co-residence in Paternal grandparents' household Co-residence in Maternal grandparents' household Not co-residence Others _____

1.8 Care frequency: Daily (daytime and nighttime) Daily (daytime)

Daily (nighttime) Others _____

1.9 Do you have more than one child? Yes __children No

1.10 Do they have children? Yes __grandchildren No

1.11 Is there any other background information you think important to you providing care to your grandchild/ren?

SECTION 2. ROLES & ROUTINES

Now I would like to hear about how you go about looking after your grandchild/ren – your roles and routines

2.1 Can you describe what you normally do in providing care for your grandchild/ren?

Prompts:

What does a typical day look like?

What roles do you undertake when you are taking care of your grandchild/ren?

2.2 How does what you do relate to the child care undertaken by the child/ren's parents?

But you can see the way grandparental care and parental care are connected. The child needs both those things for a good early childhood. The two bits had to fit together in order, and they complement each other.

Do you think they are linked with each other?

What is the linkage between them? (what extent are participants aware that there is a linkage.)

What you can do and cannot do in childcare. (boundaries)

2.3 If there are others involve in the childcare of your grandchild/ren what roles do they undertake?

2.4 Is there anything else you want to say about roles and routines that would help me understand your involvement with the childcare of your grandchild/ren?

SECTION 3. DECISION MAKING

Now I would like to hear about how you got involved in providing childcare for your grandchild/ren.

3.1 Can you tell me who was involved in making the decisions and why it was decided that you would be involved with your grandchild/ren?

Prompts:

- How was the decision made?
 - Who was involved in making the decision?
 - Was it a difficult decision to make?
 - Have there been any changes over time in the decision initially made?
 - How did you decide the nature of the care?
 - How did you decide the frequency of the care?
 - What was your motivation in providing childcare?
 - Do the development and needs of the grandchild matter in decision-making and how they impact the decision making?
- 3.2 Is there anything else you want to say about decision-making?**

SECTION 4. PERCEPTIONS OF GRANDPARENTING

I am interested not just in your experiences of providing childcare but also in your views more generally about grandparenting and child care.

4.1 What are your general views on grandparenting?

Prompts:

- What are your expectations of parents?
 - What are parents' expectations of you?
 - What in your view is good grandparenting?
 - What do you agree with the norms and what do you disagree with the norms?
 - How similar or different is what you do compared to what other grandparents do?
 - Do you think childcare by grandparents is taken for granted?
- 4.2 Is there anything else you want to say about perceptions of grandparenting that would help me understand your views about grandparenting?**

SECTION 5. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Now I would like to hear about your relationship with your grandchild/ren's parent/s in providing childcare for your grandchild/ren.

5.1 What are your views on your relationship with your adult child/ren in providing childcare for your grandchild/ren?

Prompts:

Do you have different opinions or disagreement with parent/s of your grandchild/ren in childcaring?

What do you do when it happened?

Can you give me an example?

5.2 How similar or different are your relationships with your adult child and adult child-in-law who are parents of the grandchild/ren?

5.3 Is there anything else you want to say about intergenerational relationships that would help me understand your views on your relationships with your grandchild/ren's parent/s?

Close of the interview



thanks




you will be sent a report of this research if you like





bye


Appendix 5 – The Interview Guide for Parents in English


B: Parent Interview Schedule


 Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed by me. As I think you know my name is Jiatong Ling and I am studying for a PhD at Queen's University in the UK.


 The aim of my research is to describe and analyse in depth the perceptions of grandparents and their adult children providing childcare for children under three years. It will explore the relationships between grandparents and their adult children in arranging and providing these childcare arrangements.

 So I am interviewing parents like you whose children are under three years and cared by their grandparents.

 This interview is very much about you sharing whatever you feel is important for me to know about your perceptions of grandparent childcare in your family. There are no right or wrong answers.

 Firstly, I will ask some questions to get some background information about you. After this, four sets of questions will be asked consisting of roles and routines, decision-making, perceptions and relationships.

