CHINESE-BRITISH INTERMARRIAGE

DISENTANGLING GENDER AND ETHNICITY

YANG
HU

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Chinese-British Intermarriage

Disentangling Gender and Ethnicity

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Acknowledgements

The journey of conducting this research and writing this book only becomes utterly enjoyable because of the people about whom, with whom and for whom I write. For this sheer joy, I am sincerely grateful.

First and foremost, I want to thank Jacqueline Scott for her guidance, patience and encouragement. I am grateful to Bing Feng, for kindling the sociologist in me in the first place. I thank Sarah Franklin and Perveez Mody for reading my work and providing valuable insights. I also want to thank David Lehmann, Miri Song, Louise Ryan, Bryan Roberts, Pnina Werbner, Katherine Charsley, Harriet Zurndorder and Rhacel Parreñas for their encouraging and helpful comments on my work, which contributed greatly to the formation of ideas behind this book. I would also like to express my gratitude to Arlie Hochschild, Matthew Desmond and Allison Pugh. Their writings have intellectually enlightened me, and I always found myself engaged in inspiring conversations when reading their books. The 'Individual in the Labour Market' reading group at Cambridge led by Brendan Burchell has always been a valued forum for the exchange of insightful ideas.

My gratitude also goes to Amelia Derkatsch, Harriet Barker, the editorial team and anonymous reviewers at Palgrave Macmillan for believing in this project. I am thankful to the series editors of the Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life for their support. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support from the Gates Cambridge Trust.

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Introduction

Popular Stereotypes

Lengthy plane rides are boring. However, the current project first arose from just such a long-haul flight from China to the UK. A conversation overheard on this flight drew my attention to Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage in the first place and inspired me to undertake this research. I sat behind a middle-aged Chinese mother on her way to visit her daughter and only child,[1] a chemical researcher working in a British university. Sitting next to the mother was a Chinese girl pursuing undergraduate studies in the UK. Nodding in and out of sleep, I overheard part of the conversation struck up between the two. Their exchange soon took a 'personal' turn, as despite her pride in her high-flying daughter, the mother expressed concern that her daughter was dating a *yangren* (Chinese slang for 'White Westerner') from her laboratory. The girl agreed that inter-ethnic relationships could be a 'Pandora's box' full of

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[1] The one-child policy was instated and eventually legalised in China in the late 1970s. The law prohibits couples from giving birth to a second child, with a heavy fine imposed on those who break the law. I overheard the mother on the flight explaining that she had wished to have a second child, but had been prevented by the one-child policy.

troubles, and the two went on to talk about various incidences of domestic violence, discrimination, conflict and so forth in the context of ethnic intermarriage. Indeed, it turned out that the major purpose of the mother's visit was to make sure that her potential son-in-law was treating her daughter well.

The mother I encountered on the flight is not alone in her 'uneasy' response to ethnic intermarriage. According to the 2008 East Asian Social Survey,[2] people from mainland China are less supportive of ethnic intermarriage than people from South Korea, Japan and Taiwan. The survey's respondents were asked to give a binary 'yes'/'no' response to the question of whether they would accept Europeans as kin by marriage. While more than 65 % of the respondents in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan accepted this practice, as many as 60 % of the Chinese respondents indicated their refusal to accept Europeans as kin by marriage. The same sense of 'unease' about ethnic intermarriage, particularly with White Westerners, is mirrored and indeed fuelled by the dramatised and sometimes far-fetched journalistic portrayals of inter-ethnic families in both China and the UK.

Ethnic intermarriage is both glamorised and vilified by the mass media. An 'exotic' practice that has become popular only in recent decades due to a rapid increase in cultural exchange, population mobility and international communication (Therborn, 2013), intermarriage is still novel enough to make headlines, eliciting endless and unfounded speculation about this 'one-time taboo' (Spickard, 1991; Stonequist, 1937). However, the presentation of intermarriage in the mass media also encourages stigmatisation and hostility. For example, the marriage and eventual divorce of Wendi Deng and Rupert Murdoch created a media sensation, furnishing material for cover stories in both China and the West.[3] The depiction of their relationship was representative of the image of Chinese-Western

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[2] Data drawn from the 2008 East Asian Social Survey (EASS), which included a special module on globalisation. For more on the EASS, see http://www.eassda.org. The survey's sample sizes were as follows: China, 3009; Japan, 2039; South Korea, 1491; and Taiwan, 1970. Appropriate weights were applied to ensure the representativeness of results.

[3] For more detail on this case, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendi_Deng_Murdoch, For examples of media reports, see http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/25025412 and http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/22905550, date accessed 20 May 2014.

marriage in the mass media. The marriage is usually between a White man and a Chinese woman; the former is old, divorced and wealthy, and the latter is young, pretty and greedy, using intermarriage as a utilitarian shortcut to social status. Such marriages, according to the mass media, usually end up in divorce (Farrer, 2008). The image of marriage between Chinese men and Western women is no more positive. For example, the bitter divorce of the famous educator Yang Li and his American wife caused unnecessary furore.[4] Men who enter international marriages are still widely stigmatised as 'losers' in local marriage markets in East Asia (Cheng, 2012). Against the backdrop of this much-distorted and dramatised journalistic portrayal of Chinese-Western ethnic intermarriage, it is not surprising that the mother I encountered on my flight decided to see for herself what her daughter's relationship with a British man was really like.

As I contemplated the popular stereotypes, I also decided to see for myself how accurately the media represent intermarriage by gathering information on the actual lived experiences described by Chinese-British families. When I began to formally gather information on Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage, however, what first came to my attention was a YouTube documentary entitled 'Yellow Fever'. Made partly for entertainment purposes, but with a distinct ethnographic flavour,[5] the documentary has received 6.5 million views to date. Its aim is to explain the popularity of Asian and Chinese women among White Western men, particularly compared with the ostensible 'unpopularity' of Chinese men among Western women. From physical appeal to temperament, and from dating styles to marital orientation, 'Yellow Fever' provides a somewhat 'systematic' exploration of the gendered pattern of Chinese-Western inter-ethnic relationships. However, it is also heavily informed by cultural prejudices and predicated on the cultural stereotypes of

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[4] Li is famous for his innovative contribution to the pedagogy of English-language education in China, as well as for his marriage to a White American woman. In 2010, Li's wife filed for divorce from the celebrity on the grounds of domestic violence. For examples, see http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-21332273;http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/8756876/Crazy-English-Chinese-celebrity-Li-Yang-admits-to-domestic-violence.html; date accessed 20 May 2014.

[5] The latest version of the documentary is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vC_ycDO66bw, date accessed 21 May 2014.

feminine Oriental women, masculine Western men and androgynous/ patriarchal Oriental men. The need for evidence to counterbalance such far-fetched popular images of ethnic intermarriage provided the initial motivation for this research.

So How Is the Family?

With my curiosity piqued by the YouTube documentary described above, I was eager to examine the evidence more seriously documented in the academic literature on this subject. It was clear from my initial literature review that ethnic intermarriage has become an increasingly established field of academic enquiry, as presented in Fig. 1.1. Between 1990 and 2013, there was a five-fold increase in the number of academic articles published on the topic of 'intermarriage'. It is impossible to provide an exhaustive review of literature on this subject; with one click, the keyword 'intermarriage' yields more than 96,000 results in the Google
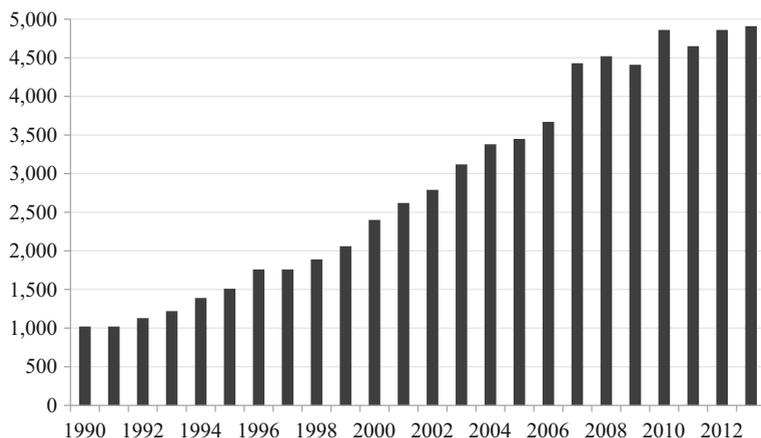
Fig. 1.1 Number of entries on 'Intermarriage' in the Google Scholar Citation Index. Published in English from 1990 to 2013. Due to a time lag in the update of datasets, the data for 2012 and 2013 may be incomplete. *Source*: http://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&q=intermarriage&btnG=&as_ sdt=1%2C5&as_sdtp=. Date accessed 20 May 2014

Scholar Citation Index. However, it would not take long to confirm that due to inconsistencies between disciplines, the existing research on ethnic intermarriage is considerably fragmented. This fragmentation is reflected in researchers' approach to how members of inter-ethnic families are treated—as ethnic minorities, immigrants or gendered individuals (Kalmijn, 1998). Intermarriage offers a kaleidoscopic lens through which scholars from a variety of disciplines—such as demography, geography, sociology, economics, anthropology, law, politics and biology—can address research questions in accordance with their divergent approaches. What information can we gain from the fragmented jigsaw of intermarriage research? More importantly, what have we missed in the gaps between pieces?

Following Weber's approach to intermarriage as a measure of 'racial segregation or attraction' (Weber, 1978[1922], p. 385), most early scholars were interested in the reasons for the formation of marital unions across ethnic boundaries (Fu, 2001; Grossbard-Shechtman & Fu, 2002; Kalmijn, 1998). Behaviourists such as Homans (1958) focused on the material exchange between husbands and wives in racially exogamous relationships. With the rise of neoliberalism, theorists developed these early arguments by defining intermarriage explicitly as a contract of status-economic exchange (Becker, 1991). However, Farrer's (2008, 2013) exploration of Chinese-American marriages in Shanghai indicated that the economic paradigm of Chinese-Western intermarriage shifted in the 2000s from 'passport-unions' to 'joint-ventures', which counters the economic and neoliberal thesis of exchange. Other scholars have underlined the role of non-material sociocultural ideation in the formation of inter-ethnic union. For example, Jayakody, Thornton, and Axinn (2012) described a form of 'developmental idealism' in which different cultural ideologies of 'development' are the key drivers of demographic change. According to them, the cultural stigmas surrounding intermarriage, which are usually criticised by social scientists, are key to understanding why intermarriage happens, given that its participants perceive each other as originating from different developmental 'castes'. Therefore, intermarriage is viewed as a means of gaining symbolic mobility on the ideational scale of development. From past attempts to explain the macro-social mechanism of intermarriage, we know that the formation of exogamy is

largely explained by three factors—the cultural values embodied in personal preferences, structural opportunities in terms of ethnic and socio-spatial mixing/segregation, and third-party factors such as immigration laws, political contexts and so on (Kalmijn & van Tubergen, 2010; Kalmijn, 1998; Muttarak, 2004).

Whereas some scholars have explored the pathways leading to inter-marriage, others have addressed its consequences in sociocultural and even genetic terms. Although early researchers focused mainly on marriage between groups with different national origins already residing in multi-cultural societies such as the USA and the UK (Kalmijn & van Tubergen, 2010), the development of modern transportation and communication has provided new opportunities for inter-ethnic contact, making inter-national migration a major channel into intermarriage (Castells, 2010; Therborn, 2013). As a result, intermarriage not only takes place between members of different ethnic groups who reside in the same country; it also happens via all forms of transnational migration. As a consequence, academic focus has shifted from the formation of ethnic intermarriage to subjects' sociocultural integration after marriage and migration (Algan, Bisin, Manning, & Verdier, 2012; O'Leary & Finnäs, 2002; Song, 2009). Therefore, the bulk of the existing research in this field addresses issues pertaining to the acculturation and assimilation of ethnic minorities and migrants through intermarriage (Berry, 2001, 2008; Chen & Takeuchi, 2011; Qian & Lichter, 2001, 2007; Song, 2010). As the second and third generations of ethnic minorities come of age in countries such as the USA and the UK, researchers are paying increasing attention to the uneven segmentation caused by intermarriage between mixed-ethnic migrants and second-generation migrants (Muttarak & Heath, 2010; Restifo, Roscigno, & Qian, 2013; Song, 2010).

Concerns about the consequences of migration and intermarriage are probably most vividly reflected in the cover story of the 1993 issue of *Time* magazine (volume 142, number 21). Drawing on 'scientific' evidence of population projection, the front cover depicted a synthesised face of a mixed-race female followed by the title 'The new face of America—How immigrants are shaping the world's first multicultural society', predicting ethnic and racial 'convergence' in multicultural America due to

migration and intermarriage. However, the notion of ethnic and racial convergence has been increasingly problematised; 'there are always contradictory tendencies at work—on the one hand towards homogenisation and on the other towards new distinctions' (Lévi-Strauss, 2003 [1978], p. 20). Evidence of ethnic enclaves and the ongoing social and cultural segregation of migrant and host communities continue to challenge the broad assumptions made regarding assimilation and acculturation in the UK and beyond (Muttarak & Heath, 2010; Platt, 2007; Song, 2010). There is an emerging consensus that the potential sociocultural effects of migration are tempered by factors such as educational and labour-force participation, and legal and symbolic status (Bradley & Healy, 2008; ONS, 2012c). Unsurprisingly, with the increasing focus on immigration and border control in British politics, attention has shifted once again from the factors that facilitate the formation of inter-ethnic unions, and their role in promulgating integration, to the policies devised to curb net immigration into the UK, and their potential role in impeding intermarriage (Anderson, 2013; Geddes, 2003).

A quick glance at the development of research on intermarriage reveals that researchers' very purpose in studying this social phenomenon has been considerably influenced by social, political and institutional agendas over time (Healey, 2011). I am also mindful of the fact that although the public and social nature of inter-ethnic families—the implications of intermarriage for ethnic relations, population change, social policy and so on (Coleman, 1994; Fu, 2001)—has been extensively addressed by researchers, less is known about ethnic intermarriage in terms of marriage and family. Most of the scant academic research on the marital and family life of inter-ethnic couples concerns issues such as divorce and cultural reproduction through childrearing (Kahn, 2000; Pagnini & Morgan, 1990; Smith, Maas, & van Tubergen, 2012). Whereas the former type of research hums along with media portrayals of intermarriage by highlighting cultural conflict (Smith et al., 2012), the latter is still deeply rooted in the Weberian tradition of examining inter-ethnic relations (Kalmijn & van Tubergen, 2010). The everyday lives of inter-ethnic and particularly Chinese-Western families have been documented mainly in US ethnic fictions (Sung, 1990). It is a truism to note that we should regard intermarriage as a form of family. Nevertheless, as George Orwell wrote, 'to

see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle',[6] and it is possible to lose sight of the seemingly obvious while on an intellectual journey. It is high time that we return to the everyday lived experiences of subjects from Chinese-British families to ask the following questions: what is the nature of these families, and how do Chinese-British couples experience everyday life in the UK?

In addition to the lack of academic attention to subjects' lived experiences, particularly in the sphere of the family, there has been a lack of consistency and continuity in the study of ethnic intermarriage, both temporally and spatially. Despite the rising popularity of transnationalism, which increases the importance of ongoing ties across national borders and sociocultural divides (Vertovec, 2009), researchers have tended to treat subjects' sending and receiving places as isolated snapshots. Their experiences before and after marriage and migration have received similar treatment (Min & Kim, 2009; Waters, 2000). Events before migration are treated as belonging to the past and to the sending place, and issues such as sociocultural integration are largely addressed in the post-migration time period and restricted to the receiving country (Williams, 2010). Yet as subjects' past experiences may significantly determine their current states as well as their outlooks on the future, an internally consistent logic underpins each subject's experiences of marriage and migration through time and across space, despite the potentially disruptive effect of migration (Elder & Giele, 2009). Moreover, the multiple identities of members of inter-ethnic families as migrants, ethnic minorities and so on are experienced simultaneously rather than in isolation (Williams, 2010). As a result, we should remain aware that Chinese-British families cannot be understood simply as the sums of their fragmented parts. Indeed, a recurring argument I make in this book is the need to understand the everyday lived experiences of Chinese-British families as ongoing, continuous, holistic and internally coherent, and to ascertain how the subjects themselves make sense of these dynamics.

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[6] Quotation from George Orwell, In Front of Your Nose; see http://orwell.ru/library/articles/nose/english/e_nose, date accessed 21 May 2014.

Despite the plethora of media reports and research on intermarriage in general, no single academic study has focused specifically on Chinese-British families in the UK. In filling this lacuna, therefore, the goal of the current research is to document as much as to analyse. A central argument of this book is the need to examine the everyday lived experiences of Chinese-British couples 'on the ground' and to explore how subjects' everyday lived experiences illuminate wider social dynamics at a macro-level. However, I do not mean to suggest that events beyond the sphere of the family are irrelevant to this research; quite the contrary. As Elizabeth Bott (1957) noted, couples' domestic arrangements are significantly associated with the formation of their social networks, such that family dynamics cannot be separated from the dynamics of social spheres at local, national and transnational levels (Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 1999; Vertovec, 2009). As will be demonstrated in this book, the experiences of Chinese-British families are substantially shaped by their interactions with extended families and social networks. An illustrative case is provided by the mother I encountered on my flight, who was involved in her daughter's relationship.

As most previous researchers have adopted a top-down approach to the study of ethnic intermarriage, I aim to enrich the existing literature by adopting a bottom-up perspective. Whilst I by no means deny the importance of focusing on macro-social processes such as inter-ethnic relations, migration, ethnic integration and globalisation, the purpose of the current research is to illuminate these macro-level social trends by providing insights into subjects' lived experiences at the micro-level; that is, individual instances that may or may not help to shape collective macro-social patterns. Despite mounting research on transnational families, I argue for and demonstrate the need to study inter-ethnic families in their own right—not just as a specific type of transnational family. Whereas transnationalism emphasises the role played by families in bridging distinct socio-geographic spaces across national borders and sociocultural divides (Charsley, Storer-Church, Benson, & Van Hear, 2012), I argue that the study of inter-ethnic families underlines the 'intimate' processes of engagement, conflict, negotiation and reconciliation that occur between two distinct sociocultural and familial systems vis-à-vis each other.

Chinese-British Ethnic Intermarriage in the UK

Britain has one of the highest rates of inter-ethnic relationships in the world (Parker & Song, 2001); and there has also been a steady increase in the number of inter-ethnic relationships in the UK in the past decades. While the 2001 UK Census indicated around 7 % of the UK population are in inter-ethnic relationships, the same figure has grown to be around 10 % in the 2011 Census (ONS, 2014). Meanwhile, the 2011 UK Census revealed that approximately 7 % of dependent children lived in a household with an inter-ethnic relationship. More specifically, the number of Chinese-British intermarriages has doubled between 2001 and 2011, from around 22,000 (25 % of Chinese ethnics in the UK) to around 45,000 (31 % of Chinese ethnics in the UK) (ONS, 2014). Besides, while ethnic groups other than the Chinese were seen to intermarry people from a diverse array of ethnic backgrounds, most Chinese ethnics intermarry White British in the UK (Berrington, 1996; ONS, 2014).

Given that ethnicity is a slippery concept, any researcher focusing on Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage in the UK must first define Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage. First, whereas previous research on intermarriage has focused primarily on interracial marriage, I emphasise ethnicity over race. In comparison with Black people, for instance, Chinese have greater flexibility to negotiate access to social resources and make choices regarding their ethnicity, albeit within cultural rather than racial bounds (Song, 2003; Waters, 1990). Although the Chinese ethnicity is visually communicated, like race, the emphasis on 'ethnicity' also suits the primary focus of this research, namely the negotiation of distinct Chinese and British, Eastern and Western cultural identities, rather than the ramifications of race, skin colour and the like. Nevertheless, as Fenton (2010) observed, the concepts of ethnicity, race and nationality overlap considerably; and my emphasis on ethnicity by no means suggests that the Chinese subjects who participated in this research are unaffected by racial imperatives (Song, 2003; Waters, 1990). Rather, ethnicity—the cultural identities conferred by being Chinese and British, an Easterner and a Westerner—is more relevant than race or nationality to

the study of Chinese-British families. In contrast, the visual communication of the physicality of race is less relevant in that this research focuses more on the clash, negotiation and reconciliation between two distinct sets of sociocultural practices.

Second, it is vital to define 'Chinese' and 'British' ethnics separately. Although Chinese ethnics have had a long history of settlement in the UK, the early Chinese settlers were mainly from Hong Kong and the Canton area (Benton & Gomez, 2011).[7] Originating from former British colonies, the UK's early Chinese settlers were considerably influenced by British culture before their migration. The lingering effects of colonialism in the post-colonial era make these settlers unrepresentative of a first-generation Chinese ethnic and cultural identity (Parker, 1995). In contrast, individuals who migrated from mainland China to the UK, broadly referred to as 'new' Chinese immigrants, are distinct from the 'old' Chinese migrants in several respects, such as self-identification, cultural heritage and, not least, employment status (Benton & Gomez, 2011).[8] The term 'new' reflects the fact that migration from mainland China to the UK has occurred only recently, over the last few decades, enabled by China's open-door policy and the subsequent end of the Cold War between socialist and capitalist campaigns (Chang & Rucker-Chang, 2013). The 'new' Chinese immigrants are also subject to numerous 'new' (recent) and ever more rigorous policies devised by the British government to tackle the rising tide of international migration into the UK. This is one of the key issues discussed in the chapters to come. Similarly, although I do not prioritise skin colour or race, it makes sense to focus on the White-British ethnic identity, because 'coloured' British in the UK may well have different ethno-racial experiences and differences in sociocultural heritage (Platt, 2007).

To highlight the engagement between the Chinese and British ethnicities, I therefore limit the focus of this research to the 'new' first-generation Chinese ethnics socialised in mainland China up to 16 years

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[7] 'Canton' refers to the district near Hong Kong in south-eastern China; it is now named Guangdong province.

[8] Whereas 'old' Chinese migrants in the UK are concentrated in, for example, ethnic-catering businesses, 'new' Chinese migrants are more dispersed across all sectors of employment.

of age. Similarly, I focus on first-generation White English, Welsh and Scottish individuals born and raised in Britain up to 16 years of age.[9] Indeed, as stated by Therborn (2014), Chinese and British families not only stand for the East Asian Confucian and Christian-European famil-ial systems respectively, they also represent unique positions in relation to the social processes of individualisation and modernisation across the globe (Therborn, 2004). This is by no means to suggest that familial sys-tems in China and the UK are at different 'stages' of individualisation and modernisation; rather that the two systems perceive and respond to such all-encompassing social trends in distinct ways.

The study of Chinese-British families is undeniably important. However, the importance of ethnic intermarriage has often been mis-characterised in the existing literature. Despite the widespread belief that the popularity of ethnic intermarriage is 'on the rise' in a globalised world (Williams, 2010), ethnic intermarriages have accounted for a small proportion of all marriages in the UK (ONS, 2005; ONS, 2014). Indeed, there is a dearth of statistics on ethnic intermarriage in the UK, and the limited existing data fail to represent the phenomenon accu-rately. Defining ethnic intermarriage as marriage between two individu-als reporting affiliations to distinct aggregate ethnic groups, the current statistics—even those relating specifically to Chinese-British intermar-riage—cover quite a heterogeneous group. People who report themselves as Chinese or British could well be second-generation 'Chinese-British'. As the social group of inter-ethnic families is fairly intangible in current social surveys in the UK,[10] the existing statistics can only provide a rough gauge of the prevalence of ethnic intermarriage.

Despite the small population size of couples in Chinese-British eth-nic intermarriages, it is important to recall the distinctive characteris-tics of Chinese-British families in the UK, which uniquely reflect the wider sociocultural processes ongoing in modern societies. As reviewed

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[9] This research does not sample respondents in Northern Ireland or respondents who were born and/or grew up in Northern Ireland.

[10] Researchers in the USA have attempted to introduce visual measurements of skin colour to social surveys. See, for example, Jasso, 'Migration and Stratification', at http://ftp.iza.org/dp5904.pdf, IZA Research Paper. Date accessed 22 May 2014.

below in detail, Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage[11] in the UK occurs primarily through two channels: Chinese ethnics already residing in the UK, who entered the country through professional migration, and those who entered the UK through marriage migration.[12] Notably, as major surveys have categorised 'old' and 'new' Chinese ethnics in the UK as a single 'Chinese' ethnic group, the statistics presented here provide only a rough estimation of the target population (namely 'new' Chinese ethnics in the UK). We should remain constantly aware of the differences between 'new' and 'old' Chinese ethnics when characterising the Chinese population in the UK.

Chinese-British inter-ethnic marriage arises in part from the mother set of Chinese ethnics already in residence in the UK. Figure 1.2 outlines the dynamics of the UK-based Chinese population from 1991 to 2011. Although the UK's Chinese population remains relatively small,[13] its growth has been considerable. From 1991 to 2001, its proportion of the population of England and Wales doubled, and its net population size underwent a three-fold increase. As the average fertility rate of the Chinese ethnic group (1.29) was far below the UK average (1.9) between 1991 and 2010,[14] this rapid population growth can be attributed primarily to a net increase in first-generation immigrants, particularly 'new' Chinese ethnics from mainland China (Benton & Gomez, 2011).

Due to the UK's stringent immigration regulations, the UK-based Chinese ethnic group displays some highly selected characteristics. Most of its members are students and high-skilled workers, and thus profes-

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[11] I focus in this research on legal marriages, partly due to the unobservable nature of cohabitation and other alternative forms of family, as unmarried cohabitation is against traditional Chinese family values. The two channels are well defined; a legitimate immigration status is necessary to marry legally.

[12] 'Professional migration' refers to migration for the main purpose of work or professional development such as higher education. 'Marriage migration' refers to migration for the main purpose of marriage. The major legal and de facto grounds for migration are constituted by marriage to a British citizen. The two channels are defined by the status of a migrant on 'entering' the UK; this status may change after entry clearance. Notably, only a limited number of legal channels are available for Chinese to migrate to the UK. Professional and marriage migration are the two major channels—as opposed to, for example, diplomacy migration or asylum seeking.

[13] According to the 2011 Census, the Chinese population is the sixth largest ethnic-minority group in the UK.

[14] Author's own calculations, based on data from the ONS (2012a) and Dubuc (2009).
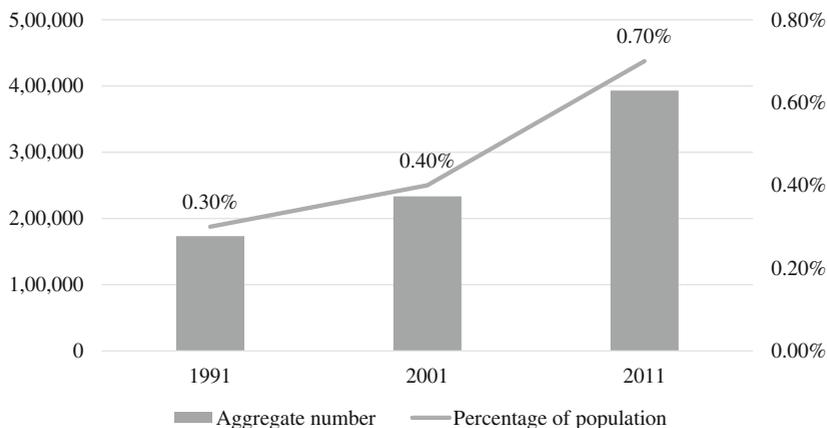
Fig. 1.2 Chinese population in England and Wales from 1991 to 2011. Author's own calculations, based on original data from the report How Has Ethnic Diversity Grown 1991–2001–2011, ESRC Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity. *Source*: www.ethnicity.ac.uk. Date accessed 6 February 2013

sionally oriented and career-driven. Indeed, with most of its members aged between 16 and 64 years old, the Chinese population boasts the largest proportion of the country's active labour force of all of the ethnic groups in the UK. Discounting full-time students, who comprise 40 % of the UK's Chinese residents, the employment rate within this population remained above 90 % from 1991 to 2001, unaffected by such events as the global financial crisis of 1993 (Dustmann, Fabbri, Preston, & Wadsworth, 2003). According to 2004 data, Chinese ethnics boasted one of the lowest unemployment rates among all ethnic groups in Britain.[15] More specifically, UK-based Chinese ethnics have the lowest rate of part-time work but the highest rate of self-employment of all ethnic groups (Hibbett & Meager, 2003).[16]

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[15] Based on the 2004 Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate of the Chinese ethnic group is 8.4, which is only exceeded by that of Indians (5.1) and White ethnics (4.3).

[16] 36 % of Chinese women report being in part-time employment, while less than 1 % of Chinese men report being employed part-time; 28 % of Chinese men report being self-employed. As Chinese family businesses such as restaurants are in most cases run by men, it is unsurprising that substantially fewer Chinese women report being self-employed.

Compared with 1995 when 657 Chinese were granted high-skilled work permits to enter the UK, 4332 Chinese ethnics were granted high-skilled work permits in 2005 (ONS, 2006). With a high income benchmark set by the Border Agency's 'High-Skilled Migrant Programme' under the Labour government in the 2000s, most of the UK's 'new' Chinese migrants are blue- or white-collar workers such as technicians, managers and supervisors, whereas most 'old' Chinese migrants work in the ethnic economy of Chinese restaurants and are consistently stigmatised as such (Parker, 1995; White, 2013). Unsurprisingly, Chinese ethnics constitute the only ethnic-minority group in the UK that does not incur an 'ethnic penalty', and whose members earn as much as White ethnics in the UK, averaging £336 per week for full-time employees (Bradley & Healy, 2008).[17] In 2012–2013, the Conservative government further restricted the number of Tier 2 work visas and set up the 'Exceptional Talent' programme to replace the 'High-Skilled Migrant Programme'. The selectivity of the UK's immigration rules is also reflected in the high educational attainment of members of the Chinese ethnic population.

Despite its close integration with the British labour market, the UK-based Chinese population shows a high degree of ethnic closure, and the distinctness of Chinese identity is constantly affirmed. From 1991 to 2011, the dissimilarity index[18] for the Chinese ethnic group remained at around 30, compared with figures greater than 50 for all other ethnic groups. This suggests that the Chinese population tend to cluster and is less evenly spread in geographical terms than other ethnic-minority groups. Meanwhile, the fact that its members send the largest sum of informal remittance[19] per capita to their families in China has often been cited as an illustration of the strength of Chinese family values, including filial piety and intergenerational support (Blackwell & Seddon, 2004).

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[17] In contrast, for example, with Pakistani men in full-time employment, who earn an average of £227 per week, and Bangladeshi men, who earn £227 per week.

[18] Report by the ESRC Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity. The index of dissimilarity measures the internal consistency of ethnic identity and degree of integration: 0 = total segregation, 100 = total evenness of spread.

[19] Money transferred to a non-institutional/non-charity source, usually family members and/or other individuals with whom the donors are personally connected.

However, the prevalence of female Chinese professionals in this population is less traditional. Compared with White women, Chinese females (who comprise 54 % of the UK-based Chinese population) enjoy a considerable employment advantage, whereas women from other ethnic-minority groups (those of Black African, Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage, for example) are significantly disadvantaged. Meanwhile, the occupational segregation by gender within the Chinese population is the lowest among all ethnic groups in the UK (Blackwell & Guinea-Martin, 2005).

In addition to the channel for Chinese-British intermarriage created by Chinese ethnics already residing in the UK, marriage migration has recently become a second major channel for the creation of Chinese-British families in the UK. In 2009, 3025 Chinese spouses migrated to the UK (Charsley et al., 2012), in contrast with approximately 500 in 2000. It should first be noted that the number of Chinese marriage migrants underwent a six-fold increase in the first decade of the New Millennium, and that China overtook the Philippines and Thailand as the largest exporting country of marriage migrants from East Asia to the UK. Second, a remarkably high percentage (89 %) of the Chinese marriage migrants who participated in this research were female. This figure is very close to the 84 % of Chinese marriage migrants constituted by women in 2008–2009—substantially higher than the average 60 % for other ethnic groups (Charsley et al., 2012). This is consistently mirrored in the data that around 40 % of Chinese women are in partnerships with someone from a different ethnic group in the UK (Muttarak & Heath, 2010; Platt, 2009); and twice as many Chinese women are in inter-ethnic relationships as Chinese men (ONS, 2014). However, although marriage migration is recognised as a major channel leading into Chinese-British inter-ethnic families in the UK, the statistics on marriage migration, like that of the other parameters presented in this section, do not directly measure ethnic intermarriage, and therefore provide only a rough and indirect means of estimation.

Marriage migration has also been subject to the strict control of the British immigration system. Not only are non-British spouses required to pass standardised English-language tests, but the status of a spousal immigrant is under scrutiny for a 'probationary period' designed

to ensure the 'genuineness' and subsistence of the marriage.[20] Chinese spouses are only granted long-term residence permits after this probationary period. Notably, the UKBA's increase in the length of the 'probationary period' from 18 to 24 months in 2004–2005 severely capped the number of marriage migrants from other East Asian countries such as the Philippines and Thailand, resulting in a drop in the annual total number of marriage migrants from these countries to the UK in the same time period and a substantial slowdown in the speed of increase in the subsequent years (Charsley et al., 2012). However, marriage migration from China was unaffected. Furthermore, the elevation of the educational and financial thresholds for entry had little or no effect on the steady increase in the number of spouses migrating to the UK from China. This suggests that China-UK marriage migration is also highly selective.

For these reasons, it is important to note the distinctive and indeed potentially unique socioeconomic status of Chinese-British families. Despite the approximate nature of statistical estimation in this area, it is safe to note that that the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families examined in this research comprise a highly selected and homogenous socioeconomic group. Filtered by the UK's strict immigration controls, they more or less represents a middle-class group in socioeconomic, cultural and educational terms. This is consistent with the findings of previous research conducted in the USA, which suggests that intermarriage is most likely to take place among people from a middle-class background (Jacobs & Labov, 2002).

The Book

Departing from attention to the two major channels for the creation of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families in the UK (namely professional and marriage migration), Chap. 2 (Happy Families Alike?) traces the general life-course patterns available to Chinese-British families in the UK. The following four categories of families are identified from examination of

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[20] A 'trial period', according to UKBA (UK Border Agency) regulations in 2012. Two probationary periods of 2.5 years each were implemented to ensure that marriages are genuine.

the recurring themes of ethnic and gender identities during the processes of migration and marriage: (a) families with homemaking Chinese marriage migrant wives; (b) families with working Chinese professional migrant wives; (c) 'off-tracker' families (those with homemaking professional migrant wives and working marriage migrant wives); and (d) families with Chinese husbands. As no previous researcher has focused on Chinese-British inter-ethnic families in the UK, I present a descriptive delineation of the life experiences of the four groups of families listed above in Chap. 2, using the empirical evidence outlined in the chapter as a foundation for further exploration.

With the importance of gender and ethnicity made clear in Chap. 2, Chap. 3 more closely reviews the relevant literature on gender identity and ethnic identity, as well as their intersectionality. The aim of Chap. 3 is to construct a theoretically plausible and empirically feasible framework for examination of the lived experiences of Chinese-British families in the UK. In Chap. 3, I first explain the relevance of gender and ethnicity to the study of ethnic intermarriage, followed by a critical review of the conceptualisation of gender identity and ethnic identity. Next, I discuss the interplay between gender and ethnicity in the light of theories of intersectionality. The last section of Chap. 3 addresses the life-course theory and life-story approach as a well-structured and empirically practical framework that captures the dynamics of subjects' lived experiences and helps to disentangle the intersecting gender and ethnic identities of Chinese-British families in the UK.

Chapters 4–7 provide an in-depth empirical exploration and analysis of the lives of the four groups of Chinese-British families listed above. Chapter 4 ('The Chinese Virtue' and 'The Good Old Days') focuses on Chinese-British families composed of working British husbands and homemaking Chinese marriage migrant wives. Chapter 5 (The Anatomy of the 'Superwoman') examines the lives of dual-earner families with working professional migrant Chinese wives. In Chap. 6 (The Road Less Travelled—Negotiating 'Change'), the two types of 'off-tracker' families are explored and discussed. Chapter 7 (A World Inverted) focuses on Chinese-British families composed of British wives and Chinese husbands.

In Chap. 8, I examine the life trajectories of the subgroups of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families under comparative lens. I summarise the results of the research and discuss their implications for wider sociocultural processes and their contribution to the existing body of literature. I discuss the implications of this research for policies related to marriage, migration and so on. Looking ahead, I also discuss the importance of studying first-generation ethnic intermarriage in advancing our understanding of the production of mixed-ethnic identities. I suggest the examination of intergenerational relations between parents and children in inter-ethnic families to be a promising direction of future research. Besides, the methodological appendix introduces the research design and methodological concerns relevant to studying family and individual life in an inter-ethnic context.

Readers on the look for scoops or stories of 'exotic' romances will not find what they expect in this book. Nor is this book 'A Guide to Successful Inter-ethnic Relationship'. A core tenet of this book is to showcase that the Chinese-British couples are just like everyone else who fall in love, get married, experience everyday vicissitudes and rejoice and struggle in the moments of their lives. Although ethnic intermarriage represents quite unique experiences, only made more unusual by its rarity in statistical terms, I hope the findings of my research could reach across to deliver the message that the unusualness of intermarriage is more often dramatised than experienced, imagined than real. Yet it is quite often those imagined distinctions shared among the general public as much as posited by intermarried couples themselves that shape the lived experiences of the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families we will get to know in this book.

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2

Happy Families Alike?

'All happy families are alike; I am afraid you will be disappointed that there is not much to find out.'[1] Indirectly quoting Tolstoy's nineteenth-century novel *Anna Karenina*, this line is drawn from my initial correspondence with Fang, my first contact when I began this research. After several emails had been exchanged, I met Fang and her husband Terry in the 'kid zone' in Cambridge City Library. It was a breezy, sunny Sunday afternoon. Lillian and Luka, aged three and five, were as cheerful as any children on a family outing. As we began chatting, Luka crawled onto Terry's shoulders, pulling his hair and pleading with him to play *Where's Wally*,[2] while Lillian attempted to join in—a scene one would be unlikely to witness in China, where mothers usually pamper children and fathers stay relatively calm and detached.

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[1] In follow-up interviews, Fang admitted that she was aware of the derogatory portrayal of Chinese-British families and her initial response to my contact was largely influenced by her dissatisfaction with popular stereotypes.

[2] A series of children's books by the British illustrator Martin Handford. Readers are challenged to find a character named Wally hidden somewhere among a group of people doing a variety of amusing things in a given location.

Eleven years ago in 2001, Fang came to England for her PhD and began working in the same laboratory as Terry. They fell in love at first sight. After graduation, Terry secured a promising job and proposed to Fang, who accepted his proposal and remained in England. For eight years, she stood behind Terry as 'the most supportive wife, mother and homemaker of a perfectly happy family'. My happiness for the family notwithstanding, I became increasingly confused as the life stories of the family unfolded. The much-anticipated cultural conflict documented with great seriousness in the literature on intermarriage (Ibezim, 2008; Jackman, 1994; Phillips, 1985) and depicted vividly in award-winning blockbusters such as *Crash* and *East is East* seemed, by comparison with Fang's account, merely a melodramatic fantasy. However, as I commuted between China and the UK and explored dust-filled archives, I was increasingly able to locate that library corner and sunny afternoon within their wider historical and geographical contexts. Gradually, it became obvious that the assumptions underpinning the designation 'normal family' are deeply problematic. More than a century ago, scrawling 'all happy families are alike' with a quill, Tolstoy could never have envisioned the world of change to come. In the past century, the processes of industrialisation, modernisation, individualisation and globalisation have made the term 'normal family' redundant (Scott, 2006; Therborn, 2013). With increasing rates of divorce, cohabitation and single-parenthood, the decline of the traditional family is accompanied by the rise of new forms such as transnational and inter-ethnic families (Williams, 2010).

