Taiwan's New Immigrant Mothers' Educational Beliefs, Practices, and Agency

by

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ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, the population of so-called "foreign brides" in Taiwan has increased significantly. "Foreign brides" are female immigrants from Southeast Asian countries who have married Taiwanese men through marriage brokers. The term "new immigrant women" is used in this study to describe this particular group of women because it is a self-identified, less derogatory term. New immigrant women's families are at significant disadvantages with their low social class, the commodified nature of marriage, and societal discrimination against them. Guided by a feminist epistemology and grounded in family studies and eco-cultural theories, this study explores this particular group of immigrant women's educational beliefs, practices, and agency manifested through their motherhood. The following research questions guide this study: 1) How do new immigrant women experience their motherhood? 2) How do new immigrant women conceptualize and contextualize their mothering experiences? 3) How is agency developed and displayed in new immigrant women's mothering practices? How does agency influence new immigrant women's mothering practices? 4) What are new immigrant women's mothering beliefs and practices? 5) What are the specific practices related to children's schoolwork in which new immigrant women are engaged? 6) What are the implications of new immigrant women's perspectives on motherhood for their education, including adult education and parenting education? Twenty-five immigrant women originally from various Southeast Asian countries who had at least one child participated in the study. They were interviewed at least two times and the interview duration ranged from
one hour to four hours. All interviews were audio recorded and conducted in Mandarin Chinese, Holo Taiwanese, and English by the researcher. Constructionist grounded theory was utilized to analyze data. The findings suggest that new immigrant women's educational beliefs, practices, and agency are strongly influenced by interaction between their original cultural background, social class, family-in-law, and the ecology of the community in which they are situated. New immigrant women demonstrated dynamic mothering practices and developed agency from their mother role. The results can help policy makers to refine a framework to develop educational programs for these parents that are effective and more supportive of their children's development.
This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and all brave immigrant mothers for their perseverance in protecting their children.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM IN PERSPECTIVE

Foreign Brides

In the past two decades, the “foreign bride” phenomenon and its associated issues have drawn attention in Taiwan. The term “foreign bride” first appeared in the late 1980s (Ministry of Interior in Taiwan, 2010a). Around the 1990s, “foreign brides” took on the meaning of female spouses from People’s Republic of China (China) or Southeast Asian countries. Through arrangements provided by professional brokers, these women marry Taiwanese men, and because the arrangements involve monetary exchange, this type of marriage is considered a commodity (Hsia, 2002). Over time, because distinct laws are applied to “foreign brides” from Southeast Asia and China, two terms have emerged: “Chinese brides” which means female spouses from China and “foreign brides” or “Southeast Asian brides” which refers to female spouses from Southeast Asia.

Because the laws and challenges involving “Southeast Asian brides” and “Chinese brides” are different, their experiences should be studied separately. In this study, I focus on “foreign brides” whose countries of origin include Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (Wang, 2005). From January 2001 to May 2009, approximately 22% of marriages in Taiwan involved “foreign brides”, and on average more than 11% of newborn babies had foreign mothers (Ministry of Interior in Taiwan, 2010b). In 2009, among the brides from Southeast Asia (not including the PRC), 60% are
Vietnamese, 21% are Indonesian, 8% are from Thailand, 5% are from the Philippines, and another 4% are from Cambodia (Ministry of Interior in Taiwan, 2010a).

The mechanism underpinning the marriage between “foreign brides” and Taiwanese men is similar to the mechanism underpinning marriage between mail-order brides and their American husbands in the U.S. Transnational marriages are formed largely because of economic inequalities wherein brides are from economically troubled countries such as Thailand. The marriages are facilitated by transnational bridal agencies for lucrative profits, and thus the international mail-order bride industry flourishes (Chun, 1996).

In 2003, the leading feminist organization in Taiwan, Awaking Foundation (婦女新知), held an event for “Chinese brides” and “Southeast Asian brides” to vote for the identifier they prefer to be called. There, these so-called “foreign brides” decided to be called “new immigrant women” because the term “foreign brides” connotes a derogatory and ahistorical implication (A married woman was a bride at one moment, not forever) (Hsia, 2005). Thus, I use the preferred term “new immigrant women” to identify the women who are the focus of this dissertation. The term “foreign brides” will only be used when it refers to the specific social phenomenon.

Like most migrants, new immigrant women crossed national and cultural boundaries in pursuit of a better future (Asis, 2003). These women serve multiple roles including wife, daughter-in-law, mother, and bread-winner in Taiwan, and
daughter and sister in their home countries. In addition to these duties, the women also need to adapt in at least two national contexts that mediate their lived experiences. However, instead of receiving help and respect, new immigrant women are often discriminated against as uneducated gold diggers, incapable of educating their children, even though there are no substantive research findings to support such views (Hsia, 2005). This is because governmental agencies, the media, and the general public tend to use a “cultural deficit perspective” in interpreting issues in regard to new immigrant women due to the economic nature of their marriage to Taiwanese men and their distinct cultural backgrounds (Hsia, 2002). However, I posit in this research that this discriminatory perspective of new immigrant women discounts the contextual influences that produce the “foreign bride” phenomenon stereotyping this minority population. Furthermore, this static and essentialist notion contributes to the neglect of the dynamics (Donnan, 1990) of new immigrant women’s daily lives and lived experiences in their multiple roles. Moreover, new immigrant women’s own authentic voices of their motivations for marriage, their struggles, and their triumphs are rarely heard (Wu, 2004). In other words, previous research on new immigrant women in Taiwan only provides a general, macro view to analyze such issues. In contrast, studies on the individual, subjective, and nuanced aspects of how new immigrant women face their situations and come to their current situations remain rare. Furthermore, because new immigrant women are constructed as victims from Third World counties under the global domination of patriarchy, their potential agency in facing their challenges is hardly recognized (Constable, 2003). As a
result, new immigrant women are portrayed as politically silent monolithic Third World women (Mohanty, 2003).

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore and document new immigrant women’s experiences with motherhood, their parenting beliefs and practices especially those related to their children’s education, and the ways that these women demonstrate their agency through motherhood. A goal of this research is to identify themes, patterns, and relationships among various factors involved in new immigrant women’s motherhood, and to give voice to the ways that the women experience, and are transformed through, motherhood.

Research Questions

The following six research questions about new immigrant women’s motherhood and agency guided this research.

1. How do new immigrant women experience their motherhood?
2. How do new immigrant women conceptualize and contextualize their mothering experiences?
3. How is agency developed and displayed in new immigrant women’s mothering practices? How does agency influence new immigrant women’s mothering practices?
4. What are new immigrant women’s mothering beliefs and practices?
5. What are the specific practices related to children’s schoolwork in which new immigrant women are engaged?
6. What are the implications of new immigrant women’s perspectives on motherhood for their education, including adult education and parenting education?

The findings from this study are expected to contribute to the body of research on women and immigration, motherhood, cultural psychology, and women’s studies.

Mechanisms of Migration

March South. Historically, the recent economic relations between Taiwan and Southeast Asia can be traced back to the 1980s (Hsia, 2004). According to Hsia’s (2004) analysis of Southeast Asian countries, by the mid 1980s, Taiwan began investing in Southeast Asia and became more prosperous around 1994, the year that the Taiwanese government announced its “March South” policy. The “March South” policy encouraged business people to invest in Southeast Asian countries in order to counterbalance the heavy investment by the People’s Republic of China (Hsia, 2004). At the same time, Southeast Asian countries released many incentives to attract foreign investment. All of this contributed to Taiwan’s transformation of its economic status from an exporter of products to an exporter of capital as well. Thus, Taiwan began to achieve a semi-peripheral status in the world economic system. Consequently, Southeast Asian countries that received foreign investment were positioned in a peripheral status as well. Southeast Asian countries provide cheap labor and lower environmental standards that can accommodate high-pollution industries (Hsia, 2004). Along with the rise in financial investment from Taiwan to Southeast Asia came more and more
transnational marriages between Taiwanese men and Southeast Asian wives (Hsia, 2004).

Economics. Meanwhile, Southeast Asian countries faced severe unemployment due to the privatization, deregulation, and liberalization accompanying this globalization. International organizations promoting free trade and liberalization such as World Trade Organization (WTO) forced these peripheral countries to lift economic protections and open their markets in the name of economic development. Ironically, the results of that policy are producing uneven distribution of wealth, poverty, unemployment, and hunger (Hsia, 2002). For instance, in agriculture, such policy has destroyed the original self-sufficient system and has led to the bankruptcy of many family farms (Hsia, 2002). Because of this intensified poverty, and threats in the labor market in their own countries, farmers and laborers face increasing economic stress and are forced to find work abroad. Women from Southeast Asian countries are not excluded from this stress. Besides their labor, these women bring their reproductive capacity to an international market, and their bodies become commodified (Parrenas, 2001). One of the important reasons for the “foreign bride” phenomenon in Taiwan is the women’s biological ability to bare children (Tian & Wang, 2006).

Marriage

There are cultural (Thai, 2008), economic, and individual reasons behind Southeast Asian women’s international marriage decisions. One of the reasons why Southwest Asian women decide to marry Taiwanese men is that the women
often view international marriage as a means to escape poverty (Chiu, 2005; Hsia, 2002). Men who marry these new immigrant women are mostly farmers, fishermen, or working class men who occupy the lower class in Taiwan. Because of continued globalization, industrialization, and urbanization, men who previously comprised the agricultural labor market encountered increased difficulty in finding a job. In addition, the evolution of higher education and a more liberal social environment freed women from the constraints of traditional stereotypes and social roles. As a result, today’s Taiwanese women may have more agency over their marriage decisions. Knowing that being a farmer’s wife requires labor-intensive work, Taiwanese women may hesitate to marry working-class men. Additionally, working class families tend to hold traditional expectations of a women’s role in the family. Along with their low social status and income, these unskilled agricultural laborers are extremely disadvantaged in Taiwan’s domestic marriage market (Hisa, 2004). In order to fulfill the patriarchal and traditional expectations that kinship should be transmitted through offspring, many Taiwanese men who do not find a Taiwanese bride are willing to, or encouraged by parents to, go to Southeast Asian countries to “buy” a bride in order to have their own children (Hsia, 2002). In most cases, these wives are expected to give birth, take care of the husband’s parents and provide labor on the farm or take a job to bring income to the family.

Marriage proceedings. There are various channels that help match new immigrant women and Taiwanese husbands, but marriage brokers facilitate most such unions. If the marriage is matched through a broker, then the cost is fixed at
around $8,000, although the bride’s family only receives several hundred dollars (Cottrell, 1990). First, a marriage broker will arrange for the prospective husband to fly to a certain country and make a selection from several potential brides. On the second day of this “business trip”, the prospective husband and the broker will visit the potential bride’s family. On the third day, a wedding banquet will be held. Then the bride must file paperwork with local Taiwanese officials for her visa. These officials provide a brief marriage counseling session including an interview to validate the marriage (Chang, 2005).

Demographics

New immigrant women are from the PRC as well as Southeast Asia countries including Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippine, and Cambodia (Ministry of Interior in Taiwan, 2010a)(See Table 1). Most reside in rural or suburban areas of Taiwan. Because of the expectation of kinship continuation, the majority of them deliver their first baby within the first three years of their arrival in Taiwan (Hsia, 2002).
Table 1
Proportion of New Immigrant Women in Taiwan January 1987 - March 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>2.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
<td>64.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.26</td>
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</tbody>
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Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Position Statements

A social constructionist position underpins this study. Consequently, my values play a crucial role in this study and the political consequences of the study (Gergen, 2008; Hepburn, 2000). Moreover, from a social constructionist point of view, because the nature of the reality being explored is socially constructed, it is dependent upon the shared linguistic endeavors of relevant communities. In other words, as Gergen (2008, p. 286) stated, “The ‘real’ world is not observed nor is it perceived, according to social constructionists. What is attended to as the ‘real’ is dependent upon the relational processes of groups in naming, defining and acting it.”

Additionally, I adopt a feminist standpoint epistemology in the process of interpreting the knowledge co-constructed and produced herein (Harding, 2007; Riger, 1992). Feminist standpoint epistemologies critique that the existing theories developed from men’s experiences may not fully capture women’s life experiences and assert that a science based on women’s experiences is crucial. Rather than treating women as a universal subject, feminist standpoint epistemologies stress that the unique ways in which women create meanings and experience life arise from their particular positions situated within complex systems of power (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008; Riger, 1992). In a similar vein, lived experience of a particular social position becomes the basis for knowledge claims (Darling-Wolf, 2004). A critical goal of feminist standpoint epistemology
is to identify the shared experience of subjugation among diverse groups of women. Instead of seeking only one universal experience of women, feminist standpoint epistemologies seek less distorted, partial views of women’s experiences (Riger, 1992).

Social positions from which scholars conduct research is as epistemologically significant as the participant’s social location (Darling-Wolf, 2004). When I started conducting this study, I was painfully fearful of committing mistakes related to essentialism. However, I was also encouraged by the comment from Darling-Wolf (2004) that “The emancipatory potential of feminism and minority movements rests on the possibility of envisioning other’s positions and of speaking for, about, and—most important— with them” (p. 39). In other words, as a researcher, I need to be conscious of the risk of endangering the participants, but I should not stop engaging in understanding their lived experiences and pursuing coalition because ceasing the quest can be equally detrimental (Darling-Wolf, 2004). Therefore, reflexivity within research endeavors is crucial in this study. I had been conscious of my multiple positions and selves (Darling-Wolf, 2004) and I acknowledge the effects of experiences and knowledge created when I engaged with the participants and co-constructed the phenomenon that was studied. Hence, instead of disregarding the researcher’s role and status in this study, I actively use my experience to relate to participants and remain intensely aware of my status in the researcher-participant relationship. As an international female student from Taiwan who crossed cultural and national boundaries, to a certain degree I feel like an immigrant woman. Also, having been engaged in a
cross-cultural relationship in the U.S. can help me to understand these women’s feelings and can help us relate to each other during the research process. Furthermore, I was constantly aware of my power and advantages in comparison to new immigrant women participants. In an attempt to avoid the potential biases of my own preconceived ideas, when I was in the field, I posed the same question in different ways and asked participants to clarify their responses. By doing so, I tried to ensure that I did not allow my own experiences to dominate the discussions.

Key Concepts

Three key concepts, stemming from theories of immigration and education, gendered immigration, feminism, cultural psychology, and social psychology informed the conceptualization of this dissertation research: motherhood, parenting, and agency.

Motherhood. Motherhood, a compelling and contested issue for many disciplines including psychology, education, and women’s studies, is the major topic of this study. A prevailing social construction of motherhood through media, childcare and parenting manuals, and policies tends to portray a woman’s choice to become a mother as a biologically-driven, joyous, sacred mission to perpetuate the human race (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). Nevertheless, this discourse represents just one side of a highly complex story. Women come to mother roles by a variety of routes, so the experience of motherhood is inextricably compounded by many factors including race and class. Research on women’s experience of motherhood is important because the mothering role intimately
affects women’s lives and wellbeing. For instance, studies of postnatal depression have suggested that women’s perceived experience of motherhood and social support strongly affect women’s adaptation to being a mother (McIntosh, 1993).

Adrienne Rich’s book *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* was published in 1976. Using her own experiences as a mother, Rich illustrated motherhood in two different perspectives: the “potential relationships or experience generated from motherhood” and the “institution of motherhood.” By the potential relationships or experiences of motherhood, Rich meant the relationship “of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to the children” (Rich, 1976, p.13). These relationships often revolve around the facts, experiences and instincts of motherhood. In contrast, the institution of motherhood, as Rich defines, “aims at ensuring that that potential—and all women—shall remain under male control” (Rich, 1976, p.13).

Rich acknowledged that the experience of motherhood is stressful, stifling, and tiring, yet also unique, invigorating, and oftentimes empowering for women. However, owing to the institution of motherhood that expects and constrains mothers to comply with only one way to perform the mother role, under patriarchy, mothers are trapped in the ideology of “good mothers” as operationalized and normalized by doctors, social workers, media, and laws (Smart, 1996).

Since Rich’s book was published, theories and systematic research on motherhood has advanced. In 1987, Louis Genevie and Eva Margolies published *The Motherhood Report—How Women Feel about Being Mothers*, an extensive...
review of 1,100 surveys completed by U.S. mothers. The authors address various themes about mothers’ emotions, experiences, and concerns and conclude that the norm of motherhood is ambivalence (Genevie & Margolies, 1987). A good illustration is that on the one hand, many women express tremendous satisfaction and joy from seeing their children’s physical and cognitive development, but on the other hand, they also report feeling stressed because of the time and energy required to care for their children (Genevie & Margolies, 1987).

**Race, class, and cultures.** Many scholars have done research on motherhood, but few scholars have written on how race, class, and the interaction of these factors affect women’s experiences of motherhood. Mothers in different social circumstances may experience motherhood differently and may have different interpretations of what motherhood means (Collins, 1994; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). For instance, Magwaza (2003) compared Black and White mothers’ experiences of motherhood in Durban, South Africa, and found that Black and White mothers’ contemporary mothering styles were strongly influenced by their cultural and historical background, as well as the cultural environment, especially the historical apartheid regime.

Studies on structural differences of motherhood and mothers’ lived experiences are also underdeveloped (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). Feminist and sociological theorists have critiqued the omission of structural differences between mothers and the omission of experiences of motherhood from people of color and working class mothers (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). Typically, samples of convenience have lead many previous studies of motherhood to report findings
based on an over-representation of participants from a narrow demographic: white, middle-class, and heterosexual.

Other underdeveloped lines of research on this topic include how women’s attitudes toward motherhood and children relate to various aspects of their value systems as well as studies about the familial, cultural and historical context in which values and beliefs are translated into individual practice and experience (Woollett, 1991). Consequently, my research aims to address issues regarding minority mothers’ motherhood, structural factors affecting mothers’ lived experiences, and the relationship between women’s original beliefs and mothering attitudes (immigrant mothers’ mothering practices in the host country).

Patricia Hill Collins states, “Survival, power, and identity shape motherhood for all women” (Collins, 1994, p.72). Historically, feminist analyses typically lacked an adequate race and class analysis of motherhood (Collins, 1994, 2000). Consequently, white and middle-class mothers’ experiences are considered as normative and become a benchmark to misinterpret other ethnic women’s motherhood actions as failures to fulfill maternal responsibilities. As a counterpoint, Patricia Hill Collins’ analysis of Black motherhood calls for developing *self-defined analyses* and examining survival, power, and identity to reveal how racial ethnic women in the U.S. fashion motherwork (Collins, 1994). She also identifies specific maternal beliefs and practices of Black women as distinct from Euro American middle-class mothers and, points out ironically, how these beliefs and practices both oppress and empower these women at the same time. For example, for African Americans, individual survival, empowerment,
and identity require group survival, empowerment, and identity (Collins, 1994). So many times Black women sacrifice their own needs in order to make sure their children are safe and secure (Collins, 1994). Collins also encourages studies on minority women’s motherhood and its contexts to make visible and give voice to women who are unacknowledged or misunderstood in mainstream culture and in literature.

Examining Black mothers’ lived experiences from interviews and narratives, Collins (1994) identifies five enduring themes in Black motherhood. All of the themes reflect a particular history and ecology in which Black women have been situated. From the specific intersectional position interwoven by different social categories including race, gender, and class, Black women have negotiated struggles imposed on them and have developed extensive survival skills (Collins, 1994, 2000). For example, one of the enduring themes of Black motherhood is a shared responsibility for taking care of children with other women. In many African American communities, “bloodmothers” are supported by “othermothers”—women who assist “bloodmothers” to fulfill mothering responsibilities in extended families (Collins, 2000, p.178).

Motherhood as a symbol of power for African American women to engage in Black women’s community work also manifests in Black motherhood. Black women often actively participate in communities by serving as “othermothers” and, consequently, their involvement forms one important basis for power within Black civil society (Collins, 2000, p.192). Viewing motherhood as a symbol of
power can catalyze women to take actions that they otherwise might not have considered.

Cultural influences on motherhood are also worthy of considerable attention. Collins examines mothers of different cultural backgrounds and explains how racial ethnic mothers’ motherhood is shaped by various complicated historical, social, and cultural contexts. For instance, Native American women can draw upon a tradition of motherhood and woman’s power inherent in their cultures (Collins, 1994). Marilou Awiakta offers a powerful summary of the symbolic meaning of motherhood in Native American cultures: “I feel the Grandmother’s power. She sings of harmony, not dominance. And her song rises from a culture that repeats the wise balance of nature: the gender capable of bearing life is not separated from the power to sustain it” (Collins, 1994, p.71). In a similar vein, because of a specific cultural, political, and historical background, Collins reports that “many Asian American mothers stress conformity and fitting in as a way to challenge the system” (Collins, 1994, p.71). For women especially those who are situated in racial domination, such as immigrant women, the everyday activities of mothers maintaining tradition and family ties can be viewed as resistance against oppression (Glenn, 1994).

Identity. Research on mothering, motherhood, and parenting has provided extensive findings on factors pertaining to mothering experiences. Some studies conceptualize motherhood as an interpretive process (e.g. Gonzales, 2005; McMahon, 1995), whereas others explain motherhood as a series of stages
(Mercer, 2004). The following section articulates the individual and structural aspects of motherhood.