 To help me ensure we cover these questions I will be using this interview guide and will be taking notes as you talk. In addition, if you don't mind it would be very helpful if I could audio record the interview.

 If at any time during the interview you no longer want to continue with it, please just say no.

The way in which information from this interview will be reported in my work will of course not disclose your identity.

'If all that seems OK let's start with the first area: back ground information.'

Parents

Location:

Date:

Interview start time:

Interview end time:

Reference code:

SECTION 1. BACKGROUND

Can you tell me what is your:

1.1 Relationship to child/ren being cared for: Mother Father Maternal grandmother Paternal grandmother Maternal grandfather Paternal grandfather

1.2 Year of birth:

1.3 Gender: Male Female

1.4 Marital status: Married Divorced Partnered Widowed

1.5 Education level? Primary school or under Middle school High school/ Secondary vocational school Post-secondary vocational education University

1.6.a Job status: Retired Full-time Part-time Unemployed

1.6.b Occupation: _____

1.7 Co-residence: Co-residence in adult children's household Co-residence in Paternal grandparents' household Co-residence in Maternal grandparents' household Not co-residence Others _____

1.8 Care frequency: Daily (daytime and nighttime) Daily (daytime)

Daily (nighttime) Others _____

1.9 Does the grandparent have more than one child? Yes ___children No

1.10 How many grandchildren does the grandparent have?

1.11 Is there any other background information you think important to you providing care to your grandchild/ren?

SECTION 2. ROLES & ROUTINES

Now I would like to hear about how grandparent(s) go about looking after your child/ren – their roles and routines

2.1 Can you describe what grandparent(s) normally do in providing care for your child/ren?

Prompts:

What does a typical day look like?

What roles do they undertake when they are taking care of your child/ren?

2.2 How does what they do relate to the child care undertaken by you (or your partner)?

But you can see the way grandparental care and parental care are connected. The child needs both those things for a good early childhood. The two bits had to fit together in order, and they complement each other.

Do you think they are linked with each other?

What is the linkage between them? (what extent are participants aware that there is a linkage.)

What grandparents can do and cannot do? (boundaries)

2.3 If there are others involve in the childcare of your child/ren, what roles do they undertake?

2.4 Is there anything else you want to say about grandparent's/s' roles and routines that would help me understand grandparent's/s' involvement with the childcare of your child/ren?

SECTION 3. DECISION MAKING

Now I would like to hear about how you got involved in providing childcare for your grandchild/ren.

3.1 Can you tell me who was involved in making the decisions and why it was decided that you would be involved with your grandchild/ren?

Prompts:

- How was the decision made?
- Who was involved in making the decision?
- Was it a difficult decision to make?
- Have there been any changes over time in the decision initially made?
- How did you decide the nature of the care?
- How did you decide the frequency of the care?
- What was your motivation in providing childcare?
- Do the development and needs of the grandchild matter in decision-making and how they impact the decision making?
- 3.2 Is there anything else you want to say about decision-making?**

SECTION 4. PERCEPTIONS OF GRANDPARENTING

I am interested not just in your experiences of having your child/ren cared by grandparent/s but also in your views more generally about grandparenting and child care.

4.1 What are your general views on grandparenting?

Prompts:

- What are your expectations of grandparents?
- What are grandparents' expectations of you?
- What in your view is good grandparenting?
- What do you agree with the norms and what do you disagree with the norms?
- How similar or different is what the grandparent does compared to what other grandparents do?
- Do you think childcare by grandparents is taken for granted?
- 4.2 Is there anything else you want to say about perceptions of grandparenting that would help me understand your views about grandparenting?**

SECTION 5. INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Now I would like to hear about your relationships with your child/ren's grandparent/s in grandparenting.

5.1 What are your views on your relationship with your child/ren's grandparent/s?

Prompts:

Do you have different opinions or disagreement with grandparent/s of your child/ren in childcaring?

What do you do when it happened?

Can you give me an example?