'Intermarriage' is not a recent phenomenon. In the West, it took a long time for this former social taboo to become accepted as perfectly 'normal'. In ancient China, intermarriage was restricted to royal alliances between neighbouring polities (Loewe & Shaughnessy, 1999). During the Cold War, the political 'Great Wall' between the socialist and capitalist campaigns removed even the possibility of East-West marriage. Only after China's Reform and Opening-up[3] in 1978 did intermarriage begin to receive acceptance on a national scale. Since that time, thanks to modern

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[3] China's state-guided programme of modernisation and economic reform; the policy transformed the structure of China's economy, replacing state centralisation with market orientation. It opened China's market to the rest of the world, allowing the influence of global/Western culture into the country.

systems of communication and transportation, the West and the East have grown closer than ever before (Wallerstein, 2004). Intermarriage has become not only a global phenomenon, a statistic on the rise, but also, and more importantly, an increasingly normalised individual choice (Fang, Sidanius, & Pratto, 1998; Williams, 2010).

Moreover, Fang and Terry occupy a unique point of cross-over between distinct sociocultural spaces. As a professional engineer and a cherished and caring father, Terry combines the symbols of suit and apron, briefcase and feeding bottle in a manner entirely inconsistent with the image of the 'sidelined father' in contemporary China (Kwok-bun, 2012). Fang, too, has taken 'the road less travelled': once a PhD candidate and now a full-time homemaker, she is swimming against the tide of the 93.6 % of PhD graduates in the UK who end up in full-time professional careers.[4] Concurring with the review presented in Chap. 1, Fang and Terry therefore are examples of the first channel—Chinese ethnics residing in the UK as professional migrants—that leads into Chinese-British families in the UK, which represents 15 out of the 29 Chinese-British families and 4 divorcées who participated in this research.

Migration and marriage do not always take place in the order experienced by Terry and Fang. Weiwei and Barry's relationship began with an encounter at a business conference in China. In 2008, the couple held a grand traditional Chinese wedding in Weiwei's hometown, and then decided to settle in England. Before giving up her job and migrating to be with Barry, Weiwei was an accredited trader in international commerce. When we first met, she welcomed me comfortably as the mistress of a Victorian house in a peaceful English suburb and the mother of Alice and Ellie, aged one and two. It would take some time to identify the Weiwei cuddling Ellie and humming 'two tigers' (*liangzhilaohu*)[5] to Alice in her cradle as the experienced businesswoman in a smart black suit sitting at one end of an oval table sealing million-pound deals in a carefully framed photo on her mantelpiece. Relinquishing promising careers as bankers, teachers, business-owners and the like is not uncommon among

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[4] Rate as of 2006; data obtained from the ESRC project 'PhD Graduates' Career Choices and Impact: A Review of UK Evidence' (Raddon & Sung, 2009).

[5] A well-known piece of Chinese folklore with a corresponding nursery rhyme.

Chinese marriage migrants, as in Weiwei's case. Undoubtedly, transnational migration disrupts one's life. Marriage migrants like Weiwei are confronted with the classic work-family decisions in deciding to intermarry and migrate as well as upon reaching their new home in the UK. Throughout the same process, they also gradually wake up to the consciousness of their ethnicity.

Like many other Chinese-British families in the UK, Fang and Terry, Weiwei and Barry have created a family across boundaries in a way that their predecessors a century ago—even 30 years ago—could barely have imagined. Negotiating and reconciling identities affiliated to distinct sociocultural spaces, Chinese-British families exhibit unique characteristics and trajectories on both an individual and a collective basis. As discussed in Chap. 1, the cases of Weiwei and Barry, Fang and Terry represent the two major routes through which Chinese-British families are established—namely marriage migration and study/work-related professional migration. As will be presented in this chapter, the distinctive dynamics through each channel of migration underpin the processes by which Chinese and British people meet, date and marry.[6] People's immigration histories not only represent distinctive choices of their geographic and social mobility, they also have a profound influence on their subsequent life trajectories. Having taken one of these two immigration pathways as distinct and comparable points of departure, each cluster of families is subsequently directed by individual propensities and social constraints. As gender arrangements and particularly that of work and the family are core to the organisation of modern family and social lives[7]

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[6] Very rarely are families formed through other channels such as asylum or illegitimate human smuggling. The two trajectories above remain the only major and legitimate channels by means of which Chinese-British families residing in the UK are established. In this research, therefore, I focus solely on marriage-related and work/study-related immigration. In addition, I triangulate and verify the roles played by different immigration pathways using event structure analysis (Ragin, 2009), which tests the sufficiency and necessity of designated prerequisites for temporally ensuing events.

[7] Gender is chosen to be a comparable destination point in the life pathways of the families due to several reasons: first, gender, focusing on the axis of work and family distinction, follows closely through the two migration trajectories—marriage (spousal) and professional, thus providing a comparable social outcome through time consistent with the social 'origin' of migration trajectories; second, gender is the basic concept that underpins the organisation of family and social life at various levels of society; third, although the meaning and understanding of gender differ from one subject to another as will be discussed in the book, the work-family orientation in terms of gender-

(Therborn, 2004), there is also a consistent and comparable distinction between these two clusters in terms of career versus domestic orientation. What is unique of the case of intermarriage is that the process of gender-role orientation may not take place on its own.

Although, like Weiwei, most of the marriage migrants involved in this study prioritised their children, families and domestic lives above all else, some displayed a clear preference for professional advancement, and viewed intermarriage and migration as an opportunity to develop their careers. Fang was one of the few UK-based Chinese professionals in this research to withdraw from their careers; many former professionals and students simply continued working after marriage. They returned to their original posts soon after childbirth, within the 'grace period' of maternity leave, and chose to use nurseries rather than look after their children full-time. Chinese husbands with British wives—a rare combination—form a separate cluster of inter-ethnic families. The Chinese husbands involved in this study had the impressive ability to juggle the demands of work and home. In contrast, all of the British spouses involved in this study, male and female alike, opted to retain their full-time careers[8] through the events of marriage and childbirth. At home, they played various roles. Some only 'chipped in' with the domestic workload—picking up a bottle of milk from their local grocery shop, for example—whereas others preferred the egalitarian ideal of sharing their domestic responsibilities equally.

As this chapter will demonstrate, people from inter-ethnic families quite often mix and blend the meanings of their gender and ethnicity across their social spaces and experiences, weaving one into the other in a daily project of creativity that nonetheless serves to produce and reproduce their ethnic understandings and gender relationships. Sociocultural identities are under constant negotiation in inter-ethnic families; and this leads to varying degrees of conflict and reconciliation. Some of the families involved in this study seemed to have fared well in this regard, reporting that 'nothing [seems] different' and that everything is 'perfectly normal'.

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role enactment (for example, compared with ethnic identification) is well defined and therefore provides a stable starting point for further inquiry.

[8] Apart from a few recent cases of retirement at the normal ages for retirement in different occupations.

In other families, one could almost smell the dynamite. Consider the following examples of the diverse routes taken by Chinese-British inter-ethnic families drawn from the larger sample used in this research.

Marriage Migration and British-Male-Earner Families

As a promising banker with a secure *tie fan wan* ('iron bowl'),[9] Monica was once the envy of many in China. Bob, an accredited technician, had more than 20 years' overseas experience with the British Army when he met Monica in the early 1980s, at a church charity function in China. The pair exchanged contact details, then went on dates and finally holidays together; in short, they followed the typical route of a silver-screen romance and fell in love.

Having grown up in a traditional family that attached great importance to marriage as a lifelong aim for women, Monica longed to marry a reliable man. Despite the constant relocations demanded by Bob's job, Monica relinquished her *tie fan wan* and accepted his marriage proposal. Her marriage was the topic of considerable gossip among her friends. Living an 'on-the-go' life, Bob and Monica relocated several times—from Germany to the Middle East, North Africa to South America. Their two sons, Peter and Tom, and their younger daughter Nikki, were all born in different countries.

While Bob's work supported the family financially, Monica was the cornerstone of the household, responsible for domestic activities such as bringing up the children and housekeeping. Wherever the couple travelled, their respective activities were largely contained within these limits. Occasionally, Monica also helped out at local schools and churches.

In the late 1990s, following Bob's early retirement from the army, the family finally returned to the UK and settled down in a suburban area. On their return to England, Bob began running a charity organisation. Living a financially secure and indeed prosperous life, Monica never

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[9] A stable and secure job in a state-owned institution. The term was conceived by Chinese socialists, who represented job security as an iron (and thus unbreakable) bowl.

again felt the need to take up paid employment. As the children grew up and went to school, voluntary work in the local Chinese community and for church and charity organisations became the new centre of Monica's life, in addition to routine housekeeping.

In the autumn of 2012, I made my first home visit to Monica and Bob. Nikki had just left for university. Her older brothers Peter and Tom had started their own families. The couple's three-storey house, exquisitely decorated with souvenirs of their extensive travels over the years, seemed empty without the presence of the children. However, Bob and Monica, both of whom are now in their early sixties, lead a happy life according to the Chinese ideal of *tianlunzhile*[10]: they enjoy loving conjugal relations, a comfortable financial situation and a big clan of offspring. Furthermore, they explained that they were eagerly anticipating becoming grandparents in the future.

Unlike Monica, Guihua was born to an ordinary Chinese family and had few aspirations. After middle school, she began to work behind the counter in her parents' grocery shop, where Garry was a regular customer during his business trips to China. After seeing each other intermittently for a few years, Guihua became pregnant; hence their somewhat hasty marriage in 2000. Pulling all of their resources and *guanxi*[11] together, Guihua's parents hosted an extravagant wedding with a high-profile motorcade and a luxurious banquet. It was an unprecedented local sensation, especially as according to Chinese tradition, weddings are hosted by the groom's family, not the bride's.

In 2003, Garry decided to focus on his business back in England. It took little persuasion for Guihua to follow him there. The couple also believed that the environment in England[12] (including air, water quality, food safety and so on) would be better for their children Leon and Alex, then aged one and three. Under the general impression that the West

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[10] A Chinese proverb describing the ideal of happy family life.

[11] The Chinese term for one's personalised network of influence, similar to the concept of social network or social capital.

[12] Quite often cited by the Chinese homemaking mothers to justify the preference for the UK over China as a place for their children is the '2008 China Milk Scandal'. Several major milk manufacturers added poisonous chemicals to make their milk powder products appear to have a higher level of protein nutrient. The chemical caused more than 300,000 infants to suffer from kidney damage.

was more developed and thus wealthy, Guihua was eager to migrate to England: a decision for which she was celebrated by her parents and other relatives as 'the sparrow that flew up to the golden branch and became a phoenix' (*maque bian fenghuang*).[13]

At home, Guihua played more or less the same role as Monica, raising and caring for her children and making her home a loving haven for her husband by ensuring that the laundry, food preparation and other chores were kept out of his way. When Leon and Alex were young, Guihua categorically refused to send them to nursery, which she described scornfully as being 'bad for children's growth and development'. Proud of being a 'tiger mother', she was strict and often critical of her children. Guihua's preference for the domestic life was further confirmed by financial calculations indicating that her potential earning power would be unlikely to exceed the cost of a nursery plus domestic outsourcing.

With Leon and Alex settling into school life, however, Guihua grew bored at home alone. She began to socialise at the local community centre and made a number of Chinese friends there. When I first met Guihua, she offered to introduce me to other members of the centre. Activities with Chinese friends seemed to be an essential part of her life during the day. Nonetheless, her family came first in all respects. She always arranged her social activities to finish before 3 p.m., enabling her to do the grocery shopping and get home before the boys returned from school. Content in her role as wife and mother, Guihua was thrilled to see her husband's business thriving and her children growing up. She maintained high expectations of Alex and Leon, hoping that they would achieve what she herself had not managed to accomplish—with a particular view to successful integration into mainstream British society.

These two families exemplify the model of the *British-male-earner* and *Chinese-female-homemaker* household. Throughout the process of migration, both Monica and Guihua followed their husbands. The geographic and temporal trajectories of these two families were thus largely dependent on the husbands' preferences and career needs, which determined where the families would go and when, what they would do, and

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[13] An ordinary female who marries the emperor and becomes the empress (symbolised by a phoenix); today, it is a slang term for those who marry someone of a higher social status.

which responsibilities fell to each family member. Setting off from the same 'starting point', namely marriage migration, these two families also arrived at the same destination in terms of work-family orientation. Monica's choice of marriage and migration reflects her prioritisation of family life and her relationship with Bob. Although Guihua expressed her hopes and desires far less clearly, she found in her children and husband the value she could not achieve in the labour market and gradually developed a powerful sense of accomplishment in, and hence preference for, domesticity.

Monica and Guihua's lives have entailed both self-exploration and fulfilment of prescribed roles. In the real-life practices of domesticity and motherhood, they came to identify with traditional family values. Associating the domestic life with socialisation, and socialisation with China, they tended to equate 'Chinese' with 'domesticity'. Guihua provided an economic rationale (comprising the family's financial needs, her own perceived lack of earning power and the high costs of domestic outsourcing) to justify her domestic orientation. The combination 'Chinese' and 'housewife' also fitted well into the stereotypes Bob and Garry held of Chinese women. It was further assured by their like-minded friends in the Chinese community. It seems that ethnicity is closely weaved into people's perception of distinctive gender roles at both an individual and a collective level.

Although most of the families resulting from the marriage migration of Chinese women were also found to be constructed according to the British-male-earner model, the research uncovered some cases of interethnic families that had beaten the odds and diverged from this pattern. Two examples are provided below.

Marriage Migration and Dual-Earner Families

Xiu and Fred met at Dubai International Airport, where Xiu was a waitress in a restaurant and Fred worked as an engineer. Both Xiu and Fred had previously been married, and were divorced when they met. While Xiu was childless, Fred had two grown-up children in England. In 2009, Xiu and Fred married in a local church in Dubai after living together for

two years. A year later, following Fred's retirement, they moved to China, where Xiu invested most of her savings in a small business. Unfortunately, the business soon failed. The couple were living in a rented apartment; they could not afford to buy a respectable home of their own, especially as China's real-estate market was then in its most dire state.[14] Although Fred enjoyed his life in China and expressed a strong preference for settling there, Xiu objected and insisted on moving to England in the spirit of 'gold-rush' optimism. After extensive debate and negotiation, Fred compromised and moved back to the UK first to prepare for Xiu's subsequent migration.

To become eligible for a spouse visa, Xiu had to take tests to prove that she was proficient in English to an A1 level.[15] During the early 1980s, she had received an education that placed an overwhelming emphasis on the sciences, according to the ideal that 'one fears nothing when one has mastered maths, physics and chemistry'.[16] Xiu never made it to university, where English was properly taught. Unsurprisingly, therefore, she failed her first IELTS (International English Language Test System) examination[17] and had to take another two before passing. She did not obtain the required language certificate for eight months, and visa clearance took another three months. In early 2012, Fred and Xiu finally reunited in England after nearly a year apart.

With the UK in the middle of economic crisis, Xiu's 'gold-rush' hopes of a job in the UK were not fulfilled. The language barrier made her job prospects even gloomier. After two months of unemployment, Xiu was becoming frustrated, bored and lonely. She made a few Chinese friends in her local area and through the influence of one new friend was finally offered a waitressing job in a Chinese restaurant. Thanks to the favourable

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[14] On China's housing prices, see 'China's Housing Price Up, Stock Price Down', *Financial Times*, 2013.

[15] A1 is the first (most basic) level of foreign-language proficiency in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; it is judged to require 40 to 50 hours' tuition for most learners.

[16] The slogan of Chinese educators in the 1980s, which crystallised the state's aim to construct a scientifically and technologically advanced nation. Other such slogans included 'science and technology is the primary production force', which sought to correct the left-extremist orientation of the Cultural Revolution.

[17] A widely used English-language proficiency test worldwide.

exchange rate between the British pound sterling and the Chinese *yuan*,[18] Xiu earned much more than the equivalent salary in China and was therefore reasonably happy.

Now in her late forties, Xiu has given up the idea of having children, despite moments of regret. Arguably, childlessness has allowed her the time to develop her career by working full-time. At home, retirement has left Fred ample time to take over the running of the household, including such chores as vacuuming, cooking and laundry. When asked to think about the future, Fred revealed that he would still consider the possibility of settling down permanently in China. Xiu agreed in theory with the idea of returning to China, but explained that she would have to keep her job for a few more years before they could afford to make a life there.

Cora majored in education at university in China and went on to be an English teacher in a private language school. Dan grew up and attended university in England. After graduation, he went to Korea and taught English there for two years. Then, in 2004, he moved to China and began working in the same school as Cora. On the day of his arrival, the headmaster introduced him to Cora in case he needed help from a colleague in adjusting to his new workplace. Dan and Cora soon hit it off, but kept their relationship quiet for some time until they both felt ready and established enough as a couple for marriage. Although Dan was happy to stay in China after their marriage in 2005, Cora wanted to go to England, where she 'had never been before'.

Migrating to the UK in late 2005, Cora did not experience the same difficulties as Xiu. She passed the language test without much effort and gained her visa. In 2012, when I first met Cora, she already had a British passport.[19]

A few months after arriving in England, Cora found a job as a trainee assistant for a well-known logistics business, and Dan started work as an assistant consultant in a transnational financial company. By mid-2012, Dan was already a senior consultant in his company, and Cora had been promoted to the manager of her department.

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[18] At the time of interview, one British pound was worth about ten Chinese *yuan*.

[19] According to UK Border Agency regulations, a marriage migrant must complete two two-and-a-half-year terms with a spouse visa and a further one-year qualification period to become eligible for British citizenship; the completion of other tests such as 'Life in the UK' is also required.

Despite their high-flying careers, Dan and Cora often came into conflict about the decision to have children. Believing that a 'child would erode [his] time, space, resources and freedom', Dan insisted that the couple remain childless. Although Cora wanted a child, she gradually gave in to Dan's persuasion. However, pressure from Cora's parents, who were eager to be grandparents, played constantly on Cora's mind, which made her concession to Dan a difficult one. At home, Cora shouldered most of the housework, despite Dan's taking the initiative to help out with a number of chores. In general, the couple cherished the time they spent shopping, cooking and entertaining together.

However, the couple led an austere life: they lived in a small, cramped apartment with only the essential furniture and minimal decoration. They did not have a car, and did not buy any luxuries. Their time was similarly restricted, as their busy schedules left little time for hobbies or socialising. At one point, they thought of signing up for an allotment three minutes' walk away from their apartment for some leisure gardening. But they soon abandoned the idea after examining the cost of this activity in terms of both money and time.

One might wonder why Dan and Cora chose a lifestyle so incompatible with their six-figure salaries. Their decisions were tied up with a vision of the future: the 40-year-old Dan hoped to save enough money to retire to a seaside resort before he reached 45; meanwhile, Cora, 30 years old at the time of the interview, planned to stop working in five years' time and do something she 'really liked'—though she had no idea what that would be. For Dan and Cora, work and family are not two parallel spaces concurrent in time. On the contrary, work is their past and present, and 'life' is something projected into the future.

Both couples—Xiu and Fred, Cora and Dan—represent the *dual-earner* model, which is characterised by childlessness and a focus on career development. Unlike Guihua and Monica, who followed their husbands from China to the UK, Xiu and Cora initiated their own marriage migration. In comparison with Monica and Guihua, the latter women expressed their motivations for migration far more clearly, with Cora citing curiosity and Xiu describing her 'gold-rush' optimism. However, given the importance of their careers to their domestic and emotional lives, it is insufficient to define their migration as merely utilitarian in its aim.

Although both Xiu and Cora wanted a child from the outset, they were persuaded to compromise on the grounds of previous marital history, ongoing conjugal conflict or concern for their future prospects. Records show that around 51 % of women in China consider it necessary for married couples to have a child, while about 28 % disagree. The tendency that a child is necessary in a given marriage is also consistent among Chinese men.[20] Xiu and Cora's decision to remain childless, and thus to diverge from mainstream value in China, was a double-edged sword. It allowed them the time and space for individualist pursuits such as personal career development and enjoyment of life, and alleviated the fear of imposed life changes. The context of migration (for example, geographical estrangement) also helped to mediate the negative consequences of deviating from social norms in both China and Britain. However, the boundary between nuclear and extended families is far less clear in China than in the UK. Negotiation becomes all the more difficult when significant others (for example, parents and relatives) also influence the decision of whether to have a child. In Chinese-British families, individuals such as Cora are torn between the Chinese tradition of family lineage[21] and the appeal of the increasingly widespread ideal of individualism.

For these couples, their working hours has certainly impinged on the availability of their time at home, which thus significantly shaped the domestic and social lives of the two families. Sharing domestic tasks brought Dan and Cora, two busy professionals, closer together; and Fred, the retired husband, became the major housekeeper. Cora and Dan's emphasis on the future left little time for socialising in the present. In contrast, the way in which Xiu found employment revealed a reciprocity between her social life and her career.

The following families set off from a different starting point. Their experiences of dating and marriage came after migration from China to

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[20] Data from the 2006 China General Social Survey. The respondents were asked how far they agreed with the proposition that 'it is necessary for married couples to have a child'. 50.7 % of the women agreed that a child is necessary for married couples, 28.8 % disagreed, and 20.5 % remained neutral—neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the proposition. For Chinese men, 50.4 % agreed that a child is necessary for married couples, 27.5 % disagreed, and 22.1 % remained neutral.

[21] In Chinese tradition, one of several filial obligations is to have a (male) child to perpetuate the family lineage.

the UK to work, study or settle, and considerably different paths unfolded for them as a result.

Professional Migration and British-Male-Earner Families

Like Fang and Terry's marriage, Yiyi and John's relationship evolved from a university romance in England. In 2004, Yiyi was studying for her MBA, and John was a second-year undergraduate. They first bumped into each other at a party at the University's Christian Union. In China, husbands are usually older than their wives (Feng & Yang, 1996).[22] Yiyi is John's senior by seven years, which incurred strong objections from Yiyi's parents, who believed that '"puppies" could not make dependable husbands'. To prove them wrong, John made great efforts to find a job and began to work as a retail manager in a transnational franchise immediately after graduation. In early 2006, John finally married Yiyi after lengthy efforts to win over her sceptical parents.

After the couple's marriage, Yiyi extended her work visa. With a background in English education and a full-time job as the manager of a business, she did not encounter any difficulties with immigration. In early 2012, she gave up her Chinese passport, with some reluctance.[23] With her only brother living in Australia, Yiyi's parents were 'international commuters' and frequent visitors to England, leading to rising concern about their entitlement to a parental visa.[24]

In 2008, after the birth of the couple's daughter Vivian, Yiyi gave up her job. As John's work in retail frequently required him to travel, the domestic burden fell to Yiyi. Naturally sociable, she began to explore her

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[22] In the 2006 China General Social Survey, people were asked how far they agreed with the statement 'husbands should be older than wives'. 50.7 % agreed, and only 13.1 % disagreed.

[23] Dual nationality is prohibited in China, although some respondents (including Yiyi) have illegally kept their Chinese passports after obtaining British citizenship, to facilitate visiting their parents in China.

[24] Currently, parental visa holders are only allowed to stay in the UK for a maximum of six months (single period or multiple periods). This limitation is determined by the country's welfare system, according to which temporary residents staying in the UK for longer than six months are entitled to access to the National Health Service and other such facilities.

neighbourhood, with which she had not had the opportunity to become familiar while working. She soon made quite a few friends and became closely involved with the local Chinese community. Her management skills quickly earned her the title of president of a Chinese toddlers' group. People also respected her as a resourceful mother who had once 'made it' (had a successful career). As an exemplar of motherhood, she attracted numerous other proud Chinese mothers around her. Meanwhile, leading a busy and financially secure life, she did not feel the need to work.

The birth of Vivian not only gave Yiyi a new purpose in life, but also deepened her and John's relationship with their own parents—the enthusiastic grandparents. Indeed, the grandparents from both families volunteered to look after their 'little princess' from time to time. This allowed Yiyi the time to respond to the requests of short-term projects from her connection with former colleagues and friends at work, which she felt emotionally difficult to refuse. Happy and content, Yiyi never regretted giving up her career. Socially, moreover, she found in her position as a role model and leader of Chinese mothers the validation she would otherwise have gained from a successful career. However, in the desire to 'remain on top of things', Yiyi and John dismissed the idea of a second child, although the parents on both sides disagreed.

Emma followed her parents to the UK to start up a family restaurant business at the age of 16. She met Daly at high school, and the two 'high-school sweethearts' later attended the same university. After graduation, Emma went on to work in London as a medical staff, while Daly stayed in the Midlands as an environmental engineer. After living apart together (LAT) for three years, Emma found new work in the Midlands in order to join Daly. In late 2012, they finally crossed the finishing line of a ten-year marathon towards marriage.

Throughout their three years apart, Emma and Daly had lengthy negotiations over their future. Emma's decision to move and thereby prioritise Daly's career was supported by the rationale that Daly's job in the private sector was more region-specific, better paid and seemed to have more promising prospects for promotion. The move was further facilitated by the UK National Health Service's internal-transfer scheme, which allowed employees to take up jobs in different hospitals across the country. In a sense, Daly's profession was considered an ongoing career, while Emma's

was merely a job, with considerably lower status in terms of continuity and future prospects (Armstrong, 2007; Machung, 1989).

I met Emma and Daly in the house they had recently bought together. They described their regular visits to garden centres and department stores, and explained that they spent most of their spare time working hard to make their house a home. I was invited to one of their house parties, where I met some of their close friends. Having been to the same secondary school and university, Emma and Daly had many friends in common, mostly British. Furthermore, Emma's close ties with her parents, who lived only 20 miles away, made family gatherings an important and frequent part of their social lives. Family was thus the key point of contact between Daly and the Chinese community.

Children were at the top of their agenda for the future. One room of the house had already been decorated specifically for a new baby. In order to be a good mother and give her full attention to her children, Emma planned to give up her job after giving birth. Having grown up with his divorced mother, Daly had spent most of his childhood alone at home. He was thus in favour of Emma's plan to become a full-time mother. Emma's parents and other relatives were equally eager, awaiting their 'mixed-blood princes and princesses'.[25]

The life histories of these two families illustrate the *British-male-earner* and *Chinese-female-homemaking* model we have seen earlier in this chapter. The location and timing of events for Yiyi and Emma, who entered into a relationship and marriage as a professional immigrant, were notably different from the experiences of the marriage migrants described above. Yiyi and Emma's previous experiences of work and study in the UK, and the fact that both met their prospective partners while studying, suggest that workplaces and education institutions are also the sites of their dating activity, thus promulgating economic and educational homogamy (Algan, Bisin, Manning, & Verdier, 2012).

However, although both Chinese wives continued to work after marriage, they also harboured a deep-seated desire for motherhood, and

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[25] In China, mixed-blood children are traditionally believed to be very beautiful. Although intermarriage has only recently obtained widespread acceptance in the country, mixed-blood babies have long been considered 'cute'.

withdrew or planned to withdraw from their jobs to become full-time homemakers after childbirth. Although both displayed a certain career focus—evident in Yiyi's decision to take on short-term contracts, for example, and her rejection of the idea of a second child—their families and children remained consistently central to their lives. In both cases, the (Chinese) woman's domestic focus was consistent with the (British) husband's career needs and preferences. This gender role orientation in the nuclear family also suits the traditional expectations held by the couples' parents (on both the Chinese and the British sides), as reflected in their expectations of a 'dependable husband' and grandchildren as 'little princesses/princes'. Although most of Yiyi's friends are Chinese, and most of Emma's are British, both families have close connections with the Chinese community and are, as a result, keenly aware of traditional notions of Chinese 'virtue'. Unlike the Chinese spouses who followed their husbands to the UK, and, like Guihua, found profound consolation and comfort in raising their children, Yiyi gained from motherhood the same sense of achievement that she had previously gained from her career. This was due in particular to her status as a charismatic leader of and role model for local Chinese mothers, even though, paradoxically, this entitlement to leadership derived largely from her prestigious former career.

These two families, as well as that of Fang and Terry, were among the few to deviate from the professional, career-focused route after arriving in the UK to work or study. Most of the former work, study and settler immigrants involved in this study continued to pursue their careers after marriage and childbirth, as described in the following cases.

Professional Migration and Dual-Earner Families

Ming and Collin were brought together by a Sino-UK trade scheme. As the representatives of the Chinese and British sides, they were involved in organising business forums, fairs and conferences together. As time passed, they came to feel 'something rather special' for each other, beyond mere business rapport. In 1999, Ming began her M.A. studies in England

with the intention of advancing her career[26]: a move that enabled Collin and her to explore and develop their relationship more fully. After graduation, Ming was persuaded by Collin to leave her job in China. Her reputation in the field of international trade and commerce soon secured her the post of a senior business consultant in the UK, and thus a work visa.

Ming and Collin married in 2002, but they did not have a child until Ming felt that her career was sufficiently established to do so; she gave birth to their daughter Clare in 2008. As both parents continued to work full-time, they sent Clare to a nursery from a young age. As a clerk in the public sector, Collin followed a more-or-less fixed schedule and was therefore responsible for most routine domestic tasks such as picking Clare up from the nursery, grocery shopping and cooking. He was an enthusiastic father and soon developed a very intimate bond with Clare. In contrast, Ming was the professional 'superwoman' capable of handling various impossible missions at work. At home, the kitchen and laundry room were her 'no-go zones'.

On first meeting Ming in a café, she began to give me 'suggestions' for my research even before we sat down. She repeatedly stressed the importance of distinguishing between her, 'a working professional migrant', and 'those marriage-migrant Chinese housewives'. Indeed, Ming had only one or two Chinese friends from the past. Her busy work schedule meant that most of her friends in the UK were also her colleagues. Towards the end of our first meeting, she slipped her business card adroitly from a silver holder, and drew my attention to an association of businesswomen that she had founded. As we walked to the car park, Ming explained some of her future plans—mostly business-related. The birth of Clare was a great relief for Collin and Ming's parents who considered a child as an essential part of marital and family life. Ming, however, was determined that a second child was out of the question.

As PhD graduates whose relationship began as a university romance and who later became a professional couple and the parents of two daughters, Linda and Derek's experiences of marriage, migration and work resemble the life trajectories of other couples described in this chap-

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[26] In China, vocational gradation and advancement often depend on one's level of education. This is especially the case in the public sector and some highly institutionalised organisations.

ter. However, despite beginning as a high-skilled migrant and eventually pursuing a full-time career, like several other participants in this study, Linda temporarily broke away from the professional route, which proved a very difficult experience.

After the birth of her second daughter, Serena, Linda, a senior accountant, decided to extend her maternity leave beyond the 'grace period'. She took paid and then unpaid maternity leave, and finally gave up her job altogether three years later in 2005. Linda was responsible for babysitting three-year-old Serena and five-year-old Tanya, as well as the domestic chores.

Unfortunately, Linda's work-life decision went largely unsupported by her family. Derek, a mechanical engineer, insisted on sending the girls to nursery, hoping to cultivate their individuality through peer interactions. However, Linda thought Serena was too young for nursery. So the couple argued, reconciled and decided to keep their younger daughter at home for a while. Tanya's six-hour absence from home every day created a vacuum in Linda's life, which expanded further when Serena joined her sister at nursery. In the meantime, Linda worked hard to be a caring mother by arranging everything for her daughters, yet Derek inculcated different values, encouraging the girls to be sociable and independent.

In 2009, an argument between mother and daughter marked a turning point in Linda's life. One afternoon, Linda waited for Tanya and Serena outside school as usual, but Tanya wanted some 'girls' time' with her classmates and refused to go home. As the argument escalated, Tanya shouted at Linda, saying that she was 'fed up with being mom's puppy girl and seeing [Linda's] same old face every day', and that her friends were more interesting. The ongoing tension between Linda and Derek's parenting ideals thus exploded in this mother-daughter conflict. Linda experienced a strong sense of abandonment and loss, feeling that she was 'no longer *needed*' by her daughters in spite of her relentless devotion.

After seven years as a full-time mother, Linda returned to work in late 2009, and found a job as an accountant in a local company. It took her a long time to learn to 'let go' of her children, which was deeply rooted in Linda's conscience of what is required of a good Chinese mother. Meanwhile, Linda also toiled to re-adapt to new financial regulations and a new climate in the labour market. As Linda's work took off, Derek

stepped forward to take over some domestic tasks such as cooking and housekeeping. Despite mixed feelings about seeing her daughters become ever more independent as they grew up, Linda found solace in learning to be a professional 'superwoman'.

The families of Ming and Collin, Linda and Derek are examples of the *dual-earner* model most common to Chinese-British families formed through professional immigration. Having first become high-flying professionals in the UK, many Chinese wives simply followed this momentum and continued working after marriage and childbirth. Ming's 'superwoman' role, for example, was not only her natural inclination but also a consciously managed social image in the effort to distinguish herself from what seemed to her as 'second-class' Chinese housewives. For her, childbirth was mainly a familial obligation to fulfil. However, decisions are not always so easy. Linda's propensity for motherhood directed her away from the career pathway, but not for long. Throughout their negotiations, her husband Derek's individualist ideals took the upper hand; they appealed more to the couple's daughters and also seemed better acclimated to the British context. In a sense, Tanya was the 'battlefield' for the couple's conflicting cultures and clashing ideals, representing tensions not only between Linda and Derek, but also between Linda and other British mothers, as evidenced when Tanya's friends mocked her as her mother's 'puppy girl'. After this perilous detour from her career, Linda gradually learned to dissociate being Chinese from being a good mother, and eventually rejoiced in her professional achievements more than in her domestic feats.

In comparison with the preceding groups of families, Ming and Linda had already established their professional roles when they entered into marriage. This profoundly shaped both the expectations they held of themselves and their husbands' expectations. After marriage, however, the expectations of husband and wife were constantly negotiated and recalibrated. Clear adaptive strategies were at work in the lives of these two families, unlike those of the Chinese housewives. Both Ming and Linda associated Britain with career development, and career development with independence. Their professional lives, therefore, provide them with a combination of emotional fulfilment, social status and cultural and ethnic identity. The gap between professional working women and, in Ming's

words, '*those* marriage-migrant Chinese housewives' is further reinforced by the construction of social groups such as businesswomen associations.

Whilst the families discussed so far within this study are all composed of Chinese wives and British husbands, the few cases of Chinese husbands with British wives display unique life experiences.

Families of Chinese Husbands

Lisa was born to a traditional English family. Growing up in the shadow of her more highly valued younger brother, she refused to follow the path prescribed by her parents. The mere thought of marrying a man like her father and being trapped at home like her mother upset her deeply. Later, Lisa paid her own way through university. A 'rebellious' breakaway, she decided to become an English teacher in China after graduation. As she grew more and more fascinated with Chinese culture, she began to envision a future with a stable and loyal Chinese husband.

Born in northeastern China, Qian is his parents' eldest son. In 1985, then a university lecturer, he visited England as part of an academic exchange programme. Back in the UK for her Master's degree, Lisa bumped into Qian at university. Her experience of and fascination with China soon brought the two of them together. Later, Lisa courted Qian. Overwhelmed by Lisa's enthusiasm, Qian decided to relinquish his *tie fan wan* (a stable job in China's state sector). In 1987, the couple married in England, leading to slanders on the Chinese side that mocked Qian as a 'capitalist snob'.

After marriage, the couple decided to settle down in the UK. Qian gained a spouse visa and continued to reside in the UK until qualifying for permanent residence. Later, he turned down the offer of a British passport, mainly due to his obligations as the family's eldest son.[27]

Meanwhile, Lisa was soon promoted from the post of librarian to that of library director. Making a change in his career after marriage, Qian began working as an IT consultant. He was also the local liaison for a

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[27] In Chinese tradition, the eldest son bears the greatest responsibility (more than his siblings) for supporting his parents.

number of Chinese art exhibitions, festivals, galas and so on. His involvement in various cultural-exchange activities and the ostensible display of his Chinese identity in the social realm helped him to make friends from various ethnic groups.

At home, Qian was the *xinhaonanren* ('new good man')[28] in charge of most of the domestic tasks such as cooking, housekeeping and laundry. Lisa, who was not drawn to domestic work, only 'chipped in' with a few chores. After the births of Mark and Josh (aged 19 and 23 in 2012), Lisa eagerly returned to work. Meanwhile, Qian assumed the role of babysitter, and, unprecedentedly in his company, took unpaid 'paternity leave'.

After 25 years of marriage, Lisa has found in Qian the stable, loyal and calm Chinese husband she had once imagined. The family is perfectly happy, apart from one concern: Qian's mother is now entering old age, and Qian described his increasing guilt at failing to meet his filial obligations. With the recent economic boom in East Asia, Lisa has begun to explore options for developing her career in China. As they spoke of the future during interview, it became clear that relocation to China is a real possibility for the couple.

Qian and Lisa's household is a variation of the *dual-earner* model that places emphasis on the career of the British wife. This emphasis is shared by all of the participating Chinese-British families in which the husband is Chinese. Although the wife's career is prioritised to varying degrees, these families all show the same gender-role orientation, which contrasts with the normative model in both China and the UK. Lisa's experience as the daughter of a traditional family, considered 'lesser' than her brother, pushed her to depart from the traditions and expectations of her parents' generation and become a forerunner in the 'subtle revolution' of women's gender roles in the 1980s (Gerson, 1986). In China, a wife is expected to reside with her husband's family and to be 'less successful [in professional terms] than her husband' (To, 2013). Qian's non-traditional preference for domesticity also made him the object of endless gossip. His trajectory, therefore, also hints at a 'subtle revolution' in today's society regarding the role of husband.

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[28] A Chinese colloquial term for a family man who is caring and loving; the concept of a 'new' man is used in contrast with the patriarchal and authoritarian male of Chinese tradition.

However, Qian continues to experience tension between his conflicting identities as an unconventional husband and a traditional son. The split between these different personae reflects the varying degrees of modernisation in traditional Chinese family values (Hu & Scott, 2014; Hu, 2016). On the one hand, 'new men' such as Qian have become more accepted in China, and the stigma of 'capitalist snob' has diminished since the 1980s. On the other hand, the imperative of filial piety remains strong. It takes Qian enormous courage to lead this 'subtle revolution' by breaking away from Chinese tradition geographically, behaviourally and symbolically. Paradoxically, much as Qian attempted to display his Chinese identity in the public sphere, he was well aware of his deviance from the traditional Chinese gender roles at home. The highly gendered nature of Chinese family values might help to explain the scarcity of Chinese men involved in inter-ethnic marriage. Values are highly durable, and stories are always easier told than lived through. So how will Lisa and Qian make their choices? Where will they end up?

Pathways of Chinese-British Families

Each of these nine cases of inter-ethnic families above illustrates distinct dynamics in Chinese-British migration, dating and marriage, work and family life as well as extended family and social connections in the diasporic and transnational spaces. As a group, they also illustrate the diverse trajectories of Chinese-British families in the UK. Although these are only nine instances of a very diverse population, they offer representative examples of the patterns assumed by people's life trajectories, from which distinctive clusters of families are formed.

As illustrated in Fig. 2.1, two key sets of variables emerged from the case studies: (1) immigration route and (2) gender-cum-ethnicity orientation. Although everyone holds different expectations according to the unique time and location in which one is socialised (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007),[29] the two immigration channels certainly work to filter and redi-

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[29] Although no significant generational difference in people's work-family orientation was observed, the generational effect is certainly clear in the patterns of immigration. While marriage migration

Immigration Pathway (*De facto* status)	Ethnicity-Gender Orientation at Home (Present status + future plans)	Ethnic Orientation in Social Life
	British-male-earner/Chinese-female-homemaker model The Chinese wife is or expects to be a full-time homemaker or with loose ties to part-time/short-term jobs.	**Divergent ethnic orientations** British spouse with close tie to ethnically British network. Chinese spouse with close tie to Chinese diaspora and transnational realms.
Marriage migration Entered the UK initially on the grounds of marriage, on a spouse visa.		
Professional migration Entered the UK as a student or professional worker, and entered into marriage with non-spousal visa.	**Dual-earner model** Both the Chinese wife and British husband orientate towards professional work; favours external help and domestic-outsourcing; works after childbirth, or plans to be childless.	**Shared ethnic orientation** Spouses share a similarly close tie to ethnically British social network; veer away from Chinese diaspora and transnational ties.