In terms of individual aspects, women’s motivation to want children, maternal efficacy beliefs, family structure, family members’ support, and interpersonal relationships all play a role in shaping the effect of mothering on women’s lives (Brody, Flor, & Gibson, 1999; Gerson, Alpert, & Richardson, 1984; Mercer, 2004; Pan, 2005; Valsiner & Lawrence, 1997). Women’s identity also plays a role in shaping their mothering experiences (e.g. Gonzales, 2005). The term identity has been conceptualized differently depending on the discipline. In nursing, Rubin (1967) develops a theory of maternal role attainment assuming that women achieve maternal identity through a series of stages in maternal role-taking and a sense of comfort about the past and future (Mercer, 2004). Factors contributing to maternal identity development are feelings of attachment to the baby, self-reported and observed maternal competence, role strain, and mother’s new sense of self (Mercer, 2004).

Feminist philosopher Linda Alcoff’s (2006) elaboration on identity as an interpretive horizon is particularly valuable in explaining new immigrant women’s mother identity development and experiences of motherhood. The concept “identity as interpretive horizon” is a metaphor that enables researchers to articulate the substantive context and location from which a given subject develops understanding. In other words, the ways the individual experiences and interprets her/his experiences are mediated by the social location where she/he is located and the horizon she/he can see from the location (Alcoff, 2006; Darling-
Wolf, 2004). Alcoff (2006) writes, “The mediations performed by individuals in the processes of interpreting their experience and the world are produced through a foreknowledge or historical a priori that is cultural, collective, historical, and politically situated” (p.96). She further explains the nature of interpretive horizon, “Horizons are open-ended, and the situatedness of horizons as a material and embodied situatedness, and not simply mentally perspectival or ideological” (p.102). In other words, people see through interpretive horizons underpinned by different identities to understand and develop their experiences in a particular context. At the same time, their interpretive horizons are reshaped and reconfigured.

Cultural differences are reflected in mothers’ ethnotheories, developmental goals, and aspirations for their children (Rogoff, 2003; Rosenthal & Roer-Strier, 2001). Research indicates that it is culture, rather than parental experience, which strongly influences how parents arrange efforts to achieve socialization and developmental goals for their children. Rosenthal and Roer-Strier stress that, “…ecocultural context shapes parents’ perceptions and understanding of the reality in which they live as well as the core values which guide their interactions with the world, people, and their own particular society” (p.21). This is especially true of minority and immigrant women who develop a private culture reflecting their culture of origin (Berry, 1997).

*New immigrant women as minority mothers in Taiwan.* There are two principle reasons why new immigrant women in Taiwan are considered minority mothers. Firstly, new immigrant women come from less economically developed
South Asian countries and are married to lower class Taiwanese men. Oftentimes, both the wife and husband have low levels of education, so they are situated in the lower social class and struggle to overcome economic, language, social, and cultural barriers. Secondly, owing to public discourses wherein new immigrant women are consistently portrayed as gold digging uneducated mothers, they are discriminated against in family, school, and societal settings at a personal level as well as on a national scale. In Don’t Call Me a “Foreign Bride” (Hsia, 2005), there are numerous personal accounts of new immigrant women’s experiences of struggles and institutional analyses about how national policies and laws have systematically discriminated against new immigrant women by providing unfair treatment or outright lack of accommodations.

*Images and norms of Taiwanese mothers.* In a traditional Confucianism-oriented society, giving birth and raising children are believed to create a special bond to enhance the conjugal relationship. In other words, giving birth is one of the primary purposes of marriage. Especially in Vietnam, the term *Tinh cam* refers to an emotion, sensibility, feeling, and sentiment that arises within one’s self and can be shared mutually. Regardless of the motivation and mechanism through which the couple is married in Vietnam, establishing Tinh cam with one’s husband is important (Pashigian, 2002). Vietnamese women expect to change their daily lives and the affective content of their marriage through children (Pashigian, 2002). Children may bring “cheerfulness” to the family and create a new focal point, refocusing attention from the woman to her child. Family
happiness and harmonious relationships are very significant to a recently married woman because she is a new member of her husband’s family. Consequently, the relations between wife and husband, and wife and in-laws, become closer (Whitmore, 1984).

Similar to the case in Vietnam, Confucianism significantly impacts Taiwanese culture. However, because of contemporary modern Western influences, economic development, and women’s education, the institution of motherhood in Taiwan is different from that in Vietnam.

A famous proverb symbolizes the expectation of Taiwanese mothers’ infinite capability “To be a mother means you will be strong (wei mu ze chiang)(為母則強)” Motherhood is a state from which Taiwanese women develop and demonstrate extensive abilities to protect their children (Pan, 2005). In terms of the children’s sex, the preference for boys is now less due to the low birth rate and other societal changes. However, especially for a traditional family, at least one boy is considered necessary for couples. Boys hold high family status because only a son can continue a kin group’s practice of ancestor worship, as daughters are considered to be members of their husbands’ families. The primary responsibility for maintaining the family altar is very important and only passed through the paternal line from eldest son to eldest son. If a woman’s firstborn is a son, or at least she bears a son, she will not need to worry about securing her position in the family, especially if the husband is the eldest in the family. For educated women, a number of patrilineal practices that valorize males have been
deemed feudal. However, it is still a widely held traditional value that every family should have at least one boy.

The discourse of motherhood in Taiwan remains under patriarchy control (Pan, 2005). The idea is still commonly held that a dichotomy between public and private spheres corresponds to men’s and women’s work. Mothering is generally viewed as a private and individual responsibility in Taiwan and the evaluation of mothers is still tied to children’s achievement and wellbeing (Pan, 2005; Pon, 1996). Like mothers described in the literature, Taiwanese mothers embrace their motherhood, express irreplaceable joy, and acknowledge the ambivalent attitude toward motherhood because of role strain (Pan, 2005). However, in contrast to Western mothers, Pan (2005) interviewed thirty-seven Taiwanese mothers and found that they rarely criticized the collective responsibility of child rearing ascribed by nation and society, whereas they described mothering as an individual responsibility. As a result, family structure and family members’ support were cited as the most important reasons behind Taiwanese women’s mothering decisions (Pan, 2005).

Parenting. Parenting practice, parent engagement, and parental involvement are terms used to describe parents’ efforts to raise their children to achieve various developmental goals (Harkins & Super, 1996). Parenting practices are studied extensively. For example, researchers investigate parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991), parenting practices for different-age children (e.g. Shelton, Frick, & Wootton, 1996), and parental ethnotheories (e.g. Harkins &
Most empirical research in this area addresses issues regarding the relation between parenting practices and children’s developmental outcomes.

Parent behaviors are highly predictive of children’s social-emotional learning and cognitive development in home and school settings (e.g. Sheridan, et al., 2010). Parental practices of positive coaching (Nettles, Caughy & O’Campo, 2008), valuing education (Sheridan, et al., 2010), having high expectations, promoting learning by managing educational resources (Nettles, Caughy, & O’Campo, 2008; Sheridan, et al., 2010), and offering educationally-conducive home environments have been shown to be positively correlated with young children’s academic performance (Hill, 2001). Parents’ preparation for children to excel in school is not limited to offering physical settings. More importantly, parents supply complimentary educational work, defined by Griffith and Smith (2005) as work done by parents to help a child’s work as a learner in school, for instance, checking homework or reading with children. Moreover, collaborative partnerships among parents and teachers are also predictive of child social-emotional outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002), social skills (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007), and academic attainment (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007).

In terms of structural factors, social class and cultural background significantly affect family-school relations (Carvalho, 2001) and parenting practices in home and school. In Annette Lareau’s (2000, 2003) ethnographic studies of the relation between parents’ social class and school participation, she illuminates the discrepant natures of children’s family lives, parent involvement
based on parents’ social class, and the complex effects of social class. She reports that parents’ social class determines their positions in the social stratification system, and equips parents with different viewpoints on children’s development as well as their academic and social skills. In middle-class families, grounded in the belief of developing their children, parents purposefully bring children to different activities such as soccer practice and piano lessons. In Lareau’s view, this is a process of concerted cultivation in which middle-class parents engage children. As a result, their children are equipped with various skills and a sense of entitlement when they are interacting with adults and authority figures. In contrast, working-class parents, instead of developing children, aim to accomplish the natural growth of children’s development. Consequently, children of working-class families have more free time and do not participate in structured activities as often as their middle-class counterparts. As a result, children of working-class families develop a sense of distance and distrust of authority figures and feel constrained in their institutional experiences (Lareau, 2003).

What matters most in terms of the relationship between parents and teachers is that parenting practices of middle-class parents dominate school. Unfortunately, teachers are oftentimes unaware of the discrepant nature of parenting practices and inaccurately presume that every parent has similar educational competence, (Lareau, 2000, 2003; Ramirez, 2003; Rueda, Monzo, & Arzubiaga, 2003). To some extent, this is because the dominant discourse of normal parenting practices is the discourse of middle-class parents (Lareau, 2003). Consequently, lower class parents feel a strong sense of exclusion and self-
doubt about helping their children, whereas upper-middle class parents demonstrate strong autonomy to complete teacher requests and negotiate levels of involvement in school and at home in order to pursue their personal interests (Lareau, 2000).

The inconsonance between dominant parenting practices and those of minority parents also occur because of cultural factors (e.g. Shwalb, Shwalb, & Shoji, 1996). Because of various historical, societal, and ecological contexts, people develop corresponding cultural repertoires including parental practices (Rogoff, 2003). In other words, regardless of cultural backgrounds, all parents raise children and expect them to grow. But the ways they raise children and the goals they expect children to achieve may differ according to the cultural and ecological context. With the growing trend of immigration around the world, the possibility of seeing various parenting practices is more and more common. Schools in the host society and immigrant parents are facing challenges because of the discrepancy between parents’ and children’s growing experiences, as well as the contexts where they are situated. The body of research on immigrant families has documented the complexity of immigrant parents’ adaptive parenting practices and the challenges they face (e.g. Lopez, 2001; Ramirez, 2003; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). For instance, Ogbu and Simons (1998) observed that voluntary immigrant minorities compared educational opportunities and benefits in the U.S. with those in their home country, viewing good education as a key in achieving upward mobility in American society. As a result, voluntary immigrant parents encourage children to learn the language and culture of the host society so that
they can succeed there. Voluntary immigrant parents view learning new culture and new language as an addition to their original culture and language. Importantly, voluntary immigrant parents pragmatically trust in schools and teachers as experts who can teach children the societal rules, and they hold their children responsible for their school performance.

Another camp of researchers shows the discontinuity between immigrant children’s home culture and school culture and they find that immigrant children’s poor school performance is due to the divergent educational beliefs and practices between school and family. For example, Rueda and colleagues (2003) found that Latino immigrant families possess cultural and social capital, but the capital is neither easily understood or valued by schools. As a result, children cannot easily or efficiently transfer the knowledge they are socialized with at home to their school settings, and parents have difficulties helping children with schoolwork, because the parents do not understand how to fulfill teachers’ assignments and expectations.

Moreover, immigrant parents’ parenting practices are compounded by factors related to social class. Therefore, when endeavoring to understand parenting practices, it is imperative to interpret those practices as embedded in a particular social-cultural-historical context, instead of interpreting them as a set of scripted rules in isolation (Lopez, 2001). Unfortunately, people often use a deficit model to interpret differences and parenting practices of minority parents are oftentimes viewed as inadequate or deviant. Thus if minority children fail in school or get involved in gangs, their parents are often unjustly blamed.
Research on new immigrant women’s parenting practices. Because of the rise in divorce rate and the number of single-parent families, Taiwan passed the Family Education Act (jia-ting-jiao-yu-fa) (家庭教育法) on January 7, 2003. The Family Education Act aims to promote family function and relationships through educational activities. Parent education is listed as the first item in Article 2 of the Family Education Bill. The Taiwanese government emphasizes the importance of parenting and its impact on children's cognitive and physical development; consequently, research on parenting and education has grown. Studies of new immigrant women's parenting and their children's development have also emerged.

“New Taiwanese children” is a term specifically referring to children of new immigrant women. This term came into use and prevailed because of a series of reports on families of new immigrant women published in a popular Taiwanese financial magazine—Common Wealth in 2003 (Hsia, 2007). In the past decade, research on new immigrant women and new Taiwanese children proliferated in Taiwan. In regard to studies on cognitive development and academic performance of new Taiwanese children, there are mixed findings. Some studies have shown that children of new immigrant women do not perform differently from their counterparts (e.g. Liang, 2010) whereas other studies have shown that new Taiwanese children perform below average in school (e.g. Chang, 2007; Na, 2007).
Regardless of positive or negative research findings, generally, people in Taiwan still report that children of new immigrant women are falling behind academically and report that the cause of this downfall is new immigrant women’s perceived status as uneducated and poor. Research conducted on new immigrant women’s parenting has indicated that children’s poor academic performance is the result of new immigrant women’s low Mandarin-Chinese literacy levels (Na, 2007; Wu, 2004), their inattention to children’s academic performance (Chung & Chao, 2009), and the lack of appropriate parenting knowledge and practices (Chung & Chao, 2009; Lin, 2007). At the same time, the family condition and dynamics in which new immigrant women’s parenting practices take place are oftentimes overlooked or even misinterpreted with labels of low socio-economic status. Additionally, most of the studies adopted a deficit model to investigate the family of new immigrant women, and, consequently, generated empirical findings that contribute to stigmatizing new immigrant women and their families (Hsia, 2007).

Agency. Agency is an under-theorized term. Generally, the concept of agency connotes an individual’s capacity to act (Ahearn, 2001), self-generated influences (Bandura, 1989, 1995), or purposeful actions to resist social constraints (Parker, 2005).

Theoretical filters. According to Bandura’s (1989) social cognitive theory, human agency refers to the capacity to exercise control over one’s own thought processes, motivation, and action (p. 1175). Bandura describes agency as interactive; people make causal attributions reciprocally among cognitive,
affective, and other human factors, and environmental events. Most importantly, any account of the determinants of human action must include *self-generated influences*. People make causal contributions to their own psychosocial functioning through mechanisms of personal agency among which personal efficacy is central (Bandura, 1995). Through the reciprocal processes of cognition, motivation, affection, and selection, people have the capacity to generate novel ideas and innovative actions to transcend their past experiences and achieve their goals. (For details, see Bandura, 1989, 1995). Further, Bandura found that efficacy beliefs operate as causal factors influencing how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. Self-efficacy is affected and developed by mastery experience, observing social models (vicarious experiences), persuasion, and personal physiological and emotional states. Unlike cognitive and developmental psychologists who study agency mainly on the intrapsychic domain of human functioning, anthropologists, feminists, and sociologists have raised significant questions about structural influences on individuals and call for a contextualized analysis of agency (e.g. Gardiner, 1995).

Within a constructivist paradigm, cultural anthropologists and sociologists propose that agency, and the tools of agency, are social and cultural, and are mediated through socio-cultural values and practices (Ahearn, 2001; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998; Mehan *et al.*, 1996). Specifically, individual interpretations of environmental constraints are based on available culturally grounded resources. Consequently, individuals adopt pragmatic accommodations and produce their own meaning systems to interpret the world in which they live.
In order to reveal such creative, as well as resistant, practices under oppression, scholars have called for researchers to examine the daily practices operating in an individual’s life and lived experiences (e.g. Ortner, 1995).

Critical anthropologists and feminist scholars not only recognize the structural and environmental influences on people (especially on women), but also highlight the subordinate status of people under oppression. For these scholars, agency is an issue of power: it necessarily addresses relations of social inequality, and it comes into play in the operation of power differentials between genders and between other social groups as well. The capacity to become an agent is potentially available for everyone, but interpersonal and discursive fields of power shape such capacities that may inhibit or enable them (Gardiner, 1995). Agency is, therefore, of particular relevance for those who experience historically produced, institutionalized subordination. In a patriarchal society, women are subaltern in comparison to men, although other factors such as race and class also confound one’s status. Hence, feminist scholars often deploy the term agency to refer to an active subaltern, a woman with the capacity to make choices and voice to express her choices (Parker, 2005; Riger, 2000). Agency often opposes forces of oppression and is expressed as the action of the individual who seeks to escape the constraints of society (Parker, 2005). Hence, in this body of literature, the terms agency and resistance are oftentimes interchangeable and the concepts are interwoven.

To elaborate, critical anthropologist Ortner (1995) called for resistance studies to attend to the psychological ambivalence and the social complexity of
resistance. Thus Ortner suggested exploring the politics between the oppressor and the oppressed and the internal political complexities. She also pointed out that resistors should be understood as socially and culturally constructed. “Every culture, every subculture, every historical moment, constructs its own forms of agency, its own modes of enacting the process of reflecting on the self and the world and of acting simultaneously within and upon what one finds there” (Ortner, 1995 p.186). In other words, investigating the particularities of cultural and historical context where the actors are situated allows us to better understand agency and its limits.

I operationalize new immigrant women’s agency as the capacity to act individually, to create self-generated influences (Bandura, 1989, 1995), or purposeful actions to resist social constraints (Parker, 2005). I am particularly interested in agency as it relates to unequal power differentials in new immigrant women’s daily lives. When the exercise of agency aims to resist oppression, it is important to realize that resistance and accommodation can be, and oftentimes are, co-existing and intertwined. The elements that constitute resistance in a given action for an individual can be interpreted as accommodation of subordination for others (Weitz, 2001). It is crucial to explore the complexity and nuances of the exercise of agency. This research can reveal the extent to which agency can be displayed, and the opportunities and limitations involved can be better understood. Agency does not necessarily transform the overall underlying asymmetrical relations inherent in the society (Parker, 2005). This is because individual agency is more local and has minimal impact on reconstituting more
resilient structural features such as the unequal legal regulation for new immigrant women (Liao, 2005). An individual’s exercise of agency can empower her/himself but may also reinforce hegemonic discourse that oppresses people as a group (e.g. Gagne & McGaughey, 2002).

Semiotic mediation as a means to agency (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998) is of special interest in the analysis of new immigrant women’s narratives. Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, and Cain (1998 p.38) elaborate, “It [Semiotic mediation] is an indirect means--one modifies one’s environment with the aim, but not the certainty, of affecting one’s own behavior--and it requires a sustained effort”.

Feminist scholars also raise significant philosophical questions about social reality and its connection to agency. For example, law scholar Pollack (2000) raises questions about what comprises choice; “How do we conceive of choice, especially the impact of oppression on a person’s choice?” Furthermore, she proposed a concept of relational autonomy as a useful tool to analyze female lawbreakers’ agency (Pollack, 2000). Relational autonomy defines autonomy based on the subject’s relationship to the dominant power structure and access to resources; thus it acknowledges that even under oppressive conditions, individuals can still be agenic and make choices (e.g. Gagne & McGaughey, 2002). Consequently, researchers can examine the options and nature of the choices based on such a framework. Feminist scholars argue the inadequacy of traditional assumptions that people have pure agency and treat mind and context as separate spheres (Gardiner, 1995).
**Structural and environmental influences.** Drawing on a constructivist paradigm and cross-cultural research, critical anthropologists and feminist scholars insist that environmental or contextual factors are crucial and should not be separated when interpreting human motivation and behaviors. From this perspective, gender-related behaviors are cultural and context-specific, determined by the historically produced power structure, and highly flexible (Connell, 2002).

In the immigration process, immigrant women are oftentimes situated in a subaltern position because of their female (in comparison to male), racial (in comparison to dominant race in the receiving country), and foreign (in comparison to native) characteristics. In order to survive in a new context, immigrant women are forced to adapt to the new cultural environment and actively create survival practices. Not surprisingly, much of the research on immigrant women and agency employs a constructivist worldview to examine the meaning and influences of immigration on women’s personal well-being, subjectivity, and social status (e.g. Constable, 2003). Furthermore, most such studies are conducted by feminist scholars or cultural anthropologists who favor an emic perspective of the subjects’ lived experiences in a particular socio-cultural-historical context. An emic perspective means that immigrant women’s personal accounts and how they make meanings of their immigration experiences are the focus of those studies.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Constructionist Grounded Theory

After reviewing various qualitative research methods, I chose constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1997) for this research. Instead of building preconceived hypotheses from theories and testing them in the field, grounded theory requires that researchers begin with data in particular contexts and develop categories and hypotheses from those data (not from preconceived theory), and through constant comparison, arrive at a midrange scope, grounded theory (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1997).

Different from classical grounded theory, constructionist grounded theory follows a constructionist epistemology and pays close attention to how participants interpret and make sense of their world. In other words, constructionist grounded theorists assume that knowledge rests on social constructions (Charmaz, 2009, p.130), and the research process and outcomes are constructed and influenced by the researcher’s stand point, positions, and interactions. The goal of this type of research is to make the constructed realities explicit in analysis by locating participants’ actions and meanings in relevant, larger social structures, even when the participants are not aware of such structures (Charmaz, 2009).

Although the purpose of this study is not to develop a theory, I found that the assumptions of constructionist grounded theory fit best with my research
questions. The unit of analysis in this study is new immigrant women in Taiwan and their experiences and agency regarding motherhood.

Cases

In summer 2008, I spent two months contacting new immigrant women, and building relationships with individuals who work with them through personal networking including my two social worker friends, my mother’s insurance agent friends, my neighbor, and new immigrant women’s agency websites. I also have two close friends—Teacher Chang and Teacher Shao (pseudonyms) who were teaching new immigrant women in Chinese Literacy Programs in Taipei, the metropolitan capital of Taiwan, and in Chiayi, a small rural county in Taiwan. It was through this network that I met many new immigrant women.