5.2 How similar or different are grandparent's/s' relationships with you and your partner?

5.3 Is there anything else you want to say about intergenerational relationships that would help me understand your views on your relationships with your child/ren's grandparent/s?

Close of the interview



thanks



you will be sent a report of this research if you like



bye

Appendix 6 – The Interview Guide for Grandparents in Chinese

A: (外) 祖父母采访计划表



感谢你接受我的访谈。我是凌嘉彤，目前在英国贝尔法斯特女王大学攻读博士学位。



我的研究目的是描述和深入分析 (外) 祖父母和年轻父母对于三岁以下儿童照顾的认识，探究中国家庭如何决定由 (外) 祖父母提供照顾，以及在照顾安排和隔代抚养过程中祖父母和年轻父母的代际关系。



所以我会采访和您一样的照顾三岁以下的 (外) 孙子女的 (外) 祖父母。



你的回答没有正确和错误之分，这个采访更重要是分享你的真实感受，这个对于我了解你对隔代抚养的认识十分重要。



首先，我会问一些关于您的背景信息的问题；接着，我会问四组问题，包括在照顾 (外) 孙子女时，您的日常活动内容和发挥的作用，儿童照顾的安排，对于隔代抚养的认识，以及代际关系。



为了确保访谈能够覆盖上述问题，在采访过程中我会使用这个访谈指南，同时可能会做记录。另外，这个访谈也会录音。



如果在访谈过程中，你不想继续这个访谈或者不想回答某个问题，请直接表达您的真实想法。



基于我们的访谈的研究成果，将会呈现在我的博士论文以及学术文章里，并且向您保证你的身份不会泄露。

如果可以的话，那我们开始第一部分，背景信息问题。

(外) 祖父母

地点:

日期:

访谈开始时间:

访谈结束时间:

编码:

第一部分：背景信息

您能告诉我：

1.1 您是孩子的： 妈妈 爸爸 外祖母 祖母 外祖父 祖父

1.2 您的出生年份： _____

1.3 性别： 男 女

1.4 婚姻状态： 已婚 离婚 同居 丧偶

1.5 教育程度： 小学及以下 初中 高中/中专 大专 本科及以上

1.6.a 工作状态： 退休 全职工作 兼职工作 没有工作

1.6.b 职业： _____

1.7 共同居住： 同住在年轻父母的家中 同住在祖父母的家中 同住在外祖父母的家中 没有同住 其他 _____

1.8 照顾的频次： 每天（白天和夜间） 每天（白天） 每天（夜晚）

其他 _____

1.9 是否有多个子女： 是 有____个子女 否

1.10 是否有其他孙子女： 是 共有____个孙子女 否

1.11 您认为还有其他与儿童照顾相关的重要背景信息吗？

第二部分 日常活动和任务

现在我将会问一些问题，关于您平时如何照顾您的（外）孙子女，也就是您的日常活动和发挥的作用。

2.1 您能描述一下在照顾您的（外）孙子女时，您通常都做哪些事情？

提示问题：

- 很典型的一天是什么样的？
- 当照顾您的（外）孙子女时，您都要承担哪些任务或者说发挥什么作用？

2.2 您所做的事情和您的孩子所作的照顾孩子的事情有什么关系？

提示问题

你可以看到祖父母提供的儿童照顾和父母提供的儿童照顾，这两种照顾都是孩子需要的，只有这两种照顾相辅相成，孩子才能有一个好的幼儿时期。

- 你觉得他们是否有关系？
- 祖父母的照顾和父母的照顾，他们的关系是什么？
- 你觉得在照顾孩子方面，有哪些事情你可以做，哪些事情不可以做？

2.3 还有其他人也照顾您的（外）孙子女吗？

提示问题：

- 很典型的一天是什么样的？
- 当照顾您的（外）孙子女时，这个人都要承担哪些任务或者说发挥什么作用？

2.4 关于日常活动和任务部分，您还有其他事情要分享吗？

第三部分 照顾安排

现在我想了解一下您是如何参与到您的（外）孙子女的照顾中来的。

3.1 您能告诉我您是怎么参与其中的，以及为什么决定由您来照顾您的（外）孙子女？

提示问题：

- 这个决定过程是怎样的？
- 谁参与做这个决定？
- 做这个决定难吗？
- 随着时间的发展，这个决定有发生变化吗？
- 您决定如何照顾（外）孙子女的？
- 如何决定照顾（外）孙子女的频次的？
- 您照顾（外）孙子女的动力是什么？
- 在做关于谁来照顾（外）孙子女的决定过程中，孩子的需要和发展对于这个决定影响大吗？怎么影响的？
- 3.2 关于照顾安排，还有其他对我了解有帮助的重要的事情想分享吗？**

第四部分 对于隔代抚养的认识

我不仅对您照顾（外）孙子女的经历感兴趣，也对您关于隔代抚养的认识有很大的兴趣。

4.1 您怎么看待隔代抚养？

提示问题：

- 您认为孩子父母对于（外）祖父母的期待是什么？
- 在照顾孩子方面，你对孩子的父母有什么期待？
- 您认为好的隔代抚养是什么？
- 对于（外）祖父母的这些社会准则，哪些您同意，哪些您不同意？
- 和其他的（外）祖父母相比，您和他们有什么相同，有什么不同？
- 您认为（外）祖父母理所应当照顾（外）孙子女吗？
- 4.2 关于隔代抚养的认识，还有其他您认为对我了解您的认识，重要的事情要分享吗？

第五部分 代际关系

现在我想了解在隔代抚养过程中，您和孩子的父母的代际关系。

5.1 在您看来，您认为隔代抚养是否影响您们的关系？您们的关系影响隔代抚养吗？

提示问题：

在儿童照顾过程中，您和您的子女有分歧吗？

当有分歧时，您会怎么做？

可以举个例子吗？

5.2 在照顾（外）孙子女过程中，您和您儿子的关系，与您和您儿媳的关系有什么不同吗？在照顾（外）孙子女过程中，您和您女儿的关系，和您与您女婿的关系有什么不同吗？

5.3 （如果访谈对象有多个子女并且有多个（外）孙子女提问）

在不同的（外）孙子女的照顾投入是否有不同？这是否影响你和子女的关系？

5.4 关于代际关系部分，还有其他您认为能够帮助我了解代际关系的事情要分享吗？

访谈尾声



感谢




如果您想阅读这个研究报告的话，我会发给您





再见


Appendix 7 – The Interview Guide for Parents in Chinese


B: 父母采访计划表


 感谢您接受我的访谈。我是凌嘉彤，目前在英国贝尔法斯特女王大学攻读博士学位。


 我的研究目的是描述和深入分析（外）祖父母和年轻父母对于三岁以下儿童照顾的认识，探究中国家庭如何决定由（外）祖父母提供照顾，以及在照顾安排和隔代抚养过程中祖父母和年轻父母的代际关系。


 所以我会采访和您一样的您的三岁以下的孩子由（外）祖父母照顾。

 您的回答没有正确和错误之分，这个采访更重要是分享您的真实感受，这个对于我了解您对隔代抚养的认识十分重要。

 首先，我会问一些关于您的背景信息的问题；接着，我会问四组问题，包括在照顾（外）孙子女时，您的日常活动内容和发挥的作用，儿童照顾的安排，对于隔代抚养的认识，以及代际关系。

 为了确保访谈能够覆盖上述问题，在采访过程中我会使用这个访谈指南，同时可能会做记录。另外，这个访谈也会录音。

 如果在访谈过程中，您不想继续这个访谈或者不想回答某个问题，请直接表达您的真实想法。

 基于我们的访谈的研究成果，将会呈现在我的博士论文以及学术文章里，并且向您保证您的身份不会泄露。

如果可以的话，那我们开始第一部分，背景信息问题。

背景信息 B: 父母

编码:

日期:

访谈开始时间:

访谈结束时间:

地点:

第一部分: 背景信息

您能告诉我:

1.1 您是孩子的: 妈妈 爸爸 外祖母 祖母 外祖父 祖父

1.2 您的出生年份: _____

1.3 性别: 男 女

1.4 婚姻状态: 已婚 离婚 同居 丧偶

1.5 教育程度: 小学及以下 初中 高中/中专 大专 本科及以上

1.6.a 工作状态: 退休 全职工作 兼职工作 没有工作

1.6.b 职业: _____

1.7 共同居住: 同住在年轻父母的家中 同住在祖父母的家中 同住在外祖父母的家中
 没有同住 其他 _____

1.8 照顾的频次: 每天 (白天和夜间) 每天 (白天) 每天 (夜晚)

其他 _____

1.9 照顾孩子的 (外) 祖父母是否有多个子女: 是 有 _____ 个子女 否

1.10 是否有其他孙子女: 是 共有 _____ 个孙子女 否

1.11 您认为还有其他与儿童照顾相关的重要背景信息吗?

第二部分 日常活动和任务

现在我将会问一些问题，关于（外）祖父母平时如何照顾您的孩子，也就是您的日常活动和发挥的作用。

2.1 您能描述一下在（外）祖父母在照顾您的孩子时，通常都做哪些事情？

提示问题：

- 很典型的一天是什么样的？
- 当照顾您的孩子时，（外）祖父母都要承担哪些任务或者说发挥什么作用？

2.2 （外）祖父母所做的事情和您所作的照顾孩子的事情有什么关系？

提示问题

你可以看到祖父母提供的儿童照顾和父母提供的儿童照顾，这两种照顾都是孩子需要的，只有这两种照顾相辅相成，孩子才能有一个好的幼儿时期。

- 你觉得他们是否有联系？
- 祖父母的照顾和父母的照顾，他们的关系是什么？
- 你觉得在照顾孩子方面，有哪些事情（外）祖父母可以做，哪些事情不可以做？

2.3 还有其他人也照顾您的孩子吗？

提示问题：

- 很典型的一天是什么样的？
 - 当照顾您的（外）孙子女时，这个人都要承担哪些任务或者说发挥什么作用？
- ### 2.4 关于日常活动和任务部分，您还有其他事情要分享吗？

第三部分 照顾安排

现在我想了解一下（外）祖父母是如何参与到您的（外）孙子女的照顾中来的。

3.1 您能告诉我（外）祖父母是怎么参与其中的，以及为什么决定由她/他来照顾您的孩子？

提示问题：

- 这个决定过程是怎样的？
- 谁参与做这个决定？
- 做这个决定难吗？
- 随着时间的发展，这个决定有发生变化吗？
- （外）祖父母如何照顾（外）孙子女的？
- 您们如何决定照顾（外）孙子女的频次的？
- 您让（外）祖父母帮忙照顾孩子的动力是什么？
- 在做关于谁来照顾您的孩子的决定过程中，孩子的需要和发展对于这个决定影响大吗，怎么影响的？
- 3.2 关于照顾安排，还有其他对我了解有帮助的重要的事情想分享吗？**

第四部分 对于隔代抚养的认识

我不仅对您照顾（外）孙子女的经历感兴趣，也对您关于隔代抚养的认识有很大的兴趣。

4.1 您怎么看待隔代抚养？

提示问题：

- 您对于（外）祖父母的期待是什么？
- 在照顾孩子方面，你认为（外）祖父母对你有什么期待？
- 您认为好的隔代抚养是什么？
- 对于（外）祖父母的这些社会准则，哪些您同意，哪些您不同意？
- 和其他的（外）祖父母相比，（外）祖父母和他们有什么相同，有什么不同？
- 您认为（外）祖父母理所应当照顾（外）孙子女吗？
- 4.2 关于隔代抚养的认识，还有其他您认为对我了解您的认识，重要的事情要分享吗？