Fig. 2.1   Pathways of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families in the UK

rect the life courses of Chinese-British families. A unique product borne out of the process of intermarriage and migration is that people's understanding of their gender and ethnic identities seems to be closely and intricately woven into each other. Most of the marriage-migration families involved in this study conform to the *British-male-earner* and *Chinese-female-homemaker* model (8 families, top route in Fig. 2.1). Meanwhile, most of the families formed on the basis of professional migration have opted for the *dual-earner* model (12 families, lower route in Fig. 2.1), with the exception of the families that include Chinese husbands (3 families). In contrast, only a few families have deviated from their outset immigration pathways in terms of gender-cum-ethnicity orientations (6 families, dashed lines in Fig. 2.1). Having departed from one of these two starting positions, people's lives are shaped by further constraints and opportunities. Human agency and structural constraints are in constant conflict and negotiation.

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has shown a stable increase among all generations, work and study immigration is more common among younger people.

On the one hand, of the Chinese who migrated to the UK for the purpose of marriage, some had aspirations beyond marriage itself. For example, a 'gold-rush' optimism and the desire for a British passport were factors in the decisions of Xiu and Guihua to move to the UK, whereas others such as Weiwei and Monica demonstrated a closer attachment to their families and were more straightforwardly motivated by marriage itself. Given the diverse motives for marriage migration and the various reasons for the marriage migrants' near-unanimous decision to take the domestic route, it is naïve simply to distinguish between 'love' and 'utilitarian' marriages. Moreover, the multiplicity and complexity of individual and familial choices suggest that utility may be closely interwoven with emotion and intimacy. Accordingly, the domestic orientation of Chinese female marriage migrants is not only an individual propensity but a response to immigration regulations,[30] employment opportunities, the experience of being part of an ethnic minority group and, of course, the status and preference of their British husbands. Indeed, as marriage migration is often preceded by the future British spouse's visit to China (as in Cora, Xiu, Guihua and Weiwei's cases, among others), the roles of 'initiator' and 'out-reacher' played by British spouses indicate their importance to such processes as spouse selection and gender-role negotiation.

On the other hand, professional migration is shown to be the beginning of a different route for inter-ethnic Chinese-British couples residing in the UK. Directed by different normative expectations, the processes of negotiation and reconciliation take a different course. Work or study migration is itself a form of professional advancement. Entering marriage with an already-established professional persona and following the momentum of their careers, many of the Chinese participants who had moved to the UK for work or study were able to continue their careers after marriage and childbirth. Their professional experiences in the UK exerted a profound influence on their subsequent life trajectories, even if they naturally inclined to the opposite. Such was the case for Linda, who

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[30] According to the UK Border Agency, a marriage migrant's spouse visa may be revoked if his or her British spouse reports the termination of the marriage/relationship, subject to formal investigation.

eventually went back to work after seven years of formal unemployment. In the inter-ethnic context, however, it is observed that the changing orientation of one's gender roles seems to be accompanied by subtle ways in which people weave in and out of the association between their gender and ethnicity.

The Chinese husbands involved in this study form a distinct group, whose dynamics are consistently different from those of the other families in this research. 'Supermen' at work and 'super-daddies' at home, the Chinese husbands described juggling the two seemingly conflicting worlds of work and family, office and kitchen. Rejecting the egotism of the traditional Chinese man, who blushes to speak of his wife's successful career (To, 2013), they are proud to be 'new men' working hard in the shadow of their wives' high-flying professional lives. In Qian's case, however, the inconsistencies between his identities as husband, son and father have given rise to a growing tension in his life.

Notably, people's lives are powerfully shaped by both significant others and their immediate sociocultural contexts. Their family-work orientation is closely anchored in the orientation and structure of their social lives (Bott, 1957). Both endogenous and exogenous in nature, labels such as 'we' and 'they' are readily used as means of identifying oneself with a particular group or distinguishing another group as 'the other'. For instance, as pronouns reflect people's group identifications (Lyons, 1995), the Chinese housewives used deictic terms such as 'you' and 'we' to define their group membership and distinguish themselves from the British and Chinese professionals—and vice versa. The recurrence of such labels in the lives of Chinese-British families suggests that the work-family decisions of Chinese-British families are dependent at a deep level on how Chinese and British ethnic identities are defined and perceived. Indeed, all of the Chinese housewives explained that they would much rather have Chinese than British friends. In contrast, most of the female Chinese professionals involved in this study have mixed or British friends, and spoke of marriage-migrant Chinese housewives as 'the other'.[31] As well as actively selecting their friends, the respondents

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[31] For example, the female Chinese professionals frequently used such expressions as 'they', 'them', 'different' and 'not the same' when discussing marriage-migrant Chinese housewives in the UK.

found that opportunities for friendship were also shaped by their work and domestic settings (Ryan & Mulholland, 2014). Ethnicity and gender therefore constantly interplay with each other at various levels both in and beyond the setting of the family.

The inference that Chinese marriage migrants prioritise their families and identify their domestic orientation with their Chinese ethnicity, and that professional migrants put their professional careers first but seek to dissociate their gender and ethnic identities, could sound all so obvious. Not surprisingly, as individuals and families are closely embedded in their social lives, it may also sound obvious that Chinese housewives flock together, and professional Chinese spouses orientate towards their colleagues and university friends—dominantly British—in their social lives. Yet the diverse experiences of the nine families, among those of many others, suggest that the explanation for this pattern may not be as obvious and straightforward as the pattern itself. In a rapidly changing world, remaining focused on one's planned life trajectory—whether as a homemaker or professional—may be just as difficult as breaking away from that trajectory. How do people decide to intermarry and migrate in the first place? How do migration pathways re-calibrate people's early orientations? Why do people decide to follow a mainstream route or else attempt to beat the odds? Why do people pursue intermarriage despite the difficulties involved in constructing families across national, cultural and political boundaries? Are they guided by love, financial aspirations, the desire for a British passport or curiosity (among many other possible forces), or are they motiveless?

In the following chapters, I will further explore the lives of Chinese-British families comprised of marriage-migrant Chinese housewives (Chap. 4), working professional migrant Chinese wives (Chap. 5), Chinese wives who diverge from mainstream immigration routes (Chap. 6) and Chinese husbands (Chap. 7), respectively, with a view to answering the questions above. If 'love takes two', it is therefore vital to explore how husbands and wives actually construct their lives together and negotiate their respective identities within inter-ethnic marriages. Furthermore, it often takes more than two—when parents and friends, for example, are involved. For this reason, I will also endeavour to examine the influence of significant others on the life trajectories of Chinese-British families.

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3

Disentangling Gender and Ethnicity in Ethnic Intermarriage

Gender and Ethnicity in Ethnic Intermarriage

Chapter 2 vividly demonstrates that the umbrella category of 'Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage' conceals distinct sub-groups of inter-ethnic families, differentiated by their unique life trajectories. Each of the sub-groups contains a unique set of individual, conjugal, familial and social identities 'lived out' on a daily basis. Notably, the divergence between these groups is not merely a matter of self-identification (as indicated by the prominent use of 'we' to refer to members of the same sub-group); it is also a matter of mutual indexicality (Cresswell, 2010), as the respondents in each sub-group referred constantly to the other groups to define their own identities. Particularly vivid examples are provided by Ming, who began by noting the difference between herself, a 'working professional migrant', and '*those Chinese housewives* who entered the UK as *marriage migrants*'; Weiwei, a former successful businesswoman and now a proud mother and toddlers' group leader, who repeatedly expressed the desire to be treated differently from '*those professional British women* who left their families behind'; and Qian, the '*new* good *Chineseman*' practising the unconventional role of a male homemaker in an inter-ethnic family.

Even without in-depth exploration, a glimpse into the lives of these distinctive sub-groups of Chinese-British families provides three important clues. First, gender and ethnicity—recurring themes of this book—emerge as two key concepts underpinning the self-identification and mutual indexicality of the Chinese-British families assessed in this research.[1] Second, as widely reported in previous research (for example, Donato et al., 2006; Gupta, 1997; Herrera, 2013; Mehrotra & Calasanti, 2010), gender and ethnicity do not operate independently in shaping the lived experience of subjects. Rather, they interact in distinct ways to shape the everyday lives of each sub-group of Chinese-British families. Third, the 'ready-made' social categories of a unified 'Chinese' ethnicity, a 'female' or 'male' gender, and an intersectional ethnicity-cum-gender identity—widely used in previous studies of gender, ethnicity and migration—are problematic. Membership of a gender or ethnic group, or a group supposedly 'at' the intersection of gender and ethnicity, does not suggest that such groups are homogeneous. Rather, each may be experienced and defined very differently within a specific (social) group (Castles & Miller, 2003; Ryan & Webster, 2008; Wimmer, 2004). A glance at the diverse cases presented by the Chinese-British families suggests that gender is ethnicised at times and that ethnicity is gendered at other times. But how should we understand the intricate and subtle interplay between gender and ethnicity? How can such an understanding benefit our exploration of the distinctive lives of Chinese-British ethnic intermarriages in the UK?

Before examining further the concepts of gender and ethnicity, and their intersectionality, a word must be said about the definitions of 'gender' and 'ethnicity' and their particular relevance to the study of intermarriage. Despite the danger of a reductive approach to these two concepts, whose definitions are subject to ongoing debate, working definitions must be provided to guide the direction and determine the scope of the

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[1] As race, class and gender are almost always addressed as a set in modern sociology (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan, & Pessar, 2006; Fenstermaker & West, 2013), it is necessary to briefly justify the focus on gender and ethnicity in this research. First, as introduced in Chap. 1, due to the highly selective income and education thresholds of British immigration policies (Bradley & Healy, 2008), the 'new' Chinese ethnics in Britain represent a more or less socioeconomically homogeneous group, which is the least deprived and closest in status to White British of all of the ethnic minorities in Britain (Bradley & Healy, 2008).

current book. First, gender—as distinct from sex—is usually understood to refer to the sociocultural belief in the difference between femininity and masculinity, traditionally predicated on biological distinctions between men and women (Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 1999). The notion of gender is intricately woven into everyday life, and it is constantly present within society at an individual level, a conjugal level, a familial level and an institutional level (Smart, 2007). As an omnirelevant concept, gender shapes the differentiated distribution of power between sexes, and it saturates everyday social interactions in both Britain and China (Therborn, 2004). However, the specific codifications and definitions of gender vary significantly across social and cultural contexts.

Meanwhile, following Weber (1978 [1922]: 237), ethnicity has traditionally been defined as a 'subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry' (Wimmer, 2008). Although recently scholars have attempted to deconstruct this belief in ethnicity as an objectified social entity, the perception of ethnic difference is quite often substantiated and remains widespread. Without such a belief, the concept of 'ethnic intermarriage' would never have arisen. Unsurprisingly, nearly every major social theorist has conceptualised intermarriage as an index of the presence or absence of ethnicity—one of the most telling touchstones of ethno-racial assimilation (Gordon, 1964; Weber, 1978 [1922]), though such ideas are increasingly challenged in recent scholarship (Song, 2009). Although the entanglement of gender and ethnicity is key to the understanding of ethnic intermarriage, few studies have specifically explored how gender and ethnic identities are constructed, negotiated, experienced and particularly entangled in interethnic families.

To understand how gender and ethnicity operate in ethnic intermarriage, it is necessary to depart from the traditional idea that intermarriage represents the engagement between two *a priori* cultures, gender-sex-power systems, familial institutions or the like. This idea has been widely promulgated in previous studies of intercultural psychology and communication (Berry, 2008; Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010; Rodríguez-García, 2006), but is inappropriate to the present research because both the Chinese and British social and familial systems and cultures are constantly undergoing change, not remaining static. Of the

many such changes taking place across the globe in the last century or so, individualisation and the changing relationship between the sexes have probably had the greatest roles in shaping modern societies.

The term 'individualisation', as succinctly summarised by Jamieson & Simpson (2013, p. 23), refers to the 'social processes of separating out, delimiting, focusing on or giving place to the individual, allowing some differentiation rather than being subsumed within social categories and collectivities, and enabling room for manoeuvre rather than constraining through anchorage to traditional moorings'. The rise of individualisation has gone hand in hand with the dissolution of traditional forms of labour division and thus co-dependency between members of a collective familial organisation (Smart, 2007; Therborn, 2004). These effects cannot be separated from the changing landscape of the labour market, and particularly the 'feminisation' of the labour force that has empowered women economically (Smart, 2007; Therborn, 2004). Of course, the rise of feminism has provided even more new ways of thinking about sex, gender, power and institution in sociocultural terms (Walby, 2011). Classical family theorists such as Goode (1970) posited that changes to the institution of family may follow a single linear trajectory, despite differences between countries in the extent and nature of these changes, leading eventually to global convergence. However, there is mounting evidence that family and gender-sex-power systems around the world have not followed a linear pattern of evolution (Cheung & Kwan, 2009; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Tam, Wong, & Wang, 2014). Instead, such all-encompassing processes interact uniquely with specific social and political contexts to shape distinctive social and familial systems (Hu & Scott, 2014; Iwai & Yasuda, 2009; Whyte, 2005, 2010).

In the West, the rise of individualisation has been closely discussed in conjunction with the decline of familism (Popenoe, 1988, 2008). It is widely believed that the conflict between familism and individualism has led to a rise in divorce, an increased number of single-headed households, more fluid and flexible personal relationships, and the decline of marriage and the extended-family model, among other consequences (Giddens, 1991; Jamieson & Simpson, 2013; Lewis, 2001; Smart, 2007). Such trends are echoed in the transformation of the modern welfare state

in the West, particularly in such aspects as care provision (Blossfeld & Hofmeister, 2006; Esping-Andersen, 1990).

In China, there has been a similar rise in the individual pursuit of personal fulfilment through educational and professional advancement (Beutel & Axinn, 2002; Peterson, Hayhoe, & Lu, 2001). Nevertheless, the in-depth anthropological research conducted by scholars such as Yan (2002, 2009) suggests that the process of individualisation has not necessarily promoted the ideal of individualism. Not only do the moral imperatives of traditional familial obligations (for example, filial piety) and the extended-family model still hold sway (Hu & Scott, 2014; Yan, 2002, 2009), there is no sign that the state has adopted individualistic ideals. Nor has the state responded by reforming welfare, as the family remains the major institution of care provision (Tam et al., 2014), and collective and familist ideals are still promoted as the chief 'virtues' valourised in the modern Chinese educational system. Therefore, supposedly similar ongoing social processes are seen to operate in divergent ways in China and the UK.

Bringing together distinctive ongoing social processes in China and the UK, intermarriage today cannot possibly be understood without considering its embeddedness in the process of globalisation. 'Globalisation' is defined as the set of processes that increase global reach and social, cultural, political and economic interconnectedness, enabled by modern communication and transportation (Therborn, 2013). According to Therborn (2013, p. 79), sociocultural systems 'not only co-exist, compete, and clash, but also overlap, affect, and contaminate one another'. Central to the idea of globalisation is a transnational vision of the world (Vertovec, 2006). In this light, intermarriage not only brings two isolated Chinese and British sociocultural processes together; it also helps to *connect* these ongoing processes. Familial and social change in China and the UK are not two processes in parallel with each other, particularly for the individual subjects involved in intermarriage and migration. Rather, the encounter between subjects involved with and shaped by distinct social dynamics suggests that the mobility of subjects across time and place links the two ongoing processes and integrates them into subjects' continuous life-course experiences. Examining the distinct social dynamics ongoing in China and the UK could therefore shed light on how and why

people undertake the labour of a 'transnational shift' as they jump from one marriage market to another. Moreover, people's experiences of one social system in China or the UK may powerfully determine the strategies they deploy in response to another set of social dynamics. It is thus vital to examine Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage from a bottom-up perspective and at a micro-level to understand how the intricate needlework of individual life trajectories weaves into wider social trends such as individualisation.

Drawing on the empirical and theoretical insights outlined thus far, I will focus more specifically on conceptualisations of and theoretical approaches to gender and ethnic identities at a micro-level in the ensuing section. I then provide a critical review of theories of intersectionality, which are widely used to examine the multiple dimensions and modalities of social identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Hancock, 2007; McCall, 2005). Third, to address the limitations of current theories of intersectionality, I argue for the usefulness of the life-story approach in disentangling the dynamic mechanisms that underlie the ongoing interplay between gender and ethnicity throughout the distinctive life trajectories of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families. Incorporating theories on gender and ethnic identities and intersectionality into the life-story framework, I develop an analytical framework to guide the organisation, analysis, interpretation and presentation of the empirical evidence examined in this book.

'Doing' Identity: Gender and Ethnicity *In Situ*

Against the backdrop of human civilisation, few questions seem as basic yet as indispensable as 'who am I?' or 'who are we?' (Erikson, 1980). Indeed, the encounter between the Chinese and British ethnicities, as well as that between the female gender and the male gender, in Chinese-British families heightens awareness of a gendered and ethnicised 'self' as reflected in the looking-glass of 'the other' at work and at home, and in public and in private. Such encounters demand self-identification. However, any attempt to define 'who we are' is instantly proven futile and impossible. As the question is in itself a Rorschach test, any answer is likely to face the charge of over-simplification through the subscription to certain 'fixed'

epistemologies (McCall & Simmons, 1978). A plausible and indeed crucial first step is to narrow down the question by specifying that which is *not* the focus of this research.

As will be demonstrated throughout this book, recurring themes in the lives of Chinese-British families are the self-conscious articulation, performance, endorsement or rejection of membership of ethnic-cum-gender social groups such as 'homemaking Chinese marriage-migrant wives' and 'working professional migrant wives'. It is crucial to clarify that this research explores *social* rather than *personal* identity and highlights gender and ethnicity as much as the intersectionality between the two concepts at a 'group' level (Burke & Stets, 2009). The difference, as noted by Burke and Stets (2009), lies in the distinct bases and scope of the two types of identity. Whereas personal identity underpins the cognitive process of characterising the 'self' as unique by differentiating oneself from others in terms of physique, behaviour and ideation, social identity primarily concerns the roles taken on by social actors to define their collective status, social positions and group membership.

Indeed, the possession of a *social identity* entails 'being at one with a certain social group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group's perspective' (Stets & Burke, 2000, pp. 1–20). This underlines the relevance of 'belonging'. From Cooley (1992 [1902]) to Mead (1934), and thence to Goode (1960), early theorists emphasised the importance of role enactment to the formation of social identities. According to Durkheim (1997 [1893]), the early notion of a 'role' prescribes extant social categories for a subject and requires the subject to 'integrate' into society by either organic exchange or mechanical connection with others. Of course, the ideas of 'fixation' and 'prescription' are not new to the conceptualisation of either gender or ethnicity. Biological determinism has profoundly guided traditional attempts to distinguish between the male and female sexes (Beauvoir, 2010 [1949]; Epstein, 1990). Only in the last few decades has intellectual progress been made in distinguishing gender from sex, nurture from nature (Oakley, 1985; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Meanwhile, the debate over primordialism persists to date, with ethnicity still widely believed and perceived to be 'visually communicated' and therefore 'fixated' (Gonzalez, Houston, & Chen, 2000; Song, 2003; Waters, 1990).

In recent decades, the rise of symbolic interactionism and social constructionism has drawn researchers' attention away from 'nature' and towards 'nurture'. It has shifted the focus on gender and ethnicity from prescribed attributes to the symbolic meanings that arise from such attributes (Ervin & Stryker, 2001; Stryker & Statham, 1985; Stryker, 1968). Arguing that gender and ethnicity are ongoing sociocultural performances, West and Zimmerman (1987) and West and Fenstermaker (1995) made landmark responses to primordialism and biological determinism. They stressed that gender and ethnicity are not 'already there'; rather, they are enacted and maintained on a daily basis by means of social interaction (Fenstermaker & West, 2013). Whilst such interaction may be self-reflexive, and does not necessarily involve other social actors, it is widely accepted that the 'self' can be modified by the sense of belonging to communities conjured up in one's imagination (Anderson, 2006).

Despite its abstract, subjective, ambiguous and sometimes intangible nature, 'identity' has been addressed and defined by scholars in two major ways. At an individual level, scholars have drawn attention to the human and emotional 'efforts' invested in the endorsement and enactment of identities (Goffman, 1959). At a collective level, other researchers have focused on the perceived existence of social boundaries. If identity performance requires effort, the first question to ask is whether it is possible to evade gender or ethnicity. Or, conversely, why do people still seek to perform 'identity work'? A quick answer to the first question is 'no'. As I will present in the following chapters, no matter whether subjects passively evade or actively confront their gender and ethnicity, they are seen to 'do' ethnic and gender identities in one way or another. Some subjects are seen to 'make effort' to present and represent their identities. In others, the lack of such effort is noted in their emotional responses such as fear and shame to deviating from the fulfilment of normative expectations (Burke & Stets, 2009; Fenton, 2010; Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983). This is consistent with the following claim made by Fischer (1986, pp. 195–200).

> What the newer works bring home forcefully is … the paradoxical sense that ethnicity is something reinvented and reinterpreted in each generation by each individual and that it is quite often something quite puzzling to

the individual, something over which she or he lacks control. Ethnicity is not something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught and learnt: it is something dynamic, often unsuccessfully repressed or avoided.

Theorists argue that identities provide meaning at an individual level (Burke & Stets, 2009). From the early works of Freud (1930) to subsequent developments in stress theory (Thoits, 1983, 1986), with an increasing focus on subjective wellbeing in recent years (Suh, 2002), scholars have found that self-identification—particularly in terms of the gender and ethnic identities that are enforced by normative structures (Thoits, 1986)—is key to the maintenance of mental sanity and health. Therefore, individuals are motivated by the need for self-esteem and self-consistency to enact the process of identification. In the absence of pre-defined sociocultural norms for ethnic intermarriage (Spickard, 1991), the need for self-identification is only made more pressing by the fact that the encounter between the distinct Chinese and British cultures may challenge the sociocultural norms taken for granted by each party involved.

Collectively, the fragmentation of life-worlds between the ethnic enclave, diaspora and mainstream host society during the processes of marriage and migration indicates that the purpose of identity formation is far beyond personal. As individuals verify identities, enact and withdraw from roles, and subscribe to imagined social groups, individual efforts in the collective erect and erase powerful symbolic boundaries to define distinct life-worlds and social spaces (Khanna, 2011; Mehrotra & Calasanti, 2010; Wimmer, 2004). Therefore, three tenets of 'boundary-work' theory are particularly helpful in advancing our understanding of the roles of ethnic and gender identities in ethnic intermarriage. First, ethnic boundaries, like gender divisions, are both imposed from the top down and engaged with from the bottom up (Banton, 2011; Bourdieu, 1985). The prevalence of ethnic and gender divisions as perceived social boundaries indicates that the enforcement of such categories is assisted by people 'on the ground' who actively buy into the belief in such categories. Hence the need to address the operation of both processes. Second, whereas early scholars believed that the boundaries rather than

the 'cultural stuffs' enclosed in the boundaries determine ethnic relations (Barth, 1998), there is an increasing consensus that the 'stuffs' enclosed in boundaries do make a difference (Wimmer, 2008). It is thus vital both to study each group in its own right and to examine the groups comparatively. Third, although boundaries are often understood as rigid borders, it is important to conceptualise them as fuzzy and undefined continuums subject to constant negotiation. Ethnic and gender boundaries may be as 'fluid' as the identities they enclose, especially as the dynamics of power (re-)distribution shift between the social parties involved in the 'boundary work' (Ragin, 2009; Wimmer, 2004).

Whereas social constructionists' conceptualisations of gender and ethnic identities are most frequently characterised by the nature of 'fluidity' (Burke & Stets, 2009), less is known about what 'fluidity' means and how this ambiguity can be operationalised in empirical terms. If physical and emotional efforts leave traceable clues to the performance and maintenance of identity (Erikson, 1980; Stryker & Statham, 1985; Turner, 1990), questions should be asked as to *where*, *when*, *why* and *how* such efforts are exerted to mark the presence or absence of gender and ethnic identities. The exploration of such efforts takes us back to early scholars such as Goffman (1959), whose milestone work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* instituted the idea of social performance as an everyday practice. In response to the questions of *where* and *when*, Goffman (1959) noted the centrality of place (locality) and time (temporality) in his examination of identity as a social construct. He offered the analogy of a theatre whose space is divided between a 'back-stage' area and the front of the stage, with performers relating to these distinct spaces in different ways at different times. This emphasis on place and time has since been developed by Bourdieu (1990); Giddens (1987) and Therborn (2004), to name just a few, but the central message stays more or less the same: identity is a relational concept arising from the position of a subject *in situ*.

Drawing on the notion of relative position, identity theorists have more succinctly conceptualised the transient, fluid and situated nature of identity in terms of 'salience' (Burke & Stets, 2009). A 'salient' identity refers to an identity that is 'activated' in a particular situation and at a given time (Turner, 1990). Whereas the identity of a professional worker, for example, is transient and limited to the professional

sphere, an identity that is consistently relevant across most situations and through time—such as gender—is exalted as a *master* identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). Unlike gender, ethnic identity is not always conceptualised as a master identity. Nevertheless, ethnic intermarriage is an empirically unique and theoretically plausible case, because—unlike co-ethnic marriage—it places ethnicity alongside gender as an omnirelevant identity that is salient in all situations at all levels—individual, conjugal, familial and social, and national and transnational (Ferree et al., 1999; Freese & Burke, 1994). However, we should be reminded that the omnirelevance of a subject's gender and ethnicity by no means suggests that gender and ethnic identities are experienced in the same way across social situations and time. We should also be aware of the danger of conceptualising identity as merely *in situ*, because the slippage between different life-worlds in modern societies often leads to spill-over between different situations (Giddens, 1991). Notably, neither place nor time relies solely on pre-existing social structures. On the contrary, as subjects trigger exchanges between place and time by weaving in and out of social situations, both gender and ethnicity are ongoing dynamics open to the possibilities of the present and future. Wikan (2002, pp. 80) makes this argument as follows.

> To say that culture refers only to traditions and values that have been transmitted from one generation to another is like bowing to ancestors at the expense of children (and adults) whose life experience is very different. In addition, it means freezing culture in time. In reality, culture is always changing, for humans learn as long as they live.

We should be mindful that social groups and boundaries may only seem to be 'fixed' when the process of social reproduction is viewed as retrospective and self-perpetuating, especially given the importance of 'groupness' to the construction of gender and ethnic identities. Indeed, Brubaker (2004) warned social scientists of the danger of 'groupism' and its cultural content. According to Brubaker (2004, p. 2), it is dangerous to 'take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonist of social conflicts and fundamental units of analysis'. Echoing Brubaker,

Blossfeld and Hofmeister (2006) criticised the tautological use of social labels such as 'patriarchy' to explain gender-role differentiation without scrutinising the mechanisms underlying patriarchal values. The message is clear: we should try to explain gender and ethnic identities, rather than using them as ready-made explanations for observed social phenomena. Indeed, although categorisation may be a natural human instinct when processing information (Hirschfeld, 1998), it is even more interesting to explore what people (intend to) do with the resultant categories.

The purposes, effects and consequences of gender and ethnic categorisation have been extensively discussed in the literature on symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1977, 2012). The scholars concerned have criticised the 'scientisation' and objectification of gender and ethnicity, and instead viewed both concepts as grounded in the linguistic generation of meaning in discursive discourse, as well as monopoly over discourse (Bourdieu, 1991; Talbot, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 2003). It is widely believed that the concepts of race and ethnicity originated during the colonial era, as a result of the marginalisation of non-Western people—'the other'—based on ethno-racial taxonomies (Fenton, 2010; Hall, 1992). Similarly, gender is widely recognised to have been produced by the institutionalised programme that distributes and re-distributes power between sexes (Therborn, 2004). In both cases, abstract symbolic power is often discussed in reference to its material foundations, such as the allocation of and access to socioeconomic resources in society. Therefore, the individual 'acts' of erecting and erasing ethnic and gender boundaries are not only markers of symbolic status that provide a subject with a sense of self-efficacy and the ontological security that comes with being in control (Giddens, 1987). The active endorsement and rejection of certain identities may also be driven by material interests. Nevertheless, as evident from the diverse lived experiences of Chinese-British families explored in Chap. 2, the effects and consequences of ethnic and gender categorisation should not be understood in terms of a mere static relationship between domination and subordination. Instead, they should be viewed as dynamic and ongoing struggles wherein individuals act upon and react to their specific sociocultural conditions.

The notion of 'doing' identity *in situ* is of course not new to social scientists (Fenstermaker & West, 2013; Song, 2003; West &

Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Treating ethnicity and gender as 'everyday happening[s]', Brubaker (2004, p. 2) described social groups as 'embodied and expressed not only in political rhetoric and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories common-sense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms'. Although this description may be overly ambitious and comprehensive for empirical application, Brubaker's (2004, 2014) central message is a simple and useful guide to the orientation of the current research. Gender and ethnic identities are social constructs and not entities, and they should be regarded as dynamics that echo ongoing macro-level social processes, rather than static objects. A similar claim was made by West and Fenstermaker (1995). Emphasising that gender and ethnicity are similar and comparable *mechanisms* for engineering social boundaries, they urged social researchers to explore the questions of *how* people 'do' gender and ethnicity in their everyday lives, and how they make sense of their own acts of 'doing'. The investigation they recommended into subjects' creation of logic from discursive everyday life corresponds with the theory of ethnomethodology promulgated by Garfinkel (2002).

Indeed, as demonstrated in Chap. 2, the emerging pattern of association between migration trajectories and gender-cum-ethnic identities in Chinese-British families is as important as the explanations of how and why this pattern is formulated. Whilst we would undoubtedly benefit from examining how people 'do' and 'make sense of' their diverse gender and ethnic identities in subtle and nuanced ways in particular situations, the question remains as to how we should understand the subtle and intricate interplay between gender and ethnicity.

'(Un-)Making' the Intersection

The notion of intersectionality is not new. Nor is it novel to observe that ethnic intermarriage is located 'at' the intersection of gender and ethnicity (Collins, 1998; Nagel, 2003). There are a plethora of examples of cross-fertilisation between gender and ethnicity in the areas of mul-

ticulturalism, feminism, cosmopolitanism, hybridity and so on (Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012). Accordingly, attention to the intersection between gender and ethnicity has since led to discoveries such as the feminisation of international migration (Donato et al., 2006), the skewed gender ratio in intermarriage (the proportion of women far outweighs that of men; see Muttarak and Heath (2010)) and so on. Nevertheless, although intermarried couples stand at a complex interface between distinct gender, cultures and nations in an increasingly globalised world, the idea of intersectionality is seldom applied to the study of ethnic intermarriage and the limited applications remain formulaic.

In recent years, scholars such as Werbner (2013) have urged researchers to conceptualise intersectionality and the principle of multiple identities as separate, as the former mainly concerns 'negative' identities while the latter emphasises 'positive' identity constructs. However, I believe the limitations of the current theories of intersectionality are best used to inform our research rather than to paralyse it; to modify the current theories than to abandon them once and for all. Indeed, the concept of intersectionality uniquely highlights the mutually constituent and mutually shaping nature of the identities that are simultaneously present in a given social situation (Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013). This advantage has been neglected in research on multiple identities, which emphasises the isolation of identities from each other. Nevertheless, I concur with Werbner (2013) that most current theories of intersectionality take a limited focus on the multiple modalities of inequality. In face of an imposed and passive intersectionality, subjects often devise strategies of active identification as a defence against potential inequalities (Bradley, 1996; Song, 2003). I thus argue and demonstrate with empirical evidence that our understanding of interlocking sociocultural systems may benefit from re-conceptualising intersecting identities in terms of subjects' active, dynamic and ongoing construction of symbolic meanings, rather than understanding such identities as reified intersecting categories.

It is now widely accepted that gender is codified differently by distinct ethnicities, and that ethnicity is in turn closely related to the distinctive power relations between sexes (Therborn, 2004). However, the notion of multiple intersecting identities is not new to identity theorists (Burke

& Stets, 2009). As early as the late nineteenth century, scholars such as William James (1890) noted that we each have as many 'selves' as there are others with whom we interact. However, systematic theories of intersectionality only began to take shape a century later. The establishment of a theory of intersectionality was rooted in Black feminism in the USA. In her study of domestic violence, Crenshaw (1989) found that neither gender nor race is sufficient to explain the disadvantages and inequalities experienced by, in her words, 'women of colour' in such areas as legal representation. With its feminist perspective on social policies, Crenshaw's study may have been primarily a political manifesto. Nevertheless, her work significantly increased the visibility of previously taken-for-granted social groups 'at' the intersection (Crenshaw, 1991).

The empowerment of social groups 'at' the intersection has led researchers following Crenshaw to enumerate a plethora of supposedly 'new' social groups occupying the overlaps between multiple social categories such as female migrants, Black women and Hispanic men (Kurien, 1999; Mehrotra & Calasanti, 2010; Ryan & Webster, 2008). Crenshaw has been criticised for her over-stabilisation of discrete intersectional groups (Walby et al., 2012). However, the isolation of subjects 'at' the intersection as new entities of analysis not only courts the danger of groupism emphasised by Brubaker (2004); it also displaces the wider exogenous social forces that may shape the experiences of particular social groups 'at' the intersection. Despite speaking of gender and ethnicity as 'mutually constituted', Crenshaw did not explain how gender and ethnic identities constitute each other.

Addressing the drawbacks of early theories of intersectionality, McCall (2005) conducted an exhaustive review of research on intersectionality, and formulated three systematic approaches to intersectionality—intra-categorical, anti-categorical and inter-categorical. The intra-categorical approach takes a focus similar to that of Crenshaw: the complexity of lived experiences of people at 'neglected points of intersection'. The anti-categorical approach deconstructs social categories. It cautions against the danger of stabilising intersectional social groups, and prioritises the fluidity of social constructs. The inter-categorical approach begins with a focus on the components of a given intersection, and then addresses their changing configurations when different dimensions are brought together.

To construct the latter approach, McCall (2005) drew on the arithmetic metaphors of addition and multiplication and the algebraic notion of overlapping sets. McCall (2005) recommended that researchers analyse the diversity within groups 'at' the intersection to examine how different components rise above one another in specific situations. This has particular relevance to the diversity revealed in the present study beneath the umbrella category of 'Chinese-British inter-ethnic families'.

In support of the opposite extreme of fluidity over stability, Hancock (2007) devised a similar three-part set of approaches to intersectionality: unitary, multiple and intersectional. The unitary approach addresses only one category. In contrast, the multiple approach somewhat resembles McCall's principle of inter-categorical analysis. Recommending the intersectional approach, Hancock (2007) argued that we cannot understand intersectionality by simply adding up or multiplying the sum of its parts, because categories are 'mutually shaping' as well as 'mutually constituent'. According to Hancock (2007), understanding an intersection entails more than merely recognising its parts. She highlighted the need to explore the specific relationships—causal, associative and so on—between different forces operating at the intersection (Hancock, 2007). Unsurprisingly, however, practitioners have found that the lack of fluidity in empirical studies of intersectionality is more easily criticised than rectified.

In response to the difficulty of putting 'fluidity' into practice, Walby et al. (2012, p. 231) recommended that researchers explore snapshots of intersectionality 'at any one moment in time, [when] these relations [between multiple categories] have some stability'. However, as noted earlier, both time and place are key to the understanding of gender and ethnic identities. Therefore, while freezing time may provide a viable means of examining intersectionality frame by frame, it precludes the potentially momentous insights to be gained as subjects move in and out of social situations. It may thus be useful to identify the components of an intersection when static, but also to question the dynamic relationships between mutually shaping categories.

Exploring the system of 'control' over the process of identity-verification, identity theorists have examined the functions of multiple identities within individual subjects. This provides important insights

into inter-categorical relations at the intersection (Stets & Burke, 2000). Such theorists have found that identities are arranged hierarchically at the intersection, and that higher-level identities are usually more general, superseding more specific lower-level identities (Stets & Burke, 1994). First, when multiple groups and identities intersect, the higher-level identities that are most relevant to the situation become more salient than the lower-level ones. Second, when more than one identity is 'relevant', identity standards are 'shifted', with the most salient identity shifted to the least degree. Third, when several identities are equally important, they are usually constructed as one 'hyphenated' identity such as 'British-Chinese' or 'Asian-American'. Such compounds are processed by the human mind as 'wholes' (Stets & Burke, 2000). According to psychologists, this form of processing is a near-instinctual form of human cognition and perception (Stets & Turner, 2008). Nevertheless, neither the observation that gender and ethnicity may rise above each other, nor the implication that the human mind processes information 'lazily' and 'reductively', are satisfactory explanations of *why* gender and ethnicity intersect in diverse and distinct ways in Chinese-British families, or *how* the importance of ethnicity and gender are determined. Nevertheless, psychological theories certainly offer relevant insights. Members of Chinese-British families are not merely 'at' the intersection between gender and ethnicity, if such an intersection can even be said to exist. Rather, the human mind is actively engaged with the dynamics of 'making' such intersections. People adopt different strategies in response to institutional structures (Wimmer, 2008). Therefore, we must ask *where* and *when* gender and ethnic identities are hierarchical or equal in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage, and *why*?

It cannot be emphasised enough that gender and ethnicity—both separately and together—are ubiquitous. However, their specific forms of representation are highly contingent on time and place (Browne & Misra, 2003, 2007). As I argue in this book, a key means of tracing the dynamics of gender and ethnicity is to emphasise the sense of *continuity* over time and between places. However, despite the increasing influence of the transnationalist perspective, which underlines the continuity between sending and receiving places as created and re-created endlessly by ties across symbolic and geographic borders (Vertovec, 2009), migra-

tion itself is still predominantly conceptualised as a 'disruptive' process. The same sense of discontinuity is widely regarded as a defining feature of modern societies (Fuchs, 2007); arising between the distinct life-worlds of family and work, for example, or private and public. This is vividly reflected in the current state of research on ethnic intermarriage, in which subjects are treated in isolation as migrants, ethnic minorities, labourers, family players or gendered individuals. Accordingly, space is divided between the sending and receiving places, and time is split between pre- and post-migration and marriage (Charsley, 2013; Williams, 2010). The need to break away from such a fragmented approach and to address intermarried couples as simultaneously migrants, gendered individuals and ethnic minorities therefore form a key rationale for this research and for applying the idea of intersectionality to the study of inter-ethnic families.

In fact, an individual's experiences are interconnected over time, and together determine his or her current position and future social mobility. Similarly, an individual's lived experiences in a given sphere of life are intimately interlocked with another like links in a chain; the movement of one changes the behaviour of another (Browne & Misra, 2003; Collins, 1998; Davis, 2008). An analytical framework that accommodates temporality and locality as ongoing dynamics is necessary to determine *when*, *where*, *how* and *why* the intersections of ethnicised gender and gendered ethnicity are created in the lived experiences of Chinese-British families.

Life Stories: Disentangling 'Intersectionality'

To ascertain how and why gender and ethnicity intertwine, we need to address the multilayered (or 'hierarchical', as termed by social psychologists) nature of social situations, as well as the importance of time and place. On the one hand, the centrality of locality to subjects' enactment of intertwining identities lends itself to an ecological-systems framework that contextualises individual lives within immediate and wider socio-cultural and historical settings (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). On the other hand, a focus on temporality, particularly in terms of personal time (as

opposed to historical time),[2] demands attention to individual life trajectories, especially as identity formation is subject to change over the life course—particularly at transitional moments in life such as marriage and migration (Aspinall & Song, 2013; Doyle & Kao, 2007). These requirements make the life-course theory—which is currently enriching many branches of social science—particularly appropriate to the study of intersecting identities.