In June 2009 and January 2010, I sat in Teacher Chang’s and Teacher Shao’s Chinese Literacy Program classes to observe new immigrant women’s learning conditions and class interactions. I observed from 6:30pm until 9:30pm in Teacher Chang’s class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I observed Teacher Shao’s class on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. By doing so, I was able to better grasp new immigrant women’s daily life, understand the quality and content of the Chinese Literacy Programs they experienced, and build closer relationships with participants.

I approached perspective participants after their Chinese Literacy Program classes, as a friend of Teacher Chen and Teacher Shao, and explained my study verbally. I also shared a written information letter (See Appendix A and Appendix B), answered any questions, and arranged interviews.
I interviewed twenty-five new immigrant women for this study; 10 participants through my friends’ Chinese Literacy Program classes, and 15 participants through my other personal networks. The participants came from a variety of countries and social statuses. They had attained different levels of education and had lived in Taiwan for 2 to 20 years. I sought variety in participants’ family type (nuclear or extended family), jobs, and husbands’ occupations, and recruited participants with children of different ages in an effort to explore the potential changes of mothering practices and concerns coinciding with children’s developmental stages. Participants’ children ranged in age from 5 months to 16 years, and participants had between one and four children. Table 2 displays the demographics of the new immigrant women in this study. All names are pseudonyms based on participants’ Chinese names and the corresponding English translation. Only first names are listed below because this was the way the women introduced themselves.
Table 2
Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Len</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuan</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>High school unfinished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhong</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>High school unfinished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayang</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen Hua</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yushen</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Help in home business</td>
<td>High school unfinished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim Chai</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Shen</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Help in home business</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awan</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Part time interpreter</td>
<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afong</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fong Li</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Selling fruits on street</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahen</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Help her husband in his work</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anny</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Interpreter in a migrant worker company</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan-Ni</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Nanny</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuhui</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Part time tea picker</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muyin</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>A labor in a food processing factory</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zen Chin</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Assistant</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Part time interpreter for government</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Part time interpreter for government</td>
<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satana</td>
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<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noa</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alva</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Business with migrant workers</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Junior high school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

Interviews provided the main source of data for this study. Oral interviews are particularly valuable for understanding women’s perspectives (Anderson & Jack, 1991). Whereas field-observation of new immigrant mothers would have been ideal, I needed to respect the cultural context of these women's lives. For example, home is considered a private space for most families in Taiwan, and systematic observations of new immigrant women’s mothering practices and family interactions would not be viewed as natural or welcomed.

I conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews with each of the participants. These interviews lasted from 1 hour to 5 hours. Through “truly collaborative encounters” (DeVault & Gross, 2007) with the participants, we sought new meanings together. I conducted these interviews, based on participants’ convenience, in restaurants, workplaces, and the classrooms of Chinese Literacy Programs. Working with participants in their daily life settings over time offers the best conditions for them to tell their life stories (Riessman, 2008). I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews and offered each of the participants a meal or small gift in appreciation for their time and willingness to share their perspectives of motherhood.

Ethnographic techniques. Respecting time constraints and barriers of the cultural norm in Taiwan, I used ethnographic interview techniques elaborated by Spradley (1979) when examining the new immigrant women’s experiences of motherhood. I also interviewed family members, teachers, marriage brokers,
officials or directors of the government agency or non-profit organization that
caters to new immigrant women’s needs.

The ethnographic interview, different from other forms of interviews, is
expected to be carried out as an open-ended, friendly conversation. Three specific
elements including explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations, and ethnographic
questions, direct these interviews through friendly formal or informal
conversations between the researcher and the participants (Spradley, 1979). This
process allows each interview to be unique so as to unveil the individual
experiences of each informant, emphasizing the role of culture, from the
participant’s perspective.

Feminist scholars also provide significant insights on how to conduct
interviews. For example, feminist scholars have underscored the importance of
the investigator’s reflexive awareness during interviews and throughout the
research process (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Fonow & Cook, 2005). Thus,
researchers should remain attentive to the dynamics of the interview and be
prepared for challenges or debates. Consequently, I employed the tactics of active
listening, strategic disclosure of personal experiences, overtly acknowledging the
differing social roles of myself and the participants, as I tried to understand and
explicate these new immigrant women’s experiences and beliefs about
motherhood, and tried to develop relationships with the participants to better
understand their unique and individual perspectives. Commonly, I disclosed my
struggles about being an international female student in the U.S., and juggling my
roles as a woman, a daughter, a worker, and a student. I also related my
experiences in a cross-cultural relationship to invite their comments on my own and other participants’ situations. By doing so, I found that I could shrink the power distance between us. Employing these techniques enabled participants to feel comfortable enough to share in-depth about their experiences.

Language considerations. As Riessman (2008) suggested, the investigator ought to conduct interviews because the interpretive process starts during these conversations. Consequently, I conducted the interviews in Mandarin-Chinese, Holo-Taiwanese (one of the dominant Taiwanese dialects), and English, at the participants’ discretion, as I cannot speak many participants’ first languages including Vietnamese and Indonesian. Thus, throughout the process, I was aware that participants may have encountered difficulties fully expressing their opinions and feelings. However, the pilot study showed that participants felt comfortable expressing their experiences using the mainstream languages. These participants were able to articulate their opinions, and they all rejected the offer of a translator. Additionally, some researchers have found that immigrant women interviewees felt empowered to have a chance to practice and make themselves understood in their non-native language when they were accommodated in a friendly atmosphere (Kouritzin, 2000). Thus, I ensured that the interviews were conducted in a friendly and comfortable environment with enough time for participants to elaborate their experiences of motherhood.

Topics. Interview questions covered new immigrant women’s demographic information, their mothering beliefs and practices, and experiences of being a mother in Taiwan. Demographics included age, country of origin,
duration in Taiwan, number of children and children’s age and sex, women’s educational attainment, husband’s occupation and educational attainment, and their household makeup (nuclear or extended family). Questions about mothering practices and beliefs were 1) What is the reason that you became a mother? 2) What is a mother’s responsibility? 3) Are there any differences between mothering beliefs in Taiwan and in your home country? If so, what mothering practices do you adopt? 4) Do you feel that you are different after becoming a mother? 5) Once you became a mother, did any lifestyle changes occur such as family members’ way of treating you or with your workload rearrangement? 6) What are the best and worst experiences of being a mother? 7) On what occasions did you feel empowered and frustrated? (See Appendix B for a complete list of questions). Additionally, I asked participants about their feelings and impressions regarding other women’s lives. Specifically, I asked about new immigrant women who do not have children and about Taiwanese mothers. My strategy was to provide reference points for participants to articulate their own situations including their mothering beliefs and the structural context in which their motherhood experiences take place.

Observations

Besides ethnographic interviews of new immigrant women and individuals in their social network, I also observed new immigrant women in Chinese Literacy Program classrooms, in their homes, and in their workplaces if the situations allowed. By doing so, I built rapport with the participants, and the field notes generated from these observations provide another avenue toward a deeper
understanding of new immigrant women’s daily lived experiences, particularly those experiences of motherhood.

Translations

Traditionally, the role of translator in cross-language studies is rarely mentioned. It is assumed that meanings can be “translated” if the corresponding words are correct. Nevertheless, Tempe and Young (2004) explored the importance of the translator and the potential dynamics and research ethics in relation to the phenomenon of researcher as translator. They argued that speaking for others is always a political issue and the matter of translation is not the meaning itself. Instead, translation is an issue of epistemology and ontology because it deals with approaches to knowledge producing, and, consequently, power (Tempe & Young, 2004). Specifically, when researchers need to translate such data, they face the question—who can represent whom in cross language research? There is no absolute answer to this question, and the most crucial strategy for researchers is to be reflexive about translation in the research process (Tempe & Young, 2004).

Because this study involves interviews in Mandarin-Chinese, I faced the translation issues. I reflected on these issues at various points in the research process. Initially, I decided to delay the translation of the interviews because I believe in the ontological importance of using my first language to interpret participants’ meaning making in the interviews. Because my first language is Mandarin-Chinese, I felt more comfortable and confident that I would understand the analyses best in Mandarin-Chinese. Thus, I avoided the issue of collusion that
could have resulted from first translating all interviews into English then conducting the analyses in English. My Taiwanese colleague—An-Chi Lin, who earned her Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education at Arizona State University in 2009, was my consultant for translation. An-Chi Lin was capable of such a responsibility since she took courses in qualitative research methods and she also utilized qualitative methods for her dissertation study in Taiwan. She validated the meanings of my interpretations based on Taiwanese cultural contexts.

Challenges still emerged in the process of Chinese to English translation. I tried to literally translate participants’ responses from Chinese to English in order to keep participants’ voices and show the authenticity of their responses. Nevertheless, there are specific language usages and Chinese idioms which become difficult to understand or sound illiterate after translation. For example, “wo dan zi hen da (我膽子很大)” is literally translated to English as “I have big guts.” When one reads such a sentence, one may get a sense of the authenticity of the response, but may also assume that the respondent is illiterate. Certainly, it was not my intention to portray some participants as illiterate, when in fact they spoke eloquently. However, in some cases, it is inevitable that literal Chinese-to-English translations may give the impression of illiteracy. In addition, the degree of Mandarin fluency of each participant varied; some participants expressed themselves fluently, while others used very basic and simple language to answer the interview questions. Thus, as long as the translation was understandable in English, I kept the literal translation of responses. If the literal translation of the
response did not make sense in English, I translated it based on corresponding meanings in English. As a result, when reading the various responses, one can experience the richness of participants’ voices and get a sense of the authenticity of their responses.

Analyses

I adhered to analyses procedures and guidelines from grounded theory (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). When I was in the field in Taiwan in 2010, after interviewing three participants, I simultaneously analyzed the data with open coding. First, I transcribed the interviews and started with line-by-line coding of each transcript as suggested by Charmaz (2001). I developed codes and then categories from data, thus generating questions for subsequent data collection. After coming back to the U.S., I transcribed all interviews and started line-by-line coding again. I used specific terms to assign meaning to each line of the data next to the transcript. After finishing the line-by-line coding for all transcripts, initial codes were created. Initial codes helped me to sort data into categories and begin to see the process of new immigrant women’s motherhood (Charmaz, 2001). Along with coding the data, I wrote memos and diagrams that provided a record of my understanding of the researched phenomenon at the time. After the initial coding, axial coding was launched which meant that I grouped the discrete codes together based on the commonalities reflected in each code. For example, the code Bring Children to Doctors fit into a category of codes that I called Mother’s Responsibilities, which referred to participants’ views of a mother’s responsibility.
After axial coding, well-developed categories were produced. Then, in a process known as selective coding, I selected the codes that closely responded to the research questions. This level of analysis is also called “thematic level” (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005), and the identified underlying messages of these categories were treated as themes. Toward the end, when well-developed categories, themes, and memos were available, I sought patterns and interrelationships between each category and constructed a visual model of these relationships. At the same time, I examined my developed conceptual analysis of the data in terms of existing motherhood and immigration literature. During the analyses, I used theoretical sampling, a systematic method of selecting participants in grounded theory. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to select participants whose experiences are of theoretical relevance to develop the theory.

I needed to locate participants’ voices in a particular historical context and to recognize each response as emerging from a complex situation of local and global raced, classed, and gendered relationships, that is, in DeVault and Gross’s (2007) term, to produce “relational knowledge”. Research grounded in feminist perspectives has revealed that women’s expressions of their unique experiences as women are often muted, especially when their experiences are different from those of men (Anderson & Jack, 1991). Consequently, it is highly possible that women present two distinct, conflicting perspectives when they are talking about their experiences, because one perspective reflects the dominant view, whereas the other perspective is informed by their personal experiences (Anderson & Jack, 1991). Thus, in order to accurately grasp women’s perspectives, researchers must
attend to both the dominant and muted channels of women’s voices. In order to achieve that goal, I found Anderson’s and Jack’s (1991) strategies for “listening for meaning” enabled me to analyze how women understood their actions. These strategies include three ways of listening: 1) attending to moral language, 2) attending to meta-statements and 3) attending to the logic of the narrative.

Examining moral language informs researchers to look at the relationship between a respondent’s self-concept and cultural norms and to see the respondent’s self-judgment. Meta-statements relate to the respondent’s awareness of a discrepancy within the self. Meta-statements can offer a window for the interviewer to see what categories the respondent is using to monitor her thoughts. Finally, the logic of the narrative refers to the internal consistency or contradictions within a participant’s narratives. By listening to the recurring themes and the connections of each statement, the researcher can understand the assumptions and logic that the participant used to interpret her experiences.

Validity

Denzin (1978) has described four types of triangulation: data triangulation, methodological triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theory triangulation. In this study, data triangulation enhanced validity because data were collected from various sources (immigrant women from different countries who now reside in different cities in Taiwan) and forms (interviews and observations). Information was verified through participant checks that ensured the validity and reliability of my data as I reframed participants’ responses and reiterated these in order to verify my comprehension.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

After following the analysis procedure guided by constructionist grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), several major themes emerged. Often, the contexts where these themes are embedded are overlapping and related. For instance, every participant reported a view of mothers as all-powerful. This theme fits both Research Question 1: How do new immigrant women experience their motherhood, and Research Question 2: How do new immigrant women conceptualize and contextualize their mothering experiences. To illustrate the themes, I categorized them in terms of the research questions. For example, I put the theme of “all-powerful mothers” with Research Question 1: How do new immigrant women experience their motherhood. Table 3 shows the numbers of participants whose responses evoked each theme. As noted in Chapter 3, I used pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Only English translations of participants’ first names were used to identify their corresponding responses. In order to contextualize individual responses, each participant’s demographic information, including their country of origin, job, educational attainment, and family type will be articulated the first time their names are mentioned.

After all the themes are discussed based on each research question, through theoretical lens, the following section is a further articulation of new immigrant women’s motherhood, mothering beliefs as well as practices, and agency as embedded in a larger social, cultural, and political context.
Table 3

Major Themes by Sample (n = 25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Children bring irreplaceable joy and a reason to live</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>All-powerful mothers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Motherhood is a heavy and life-long commitment and responsibility</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Motherhood is universal</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Motherhood transforms a woman</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Foreign bride identity as agency</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Agency as social and cultural capital accumulation through motherhood</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Emphasis on children’s academic achievement</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Early discipline is essential</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>A lack of confidence in teaching children</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Enrolling children in after school academic program</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A need for immigrant adult-oriented and student-centered non-deficit education program</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>By providing love, new immigrant women display effective parenting practices</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 1: How do new immigrant women experience their motherhood?

All participants reported common lived experiences of motherhood from labor and delivery to their children’s current issues. Twenty out of twenty-five new immigrant women talked about intense labor pain, happiness, worry, exhaustion, despair, challenges in parenting, and the strategies they used to pursue the best quality of life for their children. The themes that emerged from this question include Theme 1: Children bring irreplaceable joy and a reason to live and Theme 2: All-powerful mother.

All participants evoked Theme 1: Children bring irreplaceable joy and a reason to stay. To illustrate, responses from Kim Len, Noa, Lily, Chuan, and Kim Chai follow.

Kim Len is from Vietnam. She gave birth to her son and then discovered her husband having an affair during the first year of their marriage. Once, when Kim Len awakened in the middle of night and walked downstairs for water, she saw her husband sitting on the sofa with a woman in his arms. She was shocked and could barely walk back to her bed. At one point she attempted suicide. Fortunately, her son found her in time, so the suicide attempt did not succeed. At the time, Kim Len was struggling to adapt in Taiwan with very limited Chinese language proficiency, so it was really difficult for her. After three unhappy years, the marriage ended in divorce. Kim Len still lives with her son and her ex-mother-in-law although her ex-husband moved away. Currently, she works as a waitress in a restaurant everyday. Kim Len only had 8 years of education in
Vietnam, but she has studied hard in the Chinese Literacy Program and earned her diploma. Kim Len’s son, both literally and figuratively, gave her a reason to live.

Kim Len: When I found my husband’s affair, it was like the end of the world. I cried endlessly. I didn’t want to live, so I took many sleeping pills [to commit suicide]. My son found it and saved me. I can’t continue my life if I don’t have my son. If I don’t have my son, I had already left this heartbreaking place. There is nothing to keep me here.

Noa, is a single mother from Thailand. I met her in Teacher Shao’s class, where she showed a strong motivation to learn Chinese and computer skills, but Noa complained that she was too old to learn effectively. She only attended elementary school in Thailand. She works as a janitor and lives with her daughter in a friend’s home. Noa evidenced that her daughter added irreplaceable joy to her life.

Noa: My happiest moment in life is to see her [her daughter] grow up, well behaved, and doing well in school. I like kids. My daughter accompanies me so I am not lonely anymore.

Lily dropped out in junior high school in Indonesia. Her husband is a tour-bus driver. She lives with extended family members including her mother-in-law and her brother-in-law’s whole family. She works as a part-time interpreter and commented on the happy family atmosphere her children have brought to her life.

Lily: I was so bored when my kids were not around me. For example, last time when they went to visit their aunt in Kaohsiung, I was really bored. I like to have them with me and we do things together.

Because all participants are in the middle or lower social class, most of them work full time in low-paying jobs in order to support the family. Twenty-two out of twenty-five participants specifically mentioned the joy children bring
to comfort them after a long work day. To illustrate, responses from Chuan and Kim Chai follow.

Chuan finished high school in Vietnam. She works everyday without any breaks as a barber in her mother-in-law’s barbershop. She lives with her husband, two preschool sons, and mother-in-law. She described the joy her son brought after a long day working.

Chuan: My older son is a sweetheart. Whenever I come home tired, he runs to me and says ‘Mom, you are tired. Let me give you a massage. Lie here, I will rub your neck.’ Even I am really exhausted, when I see him, I don’t feel tired anymore.

Kim Chai is from Vietnam where she earned an elementary school education. She works as an hourly laborer in a factory during the day and takes care of her paralyzed father-in-law at night. Her household consists of her two grade-school children, her husband, and father-in-law. Her husband’s brothers live next door. Her husband is a factory laborer. Kim Chai commented on how her children had made her life easier.

Kim Chai: I love my children. They are so cute. We [the family] never went on trips or anything like that. Everyday the same routine takes place: work, eat, take care of my father-in-law and children, sleep, wake up, and work again. But after I had children, life is easier and happier.

Twenty-five participants’ responses evoked Theme 2: All-powerful mother. New immigrant women described the identity of mother listing characteristics of courage, endurance, perseverance, and strength. To illustrate, responses from Awan, Anny, Inhong, Hui, Kim Chai, and Chuan follow.

Awan is from Vietnam and works as a part time interpreter for government services. She has a high school diploma. Her husband works in his sister’s
advertisement business. Awan lives with her husband and two children. She discussed her life in Taiwan and the realization that her children make her strong. “If this is for my children’s benefit, I can do whatever for them.”

Anny has the highest education among all participants. She earned her college diploma in Indonesia. Now she works as a part-time interpreter in a migrant workers employment company. Her husband is a construction worker, and only gets called to work when there is a need, so his income is not stable. Anny vividly described how motherhood significantly increases a women’s strength.

Anny: Children make a mother strong and braver. I was afraid of many things including cockroaches. Now I am not afraid anymore. I have very big guts.

Inhong, is a tailor from Vietnam, and the sole income provider in her family. Her husband has poliomyelitis and is now out of work. He used to sell clothes, but closed the business due to the economic recession. Inhong lives with her husband and her only son, but everyday her husband and her son interact with her mother-in-law and her brother-in-law’s family. Inhong described a mother’s endurance and perseverance.

Inhong: Women can endure and persevere much more after assuming the mother role. There is no other way.

Hui is from Cambodia. She dropped out of high school because girls are not expected to pursue too much education in Cambodia. She works as a technician in a local factory and provides the family’s main income. Hui lives with her two sons and husband. She coldly grumbled about her husband, but wholeheartedly
expressed her love for her sons. She proclaimed that her role as a mother offers her strength to endure the difficult relationship with her husband.

Hui: I stay in my marriage for my sons. I am willing to sacrifice my youth for them.  
I: Is it worthy?  
Hui: It is worthy. I am willing to do whatever for my sons.  
I: You are so brave.  
Hui: Every mother is brave. After you become a mother, you will have the courage.

Kim Chai took a mother’s strength for granted as she described her daily routine.

I: You go to work at 8:00 am and come home at 7:00 pm. You need to cook and take care of your family. You also need to take care of your paralyzed father-in-law in the evening. When is your sleep time?  
Kim Chai: (smile). I don’t sleep much.  
I: You are so strong and perseverant.  
Kim Chai: Every mother is like that.

Mother’s power is also presented in physical endurance. Chuan described her extremely painful birthing experience, but emphasized the significance of her son’s birth.

Chuan: I was in really bad pain; I was in labor but I could not make it so I was in Caesarian section. Every woman only gets one kind of pain but I got both. (laugh). My poor husband! I was in such a pain so he let me bite his hand. His hand even bled. It was awful! However, the moment I saw my son I didn’t feel pain anymore. Regardless how much pain I endured, after the baby was born, you didn’t feel any pain and it was worth it.

**Question 2: How do new immigrant women conceptualize and contextualize their mothering experiences?**

Every new immigrant woman in this study explicitly referred to motherhood as an important, heavy responsibility characterized by words such as “worry”, “freedom”, “critical”, “responsibility”, and “commitment”. The themes
that emerged from this question include Theme 3: Motherhood is a heavy and life-long commitment and responsibility, Theme 4: Motherhood is universal, and Theme 5: Motherhood transforms a woman.