第五部分 代际关系

现在我想了解在隔代抚养过程中，您和孩子的（外）祖父母的代际关系。

5.1 在您看来，您认为隔代抚养是否影响您们的关系？您们的关系影响隔代抚养吗？

提示问题：

在儿童照顾过程中，您和您的子女有分歧吗？

当有分歧时，您会怎么做？

可以举个例子吗？

5.2 在照顾（外）孙子女过程中，您和您儿子的关系，与您和您儿媳的关系有什么不同吗？在照顾（外）孙子女过程中，您和您女儿的关系，和您与您女婿的关系有什么不同吗？

5.3 （如果访谈对象有兄弟姐妹提问）

（外）祖父母在不同的孙子女的照顾投入上是否有不同？这是否影响您和孩子（外）祖父母的关系？

5.4 关于代际关系部分，还有其他您认为能够帮助我了解代际关系的事情要分享吗？

访谈尾声



感谢



如果您想阅读这个研究报告的话，我会发给您



再见

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR RE-SEARCH

Why have you been given this leaflet?



- You are invited to participate in this research about grandparent care.
- This research is conducted by Jiatong Ling, a doctoral candidate at Queen's University Belfast in UK.
- The findings of this research will help Jiatong complete her PhD and write a thesis.

What is the research about?



- This study is to describe and analyse in depth the perceptions of grandparents and their adult children providing childcare for children under three years (0-36 months).
- It will explore the intergenerational relationships between grandparents and their adult children in arranging and providing these childcare arrangements.
- It is funded by Queen's University and China Scholarship Council PhD Scholarships.

Who can take part in?



- Parent of a child under three years (0-36 months) who is looked after by the child's grandparent.
- Grandparent who is taking care of grandchild under three years (0-36 months).
- In each family, both one grandparent and one parent would participate in this research.

How can you take part in?



- Jiatong will be asking you about your experiences of childcare arrangements and views on grandparent care.
- You will take part in an individual interview lasting about an hour.



Thank you for reading this leaflet. If you would like to participate in this research or have queries, please do not hesitate to contact Jiatong.

Jiatong Ling



Mobile phone: xxxxxxxxxxxx



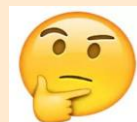
WeChat: xxxxxxxxxxxx



研究对象招募信



•送宝宝早教益智布书一套啦!



• 这项研究关注祖父母或外祖父母和他们的成年子女对于**照顾三岁以下 (0-36个月) 儿童**的认识。

• 这个研究由凌嘉彤开展，这项研究由中国国家留学基金委和贝尔法斯特女王大学合作奖学金资助，嘉彤是女王大学的博士生。



• 照顾三岁以下 (0-36个月) 孙子女或外孙子女的**祖父母或外祖父母**。

• 由祖父母或外祖父母照顾的三岁以下 (0-36个月) **儿童**的父母。

• **每个家庭共两人**参加这项研究，其中至少一人现居住在**洮南市内**。



• 每人分别参加一次一对一的**线下或线上访谈**，时长30分钟 - 1个小时。

• 问题是有关**儿童照顾安排**的经历和对于隔代抚养认识。



Distress Protocol

Distress

- A participant indicates that they are experiencing high levels of emotional distress
- OR
- Exhibits behaviour to suggest that the interview is too stressful

Stage 1 Response

- Stop the interview
- Jiatong will offer immediate support
- Assess emotional state: What are you feeling now? What thoughts are you having? Do you feel safe? Do you feel able to go on about your day? Do you feel able to continue with interview?

Review

- If candidate feels able to continue with interview, then proceed
- If candidate feels unable to carry on to go to stage 2

Stage 2 Response

- Discontinue interview and move participant to a quiet where the participant feels comfortable. (online- verbal support will be offered)
- Encourage the candidate to contact their family member or their relevant agency support staff

Follow up

- With participant consent, follow up with a courtesy call OR
- Encourage the participant to call if they experience increased distress in the hours/ days after the interview

Appendix 11 – An Example of the Visual Model