A life course is 'a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time' (Giele & Elder, 1998, p. 2). This concept highlights the complex interrelations linking individual lives to broader social and historical trends. Unsurprisingly, the analysis of life courses is a useful means of identifying how intersecting, multidimensional identities are constructed over time by a comprehensive set of factors at an individual level, a social level and an institutional level (Giele & Elder, 1998). It is unlikely that anybody can provide better answers to the questions 'who am I?' and 'who are we?' than oneself. Indeed, fashioned by the development of narrative theory (Herman, Jahn, & Ryan, 2010), the use of the life-story approach marks an important turning-point in the development of life-course theory. It shifted the focus on individual experience from an understanding of the twists and turns of life events as objective facts to how individuals relate to and make sense of their own lived experiences (McAdams, 1988, 1990, 2001). Lawler (2002, p. 12) made the following observations.

> We all tell stories about our lives, both to ourselves and to others; and it is through such stories that we make sense of ourselves, of the world, and of our relationship to others. Stories, or narratives, are a means by which people make sense of, understand, and live their lives.

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[2] As explained in greater detail in relation to the sample characteristics (Appendix B), the participants in this group generally belong to the two generations that followed China's Reform and Opening-up in late 1978. The more recent generation has been provided with greater educational opportunities, particularly English-language teaching (which became part of compulsory education in China in the late 1990s). The participants in the more recent generation are usually their parents' only children, due to China's one-child policy. The historical time between the two generations is discussed. However, I focus mainly on individuals' life trajectories in terms of personal time and life courses.

Life-story narratives are particularly useful for understanding mobility in social and cultural terms *per* class and race as well as in geographical terms *per* physical migration (Elder & Giele, 2009, p. 236). The life-story approach is uniquely capable of generating accounts that reveal the identity, coherence and direction of subjects' lives (Elder & Giele, 2009). It offers a view of life 'from within'. Subjects construe their own lives as ongoing stories that 'shape behaviour, establish identity, and integrate individuals into modern life' (McAdams, 2001). Underlining the subjective construct of social order, the life-story approach is consistent with the ethno-methodological perspective advocated by Garfinkel (2002), according to which identity is an ongoing performance (Goffman, 1959; West & Fenstermaker, 1995). Based on a plethora of research relating to the life-course model of human development, I adapt the four-fold paradigm of the life story proposed by Elder and Giele (2009), as presented in Fig. 3.1.

How does the life-story framework work? At an individual level, life-story narrators are positioned within their time and place. They set out to categorise and verify their identities by interacting with immediately 'linked lives' with reference to the prototypical self. In turn, the prototypical self is constantly negotiated and modified (Burke & Stets, 2009). However, the form and structure of 'linked lives' are in turn shaped by wider social, political and cultural constraints.

As every individual's life story has multiple dimensions, the life-story approach is multilevel in nature. This links it with Wimmer's (2008) multilevel procedural framework of ethnicity and the multilevel framework of gender developed by Ferree et al. (1999). Drawing on ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), the life-story approach provides a multilayered framework for the study of identity from the individual level to the familial and societal levels, underpinning the embeddedness of social identity (Burke & Stets, 2009; Ferree et al., 1999; Wimmer, 2008).

Although subjects may have no literal control over their time and place, McAdams (2001) described story-telling as an 'autobiographical project' that actively integrates the 'self' into wider social contexts. Stuart Hall (1987, p. 44) has gone further to state that 'identity is formed at that point where the unspeakable stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture'. Indeed, life stories are the product of complex and
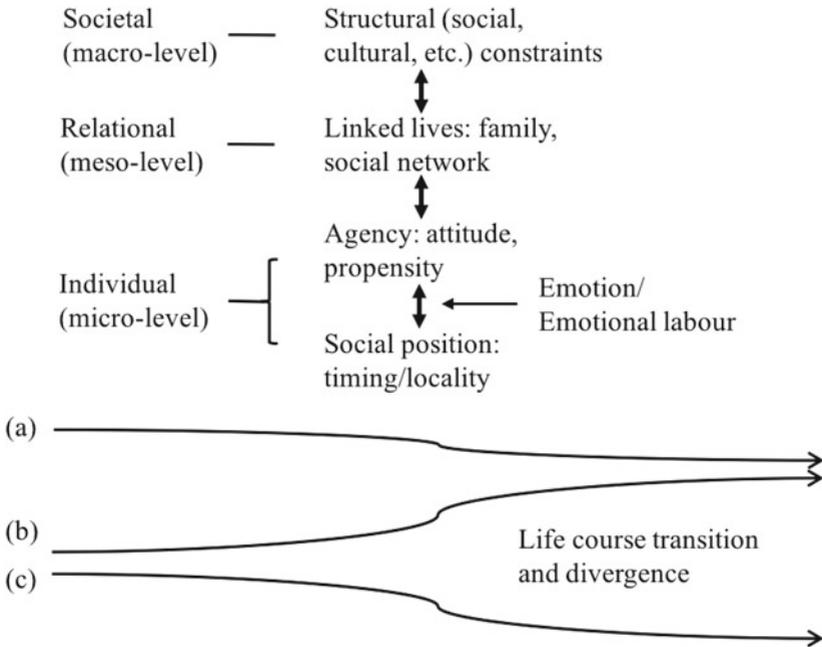
Fig. 3.1 A life-story model of identity. Adapted from Burke & Stets, 2009; Elder & Giele, 2009; Freese & Burke, 1994; Hochschild, 1983; McAdams, 2001; Swidler, 1986; and Vaillant, 1977

subtle social interactions, as argued by Berger, Berger, and Kellner (1974, p. 76) as follows.

> One way to conceptualize the term identity is not by trying merely to define who we are, but by contextualizing the term within our *relationships*, *practice*, *actions and experiences*. Because our identity is inexorably bound with what we do and how we make sense of what we do, and the significance of our activities is interpretable only within the context of communication, identity can be viewed as the actual experience of self in a particular social situation. [my italics]

The life-story approach provides an ideal framework to accommodate the interplay between *structure* and *agency* in action (Archer, 2003). Indeed, a basic theoretical tenet of this approach is that culture is not

a doctrine but a toolkit used by individuals to exercise their agency to devise personalised strategies (Swidler, 1986). It allows subjects the creative space to emerge from 'thick and thin' as distinctive individuals, albeit bound by social structure (Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013). Providing a constant intermediary or 'cushion' between structure and agency, subjects' adaptive strategies diversely and creatively navigate them through their dynamic life courses (Vaillant, 1977). Notably, as the incessant act of story-telling is itself an important adaptive strategy, the process of 'autobiographical reasoning' contains important clues to subjects' enactment and performance of their subtle, intricate and intersecting identities (McAdams, 1988). However, as it usually takes time to devise adaptive strategies in response to life changes, we should not overlook the *instantaneous* role played by emotion in the process of identity construction (Hochschild, 1983). Of course, an individual's life story is also subject to structural constraints, as it 'often [mirrors] the dominant and the subversive cultural narratives within which the individual's life is complexly situated' (McAdams, 2001, p. 256).

The life-story approach has the unique capacity to connect subjects' social origins with their social destinations (Portelli, 2010). It allows us to determine how and why people beginning at different social positions arrive at similar social destinations ((a) and (b) in Fig. 3.1), and why people who start at the same position subsequently diverge ((b) and (c) in Fig. 3.1). Therefore, this approach suits the aim of the current research: to gain insight into the distinct migration trajectories and patterns of intersection between gender and ethnic identities observed in Chap. 2. Aligning an individuals' understanding of the past with his or her outlook on the future, life stories help to maintain a sense of self-consistency across fragmented life-worlds and through time (Suh, 2002). This is particularly true in the cases of migration and ethnic intermarriage, as the sending and receiving places, the host culture and the original culture, are highly segmented despite ongoing transnational ties (Gupta, 1997). As will be demonstrated in the chapters to come, the life-story approach is particularly useful in bringing together the multiple identities of subjects as immigrants, ethnic minorities, family players and gendered actors, which in previous research have been examined in isolation.

As an individual nearly always narrates his or her life story in conjunction with others' stories, consistencies and shared themes may shed light on collective behaviour and wider social processes (Elder & Giele, 2009). Fischer (1986, p. 198) made the following argument.

> [A]utobiography is predicated on a vibrant yet ambiguous relation between a sense of self and community: What thus seem initially to be individualistic autobiographical searching turn out to be revelations of traditions, recollections of disseminated identities and of the divine sparks from the breaking of the vessels.

Further integrating the life-story approach and identity theories, McAdams (2001) proposed the more specific concept of *narrative identity*, which is defined as an individual's internalised, evolving and integrated story of the self. According to McAdams (2001, p. 257), such stories are told by individuals 'to make meanings out of their lives' and 'serve to situate them within the complex ecology of modern adulthood'. Following Tomkins's (1995) script theory, narrative theorists imagine an individual as 'something of a playwright who organises emotional life in terms of salient sense and recurrent scripts'. According to narrative-identity theory, the self is storied, and stories integrate lives by bringing together the past, present and future; which, according to Bruner (1996, p. 5), are about the 'vicissitudes of human intention organised in time'.

Notably, as narrative identity is 'unstable', we should also be wary of the use of the life-story theory to study social processes. The retrospective nature of life-story accounts suggests that life stories may not document past life events accurately or consistently, due to changes in life dynamics. As asserted by Hall (1990, p. 226):

> The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past', since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always already 'after the break'. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning.

Yet as subjects narrate their stories from their current social positions, life stories may be particularly powerful in revealing how and why they have arrived in these positions, and how they make sense of their lived experiences. As the limits of an imagined community may be just as important as real-life social boundaries (Anderson, 2006), subjective life stories may also contain important clues to subjects' future behaviour, which is enacted in response to their subjectively perceived and imagined social reality in the present. Therefore, life stories should not be understood as mere summaries of the past. Nor should they be understood as mere reflections of the present. Stories may also be told by subjects to express future intentions. As life stories are sometimes distorted by memory, efforts were made to ensure the validity and reliability of the life-story approach at all stages of this research, as discussed in Appendix A detailing the research design.

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4

'The Chinese Virtue' and
'The Good Old Days'

It is possible to make two key inferences from the work undertaken thus far. First, the marriage-migration boom has been a major driver of Chinese-British intermarriage. Second, the presence of Chinese-British families in the UK has become normalised over time (Fang, Sidanius, & Pratto, 1998). If Weber's (1978 [1922], p. 385) observation is correct that 'in all groups with developed "ethnic consciousness", the existence and absence of intermarriage (*connubium*) would then be a normal consequence of racial attraction or segregation,' then the statistical increase and normalisation of intermarriage should suggest an increment in 'racial attraction' between Chinese and British individuals.

In public discourse on this topic, however, emphasis has been laid predominantly on segregation. Even the most seasoned scholars begin by envisaging the difficulties facing inter-married couples. When an early draft of this chapter was presented at a national sociological conference in the UK, the panel chair, an eminent sociologist, introduced my research as 'an endeavour to explore how subjects *transcend* boundaries to make their families'. In the conference room, one could almost hear the 'hurrahs!' for those who construct families across ethnicities and national

borders. Structural constraints such as cultural difference, racial boundaries and immigration control are frequently and vividly enumerated; yet the existence of intermarriage has become the quintessential example of individuals' capacity to extend and reshape the boundaries of these constraints.

Against a backdrop of general belief in 'racial segregation', the boom in marriage migration from China to the UK has itself given rise to racial attraction between Chinese and British individuals. In an era in which many bemoan the end of marriage (Lewis, 2001), what factors bring Chinese and British people together, and then bind them within the institution of family? Given the predominance of Chinese women in Chinese-British marriages, one must ask what specific kinds of appeal the Chinese wives and their British husbands[1] hold for each other. In particular, how do these ethnicity-cum-gender preferences relate to the familial model of the British-male-earner adopted by most Chinese-British couples formed through marriage migration?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to conceptualise 'attraction' not only as transient affection but also, and more importantly, as a series of ongoing emotional, material and functional exchanges. If attraction is understood to represent a certain reciprocity, then husband and wife must each have something to offer the other and are likely to make their 'offerings' according to social norms in their respective countries. So what is exchanged between Chinese wives and British husbands? How does this process of exchange operate?

Previous research indicates that intermarriage, particularly via marriage migration, is a contract of status exchange: migrants marry natives with a lower economic/educational status in exchange for ethno-racial status (Fu, 2001; Kalmijn, 1993). Emerging first in research on small-group interactions (for example, Simmel, 2011 [1906]), social-exchange theory describes a balance between reward and punishment that determines individual and social action. Homans (1958) adds that such rewards and punishments are thoroughly embedded in the relevant social context, hence the importance of social approval (Coleman & Fararo, 1992).

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[1] The highly gendered pattern of Chinese-British marriages may also be due to the relative scarcity of families made up of Chinese husbands and British wives. This is discussed in Chap. 7.

According to William Goode (1970), who refers to the era following the rise of neoliberalism, 'all courtship systems are market or exchange systems'. Despite its probable exaggeration, Goode's claim paved the ground for the development of status-exchange theory by conceiving of Black-White intermarriage as a rational choice (Rosenfeld, 2005). Questions then arise as to whether status-exchange theory also applies to Chinese-British intermarriage in the UK, and what lies beyond the scope of mere rational choice.

A Paradoxical Deal?

As the traditional form of status-exchange theory is predicated on ethnic, economic and educational variables, I began the process of data analysis by exploring the respondents' demographic profiles. Although one's economic/educational status can be easily quantified and operationalised, ethnic status is a more slippery concept. The relative ethnic status of Chinese and British individuals is less well defined than, for example, the Black-White distinction in the American context (Song, 2004). This complexity and indeed ambiguity makes it necessary to explore how members of Chinese-British families perceive their own ethnicity in relation to that of their spouses.

In cognitive terms, ethnic status has traditionally been perceived as a conceptual hierarchy, with the 'height' and thus rank of each ethnicity established relative to the others (Milhouse, Asante, & Nwosu, 2001; Song, 2004). In the process of positioning their own ethnic statuses, all of the respondents in this chapter referred to other ethnic groups, including Black and South Asian. Without being prompted, they translated their conceptions of ethnic hierarchy into visual form, and scribbled down the order of ranks they had in mind.

Whether a pyramid or simply a top-down list, their diagrams were based on the same principle: most of the Chinese marriage-migrant housewives constructed diagrams similar to Jenna's, placing 'British' slightly above 'Chinese'. Adam's drawing is similar to those produced by the other British husbands. The ethnic profile described is straightforward, but the order in which the respondents constructed their hierarchies may be

more revealing. Each of the Chinese wives began by placing 'Black' at the bottom, while the British husbands first positioned 'White' at the top. Like many of the other respondents, Adam completed his list by moving vertically downwards, in the order of decreasing rank—Chinese, South Asian, Indian and so on. Before passing his slip of paper back to me, he hesitated, mumbled a correction—'umm, probably Chinese should be here'—and then drew an arrow repositioning 'Chinese' next to 'British'. Using this arrow, Adam revised his original estimation of the status of the Chinese ethnic group—perhaps to avoid embarrassing me.
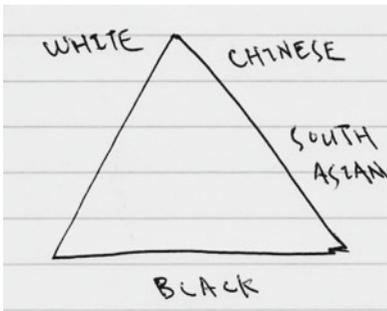

Jenna, Chinese housewife, 32. Jenna's term 'South Asian' refers to the Indian and Pakistani ethnic groups.
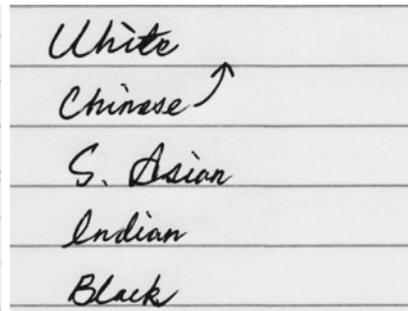
Adam, British husband, 41. Adam used 'South Asian' to refer to Southeast Asian ethnicities, including Malaysian and Filipino.

Fig. 4.1 Ethno-racial hierarchy drawn by respondents

Such racial hierarchies could translate into multifaceted meanings. But what makes such hierarchies important is that they are suggestive of how different ethnic groups fare in multicultural societies (Song, 2003), at least as perceived by individuals. The above diagrams reflect the respondents' perceptions of ethnic status at the time of my fieldwork. But how do the images presented in Fig. 4.1 differ from their original impressions of ethnic status, before meeting their husbands or wives? Keeping the diagrams to hand, I asked Jenna and Adam in separate interviews to describe their understanding of the relative status of Chinese and British ethnicity before their first meeting. Jenna, a former teacher in China, started by contrasting education styles in the two countries:

Well, where shall I start…for example, Chinese parents are demanding. They impose on children things they don't like. The Western way is more developed and scientific…umm, the Chinese tend to deal with things in an old-fashioned way. Before meeting Adam, the idea of marrying a White guy never crossed my mind. The climate was different then…. Once, Adam and I walked hand in hand in a park in China, you know, quite intimately like couples do. An old man stalked us for quite a while, with a creepy expression, until finally he came up to me and said, 'You are a bad girl, dating the *guilao*[2]: it's disgraceful. Go home if you want to snog.' I was so embarrassed, thinking, 'What the hell? Is he still living in the era of the Revolution or something?' Then I explained to Adam that some older people still retain the prejudices of the Opium War,[3] and told him not to worry about what had happened.

 While Jenna cited a clear memory of a date with Adam in China to illustrate her feelings about the distinction between 'Chinese' and 'British', 'under-developed' and 'developed', Adam went further back in time:

Adam: Back in my college days, I dated a few English girls I met in pubs and clubs—such places…they were sort of…umm, you knew right from the beginning that you would have a few drinks, get drunk and, you know, then sex. Things became boring with everything known. But I was never sure of, well, something like, 'this girl I'm dating is going to be my wife'… that's a bit far-fetched. Then, at work, my business took me to China. I never knew I'd bump into Jenna. I just thought, since I had always been interested in the Chinese culture, I'd go and have some fun and then come back to the UK to start a life.
    Yang: What made you think you would eventually return to the UK to settle down?
    Adam: Home's here, no doubt. Maybe, I thought life was better in the UK, and no dictator. Ha-ha…though it's a different world now, China is doing well…but I just wasn't sure what China was like [then]…and there was Jenna. She's really unique.

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[2] Chinese slang in the Cantonese dialect for 'foreigner', especially 'White foreigner'. It has derogatory implications similar to those of the word 'negro' to describe Black people.

[3] Also known as the Anglo-Chinese Wars; opium-trade conflict between China and Britain, and the climactic point in Britain's colonial relationship with China.

Yang: What's unique about her?
Adam: She has that Oriental charm.
Yang: Yes?
Adam: When I was dating Jenna, all I knew for sure of how people dated in England made no sense. I took the initiative, but I was never sure of the next move. I had to guess what to do and how to do it right. But I was sure that Jenna was serious [about the relationship] and there was the vision of family ahead.

Despite their very different experiences, Jenna and Adam described some similarities in their social and personal histories (Schuman & Scott, 1989). Jenna spoke of the conservative, even backward-looking qualities of the Chinese. Her sense of a generation gap in Chinese attitudes towards White people was reflected in the binary structure of her response, which opposed development and science to the era of the Opium War and the Chinese Revolution. Associating development in attitudes with the progression of time, Jenna construed the generational differences in attitudes towards Chinese-British intimacy in terms of a distinction between 'primordial' Chinese and 'modern' British culture (Fenton, 2010).

Adam's narrative was also structured by a temporal division. Recounting his early dates with English women, Adam distinguished between two phases of his life cycle—'fun time' (dates, hanging out and so on) and 'serious time' (settling down, marriage and family). Focusing on the polarities of 'certainty' and 'uncertainty', he compared two patterns in his experience of dating to illustrate his understanding of the distinction between 'Chinese' and 'British'. Dating English girls guaranteed 'fun', with an uncertain future; dating Jenna entailed an uncertain journey to the certain destination of marriage. Adam also acknowledged that his growing preference for the latter was closely related to his approaching the right age to settle down. China did not turn out to be simply a place of fun, as Adam had previously imagined. Instead, it was the place in which he found what he was missing in Britain.

Like the other Chinese-British families examined in this chapter, Jenna and Adam described the difficulty of distinguishing between Chinese and British in terms of ethnic status. What they think of the other's ethnicity has come to be defined by what they think of each other. Despite

the potentially limited accuracy of retrospective accounts, however, it does seem that most couples (like Adam and Jenna) originally perceived the British ethnic group to be of a higher status than the Chinese. If Chinese wives gain upward mobility in ethnic status from intermarriage, what is exchanged in economic and educational terms, and how does this exchange work?

Table 4.1 presents demographic profiles for the eight Chinese-British families. Three key observations can be made from these data. First, the Chinese wives all achieved a reasonably high educational and professional status prior to their marriage and migration to the UK. Second, the British husbands boast an equivalent, if not higher, professional and educational status than their wives. Third, in direct contrast to the pattern exhibited by Black-White married couples, the Chinese wives have married 'upwards', to British husbands of a higher educational and economic status.

This pattern is consistent with previous findings of Asian-American marriage in the USA (Song, 2009), as well as Chinese-Western marriage in Shanghai (Farrer, 2008). Such a pattern of exchange not only defies

Table 4.1 Profiles of Chinese-British families with homemaking Chinese marriage-migrant wives

	Chinese wives		British husbands	
Pseudonym	Education	Occupation	Education	Occupation
Susan, Damien	Bachelor's	Financial consultant	Bachelor's	Army officer
Monica, Bob	Bachelor's	Banker	Bachelor's	Military engineer
Guihua, Garry	Middle school	Grocery-shop assistant	Bachelor's	Business owner
Sarah, Park	High school	Restaurant owner	Middle school	Civil servant
Micah, Felix	Bachelor's	Teacher	PhD	Professor
Jenna, Adam	Master's	Teacher	Master's	Senior manager
Julia, Tom	Master's	Lecturer	PhD	Senior lecturer
Weiwei, Barry	Bachelor's	Businesswoman	MBA	Business owner

Note: The occupations of the Chinese wives refer to their previous jobs in China, as they all gave up their jobs to become housewives in the UK

the neoliberalist theory of marriage migration (Brettell & Hollifield, 2000; van Naerssen, Spaan, & Zoomers, 2008) but indicates something of an impasse in terms of economic-status-exchange theory, particularly for the British husbands, who seem to be in a loss-loss situation: marrying downward ethnically, economically and educationally. Following this theoretical model, the husbands' seemingly altruistic motivation creates a paradox wherein individual behaviour incurs only punishment but no reward. However, since all marriages involve some form of exchange in economic, symbolic and/or emotional terms (Farrer, 2008), the neoliberalist concept of exchange, albeit limited (Song, 2009), provides a sound outset with which to begin our exploration. If we assume that the reward lies outside the scope of the economic model, which accommodates only a trade-off between ethnic and economic status, what do the Chinese wives have to offer their British husbands?

'The Chinese Virtue'

To resolve this apparent paradox, I revisited Weber's (1978 [1922], p. 385) proposition of racial attraction. To determine whether/how the British husbands are 'rewarded' by marriage and (their wives') migration, I asked them questions about their attraction to their wives (specifically, 'What do you like best in your wife?'), and what attraction(s) they find in Chinese women. The answers to these questions outlined not only the initial interest that brought the Chinese wives and British husbands together in courtship but also the factors that continue to hold the families together. Most of the British husbands in this group began their responses to my question with descriptions of the physical beauty of their wives. Tom, who is about six feet two inches tall, with a stocky build, said:

> You see…most Chinese are slim and fit. You don't really see a lot of obese people in China, but you can see them everywhere here [England]… Chinese girls like Julia are so *exquisite*…umm, *delicate*. You know, men like to *protect* their ladies. On our first date, Julia hit me with that feeling

screaming at me from inside, 'Yes! I want to protect this girl with my life.' [my italics]

Continuing my interview with Adam, I asked him to clarify the meaning of his term 'the oriental charm' (see previous section in this chapter). After enumerating Jenna's desirable physical attributes—describing her as 'slender' and 'well-proportioned'—Adam went on to list aspects of his wife's behaviour and temperament that he has appreciated throughout their courtship and marriage:

> Jenna is *tender*, *mild* and *gentle*. She's different from English women, who are usually pushy. Jenna has never demanded much. She's caring and supportive. She understands and listens. What else? Some of the [English] girls I dated before were just drama queens. Jenna is *quiet* in nature. When we do argue, she's a good listener who *takes in* and *absorbs*.[my italics]

In terms of attractive physical characteristics, then, Adam and Tom highlighted their wives' 'exquisite', slim and 'delicate' appearance. In temperament, Adam noted in particular Jenna's tenderness, gentleness and mildness, and found her listening skills and supportiveness invaluable. These characteristics more or less constitute the ideal image of a Chinese wife, a sensual and feminine Oriental body, as shared by all eight of the British husbands involved in this chapter. The men conveyed two key messages in their descriptions of their wives. First, the attractive qualities of Chinese wives were defined as such in terms of their differences from the 'faults' of English women. In particular, Adam and Tom stated their preference for the assemblage of 'feminine' characteristics exhibited by Chinese women, which predispose Chinese wives to seek to fulfil their husbands' needs (Yokoyama, 1986). Second, the British husbands explained their conceptions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' by defining their own *roles* in relation to those of their wives. In general, they distinguished between such categories as the 'protector' and the 'protected', the 'initiator' and the 'receiver'. These stereotypes of female/male physicality and temperament reinforce the perceived roles of the husbands and wives, binding them even more tightly within the institution of the family (Oakley, 1985).

Most of the British husbands spoke highly of their wives and constructed lengthy lists of their appealing characteristics. However, my request that each husband name his wife's 'ultimate virtue' met with a more surprising response—at least at first sight. The husbands replied unanimously that their wives' chief virtue was that of being a good wife and/or mother. When I asked what they meant by 'good', they enlisted additional characteristics such as 'family-centred' and 'domestic'. For the British husbands, the appeal of their wives—both physically and in terms of temperament—seems to lie chiefly in the women's orientation towards family, the so-called ultimate 'Oriental virtue'.

Although most of the Chinese-British families involved in this study were formed as first marriages, Barry had been married before, to an English woman whose refusal to fulfil her 'wifely duty' (according to Barry, she refused to babysit and returned to work, leaving the boys from his previous marriage high and dry) eventually led to their divorce. Weiwei, Barry's Chinese wife, embodied the opposite qualities. Not only did she relinquish her career as a successful financial trader to marry Barry, but she gave birth to two daughters soon after marriage. Barry's experience of divorce seemed to amplify his gratitude for Weiwei's attitude to marriage:

> **Barry**: The divorce rate is ridiculously high in England nowadays…young people don't want to get married anymore, and married couples want to divorce. Marriage is almost an outdated fashion. In China, people still value marriage and see it as something that lasts for life. My ex-wife made such oaths as 'till death us do part', but you see she's more committed to her work than me…I didn't feel she [my ex-wife] trusted me in the same way as Weiwei.
> **Yang**: What trust?
> **Barry**: That I can secure the family a decent life and perhaps I'm not going to divorce her.

Although Barry's last comment was a joke, his concerns about divorce and his feeling that marriage should be an eternal bond were shared by all of the couples involved in the chapter—husbands and wives alike. Before deciding to marry their husbands, all eight of the Chinese wives were worried about the rumour that marriages are unreliable in the West.

Similarly, the British husbands yearned for a stable, traditional form of marriage that would allow them to take the role of wage earner and head of the household. Continuing to express his appreciation for Weiwei, Barry explained to me that as a White divorcé, he had not expected to persuade Weiwei that he was ready for a stable marriage. Neither had he imagined that Weiwei would willingly relinquish her job for him. She has since played the role of wife exactly as he would have wished. Barry expressed that he is 'most grateful that Weiwei is a good mother; otherwise, what do I do with the girls [from his current marriage with Weiwei]? Do I play Barbie toys with them?' On the contrary, Barry enjoys playing the stereotypically 'masculine' role of the guardian of his family:

> Well, you know, in the UK, all women go to work. They don't really care about the family at all. I sort of miss *the old days sometimes*. Chinese women are different. They are well *renowned* as housewives who look after the family well. That's *the virtue of Oriental society*—a *lost virtue here*…with Weiwei home, I feel so relieved to go on business trips, knowing that when I go back there's a warm home awaiting. [my italics]

Certainly, Barry's particular experience of divorce increased his sensitivity to women's work-family orientation, and Weiwei's domestic leanings made him appreciate her all the more in contrast with his first wife. Nonetheless, most of the British husbands shared the (stereotypical) perception that Chinese women make good wives. They imagined a 'domestic goddess' possessing a trinity of ideal qualities: an 'exquisite' physical appearance, a mild and gentle temperament, and a willingness to fulfil the expected roles of mother and wife.

However, although some of the wives (including Weiwei) were described by their husbands as 'natural goddess', not all met their husband's initial expectations. In these cases, according to the husbands, it took some bitter negotiation and more gentle persuasion for the Chinese women to live up to the ideal of the 'domestic goddess'. The husbands indicated that the 'virtue of obedience' had played an important role in this negotiation.[4]

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[4] As the length of the interviews varied, which problematises the use of word frequency, I counted the number of cases/families within whose interviews a given theme arose. In this case, I evaluated the appearance of certain key concepts in the British husbands' descriptions of their wives. Most

Remarks such as 'we discussed, reasoned and rationalised (Damien)' and 'we examined the consequences (Garry)' all describe the same process: the British husbands sought to persuade, and their Chinese wives listened (and, implicitly, obeyed). In short, the dynamic between husband and wife was generally presented as follows, in Felix's words: 'we discuss everything, but I tend to *reason* things out so in the end she just *follows*' [my italics]. By this means, discussion is transformed into one-way persuasion.

The use of this kind of negotiation was widespread among the eight couples, and cannot simply, therefore, be attributed to the fact that Felix has a higher level of education than his wife Micah. Indeed, the recurrence of similar patterns in my interviews with couples of a homogeneous educational background points towards some essential differences in how the Chinese wives and their British husbands think (Nisbett, 2010). In almost every case, the British husbands described exerting their control over family decisions by 'reasoning things out', while their wives began in dissent but were ultimately persuaded. The most common such decisions related to the trade-off between work and family.

Of the eight British husbands, Park is the only one who is less well educated than his Chinese wife (Sarah). However, he remains convinced that the role of full-time housewife is best for Sarah. A former restaurant owner in China, Sarah grew up in a family with a strong work ethic. After arriving in England, she considered setting up her own catering business, but was quickly discouraged by Park, who insisted that she stay at home. Within three months of negotiation, Sarah had become pregnant, and the conflict over whether to open a restaurant ended in the peaceful agreement that she would stay at home. Although the idea continued to cross Sarah's mind, Park eventually talked Sarah out of working after the birth of their younger son Jake. When I asked how he managed to change Sarah's mind, he replied as follows:

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prominent was the concept of 'family orientation', which was invoked by all eight families in this group; next, the concept of 'obedience' arose in my interviews with five families. In addition, I found 'obedience' to be closely associated with the experience of negotiating gender roles.

She wanted to open a restaurant, because it was her family business. She must have felt some responsibility to carry on the 'family heritage' [emphasis in original]. So I asked her, 'Why do you want to do that?' She said, 'My parents started [their business] from scratch, and I have always been taught to be a self-made person. It's very important.' Then I asked her, 'Who said it's important? Your parents?! How do you know they are right?'…I told her I'm earning enough to support the family, but not if *she* runs a business and sends our kids to the nursery. I *calculated* that she wouldn't be able to earn enough to pay off the nursery fees—not for the first five years. If she stayed home, *we* could claim child benefits. So I laid out the options and told her to forget about the 'self-made' deception and think more *for the family*.[my italics]

Smiling proudly, Park went on to tell me how pleased he felt that he had finally persuaded Sarah to change her mind. His differentiation of individual and familial identity was subtle: domesticity is 'her' business, yet the benefits are 'ours'. Park's narrative reflects the interaction not only of two individuals, but also of the two modes of thinking typical of China and the West, according to Nisbett (2010). In obeying the teachings of her elders and following traditional wisdom, Sarah embodied the traditional Chinese pattern of thinking. She mentioned her belief in the Chinese axiom that 'one will take a beating if he/she does not listen to the words of the elderly'. The Chinese emphasis on tacit knowledge gained through experience validates the authority of the elderly. In contrast, Park's reference to 'calculation' exemplifies the explicit logic of Western learning, which is based on hypothesis testing and methods of trial and error. These two systems of inquiry differ greatly in direction: the Chinese system is retrospective, and the Western one is progressive (Collins, 2010).

In a sense, the contextual shift involved in migration prevented Sarah from recourse to her own traditional logic in response to Park's persuasion. Despite the emotional turbulence caused by the conflict with her husband, she is 'grateful that Park understands the situation in the UK better, and is making sensible judgments *for the family*' [my italics]. This makes Sarah feel secure. Despite their different approaches, Park and Sarah both expressed a familist attitude, prioritising their family above

individual benefits. This strikes a balance between the traditional Chinese wisdom guiding Sarah and the methods of economic calculation adopted by Park.

With a sense of pride, Park told me that he spent six weeks, 'well *worth* a year's holiday', dating Sarah in China. 'Six weeks for a *wife*, that's every second worth it!' he said. Park thereby equated the value of time with that of marriage, or, more specifically, with that of a wife. He thereby suggested that the chief 'Oriental virtue'—the inclination to fulfil the role of a housewife—can be objectified as an exchangeable good. Returning to social-exchange theory, Sarah's 'virtue' as a housewife is thus a 'reward' for Park. However, it is necessary to ask whether the Chinese wives accepted this objectification of their bodies, identities and gender roles as items for exchange, and how?

'I'm a "Banana"'

According to *The Urban English Dictionary*, the word 'banana' does not always refer to the familiar fruit. As used by my respondents, for instance, its meaning is symbolic, signifying a person who is Yellow on the outside and White inside: a 'Western Asian who has lost their heritage'. Although the term 'banana' is quite often used in derogatory terms, each of the eight Chinese housewives turned this term around and proudly called herself a 'banana'. Had there been a chance to discuss Shakespeare, my respondents would surely have refuted the famous quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*—'that which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet'. As a signifier of their perceived social status (Derrida, 1998), the word 'banana' has a particular and weighty meaning for these women. As I will illustrate, the 'transcoding' strategy adopted by the eight marriage-migrant Chinese housewives in calling themselves 'bananas' corresponds to the idea of 'ethnic inversion' that the marginalised ethnic minorities would take an existing social category and re-appropriate it with new meanings (Wimmer, 2004; Song, 2003).

In most cases, I began my first interview with each respondent by obtaining basic personal details: age, nationality, name/pseudonym and the like. The pattern changed, however, when I met Micah. As usual, I

initiated the interview by introducing myself and then asking the interviewee to specify the name or pseudonym by which she would like to be addressed:

> **Micah**: Micah, yes, Micah sounds better.
>
> **Yang**: Better?
>
> **Micah**: Oh, yes, better than my unfashionable *Chinese* name, that sounds like I'm really *old.* [my italics]
>
> **Yang**: [laughs] Do you mind telling me your nationality?
>
> **Micah**: I was Chinese.
>
> **Yang**: Yes?
>
> **Micah**: I'm still Chinese. I still have my Chinese appearance [points to her face], but I have a British passport now. So I'm *British Chinese*.

Unlike most of the respondents, Micah did not provide straightforward answers to my first questions. However, she shared with her fellow marriage-migrant Chinese housewives a sense of superiority in her British citizenship, as much as her high-status English name. Indeed, all eight of the Chinese housewives were (or were about to become) British citizens at the time of research,[5] and most of them preferred that I use their English names, apart from Weiwei and Guihua.[6] Their preference for British nationality and an English identity is thus clear from the labels they have attached to themselves.

Sarah reported proudly that she was the first of her family to marry somebody British, but her sister has since followed suit, marrying an Englishman who lives only 80 miles north of Sarah and Park. 'She's not leading a happy life, so she is probably not willing to be interviewed,' said Sarah when I asked to talk with her sister as well. In my interview with Sarah, she referred from time to time to her unhappy Chinese *jie-*

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[5] Six of the eight Chinese wives were British-passport holders at the time of interview; the other two were in the process of obtaining British citizenship.

[6] The respondents' naming preferences took three main forms: (1) they preferred that I address them by their English names; (2) they use their English names at home; and (3) they use their English names among their Chinese and (if any) British friends. When choosing pseudonyms, I retained the preference for Chinese or English name in each case.

mei[7] ('female friends' in Chinese) with British husbands (her own sister included). Taking pride and probably solace in the label 'banana', Sarah acted as a spokesperson for these unhappy Chinese wives:

> Your research is very necessary. A lot of my friends who married British men, including my sister, just couldn't get used to Western culture. They argued with their husbands and came to me to cry. […] How can they learn to cope if they still live in the *old Chinese* way? I myself didn't know anything when I first came here. Park and I decided to DIY our house. The bathroom tiles had been piled up in the hallway for two months when I finally asked, 'Park, what do you want to do with these tiles?' He replied, 'I thought you had chosen the tiles and knew what to do with them.' What!? Women never carry heavy things in China, let alone do manual labour. But here [in England] they do. When I disagreed, Park said, 'Who says women can't lay tiles? But if you don't want to do it, we can pay someone to do it.'… Gardening, decoration and refurbishment—so I lived and learned… I'm very *Westernised* and *open*, I think that's really what they [Chinese wives with British husbands] need to learn to live a happy life. [my italics]

Beneath the umbrella categories of 'working husband' and 'homemaking wife', Sarah's experience suggests that the division between gender roles in these families does not equate merely to a distinction between work and family. Her narrative reveals the subtle differences between the constructs of 'husband' and 'wife', as well as 'man' and 'woman', in China and Britain. The conflict over tile laying—considered a domestic task by Park, but regarded as physical labour and thus the responsibility of the husband in China—reveals the inconsistency between Chinese and British taxonomies of gender. Park's notion of 'gender equity' did not appeal to Sarah, as it required her to perform the work of a husband, according to her own cultural expectations. Despite such occasional unpleasantness, however, Sarah described her experience of being a housewife as generally enjoyable. She maintained in the interview that cultivating an 'open' mind and willingness to be 'Westernised' is essential to achieving happiness.

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[7] 'Sister' in the literal sense, which is an intimate way of addressing close friends in Chinese, which also carries the sense of being in the same clan/group/community.

When asked to elaborate on the subject of 'liv[ing] and learn[ing]', Sarah explained that going to church for the first time in the UK marked a turning point in her relationship with Park, putting an end, on the whole, to the confrontational early phrase of their marriage. Indeed, most of the eight families had a similar experience (6/8 families).[8] Although not all of the Chinese wives are regular churchgoers, they are involved to varying degrees in church-related activities. Religion provides a kind of cultural 'toolkit' (Swidler, 1986), equipping them with the Western logic necessary to understand and thus reconcile cultural differences within their own relationships.

Monica shared Sarah's sentiments, but described having become even more committed to her Christian faith. Having pursued a nomadic life-style for several years with her military husband Bob, she yearned for a sense of belonging, which she came to find not only in spirituality itself but also in the religious communities and networks into which she was welcomed wherever she went. When I asked Monica to explain her decision to become a housewife, she swiftly fetched a dog-eared Bible from the mantelpiece and read out the following passage:

> Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. (*Titus*, 2, v. 3–5)

Unlike the other Chinese housewives, who turned to religion after marrying British husbands and migrating to the UK, Monica and Bob first met in church and have been Christians for much of their lives. Closing the Bible with a devout 'Amen', Monica went on to identify aspects of Christianity that she particularly valued. First, she strongly identified with the prescribed role of women as kind, mild and submissive housewives dedicated to supporting their husbands and children. Second, she appreciated the emphasis on tradition in Christian teach-

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[8] The eight families in this group were accessed via personal and professional contacts and so on; only two families were first approached through church-related organisations.

ing—the sense of certainty obtained from the consistency and continuity of belief.