Twenty-five responses evoked Theme 3: Motherhood a heavy and life-long commitment and responsibility. To illustrate, responses from Chen-Hua, Awan, Inhong, Yuhui and Thanh Shen follow.

Chen Hua, the only stay-at-home wife who did not work, is the oldest new immigrant woman in this study. She is 52-years-old. Chen Hua is probably the richest woman among the participants because her husband owns a business. She graduated from high school in Vietnam and married her husband twenty years ago. Chen Hua lives with her two sons, husband, mother-in-law, and an Indonesian caregiver who takes care of her mother-in-law. She sighed deeply in the beginning of the interview. She discussed a mother’s different tasks corresponding to children’s developmental stages.

I: Could you share your feelings of being a mother?
Chen Hua: (a deep sigh) To be a mother is exhausting. You have many things to worry about. You worry about different things at different stage. For example, my younger son has asthma, so if he couldn’t sleep, I couldn’t sleep either when he was young. Now my sons grow up as adolescents. They don’t listen to me, so I am concerned.

Awan compared her discrepancy before, and transformation after, giving birth.

Awan: When you don't have children, you are free. I started to worry from the moment I knew that I was pregnant. I was concerned about my child's health, how to take care of him, the money I had to raise him, things like that. Now my kids grow up, and I am worried about their academic performance and peer relationships. There are a lot of things to worry about your children.
Inhong shared her perspective of a good mother. When I asked her about new immigrant women who left their children behind and left the family, Inhong commented angrily.

Inhong: They are not mothers. This type of women who left their children are not mothers. Mothers should carry the sacred mothering responsibility. Mothers should persevere even in hardships. Look at me. I have such a unfortunate life. I have to work so hard as a tailor everyday and I got the mental illness (depression) but I didn't leave my son. It is a huge commitment.

Yuhui is from Indonesia. She told me that she was enrolled in college in Indonesia, but she dropped out so that she could go to work. Now, Yuhui works as a tea-processor. She appreciates the flexible nature of this job that allows her to take care of her daughters. Because tea trees grow seasonally, Yuhui's work and income varies with the seasons, too. Her husband is a construction worker. She lives with her husband and two adolescent daughters.

Yuhui: It is my responsibility to accompany my children in their life journey. Kids are like a kite, sometimes you need to let it go and sometimes you need to pull them back. But you always need to be there for them. Mother should accompany children, not only satisfy their materialistic needs.

Thanh-Shen finished high school in Vietnam. She and her husband work in her husband’s family-owned sofa factory in Chaiyi City. When I met Thanh-Shen in 2008, her immediate family (with two children and her husband) had just moved out from the extended family. She described her reason for staying in Taiwan, despite her despair regarding the financial situation of her primary nuclear family in Vietnam.
Thanh-Shen: I won't leave my children. I saw too many children whose mothers left them behind. Poor kids! They are so lonely without their mother. Children are innocent. No matter what happens, no matter how bad your husband behaves, you should think about child. Children are innocent. They are the most important.

Twenty-five responses evoked Theme 4: Motherhood is universal and does not vary with discrepant cultural backgrounds. To illustrate, responses from Anny, Kim Chai, Yuhui, and Yushen follow.

I still remember that in the beginning of our interview, when I asked Anny to share her mothering experiences, she looked puzzled and responded to me by saying, “Why don't you ask your mother? It is the same.” Additionally, because I am a woman, several participants related motherhood to my sex and assured me that I would know everything about mothering once I had my own child. Each time I asked about being a mother in Taiwan versus being a mother in the participant’s country of origin, I heard nearly identical responses.

Kim Chai: It is the same. I don't think it is different

Yuhui: It is the same. As a mother, you need to teach and cultivate your children.

Yushen is from Vietnam. Her husband and she both work in a family-owned fish ball business with the parents-in-law. She seemed to have a close relationship with her husband and family-in-law. She got married and came to Taiwan in 2007, so in terms of duration in Taiwan, her time was the shortest among the participants. She lives with her husband, her daughter, and the third brother-in-law. Her second brother-in-law’s family live next door. Her daughter
was ten months old. When I asked Yushen about her motherhood, she also said, “It is the same. Everything is for our children.”

Twenty-five responses evoked Theme 5: Motherhood transforms a woman. Responses from Yuhui, Anny, Hui, Noa, and Yushen reveal experiences about personal growth, a change of life style, and transcendence from childhood to adulthood.

Yuhui: You grow, you think twice before you make decision. To be a mother makes me mature and achieve adulthood. When I was single, I earned a lot, but I didn’t save any because I spent all my money. Now, I need to plan everything ahead and prepare for my daughters. You also become a role model for your children, so you need to change.

Anny related her personal growth and advancement of wisdom after becoming a mother.

Anny: After you became a mother, you grow, you know how to be an adult, and be able to tell who is good and who is bad. This is because you need to protect your children. It is so natural. You don’t need to learn; it comes along [with motherhood] by nature.

Hui commented on her personal transformation after marriage and motherhood.

Hui: I was really naïve. Coming to Taiwan opens my eyes. I work so hard because I believe I deserve what other Taiwanese people have. I am also determined to earn more money for my sons. To be a mother, I have to be strong.

Noa complained about her daughter’s 4th grade teacher because the teacher did not offer enough time for physical activities. Noa believed that the lack of physical activity was the reason that her daughter’s heath was sub-optimal. Interestingly, Noa attributed the teacher’s indifference to the fact that she was
single and not a mother. So, Noa thought that motherhood can make a woman mature and know what is important for children.

Noa: The teacher is not good. She only cares about students’ academic performance, not their health. So she always keeps her students in class for correcting the test errors in recess. It is in vein; if you don’t have good health, good performance means nothing. This is not good for students. The reason why she is doing this way is because she is not a mother. She is too young. She is only a kid; she is too young to know what is important.

Yushen, a relatively new mother in comparison with other participants, expressed her feelings of transformation after becoming a mother.

Yushen: I was so innocent and stupid. I was so young and just got married. Now I am a mother. I feel like that I am still a child, but now I need to take care of my child. Because I am a mother, I need to be tough and prepare for my daughter.

Question 3: How is agency developed and displayed in new immigrant women’s mothering practices? How does agency influence new immigrant women’s mothering practices?

The themes that emerged from this question include Theme 6: Foreign bride identity as agency and Theme 7: New immigrant women’s agency as social and cultural capital accumulation through motherhood. To illustrate Theme 6, responses from Lily, Anny, Chuan, and Hui follow.

Lily invoked her status as a foreign bride when she complained about a suspended privilege. The privilege at issue was her daughter's eligibility to attend a free after-school program. Her daughter had already attended the program for three years, since first grade. Lily contended that the program caters to the needs of foreign brides, so, in Lily’s estimation, her daughter was entitled to participate.
Lily: I went to the director of the after-school program and asked her why my daughter could not attend the program anymore. I told her that I am a foreign bride. This program is in place for foreign brides.

Interestingly, after I read the information letter about the free after-school program, I realized that the program is for minority families including at risk children or children in poverty, not exclusively for new immigrant women’s families. When I explained the eligibility standard, Lily seemed puzzled and murmured against the regulation. From my observation, Lily embraced her identity as a new immigrant woman and took for granted the social services developed for new immigrant women. Thus, in Lily's case, agency appeared as a sense of entitlement for social services.

Anny also embraced her identity as a foreign bride to maneuver through life’s challenges. She earned a college degree in Indonesia and was complaining about the discrimination against new immigrant women when I met her in 2008. However, in our conversation about how she handled her daughters’ schoolwork in 2010, Anny’s response surprised me because she seemed to embrace her foreign bride identity as a means to overcome social barriers.

I: Is your daughter’s teacher nice to you?
Anny: They are pretty nice, but you know, I am very sweet. I compliment teachers a lot. I have my way. I always politely ask the teachers all questions by saying, “please explain the question, I don’t understand. You know, I am a foreign bride.”
I: Didn’t you tell me that you feel discriminated against as a foreign bride before?
Anny: Not really. I am a foreign bride.

Chuan also used her foreign bride identity to display the agency of overcoming social constraints. In our conversation, Chaun often referred to the
hardships she had experienced at an early age in Vietnam. Hence, all the
difficulties and challenges she faced in Taiwan were nothing in comparison to the
hardships she had endured in Vietnam.

Chuan: When I was 16, I needed to wake up at 2:00 am on the farm and help. In the morning, I brought vegetables from the farm to market. But this job didn’t make me earn much money, so I changed my job. Then I worked in a pedicure service. I also sold clothes. I had done everything. So now, my life is really comfortable in Taiwan. I can sleep until 7:00 am. Sometimes I cook; if I don’t want to, I can buy [food]. Life is so easy in Taiwan. In comparison to Vietnam, it is so easy. So I am not afraid of anything. I really appreciate my husband because he changed my life [by marrying Chuan and bringing her to Taiwan]. I am very fortunate.

Hui expressed a sense of pride and self-confidence about her identity as a new immigrant woman. She was proud of her accomplishments in Taiwan and appreciated the marriage opportunity so she could come to Taiwan “to see the world.”

Hui: It is really annoying to encounter discrimination against foreign brides. But I don't care; I just think they are crazy and stupid. If they encountered the same situation as me, I don't think they can adapt so well like me. Coming to Taiwan really opened my eyes. I want to fulfill myself.

Social capital is defined as a set of intangible resources and networks in families and communities that provide a basis for social cohesion and enable people to cooperate for mutual benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, social capital can bring actual or potential resources derived from network or group membership. New immigrant women, by virtue of their mothering responsibilities, use various opportunities through official and unofficial sectors to build their social capital. School is an example of an unofficial sector. Fifteen participants befriended other new immigrant women when they met mothers of
their children’s classmates in school or at teacher-parent conferences. In terms of official channels, it is common that new immigrant women make friends with classmates when they attend the Chinese Literacy Program that now is required by government for new immigrant women to earn their citizenship. Before the requirement was in place, attending a Chinese Literacy Program was optional.

Many new immigrant women started to join Chinese Literacy Program when their children entered elementary school. This is because new immigrant women began to recognize that the lack of Mandarin-Chinese proficiency would impede their ability to help with their children’s schoolwork. To illustrate new immigrant women’s social capital accumulation through motherhood, responses from Zen Chin, Noa, Chuan, and Yushen follow.

Zen Chin has a high school education in Indonesia. She lives with her husband, her 2-year-old daughter, and parents-in-law. Zen Chin’s husband is a car salesman and their family finance is stable. Now Zen Chin works part-time as an assistant in a local restaurant and still looks for a full-time job. She explained her motive to attend Chinese Literacy Program and how she made friends with an Indonesia woman—Yuan-Ni there.

Zen Chin: I met Yuan-Ni in Chinese classes. In the beginning I learned really slowly, so learning Chinese is challenging and frustrating. But I want to teach my daughter so I stay [in class]. Yuan-Ni helped me a lot. Sometimes, we hang out and go shopping together too.

Noa stressed the importance of social networks.

Noa: It is very difficult if a person does not have any friends. When I came to Taiwan, in the beginning, I didn’t have any friends. I wish I had more friends. Now, after my daughter was born, I came to the Chinese classes
and know more people. I am glad now I can ask Teacher Shao and the Principle to answer some questions.

In one of our interviews in 2009, Chuan showed up an hour late and apologized. She explained that she was delayed because she went to help her friend.

Chuan: Poor my friend! Her husband was involved in a huge trouble—he pushed a police officer. Now the officer wants to sue him. So my friend is so scared and cries continuously. She doesn’t have many friends, so I go to help her. I knew her because her son is my son’s classmate.

Yushen: In the first year, I cried a lot. The only person I care most is my husband. I was lonely and depressed. Then my father-in-law found the Chinese Literacy Program and enrolled me in the class. I met many new foreign brides especially women from Vietnam. I was so happy to make new friends from the same background. We exchange information such as the procedure of citizenship application. The school also provides many social activities, so I don’t feel lonely and helpless anymore.

Motherhood does not only enhance new immigrant women’s outside social network, familial relationships are also altered. To illustrate how motherhood can transform familial relationships, responses from Anny, Zen Chin, Yuhui, Yuan-Ni, Kim, and Alva follow.

Anny has daughters in 2nd grade and 4th grade. Anny complained vehemently about her situation in Taiwan when I interviewed her in 2008. She complained about her husband's unemployment and financial tightness. When I went to visit her in 2009, I asked her if the situation had changed.

I: How is your husband now?
Anny: He is nice to me now. He saw the girls’ (daughters) good grades so he knows that I am not like other foreign brides.

Zen Chin and Yuhui both felt their husbands became nicer once they have children.
Zen Chin: My husband was very happy when we have the first daughter. Actually when we [new immigrant women] birth a child to our husbands, they will treat us better, better than before. Everybody told me that.

I: Do you feel any change of relationships between you and your husband after you had your daughter?
Yuhui: The relationship became closer. It feels like we are a complete family now. He becomes more responsible.

Yuan-Ni felt her mother-in-law treated her nicer after she was pregnant.

Yuan-Ni: Actually, I don’t like children. But my mother-in-law is very eager to have a grandchild. Moreover, I think kids can make me settle down, so I am pregnant now. My mother-in-law was nice to me, but now she treats me even better.

Kim graduated from high school in Vietnam. She works in her husband's furniture store in Taipei. She lives with her only daughter, husband, and mother-in-law. Kim described the change in her family dynamic after she became a mother.

Kim: After I have children, I get more allowance from my husband and mother-in-law. I feel they trust me more. I bring children with me to everywhere including meeting my friends. My husband used to ask me about details including where I went or who I hang out with, but he doesn’t ask me nowadays.

Alva is the only participant from the Philippines, and she has a high school diploma. She lives with her parents-in-law, husband, and her two grade-school age children. She owns a business at her home helping Philippine migrant workers to send remittances back to their families in their home countries.

Alva: First, I had my daughter. I knew they wanted a son, too. But at the time, my relationship with my husband and parents-in-law were not very good. So I didn’t really sleep with my husband. But after a long time of consideration, I decided to give them a boy and that’s why I had my son. My parents-in-law were very happy. They took care of my son very well, and they started to treat me better than before.
Education, as cultural capital, increases new immigrant women’s agency through motherhood. According to Bourdieu (1979), the concept of cultural capital refers to knowledge, embodied dispositions, goods and education that afford higher status in society. Often, cultural capital is cultivated through home background and formal education (Bourdieu, 1979). In this study, all of the new immigrant women expect their children to pursue higher education and have better careers. They all expect to accumulate children’s cultural capital through education. In terms of the participants’ own educational aspirations, mixed responses emerged. Three participants expressed strong motivation to pursue higher education in Taiwan. Nevertheless, due to time and economic constraints, most participants did not show interest for more education beyond the required Chinese Literacy Program. For instance, when I asked Anny and Thanh Shen if they were interested in advancing their education, they answered negatively citing that they were already overwhelmed from their jobs and did not have time for higher education. The women’s learning experiences are significantly affected by their levels of educational attainment, and not surprisingly, participants who had achieved higher educational attainment performed better academically, and were more interested in pursuing additional classes or earning a diploma.

Nearly all of the participants held a full time job and attended the government-funded Chinese Literacy Program evening classes for new immigrant women four times a week. When I asked them about the motivation for attending these classes after long hard work days, the women answered that, in the
beginning, they went to classes because it was mandatory or because they saw the need to help their children advance academically, and these classes gave the women the skills and abilities to help their children to learn. Moreover, the classes also provide new immigrant women an opportunity to develop social capital and cultural capital because they offer a space for them to make friends, exchange information, and understand children’s school experiences, as most of the classes are administered by elementary school teachers. Many new immigrant women also appreciated the opportunity to learn Mandarin Chinese and computer literacy skills, opportunities to which they previously had not had access.

To illustrate new immigrant women’s cultural capital accumulation through education (for their children and themselves), responses from Muyin, Alva, Noa, Hui and Kim follow.

Muyin earned her high school diploma in Indonesia. She works in a local food-processing factory. Her husband’s employment is not stable, so Muyin is the main breadwinner in the family. Muyin suffered from her husband’s domestic violence but she chose to stay because of the children. She attributes the violence to her husband’s unemployment. Muyin expected her daughters to achieve high academically.

Muyin: I hope my girls can study harder. They are doing fine now so I hope they will keep the good performance. So when they grow up, they can escape from poverty.

Alva recognized her English language skills as an asset and wanted to transmit them to her children.
Alva: Because I am from the Philippines, I can speak English. So I teach my children English. English is very important, and it is an international language. My children will be able to perform well in English class, too.

Noa resented her lack of education and attributed her misfortune to her low level of education. She wholeheartedly hoped that her daughter would receive higher education so she would be wise and not repeat her mother’s mistakes.

Noa: When you study more, you have extensive knowledge. So you will know what is good and what is bad. For example, if you have good education, you can read English or Chinese and understand the label on a medicine bottle. You will also figure out who is a good person and who is a bad person.

Hui expressed a strong desire for higher education so that she could grow with her sons.

Hui: I really want to go to school. I want to teach my sons on my own. I want to pursue higher education; the higher the better. I envy my friend who has a bachelor degree. She is also from Cambodia and now works in the Immigration Council. I want to be like her to pursue my own dream.

Kim seized an opportunity for increasing agency through the development of cultural capital by training as a storyteller in her daughter’s school.

Kim: In teacher-parent conference, I was invited by other parents in my daughter's school to join the story telling workshop. I didn't know what it was, but I wanted to try. I am glad I tried and succeeded. Now I tell story in my daughter's school every Monday morning. I like funny stories best. Because I am in the story mom group, now I know more about children's books and make Taiwanese friends. They share much information with me so I learn a lot. I like to grow.

**Question 4: What are new immigrant women’s mothering beliefs and practices?**

Twenty-two participants explicitly expressed the belief that mothers play a crucial role in children’s development. All of them self-identified as the main caregiver in their family and as the sole person responsible for disciplining their
children. According to these women, a mother’s role includes providing children love, disciplining children, and offering a physically, as well as a psychologically, conducive environment for children to grow and pursue their goals. The themes that emerged from this question include Theme 8: The emphasis on children’s academic achievement, and Theme 9: Early discipline is essential.

All new immigrant women in this study reported a belief that their children will have a good and happy life, and will be nice and productive adults. In order to achieve such goals, in accordance with the social emphasis on academic achievement in Taiwan, new immigrant women expected their children to earn the highest possible educational attainment. Yet, these women conceptualized a child’s academic success as determined by her/his basic intelligence and attitude toward studying. They overwhelmingly reported the belief that intelligence is mostly innate, but can be stimulated and developed by external factors including nutrition and academic programs. In contrast, they reported that a child’s attitude toward study is part of her/his innate personality and cannot be controlled, influenced or manipulated by external factors.

The Chinese character “shin” (心) is frequently used in participants’ elaborations about their children, especially when referring to innate, unchangeable characteristics. In Mandarin-Chinese, shin (心) means “mind”, “attitude”, or “core belief of a person”, (Chinese Dictionary). Responses from Inhong, May, Ahen, and Awan illustrate this perspective.
Inhong elaborated her beliefs about education and children’s attitudes toward academics as she referenced my higher educational attainment.

Inhong: I envy you [pursue a doctoral degree]. I wish my son is like you to pursue higher education as high as possible, but I know he won’t be. He is not stupid; he has the ability, but he doesn’t like studying. Children’s shin (mind/attitude) is so important. As a mother, you can give children the physical body, but you cannot determine children’s shin (mind/attitude).

May is from Indonesia. She has five children and her first daughter is mentally retarded. May was working as a technician in a local pharmaceutical factory. She also responded that personality and children’s attitudes are innate.

May: Children’s innate personality is so important. Boys seem to be lonely; they like to be attached with me. Girls are more like a helper. So we need to pay more attention on boys to make sure they grow well.

Ahen finished her elementary education in Vietnam. Her husband, Ming-Chung, has a college degree, making him the highest academic achiever among all husbands of new immigrant women who participated in this study. Ming-Chung chose to marry a new immigrant woman because he was in a hurry to get married before his father passed away. Ming-Chung wanted to ease his father’s mind with knowledge of the marriage. Ahen works with her husband raising chickens and growing crops. They live with two grade-school daughters and Ahen’s mother-in-law. Ahen echoed the belief that children’s attitudes and self-motivation are fixed and essential in determining academic attainment.

Ahen: It depends on the child her/himself. If she/he doesn’t want to study, no matter how much you push her/him, it won’t work.

Furthermore, ten out of twenty-five participants overtly claimed that their children were smart. The remaining new immigrant women did not explicitly say
that their children had high intelligence, but none of them reported a lack of intelligence among their children. Many participants recognized the possible barriers their children may face in comparison to Taiwanese children due to the mother’s lack of Chinese proficiency or the family’s lack of economic resources. For example, Lily expressed her worry that her daughter may encounter difficulties in school because Lily cannot teach her the homework due to a lack of language facility and specific subject knowledge.

I: I saw some news about low intelligence of new immigrant women’s children. How do you feel about that news?
Awan: My children are smart; there is no deficit. The only difference between my children and Taiwanese children is that my children know one more language [Vietnamese].

As evidenced by the sentiment above, new immigrant women expect their children’s academic success, but they are also very conservative about their children’s academic performance in real life. So, even though they all reported high expectations for their children’s academic achievement, they also emphasized children’s autonomy in determining their own achievement. For instance, Chen-Hua commented on her expectation for her sons.

Chen-Hua: I like them to attain as high as possible, but I don’t want to stress them out. You know, now there are many people commit suicide. Ultimately, it is still in children’s hand to decide what they want to be.

Similar to immigrant minorities in the U.S., new immigrant women’s frame of educational comparison is the comparison of educational quality and opportunities between Taiwan and their home countries (Ogbu, 2003). When new immigrant women in this study compared the quality of education in their home country with the quality of education in Taiwan, all of them reported a belief that
the quality of education in Taiwan was better so that their children should benefit more if they receive education in Taiwan. In accordance with this belief, the women echoed Taiwan’s societal emphasis on educational attainment. Twenty-five responses evoked Theme 8: The emphasis on children’s academic achievement.

To illustrate, responses from Noa, Anny, Inhong, Yuhui and Yuan-Ni follow.

Noa: I want my daughter to have higher education and cultivate as many as possible skills. Now she is young so she can learn many skills. She does not have much worry now. When she grows up, she will have a boyfriend and won’t have the time for study. Right? If she can develop extensive skills now, when she grow up, she can be more independent and have less worry. …I really hope she can at least earn a college diploma. So she can be a teacher or have a decent job.

Anny: My older daughter like dancing. I don’t like her dancing. Dancing is useless because dancing won’t bring good income. It can only be a hobby. But actually dancing is not so bad because she can represent her school to perform in many different places.

Inhong, who always grumbled about her poverty and her husband’s laziness held high expectations for her son’s academic achievement. She commented on the connection between education, career, and life.

Inhong: I want him [my son] to study as much as possible, so he will earn a lot of money in the future. Then I will have a good and easy life. The most important thing in the world is money. If you have money, you will not face hardships in life. I want my son to achieve as high as possible. The more he learns, the more he understands. If you don’t learn, your knowledge will be very limited. Look at education in Vietnam. Students study too little. They only go to school half of a day; schooling time is too short. Vietnamese can’t manufacture anything; even not a bicycle. Everything is imported. So Vietnam is so poor.

Yuhui: I told my daughters that if you don’t have good education, you will have a hard time finding a good job or even a job. I also told my husband
if we didn’t make sure children were on the right track, we will have an exhausting life to support them to go to private schools [due to the high cost of tuition].

In 2008, when Yuan-Ni was still pregnant, she told me that she would teach her child well and make sure that her child performed excellently in school. In 2010, when I met Yuan-Ni again in Chinese Literacy Program class, she repeated the expectation.

Yuan-Ni: I won’t repeat my mother-in-law’s mistake [to spoil her son]. I won’t spoil my daughter. I will teach her and make sure she is doing well in school from a very young age. I will supply all the goods for her to pursue higher education. So when I get old, I can rely on her.

Chuan echoed the expectation, highlighting her willingness to invest significant economic resources to help her son reach this goal.

Chuan: I am willing to spend so much money to send my son in a private preschool is because I don’t know how to teach him.
I: But the tuition is so expensive.
Chuan: That’s OK. I know my money is sweat money, but that is the reason I work hard—for my kids. When we provide good educational opportunities for my son, he will achieve higher so he will look down on unskilled, low-pay jobs.
I: But how about public preschool? Public preschools are much cheaper than private ones?
Chuan: The quality varies significantly. My neighbor's son goes to a public preschool and he gets out of school at 3 o'clock and does not learn anything. But my son's school finishes at 5 o'clock, and his curriculum is so rich. He learned Math, Phonics, Writing and even English. There is a huge gap between private and public preschools.

Like other new immigrant women in the study, Hui also emphasized her sons’ academic achievement, but felt sorry for their poor performance. In our 3-hour conversation, Hui expressed her concern over her sons’ performance frequently. She expressed great concern about their grades, but did not find an efficient and workable way to help her children.
I: Who is reading school's announcements?
Hui: Me, most of the time. (Sigh). Their grades are not very good.
I: Do you understand enough Chinese so you can understand [the school announcement]?
Hui: Most of the time; if I don't understand, I will ask.
I: Ask whom?
Hui: Ask my sons. I am concerned about their academic performance.
I: You seem to be very worried about their schoolwork?
Hui: Absolutely. I don't know how to help them. I feel quite helpless.

I also observed a correlation between children’s ages and the reported quality of teacher-mother interactions. Specifically, new immigrant women with preschool children did not report feeling uncomfortable when interacting with teachers, whereas women with older children found it challenging and sometimes humiliating. Chuan illustrates this point. Chuan had two preschool-age sons. When I inquired about her experiences with her son's school personnel, she reported exclusively positive experiences.

Chuan: All the teachers are very nice to me. They are so polite and always tell me how great my son did in school. They are very grateful to us. They should thank us [new immigrant women]. If we foreign brides do not marry Taiwanese men and have children, all the preschools will close.

In contrast, nineteen of twenty-five participants described bad experiences interacting with public service officials, including teachers. Responses from Inhong, Thanh Shen, Lily, and Noa illustrate new immigrant women’s frustration and disappointment in these exchanges.

Inhong shared her experience with a doctor when her son caught the H1N1 flu.

Inhong: The doctor was so strange. When I talked about my son’s situation, she just kept laughing. Finally, she stopped me and asked my husband to describe my son’s illness because she could not help but laughing. She was so weird and rude. I just told myself she was crazy.
Thanh Shen is the mother of a fourteen-year-old daughter and a ten-year-old son. When asked about her interactions with her children’s teachers, Thanh Shen complained.

Thanh Shen: To be honest, teachers won’t listen to you [parents] nowadays. Now, every student attends after-school academic programs or has tutors. If your kids fall behind, the teacher will blame the parents, not themselves.

Lily expressed her frustration with the staff of the free after-school program.

Lily: I don’t understand why my daughter cannot join the program anymore. I talk to the staff and she just didn’t understand. I even brought Ms. Lai [a Taiwanese mother] with me. Ms. Lai said the staff is strange. Could you represent me to talk to the lady? I think my daughter is entitled to join the program.

Noa was very concerned about the lack of recess in her daughter’s class, but she did not dare to communicate this frustration with the teacher.

I: Why don’t you talk to the teacher?
Noa: It is useless. She won’t listen to me. She is proud of her students’ distinguished academic performance. She won’t take my words into consideration. She will defend. I don’t think I can make her change her teaching.
I: How about talking to the principal?
Noa: Will it work? I don’t think so. I am just a Thai [a woman from Thailand].

Many new immigrant women recognize the importance of early discipline. Twenty-two participants’ responses evoked Theme 9: Early discipline is essential. To illustrate, responses from May, Yuhui, Ayang, and Chuan follow.

May used bamboo as a metaphor to describe her belief about early child education.
May: Do you see the bamboo? Bamboos are so straight. Kids are like bamboos. You need to shape them when they are young. So later they will be straight like bamboos.

Yuhui told me that she and her husband discussed discipline in children’s early development.

Yuhui: I told my husband that we need to discipline children when they are young. So after they grow up, they will behave well so we don’t need to worry. If you don’t discipline children now, children will not perform well and we [parents] will have a difficult time, too.

Ayang is from Vietnam. She works in her own Vietnamese restaurant and is her husband’s second wife. Her husband has a daughter from his previous marriage, and Ayang and her husband have a son together. Ayang lives with the two children, her husband, and parents-in-law. Her brother-in-law, who also married a Vietnamese woman, lives next door.

Ayang: It is very important to teach children what is right and what is wrong when they are young. I treat my step-daughter and my son in the same way. Whoever is doing something wrong, she/he will be disciplined.

Twenty out of twenty-five participants support the practice of corporal punishment. Chuan also advocates early intervention. She believes that corporal punishment is necessary for disciplining young children, even though corporal punishment is banned in Taiwan. Chuan drew upon her own childhood experiences to justify the usage of corporal punishment.

Chuan: Even government prohibits corporal punishment, I will still do it. My sons are my children. I should have the right to decide how to discipline them. In Taiwan, children are too spoiled. When I was young in Vietnam, I was punished physically. I don’t see any inappropriateness.

Question 5: What are the specific practices related to children’s schoolwork in which new immigrant women are engaged?
I use the definition of complementary educational work (Griffith & Smith, 2005) to analyze participants’ practices specifically related to children’s schoolwork. So, if participants were addressing issues associated with children’s schoolwork such as helping with homework, or they were sharing their own interaction with teachers and school staff regarding children’s school performance, their responses were categorized and analyzed under this research question. Every new immigrant woman expressed high expectations for children’s academic attainment. However, not everyone was confident that they had prepared the most conducive environment for their children’s academic endeavors. Depending on the individual’s financial, as well as human, resources, participants revealed a variety of educational practices particularly targeting academic tasks. The themes that emerged from this question include Theme 10: A lack of confidence in teaching children content knowledge, and Theme 11: Enrolling children in after school academic programs.

By virtue of the lack of their own educational experiences, knowledge and resources, new immigrant women are disadvantaged in providing for their children’s school readiness. Although all participants emphasized the importance of education, many felt puzzled or discouraged in preparing children or helping with schoolwork. As a result, the women seek help from family members, coworkers, or after school academic programs to provide educational information or to teach children their schoolwork. In this study, new immigrant women trusted school teachers and relied on them (and after school academic programs) to teach their children. These women try to be “collaborative parents” which means that
they rarely express their concerns or challenge teachers’ pedagogical and
disciplinary decisions, even in uncomfortable situations. Unsurprisingly, as
mentioned in Research Question 4 (p.73), many new immigrant women feel
vulnerable or humiliated when they interact with their children’s teachers. Except
Yuhui and Anny, many new immigrant women displayed different degrees of
helplessness, anxiety, and a lack of control in helping with their children’s
schoolwork. Twenty-three participants’ responses evoked Theme 10: A lack of
confidence in finding resources or teaching children content knowledge. To
illustrate, responses from Alva, Kim Chai, Hui, and Mary follow.

Alva: I can teach English, but I can’t read Chinese so I can’t teach them
(children) other subjects.
I: So what do you do when kids need help in homework?
Alva: My sister-in-law will help them. When they have questions in
homework, they go to her.

Kim Chai told me that she was not involved in her children’s schoolwork at
all. She said that her husband is the one responsible for the children’s academic
work.

Kim Chai: My husband signs the parent-teacher log (lian-luo-bu) 聯絡簿
everyday. I don’t know how to write and read Chinese, so he does it.
I: How about the after school academic program? Who decides where to
send your children?
Kim Chai: My husband. He is in charge of children’s school work. I am
despaired about my son’s performance. His grade is bad, and my husband
physically punished him harshly. It doesn’t work, but he doesn’t know
what else to do. I wish I knew Chinese so I can teach or help my son.

Hui’s story is different from Kim Chai’s. Her husband cannot help with the
children’s academic tasks. Hui wants to be involved, but she does not have time.
She expressed her frustration honestly.
Hui: I saw high achieving children of other Cambodian wives. I was so jealous. I wish my sons can be high achievers, too. But I can’t be like the women to manage children’s schoolwork all the time. I have to work. I don’t have time. And my husband is useless. He doesn’t bring money home, so I have to work day and night.

Mary earned a high school diploma in Indonesia. Before she had her daughter, Mary was working in a clothes factory. Now, she works as a maid and as an interpreter for the government. Mary does not feel confident in teaching her children, so she sends her daughter to an after school academic program. She also received two months of government service to help with her daughter’s literacy development.

I: Do you help your kid’s homework?
Mary: No, I can’t. I can’t read Chinese.
I: So who can help her?
Mary: She goes to an after school academic program. She finished her homework there.
I: What else do you do to help your girl’s Chinese?
Mary: There is a teacher who comes to read stories for her.
I: What’s that? Could you tell me more details?
Mary: I received a notice from government that there was a reading program for new immigrant women’s children to enhance their literacy. You just need to make appointments with the teacher, then the teacher would come to your home once a week to read stories with your child every week for two months.
I: So is it still going on?
Mary: No, only for two months.

Nineteen participants have enrolled their children in after school academic programs. The reasons include a perceived lack of ability to teach children subject knowledge, the desire to equip children with extra skills, and to ensure children’s academic performance. The remaining participants offered various explanations for not having their children in an after school academic program. Yushen’s and Yuan-Ni’s daughters were too young to attend the program (infants). Awan sent
her children to the program once, but did not see the benefits so she quit sending them. Thanh-Shen and Hui wanted to enroll their children in the program, but they could not afford it. Anny trusted her ability to teach her daughters, so she did not see the need to enroll them in the program. To illustrate the majority of participants’ decisions to put their children in after school academic programs, responses from Satana, Fong Li, Afong, Ayang, and Kim follow.

Satana did not finish her junior high school in Thailand. She is working in a locally famous cookie factory in Chaiyi as a technician. The age difference between Satana and her husband is 28 years. Her husband previously married a Chinese bride, but that relationship ended in divorce. Satana lives with her husband and their 4th grade son. She expressed her reason to enroll her son in an after school academic program.

Satana: I can’t teach his (her son) homework. I can’t read Chinese, so I rely on the after school academic program to teach my son.

Fong Li earned her high school diploma in Vietnam. She makes a living selling pineapples in a wealthy residential area of Chiayi. Fong Li lives in an extended family with her husband, parents-in-law, and two daughters. She described a practical need in addition to the homework supervision component of the after school academic program.

Fong Li: I rely on the after school academic program to supervise my daughter’s school work. Also, I work late, so I can’t pick up my older daughter when her school finishes. The program staff picks my older daughter from school and she stays there until 7:00 pm. Then I can pick her up and go home.
Afong earned a 5th grade education in Vietnam. She lives with her husband, children, and parents-in-law, and works part-time in a restaurant. Afong has two children: the eldest is a son with mental retardation, and the other is a typical daughter. She commented that children should learn more skills to enrich their abilities when they are young since they have more time.

I: Will you send your daughter to after school academic programs? Afong: Of course. Now she is young so learning is not a big deal. She is young so she does not worry. After she grows up, we don’t know what will happen. She may have a boyfriend, and then she won’t have the mood or time to learn, right? It is better for her to learn more skills now. She will be able to think more and won’t fall into traps set by bad people. She can be independent and live on her own.

Ayang sent her daughters to after school academic programs so they can improve their academic performance.

Ayang: My oldest daughter is not doing well in Mathematics, so I send her to learn it. I only send them to English or Mathematics classes because they do not perform well in these two subjects.

Kim also used an after school academic program to help her daughter catch up with other classmates.

Kim: I have to enroll my daughter to the after school academic program. Every parent does so; if I don’t, my daughter will fall behind.

Question 6: What are the implications of new immigrant women’s perspectives on motherhood for their education, including adult education and parenting education?

The themes that emerged from this question include Theme 10: A need for immigrant adult-oriented and student-centered non-deficit education programs, and Theme 11: Providing love is the underlying foundation of effective parenting.
practices. Regarding the Mandarin-Chinese language program required for new immigrant women, eighteen participants criticized the current curriculum and suggested a more comprehensive, instrumental, student-centered approach. Their responses evoked Theme 10: A need for immigrant adult-oriented and student-centered non-deficit education programs. To illustrate, responses from Awan, Mary, Thanh Shen, Yuan-Ni, and Kim Len follow.

Awan criticized the curriculum material.

Awan: I don’t like the curriculum. Why do we use the same curriculum as first graders? It is really boring. So in the beginning, there were forty students; now, only ten students regularly attended Chinese classes.

Mary complained about the constantly conflicting schedule of parent education workshops.

Mary: I really want to participate in the child-parent speeches. However, they always schedule the speeches in the daytime in weekdays. I need to work so I can’t attend. I wish they schedule the speeches and activities on weekends.

Boldly breaking custom in front of everybody in class, Thanh Shen questioned Teacher Shao, the lead teacher in the Chinese Literacy Program. Later, Thanh Shen told me that she envied her friend because her friend knew how to use computers and worked as a business manager in a company.

Thanh Shen: We want more computer classes. Why there are only 8-weeks [computer class]? We don’t want to learn how to make children’s crafts. It is useless. Could you ask the principal to make more computer classes? I envied my friend so much. I wish I were her. I want to learn computer and English. I really do.

Yuan-Ni demonstrated her teacher preference based on experience in the program.
Yuan-Ni: I like Teacher Chang better. She taught us many advanced Chinese and interesting information. I don’t like Teacher Lai. She always goofs off. Her students had learned nothing from her.

Kim Len had achieved the highest level of Chinese, 8th grade, compared to other new immigrant women in the study.

Kim Len: I really like the teacher in Shiuan-Shin [the elementary school] before when I first started [learning Chinese]. I don’t like my current teacher. But in order to earn my diploma, I have to stay with this teacher. We started with thirty students, but now there is only fifteen. I guess this is because the teacher doesn’t know how to teach effectively.

Sheridan and her colleagues (2010) reviewed literature on parenting and defined parent engagement as three aspects of positive parental behaviors: 1) parental warmth and sensitivity, 2) support for a child's emerging autonomy, and 3) active participation in learning. They found that these parent behaviors are highly predictive of children’s social-emotional learning and cognitive development.

From participants’ responses about how they mothered their children, providing love was frequently mentioned. The women elaborated that providing love means being attentive to children’s needs, listening to children’s opinions, understanding children, offering physical intimacy, leaving the choice for children to decide what they aspire to do, and providing extensive support for children’s learning. All of these mothering behaviors are consistent with Sheridan and her colleague’s descriptions of effective parent engagement. New immigrant women in this study displayed effective parenting practices by providing love for their children. They acknowledged the power of love in mothering and were convinced that love is the foundation for effective parenting practices. Through new
immigrant women's agency in believing the importance of loving their children, they instill agency in their children through mothering practices.

Thus, Theme 13 emerges: By providing love, new immigrant women display effective parenting practices. To illustrate, responses from Anny, Yuhui, May, Hui, and Chuan follow.

Anny described love as more crucial than monetary resources for children.

Anny: What is the most important for children is not money, is our love! We need to love kids; we need to hug them. My daughters are so close to me. They don’t want me to work. They want me to be home so I can be with them.
I: So how did you respond?
Anny: I told them I need to bring money home. Otherwise they cannot go to school because school costs money.
I: So how did they respond?
Anny: They told me not to worry about money. We can save money by spending less.
I: Wow, that’s a very mature attitude.
Anny: They are good kids. They wash dishes, clean house, and cook rice. I teach them. It is important to teach them [life skills].

Yuhui also expressed her belief that love is the priority in parenting. As she said, “loving children means always being available for children, understanding children, and prioritizing children in her daily life”.

Yuhui: I believe parents’ responsibility is to love, to take care, and to teach children. Children’s moral depends on the parents. Most importantly, you need to be there for your children; not only offering materials. You need to understand children. That is my responsibility to accompany my children and learn with them. It is very difficult to learn Chinese, but I have to [learn]; I learn with my girls; I am always available. Children are my priority; I will not find a job which requires me to sacrifice my children.

May was exhausted from her work and family responsibilities. She worked full time everyday as the only bread-winner in her family. She also took care of
five children including a mentally-retarded daughter. Despite fulfilling these
duties, May expressed a deep sense of guilt that she was not a good mother
because she did not understand her children.

   May: I think a mother’s responsibility is to “do good to children.” I don’t
   think I have done a good job to be a mother. Sometimes I am so busy. I
don’t know what my children are thinking. I rarely chat with them. Like
   my older son, he is in adolescence and very rebellious. I think it may be
   my fault; I did not spend time talking with them and understand him.

Hui was aware of her family’s difficult financial situation. Even though she
felt sorry that she did not have extra money to support her sons in extracurricular
activities, she was confident that her sons would grow up fine because she
provided unconditional love and served as a role model for them.

   Hui: I love my sons. They are everything to me. I am willing to sacrifice
   anything for them, including my youth.
I: Are you concerned about your sons’ peer relationship? Are they picked
on?
   Hui: No. They are like me, very confident. They don’t feel inferior. They
treat everybody in the same way regardless individuals’ situations. I told
my sons that they are not superior to anyone, but they are not inferior
either. No one can look down on me. I won’t allow it to happen.

As mentioned, Chuan was convinced of the importance of providing a
conducive environment for her sons’ cognitive development. She displayed her
mothering practices by ensuring that her sons opportunities for autonomy.

   Chuan: Look at my older son. He is so young (5 years old), but he does
   everything on his own including putting on clothes, eating, bathing, and
   almost everything. I only help him if necessary. As a mother, I need to
cultivate his autonomy. Don’t spoil him and end up killing him.

Socio and political context of new immigrant women’s motherhood, their
mothering beliefs, practices, and issues in regard to agency.
The socio- and political conditions comprise the shared circumstances in which new immigrant women define their mothering practices and construct their maternal identity. New immigrant women’s agency and the context where their agency is embedded are integrally interwoven and may change over time (Rogoff, 2003).

Agency and motherhood do not take place in a vacuum. Particularly for new immigrant women, they are inextricably situated in complex social relationships among family members in Taiwan and in their home country, school, and government embedded in society permeated by hegemonic social discourse (Foucault, 1980). New immigrant women are neither victims of false consciousness nor free agents in their quest for motherhood. Rather, the analysis reveals some of the ways new immigrant women are caught up in a hegemonic culture of maternity in which they often experience some part of mothering practices and their identity as a mother as empowering. They need to assert the essential and enduring nature of their maternal identity because social forces have relegated their mothering practices to a lower status. In their construction of the mother role and mothering experiences, new immigrant women employ rhetoric from these dominant discourses to comprise choices in motherhood. By doing so, these women subscribed to the hegemonic discourses that oppress them.