During my interviews with Monica and Sarah, I became increasingly curious about why and how Monica first became a Christian in contemporary China (an atheist country), and why Sarah, like many of the other Chinese wives, sought to adapt to the British lifestyle and become 'Westernised'. The answer to the first question emerged as Monica described her early life in China:

> **Monica**: I worked as a banker, just as my parents expected. They always wanted me to be successful: to secure a stable job and then start a family. On approaching thirty, I had a successful career, but no sign of marriage. My parents became very worried, and took me to a *xiangqin* [Chinese for 'matching-making']. That was very embarrassing.
>
> **Yang**: Mm…
>
> **Monica**: What was more embarrassing was that at family gatherings relatives would ask, 'Monica, where is your boyfriend, when are you getting married, when are we going to eat your *xi tang* [Chinese for 'wedding candy']?'[9] …For a while, I worked longer hours and earned much more, but I still had to face my family when I went home…I didn't really know what I wanted until one day a friend introduced me to their 'underground' Bible study. It became clear to me, I mean, the purpose of my life…and later there came my gift from God—Bob. My decision to quit my job was a big surprise to my colleagues and friends.
>
> **Yang**: Yes.
>
> **Monica**: They thought I had gone nuts, and said things like, 'You fought so hard to make it in a men's world, why quit now?' Then my relatives began to gossip about my quitting my job.

Monica's life story vividly recalls the 'structural ambivalence' identified by Gerson (1986, p. 1–3) in the 'subtle revolution' in female roles in 1980s America. In China in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Monica too stood at a crossroads of conflicting normative expectations. With a secure and successful job on the one hand and a loving family on the other, Monica was fulfilling two of her parents' chief aspirations; however, the

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[9] A special kind of candy wrapped in red wedding paper. In Chinese ritual, newlyweds would invite the guests to eat *xi tang*, which symbolises the sweet life of the newlywed couple.

professional and the domestic realms are sufficiently separate in modern China that it was increasingly difficult for Monica to juggle the two. This double bind was particularly problematic in terms of chronology: Monica, like many Chinese women, was expected first to attain a high educational and professional status, and then to halt the momentum of her career to enter the domestic world and start a family. The normative expectations that women in China are expected to fulfil are markedly discontinuous over the course of their lives.

Underlying this discontinuity or 'structural inconsistency' through Chinese women's life course is a rupture within China's own cultural ideology, caused by its rapid transition between historico-political eras. On the one hand, the traditional feudal idiom suggests that a woman's 'personal success is not as good as marrying a successful man'; in other words, that her ultimate success lies in her husband's achievements. On the other hand, the ideology of self-reliance was reinforced with the founding of socialist China in 1949, and a strong work ethic was subsequently emphasised as an important step towards women's independence (Zuo & Bian, 2001). Education and employment opportunities in state-owned enterprises were provided as part of the state's social-engineering programme to promote gender equity (Evans & Strauss, 2011). Although these recent sociopolitical developments have gone some way towards shaping Monica's parents' expectations of their daughter as a self-made woman, the feudal tradition still exerts a profound influence. Monica's successful career and impressive work ethic declined in value for her parents after she turned thirty (and thereby entered a new life stage, according to tradition), whereafter they placed increasing emphasis on the requirements of family (marriage, childbirth and so on).

However, as Monica and many others have found, the momentum built up by a successful career makes a return to domesticity very difficult. The 'preference theory' raised by the sociologist Catherine Hakim (2000) suggests that, though up to 80 % of women have rather 'adaptive' gender values and are subject to specific life circumstances in choosing between work and family, there is a small sway of women who have a clear idea of their gender-role orientation for either professional career or domesticity. Julia, a former university lecturer in China, was such an example of someone having a clear gender-role orientation from early on. Julia followed

more or less the same education and career trajectory as Monica. Yet unlike Monica—who did not know how to proceed, and allowed herself to be guided by the expectations of significant others and eventually into her current comfortable role of housewife—Julia exhibited a preference for domesticity from an early stage. However, pressure from friends and colleagues in school, university and the workplace made it difficult for Julia to swim against the tide:

> All of my university pals work: some in international cooperation, others in the public sector. When you graduate from university, especially a high-status one, everyone expects you to have a stellar career…Going back home? Becoming a housewife? You must be joking. You almost feel ashamed to speak of what you really want. It's just not ambitious at all… Your parents expect you to be a success, and you just can't let them down… but you see, research indicates that the best age for a woman to have a baby is around 28 to 30. I had always wanted a child, and I knew that I would lose the chance to have one if I didn't take this opportunity.

When asked why they chose to work in China, all eight of the Chinese housewives mentioned their parents, relatives and friends. Since 1949, generations of women in China have received an education; and after the re-instalment of higher education after the Cultural Revolution,[10] women are outperforming men academically and outnumbering men in higher education (OECD, 2011). Education has been a major channel for social mobility ever since. However, as Monica's family expected her to get married when she became thirty years old, and Julia prioritised the opportunity for motherhood, setting herself an 'optimal age' for childbirth, the lives of the Chinese housewives involved in this chapter depict an unfinished revolution in Chinese women's gender roles (Gerson, 2010). Indeed, the ideal of gender equality has not been acknowledged consistently beyond the educational system.

These narratives chart a social history in which women are urged to reject domesticity in favour of accruing educational status and climbing the career ladder. Once they reach the top, however, they must decide whether

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[10] A left-extremist socialist movement in China, which attacked Confucian teachings and eventually suspended China's education system from 1967 to 1977.

to persist in their high-flying careers (against the expectations of their families and ethnic backgrounds) or descend to the domestic world (to satisfy normative expectations). Neither option seems acceptable. Continuing to pursue a high-status career may prevent women from fulfilling certain filial obligations, such as giving birth to an heir to perpetuate the family lineage. Yet a return to domesticity wastes years of effort.

However, marriage migration seems to offer a third alternative. Although none of the eight wives originally envisaged marrying a white British man, their British husbands provided the opportunity to escape the predicament described above. First, their increased ethnic mobility suggests that their prior efforts have not been wasted after all. Second, marriage migration places geographical distance between the women and their families in China: the centre of ambivalence and gossip, as described by Monica and Julia. Despite the diversity of their initial gender-role orientations—Julia's domesticity, for example, and Monica's ambivalence—marriage migration and their subsequent experience as marriage migrants in the UK further directed the wives towards domesticity.

Why did the eight wives opt for domesticity and intermarriage in the UK, but not in China? The difference is subtle but self-evident. The Chinese housewives' fulfilment of domestic roles is greatly appreciated by their husbands. In return, the eight housewives unanimously expressed their appreciation for their British husbands for being different from the Chinese men they had previously dated, who had 'frowned' at Julia's lectureship and Susan's career as a financial consultant, regarding the women's success as a 'potential threat to their manhood', according to Julia. The emotional contours described by the eight couples—ranging from the husbands' nostalgia for the 'old days' in the UK to their gratitude to their wives, and from the women's feelings of being trapped to their fulfilment as proud mothers and wives—offer important clues to the symbolic meaning generated from the journey of intermarriage and migration. After all, fulfilling a much-appreciated domestic role is different from playing the same role within the narrow constraints arising from a cultural rupture.

However, how does the respondents' goal of becoming 'bananas' suit the expectations of their significant others? Most of the Chinese housewives described feeling that they couldn't let their parents down. So have

these significant others sanctioned their 'jump', and if so, what form does this approval take? Does their approval matter, and if so, why?

Eager Parents and Like-Minded Friends

Although marriage is a contract between two individuals, the contract is sanctioned by significant others such as parents and close friends. The dynamics of dating, marriage and marital life therefore represent the engagement not only of two individuals but of two families (and social circles). When family members evaluate the social background, personality and temperament of a potential daughter- or son-in-law, they seek to ascertain whether the prospective fiancé(e) is reliable, and whether the marriage will be *men dang hu dui* (marriage of matching doors).[11] This is particularly important in China, where marriage represents a social contract as the union of two families and the fulfilment of a filial obligation (Watson & Ebrey, 1991).

With parental approval as the generalised reinforcer legitimising marriage as a social action (Homans, 1958), it is unsurprising that a meeting with the (Chinese) parents marked the beginning of each of the eight relationships examined in this chapter. Although the parents seldom disapproved of the marriages, the rituals of 'approval seeking' and 'consent granting' were necessary means of deferring to the authority of the elderly and the decency (also known as 'face' in the Chinese context) of the family as recognised by others. This creates symbolic meaning in its own right in the Chinese context. In some cases, approval was readily granted; for others, like Adam and Jenna, the symbolic ritual of inspection and legitimisation was executed more seriously:

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[11] A Chinese proverb that describes the equality of social, economic and cultural status (homogamy) between two families whose representatives are to marry. The practice of (family) homogamy is central to traditional marital rituals in China, where greater emphasis is placed on the *perception* of the marriage as homogamous than on whether the marriage is truly homogamous (in other words, homogamy is primarily a social performance). Notably, this matching would involve extended (parental) families other than the husband and wife.

Adam: The first person I met from Jenna's family was her aunt. Jenna's parents couldn't speak English, so they sent her aunt to meet me…I can still remember clearly that I was taken to a hotel room. We sat down and then she [Jenna's aunt] started questioning me.

   Yang: What were the questions?

   Adam: It was almost an interrogation, she asked me about my age, job, whether I have siblings, and what they do, my parents' occupations…she wanted to know everything about my family. Some questions were quite outrageous, like how much I earn…I felt pretty upset then, but later Jenna explained to me that they just wanted to make sure I was a decent guy and meant no harm…Jenna calls her family two or three times a week, and now I can see where they come from. It's quite a close family.

Adam's narratives resemble that of a few other of the British husbands, whose experiences illustrate the difference between Chinese and British perceptions of the boundary between extended and nuclear family. Although Adam understood marriage as a personal matter from the outset, it is anything but an individual business in China. In fact, all of the eight Chinese families hosted grand weddings that seemed almost to put their daughters and sons-in-law on display for the wedding guests (friends, relatives and so on). In this way, each wedding became a social declaration, thereby gaining wider social recognition for the marriage.

Although Adam was joking when he described his meeting with Jenna's aunt as an 'interrogation', the British husbands certainly experienced less hassle from their families. Indeed, neither their parents nor members of their extended families appeared frequently in the British husbands' narratives of their dating and marital experiences. After dating Sarah for six weeks, and then returning to the UK, Park travelled back to China three months later. He proposed to Sarah, and the couple married—in both cases without involving his family in England. This, according to Sarah, would be 'totally unacceptable in China'. Sharing Sarah's sentiments as a Chinese, I asked Park how his family had responded. He described their reaction as follows:

I visited my mother. She sat in her chair, fairly laid back, and said, 'Tell me then, what have you done this time?' I just said, 'Oh, I have just returned from China…by the way, I got married this time.' Then we chatted and

chatted, about Sarah and her family, the Chinese wedding and everything. But, you know, it's no big deal. My mother wanted to see me happy, and I am happy, then that's it.

Despite differences in the extent to which the British husbands involved their families in their marriages, they all described marriage as a matter of individual choice. Although they felt that their parents were entitled to their own opinions, 'it all boils down to one's own choices', in Park's words. The contrasting experiences of marriage on the Chinese and British sides raise questions about *men dang hu dui*, and specifically as to how homogamy is conceptualised and justified in a cross-cultural context (for Chinese parents in particular).

The close involvement of each of the eight sets of Chinese parents in the couples' nuclear families not only revealed the parents' continuing intervention in their daughters' marriages but also allowed me to examine the construct of parental approval by engaging the Chinese parents in my interviews and observations. Some of these parents speak with their daughters on the telephone almost every day, and they are frequent visitors to the UK. In fact, in seven of the eight cases addressed in this chapter, the Chinese parents have visited their daughters every year, and stayed as long as their visas allow.

I met Micah's mother during her three-month annual visit[12] in the autumn of 2012. When I arrived at Micah's home, it was drawing near to dinnertime—Felix was expected to be back at any moment. While Micah flicked through some cartoons on television with her daughters, her mother prepared the family's dinner in the kitchen. She invited me to join her in making dumplings, grumbling to me that Micah had never learned to cook proper Chinese food and could never keep up with the laundry, among other complaints. Like the other parents I met during the research, Micah's mother still regarded herself as her daughter's guardian. When I asked whether she had accepted the fact that Micah had given up her teaching career to become a full-time housewife, she said:

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[12] Micah's father had not accompanied her mother to the UK, because he was still working. In China, the retirement age for females is generally five years younger than for males, and ten years in cases of early retirement.

> You know, we are an ordinary Chinese family with a humble background. So we always wanted Micah to work very hard to make a life for herself. There was a limit on how high she could really fly…to live a better life, she would either have had to work extra hard or marry 'up'…life is generally better here [in Britain], so it [migration] was not a bad choice, though, you see, we are concerned as parents when our daughter lives so far away from home, and doesn't have anyone [family members] around.

As Micah's mother elaborated further on her concern for her daughter 'so far away from home', I noticed two key assumptions underpinning her words. First, in juxtaposing marriage migration with career advancement in China, she clearly viewed inter-ethnic marriage as a form of upward social mobility for Micah. This was closely related to her perceptions that 'White' comes above 'Chinese'[13] and that 'life is generally better' in Britain. These perceptions reflect typical ethnic stereotypes created by China's Reform and Opening-up in late 1978, which exposed China to the West and downgraded the status of traditional Chinese practices (Whyte & Parish, 1985). It also lends support to the idea of 'developmental idealism' that people perceive different countries and cultures to be on a scale depicting different levels of development, and thus act accordingly upon their perceptions (Jayakody, Thornton, & Axinn, 2012). Second, Micah's mother understood 'home' as essentially an ethnic and geographical construct defined by 'Chinese-ness'. Although Micah has made a family in England, her mother continued to regard her as being away from (the parental) home.

Having established deep-rooted connections within their nuclear families, few of the Chinese housewives agreed with their parents that it was difficult not to have family nearby in Britain. However, despite their reluctance to accept their parents' sympathy, the eight Chinese housewives did experience a certain loneliness when they first arrived in the UK, before they became closely embedded within their social networks of like-minded friends—usually in Chinese community centres, toddlers' groups, 'Chinatown' regions and similar. Whereas

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[13] Where possible, I requested from the parents' comments on status of different ethnic groups like those produced by the couples. The Chinese parents of four families in this group provided their comments, and in each case placed 'White' above 'Chinese'.

some of the Chinese housewives seemed almost immediately to affiliate themselves with Chinese communities, others, including Weiwei, first tried to make friends among the local British people. However, these attempts failed, and the women were forced to remain within their comfort zones, interacting almost exclusively with Chinese communities:

> **Weiwei:** At first I thought I'd start with his [my husband's] family. So I went shopping with my sister-in-law. That was a disaster. We didn't click at all. Whatever I thought was pretty, she thought was ugly. We ended up buying nothing, which was very frustrating. We didn't share the same *yuyan* [Chinese for 'language (literal)' and 'shared cultural taste (metaphorical)'] at all.

Weiwei's use of the term *yuyan* ('language')[14] reflects both the ideological and the practical difficulties encountered by the Chinese housewives in their attempts to make British friends. On a practical level, Susan, Monica and other members of the relatively older generation of Chinese women had not received a proper English education, and thus found it difficult to 'blend in', especially when they failed to comprehend the punch-lines of jokes or communicate their feelings in a suitably subtle or precise way. Even Weiwei and the other members of the younger generation of respondents, who speak fluent English and thus do not see language as a practical barrier, were discouraged by the cultural barriers between themselves and the local British people. As a result, all of the eight Chinese housewives gathered like-minded Chinese friends around them. They also identified with other local Chinese-British families they met at their husbands' workplaces and elsewhere. When Jenna and Adam were interviewed, they joked that 'everybody from Rick's [Adam's workplace, pseudonym] has a Chinese wife'.

An individual's ethnic identity is powerfully shaped by interactions with one's co-ethnics as much as people from other ethnic groups. Although one's sense of self cannot accord perfectly with co-ethnic designation of what it means to possess a particular ethnicity, co-ethnic

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[14] In Chinese, the word 'language' is also used to refer to cultural understanding, such as aesthetic preferences.

interactions usually contribute to an awareness of the normative values and behaviours expected of individuals (Song, 2003). When asked why they felt estranged from British social circles and/or identified primarily with Chinese communities in Britain, the women cited their domestic role, and explained that they felt more comfortable with like-minded friends. This concurs with Bott's (1957) classical research underpinning the association between social network formation and conjugal roles at home. It also links to more recent research underlining the importance of understanding the identity constructs of ethnic minorities and migrants in terms of their social network dynamics (Ryan, 2008; Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2009). The Chinese housewives 'flocked together' with those from similar backgrounds and with similar characteristics: Chinese, immigrant, female, mother and housekeeper. Participation in social groups defined by ethnicity and gender, such as Chinese Women's Associations and Chinese toddler groups, in turn re-defined the women's ethnic-cum-gendered identities.

As part of their respective Chinese social networks,[15] the eight housewives were united further under the flag of 'proud Chinese mother', in line with the chief 'Oriental virtue' as perceived by their husbands. However, there is an obvious conflict between the women's desire to become 'bananas' and their actual disengagement from British communities. They internalised the aim to Westernise themselves and strip away their Chinese identities in order to achieve a higher social status. Increasingly, however, their identities were shown to be defined in opposition to those of professional British women. When I asked Weiwei why she had chosen to be a stay-at-home mother, she responded as follows:

> English women tend to send their kids to the nursery—that's only a secondary choice for selfish mothers. In nurseries, individual kids don't really get the amount of attention they need. Instead, at home, I can make sure my kids get my full attention. This is more important than working. Umm, Westerners think more about themselves. You see those English problem

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[15] Apart from two of the Chinese housewives, who knew each other and belonged to the same social group, the sample was dispersed in terms of social network. This helps justify the claim that an orientation towards the Chinese ethnicity is a feature common to the social-networking preferences of the respondents in this diverse group.

kids hanging out aimlessly after school and taking drugs! Their parents are entirely responsible. *We Chinese* [my italics] know well that we need to make personal sacrifices to allow our children to live better lives.

Weiwei's child-centric style of discourse was common to all of the Chinese housewives. Indeed, a common practice in such social spaces is the vilification of 'self-centred' British women. In a world focused towards individual gain, as Britain seems to them, it is not easy to uphold a 'selfless' ideal; hence the need for reinforcement from like-minded friends. Being the social spaces of their own creation, such social groups as the toddlers' sessions allow Chinese wives to gather together and share their experiences of raising children. In many cases, they welcomed me into their social gatherings and shared with me their concerns about the growth and education of their children and the possible immigration of their parents from China to the UK, hoping that I as researcher could somehow act as their spokesperson. They sought to determine what would be best for their children, and asked whether they would be likely to face racial discrimination. Should they try to integrate their children with mainstream British society, and if so, how should this be done? What methods could be used to extend parental visas?

Answering these questions would require another project. However, the Chinese housewives' overriding concern for their families, and their emphasis on the importance of motherhood and family bonds, clearly reflect their strong family orientation. Paradoxically, their decision to renounce their careers and instead fulfil stereotypes of 'the Oriental virtue' represents a journey back to the family-focused ideology associated with Chinese ethnicity, as well as a literal journey (via migration from China) away from the families that impose these expectations upon them. Swimming against what they feel to be the general tide of individualisation in China and Britain, they have formed safe havens with like-minded friends from Chinese communities, among whom motherhood is prioritised. Although the women's inter-ethnic marriages, migration and choice of full-time domesticity have been fully approved by their significant others, how do the work-family negotiations carried out by the eight families fit into Chinese and British society at large?

Intermarriage and Marriage Migration: A Journey Beyond Economic-Status Exchange

For the eight British husbands, their marriage-migrant Chinese housewives have satisfied a sense of nostalgia for the 'old days' of female domesticity. Meanwhile, marriage migration has legitimised the seemingly 'unacceptable' choice of domesticity for the eight Chinese wives. Although the women rejected 'old-fashioned Chinese names', 'antiquated Chinese frames of mind' and so on, inter-ethnic marriage has provided them with a 'novel' way to return to traditional family values—crucially, a way that is considered acceptable in the inconsistently de-traditionalized China (Hu, 2015). The romance between each of these Chinese-British couples began with the ethnic stigmas of 'tender, gentle, family-oriented Chinese woman' and 'manly, open-minded British man'. Living up to their stereotype, the Chinese housewives are full-time wives and mothers, while the British husbands enjoy shouldering the weight of their families' financial responsibilities, as the earners in their households. How do their lives fit into the bigger picture at a societal level in China and in the UK?

Figure 4.2[16] illustrates Chinese and British attitudes towards women's professional versus domestic roles. In both the upper and lower figures, a higher percentage indicates stronger pro-work attitudes to women's professional careers. In China, more than 90 % of the respondents, male and female alike, consistently supported women's labour force participation and believed that women's professional careers would not harm their family/personal relationships. The British respondents exhibited a lesser support towards women's professional roles, with women marching slightly ahead of their male counterparts (Scott, 2008).

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[16] The data displayed in Fig. 4.2 were accessed from the 1990, 1995 and 2001 World Values Surveys (www.worldvaluessurvey.org); the data for the UK were obtained from Scott (2008, pp. 164–165), 1989/91, 1994/95, 2001/02. The sample size varied according to year and country. For the upper Figure: *N* (UK—female) =690 (1989/90), 498 (1994/95) and 1059 (2001/02); *N* (UK—male) =552 (1989/90), 482 (1994/95) and 867 (2001/02); *N* (China—female) =395 (1990), 693 (1995) and 493 (2000/01); *N* (China—male) =590 (1990), 792 (1995) and 487 (2000/01). For the lower Figure: *N* (UK—female) =686 (1989/90), 501 (1994/95) and 1024 (2001/02); *N* (UK—male) =558 (1989/90), 473 (1994/95) and 864 (2001/02); *N* (China—female) =394 (1990), 671 (1995) and 474 (2000/01); *N* (China—male)=586 (1990), 746 (1995) and 468 (2000/01).

Both husband and wife should contribute to household income

Working mothers can establish warm relationship with children
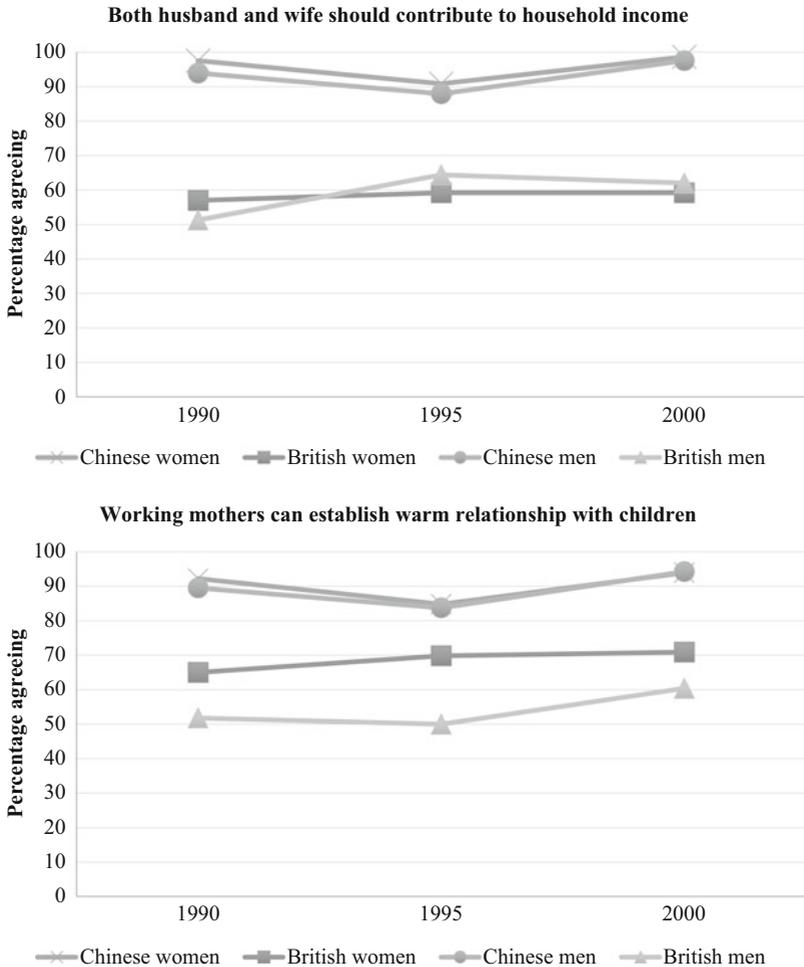
Fig. 4.2 Chinese and British attitudes to women's work-family orientation across time

Although the two panels in Fig. 4.2 address different facets of this topic—the first examining women's financial contribution to the household, and the second their familial relations—they convey the same message: pro-work sentiments towards women's professional roles are substantially stronger in China than in the UK. This is not surprising

**Men's job earn money, women's job look after family**
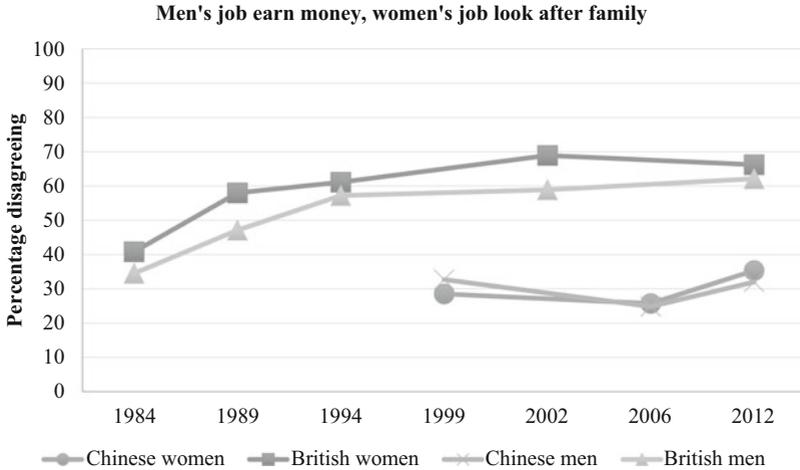
Fig. 4.3 Chinese and British attitudes to gender division of labour across time

as the establishment of a socialist regime in late 1949 enforced women's labour force participation from top-down. Following the Maoist ideal that 'women can shoulder half the sky as men do', Chinese women were mobilized into the labour force, which has led to a nationwide normalisation of female employment in the public sphere. In post-reform China, women's employment rate reached as high as 90 %, which is much higher than that in most OECD countries (OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). The statistics consistently contextualise the pressure felt by the Chinese women in this chapter (such as Monica, among others) to attain a successful career. However, the socialist revolution of women's gender role in China's public sphere is not equally enforced in the domestic sphere (Zuo & Bian, 2001).

Whereas Fig. 4.2 presented social attitudes towards women's role at work, Fig. 4.3[17] displays Chinese and British attitudes towards women's

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[17] For Fig. 4.3, data for China were accessed from the Study of Family Life in Urban China, 1999, the China General Social Survey, 2006; the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2012; data for the UK were obtained from Scott (2008, pp. 164–165) for 1984, 1989, 1994, 2002 and the 2012 data were accessed from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) 2012. Sample size varied according to year and country. *N* (UK—female) =823 (1984), 699 (1989), 499 (1994),

role at home as the major homemaker. Here, the value that women should be the major housekeeper in the domestic sphere is challenged to a far lesser degree in China than in the UK. This is highly inconsistent with the much higher level of support for women's labour force participation and gender egalitarianism in the public sphere in China than in the UK. While public attitudes are more or less consistent in terms of women's gender roles at home and at work in the UK, there is a notable disparity in Chinese attitudes towards women's gender roles at work and at home (Hu, 2015). The high degree of both pro-family and pro-work sentiments in China represents the 'double bind' vividly documented by Hochschild and Machung (1989) in *The Second Shift*. In China, progress towards gender egalitarianism in the public sphere is not equally mirrored in the domestic sphere. This 'structural inconsistency' is meanwhile felt in one's movement through distinct life stages. Whereas Chinese women are largely encouraged to pursue education and employment from early on, they are then encouraged the opposite to prioritise their familial obligations over their career development.

This dilemma is accurately reflected in the experiences described by the Chinese housewives we met in this chapter. Meanwhile, the domestic ideological stance expressed by the Chinese housewives in this chapter corresponds to the stereotype of feminine and domestic Chinese women that is highly valued by their British husbands. This lends support to Farrer's (2008) argument that today's Chinese-Western marriage represents the matching of sociocultural traits that are otherwise 'devalued' in each spouse's local marriage market. While women's domestic role may be more taken-for-granted than 'devalued' in China, the eight Chinese-British families clearly illustrate that the import of female domesticity from China to the UK via intermarriage and migration certainly elevates domesticity as a much-valued 'Chinese virtue'.

Although, in this light, West-centric White men have quite often been blamed as the condescending and patronising imposers of stigmas such as feminine and domestic Oriental women, I find that Chinese-British

1064 (2002) and 512(2012); *N* (UK—male) =552 (1989), 482 (1994), 867 (2002) and 438 (2012). *N* (China—female) = 2360 (1999), 1754 (2006) and 3095 (2012); *N* (China—male) = 2084 (1999), 1454 (2006) and 2851 (2012). Data were not available on China in early time periods.

intermarriage equally offered the traditional British husbands such as Barry a viable solution to their marginalised position in the increasingly individualised Western marriage market. Their emotive affection and sincere gratitude for their wives' care for the family go far beyond the mere objectification of their wives' body and gender-role performance. Notably, the exchanges I observed between the eight sets of husbands and wives in no way suggested that their intermarriage was a matter of mere utilitarian choice. Indeed, all of the eight couples believed fervently in their 'complementary' conjugal exchange as a linchpin of their love and intimacy (Venkatesan, Edwards, Willerslev, Povinelli, & Mody, 2011).

In an increasingly globalised world, marriage migration seems to provide an array of alternative means for people to respond to socio-contextual change in a way that was once considered impossible. Whether Chinese women are indeed good housewives or British men open-minded husbands matters far less than the ethnicity-cum-gender stereotypes held in the respondents' minds and imaginations. Building upon these perceived roles, they have fashioned and moulded their lives as they imagine they should be. Limited by social structural constraints, they also exercise their agency to shape their familial and social life from time to time.

The lived experiences of the eight families examined in this chapter problematise the rationale of socioeconomic exchange that has dominated research on intermarriage for decades. It adds to an emerging awareness that economic and status exchange can no longer explain the diverse patterns of today's intermarriage (Song, 2009). Instead, findings from this chapter support the concept of 'developmental idealism' (Jayakody et al., 2012) or 'cultural racism' (Song, 2003) that lifts the role assumed by cultural values and sometimes stigmas in fashioning demographic change. Concurring with Farrer (2008), today's intermarriage embodies complex exchanges of social, cultural and symbolic resources.

By tracing through the eight families' life course dynamics, I demonstrate that subjects are not merely 'at' what seems a reified intersection; rather they are actively and incessantly engaged in the construction of their intersecting identities. Although the existing theories mostly conceptualised intersectionality as an imposed negative identity construct (Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012), I demonstrate that subjects actively engage with the meanings of their identities 'on the ground'. It is not until

the individuals actively engage with the prevalent stigmas such as sensual and feminine Oriental women that the intersectionality between gender and ethnicity becomes a lived social reality beyond mere imaginaries. At a societal level, it is necessary to depart from the traditional idea that intermarriage represents the engagement between two *a priori* cultures, gender-sex-power systems, familial institutions or the like (Piller, 2007), but rather as the engagement of two ongoing social processes because both the Chinese and British social and familial systems and cultures are constantly undergoing change. As we have seen in the examples of the eight families, it is the individuals' unfolding experiences in one society that lead to their subsequent migration, out-marriage and distinctive adaptive strategies in the face of life changes.

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5

The Anatomy of the 'Superwoman'

In the past several decades, international migration has become increasingly 'feminised', and there has been a rising recognition of women's participation in population mobility across national borders (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan, & Pessar, 2006). However, such participation has often been simplified as women following their husbands as 'trailing wives' or contributing to low-skilled care-provision sectors (Parreñas, 2001). Women's active agency in initiating international migration and their role as high-skilled migrant workers remain understated and understudied (Ryan, 2007).

Exploring the lives of Chinese-British families of working professional migrant Chinese wives, the initial idea for this chapter arose from a crisis in my research that occurred during dinner at an international conference on family studies. To facilitate the delegates' interaction, the conference host invited us to change our seats after each course. Unsurprisingly, each of my conversations with my six new neighbours during the three-course meal began with formulaic self-introduction and moved on to discussion of each other's research topics.

During the starter, I sat beside a female doctoral researcher with a Syrian father and a British mother. When I introduced my research, she sympathised with the difficulty of studying inter-ethnicity, having herself experienced 'little difference'. Her parents 'lived a perfectly normal and ordinary life', and she 'grew up in England feeling nothing different'. Her opinion somewhat resembled that of the 12 Chinese-British families under study in this chapter, whose life trajectories all chart a movement from work/study immigration to the dual-earner family model. Without exception, these professional couples conveyed the message that ethnicity does not affect their lives.

Sitting beside me during the main course were two experts in domestic conflict and violence. They acknowledged the importance of ethnicity but suggested that differences between men and women in such aspects as physicality, psychology and so on could be universal and thus non-ethnic. This is to some extent reflected in the 12 Chinese-British couples' descriptions of their conjugal relations as a matter of men and women, not ethnicity. Despite an increasing emphasis on the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity (Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012), it is unclear why most of my respondents seemed near-instinctively to pack all socio-cultural, interpersonal and conjugal differences into gender distinction alone.

The challenge escalated when I conversed with an eminent sociologist, Barry,[1] over dessert and coffee. Problematising British ethnicity, he cited the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Norman influences throughout British history to argue that all ethnicities are by default 'mixed'. His deconstructionist approach represents a political stance as much as an argument for de-stigmatisation (Fenton, 2010). Although Barry, along with the 12 inter-ethnic couples addressed in this chapter, expressed doubt about the label 'inter-ethnic marriage', it would make more sense to ask why he deconstructed ethnicity but not gender.

The individual comments I received in the course of the conference dinner are representative of wider concerns regarding the study of family and gender in an inter-ethnic context. My interlocutors raised the key questions to be explored in this chapter: does ethnicity matter? If so, how

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[1] Pseudonym applied here.

are its effects felt? Most importantly, how do the 12 families' perceptions of ethnicity and gender relate to their shared experiences of work/study migration and their adoption of a dual-earner model after marriage?

The 'Superwoman' and Her Three Worlds

I 'knew' the 12 professional Chinese wives long before we actually met. I had heard about them from their colleagues, acquaintances and members of the Chinese community to which, in fact, they never belonged.[2] Having become successful accredited accountants, engineers, businesswomen and so on, they were held to be 'superwomen' capable of achieving the impossible. Indeed, at an early stage in this research, my own impression of the 12 professional Chinese-British families was shaped to a large extent by their public image; by the work they did, the titles they held and the professional success they had achieved. Not surprisingly, the trademark costume featuring a large 'S′ for 'success' is where most people's knowledge of the lives of these 'superwomen' begins and ends.

I was introduced to Yu by one of her colleagues, a mutual British friend, who gave me the work email address of the 32-year-old rising academic and warned me that, given Yu's hectic schedule, I should expect to wait a couple of weeks for a reply. As usual, I sent Yu a brief email introducing myself and providing details of my research. She replied two weeks later, in succinct English, to suggest a meeting at her workplace. The reply concluded with a template email signature giving her title and work affiliation. This interaction resembled my initial contact with the other professional Chinese-British families, whose members first approached my interviews as a matter of business.[3]

Having heard all about Yu's successes from others, I finally met her in person at 2 p.m. sharp on a Sunday in late 2012. Wearing a baggy hooded sweatshirt and a pair of bright New Balance running shoes, with hair

[2] As described in detail later in this section, the professional Chinese wives had little actual engagement with the Chinese community.

[3] Eight of the twelve first meetings with the professional families were conducted at the couples' workplaces, and the other four were held in public places such as cafés and restaurants. None of the first meetings were conducted at the respondents' homes.

cascading down her shoulders, Yu greeted me at the doorway and invited me into her spacious London office. The contrast between Yu's laid-back outfit and others' descriptions of a successful woman with a meticulously managed image caught me by surprise. 'We have about an hour,' she told me. Noticing my surprise, she explained that she needed to pick up her daughter from a taekwondo lesson soon after 3 p.m. However, showing her hospitality, she did not rush the interview. She first offered to make coffee, and invited me to look around her office in the meantime.

For a 'workaholic' like Yu, who spends a considerable amount of time in her office every day, the arrangement of books, crystal trophies, family photos and so on in one's work space is like a *vita* that introduces us to the person. While the books and trophies represented Yu's stellar career as an award-winning lecturer and writer, the exquisitely framed photo of her family horse riding that faced the visitor's seat made her happy family life abundantly clear. On beginning the interview, like most of the other professional Chinese wives, Yu took the initiative and expressed her interest in my work.[4]

> Your research is very interesting. I thought about studying intermarriage, as I myself had first-hand experience. But after being with Ron for a few years, I felt there wasn't anything special…so I thought I'd love to communicate with you to see if you have found anything interesting…by the way, what research methods do you use?

As an academic, Yu may have shown a particular interest in the details of my research. However, her curiosity was shared by the other professional couples, which initially encouraged them to agree to a meeting with me to learn about rather than participate in my research. Although they sought proactively to learn *from* me what other Chinese people said about them, and their socio-ethnic positions in relation to 'the wider picture', they were somewhat reluctant to share their lives *with* me.

Deliberately distancing themselves from the Chinese community, the 12 couples under study in this chapter lived away from Chinese enclaves

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[4] Most of the individual interviews with the Chinese wives were conducted in Chinese, as this is the respondents' preferred language. The interviews with the couples were conducted in English.

and had few Chinese contacts, preferring British friends. Placing themselves at the periphery of the Chinese community, they derived a sense of superiority from being different from 'those Chinese migrants who could not survive out of China-town', as recalled by Shalai, a 24-year-old teacher who first came to England to study for an undergraduate degree.

> When I first came to the UK, I had some friends in the Chinese community at my university. But they were very weird. They were afraid even to speak to White people and only mixed with other Chinese…Trapped in a little shell of their own making, they didn't seem to be able to integrate into mainstream society. So I thought that if I only socialised with them, I'd probably end up a *failure* like them. [my italics]

Like Shalai, the professional Chinese wives almost unanimously cited the Chinese community as an inferior reference group; the 'S' on their metaphorical costumes stood this time for 'superiority'. Almost all of the 12 wives expressed pride at having been able to mix and integrate with the British, and to make British friends. This was especially so for the relatively older professional Chinese wives, most of whose contemporaries were marriage migrants who did not speak proper English. Such was the case for the 54-year-old Sujuan, who arrived in the UK to take a nursing degree soon after China's economic reform and open-door policy in late 1978, and later met her husband at work.

> For the first few months after I arrived in England, most of my friends were full-time housewives. Some had Chinese husbands, and others British husbands… Unlike them, I came to Britain to make a life for myself. I had to learn to speak English well and mingle with the local people, instead of finding a husband and being supported by him… When I started my work at the hospital, most of my colleagues were British. 'When in England, do as Englishmen do': one needs to move beyond one's own ethnic boundaries and mix.

The other professional Chinese wives, young and old, were similarly proud of their 'mostly British' workplaces. They shared Sujuan's satisfaction that their residence in the UK was merited by their own hard work, and not by marriage to a native British man. At an early stage in my

research, each of the 12 wives seemed most concerned to convey in interview the image of a hardworking and self-reliant professional woman. They preferred to talk about their work, my work and the lives of others rather than their own home lives; surprisingly, however, they did not hesitate to talk about their extended families in China. Sujuan clearly had unpleasant memories of her relationship with her family in China, like her early experience of the Chinese community in Britain.