In order to better understand their expressions of agency, it is important to consider the factors influencing new immigrant women’s decisions. Decisions are grounded in people’s beliefs. Especially for oppressed people (i.e. new immigrant women), crucial decisions are significantly dependent upon relationships to the
dominant power structure and access to resources (Pollack, 2000). As a result, a voluntary decision may not always result in the decision-maker’s best interest. For instance, several participants suffered from domestic violence at the hands of their husbands. Based on my opinion, these women should leave their husbands. But they voluntarily decide to stay in the abusive relationship because they did not want to leave their children behind. In sum, although the practice may be problematic, women are nevertheless active in making their choice.

New Immigrant Women and Hegemonic Discourse in Taiwan

From the interviews, three dominant discourses emerged as these new immigrant women articulated their experiences and expressions of motherhood; 1) discourse about motherhood, 2) discourse about an intact, two-parent family, and 3) discourse about academic achievement and the importance of education. In the following section, I illustrate the complexities among new immigrant women’s motherhood, subjectivity, agency, and social discourses.

Discourse about motherhood. New immigrant women’s mother image is shaped and sanctioned by social discourses perpetuated by media, government-designed and required curriculum for new immigrant women, and school teachers. In 2004, the Taiwanese government designed a three-volume textbook entitled, “Happy, Learning, New Life” as the official curriculum for the new immigrant women’s Chinese Literacy Program. Designed to help new immigrant women adapt in Taiwan, the textbook mainly covers topics about daily life such as an introduction to Taiwanese holidays and social norms. However, the theme specifically related to the mother role perpetuated in the content is that new
immigrant women should endure, sacrifice themselves, and assimilate into Taiwanese norms. For example, in Lesson 12, titled “Being happy in daily life,” on page 78, there are four pictures depicting new immigrant women’s daily life. In these pictures, readers can see a woman smile, cook, help with a child’s homework, and respectfully serve tea to her father-in-law. On page 79, the content says that a new immigrant woman has been married for three years and wholeheartedly takes care of the children and her parents-in-law. When she faces any obstacles in her life, she calms down and endures. Besides the content of the textbook, Chinese Literacy Program teachers also consciously or unconsciously help promote such assimilation and sacrificing-mother expectations. For example, as documented in my June 9, 2009 field notes, I observed Teacher Shao who used a first grade Chinese textbook (not the official government-designed curriculum for new immigrant women) to teach new immigrant woman the Chinese language. Even though the lesson itself had nothing to do with motherhood, when Teacher Shao was teaching new Chinese vocabulary, she used many examples about motherhood or womanhood that implicitly conveyed the dominant patriarchal expectations of women. For instance, in class, Teacher Shao said, “This word is “chi” (持). “jian-chi”(堅持) means perseverance. It is tiring to be a mother so you should persevere. Don’t give up learning Chinese. Our government treats you very well and offers the free learning Chinese opportunity because we want you to be good wives and mothers. You need to be literate and take good care of our next generation of Taiwanese children, so you should try hard to learn.” This case
is just one example of the ideological encapsulation of motherhood imposed on new immigrant women in their daily life, an imposition that carries with it the expectation that the mother role, in its many aspects, is to be fulfilled based on a Taiwanese social norm.

Aligned with Ann Oakley’s (1979) writing on myth of motherhood in the 1970s, the discourse of motherhood in Taiwan reflects three beliefs: “that all women need to be mothers, that all mothers need their children, and that all children need their mothers (as cited in Glenn, 1994, p.9).” These beliefs prevailed in new immigrant women’s discussions of mothering experiences. For new immigrant women in this study, maternal identity reflected an essential and enduring nature of being a mother, rather than doing mother work (Maher, 2004). As these women articulated, being a mother entails noble responsibility, tremendous potential and strength, an irreplaceable ability, and a social role only woman can fulfill.

The new immigrant women in this study revealed their strong motivation to fulfill their mothering responsibilities and strove to prepare the most conducive environment for their children’s personal and academic development. All but one participant, Mary, gave birth in the first year of marriage. No one seemed to feel surprised or regretful about having children, yet some women resented marrying too young or marrying a foreigner and consequently living far from their parents.

Given the fact that the Taiwanese government provides many incentives to give birth, it seems that women have a choice to become a mother or not. But in this study, as the women spoke of themselves and their children, it became clear
that assuming the mother role is not a simple matter of fulfilling the “women's innate calling”. Having children is viewed as a duty and a part of the marriage agreement. Becoming a mother serves as socially validating proof of their functional bodies. The decision to bear children is not simply driven by the desire to mother; it also relates to what is seen as socially and culturally appropriate, and in the case of new immigrant women, motherhood is also an obligation. Thus, in this case, children are conceived in a social sense (McMahon, 1995).

A case in point is Inhong. Regarding marriage and childbirth, Inhong said, “If you don’t give birth to at least one child, people will think that you are infertile. That is your job to give a child to your parents-in-law. You get married then have children.” Marriage and childbearing are inextricable for new immigrant women in this study. Yuhui, a stay-at-home mother from Indonesia with two teenaged daughters, questioned me by saying, “If you don’t want to have children, why do you get married?” Marriage is identified as a woman’s destiny. Many participants made similar remarks that as long as you are a woman, you should get married and then have children.

Interestingly, every participant emphasized the importance of being a mother and the irreplaceable joy of that role. I was overwhelmed and puzzled by the claim from each and every participant that, “You must have your own children”. But when I asked more specific questions about mothering experiences, the women invariably talked at length about role strain or financial stress in their efforts to provide a decent living for their children. Eventually, I realized that not
having children is not an option for new immigrant women because of the contractual, cultural and economic circumstances of their marriages.

Once new immigrant women accepted and embraced their mothering responsibility and the social role as a mother, they actively sought cultural beliefs and norms of motherhood to strengthen their status, accumulate social and cultural capital, and transform life constraints. At the same time, because new immigrant women in this study considered having children a necessary responsibility, the fatigue and role strain associated with their mother role are taken for granted and rarely addressed in the beginning of interviews. Mothering was romanticized as a labor of love, a common occurrence in discourse of motherhood (Glenn, 1994). Additionally, motherhood is understood as a state of being, rather than doing (Maher, 2004). Therefore, the labor women do to mother is taken for granted and rendered invisible. Becoming a mother also symbolizes a woman’s moral career (Liamputtong, 2006) in which new immigrant women are willing to offer a great deal of support and sacrifice in order to ensure their children’s physical and mental well-being. In sum, when motherhood is discussed, new immigrant women emphasized the irreplaceable joy children brought to them and indirectly presented a traditional, prescriptive perspective of motherhood (Liamputtong, 2006; Pan, 2005).

Children also symbolize a form of assets or capital for new immigrant women. Like Hui said, “Other people have nothing, but I have two sons. They are so handsome! Whenever I see them, I am so happy.” Children bring irreplaceable joy and important meanings to enrich new immigrant women’s lives. For
instance, a Vietnamese wife, Ahern, said, “When you become old, you have a child to worry about.” Children also provide a hope of security in the future when new immigrant women become old. Consistent with Pashigian (2002), having children was seen as a catalyst to maintain close relationships with family members. Thus, children also serve as a bargaining chip for new immigrant women to elevate, or at least secure, their place in the larger family.

Yuan-Ni's case illustrates the complexity of power and survival in the decision to have a child. Yuan-Ni was a 19-year-old new immigrant woman from Indonesia. She forged her birth certificate so she could get married when she was 16-years-old. The legal age for marriage in Taiwan is seventeen-years-old. Yuan-Ni was very motivated to learn Mandarin Chinese and to represent herself as a high achiever. Yuan-Ni and her mother-in-law had a close relationship that was uncommon in mainstream Taiwanese families. Yuan-Ni also recognized that her mother-in-law held most of the power in her family. In our conversations, she referenced her daughter-in-law frequently. Although Yuan-Ni despised her husband explicitly, she was willing to have a child mainly to please her mother-in-law and implicitly secure her family position and future opportunities in Taiwan.

I: Why did you decide to have a child?
Yuan-Ni: This is because deeply in my heart, I believe that I will settle down in Taiwan. I won’t wander anymore. Additionally, my mother-in-law really wants to have a grandkid.
I: Is your relationship with your husband getting better?
Yuan-Ni: I don’t care about that. I just want to take care of my mother-in-law.
I: So your mother-in-law has no problem that you don’t like your husband?
Yuan-Ni: Yes, she did. Once she told me to go back home if I don’t like her son. I felt so hurt. I apologize to her. I cannot go back to Indonesia. In there, my life would not be much better. If now I am asked to go back, I will commit suicide. I am not kidding.

Yuan-Ni’s strong ambivalence toward her mother-in-law is produced by the power dynamics and anxiety interlocking her mother-in-law’s niceness to her, Yuan-Ni’s need for financial support, and Yuan-Ni’s dislike for her husband. Yuan-Ni’s case about the change of family dynamics by virtue of mother role is not uncommon among new immigrant women. An in-depth articulation about this issue will be illustrated later in the chapter (page 94).

Motherhood is not universal (Liamputtong, 2006; McMahon, 1995), but all new immigrant women claimed that motherhood was universal. Even when I purposely drew their attention to compare their own childhood experiences when their mothers took care of them with their current mothering practices, new immigrant women in this study still expressed a firm belief that there is a crucial, central property of motherhood that is universal. As a result, every mother is essentially the same according to the participants’ opinion regardless if they are foreign brides or not because motherhood is universal. Expressing this “sameness” belief, elevated the women, at least in their own perspective, beyond the confines of the prevailing discrimination against “foreign brides”. The perception of this elevation served to align their mothering expertise with that of the Taiwanese mothers. Yet, at the same time, this practice devalues and practically eliminates the women’s unique experiences of motherhood accounted
for by migration, customs in their home countries, social class, and age characteristics.

In summary, new immigrant women’s identity as mother is blended with normative femininity and ethnicity. While new immigrant women take on the social signifiers to acknowledge their power as a mother and celebrate maternal achievement, they resist the imposed societal view that women are weak. However, they are simultaneously emphasizing normative femininity and ironically maintaining their disadvantaged position as a woman in a sexist society (Thomas, 2008; Weitz, 2001).

Discourse of an intact family. Many new immigrant women were not happy in their marriages (seventeen out of twenty-five). The reasons why they stay married are economic support and to provide “an intact family for children.” Many new immigrant women told me that they could not raise their children on their own. But when I suggested they could find social welfare to support them financially, they conveyed worry about the detrimental effect of divorce on children. They consistently mentioned concerns that their children would be discriminated against or stigmatized for growing up in an “incomplete” or “broken” family. In other words, new immigrant women define only a two-parent family as an intact family where children can grow properly. They believe in the importance of their families being “whole and together.” Hui’s response exemplified a belief about such discourse. She was worried that divorce would result in trauma and discrimination against her sons, so she chose to stay married, despite her strong disapproval of her husband. Furthermore, along with a
preference for a “intact family”, the belief in maternal responsibility compounds and mediates the hardships of marriage and finance that new immigrant women encounter.

Discourse about academic achievement and the importance of education. All new immigrant women I interviewed emphasized their children’s academic achievement, regardless of their children’s ages. I discovered three principle components of the relationship between children’s academic achievement and new immigrant women’s agency. As mentioned, children’s academic achievement is connected to cultural capital and symbolizes a better future for the children and for the new immigrant women. This perspective echoes Ogbu and Simons’s (1998) finding that immigrant minorities in the U.S. believe that the way to achieve upward mobility is to get a good education. All participants expressed value for higher educational achievement for their children citing the belief that higher education warrants a better career with greater economic stability. Thus, academic accomplishment is a form of cultural capital and new immigrant women are willing to build children’s cultural capital at the expense of economic capital. Specifically, twenty-three out of twenty-five participants spent or budgeted a considerable amount of their income for children to enroll in a private school or join after school academic programs. To illustrate, May, an Indonesian wife who worked for a pharmaceutical factory, elaborated when we discussed her son’s preschool experience.

May: I am willing to spend so much money to send my son in a private preschool is because I don’t know how to teach him.
I: But the tuition is so expensive.

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May: That’s OK. I know my money is sweat money but that is the reason I work hard—for my kids. When we provide good educational opportunities for my son, he will achieve higher attainment and get a good job. He will neither like nor settle for unskilled, low-pay jobs.
I: But how about public preschool? Public preschools are much cheaper than private ones.
May: The quality varies significantly. My neighbor's son goes to a public preschool and he gets out of school at 3 o'clock and does not learn anything. But my son's school finishes at 5 o'clock, and his curriculum is so rich. He learned Math, Phonics, Writing and even English. There is a huge quality gap between private and public preschool.

Although all participants described deep commitment in their mothering roles and stressed the importance of children’s academic achievement, they left the responsibility for formal education with the teachers. New immigrant women in this study said that they preferred teachers to be responsible for children’s academic learning in school, while the mothers would continue to be responsible for the children’s day-to-day care and development. This finding is consistent with the results of Lareau’s (2000) studies that lower-social-class parents view family and school as separate spheres and leave educational duty to teachers. Lower-social-class parents neither feel confident or entitled to teach their children schoolwork, and do not believe they could or should oversee teachers’ methods of educating their children. The lack of confidence in their ability to understand, challenge, and face teachers as equal was a key factor in shaping lower-class parents’ behaviors (Lareau, 2000, p.112). Consequently, lower-class parents exhibit passivity, insecurity, and dependence with teachers.

The other reason why most new immigrant women leave the responsibility of education to teachers and do not engage in children’s schoolwork is because of the prevailing discourse of professionalism and education (Cannella, 1997). New
immigrant women’s decisions to send children to after school academic programs are strongly influenced by the discourse of academic achievement and professional education. The discourse of professional education arose in the last two decades (Liu, 2006). It promotes a belief that only professional experts such as school teachers or after school academic program tutors know what content should be taught and how the curriculum should be delivered effectively (Cannella, 1997). Thus, parents are worry about their own lack of professional knowledge when it comes to teaching their children, and this worry robs them of their rights and confidence to teach their children. In response, new immigrant women who could afford the expense reported feeling relieved by relegating this responsibility to after school academic tutoring programs. New immigrant women also reported feeling pressured to earn money to support children’s education. Many participants used such a belief about the necessity of sending children to after school academic programs as motivation to work harder or to work overtime and took the work exhaustion for granted. In this context, not surprisingly, some of the new immigrant women in the study reported feeling helpless or trapped in economic despair if they could not afford to enroll their children in quality educational services (e.g. private school or after school academic program).

The second principle component of the relationship between children’s academic achievement and new immigrant women’s agency concerns children’s learning of new immigrant women’s mother tongues. Numerous studies have shown that bilingualism is positively associated with cognitive development such as working memory and metalinguistic awareness (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, &
Ungerleider, 2010). More importantly, language and culture are intimately intertwined. Language is the primary means through which people express their cultural beliefs, understand the world (Nieto, 2004), and display their emotions. Research in the U.S. shows that maintaining heritage language in immigrant families can help immigrants’ self-esteem and adaptation in the host society (e.g. Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001). Additionally, the stronger students feel about their cultural identity, the better their academic work will be (e.g. Ogbu, 2003).

However, none of the participants teach their mother tongues to their children. For new immigrant women, even though they would like their children to be able to speak the mother’s original language, they do not insist on maintaining it after carefully evaluating the cost and the consequence. First, they do not see the need and instrumental benefit for children to speak the mother tongue because children do not have a chance to speak it in public and use it to find a better career (at least not in their expectation). From this perspective, learning to speak English is deemed more important than learning the new immigrant women’s first language, and the responses from the participants echoed this sentiment. Secondly, new immigrant women’s family members often hold the assimilation expectation, so teaching children their mother’s first language is not socially supported. Thirdly, new immigrant women are focused on their children learning Mandarin Chinese, so they do not want to risk taking away time and energy for children to acquire the mother’s first language or the official language in Taiwan. Because new immigrant women are voluntary immigrants,
they expect themselves and their children to learn a new language and new
cultural behaviors to achieve a higher social status (Ogbu, 2003). They do not feel
threatened by losing their cultural identity by learning another language. Affected
by the language ideologies and the voluntary immigrant status, language for new
immigrant women carries more pragmatic and instrumental value than cultural
and emotional value. As a result, choosing not to teach children their first
language is one example of new immigrant women’s agency (Kabeer, 1999) even
though their children may risk losing their mother’s cultural heritage or be unable
to communicate with their mother’s family members due to the lack of shared-
language proficiency.

The third principle component linked with the discourse of academic
achievement is that children's academic success symbolizes mother’s values and
success. Taiwanese society judges the performance and worthiness of mothers
based, in large part, on the behavioral and academic performance of their children
(Pon, 1996). Children occupied these women’s valued sense of self. Frequently,
the new immigrant women expressed a sense of pride in their children’s academic
achievement. Children’s success in school represents an external, tangible means
for new immigrant women to show their value, and new immigrant women can
use this success to counter the discrimination. Ironically, some new immigrant
women in this study espoused the discriminatory beliefs. For example, Anny had
two daughters who earned the first place in school. Anny was very proud of them
and used their achievement to prove her value to her husband. Anny said: “I am
not like other ‘foreign bride’ mothers whose children fall behind in class. My girls
are doing great in school, so my husband knows that I am a good wife.” Anny demonstrated her agency by the strategic use of dominant discourses, but, ironically, reinforced the stigma against new immigrant women. Hence, the agency is displayed at individual level, but does not contribute to the change of existing social discourses and structures.

Positional Identity

New immigrant women are situated in a minority position and their exercise of agency is strongly influenced by the vision they can see from their social position and the interpretive horizon offered from that particular position (Alcoff, 2006). The following section utilizes the conception of positional identity (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998) to elaborate new immigrant women’s agency.

Relational or positional identities are behaviors that signify the individual’s perception of her/his social relationships with others (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998). Positional identities have to do with the day-to-day and on-the-ground relations of power, deference and entitlement, social affiliation and distance, with the social-interactional, social-relational structures of the lived world (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998, p.127).

Positional identities can be acquired without awareness by emerging in the situation for a long period of time. Other indices of positional identities become conscious and available as tools that can be used to affect the self and others (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998, p.140). The everyday aspects of
lived identities, in contrast, may be relatively unremarked, unfigured, out of awareness, and so unavailable as a tool for affecting one’s own behavior.

The development of social position into a positional identity, into dispositions to voice opinions or to silence oneself or to enter into activities or to refrain and self-censor, depends on the social situation and social interaction. Relational identities are publicly performed through perceptible signs (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998).

For new immigrant women in Taiwan, the external messages from their family members, school teachers, classmates, coworkers, and media are reflected back to themselves and shape their construction of their social relationships and positional identities. After new immigrant women became mothers, their relational identities as a Southeast Asian woman, a daughter-in-law, a foreigner, a less-educated woman, and a childless woman are altered. Because of the role as mother, new immigrant women are afforded new opportunities and new social positions within their family and in society.

Motherhood brings opportunities for self-validation and self-growth; and women constructed their own mothering in ways that are both empowering and constraining (Glenn, 1994). Becoming a mother is a way of marking status transition in society for individual women. As mentioned, a women’s fertility is a mark of her functional body and value elevating her status in family and society.

The saying that “A mother becomes precious because she bears a son (mu yi zi gui) (母以子貴)” is prevailing in Taiwan. In other words, traditionally, when
women had the first son, their family status was significantly changed to a much higher level. Nowadays, since the birth rate in Taiwan is very low, the sex of the child is less important, but the correlation between having children and a woman’s perceived value remains significant and irreplaceable.

Each informant claimed that she became mature or achieved the adult stage in lifespan through motherhood. Consistent with McMahon’s (1995) study about working class mothers’ experiences of motherhood, new immigrant women reported that being a mother had forced them to grow and become responsible. To grow involves the transition from child to adult. To be responsible, in this context, means to provide for all the child’s basic needs, often sacrificing ones’ own desires, saving money, protecting, socializing, and educating the child.

Unlike marriage, being a mother contains both biological and social role alterations for a woman. From the societal message of “all powerful mother (wei mu ze chiang) (為母則強),” new immigrant women embody the belief of maternal strength and demonstrate such capability in their own way in daily life. For instance, Anny, Yuhui, and Lily kept referring to maternal strength as a motive to drive themselves to learn Mandarin Chinese, find a job, and fight for the best life for her children.

When new immigrant women need to handle children’s schoolwork, encounter children’s school teachers and other students’ parents, they are exposed to new life experiences and opportunities for building new social networks. New immigrant women expressed an unexpected achievement in their daily life when
they fulfilled the mother role. For example, Lily, an Indonesian wife, was very proud of herself that she accomplished her children’s elementary school enrollment on her own. She told me in detail how many public sectors and schools she visited and how she maneuvered through all the staff and procedures to get things done. Lily proudly said, “I did it (children’s school enrollment) on my own. I had talked and asked numerous people. I had to apply for my children’s school enrollment on my own because my husband didn't care.” Lily’s experience exemplifies the potential for new immigrant women to develop agency in new daily practices encompassed by the mother role.