> I was born into a big family with three brothers. They [her brothers] now live in the same city as my parents. But, actually, I didn't grow up with them [her parents]. During the Great Leap Forward,[5] I was sent to live with my grandparents to ensure that my parents could support my brothers at home. I was close to my grandparents. But they died soon after the Cultural Revolution…I was like a brave pioneer when I decided to leave China for England. As my grandparents were dead and I didn't get on with my parents, things were easier [in terms of migration]. I have always fought my own battles.

Sujuan's experience was perhaps somewhat extreme. Her perception of 'independence' from her parents, however, was widely shared by the 12 professional Chinese wives, who only irregularly contact their Chinese families, and are reluctant to invite them to visit Britain. Although holidays have taken the 12 couples to North Africa, South America, Australia and elsewhere, they visit China only every two or three years.[6] Indeed, all of the 12 families described keeping 'a respectable distance' from their extended families.

Striving to be 'independent', the 12 families were determined to take things into their own hands. Meilin and Billy were a newlywed couple when I first met them. Eight months into their marriage, they began to plan for a child. Meilin's parents volunteered to help out even before she became pregnant. Meilin and Billy, like the other couples, insisted that such things as domestic chores and childcare are their own responsibilities, and that the extended family should not be involved except in cases of emergency. If efforts were made by the Chinese housewives to draw their parents into

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[5] China's left-wing socialist movement, which resulted in a nationwide famine.

[6] Compared with the Chinese housewives, who engaged their extended families closely in their homes in Britain, and visited China regularly, the professional couples showed a low degree of attachment to their Chinese families.

the nuclear family as we have seen in Chap. 4, the 12 professional Chinese-British families did the opposite, shutting their extended families out.

At an early stage of the research, my own Chinese identity was not particularly helpful in gaining me access to the lives of the professional couples. The use of mutual Chinese acquaintances, who had helped me to make contact with the marriage-migrant Chinese housewives, was unfruitful with the professional couples. Instead, mutual British contacts were considered the most reputable by the professional Chinese wives, who seemed almost to enforce an ethnic line keeping the Chinese community and diaspora out, or retaining them only in the background. In many cases, I was not invited to the professional couples' social events (house parties, tea gatherings and the like) until they had received my business card, heard my story, checked my background and decided that I was not one of the Chinese from whom they wished to remain dissociated.

In short, my Chinese ethnicity did not facilitate my access to the family lives of the 12 professional couples, as I had expected. Even the social activities above enabled me only limitedly to get to know the families' (mostly) British friends and colleagues; I was not at first permitted to see beneath their social veneer. Sheltered by a sense of privacy, the lives of these nuclear families were presented to the public only as happy family photos on desks and mantelpieces. Clearly, ethnicity and work were seen as separate yet interconnected—in that work distinguished the families' success in assimilating themselves into British culture from the failure of the Chinese community to integrate. While such an ethnic boundary was made clear by, for example, residing separately from the Chinese community, the public-private, social-personal and work-family distinctions were far more difficult to pin down. Given the modern-day slippage between work and home (Myrdal & Klein, 1998; Nippert-Eng, 2008), the ambiguity of the work-family/social-personal line also offered the opportunity for my own 'business' (of research) with the families to become a personal matter. Although in most cases it took a considerable amount of time for me to become an insider,[7] my first interview with

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[7] The effort was mainly made to establish credibility and trust, and to persuade the professional families that I had no intention of prying into their privacy, because they were at first highly aware of the potentially negative implications of my participation in their family lives. The same process was markedly different with the Chinese housewives (see Chap. 4).

Ming was an exception. It epitomised in brief my other, longer journeys into the family lives of the 'superwomen'.

 Ming, 35, is the founder of several international business initiatives and a public-relations expert, and consummately plays the role of a decisive, capable and visionary business leader. It took me four telephone calls to find space in the diary of this round-the-clock 'superwoman' for a meeting. At the last minute before our planned meeting, Ming telephoned me to suggest a change of date. A week later, Ming—with short hair, a black suit, high heels and long strides—glided into the café we had arranged as the venue for our first interview. After our coffees had been served, she apologised for rescheduling the original appointment, and explained the need to do so.

> **Ming:** I'm really sorry for last week.
>   **Yang**: That's no problem at all.
>   **Ming**: Thank you for your understanding. You know, it is very difficult to manage a professional career and a warm family life. This is especially the case when your child is still young…before last weekend [when Ming rescheduled the original meeting], I had been on a business trip to China for about two weeks, followed by a hectic week finishing my work, which was piling up on the British side… Every day, I get up and drive to work before Clare [Ming's daughter] gets out of bed. I often go home just to kiss her good night. Last weekend, it was the first time in about three weeks that I was able to spend time with my daughter. She pleaded with us to take her out for the day. So Collin and I decided to take our girl to the zoo.
>   **Yang**: Yes, I understand.
>   **Ming**: You know, it is quite hard sometimes. I do love my job. But sometimes when I go back home after a long day's work, Collin tells Clare, 'Baby, go and give Mummy a huggie.' My own daughter stands there looking at me as if I were a stranger, before stepping forward to give me an almost formulaic hug…that's quite a hard feeling, you know, but sometimes you just have to live with it.
>   **Yang**: What made you decide to have a child, then?
>   **Ming**: Well, at first, it was mainly to tick a box so that my parents wouldn't ramble on and on about wanting a grandchild. Of course, Collin has always been a good father, and he loves children! But not another child, it's too much to take on board.

As tears came to Ming's eyes, the façade of a tough superwoman crumbled, and the reality of her tension-laden, emotionally charged life began to emerge. It was frequently the case during my interactions with these families that moments like this—emergency calls from husbands or children during interviews, for instance, or crises of time management—allowed me the opportunity to peep into and eventually enter the family lives of the 'superwomen'.

Gaining access to their lives took me over two intangible lines demarcating three distinctive 'worlds'—Chinese enclave/diaspora, work and home. The first distinguishes ethnic integration, viewed as success, from the segregation of the Chinese community, viewed as failure. For the professional Chinese wives, one's level of integration determines one's social status—with work being an eminent indicator of integration. The second line divides work and family. However, as work and family are both fundamentally important to the 12 couples, they cannot simply choose one over the other—hence potential conflicts between the two worlds. With work and family closely interconnected and the line between them highly ambiguous, it is not a matter of merely 'juggling' one's priorities as if the two worlds were two balls. Instead, the difficulty lies in keeping the two worlds separate as two balls in the first place. Indeed, much as the professional couples tried to separate their family lives from their professional lives, they expressed a growing ambivalence about this distinction—not least due to the time constraints described by Ming. We must then ask how these 12 Chinese-British couples have maintained the clarity of these lines. Delving into the family lives of the 12 couples returns us to the essential question: what first brought these couples together and then kept their marriages going?

Love Actually? Their Account

Social scientists have focused on sociocultural conflict, integration and assimilation in inter-ethnic families for many years (Berry, 2001; Fu, 2001; Kalmijn, 1998). Against the backdrop of this abundant literature on ethnic conflict in inter-ethnic marriages (Smith, Maas, & van Tubergen, 2012), the lack of emphasis placed on ethnicity (compared

with emphasis placed on gender) by the 12 professional Chinese-British families both caused a crisis in my research and inspired curiosity in me as a researcher. To gain insight into the perceived insignificance of ethnicity in comparison with gender, I asked my respondents what they thought of ethnicity and what mattered most in their marriages if not ethnicity.

The 12 professional couples consistently highlighted 'love' as fundamental to a happy marriage. Although the 12 couples described their marriages as a 'love bind', they faced the universal difficulty of defining what love is and how it works; 'what 'tis to love', in the words of Shakespeare's Rosalind in *As You Like It*. While some (for example, Meilin and Billy) described love as a matter of 'chemistry', others (for example, Qing and Carl, Haipin and Peter) defined it as everyday give-and-take between husband and wife. However, despite the diversity of answers provided to my questions about the nature of love in successful inter-ethnic marriages, the 12 families shared a common understanding of love that is usefully crystallised in Aristotle's definition: 'love is a single soul dwelling in two bodies'. This stresses the two key notions of homogeneity and independence.

Indeed, one defining characteristic of the 12 professional Chinese-British families is educational, occupational and (perceived) ethnic homogamy. As shown in Table 5.1 below, the husbands and wives from these 12 inter-ethnic families have a similar or equivalent educational and occupational status. Moreover, their responses indicated that they perceive the Chinese and British ethnicities as conditionally equal[8]—as long as the Chinese integrate into mainstream British society. Most of the husbands and wives had similar educational and professional histories. As a textbook example of modern courtship (O'Hara, 2002), Lihua and Bert first got to know each other at university, after which they became colleagues at a London-based firm. Like the other 11 couples, Lihua and Bert firmly believed that their marriage was bound together by 'love'. When I asked each of them how they felt about having a Chinese/British spouse, their replies were as follows:

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[8] The couples all agreed that ethnicity itself does not carry any status distinction, but that the relative position of an ethnic minority in relation to mainstream labour, cultural activities and so on does define one's social status; hence the importance of integration.

Table 5.1 Profiles of Chinese-British families with working Chinese professional migrant wives

| Pseudonym | Chinese wives | | British husbands | |
	Education	Occupation	Education	Occupation
Haipin, Peter	Bachelor's	Nurse	Ph.D	Professor
Sujuan, Dominic	Bachelor's	Nurse	Bachelor's	Engineer
Ming, Collin	Master's	Businesswoman	Master's	Civil servant
Linda, Derek	Ph.D	Accountant	Ph.D	Senior Engineer
Meng, Sam	Bachelor's	Business manager	Bachelor's	White-collar employee
Yihua, Darren	Ph.D	Senior engineer	Ph.D	Senior programmer
Yu, Ron	Ph.D	Lecturer	Ph.D	Senior consultant
Qing, Carl	Bachelor's	Company employee	Bachelor's	Clerk
Meilin, Billy	Master's	Researcher	Ph.D	Lecturer
Shailai, Mike	Bachelor's	Teacher	Bachelor's	Bank clerk
Lihua, Bert	Master's	Graphics designer	Master's	Studio technician
Siyu, Jason	Master's	Company employee	Master's	Bank clerk

> **Lihua:** Actually, it surprises me sometimes that I have never felt we are from two different cultures…We first met each other at university [in England], and were drawn to each other as we shared a lot of common hobbies like classical music, art and theatre. And we did argue sometimes, but that happens in every family, doesn't it? …I haven't felt anything different—not as people imagine things to be. Perhaps, *those* mail-order-brides would experience some cultural shock, not us. They don't speak proper English. There is no *real love* between their husbands and them. [my italics]
>
> **Bert:** [Nodded as Lihua spoke, and added:] I think Lihua is very Westernised. If anything, I'm more Chinese and she's more English [jocularly]. We share a lot of common interests and always have endless things to talk about.

Although the answers provided by the other families to the same question were phrased in a variety of ways, the core message was roughly the

same. According to the professionals, 'real love' is defined by homogenous interests, hobbies and so on. However, the couples' common interests and experiences are not merely personal explanations for 'love'. They have also functioned as legal justifications: when the couples married, they had to prove to British immigration authorities the 'genuineness' of their 'love' (Carver, 2013). As a result, most of the couples were proud to tell me that they had encountered no difficulty in 'proving' the genuineness of their marriages. Interestingly, the definitions of love in terms of homogeneity provided by the professional couples differed entirely from the explanations provided by the Chinese housewives and their British husbands, whose marriages were described as dependent mainly on role and 'gendered-resource' exchanges enabled by the heterogeneity between husband and wife (Zuo & Bian, 2001).

Certainly, the professional couples derived a sense of superiority from the perceived contrast between their 'genuine' and 'true' love and what seemed to them the apparent insincerity of marriage migrants. In many instances, the professional Chinese wives (for example, Ming, Sujuan and Yu) deliberately tried to prove that they were not 'utilitarian' marriage migrants and that they wholly enjoyed their 'loving family lives'. They invariably denigrated 'mail-order-brides' to stress by contrast the success of their own marriages, which, in Lihua's words, 'did not experience problems such as cultural shock, social exclusion and argumentative conflict'. Speaking of marriage migrants as people who 'want to live a better life in the UK by marrying a native instead of working their own way up' (Haipin), the professional couples emphasised by contrast that they are fully independent and self-reliant individuals. This sense of independence and, most importantly, autonomous agency was consistently highlighted by the professional wives, who were adamant that they chose freely whether or not to marry their current spouses.

With levels of educational and occupational status far above the average, the 12 Chinese-British couples have, unsurprisingly, greater autonomy and flexibility in manoeuvring social resources and thereby exercising their agency over such decisions as migration. However, if they are as in control of their life as they appear to be, then the question arises as to exactly how and why they chose to marry. Indeed, most of the 12 couples

dated and cohabited for a considerable period of time prior to marriage.[9] Although 'love' may provide a solid foundation for their romantic relationships, why and when did they decide to marry?

Exploration of the timing of marriage reveals some remarkable similarities between the 12 professional Chinese-British families. Not only were the 12 marriages all preceded by key events such as graduations and successful job applications, but the professional husbands and wives all described their careers as of primary concern in their marital decisions. Yihua and Darren, who began dating as first-year PhD students, had one of the longest-standing unmarried relationships (dating and cohabitation) of the 12 couples. However, they did not consider marriage until they had graduated, and, in particular, until Yihua had secured a job. When asked in separate interviews to explain their decision to marry, Yihua and Darren answered as follows:

> **Yihua:** I had no idea where I might end up then. I had worked hard for many years to get to do a PhD in the pursuit of my hoped-for career, so I wasn't really sure if I'd be happy to hold back my professional development for marriage. Oh, don't get me wrong, I do love Darren, and there was no comparison between him and my career. But I love my job, too, in a unique way. That made things hard…*fortunately*, we both landed on our dream jobs at Rotex [company pseudonym], so we didn't have to face the impossible choice. [my italics]

> **Darren:** As both of us wanted to have successful careers, I wasn't sure if we'd be *fortunate* enough to stay in the same place to make things work. On our second anniversary [of the relationship], I actually proposed to Yihua, but she suggested that she would only marry me after securing a job. And I respected her wish. [my italics]

It is clear that Darren and particularly Yihua prioritised career development; in other words, that career settlement was a prerequisite for their marriage. The other couples reported a similar situation. Yihua described a consistent and continuous career ladder with its own momentum, capable of affecting the marital choices of professionals. This point was

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[9] From one year to five years.

reinforced by her invocation of Chinese idiom: 'a boat sailing against the current must forge ahead, or it will be driven back'.[10]

Yihua and Darren were not the only couple to have described their marriage as 'fortune's child'.[11] The couples do not appear to have had as much choice over their marriages as they claimed. One might argue that the professional couples, brought together by common educational and working experiences, never stepped off their (professional) paths to look for marriage partners or to build a family. Rather, the world of family emerged alongside and in addition to their pre-existing professional worlds. However, while 'love' may enable courtship and romantic relationships, marriage may change a couple's dynamic. Researchers have found that cohabiting couples generally enjoy greater gender equality than their married counterparts (Dominguez-Folgueras, 2012). Indeed, marriage may give rise to an emerging sense of obligation, transforming a previously voluntary investment in a romantic relationship into an enforced responsibility. In light of this, we must ask how the professional Chinese-British couples fulfilled and negotiated their roles at home after marriage. And what did they have to say about each other as husband and wife?

'Woman Manly': His Account

I first met Mike and Shalai in a branch of Café Nero and subsequently exchanged several phone calls with the couple before visiting their home for the first time during an early spring evening in 2012. The visit began with a simple dinner cooked by Mike. The young couple invited me to sit down, and our conversation began with cooking. Mike explained that he did most of the cooking at home. I turned to Shalai and asked if she ever cooked Chinese dishes. After a few seconds of silence, Mike hinted jocularly to me that Shalai 'is not anything like a Chinese woman'. I asked

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[10] Quotation from the *Analects of Confucius.* The phrase suggests that when one is capable of doing something, one should continue to do so. It is based on the philosophy that the world is in constant movement and progression, so if one does not go with the flow, one will be left behind.

[11] Shakespeare described the relationship of Romeo and Juliet as 'fortune's child', implying that the relationship was largely shaped by external and socio-structural forces.

Mike to describe the image of a Chinese woman he had in mind, and how Shalai differed from it.[12] Mike's response ignited a minor argument.

> **Mike**: Before marrying Shalai, I had learned from novels and TV shows that Chinese women were tender and mild. Don't get me wrong. I am not into that type. Shalai is exactly the type I like. [My observation: Shalai smiled, seeming pleased.] But as we got to know each other, Shalai appeared to be very different from what I knew of Chinese women.
>
> **Shalai**: [Interrupting] How am I different, then?
>
> **Mike**: Uhm, you are more direct…I was under the impression that Chinese women were more implicit, but you are usually very straightforward. I am also told that Chinese people seek mediocrity—the golden mean?[13] [Jocularly:] Well, Shalai is quite man-ly.

As the first half of the word 'man-' slipped from Mike's tongue, and even before he was able to complete his second syllable, '-ly', Shalai nudged Mike with her elbow, suggesting that she was displeased with his description of her as 'manly'. The argument ended with Mike's complimenting Shalai by describing her as a 'manly fighter' who fought her own battles, with which Shalai seemed pleased. The subtle interaction between Mike and Shalai more or less resembled that of other couples when I asked the British husbands what they thought of Chinese women and their wives. Almost unanimously, the husbands described their wives as 'atypical Chinese'. While some described their wives as being more 'forceful' (Carl), 'straightforward' (Derek) and 'decisive' (Ron, Bert and others) than their perception of 'typical' Chinese women, others used such words as 'formidable' (Peter) and 'manly' (Darren and Mike). Most of the Chinese wives were vigilant in their disagreement, which was expressed in a range of ways, from nudges and pinches to upfront confrontation. The tension between husband and wife exposed by this question led me to explore the topic further in my individual interviews with the British

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[12] I asked all of the couples what they think of Chinese woman/British men; as this was revealed to be a point of tension, I pursued the topic in the individual interviews.

[13] The traditional Taoist belief that people should go with the flow and seek to be part of the crowd. According to the principle of the golden mean, one is not supposed to stand out from the crowd. Based on this tradition, people are educated to be 'mediocre', as the 'singing bird would always be killed first' (Fleming, 2008).

husbands; I asked, for instance, what precisely they meant by 'manly', and why they had used the word to describe their wives.

The British husbands were able to end the arguments by explaining their references to 'manliness' in terms of their wives' career success in a 'man's world'. This reveals some deep-seated gender stereotypes that were also shared by their Chinese wives. Although the British husbands supported their wives' career choices, and some even pushed their wives back to work after childbirth (for example, Derek; see Chap. 1), they still perceived the professional environment—like the primitive hunting wild—to be a 'man's world'. The professional Chinese wives shared this perception, as indicated by their endorsement of the compliment 'manly fighter'. Therefore, the (manly) qualities of the wives as perceived by their husbands—decisiveness, determination, persistence and so on—were derived from the gendered stereotype of the professional world.

While driving me to the train station after a home visit, Sam, a 36-year-old White-collar office worker, explained that he had always been fascinated by Chinese culture. Having read extensively in the field of Chinese literature, and well acquainted with Chinese history, culture and folk customs, he referred to himself proudly as 'Dr China'. Yet just when it occurred to me that 'Dr China' might know better about Chinese women, Sam explained that his views had been changed by Meng.

> **Sam**: Have you read *Sida Mingzhu*?[14]
>
> **Yang**: Oh yes, I have. Which one are you referring to?
>
> **Sam**: Ling Daiyu from *Honglou Meng*[15] was pretty much my impression of Chinese women. But personally speaking, I wouldn't want to marry someone like her. But, that's the image of a Chinese woman I had in mind you know…isn't this similar image also portrayed in the writings of Ailin Chang?[16]

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[14] The four great classical novels: four famous novels of the Qing dynasty (644 to 1922), China's last imperial dynasty before the modern revolutions.

[15] *A Dream of Red Chambers*: one of the four great classical novels, depicting love stories within a large feudalist Chinese family. Ling Daiyu is the leading female figure, famous for her vulnerability and delicacy.

[16] A famous modern-day female writer renowned for her characterisation of Chinese women.

Yang: Yeah. That's impressive! You are well read in Chinese literature!

Sam: Thank you. But you can see how surprised I was to see Meng coming to England on her own and determined to make a career! I'm happy to see Meng doing well at work, and obviously she enjoys working. But she's a bit stubborn. She insists on achieving certain goals. Sometimes, she leaves me the impression that she wants to do it [pursue her career] because she wants to prove that she can.

The British husbands described a different conception of the 'manly fighter' when not in their wives' presence. They also shared the experience of 'culture shock' caused by the discrepancy between stereotypes of Chinese women and their real-life experiences of Chinese wives. The first impression of Chinese women gained by Peter, a physics professor, was that of a Chinese female academic who took her child to conferences. Before marrying, Bert, a studio technician, knew Chinese women only through his limited collaboration with Chinese performers; and Ron's image of Chinese women was shaped by what he called 'homely' and 'motherly' advertisement boards he saw in shopping malls when he first visited China. In every case, these early stereotypical images were revised by the experience of marrying a professional migrant Chinese woman. Somehow, as a result, the husbands came to the conclusion that their wives were 'atypical Chinese'. Therefore, any conflict between husband and wife must have little to do with ethnicity—or so they thought early in their marriages.

The British husbands were perhaps right about their wives' atypicality. In 2006, China's national General Social Survey indicated that only 18.5 % of working women sided with the professional migrant Chinese wives in this chapter and disagreed with the statement that women should prioritise the career development of their husbands (Hu & Scott, 2014). Therefore, the 12 professional Chinese wives thus represent a highly selected group of women who have been educated to be independent, strive to be self-reliant, and in particular remain so after marriage, while most working women re-orientate their life focus from work to family after marriage in China. Notably, the 12 professional migrant Chinese wives are 'required' to be professional by immigration constraints that

categorise them as 'high-skilled migrants' rather than spousal dependents (Carver, 2013).[17]

Despite the Chinese wives' reluctance to admit that they had ever experienced 'culture shock' or ethnic conflict, everyday communication was not always easy when the couples first met. Roman Jakobson (1987), a famous Russian linguist, defined six functions of language and argued that the importance of verbal communication lies not only in the conveyance of meaning but also in the emotions attached to the verbal content. While acknowledging their wives' English proficiency at a communicative level, the British husbands were confused and discouraged by their wives' emotive use of language. Conveying a message is one thing; ensuring that the nuances are understood is quite another.

> **Carl**: For the first few months living together, I was discouraged by the way Qing talked. She didn't talk like a lady and was quite harsh. For example, many times at the dinner table, Qing just said 'Carl, pass me the salt, OK?' She wouldn't say anything like 'Could you please…' or 'Would you…'. I thought it was really rude. One day, I brought this up to Qing. Then I realised that she wasn't aware of it at all. What she said was just a direct translation of what people would say in Chinese.

> **Jason**: When Siyu cooked a nice meal or did the ironing or suchlike, I always thanked her. One time, I thanked Siyu for polishing my shoes. She shouted back in anger, 'Isn't this what a family is supposed to be?'… Later, she explained to me that people in China didn't thank people they deemed close. Strange enough, people are always grateful to their family, but they just never say it.

The above incidents led to considerable tension between husbands and wives at an early stage in their relationships and marriages. Although emotions cross the Chinese-British cultural boundary, their expres-

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[17] The new British Immigration Bill implemented in 2013 also requires spousal immigrants to have a minimal annual income of £18,600. Over time, there has been an increasing emphasis on professionalisation in British immigration policies.

sion in the two cultures is often notably different. In his comparison of Western and Oriental cultures, Nisbett (2010) found that the Chinese language tends stylistically to be less direct and more circumlocutory than its Western counterparts. However, this does not apply in cross-cultural contexts in which the East actually meets the West. For example, 'thank you' expresses gratitude and thus intimacy for the British husbands, but conveys the opposite social meaning, 'respectable social distance', in China. Over time, through mutual cultural learning and/or conflict, the 12 Chinese-British couples gained an understanding of their differences in expression. Yet once everyday communication was causing fewer problems, the allocation of domestic responsibilities remained to be negotiated.

In all of the 12 families, both husbands and wives were adamant that housework should be shared equally. The British husbands, in particular, were prepared to take on their share of the domestic tasks. In most cases, they willingly embraced these responsibilities, even regarding them as enjoyable and pleasurable. Dominic, for example, learned to cook and experimented with recipes as a major hobby; Collin took pride in his bond with his daughter; and the flexible work schedules of Bert and Peter allowed them simply to get on with doing things at home. 'It [housework] wasn't pleasant to start with, but it became easier when I explored the fun side,' said Dominic. When neither husband nor wife was able to cook, for example, dining out and takeaways were among the easy solutions. The husbands explained that they took pleasure in daily chores. Above all, they were pleased that their wives were 'fairly easy-going food-wise' (Derek) and were not demanding 'gourmet meals' (Billy), which made the culinary chores easy. While the British husbands may have 'pleasurised' their share of domesticity, however, it seems that the professional Chinese wives may have experienced more difficulty adapting to their roles at home. As they denied being the 'manly woman', how have they managed their share of domestic and professional responsibilities?

'Woman Womanly': Her Account

When I first interviewed Siyu alone, the icebreaker in our conversation was a popular Korean film that had swept the Asian box offices in 2012.[18] Siyu asked me whether I had seen the film. As I had not, the 23-year-old Master's degree holder began to recount its plot:

> The film, named *How to Use Man with Secret Tips*, is about the making of a successful professional woman in Korea. Cui, the protagonist, worked as an assistant director in a media company. She was known to her colleagues as a 'manly workaholic' with short hair, who wore sack-like clothes and hoodies. Despite her hard work, she had little prospect of promotion. One day, Cui's life took a dramatic and surreal turn. Frustrated by work, she strolled to the seaside and met an old man who sold her a video course, entitled *How to Use Man with Secret Tips*, on how to make a successful career in a man's world. The old man, a symbolic father figure, taught Cui to make changes from the way she dressed to her mannerisms. [Here Siyu took out her phone, searched online and showed me a few snapshots from the film]. She was instructed to grow her hair, wear skirts and cultivate a sweet and delicate smile. Although Cui was not happy about being taught how to live her life, she was soon rewarded. The changes attracted attention from her colleagues and supervisors, who had long ignored her. Her new feminine characteristics enabled her to achieve success.

The interview took off from our discussion of Cui's character. Siyu's method of narrating the plot was as important as the plot itself. In Siyu's words, the story clearly aligns the transition in Cui's life from failure to success with her transformation from a 'manly woman' into a 'womanly woman', which associates 'manly woman' with failure and 'womanly woman' with success. Although Siyu provided little commentary on the plot, she elaborated noticeably on the subject of the old man who changed Cui's fate, describing him as a 'father figure'. Such a figure vividly illustrates the concept of paternalism depicted by Cynthia Epstein (1990) in her book *Deceptive Distinction*. Epstein (1990) argued that the paternalistic colonisation of individual identity via the provision of care,

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[18] Siyu and others had seen the film on the Internet.

resources and opportunities in turn serves patriarchy by directing females to follow the social logic and rules set by male dominators. Drawing to the end of our discussion of the film, Siyu sighed, 'Cui's life, that's pretty much my life, too.' And Siyu was not alone. Four of the other eleven professional wives had seen *How to Use Man with Secret Tips* and mentioned it during our interviews to illustrate their own professional lives.

Siyu was not the only one of the Chinese wives who considered her professional strengths to be 'womanly'. Shalai, a primary-school teacher, suggested that her work 'is basically a woman's job' and that 'there are only a few male teachers in her school'. Ming commented that 'when it comes to oval tables and business negotiations, women, being the rare species in the business world, have unique advantages over men'. Yihua, a female senior engineer, also recalled the 'special treatment' she received as the only woman in her laboratory, explaining that 'my male colleagues often covered for my overtime, telling me that "it's not good for a lady to work long hours"'. Not only did the professional Chinese wives acknowledge that women's professionalisation had failed to diminish the male domination of the working world, they were also well aware that they are both rewarded and patronised as 'womanly women' at work. Despite contesting their husbands' use of such terms as 'manly', the professional wives showed some relief that they did not have to play the role of the 'womanly woman' at home.

Nevertheless, being a 'womanly woman' does not seem to be enough to make a successful career for the Chinese wives. Often times in my interview with the Chinese wives, the ethnicity-cum-gender theme recurs, indicating that it sometimes requires the quality of a 'Chinese womanly woman' to achieve success in the British labour market. Just before her interview, Qing had been promoted to the role of junior manager in her human-resources department. When I congratulated her on working her way up in a Fortune 500 firm, she explained the nature of her work as follows:

> To put it crudely, my job is to make sure that when people are fired, they are turned away properly and kindly. You can understand that it is not easy to tell people that they have lost their jobs and are not needed any more. But the company thinks difficult situations like that are best handled by a

woman who's tender and caring and a foreigner who doesn't feel attached to most White employees in the same way.

Much as the Chinese professional migrant wives strived to integrate ethnically, ethnic estrangement paradoxically advantaged Qing at work. Yet the professional wives could not be merely 'Chinese'. Instead, they were required to walk a fine line between being 'British' enough to access the mainstream labour market, yet 'Chinese' enough to differ from the native White British. It is all the more ironic that the 'Chinese virtue' (the cultural stereotype of 'Chinese femininity') of the homemaking marriage-migrant Chinese women was in fact wielded by the working Chinese wives, like Qing, as a professional strength in the labour market. At work, they exchanged their feminine Chinese identity for economic resources within a 'manly' British marketplace. Yet it was precisely within the same marketplace that they used their economic resources to outsource the domestic roles associated with their gender at home.

The family lives of the 12 professional Chinese wives were predominantly structured by their working patterns. Ming, Linda, Qing and others in the private sector regularly worked overtime. As their children grew up and began to demand an increased maternal presence, the Chinese wives (for example, Qing and Ming) felt a gradually increasing sense of guilt at 'not being a good and responsible mother', specifically in failing to participate fully enough in raising their children. While working regular or flexible shifts allowed others such as Shalai and Haipin greater ability to manage their time, it also created ambivalence: although the professional mothers were prepared to devote themselves to the domestic world, they were also driven by the perceived need to work hard.

Although children are a major reason for women's domestic involvement (Scott, 2008), childlessness was not an option for any of the 12 families. Some of the couples yielded to pressure from extended families (for example, parents), and others regarded having children as a necessity (for example, Qing, Haipin and Sujuan). Although most of the 12 couples had at least one child and the remainder all planned to follow suit, giving up work was not an option for these families either. Indeed, very few of the mothers interviewed had stayed away from work for lon-

ger than their allotted maternity leave, and those who had not yet had children did not intend to do so. When asked why they chose work over stay-at-home motherhood, the professional wives indicated that it was a matter of *when* rather than *whether* to go back to work:

> **Yihua**: My company has a family-friendly policy that keeps posts for those on maternity leave for up to 18 months. Only 9 months of that is paid, though. The remaining 9 months go unpaid. As long as you go back within 18 months, the same post and salary band are kept for you. After 9 months off work, Darren and I decided that as we were reasonably well off, I'd take advantage of the 18-month scheme. Although I'd have loved to stay longer at home, I shudder to think about having to work up from scratch again. I worked hard enough to be a senior engineer and did not want to just give that up.

Like Yihua, most of the Chinese professional mothers went back to work within their allotted maternity-leave periods: some before the end of paid leave, and others to retain their posts, depending on the maternity-leave policies in question. Above all, however, the imperative of consistency/continuity suggested by the image of a career ladder was a key force driving the professional women back to work. From their educational achievements in China to their professional immigration and beyond, the success experienced by the professional wives has kept them firmly on their respective career pathways. This almost gravitational force was described with warmth, rather than merely in terms of pecuniary gain, as illustrated by Sujuan below.

> I never thought about staying home. When I was baby-sitting in the first few weeks after the birth of David [Sujuan's son], like all day long, I told myself, 'Gosh, Sujuan, hard to believe, but you are a mother now.'…My friends from Garrick [pseudonym for the hospital at which Sujuan worked] came to visit me at home and tell me what was going on at the hospital. Things like John [a patient of Sujuan's] had been discharged, and that Dr Harrison [pseudonym] was getting married. You know, that sort of thing. I just couldn't help thinking about what was going on at Garrick and wondering when I could go back.

There is an increasing tendency to conceptualise the spheres of family and work as two mutually exclusive worlds. Whereas work is conceived of more and more as a sphere of emotionless utility governed by intricate economic relations, home is supposed to be a haven for emotions and affections (Hochschild, 2001). However, Sujuan's experience suggests that the work-family distinction pursued by modern professionals may not be as clear-cut as it seems. When Sujuan talked about 'going back', she was not only referring to going back to work, but also back to a place in which she had invested heavily—in patients, colleagues and friends. It mattered less to Sujuan what she did at work than with whom she did it. Her feelings were not uncommon among the 12 Chinese professionals.

When maternity leave ends, nursery steps in. These professional 'helping hands' were regarded by the professional wives not only as a solution to the vicissitudes of domestic responsibilities, but also as an effective means of helping their children to become independent. Both the couples who used nurseries and those who planned to do so spoke of professional childcare as 'beneficial', 'constructive' and 'scientific' in terms of children's growth.

> **Lihua**: We'll definitely send our kids to nursery [in the future]. It's best for their development. Actually, research suggests that it's bad for kids to stay home and vitally important for them to socialise and interact with other kids to develop their sense of individuality.

> **Haipin**: One day, the kids will grow up and become independent. It's not easy to let go, but one's got to learn to do so at some point. It might as well be when the kids are young, which is good for them too.
> **Yang**: Good for them?
> **Haipin**: They also need to learn to be independent and eventually to stand on their own feet.

Nursery, a product of industrialisation considered impersonal and heartless by the Chinese housewives we have met in Chap. 4, was regarded by their professional counterparts as beneficial to children. In describing nurseries as better childcare providers, the professional Chinese wives identified themselves as less capable caregivers. For example, Meng and

Yihua opined that they 'may not be able to do better [than nursery]'. Other wives told me that the salaries of their husbands alone disqualify them from receiving child benefits; if they can afford to pay for nursery, then why not? However, given the offers from the couples' eager (Chinese) grandparents, nursery is clearly not the only alternative source of high-quality childcare. So how did the families make their choice to send their children to nursery?

> **Yang**: Did your parents visit often and look after the kids when they were young?
>
>   **Yu**: We shouldn't get our parents to do our job. When you ask your parents to baby-sit, you feel you *owe* them something. I mean they [Yu's parents] did enough baby-sitting when I was young. They deserve to have their own lives, too. I don't want to feel that they are doing something I should've done [baby-sitting]. It's much *easier* to just pay the nursery to do it. [my italics.]

Although the other Chinese wives phrased their responses differently, 'making things easier' and 'avoiding complication' were the most frequently heard answers. Some of the wives suggested that they did not really get along with their parents. Some shared Yu's reluctance to feel indebted to their parents. Others highlighted childcare as the responsibility of the nuclear family. Whatever the reason, they shared the opinion that domestic outsourcing provides an easy way out of potential conflict between the demands of work and home. It is 'easy' in the sense that it allows the professional wives to detach themselves with less effort from care provision as a form of intimate emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012). Once childcare is imagined as a form of replaceable 'commodity', it becomes 'easier' for the women to draw the line between nuclear and extended families without feeling guilty or indebted to their parents.

All of the 12 families are likely to seem familiar in some respects. In many ways, they are representative of the prototypical individualised families of our times (Therborn, 2004). Much as the Chinese wives would like to live up to the ideal of the 'superwoman' and maximise their ability to take control of their lives by drawing lines, defining boundaries and reducing ambivalence, their efforts also reveal their 'superpowers' to

be limited by structural constraints. Their feelings of guilt, for instance, reflect the deep-seated belief that it is still the responsibility of women to look after children. It transpires, therefore, that these professional 'superwomen' are still forced to deal with a quandary faced by women throughout history.

The Anatomy of the 'Superwoman'

The existence and importance of boundaries between the professional Chinese-British couples' life domains not only became clear to me when I crossed them in the course of my research; they were also explicitly highlighted by the professionals, who had themselves actively drawn the lines. These normative expectations and rules prescribe the roles of the professionals at work and at home, structure their social networks, shape their sense of self and influence their everyday feelings such as love, pride and guilt. The same set of lines has navigated the 12 couples through their lives by determining milestone decisions such as immigration, marriage and childcare. *How* the lines were drawn, therefore, may provide key clues to the making of the category of 'superwomen', the role assumed by ethnicity (despite the lack of emphasis placed on this factor by the families) and the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, migration, family and work in inter-ethnic families. Hereafter, it is with reference to these lines that I dissect the mechanisms that underlie the life trajectories of the 12 professional Chinese-British families.

'*That's not what I came here for*'. The first line structuring the lives of the 12 professional Chinese wives was drawn at an early stage, by their immigration trajectories. Differentiating professional incomers with respect to economic contribution, access to public resources and so on, Britain's immigration policies constructed a social hierarchy with, for example, professional and spousal immigrants on different levels (Anderson, 2013). The post-migration agenda of integration further exacerbated the discrepancy in status between those who 'integrated' and those who remained segregated (von Meien, 2007). At an individual level, this hierarchy was reflected in the interviewees' conceptualisation of British society and the Chinese community in Britain as two poles repre-

senting mainstream culture and the marginalised periphery, respectively. Although the 12 professional couples insisted on the equality of status of the two ethnic groups, they also disparaged 'those marriage-migrant Chinese housewives' as examples of failure in contrast with their own success. Why the apparent contradiction? To varying degrees, the professional wives were proud of being Chinese. Nevertheless, it appears that unlike the marriage-migrant Chinese housewives, who considered British ethnicity to be of a higher status,[19] the professional wives' perception of superiority bears no direct link to their retreat from the Chinese community. Instead, their retreat was a symbolic journey away from a site of stereotypical failure. The vehicles to success (for example, employment, integration with the British social network) thus mark a point of divergence between ethnic and social status. However, even this construction of success/failure was originally defined to a large extent by immigration policies and social engineering programmes such as cultural integration (Watt & Mulholland, 2011).

The line traced by the immigration trajectory and concertedly completed by subsequent ethnic distinction is not only observable in the 12 families under study here. Statistics drawn from the UK Census suggest that individuals from a Chinese ethnic background in the UK exhibit somewhat polarised residential tendencies. While the unemployed and the self-employed tend to live in Chinese enclaves, Chinese professionals tend to reside separately from ethnic enclaves, in ethnically mixed and urban areas (Finney & Simpson, 2009). It appears that their residential patterns are determined not only by work needs but by individual preferences for/against mingling (CoDE: ESRC Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity, 2012). As a result, the sense of superiority conferred by integration status could in turn bolster the career orientation of professional immigrants.

'*True' love*. The second line is defined as 'love'. The immigration trajectory not only affects career and ethnic orientation; it has also shaped the idea of 'true love' held by the 12 professional couples. Again in contrast

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[19] This is fundamentally different from the ethnic profiles perceived by the Chinese housewives and their British husbands, for whom the perceived higher status of British ethnicity is based on the 'development thesis' (see Chap. 4).

with marriage migrants and the segregated Chinese community, the professional Chinese wives took pride in their marriages as 'genuine love bind[s]' defined by their homogamous mating practices. Professional migration has clearly allowed these couples the time and opportunity to date prior to marriage. Although the couples described their 'love' as a matter of autonomous choice, their agency was nonetheless shaped and constrained by structural forces.

The criterion of 'true love' as based on homogeneity was largely defined by the immigration policies' emphasis on 'genuineness' (Carver, 2013).[20] Indeed, all of the 12 couples were proud of the ease with which they proved themselves to be authentic couples rather than shams. Ironically, although the couples tried hard to separate their 'love' from economic utility, the British immigration policy has shown an increasing tendency for economisation. While older couples such as Haipin and Peter and Dominic and Sujuan proved their love simply by showing the authorities family photograph albums, the 'proofs of love' presented by the younger couples to the immigration authorities and marriage registrars were evidence of shared financial responsibilities and economic exchanges between husband and wife (for example, shared bills and joint bank accounts). Ultimately, the 12 couples did not have as much autonomy over their marriages as they had imagined. As 'fortune's child', the marriages of the 12 couples were subject and secondary to their career settlements and other professional events/factors.

Gender and/or ethnicity. The third line is an inconvenient truth for the 12 families. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, most of the families thought of this line as a matter of gender but not ethnicity. First, the labels 'manly woman' and 'womanly woman' reveal a deep-seated gender-stereotypical structure of belief. Despite the professionalisation of women, their capacity to achieve career success is still substantially bounded by rules dating back to the primitive, male-centred, hunting wild. Yet due to pride in their ethnic integration, the professional Chinese wives were somewhat reluctant to admit that they had experienced communicative difficulties and cultural shock on moving to the UK. However, the frustrations and negotiations undergone by the couples in subtle and

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[20] Most of the 12 couples registered their marriages in the UK.

nuanced cultural conflict suggest that the 'manly woman' label is, in part, an inter-ethnic construct beneath its more overtly gendered surface. The gender line thus not only reflects the differences between 'man' and 'woman' but suggests that the concept of gender is itself ethnically and culturally specific and therefore not universal.

The 'easy' way out. The fourth line comprises individual boundaries between responsibilities, obligations and levels of attachment. It is vividly reflected in the childcare decisions and plans of the 12 couples. Unlike the Chinese housewives, the professional wives described childcare as more economically viable, as their husbands' income alone disqualifies the families from applying for child benefits. Choosing between childcare provided by extended families such as parents and that of professional nurseries, the 12 couples unanimously decided that the latter offers the 'easier' way out. It is easier partly because it allows the professional wives to detach themselves emotionally from the care providers, so that they do not feel indebted to others. It is also easier because paying for childcare as a commodity enables the wives more easily to detach from their 'guilty selves' as represented in their perceived failure to fulfil their maternal responsibilities (Hochschild, 2013). The guilty emotion is a product of the social structure that expects women to be the major caregivers to children. Vice versa, the British husbands described domestic chores as enjoyable activities that make the vicissitudes of domestic life 'easier' to cope with.

These lines (along with many others not discussed here) are inseparable at a social, conjugal and individual level. Taken together, it is clear that they amount to a tendency for individualisation in the 12 families. When the couples reflected on how they, as individuals, relate to their spouses, their extended families and their wider social networks, each interviewee began by taking himself or herself as a reference point for the differences and similarities between internal and external factors. They reflected on the nature of modern society and looked to 'the life world' and 'the system world' of Jürgen Habermas (2003 [1984]), and then looked to order their lives by drawing lines to separate distinct spheres of life.

However, neither individualisation nor sociocultural integration is straightforward for the couples we have examined in this chapter. As Smart and Shipman (2004) argued, individualisation of ethnic minori-

ties in multicultural Britain does not follow a linear trajectory. Nor does sociocultural integration or assimilation follow a straight line as specified by classical assimilation theories (Alba & Nee, 1997; Song, 2009). Although the idea of sociocultural integration imposed by British social policies from top-down has closely permeated into the personal discourse of the 12 families examined in this chapter, the families' acts in choosing their ethnic-cum-gender identities are equally important in bringing institutionalized concepts such as 'social integration' to life at an individual level (Song, 2003). Concurring with Song's (2003) argument, the families were seen to opt out of the Chinese enclave 'by employing a variety of dis-identifiers, for instance, […], choosing friends outside their assigned ethnic group'. Although the 12 professional couples felt subjectively empowered by their capability to 'opt out', they do not necessarily have 'more' options over the meaning of their intersecting identities than the families of marriage-migrant Chinese housewives we have met in the previous chapter. Rather, social constraints are felt at distinct sites (for example, home and/or work) and at different times (for example, timing of marriage and other life events).

When examining how the 12 couples actively draw lines to erect and erase symbolic boundaries, the notions of conditional integration, conditional belonging (Song, 2003, p. 59) and conditional individualisation (Smart & Shipman, 2004) may be particularly useful, because such notions illustrate how partial, fragmented, multifaceted and sometimes emotionally torn people's experiences in inter-ethnic families could be, despite their manoeuvre of a highly professional personae and abundant sociocultural resources. At first sight, the families' arrangement of these lines to manage their lives and reduce ambivalence appears simple. However, the complications that arise from one line have forced them to draw more lines, and so on. By the end of my fieldwork in mid-2013, news came that Meilin was pregnant. As she rejected yet another offer from her parents to look after their imminent grandchild, Meilin encountered just such a complication. Her mother telephoned and, sobbing, claimed that Meilin 'does not need [her] any more'. When Meilin suggested to her mother that she should seek to live her own life, her mother asked, 'Isn't my own life the life of the [extended] family? What am I supposed to do with my own life?'

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6

The Road Less Travelled—Negotiating 'Change'

Envisaging 'Change'

Change is the measure of time; and like time, change is constant.

Whilst even the happiest marriages experience constant adaptation and negotiation, not all of the Chinese-British families interviewed for this research have adapted and negotiated well enough to become stereotypical 'happy families'. As widely documented in recent literature (Garrison, 2007; Lewis, 2001; Popenoe, 2008), marriage has not only fallen 'out of favour' in the last decades, with fewer and fewer marriages taking place, it has also become harder to maintain, as more and more couples opt for divorce. This decline is clearly displayed in Fig. 6.1, which presents marriage and divorce rates in England and Wales from 1970 to 2010. In 1970, as many as 80 males and 60 females per 1000 unmarried people entered into marriage; in 2010, the equivalent rates were as low as around 20 per 1000 for both genders. The solemn vow of the wedding ceremony—'for richer or poorer, […] in sickness or health, till death do us part'—is becoming harder to uphold than ever before, as marriage undergoes a transformation from a lifelong commitment to a matter of choice wherein individual agency is increasingly emphasised (Cherlin, 2004).
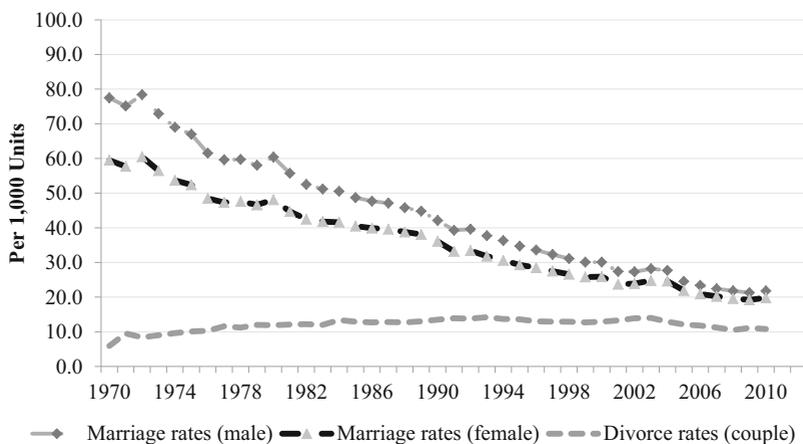
Fig. 6.1 Marriage and divorce rates in England and Wales from 1970 to 2010. Marriage rates calculated as the number of males and females who married in the given year per 1000 unmarried males/females; divorce rates calculated as the number of couples who divorced in the given year per 1000 married couples. *Source*: Office of National Statistics UK, 2010

Numerous attempts have been made to explain the 'death of marriage'. The most prominent theory to account for its decline is that of individualisation (Cherlin, 2004; Therborn, 2004; Yan, 2009). Proponents of this theory infer from evidence such as soaring divorce rates and tumbling marriage rates that the increasing economic independence of both men and women has reduced interdependence and exchange within couples. If individual benefits and needs are perceived to precede those of the family, the marital union could become less stable (Popenoe, 2008). Increasing individualisation goes hand in hand with the rise of socioeconomic and educational homogamy (Kalmijn, 1998). As educational institutions and workplaces become modern 'mating sites', the cultural, intellectual and social homogeneity of husband and wife may erode the perceived irreplaceability of each within the couple dyad (Kraft & Neimann, 2009).

Against the backdrop of marriage's increased 'vulnerability' in modern society due to accelerating life courses and social changes, intermarriage has been on the rise in the globalising world (Fu, 2001). Despite the results from recent research that intermarried couples are not more likely

to divorce than co-ethnic couples in the UK (Feng, Boyle, van Ham, & Raab, 2012), this does not necessarily reflect the heightened difficulty of 'doing' marriage across ethnic divides. Although most of the Chinese-British families who participated in my research had successfully created lasting marriages despite occasional conflict, in a few cases changing circumstances had led to divorce. In terms of the couples' initial encounters, dating, marriage experiences and other observable demographic factors, the divorcées were not substantially different from those who remained in happy marriages. In *Adaptation to Life*, George Vaillant (1977) reported the findings of the Grant Study on Harvard Men—the lengthiest-ever longitudinal study of human development. He found that despite similarities in departure points and circumstances, 'a man's adaptive devices are as important in determining the course of his life as are his heredity, his upbringing, his social position' and other factors (Vaillant, 1977, p. 29). Such negotiation strategies are crucial to inter-ethnic marriage. Focusing on the processes of adaptation and negotiation, my interviews[1] with divorcées previously in Chinese-British marriages alerted me to the human and emotional labour invested in adapting to inconstant circumstances. In particular, the divorcées' failures of negotiation raise the key question explored in this chapter: how do people negotiate their changing ethnicity-cum-gender identities in Chinese-British inter-ethnic marriages? I thus begin my exploration with the few divorcées who were formerly in Chinese-British marriages.

When I first met Hanna, she was in her 60s and approaching retirement from her nursing career. She had divorced her ex-husband about 30 years earlier due to his 'adultery with the nanny [they] had at home'. At that time, Hanna had just given birth to her second son. Her insistence on going back to work met with strong objections from her ex-husband. As neither Hanna nor her ex-husband was willing to give in, the couple turned to a nanny for help with childcare. Throughout the whole subsequent period, according to Hanna, her ex-husband was engaged in an

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[1] The divorcées were interviewed on their own. As their ex-husbands were not interviewed, I took into consideration the potential bias in the interviewees' representations of divorce. Nevertheless, as the decision to divorce was determined by the respondents' feelings about their marriage, these retrospective accounts may still provide valid information on how and why negotiation failed and led to divorce.

adulterous relationship with the nanny. After divorcing Hanna, he went on to marry the nanny, whom he described to Hanna as 'the type of woman to make a family with'—unlike Hanna, who was 'anything but [the] good Chinese wife' he had once had in mind. Hanna won the custody of her two sons, and was determined to be a professional mother capable of both working and giving her children ample care. She worked especially hard to earn enough to support the family financially and tried even harder at home to provide her sons with motherly care. Pouring all of her emotion into her sons, she was pleased to see them flourish. Although Hanna's life has been a constant struggle over the last 30 years, she does not regret the divorce, describing it as a 'liberating experience' that eventually set her free to be herself.

Unlike Hanna, Liz was not forced out of her marriage, but chose to opt out of the commitment. I met Liz ten years after the end of her marriage, when she was 55 years old, childless, unwell and out of work. Liz and her ex-husband were colleagues in the healthcare system when they first met, and worked together for the duration of their marriage. At home, Liz shouldered most of the domestic responsibilities, including cooking, laundry and other housekeeping necessities, because, in her words, her ex-husband was 'too lazy to move his butt'. He was even reluctant to carry out conventionally masculine-typed domestic chores such as gardening, which he completed shoddily and with endless squabbles. At the age of 43, Liz was diagnosed with narcolepsy, a disease that gave her bouts of fatigue; this marked the turning point in her marriage. When Liz's health deteriorated further, she gave up her job. However, Liz's ex-husband interpreted her sick leave as a transition into full-time domesticity, and thus expected her to take on even more housework. At first, everything carried on as usual. As Liz's condition worsened, the simplest of daily tasks came to require enormous effort. One day, she simply sat on the sofa and waited for her ex-husband to arrive home from work. Upon his return, Liz asked him to make her a sandwich. This seemingly reasonable request ignited a massive argument, with Liz's ex-husband complaining that she 'just couldn't do anything.' Over the next few days, Liz became convinced that she would be better off if she only had to look after herself, rather than doing all of her ex-husband's chores. Finally, she filed for divorce. Since her divorce, she has received help from com-

munity and healthcare services, and her disease has been brought under control. Now that Liz is approaching her sixties, childlessness is her biggest regret in life.

Although one's memory may be distorted by traumatic experiences such as separation and divorce, the experiences described by Hanna and Liz offer similar important clues to the nature of marital negotiation. Both cases of divorce arose from conflicts between work and family, or the relative roles between the husband and wife at home and at work. While Hanna divorced her husband on realising that her career aspirations did not fit his expectations of a good wife, Liz chose actively to divorce on becoming increasingly aware of her individual needs and the lack of domestic support provided by her husband. However, although both Hanna and Liz evaluated divorce as a 'liberating' experience allowing them a way out of unhappy marriages, such liberation would have been impossible without the British welfare system. This system enabled Hanna to raise two boys while working full-time, and provided Liz with full medical coverage while living on disability subsidies. In China, Hanna's divorce would have entailed the intervention of grandparents as natural 'surrogates' to her boys, and Liz's narcolepsy would have incurred staggering medical bills. As a result, both women would have been forced to turn to their families as immediate sources of support rather than implementing their own strategies. In one sense, an individualised society with a relatively complete welfare system fosters gender equality, as it allows both men and women the independence to fulfil their individual aspirations. However, when social support trumps that of family and makes the option of divorce less 'costly', individualisation may destabilise the institution of family. As a result, negotiation and adaptation are crucial to successful marriages in an individualised society.

Although I focus in this chapter on the strategies used by Chinese-British couples to 'do' marriage, cases of divorce—as experienced by Hanna and Liz, among many others—show that change may pose severe challenges for families in an individualised world, let alone in a cross-cultural context. As described in the preceding chapters, I observed instances of tension and conflict in the relationships of almost all of the Chinese-British families I met. However, as the couples negotiated, compromised and worked things out, such conflict rarely led to divorce. If

negotiation is difficult for homemaking marriage immigrants and working professional immigrants examined in Chaps. 4 and 5, then adaptation can be no less complex and difficult for 'off-trackers' who have not merely engaged in ethnic intermarriage but re-calibrated their gender roles to emphasise family over work, or vice versa. This raises two key questions: how do former professional immigrants adapt to domesticity, and how do former marriage immigrants fare as professionals in an inter-ethnic context?

The Road Less Travelled

Unlike the families described in the preceding chapters, those assessed in the current chapter show no remarkable demographic similarities, as presented in Table 6.1 below. Although the marriages of Fang and Terry,

Table 6.1 Profiles of 'Off-tracker' Chinese-British families

	Chinese wives			British husbands	
Pseudonym	Education	Occupation before	Occupation after	Education	Occupation
Professional immigration → Home (stay-at-home professional migrants)					
Fang, Terry	Ph.D	Researcher	Housewife	Ph.D	Senior engineer
Yiyi, John	Master's degree	Business manager	Housewife, works flexibly	Bachelor's degree	Retail manager
Emma, Daly	Bachelor's degree	Paramedic	Housewife	Bachelor's degree	Engineer
Marriage immigration → Professional (marriage migrants at work)					
Rita, Cary	Master's degree	Interior designer	Graphic designer	Bachelor's degree	Banker
Xiu, Fred	High school	Airport waitress	Restaurant waitress	Bachelor's degree	Retired engineer
Cora, Dan	Bachelor's degree	English teacher	Logistics manager	Bachelor's degree	Financial consultant

Note: The occupations of the Chinese wives are distinguished as 'before' marriage migration (in China) and 'after' marriage/childbirth in Britain, with the exception of Emma, whose occupational status after marriage and childbirth reflects her career plan.

Emma and Daly and Cora and Dan are each founded on educational and socioeconomic homogamy, this has not always led the couples to adopt the egalitarian gender roles observed in Chap. 5, whether at home or at work. The relative status of husband and wife is less consistent in the cases of the other families addressed in the current chapter: Yiyi and John, Rita and Terry and Xiu and Fred. Two life-course trajectories clearly emerged in the experiences described by the six families: the professional immigrants inclined towards domesticity, while the marriage immigrants sought to work. However, their particular sociocultural and economic positions and past experiences varied considerably,[2] indicating that distinct explanatory factors may underlie their shared life trajectories. In this chapter, therefore, I am careful to ensure that the six families are treated as distinct units and that appropriate comparisons and contrasts are drawn between them, despite their apparently similar life-course trajectories.

'Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— / I took the one less travelled by, / And that has made all the difference'. These lines from Robert Frost's famous poem 'The Road Not Taken' crystallise some key elements of the lives of the six families discussed in this chapter: structural constraints ('two roads'), human agency expressed in choice ('I took the one less travelled by') and how they lead to substantially different life outcomes ('that has made all the difference'). In metaphorical terms, the six 'off-tracker' families have chosen the less well-trodden path. Robert Frost romanticises the speaker's dilemma with a light poetic touch; the choices made by the six families were more difficult, especially when they confronted sociocultural constraints. Indeed, departing from the stereotypical labels of 'professional immigrants' and 'marriage immigrants', the homemaking professional migrants and working marriage migrants occupy relatively rare niches within Chinese-British marriages in Britain. Despite the potential selectivity of my snowball-sampling technique, the findings of past research consistently suggest that the rarity of 'off-tracker' families is more than merely a matter of sample selectivity and may be due to sociocultural constraints (Kofman, Phizacklea, Raghuram, & Sales, 2005).

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[2] Notably, the six families belong to different generations and are at different stages of life. For details, see Appendix B.

Swidler (1986) argued that culture is a toolkit rather than a doctrine, enabling individuals to tailor their own 'culturally acceptable' adaptation strategies in response to life changes.[3] Although British immigration laws impose no restrictions on the work-family orientation of members of Chinese-British families, the two immigration trajectories—marriage and professional—are in fact laden with distinct cultural meanings. As presented in the preceding chapters, these trajectories are not only politically divided but understood to represent sub-diasporas with distinctive ethnic identities and symbolic social statuses. Therefore, as marriage migrants regard professional migrants as 'ethnic others' who have lost their 'cultural roots' (see Chap. 4), and professional migrants consider marriage migrants to be of a lower status (see Chap. 5), departure from one's nominal immigration category may be deemed cultural 'transgression'. Consequently, people are acculturated to follow the sociocultural and symbolic implications of their immigration trajectories.

The rarity of 'off-tracker' Chinese-British families[4] is not only due to individuals' personal disinclination to transgress; it may also be the result of practical constraints, whose significance is clear from the findings of other studies conducted in the UK. Analysing data from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, Dale (2008) found an extremely low proportion of marriage migrants from an Asian background in the active labour force, noting that as few as 13.3 % of Bangladeshi and Pakistani marriage migrants who married British husbands were employed. Although the research focused primarily on South Asian ethnics, their findings have important implications for studies of Chinese ethnics.

In the research, Dale (2008) suggested that two major structural constraints determine the employment opportunities of marriage migrants: (1) skill sets and especially languages, which are essential to labour-market participation; and (2) the existence of an 'ethnic economy' wherein co-ethnics constitute the major work force. The narrow ethnic economy and vastly different linguistic backgrounds of ('new') Chinese marriage

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[3] According to Swidler (1986), cultural codifications do not directly prescribe what people should or should not do. Instead, they provide a comprehensive, though rather ambivalent, set of rules within whose boundaries human agents can devise their own life strategies.

[4] Six of the 29 Chinese-British families involved in this research are categorised as 'off-tracker' families, as defined by deviation from their immigration categories and trajectories.

migrants may well impair their employment prospects. In this light, Xiu's job as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant is not at all surprising. Even Rita and Cora, the marriage migrants who ended up working in British companies, found such barriers a 'long and painful' challenge to overcome. Cora, a former English teacher in China, a marriage migrant and now a logistics manager in a national franchise, described her first experience of working in Britain, seven years ago, as follows:

> I thought I'd have no problem at all as I used to be an English teacher in China. But it was a huge shock when I first worked as a junior assistant in my current company: the English [language] people speak here is so, so different from what I learned from textbooks in China […]. At lunch and tea-time, all of my colleagues gathered in groups, chitchatting and giggling. But as I couldn't mingle with them, I had to stay away. I don't think it was racial discrimination or anything like that. I was really frustrated then, but I have no problem at all now.

Cora's experience is far from exceptional. Rita's limited English proficiency isolated her during her first few months in England, until she finally 'dared to step outside the house'. Having locked herself up with a television set at home while Cary worked long hours, Rita decided that it was time for her to explore her surroundings and make a life of her own during the daytime. Cora and Rita's frustration was shared by the 'proud Chinese housewives' we met in Chap. 4. Notably, it is such emotions of fear, lack of confidence in inter-ethnic communication as much as the practical difficulty in English language itself that hindered Cora, Rita and Xiu from breaking away from the stereotypical 'marriage migrants' in the first place. However, different motivations for and attitudes and responses to this frustration led Rita, Xiu and Cora on a pathway in life that diverged from that of the Chinese housewives.

Despite the paucity of research or data documenting the transition of former professional immigrants to domesticity, it seems clear that the difficulty of this transition is exacerbated by the forceful career momentum of professional migration discussed in Chap. 5. Indeed, the powerful magnetism of former careers and social networks accumulated at work sometimes prevents former professional migrants from escaping the pro-

fessional world. Yiyi, a former business manager for a British company specialising in international trade, described the few odd jobs she undertook from home as follows:

> My former colleagues would ask me to help them out with translating a document or something like that. In such cases, it was really hard for me to say 'no'. But as they frequently insisted on paying me for these things, *favours* became jobs. [my italics]

Indeed, the boundary between work and family was rarely well-defined in the lives of the six 'off-tracker' Chinese-British families. Fang, Yiyi and Emma undertook occasional flexible and short-term jobs while prioritising their familial roles, and Rita, Xiu and Cora continued to be constrained by the domestic and familial responsibilities expected of marriage migrants.[5] Therefore, the consequences of departing from stereotypical immigration categories and trajectories are by no means consistent: the six women mentioned above are variously domestic, professional or somewhere between the two. The term 'off-tracker' reflects a rather ambivalent, crude and convenient typology defined by an individual's act of 'departing' from the implied sociocultural trajectories and practical constraints of immigration categories. Rather than making a clear-cut transition from professional work to the family, or the other way around, the six families occupy fairly ambivalent positions in their respective journeys of change. Such ambivalence, according to Vaillant (1977), is in itself a useful adaptive device that knits couples together in times of life changes by providing potentially conflicting social actors with considerable leeway to avoid confrontation. Nevertheless, given the difficulty of swimming against the tide, one must ask why the six 'off-tracker' families chose to 'transgress'; how they adapted to and negotiated their changing life-course dynamics; and how their acts of transgression, adaptation and negotiation relate to their specific and distinctive life experiences and situations.

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[5] Fang mainly undertakes unpaid voluntary work; Yiyi occasionally works from home and takes on short-term and flexible paid jobs; Emma is planning either to work more flexibly or to leave her job once she has a child. In contrast, Rita, Xiu and Cora shoulder a large share of the familial and domestic responsibilities.

Homemaking Professional Migrants

'Work' has multiple meanings. It may mean a long-lasting career, a way of obtaining economic resources, a sphere of life offering lively inter-personal connections, and so on (Hochschild, 2001; Treas & Drobnic, 2010). As people conceptualise and perceive work in different ways, they adopt different 'investment strategies' and construct distinctive attitudes and forms of emotional attachment to professional life (Hochschild, 2013). In traditional societies, men and women have different and indeed unequal relationships with work, as most professional contexts are monopolised by men (Whyte, 1978). Whereas the work of men has often been envisaged as a continuous career, an economic pillar of the family and so on, the work of women has been less highly valued (Blewett, 1990). In cases of conflict, therefore, the husband's work is quite often prioritised over that of the wife. Although this explanation of the unequal professional status of men and women may not hold true in all cases, I observed that men's work tended to be prioritised over that of women in the families of Fang and Terry, Yiyi and John and Emma and Daly. In all three cases, the demands of the British husbands' jobs were regarded as a prime consideration when the Chinese wives decided to relinquish their professional careers.

When Fang and Terry graduated from their PhDs, Terry was offered a 'golden' job that suited his expertise and offered a handsome salary. Although the job was located near a little-populated town in East Anglia, which thus offered scarce employment opportunities for Fang, the couple decided to take up the offer, and relocated to a town 15 minutes' drive from Terry's workplace. Over the next eight years, Fang became a mother of two, and enjoyed her life as a housewife. Whilst apparently simple and straightforward, however, this type of transition is rare among PhD graduates in the UK (see Chap. 2). When asked whether she had been reluctant to prioritise Terry's career, and why she had decided to do so, Fang answered as follows:

> **Fang**: At that time, we both agreed that it was an ideal opportunity for Terry. The salary on offer was very reasonable, the post suited Terry's exper-tise and it was important for him to enjoy his job. The company was newly

established, so there was a lot of room for his [Terry's] development. Everything seemed perfect. So I said to Terry, 'Why don't you give it a go?'

    Yang: Did you think about what you were going to do then? I mean job-wise.

    Fang: Maybe I thought we'd settle down first. As I didn't really want to carry on doing biochemistry [her doctoral discipline], I was sure that I could just find a job of some sort […]. After we had our daughters, I was kept busy mothering them anyway […] I didn't have much thought about it [her job]. But my friends and family were telling me all sorts of things.

It might have been awkward to ask why Fang did not take Terry's job, given that they had graduated from the same laboratory, but Fang was not at all reluctant to draw comparisons between Terry and herself. Explaining that the higher one climbs in the professional field of biochemistry, the more it becomes a man's world, Fang indicated that the company may have preferred to employ Terry than a '*female immigrant* working in a *man's* world' [my italics], as she described herself. Although Terry has always been grateful to Fang for supporting his career and making a home for him and their daughters, Fang's British friends had quite different opinions. Fang's decision to relinquish her career caused a stir among her labmates, her former supervisor and her university friends—mainly British—who thought that Fang was too bright to give up her profession. Fang recalled being told that she ought to stand on her own feet and continue with her career. However, these recommendations conflicted with the advice of Fang's family and female friends in China, who encouraged Fang to prioritise Terry's career according to the tradition '*jiaji sui ji, jiagou sui gou*', which translates literally as 'if a woman marries a chicken, she should follow the chicken; if she marries a dog then she should follow the dog.'[6] When I asked Fang to be more specific about her family's response to her transition from professional to domestic life, she provided the following details:

They were all for my marriage with Terry and told me to go along with him. By that time [the early 2000s], I was already 26. My parents thought

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[6] The phrase means that a wife should support her husband's career and follow him in his walk of life.

that I had 'fooled around' [in a jocular tone] for long enough, and that it was time for me to get married and have a family. They didn't really care whether I had a successful career, but they had always been worried about my finding someone to marry—mainly because they were eager to be grandparents. And similarly my female friends in China told me something like 'get your head around it, you are a *female PhD*, and you don't want to be a *shengnü* [Chinese for 'left-over women'],[7] do you?' Then they told me that how fortunate I was to have found a *British* husband, who didn't mind that I had a *PhD*.[my italics]

Fang had made up her mind to follow Terry from the outset, paying little attention to the conflicting advice from her friends, colleagues and family in Britain and China. She was not particularly worried about achieving success and shared some of the opinions of her Chinese relatives and friends. The key word in the above quotation is 'female PhD': a social category that is jocularly and derogatorily regarded in China as 'the third sex', separate from both 'men' and 'women'.[8] The educational and socioeconomic status conferred by a doctorate degree challenges the patriarchal expectation that females will prioritise their families and remain subservient to men. As a result, female PhDs are marginalised in the Chinese marriage market (To, 2013). Unsurprisingly, whereas gender equality extends up to undergraduate level in China (Hannum, Park, & Butler, 2010), fewer females than males choose to undertake graduate and especially doctoral studies. In 2010, only about one in four postgraduates in China was female, while the equivalent figure for the UK was approximately one in two.[9]

As a result, Fang's marriage to a British man unconcerned by the 'female PhD' issue was a source of celebration for Fang's Chinese family. As Fang felt that her professional friends—British in particular—were pressurising her to keep pursuing a stellar career, she began to distance herself

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[7] This expression describes a female with a high-status academic degree and a large income, who is relatively 'old' and has therefore been overlooked ('left') in the marriage market.

[8] For example, see http://news.sina.com.cn/cul/2004-12-15/2058.html, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21320560, date accessed 10 October 2014.

[9] The figures for China are available at http://edu.ifeng.com/news/detail_2010_12/07/3377574_0.shtml and the figures for the UK are available at http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2705/278/#gen, date accessed 10 October 2014.

from the social network she had formed at university. She remained close to her extended Chinese family and developed a new network of friends—mostly Chinese. This network allowed her to share the vicissitudes of family life with empathetic individuals who did not judge her for choosing domesticity over her pre-marriage professional life.

Similarly, John's career has determined Yiyi's life trajectory. John has been working as a retail manager since gaining his bachelor's degree in 2005, and his job requires him to visit various franchises of his company across England, often working away from home. Although tired of travelling a lot for work, John has not considered finding a new job because, he explained, he enjoys his work. The nature and locational requirements of John's career have substantially limited Yiyi's mobility and time availability. Nonetheless, Yiyi agreed on the importance of John's keeping the same job, because 'there might not be a better alternative out there, given the financial crisis', not to mention that John 'has stayed long enough in his current career to deserve a promotion soon'. As Yiyi's parents initially felt that John, seven years Yiyi's junior,[10] might not be a reliable husband capable of supporting the family, John insisted on working his way up partly to prove Yiyi's parents wrong. He has been consistently supported in achieving this goal by Yiyi.

Meanwhile, Yiyi herself has made changes. Bringing up and caring for their child has required an increasing amount of time and effort from the couple since the birth of their daughter, Vivian. Similar to Fang, Yiyi left her job as a manager in a British company specialising in international trade after Vivian was born. However, Yiyi explained her decision more explicitly than Fang, citing her Christian beliefs (acquired while still in China) as the reason for her choice.

> **Yiyi**: It's all about love, isn't it? Have you read the Bible?
>
> **Yang**: Yes, I have, when I studied British literature for my undergraduate degree.
>
> **Yiyi**: Good. In the Bible, it says that a woman should serve her husband, give birth and raise children. In return, a man should hunt for his family and protect his wife. So it [giving up her job] hasn't been much of a sacri-

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[10] See Chap. 2 for details of traditional Chinese attitudes to the issue of age differences within couples. John's parents did not express similar opinions on the age difference between Yiyi and John.

fice for me, as it's a two-way traffic of mutual giving… Look at him [pointing towards John, more than six feet tall, working in the garden while we talked in the living room]; I never expected this big man to be able to look after a young baby well anyway.

Yiyi and Fang expressed similar opinions. However, it seems that Christianity has provided Yiyi with an explicit framework for the values implicitly endorsed by Fang. In his book *Beyond Culture*, the anthropologist Edward Hall (1989) distinguished between 'high-context' and 'low-context' languages. The conveyance of meaning in high-context languages is highly dependent on cultural context, so little is said but much is conveyed through mutual cultural understanding. Notably, Hall (1989) categorised both Chinese and British English as high-context languages. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Chinese-British communication may pose difficulties for people acculturated in these two vastly different contexts.[11] For Yiyi and John, however, Christianity seems to have bridged the British-Chinese cultural divide by providing a shared 'language' that allows the couple, and particularly Yiyi, to express the ideas of reciprocity and familism that underpin their understanding of 'love'.

Yiyi, who has a background in international business and cross-cultural communication, herself raised the topic of 'high-context' languages when discussing her daily communication with John. She went on to explain that her Christian beliefs have helped her to resolve conjugal quarrels and conflicts, and that her approach to religion is appreciated by her parents-in-law, who encouraged their son to go to the Christian Union (where John met Yiyi) to find a girlfriend in the first place. Yiyi's transition from professional work to domesticity has also been well received by John's parents, who always expected John to find them a daughter-in-law who put family first. Nevertheless, familism—broadly defined as putting family benefits above those of individual family members (Therborn, 2004)—does not entirely define John and Yiyi's relationship. When asked in a couple interview if they would consider a second child, Yiyi responded as follows:

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[11] This is also consistent with the finding, reported in Chap. 5, that the professional Chinese wives tend to use literal, explicit and direct expressions when communicating with their British husbands in English (that is, a low-context strategy), as they are not proficient in the high-context use of English.

No, definitely not. [John nods in agreement.] We don't want children to dominate our lives. We have enjoyed raising our child, but too many children would take up too much time, let alone money. Before Vivian [their daughter] was born, we used to travel a fair bit. But since her birth, we haven't travelled for a long time. You can't take a crying kid on the plane; it would be such a nuisance to other people.

It seems that for Yiyi and John, one child represents a fine balance between their perceived 'obligation' to reproduce and their sense of individualism. As the couple also wished to have a life of their own, the parents from both sides have been welcomed into the nuclear family to help with childrearing. As explained in the preceding section, Yiyi still works occasionally from home and undertakes short-term and flexible jobs that arise from her continued connections with former colleagues and friends. Since the birth of Vivian, Yiyi has gradually moved away from her professional social network and become more engaged with a network of Chinese mothers. Paradoxically, her previous career success has gained her high-status roles in her new social life, including that of leader of a Chinese toddlers' group, as other Chinese mothers believe that Yiyi, the former professional, is likely to have a sensible vision of how to educate children to be successful.

Whereas Fang and Terry and Yiyi and John are de facto 'off-tracker' families, Emma and Daly were newly married at the time of interview and planning to have a child. Therefore, Emma's departure from professional work has only been considered as a future prospect. Like the other couples, however, Emma and Daly have prioritised Daly's work, as Emma moved her job to go along with Daly and further planned to veer towards domestic life after marriage. Despite the absence of observable tension in the couple's negotiation of the choice between work and family, Emma and Daly's relationship in many aspects resembles that of the preceding two families: in each case, the wife has made a seemingly voluntary concession to allow the husband to pursue his career without interruption.

A detailed biographical description of Emma and Daly is provided in Chap. 2. However, it is worth noting here that Emma and Daly dated and, like around 10 % of adults in Britain (Coulter & Hu, 2015), lived apart together (LAT) for a considerable period of time before they decided

to live together and get married. From an outside perspective, their relationship and marriage seem to have been made possible by Emma's relocation, a movement that eventually brought the couple together in one place after a three-year period of LAT. Whereas Fang and Yiyi's memories of the specific emotional contours of their transitions may have been less clear after seven or eight years, Emma and Daly were newly married when I met them, so their memories of and feelings about making changes were fresh. Therefore, it makes sense to explore the reasons for and nature of Emma's relocation.

Emma began her explanation of the decision to relocate by describing her job as a hospital medic as 'essentially the same everywhere'. Emma perceived her work as a repetitive and replaceable job rather than a prospective career, noting that 'there's not much room for promotion anyway, so it doesn't matter if I hop from one hospital to another'. In contrast, Daly explained to me in an individual interview that he had been working his way up and might not have been able to find an equivalent job elsewhere. The distinction between a woman's *job* and a man's *career* was also clear in the narratives of Fang and Terry and Yiyi and John. In terms of importance, emotional attachment and so on, a *career* trumps a *job*. Although husband and wife can both have their own careers, as in the cases of the dual-earner families examined in Chap. 5, comparisons between men's and women's work tend to arise from a background of change, tension and conflict. The questions then arise of *when* and *how* couples make such comparisons. In pursuit of answers to these questions, I asked Emma what had triggered her decision to move.

> **Emma**: When we were first together, I thought my job was more important than my relationship. So I thought it was just fine that we stayed in different places and carried on with our jobs.
> **Yang**: Sure, then?
> **Emma**: After we had lived apart for a couple of years, I felt that if we carried on like that [LAT] the relationship wouldn't lead anywhere. I was 27 then, and my parents had started to worry a bit [about her relationship]. Then, I thought to myself seriously, 'It is either the job or the relationship. I have to make a choice!' As we had been together for a few years, the relationship had become somewhat more important to me by then.

But again I wasn't sure if Daly was on the same page, or if our relationship would eventually lead somewhere. So I mentioned the idea [of job-hopping] to Daly, and he said 'Why don't we buy a house and move in together?' At that point, I knew that he was really *serious* about us and willing to *commit*. I was *convinced* that it was the right decision to make the move. [my italics]

In addition to the evolution of their relationship over time, becoming certain of Daly's commitment gave Emma the sense of security that facilitated her decision to move. In modern society, with rising separation and divorce rates eroding beliefs in marriage as a lifelong commitment (Lewis, 2001), Emma's decision to prioritise Daly's career over her own reflects a trade-off between familism and individualism, and a venture built upon mutual trust between the couple. For Emma, Daly's suggestion of a joint venture—buying a house and moving in together—defined and expressed his commitment; and Emma reciprocated with her relocation and job-hopping. Perceived 'commitment' had similar emotional efficacy for the other two families. Although Fang and Terry had less clear memories of their transition, a brief examination of their life trajectories suggests that Terry's marriage proposal persuaded Fang to follow him. The presence of children as a common investment and symbol of commitment was also important for Fang and Terry and Yiyi and John.

Establishing a sense of trust is particularly difficult in Chinese-British relationships and marriages, which are clouded by cultural stereotypes, myth and hearsay. Whereas the cultural stereotype of the feminine and family-oriented Chinese woman may have made things easier for the British husbands involved in this study, the rumour that Westerners are less serious about relationships and the high divorce rates in Britain were sources of anxiety for the Chinese wives at an early stage in their relationships (Chan, 2011; Farrer, 2013). This was particularly true for the wives from the 'off-tracker' families, who decided to give up their careers for their families. Like Emma, Fang explained that when considering her relocation, 'If there was any worry, it was not about whether I should prioritise my husband's career, but about whether he [Terry] was devoted to the family enough to be *worthy* of my "jump," as I had nothing other than my family to fall back on.' Now that Emma and Daly are planning

their first child, Emma is considering withdrawing from her job after childbirth and perhaps taking on some flexible odd jobs as their child grows up.

Most of Emma's university and work friends are British, but she is more closely connected with her Chinese family than the other professional migrant participants in this research, because both of her parents live nearby in England. Despite her limited number of Chinese friends,[12] Emma's contact with the Chinese diaspora—through the influence of her parents—has been no less frequent than that of the other two families.

Marriage Migrants at Work

Although the decision to give up work was emotionally challenging, the three former *professional migrants* encountered few practical impediments to their departure from professional life. Nevertheless, the constraints of labour-market thresholds, limited job opportunities and so on only made it more difficult for former *marriage migrants* to join the British labour market. Therefore, veering from marriage migration to professional work, Rita and Cary, Xiu and Fred and Cora and Dan not only faced the difficult decision of whether to work; it also required enormous effort to find work. Therefore, one must ask what encouraged Rita, Xiu and Cora to make the change in the first place, and how they, as former marriage migrants, have adapted to and progressed within the professional world in Britain.