Mothering role transforms family relationships. Motherhood not only provides an avenue for new immigrant women to build inter-family social networks with friends and colleagues, but also to transform intra-family relationships. Familial relationships do not only refer to relationships in new immigrant women’s marital family in Taiwan, but also their families in home countries play a significant role in new immigrant women’s positional familial identities. For many new immigrant women in this study (eighteen of twenty-five), the antecedent of the cross-cultural marriage was the poverty and economic despair in their home countries. Along with the shared cultural norm of moral principles of kin economies (Wilson, 2004) that daughters should use all means to support the family economically, new immigrant women were forced to, or chose to, become involved in cross-cultural, commodified marriages. Consequently, from the day new immigrant women agreed to marry, many of them have carried the financial burdens of their original and current immediate families. Their
responsibilities as the “golden goose” of the family imparted a sense of familial, inescapable obligation. Chuan explained that having a daughter who got married abroad in Vietnam is similar to having a savings account abroad; “My family believe that I always have extra money or I can find some money easily so they expect to withdraw money from me anytime legitimately.” For many new immigrant women, they have mixed feelings about this role; they are overwhelmed by the financial stresses, but feel proud to support the family, and feel less guilty for not being with their own parents physically.

When new immigrant women assume their role as a mother, their relationship with their biological mothers transformed. Regarding mothering practices, new immigrant women consistently consult their mothers for pragmatic suggestions and emotional support when they feel exhausted. So, the mothering role enables a richer and deeper relationship between new immigrant women and their own mothers.

When new immigrant women start their own families and become mothers, they feel entitled to allocate their income for the children first. Chuan, a Vietnamese barber, had sent a considerable amount of money back to Vietnam to help her family build a house and start a café. Chuan was deeply concerned about her mother’s poor health and felt stressed about the obligation to send money back to Vietnam every month in order to offer her mother better medical care.

Chuan: I have my own family now, so my sons are my priority. My parents are the second (in terms of priority). I cannot abandon them (the biological parents). 
I: Will this cause any conflict in your marriage?
Chuan: I told my husband that I can live without my husband, but I cannot live without my parents. I really appreciate my husband because he supports me. I think I have done more than enough to my family in Vietnam. It is enough!

Through their accountability to financially support the family, new immigrant women acknowledge their struggles, but take them for granted. For instance, some participants expressed the pride of perseverance and strength that they could sustain two families in the social roles of a daughter and mother. They believe these lived experiences empower them to overcome any life barriers and thus display agency.

Motherhood supplies new immigrant women opportunities and momentum to shift their status in the family in Taiwan. Undoubtedly, children bring new tasks and changes to a family, but it is especially true for the new immigrant women in this study. Across all participants, the mothering role offers an expanded opportunity for their Taiwanese family members to treat these women with more kindness and trust.

It is a norm shared by Taiwanese and Southeast Asian cultures that to have a child is the paramount duty of a daughter-in-law. Although they were not against the decision to have children, many new immigrant women still felt relieved of the cultural pressure from parents-in-law, husbands, and themselves, after they delivered children. However, besides the reproductive duty of a daughter-in-law, there are other reasons for new immigrant women’s decision to give birth. For example, Yuan-Ni decided to have her daughter as a bargain to please her mother-in-law and secure her citizenship in Taiwan.
Another transformation of meanings and mechanism embedded in traditional Taiwanese motherhood is found in the couple relationship. Originally, guided by research conducted on the relationships between parents and children, I expected that the couples’ relationships would improve with the birth of their children (e.g. Pashigian, 2002). Based on the dominant rhetoric that children can improve a couple’s relationship, I assumed that the new immigrant women’s wife-to-mother role transition and the sense of collective obligation for the child accounted for the improvement. According to the interviews, many new immigrant women reported a closer relationship with their husbands and reported that their husband treated them better after the child’s birth. However, more participants told me that their arguments with their husbands decreased because the women did not care anymore about the treatment from their husbands. Consistently, new immigrant women reported feeling empowered and simultaneously distracted from the difficulty with their husband by their motherwork. For example, Mary illustrated how her relationship with her husband changed.

Mary: The arguments and fights with my husband decreased after I had my daughter.
I: Is this because your daughter facilitates your marriage relationship?
Mary: I don't think our relationship has been improved. But now I have my daughter; I don’t care if he is home or not. Also, he stopped asking money from me because he knew that I needed money for my daughter.

In addition to the changes in their relationships with their parents-in-law and husbands, new immigrant women’s relationships with other family members also shifted because of their role as a mother. Such family dynamics are evident in
the interviews. I observed that new immigrant women have a strong desire and a stated obligation to protect their children’s rights and benefits in the family. They are motivated to fulfill their mothering roles as protectors and defenders (Connolly, 2004). Fifteen participants lived within an extended family that often included parents-in-law, the husband’s unmarried siblings, and family of married siblings. If all family members stay in the same house, a common physical arrangement in a household is parents-in-law living on the first floor and each adult child and their family (if married) occupying a separate floor. If all family members do not live in the same house, they often live in consecutive houses or live very close to each other. Consequently, tension among family members arises easily.

Many new immigrant women expressed a concern that their children were not the beloved ones among all grandchildren. They felt that the parents-in-law favored children of siblings-in-law. So, as the mother, they described a need to stay home to love and protect their children, and ensure their children are under proper care. For example, in the interview, while we were talking about mothering practices in a normal voice level, Lily suddenly lowered her voice and whispered to my ear her concern over her mother-in-law's favor of other grandchildren over Lily's son and daughter. Lily whispered, “She (mother-in-law) is favoring the second son’s child. My poor kids; no one loves them. Only me. You don't know my sister-in-law (the wife of second son). She is a Chinese bride and a talker. She always pretends to be sweet to my mother-in-law, so my mother-in-law favors her and her children.” Lily's strong motivation to stay to protect her
children anchored her in Taiwan and constrained her with an abusive husband and unfriendly family members. Lily’s antagonism toward her Chinese sister-in-law reveals the importance of the within-group politics and dynamics of new immigrant women in Taiwan and their effects on new immigrant women’s agency and solidarity.

Identity as a “foreign bride.” Unfortunately, the new immigrant women in this study did not build close relationships and solidarity across ethnic boundaries. Specifically, participants said that they like making friends with other new immigrant women from the same countries by virtue of sharing the same mother tongue and the convenience of communication. Yet, they are also very selective about their friends because they do not like the stress caused by comparison and gossip among the friends. Several women even told me that they were deeply hurt by women from the same country because they had spread rumors. When I asked new immigrant women if they befriended women from other countries, most of them answered me negatively. First, they do not have time or opportunities to make friends with new immigrant women from other countries. Secondly, they do not see the need to do so. When new immigrant women encounter problems or have questions about child rearing, they primarily consult their biological mothers and family members in Taiwan.

New immigrant women seem to form a “new immigrant woman” identity based on their home country, frequently using nationality as an identifier to differentiate themselves from other new immigrant women. Like Anny said, “I am Indonesian. Unlike ‘foreign brides’ from Vietnam, maybe because they are
poorer, they are so aggressive in making money. They care more about money than children.” I was shocked when I heard Anny’s blatant criticism of Vietnamese wives. I think the superiority feelings of Indonesian wives and the conflict among new immigrant women can be explained at three levels. First, in Taiwan, regarding new immigrant women from Southeast Asia, Vietnamese women outnumber women from other countries such as Indonesia. Thus, new immigrant women from Indonesia may feel that they are a minority. Secondly, Indonesian wives may feel superior to Vietnamese wives because of their own higher educational attainment and their Chinese heritage. In this study, many Indonesian wives had Chinese heritage so many of them were able to speak one of the Taiwanese dialects, such as Hakka, and were familiar with Chinese cultural norms that were an integral part of Taiwanese culture (Thornton & Lin, 1994). Thirdly, generally, new immigrant women from Indonesia in this study had higher education attainment than their counterparts. These factors together may make Indonesian wives feel superior to new immigrant women from Vietnam in terms of the mother role because they had more education, came from a relatively more economically developed country, had deeper ethnic connections with Taiwan, and felt that they cared more about their children. However, Indonesian wives only touted their nationality in contrast with other new immigrant women so as to symbolize their uniqueness and capability to fulfill the traditionally accepted expectation of a good mother.

Interestingly, in contrast, none of the Vietnamese and Cambodian participants expressed any negative opinions about other new immigrant women
in the interviews. Their frames of references for their mother role centered on comparisons among new immigrant women from the same country of origin or Taiwanese mothers present in their daily life.

Dynamic Parenting Practices of New Immigrant Women

Many participants claimed that they are primarily responsible to parent their children. Even though they are not familiar with Taiwanese culture and the corresponding institutional regulations, in most cases, they are the main caregiver and educator in their families. Since new immigrant women carry out these tasks, the responsibility of parenting rests on their shoulders. Parenting is actually fulfilled by mothers, so parenting as a term to denote child-raising practices can be replaced by mothering in new immigrant women’s families.

From new immigrant women’s elaborations about their mothering beliefs, practices, and interaction with school staff and family members, it is evident that these women do care about, and have commitment to, mothering their children. Nevertheless, the myriad social contexts where their mothering takes place both constrain and facilitate the mothering practices and outcomes (Kouritin, 2000). As discussed, the ways that new immigrant women form mothering beliefs and display mothering practices are affected by the dominant social discourses. In daily life, the ways that they demonstrate mothering practices are complicated by the intersections of family members’ attitudes to the mother and education, mother’s interaction with school staff, mother’s employment, education, social class, and cultural background.
The following section will use narratives to illustrate the complicity of new immigrant women’s parenting beliefs and practices. These narratives are of Hui, from Cambodia, Anny, from Indonesia, and Yushen from Vietnam.

I don’t allow my sons to be picked on: Hui’s narrative. When I interviewed Hui in 2009, she had just turned 30-years-old. Hui’s husband, Mr. Win, is 48-years-old. Both of his parents had already passed away when Mr. Win was married. He had a mini-stroke and had a difficult time finding a wife in Taiwan, so Mr. Win’s sister, introduced Hui and they married in 2001 in Cambodia. Hui told me that she decided to marry him because she wanted to see the world. She dropped out of high school because “girls do not have high education in Cambodia”. Since Hui came to Taiwan, they had lived in a rented apartment. Now, Hui, Mr. Win, and their two sons live in an apartment Hui bought in May 2008. When their first son, Chahon, was born, Mr. Win’s older sister came to teach Hui how to take care of an infant. This way was different from Hui’s experience, so she felt very confused, but did not dare to refuse or refute such child-rearing practices. Hui tried to adopt the Taiwanese way and was concerned about her sister-in-law’s impression of her. After two years, Hui’s second boy was born and her marriage relationship was getting worse. Hui was frustrated about her husband’s unemployment and his personality. Hui complained, “I tried so hard to know Taiwan and communicate with him. But he just didn’t get it. Whenever I initiated something to discuss, he always said he didn’t know. He is getting worse and worse. I don’t know how to describe him. He doesn’t know anything and doesn’t want to learn.” Hui was also disappointed with Mr. Win’s
financial situation. She told me, “When we first got married, he was working as a
cook and brought good money home. But he did not know to save money, so we
still resided in a rented apartment. Then he got laid off and totally has relied on
me. I save and save to buy this apartment even though the mortgage is killing me.
We have two sons. Children need a place to live!” With the frustration with her
husband and Hui’s increasing sense of autonomy, she decided to follow the
Cambodian way to raise her second son as she had seen her relatives raise
children in Cambodia. Hui claimed, “I didn’t tighten my son this time. Why you
Taiwanese mothers want to tighten them in clothes? I didn’t do it this time, and he
was fine.” Hui is frustrated with her husband and does not trust his knowledge
about children’s education. So she consulted her co-workers and other Cambodian
new immigrants for child-rearing or education questions. I saw Hui’s obvious
disappointment with Mr. Win and asked Hui why she did not divorce him? Hui
responded, “Everything is for my sons. I don’t want my sons to grow in a broken,
single-parent family. Once my sons grow up, maybe when they turn 18 year old, I
will leave their father.” Hui decided to stay with her husband to offer a complete
family for her children. Not surprisingly, Hui had high expectations for her sons’
academic achievement and had a dream that her sons would become international
businessmen who travel around the world. But Hui was also aware of the
disadvantages surrounding her sons including their lower-social-class, financial
difficulty, and Hui’s unavailability to teach her sons. Hui said, “I want them (the
sons) to excel in school, but I know they are not doing the best now. They are
above average. I know this is because I don’t spend time teaching them. I can’t

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because I have to work.” Hui had worked overtime almost everyday so that she could earn more money to support her family and her sons’ after school academic program. When I asked Hui if she missed the carefree childhood environment in Cambodia, she answered ambivalently with hesitation. She said, “If I am in Cambodia, I will have many children. The more children the better for family and everybody is happy. In Taiwan, it is so expensive to raise a child. But I believe education in Taiwan is more advanced and better for my sons. So even though I need to work like a dog (to support her family), I like Taiwan more.” Due to Hui’s busy work schedule, she rarely interacted with her sons’ teachers. Regarding discrimination, Hui had not heard anything negative from her sons. In her limited opportunities interacting with the teachers, she did not feel uncomfortable, either. Hui was not worried because she believed her sons would have high self-esteem by virtue of having a confident mother. Hui stressed, “I don’t allow my sons to be picked on. They are smart and confident kids.”

My daughter’s teacher loves me: Anny’s narrative. There are three reasons behind Anny’s decision to marry abroad. First, she was 29 years old and the only child left unmarried in her nuclear family. Secondly, there was an anti-Chinese movement in Indonesia around 1998 (Purdey, 2006). Thirdly, a fortune-teller told Anny that she would die unless she got married far away. Thus, she married through a marriage broker. Anny had a college degree and a decent job in Indonesia, so she felt very frustrated with her unskilled job choices and poor family situation.
In terms of cultural adaptation, Anny had an easier time because of her Chinese background. She also spoke Holo, one of the dominant dialects in Taiwan. Anny always consults her mother about child-rearing practices and her mother’s suggestions are consistent with the customs of Taiwan. Anny claimed that she had never asked for help from her husband because she did not want to be looked down upon. Anny did not enroll her two daughters in after school academic programs because she could help or teach them the schoolwork. The only subject Anny could not provide satisfactory help with was Chinese. However, Anny did not see her deficit in Chinese literacy as an obstacle to her mothering. Instead, she developed a “classmate” relationship with her daughters in learning Chinese. Anny said, “When I see an unknown word, I ask Huilin (her first daughter). She teased me at the first time. But I told her we were classmates in learning Chinese, so you should teach me, not tease me. Then she taught me the words. Since then, we learn Chinese together.” With respect to the family-school relationship, Anny was neither shy nor afraid when talking with teachers. Anny had a close relationship with her daughters’ teachers due to her sweet and flattering attitude, not because the teachers appreciated Anny’s efforts. Anny acknowledged the strategic attitude so she could access important information and resources. For example, Anny went to Huilin’s school to use the school computer almost everyday because she knew the teachers. Huilin’s teacher also relayed the information about a project design competition, so Anny and her daughter could participate and won the first place. Most importantly, she hoped to ensure that her daughters were treated with favor, or at least treated fairly. Anny told me,
“Huilin’s teachers love me because my mouth is sweet. I always compliment them. I hope Huilin’s teacher will treat her better because of this relationship.” So far, Anny’s daughters performed very well in school. However, Anny was concerned about the increasing financial cost of her children’s education. Witnessing the economic recession in Taiwan, Anny considered moving back to Indonesia with her family. Nevertheless, she was worried about her daughters’ adaptation in Indonesia. With so many things beyond her control, Anny decided to live in the moment and handle obstacles as they came.

As long as my husband understands, it’s OK!: Yushen’s narrative. Yushen was the latest comer to Taiwan among the participants; she married in 2006. Her daughter was 16 months old when I interviewed her in 2009. Yushen did not plan to marry abroad. Her aunt tricked her into participating in a match-making event, and that was how her husband met her and decided to marry her. Yushen described the match-making occasion, “My aunt told me that is not formal. We are just going to see Taiwanese men! Then my husband saw me and wanted to marry me. So my aunt agreed. I cannot say no. It is already promised.”

Yushen’s father-in-law bought two consecutive houses for her three sons. Yushen, her husband, her daughter, and her single, 3rd brother-in-law resided in one house, and her 2nd brother-in-law and his family live in the other house. Yushen became pregnant in the first month of her arrival in Taiwan. She had a hard time then because everything was new and she was going through pregnancy and its physical changes. But Yushen did not feel regretful because she had her husband’s and father-in-law’s support. Yushen was wholeheartedly thankful for
her husband and her father-in-law because they treated her very well. According to Yushen, her father-in-law had no daughter, so he treated Yushen like his own daughter. He bought Yushen clothes and encouraged her to attend Chinese Literacy Program. Thus, even though she did not like the gossip and tension between extended family members, she could tolerate it and stay in the marriage.

Yushen helped in the family fish business from 5:00 am to noon everyday. In the market, her mother-in-law helped take care of her daughter. After work, Yushen became the main caregiver, but her parents-in-law and 2nd brothers would come to her home and play with her daughter. Yushen grew tired of interacting with the family members. Moreover, sometimes she did not like the way her extended family members taught her daughter. She preferred to have more privacy, but she could not control the situation because the family lived next to her. What also made her uncomfortable was a feeling of competition about children’s performance. Even though her daughter, Yuting, was only 16-months old, Yushen’s sister-in-law had already suggested which preschool Yuting should attend and boasted of how great her sons performed in that preschool. Yushen was worried about the enrollment tuition and told me, “It is a private preschool. It costs a lot of money. I am really concerned about it.” When I comforted her and talked about the option of public preschools, Yushen seemed to be relieved, but still concerned. I could see that her husband played a crucial role in Yushen’s life and decision-making. In the 4-hour interview, she repeatedly told me, “As long as my husband loves me, everything is OK.”
From Hui’s, Anny’s, and Yushen’s narratives, it is evident that new immigrant women’s mothering practices are affected by the intertwined factors among family, school, and society that are beyond personal choices and preference. Economic difficulty remains the most pronounced concern in mothering because the women view education in Taiwan as a costly, but a non-negotiable requirement for success. For them, the cost of education in Taiwan is not only the school expenses. Sending children to after school academic programs is believed to be required for academic success, especially for new immigrant women because of their unfamiliarity with school operations in Taiwan and lack of subject content knowledge.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

In chapter four, I presented new immigrant women’s perspectives on and lived experiences of motherhood, and explored the ways in which these women exercised their agency through motherhood. From new immigrant women’s sharing about their lived experiences of motherhood in this study, I discovered that a considerable part of their accounts of lived experiences of motherhood are similar to those of middle-class mainstream Taiwanese mothers as described by Pan (2005). But there are also aspects that separate new immigrant women from their Taiwanese counterparts. Considering agency in motherhood, there are similar patterns connecting multiple factors across participants as well as unique subjective improvisations of agency in motherhood (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cian, 1998).

New immigrant women’s experiences, feelings, knowledge of motherhood and development, and display of agency, are strongly affected by the multiple power structures (Cannella & Manuelito, 2008) which are formed by new immigrant women’s approximate surroundings including family, school, and community, as well as the larger social, cultural, and political context in Taiwan.

For example, “foreign bride” as self-identity is frequently mentioned in new immigrant women’s accounts of motherhood. New immigrant women’s understanding and constructions of their own identities, as well as other new immigrant women’s identities, are influenced by the dominant ideologies of “foreign brides” in Taiwan. There exists a prevailing stereotype in mainstream
Taiwanese society that Southeast Asian women are more compliant, submissive, and are anticipated to fulfill the traditional daughter-in-law’s responsibility (Chi, Jhou, & Hsieh, 2009). An approach to understanding the stereotypical image of new immigrant women in Taiwan can be illustrated by looking at the accounts of “foreign brides” by Taiwanese marriage brokers. Consistent with bridal agencies in Western contexts, Taiwanese match-making agencies sell the fantasy that foreign brides are more accommodating wives. The agencies capitalize on and perpetuate the stereotype of Asian women as subservient, compliant, and dutiful (Chun, 1996). Mr. Lee, a marriage broker in Chaiyi, Taiwan, articulated in detail these stereotyped “virtues” as if he was selling products, not describing human beings.

Mr. Lee: I saw a big market of foreign brides in Taiwan. The failure rate of my match making is very low because I saw the individual needs of every groom and matched them with brides from different countries. For example, if he (a groom) wants a compliant, good wife and he doesn't care about appearance, I will introduce an Indonesian wife. Indonesian girls work hard and most of them have Chinese backgrounds. They don't need to be taught (about Taiwanese cultural norms and practices). But their skin tone is darker so they are not very beautiful. Vietnamese wives are very pretty. They are short and have pale skin. The cost to marry a Vietnamese wife is also cheaper than Indonesian wives, so they are very popular. But because Vietnam was a communist country, Vietnam is a matriarchy society. So when Vietnamese wives come to Taiwan, cultural conflicts occur.
I: How about Thai women and Cambodian women?
Mr. Lee: Nowadays, the amount of women from Thailand is low. Most of Thai brides are migrant workers. You know, people from Thailand have darker skin. There are not many Cambodian wives. So I don't know much about them.
I: How about Chinese brides?
Mr. Lee: Chinese brides are greedy. They are more interested in your money. They are not as compliant and traditional as Southeast Asian women. They can speak Mandarin Chinese so they have more autonomy; they are not submissive.
Mr. Lee's descriptions of new immigrant women reflect the common stereotypes of “foreign brides” in Taiwan. Among new immigrant women from Southeast Asia, women are categorized by their country of origin and differentially labeled with value based on their normative femininity including skin tone and appearance as well as their cultural heritage.

When new immigrant women are exposed to these distorted, constructed images of themselves, especially when they are situated in a disadvantaged position, it is understandable that some participants employ the dominant ideologies to criticize other new immigrant women without recognizing the complex power dynamics surrounding individual new immigrant woman and empathizing with their shared struggles. While individual new immigrant woman may feel empowered and thus gain agency by proving they are better mother than other new immigrant women, this type of criticism results in the perpetuation of stereotypes against new immigrant women and their role as a mother.

In a similar vein, because Taiwan is a patriarchal society, dominant ideologies still implicitly reflect a patriarchal foundation, particularly in regard to ideologies of motherhood (Pan, 2005). Consequently, new immigrant women’s accounts of motherhood reflect a moral, sacred image of mother which is consistent with the mainstream, patriarchal point of view. As a result, new immigrant women’s accounts of motherhood reinforce the existing norm of motherhood in Taiwan.

Additionally, it shows that the image of new immigrant women as mother in family—a private domain, also determines their status within the public domain
such as in school or society (Yuval-Davis, 1994). New immigrant women’s performance as mother and their children’s academic achievement oftentimes mediate their status change at home as well as in community. Private or public spheres for new immigrant women can rarely be demarcated as two separate domains, especially in regard to their mothering practice and agency.

The findings also manifest that new immigrant women’s social class and ethnicity are intimately connected together in affecting their lived experiences of motherhood and ought to be analyzed together. New immigrant women’s lived experiences of motherhood have revealed the intersectionality between their social class and ethnicity or cultural background in affecting their mothering practices. For example, Indonesian women often refer to their Chinese cultural heritage as the reason to account for their high expectation on children’s education regardless of their low social class and financial difficulty.

Because of the role as a mother, new immigrant women receive or are forced to be engaged in multiple mothering-related tasks and responsibilities which may be opportunities for developing agency. For example, Lily was very proud of her accomplishment of her children’s school enrollment. Nevertheless, this kind of empowerment is very conditional, unsystematic, and deeply dependent on an individual’s perception and interpretation of the experience. Based on my perspective as a researcher and advocate for new immigrant women, I suggest recognizing, but not romanticizing, this sort of agency (Aguilar, 2000). I understand that the mother role fulfillment can empower new immigrant women
on one hand, but on the other hand, also make them vulnerable to the exploitation and unequal power struggles in a family.

Conclusively, this study attempts to bring attention to the variability within new immigrant women as a group of women. The findings show that unity and homogeneity of new immigrant women’s motherhood, or even motherhood in Taiwan, should be replaced by dialogues of differences which give recognition to the specific positionings of those women who participate (Yuval-Davis, 1994).

A Critical View on New Immigrant Women’s Mothering Practices and School-Family Relationship

The findings of new immigrant women’s mothering beliefs and practices point to a recurring theme: children’s educational achievement is crucial to new immigrant women as mothers. New immigrant women expect their children to pursue higher education so as to have a stable career and eventually elevate their family’s social status. The only strategy new immigrant women articulated as a way to prepare their children for academic success is to invest economic capital in children’s education such as enrolling children in private school or after school academic programs. However, critical theories of education have shown that schools essentially play a role to reproduce structural inequalities (e.g. Jacob & Jordan, 1993; Lareau, 2000, 2003). Schooling only privileges and reinforces cultural-based, legitimized school practices and scripted knowledge of a particular, dominant social class, as well as race as a norm for every student and disadvantages students coming from families of minority status. Therefore, from a critical perspective, in regard to children’s schooling, what new immigrant
woman are unaware of, or have not been able to combat, is the structural inequality embedded in Taiwanese education. Many children of new immigrant women are at a significant disadvantage with respect to their lack of social and cultural capital that is evaluated based on dominant Taiwanese societal norms.

New immigrant women are at a significant disadvantage with respect to cultural capital because they cannot easily transfer their child-rearing knowledge from their original culture to their mothering practices in Taiwan. This difficulty is particularly problematic when it comes to helping children with schoolwork. New immigrant women are not expected to employ their diverse cultural backgrounds and potential funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) to educate their children. None of the participants bitterly complained about the expectation to shed their native cultural background with regard to mothering practices. Perhaps this is because, from the position where they are situated, applying their cultural knowledge to mothering is, pragmatically, not a choice.

Many children of immigrants fall behind academically in school because their parents have little knowledge of how schools in host countries function and thus cannot help equip children with the instrumental knowledge to succeed in school (e.g. Rueda, Monzo, & Arzubiaga, 2003). On the surface, it seems like the immigrant families do not possess cultural and social capital, so their children fall behind in school. However, from a socio-cultural perspective (Rogoff, 2003), knowledge and skills are culturally produced and cultural capital is culturally legitimized. Hence, immigrant families do possess cultural capital, but their
cultural capital is not acknowledged by the host society and a means to translate and transmit knowledge between sending and receiving cultures is missing.

For example, new immigrant women do have child-rearing knowledge developed from the culture of their home countries. Unfortunately, because Taiwanese family members of new immigrant women or school teachers are unfamiliar with the specific child-rearing practice, they do not acknowledge it and simply label new immigrant women as incapable mothers. In a similar vein, new immigrant women do have funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) from their original culture, and potentially the funds of knowledge can be converted as resources for their own benefit. However, because these resources are not institutionally acknowledged, the funds of knowledge are rendered useless.

Another aspect regarding educational inequality that new immigrant women encounter is the issue of access, especially access to academic instrumental knowledge (Rueda, Monzo, & Aruzbiaga, 2003). Rueda and colleagues (2003) define academic instrumental knowledge as a form of cultural capital that contains school-specific knowledge. “Access to academic instrumental knowledge” is defined as knowing a person who knows how the educational system operates in the host country and who immigrant families can consult when questions arise about their children’s school-related issues. In Taiwan, new immigrant women’s access to academic instrumental knowledge is very unstable and deeply impacted by people with whom they are acquainted, their network and social capital. Most of the participants reported that they rely on coworkers,
family members, and teachers from school or after school academic programs for such information. Teachers are at the forefront with the opportunity to interact with and inform new immigrant women. Teachers play a crucial role as the gatekeeper for important information and potential benefits for children’s school performance, adaptation, as well as their emotional and cognitive development. Unfortunately, because the dominant set of cultural repertoires about education is formed by middle class parents, school function is dominated by middle-class parents’ values. As a result, Taiwanese teachers are not equipped with a critical understanding of the barriers minority parents encounter. Nor do they have multicultural training to be able to bridge the differences between school and children’s home cultures. For new immigrant women, due to their fixed, busy working schedules and the uncomfortable sense of inferiority to teachers, new immigrant women rarely interact, discuss children’s issues, or negotiate, with teachers.

Besides teachers, family members and coworkers are frequently referred as new immigrant women’s source of information. However, none of these people share similar experiences with new immigrant women as mothers and may not be able to recognize their true needs. As a result, regardless of new immigrant women’s high expectations and collaboration with teachers on children’s academic performance, a lack of effective communication between home and school, including accessible teachers and the lack of academic instrumental knowledge, impede new immigrant women’s meaningful participation in children’s academic progress. The ways of effective communication between
school and family should be determined collectively by parents and school staff, instead of the current situation which is solely determined by school staff or administrative policy makers.

Numerous studies have shown that the specification of different kinds of parenting that depends on the particular context in which this kind of parenting is acquired (e.g. Lopez, 2001). New immigrant women’s mothering practices are no exceptions. In order to better understand and help families and children of new immigrant women, it is crucial to probe and interpret their parenting practices as situated in a particular social context from a critical, participant-centered, culture-sensitive, perspective.

Another case in point about the importance of acknowledging culture-sensitive, participant-centered parenting practices is corporal punishment in new immigrant women’s mothering beliefs and practices. On 27 December 2006, an amendment to the Educational Fundamental Act was passed banning corporal punishment in Taiwan (Ministry of Education, 2006). Nevertheless, corporal punishment prevails among new immigrant women’s mothering practices. In our conversations about corporal punishment being illegal in Taiwan, the new immigrant women all complained about the law and insisted on the legitimacy of corporal punishment in their own mothering practices in Taiwan as well as in their home countries. After careful examination of corporal punishment in relation to new immigrant women’s mothering practices, I suspect that for new immigrant women, corporal punishment does not correspond to child abuse; instead, it is based on care and considered an effective discipline practice, especially when
parents are busy and struggling with multiple responsibilities (Chuang, 2005). Furthermore, given the situation that a new immigrant woman often has not yet developed the facility to use the Chinese language to discipline her child, when she encounters occasions that require discipline, she feels as though she is forced to use corporal punishment because she is not allowed to use her first language in Taiwan. New immigrant women may feel comfortable using corporal punishment because it was part of their own childhood experiences in their home countries. As previously discussed (p. 69), new immigrant women believe in the benefits of early discipline. Since corporal punishment is often implemented on young children, new immigrant women view corporal punishment as an essential, indispensable part of early discipline. Consequently, corporal punishment is considered culturally appropriate and essential in new immigrant women’s mothering practices.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

While I was eating dinner and watching the news on Jan. 14, 2010, one news segment attracted my attention: Taiwan just achieved the world’s lowest birth rate (Lin & Huang, 2010). On average, every woman in Taiwan has only one child. To promote a higher birth rate, there are more positive parenting portrayals and mother images in the media. The Taiwanese government also tries hard to encourage Taiwanese women to have more children by providing incentives such as childcare vouchers. Ironically, in Taiwan, new immigrant women, as a group of mothers, are willing to have, and already have, more than one child, but they are discriminated against or questioned about their mothering capability.

New immigrant women in this study asserted their rights to have children and disprove the label of “inadequate mothers” (Glenn, 1994). This study shows that new immigrant women have high expectations for their own mother role and strive for their children’s, as well as their own, best futures. In addition, to fully understand the complex lived experiences of new immigrant women’s motherhood requires a perspective from their standpoint. The findings also disturb neat binaries and reveal the complex interrelationship among sex, ethnicity, and social class in influencing new immigrant women’s agency in motherhood, mothering beliefs and practices.

New immigrant women develop agency in motherhood. They develop strength deeply connected to maternal identity and their social position. Their capacity for self-reliance, risk taking, and being adventurous sustains them and
enables their survival. Motherhood is a symbol of power that catalyzes new immigrant women to take actions that they otherwise might not have considered. Positioned in their unique social location, new immigrant women strategically employ a variety of resources drawing from their interpretive horizon (Alcoff, 2006) to maneuver through their daily challenges. Yet, their means of control over their circumstances are ultimately constrained by the social status, gender, and cultural background. In other words, because of the mother role, new immigrant women are constrained and forced to handle all the responsibilities and hardships in the family; they are perpetually exposed to intense scrutiny of their mother role performance and their children’s academic achievement.

This study is not intended to romanticize new immigrant women’s agency in motherhood. Instead, the goal of this study is to provide counterstories (Yosso, 2006) and reveal new immigrant women’s lived experience, voices of motherhood, the complex circumstance in which they are situated, and the agency they develop from their mother role in daily life. The findings challenge earlier research that assumes that new immigrant women are monolithic, speechless, Third World women (Mohanty, 2003), and victims under patriarchy. Additionally, the findings presented here suggest that new immigrant women’s agency should be investigated as situated practices or action-in-context so the contexts where agency takes place bear more significance than recognized with current research approaches. What constitutes choices for new immigrant women is more complicated and requires further scrutiny.
Findings also address large questions about the ways in which social class, ethnicity, and gender are interwoven, and how parenting practices are shaped by the larger political economy. Parenting should be understood and investigated from an integrated (Darling & Steinberg, 1993), systematic approach, especially for those of disadvantaged parents. Parenting beliefs, practices, and styles are dynamic and significantly influenced by the socio-cultural context where parenting takes place. Unfortunately, the dominant research approaches to parenting practices still focus on characteristic-identification, which implicitly assumes that parenting is universal and parenting practices are solely determined by parents’ personal traits.

This study also shows that processual approaches to culture are more meaningful conceptualizations accounting for the cultural effect on new immigrant women’s motherhood. Processual approaches to culture stress the processes of everyday life in the form of daily activities as a frame of reference (González, 2005). This study reveals that new immigrant women drew from lived experiences in their daily life instead of taking from a static set of “Southeast Asian cultural norms” to construct meanings and direct their lives. It does not mean that Southeast Asian cultural beliefs have no influence on new immigrant women’s meaning-making processes. Nevertheless, the meaning-making process is more dynamic, interactional, and emergent. New immigrant women are not merely passive means to contain cultural beliefs. They actively participate in meaning-making processes by drawing meanings from a multiplicity of social manifestations and cultural claims and authoring their own rationales.
This study informs the theories of motherhood, family studies, and multicultural education by contributing to current understandings of new immigrant women’s mothering practices, particularly how culture, transnational migration, social class, race, and the interaction of these factors affect new immigrant women’s mother roles. Additionally, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which new immigrant women interpret, as well as negotiate, their motherhood and display agency to overcome challenges about parenting and adaptation in Taiwan. It points to the need for culturally sensitive policies and programs that better serve the unique challenges faced by new immigrant women. Although the data gathered in this study may be specific to the new immigrant women in Taiwan, the results can inform regions throughout the world where married migrant women fight to sustain their own lives and their children’s lives, even without adequate accommodations and support.

Policy Implications

There are several policies in place specifically for new immigrant women and their families. However, because these top-down policies are not informed by the new immigrant women’s perspective, these policies may not provide what is really needed, and they remain unable to generate sufficient support. Studies from the new immigrant women’s perspective can create the vantage point of alternatives that allow for the development of a more transformatory experience.

It was clear that many of these new immigrant women did not like to deal with their children’s teachers. This was due to the mothers’ busy and rigid work
schedules and humiliating and awkward experiences with their children’s teachers. Indeed, all new immigrant women in this study valued education and held high expectations for their children’s academic achievement. However, a close link between school and parents seemed to be missing. Consequently, new immigrant women could not be systematically engaged in their children’s school progress. Instead, they are only peripherally involved with the schoolwork. The reasons why teachers did not build a close teacher-parent relationship are complicated. According to my interviews with teachers, my observations, and the new immigrant women’s responses (See participants’ responses on disappointments with teacher under Theme 8), teachers did not appreciate the cultural differences among new immigrant women’s families, and did not actively develop a teacher-parent relationship with new immigrant women.

Additionally, new immigrant women do stress their children’s academic achievement and actively participate in children’s development, which counters the myth that new immigrant women do not care about their children’s development (e.g. Kuo & Syue, 2004). The problem is that most teachers employ a deficit model to interpret new immigrant women’s mothering practices, so they neither understand or acknowledge new immigrant women’s efforts in helping their children.

To remedy these situations, teachers should develop practices to enhance teacher-parent relationships and bridge the gap between home and school (Ramirez, 2003). Teachers should be equipped with appropriate training to help them understand parents’ educational practices adequately. For example, teachers
should receive cultural sensitivity training to enhance relationships with new immigrant women’s families. Teachers should also be able to take advantage of the funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) in students’ families and apply this knowledge to develop students’ dignity and help students learn effectively.

This study also supplies insights for the design and delivery of adult education for new immigrant women. Appreciative as they were for the benefits of attending Chinese Literacy Program, new immigrant women in this study suggested the need for improving the curriculum as well as workshops and services offered by the Taiwanese government-funded New Immigrant Resource Center. These women reported a strong need for learning more pragmatic English and computer skills, considered as instrumental knowledge (Cornfield & Arzubiaga, 2004) to gain access to meaningful employment opportunities and earn income for their families.

Furthermore, almost all the remedial programs for families of new immigrant women are targeted at equipping new immigrant women to be effective mothers. This kind of biased policy is guided by the assumptions that children’s development is solely the mothers’ responsibility and new immigrant women are presumed to be deficient in mothering knowledge. Nevertheless, the truth is family is a dynamic system and child-rearing is not only the mother’s obligation. Therefore, husbands or family members of new immigrant women should also be obligated to participate in parenting classes or at least learn how to support their wives’ mothering practices.
Limitations

There are several limitations in this research. First, not all interviews were conducted in participants’ first languages. Even though all the participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences not using their mother tongue (all informants responded to me in Mandarin-Chinese or English), and rarely had to search for words because of language deficiency, it is possible that participants would feel more comfortable and be able to articulate their feelings and experiences in a deeper way by speaking in their first languages. Secondly, a great deal of data were generated from interviews. This self-reporting method of data collection raises questions about the quality of data. Fortunately, extensive observations of participants’ daily lives including interactions with family members and in the Chinese Language Program, as well as extensive interviews of participants’ husbands, parents-in-law, teachers, and a school principal help to make the data more robust. These supplemental data offer me various perspectives from which to interpret new immigrant women’s motherhood and help me contextualize participants’ lived experiences of motherhood and triangulate the authenticity and trustworthiness of their responses. If future studies can systematically employ mixed methods and collect data from multiple sources, new insights and a more comprehensive picture of new immigrant women’s agency and motherhood may be generated.

Future Directions

From the perspectives of 25 new immigrant women from Southeast Asia, this study provides a fresh look at new immigrant women’s motherhood,
mothering beliefs and practices, and agency. The findings are not intended to
represent a grand theory accounting for all new immigrant women, and many
questions and issues regarding new immigrant women remain unanswered.
Specifically, an urgent and important research question is how teachers perceive
the competence of new immigrant women and new Taiwanese children.
Recognizing and understanding the discrepancy between teachers’ and new
immigrant women’s views and experiences of education, may inform teaching
practices to more efficiently help new Taiwanese children advance their academic
achievement.

In order to change the hegemonic ideologies against women, new
immigrant women in this study, it is pivotal to build solidarity among women who
face similar oppression. From a grassroots perspective, solidarity is easier to build
among women who are situated in the same social position (Kitch, 2009). Thus
conducting studies to compare the lived experiences of motherhood among
minority mothers may generate opportunities and momentum to build solidarity
among women.

A final call for research rests on the issue of women’s agency in
motherhood. Agency and motherhood are both contested terms and bear further
and more nuanced scrutiny; women’s own interpretations and experiences should
be the central concern in such research. Feminist literature on motherhood and
agency should be further developed to account for the complexity of women’s
struggles and agency (Thomas, 2008). By doing so, by attentively listening to
silenced women’s voices, we can truly hope for a better future for all mothers.
REFERENCES


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I am a doctoral student of Dr. Elsie Moore in the Department of Psychology in Education in College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a study to understand immigrant women’s mothering experiences and incorporation in Taiwanese communities.

I am requesting your participation which will involve in-depth interviews. Your interview will be audio-taped. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty or negative consequence. The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be used without your permission.

In publications resulting from this study, your name will not be used, unless you’d prefer to be identified by name. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, nor any financial gain, if you decide to participate, it is an opportunity for you to express your ideas, listen to other immigrant women, and help further our understanding of immigrant women in Taiwan.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 0953-001517.

Sincerely,

Tzu-Hui Chen  
Division of Advanced Studies in Learning, Technology, and Psychology in Education  
Mary Lou Fulton Institute and Graduate School of Education  
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外籍媽媽母職研究
研究書

你好，謝謝您對這個研究的興趣，我是亞利桑那州立大學教育心理學研究所摩爾教授(ElsieMoore)的研究生。這個研究計畫目的是探討在台灣的新移民女性如何教育自己的孩子及適應台灣社會。

經由約40分鐘到一個小時的訪談，我想了解外籍媽媽如何適應台灣社會，她們對孩子教育的參與及期待。因為搜集資料的需要，整個過程會錄音下來，你們的參與完全是自願性的，你可以決定參加或不參加，完全不會有任何不好的影響。整個研究都是匿名的，你的名字不會出現在研果結果中。雖然參與這份研究無法給你直接的助益，也沒有金錢的回饋，卻是一個讓你表達想法的機會，藉由討論，我們也可以了解其他移民女性的想法，幫助我們了解移民女性的需求。
如果你有任何問題與指教，歡迎與我聯絡
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APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
To: Elsie Moore  
FAB

From: Mark Roosa, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Date: 12/06/2007

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 12/06/2007

IRB Protocol #: 0612001396R001

Study Title: A Study of Immigrant Women in Taiwan

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.
1. Demographic information: age, country of origin, duration in Taiwan, number of children and children’s age and sex, education, husband’s occupation, education, and the household makeup.

2. Interview questions about mothering practices and beliefs
   A) What is the reason for you to become a mother?
   B) What is a mother’s responsibility?
   C) What are the characteristics of a good mother?
   D) Who will you consult you encounter questions in mothering? Your mother, mother-in-law, books, or others?
   E) Are there any difference about mothering beliefs between Taiwan and your country? If so, what mothering practice do you adopt?

3. New immigrant women’s experiences of motherhood
   A) Could you share your experiences when you gave birth for your first child?
   B) What is your motivation to be a mother?
   C) After you become a mother, what kind of changes emerged?
   D) How do your family members treat you after you have the child?
   E) What is the best and worst experiences of being a mother?
   F) How do you help your children with their homework?
   G) Could you share your experiences about interaction with school teachers?
   H) Did you receive any help from agencies or government? What kind of services were provided? Were they helpful?
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Tzu-Hui Chen was born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1978. She received a bachelor’s degree in business administration from National Cheng Kung University in Tainan, Taiwan. In 2002, she came to Tempe, Arizona to pursue her master degree in lifespan developmental psychology under Division of Educational Psychology at Arizona State University. In 2005, she received her master’s degree and continued her journey to pursue Ph.D. Her research interests are immigrant women’s motherhood, immigrant women’s agency, parenting practices of immigrant family, and multicultural education from a critical perspective.