Like Cora and Dan, Rita and Cary first met in China. Rita was introduced to Cary by a mutual friend during his trip to a south-western Chinese city. Dan and Cora had a similar experience: Cora helped Dan to settle in as an English teacher. Despite subsequent differences in the development of their relationships, the three couples all made the decision to migrate to and settle down in the UK after marriage. Although the three British husbands showed an interest in staying in China, due

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[12] Emma is not averse to making Chinese friends. Since her arrival in the UK, however, she has lived in areas with mainly White-British populations, which offer only limited opportunities to make Chinese friends. This situation was meticulously arranged by her parents, who hoped that living in White-British neighbourhoods would help Emma to integrate with mainstream British society.

to their fascination with Chinese culture and the country's fast development, their Chinese wives insisted on migrating and making a life in the UK. Whereas Rita and Cora were '*curious* to see what life is like in Britain' (in Cora's words), without any specific goals for their migration, Xiu's reasons for migrating were clear from early on. Fred, who already had a son and a daughter from his previous marriage, married Xiu in his 60s and decided that it would be best for him and Xiu to keep their finances separate. This decision still incurs complaints from Xiu that Fred did not 'trust' her enough. The couple were unwilling to admit that Fred saw Xiu, about 30 years his junior, not only as a love commitment but as a 'safety-net' for later life, as he was 'getting no younger'. Having worked as a waitress in Dubai airport, Xiu lost most of her savings in an unsuccessful business venture in China. As a result, she insisted on a 'gold-rush' migration to the UK.

> **Xiu**: At that point, I realised that it was a bad idea to run a business in China. After living in Dubai for a long time, I was out of touch with the Chinese market. Then I thought I'd just invest my savings one last time so that we could buy an apartment and retire…anyway, as the business failed, I had to start all over again. While it would have taken me forever to earn that money back in China, the exchange rate was 11 [Chinese yen] against 1 [British pounds] then. So I said to Fred, 'Let's move to the UK.'

However, Xiu's 'gold rush' proved to be difficult from the outset. As she failed her English-language test twice, her visa application did not go as smoothly as expected. Fred returned to the UK first to prepare for Xiu's arrival, but it was another 11 months before the couple were finally reunited, in early 2012. Xiu's difficulties continued with her struggle to find a job after arriving in England. Fred insisted on living in a seaside town in south-east England, where he could enjoy a 'hassle-free retirement', and the sparsely populated town offered few job opportunities for Xiu. With only a tiny local Chinese community and thus a very limited ethnic economy, Xiu's limited English proficiency also stood in the way of her employment, as she felt that she was 'too old to learn English at the age of 42'.

Unlike Xiu, who aspired to work from the outset, Rita and Cora—former professionals in China before marriage migration—chose to work after their arrival in the UK to mitigate boredom, frustration and loneliness. Having studied English as a compulsory subject at school, Rita and Cora were accustomed to sitting English exams.[13] They did not encounter the same difficulties with visa clearance as Xiu, but finding and subsequently settling into jobs was no easier for them.

> **Rita**: After arriving in England, I was a housewife for a long time. I didn't feel the sense of curiosity I had imagined. Instead, I stayed at home doing nothing but waiting for him [Cary] to come back home from work every day. I didn't know what else to do. I lost my confidence and didn't even dare to step out of the house for a while… Cary knew I wasn't happy, so he asked for favours from his friends and got me some odd jobs to do from home. I designed things like websites and they wired the payments into my account. Although it lifted my spirits to do something, my life was still housebound, as I was sitting in front of a computer. I missed the human contact so much, you know.

> **Cora**: At first, things were fresh. I explored the neighbourhood and everybody greeted me with big smiles on their faces. But within a few months, things had become boring at home, especially as I didn't know what to do… Beneath the friendly surface, exchanging greetings was the farthest I got with my neighbours. I felt so depressed and cried and cried. Then I went on QQ[14] all the time. While browsing the Internet, I found some job advertisements. It occurred to me that I'd probably feel better if I found a job of some kind.

Responding similarly to their initial boredom and loneliness, both Rita and Cora came to view professional work as a viable means of giving their lives purpose. Rita's experience of working from home failed to fill the gap in her life; she clearly expressed her desire for 'human con-

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[13] English has been a compulsory part of education in China since the 1990s. As both Rita and Cora received high school and higher education after the 1990s, they were required to pass English exams to gain their degrees.

[14] A popular Chinese instant-messaging platform with more than 100 million users in 2010. It is often used by family and friends to keep in touch with each other.

tact', a sense of social engagement and interpersonal interaction, which she identified with work. In modern societies, time often works against professionals, who live their lives by the clock and shift back and forth between the spheres of work and home, always hoping to find more time for both (Gerson, 2010). For Rita and Cora, however, work was a means of filling time. While social constraints such as communicative barriers quite often engender emotions of loneliness and frustration, social actors also act upon their tangible feelings in response to practical constraints. Whereas most of the marriage-migrant Chinese housewives in Chinese-British families described overcoming similar experiences of loneliness and frustration by making 'like-minded Chinese friends' (see Chap. 4), Rita, Cora and Xiu rejected this domestic orientation and more or less endorsed the 'that's not what I'm here for' ideal expressed by most of the professional Chinese wives in this research (see Chap. 5). Whereas most of the Chinese marriage migrants found that bringing up children filled their time and gave their lives purpose, Xiu and Fred, Rita and Cary and Cora and Dan had all, notably, chosen not to have children or were compelled to go childless given their circumstances.

Xiu's previous marriage had been childless, and Fred's age left her with no option but to remain without children. Unsurprisingly, Xiu felt the need to work and make financial provisions for her later life.[15] Feeling 'no desperate hurry', neither Rita nor Cary felt ready to be a parent. They welcomed the idea of childlessness, despite disagreement from their families on both sides. For Cora and Dan, the question of whether to have children caused long-term tension. Although Dan insisted that he did not want to have a child, Cora tried hard to persuade him. This is unsurprising, because childlessness defies mainstream Chinese tradition; indeed, more than half of the respondents in a nationally representative survey in 2006 expressed a strong aversion to childlessness.[16] When asked why he wished to remain childless, Dan offered the following explanation:

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[15] China has no welfare or medical system similar to that of the UK. Individuals and their families are responsible for providing care for the elderly, including medical care. Xiu explained clearly that as she did not have a child, she needed to make preparations to look after herself in her later life.

[16] Data drawn from the 2006 China General Social Survey. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with the statement 'it is acceptable for a married couple not to have a child' on a 1 to 7 scale, where '1' signified 'strongly agree' and '7' signified 'strongly disagree'.

Starting from day one [when they dated], I said to Cora that I didn't want a child and if that's what she wanted, she may need to find someone else… If I have a kid, the next twenty years of my life will be looking after the child every day, spending money, spending time, worrying and worrying. I will not be allowed to do whatever I want. And sometimes I say to my friends at work, you can have two children or two months' holiday every year [grinning in pride]…I want to retire as early as possible, probably at the age of 45. Sell everything; sell the house. Take all my money and go to somewhere like China.[17] If I have children, I can't do that, because I'll be stuck here for twenty more years. I won't have the money to retire.

Notably, it is evident from Dan's narratives that the pronoun 'I' was frequently used, even when describing family decisions. Whilst Cora at first believed that she could talk Dan out of his refusal to have a child, she eventually gave up trying. Not only did this conflict once nearly lead to the couple's separation, but Cora gradually came to accept and support Dan's ideal of individual enjoyment of life. This individualist ideal also characterises Dan's relationships with the couple's extended families. Noting that Cora, 'like many *Chinese* people' said Dan, 'don't *think things through*' [my italics], he went on to comment on Cora's understanding of filial piety, that is giving money to her parents.

One time, Cora told me that she just gave five thousand quid to her parents, which got me so angry. What!? 5K!? Are you mental?! Then I got to learn about the filial piety thing in China and told her a thousand would do next time. If I haven't done so, she'd give all our money away. Sometimes she just doesn't think things through: whether they [Cora's parents] need the money? What is our financial status?

Dan's role as the opinion leader and figurehead of the family was similar to that of Cary, who made most of the family's decisions; according to Rita's words, he was better able to 'reason things out'. To illustrate the sense of freedom afforded by a childless life, Rita and Cary proudly listed

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28.21 % of the respondents gave answers of 1, 2 or 3, indicating their agreement with the statement; 21.23 % expressed neutrality (4); and 50.06 % disagreed with the statement (5, 6 and 7).

[17] Like Xiu, Dan cited the favourable exchange rate between Chinese yen and British pound sterling to explain that he was able to earn enough in the UK to enjoy a decent life after early retirement.

to me the holidays they have taken in the past several years, including time spent in Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt and the Caribbean islands. They noted that none of this would have been possible if they had had a child. For all three families, enjoying life on an individual basis—whether Fred's hassle-free retirement, Dan's vision of an early retirement or the others' child-free holidays and cinema trips—was the basis of a persuasive and reasonable argument that childlessness would best benefit the family. However, much as Dan and Cora looked forward to celebrating their own lives after early retirement, they had no idea what exactly they wanted to do.

Childlessness not only allowed the families more freedom of time, space and financial resources for individualist personal lives but removed a key practical obstacle to the marriage-migrants' decision to work. However, jobs were difficult to find, especially as Rita, Xiu and Cora themselves did not believe that they would be able to succeed as qualified professionals in Britain. Recounting their experience of job-hunting, Rita, Xiu and Cora unanimously agreed that it is much more difficult for 'us marriage migrants' to find jobs than people who come to study or work in the UK. Indeed, they envisaged marriage migrants as less competitive than professional migrants. Arguably, this imagined inferiority does not necessarily exist in practical terms. As employers are not required to sponsor their visas, marriage migrants may even have an edge over non-EU students and migrant workers when it comes to job-hunting. Nevertheless, the transition from marriage migration to professional work requires individuals to overcome not only objective hurdles such as language but also subjective psychological barriers such as difficulties with self-identification and confidence (Hardill, 2002).

I found the British husbands in the three families to play key roles in helping their Chinese wives to overcome these barriers, both subjective and objective. On the grounds that, in Rita's words, the '*native British* […] know much more than Chinese migrants', and thus can be trusted by their wives, the three British husbands have provided substantial practical counsel and psychological reassurance in matters of job-hunting. On Fred's recommendation, Xiu began looking for a job during mah-jongg games with a few Chinese living in the same town; this connection soon secured Xiu her job as a waitress in a Chinese restaurant in a city 30

miles away. Working in the 'ethnic economy', Xiu is pleased that she no longer has to worry about her English. With the help of Cary's friends, Rita secured a post in a company specialising in graphics design. Due to her design expertise, Rita has not experienced many problems, despite her limited English proficiency. At the time of the study, she had only recently begun a language-training course sponsored by her company. Meanwhile, Cora, a former English teacher, tried hard to gain expertise in logistics as she worked her way up to the position of logistics manager from that of trainee assistant over seven years.

As they settled into their work, Rita, Xiu and Cora's lives began to revolve around the competing worlds of work and the family. Nevertheless, their transition to professional work has not substantially altered their home-making roles within the family. Although Fred's retirement has allowed him to shoulder a considerable number of chores, he still expects to fall back on the 'safety-net' of Xiu in his later life. Rita is the major house-keeper in her family, responsible for most of the domestic chores, such as cooking, housekeeping and grocery-shopping. Although Dan takes the initiative to help out with various chores, Cora still feels the need to take charge of domesticity to ensure that the family does not overtly 'cut back' on the quality of their life, given Dan's austere and simplistic ideal of life. As most of the professional Chinese wives we have met in Chap. 5 felt there to be an underlying tension between work and family, one must ask whether the 'off-tracker' families experience a similar tension, and if so, how they have handled it. The three working marriage migrants stated unanimously that they felt little such tension. Sharing Dan's belief that work is mostly about economic benefits, Cora offered the following explanation:

> **Cora**: My work has not been easy. But I don't plan to do it for much longer, anyway; probably only a few more years. I never expected to achieve huge success [in her career]. So it's all about doing the job, getting the salary and putting it in the bank […]. Dan and I both enjoy a simple life.
> **Yang**: Simple life?
> **Cora**: Yes, for example, we don't demand luxurious cars or fancy food. Sometimes just a simple walk will do. So there's not much hassle on the family side either.

Rita and Xiu shared Cora's view of her work as a *job* rather than a prospective *career*. Xiu, who was saving up for her retirement at the time of interview, considered her job to be a 'cash machine'. Saying jokingly to me that 'you don't think I will become a well-known designer, do you?!', Rita explained that her work is mostly project based and that her company encourages a flexible working style to encourage designers to be creative. In his research on international migration in Central and North America, Bryan Roberts (1995) found that migrants' attitudes towards their geographic mobility and ethnic identification vary as they posit distinct outlooks on their expected duration of migration. The same idea of how people's understanding of the future shapes their current life—particularly in terms of expected duration of life events—similarly applies to Rita, Xiu and Cora's attitudes towards their work. Distinguishing their *jobs* from *careers*, Rita, Xiu and Cora are not as attached to professional work as most of the professional Chinese wives interviewed for Chap. 5; nor are they as attached to domesticity as the Chinese housewives in Chap. 4. Therefore, the attitudes adopted by the marriage migrants towards work reconcile the tension that might otherwise arise from the competing demands of professional life and home.

Whereas Cora and Dan have been busy making money, and thus have only a limited social life, Rita and Cora have maintained loose connections with their extended families as well as forming new social networks in the UK. These connections allow them sufficient access to social resources, but also the space to pursue their individualist ideals. For example, Xiu objectified her social network in the mah-jongg room in utilitarian terms as a form of social resource, which made it easier for her to avoid subscribing to values widely held by the Chinese community, such as the necessity of having a child. Having undergone divorce and business failure and re-marriage, Xiu has been marginalised as the 'black sheep' of her Chinese family. When Xiu's nephew, a friend of mine in Cambridge, gave me her telephone number, my desire to find out more about Xiu was instantly thwarted. My friend told me that Xiu's had not been in close contact with her (nuclear) family for years and thus did not know much about her life. Although Rita and Cora have retained better relationships with their families in China, contact has been limited to occasional phone calls, money transfers and short home visits. They

explained that they have not made many friends with whom they identify and can share their experiences in Britain.

Negotiating 'Change'

In the twentieth century, the rise of individualism was accompanied by the fall of familism, as individual aspirations and benefits were increasingly prioritised over those of the family. As the war over family escalated (Popenoe, 2008), grief at the 'death of marriage' loomed large in the first decade of the new millennium (Lewis, 2001). The focus of the classic familism-individualism debate was within-family organisation, and how this prescribed relationships between family members. However, at the heart of the new individualism-familism debate is the question of why marriage and the family exist in the first place. The cases of Hanna and Liz rather vividly elaborate how the rising sense of individualism may render marital negotiation exceptionally difficult, especially as alternative individual strategies are readily available in modern welfare societies. Nevertheless, in choosing the roads less travelled, the six 'off-tracker' families we have met in this chapter have survived drastic life changes from professional migration to domesticity and from marriage migration to professional work. How have they negotiated these changing life trajectories, and what adaptive devices have they used to do so?

Settling '*trust*'. It all began with a willingness to negotiate, which is based on mutual trust between two social actors (Festenstein, 2005). The very existence of the six Chinese-British couples indicates that the institution of marriage is still upheld by some, despite the growth of individualist ideals. Individualisation theories may have exaggerated the extent of family fragmentation and decreasing relationship commitment; Smart (2007) notes that all kinds of 'connected lives' are underpinned by commitment, albeit to varying degrees. Such commitment is predicated on the feeling of 'trust' and enacts 'entrustment' in terms of emotional and material investment in the family. While a sense of 'trust' was present in the lives of most of the families examined in this research, it was most clearly evident in the experiences of the six 'off-tracker' families.

Such a sense of 'trust' is especially difficult to establish across ethnic boundaries, due to restrictive sociocultural stereotypes. Suspicious of the 'mystique of Western playboys' (Chan, 2011; Farrer, 2013), the Chinese wives and their extended families were unsure whether inter-ethnic marriage was sufficiently *trustworthy* to be *worthy* of such a significant 'jump' early in a relationship. This uncertainty extended beyond the six 'off-tracker' families to those we have met in the preceding chapters. As we have seen, it takes persuasive gestures such as common ownership, emotional investment and not least the institution of marriage itself as a symbolic and legal binding to elicit the willingness to negotiate compromises. Once a sense of 'trust' has been established, and family members are convinced that, in Fang's words, 'there is a family to fall back on', the husbands and wives are set to negotiate.

British-male-earner model: going back and stepping forward. The six 'off-tracker' families represent diverse variations of the male-earner model. Not only have the British husbands' careers been prioritised to ensure that they remain as continuous, smooth and straightforward as possible, but most of the families' dominant ideals—whether individualism, childlessness or the other way around—have been largely determined by the British husbands. This has required the Chinese wives to make changes. The former professional immigrants have withdrawn from their careers, and the former marriage migrants have in a sense been 'encouraged' to work to fill their time and justify choices such as childlessness. Nevertheless, the transition between work and family has not been clear-cut, whether 'going back' or 'stepping forward'. Ambivalence has been used to cushion potential backlash throughout the changes (Vaillant, 1977), as in the cases of Yiyi and Rita's flexible jobs and Fang's participation in voluntary work.

However, in an inter-ethnic and transnational context, the prevalence of the male-earner model may be attributable to factors other than patriarchal tradition. The emergence of a male-earner model in the six families examined in this chapter is a complex product of sociocultural values, economic calculations, emotional compromise and so on, based on a conscious characterisation of the British husbands as 'natives' and the Chinese wives as 'migrants' and 'ethnic others'. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese wives' willingness to entrust their husbands with the responsi-

bility for decision-making was facilitated by the belief that their British husbands—as fully informed 'natives' equipped with the tool of rational reasoning—would make sensible choices on their behalf.

Gender and ethnicity: '*chain reaction*'. A message clearly encoded in the lives of the six 'off-tracker' families is that the change in one's gender role does not take place on its own in an inter-ethnic context. Evidently, gender and ethnic dynamics intricately intertwine with each other in the six families. As the marriage migrants veered towards professional work, they seem to have moved away from identifying with their Chinese extended families and social networks. Such were the examples of Rita and Cora who made enormous efforts to integrate into an ethnically British social life, and Xiu who managed to cut loose her attachment to the circle of Chinese friends, despite her working in the 'ethnic economy'. Conversely, as they veered towards domesticity, former professional migrants such as Fang and Yiyi gradually grew apart from ethnically British social network conferred from their previous jobs, and they came to draw on distinctive family and gender values to define their 'Chineseness'.

There is strong and vivid evidence indicating that the ethnic and gender *dynamics* (rather than mere identity constructs) are interconnected in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage. Indeed, gender and ethnic identities are mutual-shaping and mutual-constituent (Kraler, Kofman, Kohli, & Schmoll, 2011). First, dichotomised between the mainstream and periphery, and differentiated by the status of 'integration', the inter-ethnic families have actively mobilised ethnicity as social and cultural capitals to facilitate their changing gender roles. Xiu, Rita and Cora, for example, accessed and benefited from such 'ethnic capital'—particularly through their British husbands as well-informed 'insiders'. Second, ethnicity also places structural constraints on the available options of gender-role change—both at home in terms of domesticity and at work in terms of what job one could get, how far one could advance in his or her career and the like. One's ethnic options cannot possibly be understood without considering one's gender options and politics. Third, as a matter of self-conscious identification, gender roles change hand in hand with ethnic preferences. Yiyi, Fang and Emma, for example, were seen to actively calibrate their ethnic preferences in line with their changing work-family orientations.

Attitude lubricant. In addition to the willingness to initiate change, smoothing out the process of change requires constant effort. Almost unanimously, the six families resorted to conceptualisations of work as 'attitude lubricants', which gave rise to divergent attitudes towards the wife's *job* and the *career* of her husband. By conceptualising their work as 'flexible', 'replaceable' and 'repetitive' the six Chinese wives managed to detach themselves from the professional world. This made it easier for the former professionals to relinquish their careers, and for the former marriage migrants to take up professional work without becoming particularly attached to it—thereby precluding potential tension between work and family. The same sense of flexibility is similarly applied to the six families' perception of ethnicity as a form of utilisable social resource rather than a reified 'given'. Meanwhile, the British husbands projected their *careers* as 'continuous', 'upward' and 'long-term' mobile processes, requiring them to remain on their professional pathways. Such attitude lubricants, according to Goffman (2005), are useful means of managing emotions, as they construct leverage between psychological cognition and actual social behaviour. Notably, as the six families do not exclusively subscribe to the typical 'Chinese' or 'British' values we have seen in preceding chapters, an attitudinal 'ambivalence' has also facilitated their individualist life choices, such as childlessness.

'*Feeling' change.* We not only shift our perspectives to adapt to life changes, we feel such changes and enact 'emotional labour' to respond to our subtle feelings all the time, even before we knowingly devise any adaptive strategy (Hochschild, 1983). Not surprisingly, feelings such as Rita's frustration and loneliness, Xiu's uncertainty and insecurity, Fang's ambivalence, Cora's lack of confidence and the sense of 'trust (security)' the six couples strived to construct all contain some of the most nuanced clues to how people negotiate their distinctive identities in an inter-ethnic context. For the six couples, inter-ethnicity triggered a common feeling of uncertainty and ambivalence when the Chinese wives and their British husbands were faced with drastically different and unfamiliar sociocultural logics. Such senses of uncertainty and insecurity could only be stronger when changes happen to the domestic and work arrangements of the couples all at the same time. While the families strived to achieve the sense of what Giddens (1991) referred to as 'ontological secu-

rity', emotions such as the lack of confidence, frustration and so on also tangibly shape the attitudes and behaviours of the couples we have met in this chapter. Above all, these ongoing feelings kept the six couples alive to the need of action as much as inaction when deciding, coping and simply living with their changing lives.

Although discussed as a separate typology, the six 'off-tracker' families resemble the families discussed in previous chapters in several key respects. Just as it proved impossible for the three former professional migrants to cut themselves off entirely from their previous careers, so the marriage migrants were unable to rid themselves altogether of their domestic responsibilities. The distinction, therefore, is a matter of degree. Change, conflict and negotiation are often understood in more dramatic terms, as clashes and flarings-up. Certainly, cases of divorce indicate that such 'dramas' do occur in reality. In most cases, however, change and negotiation take place in quieter and more implicit forms. The strategies of negotiation used overtly by the six 'off-tracker' families may also be deployed by some of the other families, albeit in potentially less explicit forms. Although the battle between familism and individualism has often been conceptualised and rationalised in terms of economic calculations and benefit trade-offs (Popenoe, 2008), the reasons for the marriages of the six couples discussed here are far more complex. Interpersonal intimacy is a self-perpetuating process that goes beyond merely material factors: it is not only built on trust and interdependence but generates these feelings in return.

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7

A World Inverted

The Gender Myth

As a Chinese man, my initial motivation to write this chapter was personal. The rarity of Chinese men in inter-ethnic marriages is not only evident from the difficulties I faced in enlisting participants for my research; it is consistently reflected in statistical indicators at the level of the population. According to UK population estimates in 2001 and 2005 and other survey-based research (Muttarak & Heath, 2010), Chinese form an exceptional ethnic group whereby women are much more likely than men to intermarry.[1] The small proportion of Chinese men in inter-ethnic marriage is not simply perceived as such relative to the proportion of

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[1] For 2001 data see: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ethnicity/focus-on-ethnicity-and-identity/focus-on-ethnicity-and-identity-summary-report/focus-on---ethnicity-and-identity-summary-report.pdf and for 2005 data see: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/population-trends-rd/population-trends/no--120--summer-2005/population-trends.pdf, date accessed 6 March 2014. The exact number of first-generation Chinese-British intermarriage is not available to date, which could be largely attributed to the measurement used by national surveys and census for ethnic grouping whereby a second-generation Chinese or mixed-ethnic may identify themselves as either Chinese or British by national-cultural origin or nationality. Notably, as current surveys and census only

Chinese women; exogenous comparison also reveals Chinese men to intermarry less frequently than men from other ethnic-minority groups, such as Caribbean and African (ONS, 2005). Why is this the case?

The 'lack of popularity' of Chinese men in terms of inter-ethnic marriage has long been a subject of popular debate and gossip in the mass media and elsewhere. While some have claimed that Chinese men lack a certain masculine and 'tough' physical appeal, others have argued that 'traditional' and 'patriarchal' Chinese men are unwilling to intermarry (Kibria, 1997; Sung, 1990). As beauty is in the eye of the beholder, physical aesthetics may determine individual choice at a micro-level. At the macro-level, however, the 'appeal' argument has been proven invalid: with the exception of traits that are socioeconomically or culturally salient, physical traits play little role in determining the aggregate patterns of intermarriage (Kalmijn, 1998). Nor does the argument stand that Chinese men resist exogamy. In a representative national survey conducted in China in 2008,[2] the respondents were asked whether they would accept Europeans as kin by marriage. Gender difference barely affected the results, with 41.38 % of the male respondents and 41.18 % of the female respondents expressing willingness. Although evidence from the US suggests that structural forces such as gender ratios and ethnic-group sizes are key determinants of the rate of ethnic exogamy (Hwang, Saenz, & Aguirre, 1997), the more or less equal population sizes of male and female Chinese ethnics in Britain indicate that structural imbalance is unlikely to explain the gendered pattern of Chinese-British inter-ethnic marriage.[3] If anything, the surplus of Chinese men in the Chinese marriage market would suggest that Chinese men are more likely to out-marry than their female counterparts (Hesketh & Xing, 2006).

As macro-exogenous social and demographic factors cannot account for the gender imbalance in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage, we

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gauge the 'out-marriage' rate of a given ethnic group, we do not have exact figure for the percentage of Chinese men and women marrying to the specific ethnic group of 'White-British'.

[2] Data from the China General Social Survey 2008, which contained a special module on attitudes towards globalisation; 3010 respondents, with one respondent randomly drawn from each household, were surveyed. As the globalisation module had one missing response, the remaining 3009 respondents were used for the analysis.

[3] Oxford Migration Observatory: http://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/immigration-population-and-ethnicity-uk-international-perspective, date accessed 7 March 2014.

Table 7.1 Profiles of Chinese-British families of Chinese husbands

| Pseudonym | Chinese husbands | | | British wives | |
	Education	Occupation (before)	Occupation (after)	Education	Occupation
Qian, Lisa	Master's degree	University lecturer	IT consultant	Master's degree	Director of library
Zeng, Iris	Bachelor's degree	School teacher	Part-time Chinese tutor	Master's degree	University professor
Jun, Becky	Bachelor's degree	Businessman	Restaurant chef	Master's degree	Council clerk

Note: The occupations of the Chinese husbands are distinguished as 'before' migration to Britain (in China) and 'after' migration

must directly examine the lived experience of Chinese husbands and their British wives to explore the cause of this phenomenon from the inside. Indeed, as inter-ethnic marriage incurs complex decisions such as immigration and involves intricate familial ties, particularly on the Chinese side, it is essential to explore how the few Chinese husbands and British wives involved in this research—as described in Table 7.1—have managed to beat the odds. This will shed light on the difficulties that may impede the formation of families composed of Chinese men and British women.

Whilst it is impossible to generalise from just three cases, the unique characteristics of the three Chinese-British families in this chapter are worthy of attention (Lieberson, 1991). First, in terms of locality, as patrilocal tradition prescribes that Chinese men establish nuclear families on their 'home-ground' (Farrer, 2008), the three Chinese husbands are rare examples of immigration to and subsequent family settlement in the UK. Second, the demographic characteristics and career trajectories of the three couples are exceptional. The results of a nationally representative 2010 survey in China[4] indicate that more than 80 % of Chinese men

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[4] Data based on 5610 married couples with valid information on the educational qualifications of both husband and wife, from the China Family Panel Studies 2010. The China Family Panel Studies is the largest available database on Chinese families to date. Co-administered by the Social Survey Centre at Peking University and the University of Michigan, Ann Arbour, it covers 95 % of the Chinese population.

are educated to a level equivalent to or higher than that of their wives; however, Lisa, Iris and Becky not only hold educational qualifications equivalent to or higher than their husbands' but also have higher-flying careers. Qian, Zeng and Jun all 'downgraded' their occupational status after migrating to the UK, in contrast with common practice in China, where more than 84 % of males regard a man's career as being more important than that of his wife.[5] Third, not only were the configuration of Chinese-husband-and-British-wife rare in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage, the role reversal between the three husbands and wives at home is also extremely rare as less than 3 % of families host this reversed gender-role configuration in the UK (Scott, Dex, & Plagnol, 2012): the Chinese husbands described shouldering the majority of the domestic responsibilities, with their British wives providing only limited help with housekeeping.

The above exceptionalities therefore raise the key question of this chapter: how are we to understand the uniqueness of the three families in terms of their geographical, ethnic, occupational and domestic configurations? Instead of attempting to infer to the wider population from which the three families are drawn, this chapter aims to showcase the diverse and possible lived experiences that the Chinese husbands and their British wives *could* assume. The results therefore should be interpreted within the context of the three families.

Becoming 'New Man'

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'new man' refers to 'a man who rejects sexist attitudes and the traditional male role, especially in the context of domestic responsibilities and childcare.'[6] In this sense, the three Chinese husbands examined in this chapter are stereotypical 'new men' according to the dictionary definition. I paid my first home visit to Qian and Lisa on a spring day in 2013, in the late afternoon. Lisa was still

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[5] Data from the China General Social Survey 2006, in which 3208 respondents representative of the Chinese population were surveyed.

[6] The definition of 'new man': http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/new-man?q=new+man, date accessed 10 December 2014.

at work, but Qian's job allowed him the flexibility to go home early. As usual, he left work soon after 4 p.m. and headed home to prepare dinner for the family, stopping off at Sainsbury's[7] to buy the daily groceries. He greeted me at the door in a Chinese-red apron and invited me to accompany him into the kitchen, where his routine home life begins after work every day. Zeng and Jun—the other two Chinese husbands with British wives examined in this chapter—have similar routines. Jun works in a Chinese restaurant and is thus naturally held responsible for the family's meals, while Zeng's family life after work usually begins with picking up his son from the nursery.

As pioneering 'new men', Qian, Zeng and Jun are content to wear an apron or push a baby's pram. In Zeng's opinion, for instance, Britain is a 'much more liberal place' than China; compared with China, Zeng therefore felt that he is not negatively (or at least to a lesser degree in relative terms) judged for being a home-making husband and housekeeping father. Although the three Chinese husbands might plausibly have migrated to Britain for what they perceived to be greater acceptance of the liberal views of 'new man' compared with China, it is worth noting that the men did not opt for domesticity from the outset. On the contrary, the three Chinese husbands' near-instinctive identification with domesticity in later life significantly departs from their relatively traditional family upbringing. Despite Jun's having married Becky and played the role of 'new man' in his family for nearly 30 years, his mother, who was more than 80 years old at the time of interview, still vilified Becky for having bent Jun 'queer' when she heard that that her son did laundry and ironing—both tasks for which women are traditionally held responsible.

Not surprisingly, the journey to become 'new men' has not been straightforward for Jun, Zeng and Qian. One must then ask why and how, if the three husbands did not have a clear propensity for domesticity in the first place, they decided to make what seems a rather unusual move—both in terms of immigration and family-work orientation. As noted in Chap. 1, Qian and Lisa were among the first couples to intermarry following China's reform and opening-up in late 1970s and early 1980s. Not only was their marriage a novelty that stirred up endless

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[7] A famous supermarket franchise in the UK.

gossip among relatives and acquaintances, it began as a political taboo clouded by suspicions of capitalist espionage at the height of the Cold War (Bozeman, 2010). When asked how they decided to settle down in the UK, Qian and Lisa recounted their early experience of marriage as follows:

> **Qian**: We went back to China soon after our marriage. It was strange because wherever we went we felt that people were looking at us.
>
> **Lisa**: [Interrupting] It was that stabbing look, shouting at us, 'What are you doing here?!'
>
> **Qian**: The first thing we did was to go to the local police station to get registered. The police then called on us from time to time just to check that 'the foreigner' [Lisa] was OK. One day, our neighbour told us that the police were following us on our outings. We felt that we'd had enough of the surveillance thing, and decided that we should definitely settle down in the UK.

Jun and Becky, contemporaries of Qian and Lisa, shared similar experiences and revealed their concerns that 'the government might do something to the family'. In fear, they migrated to the UK. Little more than a decade later, in the late 1990s, the marriage of Zeng and Iris was no longer subject to political scrutiny. Yet despite rapid change in China's political and economic climate due to booming international trade (Wong & Bo, 2010), cultural change moved forward at a much slower pace. Indeed, researchers have found that women's gender roles became more traditional during the reform era, especially in rural areas of China, due to the lack of coverage of the socialist reinforcement of gender egalitarianism as a result of China's political reform (Chow & Chen, 1994; Tam, Wong, & Wang, 2014). In the southern village in which Zeng was born and raised, the marriage between the British volunteer tutor and the Chinese teacher in the local school was a one-time sensation. In the sound and fury of reproach from Zeng's family, who feared that Iris was 'too individualistic to be an obedient wife' (in Iris's words) and from the local villagers, whom Zeng described as 'having never seen a foreigner before', the couple decided to move to the UK. In summary, therefore, the three Chinese husbands' decision to move to the UK was clearly motivated: to

safeguard their marriages against political surveillance, cultural margin-alisation and the like. Prioritising their marriages by migrating to the UK required them to renounce the prospect of career advancement in China. Jun described his experience of looking for work in the UK as follows:

> After settling down in the UK, Becky soon secured a job in the local coun-cil and I idled at home for quite a while before finding my current job as a cook in a Chinese restaurant… I knew all too well that the decision to move here [the UK] would make it difficult for me to find a job, as both a foreigner and immigrant. I was prepared for that [being unemployed], so actually I didn't mind staying at home at all. But my family [in China] strongly objected to my *daotiemen*[8] and my decision to become a *shang-mennüxü*[9] who *chiruanfan*.[10]

Indeed, migration has been a double-edged sword for these three cou-ples: on the one hand, it has enabled them to enjoy a marital life free of interference, slander and political scrutiny; but on the other hand, it has hindered the career prospects of the Chinese husbands to a certain extent. The implication of the voluntary migration of the three Chinese husbands in prioritisation of their marriages engendered a somewhat 'involuntary' and 'coerced' career change, which vividly illustrates the 'intermarriage penalty' for men noted in previous research (Nystedt & Dribe, 2014). According to the famous sociolinguist Teun van Dijk (1998), discourse can conjure up emotions only when a social actor participates in highly contextualised social situations. Unsurprisingly, once in the UK and sep-arated from their original Chinese cultural context, Zeng, Qian and Jun no longer experienced the same feelings of shame and guilt at derogatory terms such as *shangmennüxü*, *chiruanfan* and *daotiemen*.

Although the three Chinese husbands did not initially envisage pri-oritising their wives' careers over their own, the three families would not have been possible without the husbands' shared willingness to take on the

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[8] Derogatory Chinese slang for a man's marrying into his wife's family, an act traditionally regarded as signifying incompetence and a lack of masculinity.

[9] The noun form of *daotiemen*—a man who marries into his wife's family.

[10] 'Eats soft [as opposed to hard] rice'. This term refers to a man whose wife is the family's major breadwinner; it is usually a derogatory term implying male incompetence.

novel role of male housekeeper. In a sense, despite society's entry into the 'third stage' of the development of fatherhood or husbandhood, wherein men's active choice of domesticity plays an increasingly important role,[11] the ideal of the 'new man' is not a matter of widespread awareness, even in non-traditional, developed Western countries (Lundberg, 2005). As part of her preference theory of women's gender roles, Catherine Hakim (2000) identified a large middle swathe of females who neither prefer nor reject work or domesticity. Similarly, the three Chinese husbands did not actively *opt* for male-centred domesticity or the role of a 'new' family man. Instead, Qian, Jun and Zeng semi-consciously 'dream-walked' into domesticity as a consequence of the decision to prioritise their relationships and families. Nevertheless, albeit under the influence of circumstantial forces, such a 'dream-walk' would not have been possible without the husbands' flexible attitude towards gender-role preferences, which made them willing to adopt non-traditional gender roles and take up the 'apron' when the existence of their families was challenged.

In *Orlando*, the pioneering feminist Virginia Woolf (1928) noted that 'clothes have […] more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us'. So it is with 'apron'. As umbrella terms referring to the male practice of domesticity, 'new man', 'male housekeeper' and so on veil certain nuanced and fine-grained distinctions in the attitudes and values that underlie the practice of gender roles we observe on the surface. The unique experiences of political and cultural marginalisation and subsequent migration led Qian, Jun and Zeng to make an initial attempt at domesticity. In Qian's words, they 'gradually came to appreciate the fun and sense of achievement' conferred by such activities as cooking and doing the laundry, and their wives and children praised them highly, using such terms as 'brilliant chef' and 'super-daddy'. Therefore, the initial attempt of domesticity has made all the difference to how these three Chinese men view the home world. It has allowed them to express their liking for domesticity and the activities involved in raising children. In turn, the performance of

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[11] In his review of the evolution of fatherhood, the historian John Nash identified three stages in the development of men's gender roles. During the first two stages, according to Nash, the role of father/husband was to be cold and stern. In contrast, the third stage involved a more conscious and active emotional investment from fathers and husbands.

domestic roles has elicited from the men an emotional attachment to the chores they undertake. Notably, the actual experience of domesticity has changed the Chinese husbands' original view of housework as comprised of mere blocks of tasks that could be easily divided. When asked how they *share* domestic tasks, Jun problematised the common conceptualisation of domesticity as a series of divisible allotted tasks and tick-boxes:

> Sometimes, you can't really say who does what at home. Quite often, housekeeping is not just a matter of doing A, B and C. You always need to keep the house in order on a daily basis, like putting things away and tipping the garbage…When you see a patch of dust on the windowsill, you just go ahead and mop it.

Qian and Zeng expressed similar views and indicated that they have developed a sense of 'active engagement' in domesticity over time. Rather than being assigned tasks as part of a sharing process, they are now 'actively alert' to what needs to be done and 'get on with doing it' (Zeng). With marriage and family as a stable and safe haven in their ever-changing lives, Qian did not regret moving from the educational to the IT sector, and Jun did not mind giving up his business in China to become a chef in the UK. The Chinese husbands also kept 'open minds' when choosing which jobs to take up, where to live and whom to befriend. Qian explained that he 'could get along with most people' and Zeng said that he '[loved] to make friends wherever the family goes'. The three Chinese husbands were keen to host cultural activities, participate in neighbourhood committees and develop local networks wherever they went. In addition to Ryan and Mulholland's (2014) finding that women are usually the routes to social life for migrant families, the three Chinese husbands are the routes to the social life of their respective families.

Compared with the professional husbands interviewed for this study, Jun, Qian and Zeng's social lives are domestically oriented. This has somewhat broadened their horizons, allowing them to see (in Jun's words) that 'there's a huge wide world apart from work to enjoy' and separating them from interpersonal and emotional attachments to the professional world. However, the Chinese husbands' flexible relationship with and lack of attachment to work would not have been possible without the

financial upkeep provided by their British wives. The corollary of a revolution in male gender roles is that females must also adapt to the norm of 'new woman'. How do the three British professional wives experience their lives, and what lies beneath their professional exterior?

The Making of 'New Woman'

I met Lisa about two hours after meeting Qian. At 6:40 p.m., a car engine fell silent in the driveway, the front door opened and Lisa was home. Having been chatting with me while cooking about topics ranging from his family in China to childrearing, Qian began to serve dinner—kung-pao chicken and *disanxian* (a famous Chinese dish), his speciality dishes. As she led me into the dining room, Lisa (like most of the professional husbands I met during this research) could not help sharing with Qian the latest progress on the project she had undertaken and the 'who did what' details of work. In return, Qian told Lisa about special offers available in Sainsbury's. It was clear that Lisa, who led a team of 40 employees, enjoyed her job and was closely integrated with her network of colleagues. The other two British wives, Iris and Becky, shared Lisa's enthusiasm for work. As a professor and a council clerk, they are successful in their respective walks of life, and, like Lisa, receive full domestic support from their husbands. Similar to my interviews with most of the professional women interviewed for this research, my conversations with the three British wives began naturally with their work and their decision to opt for a professional career:

> **Lisa**: I was the only person from my family who went to university… umm, actually, when I told my parents I'd like to go to university, they refused to support me financially. So I had to earn my own tuition […] At that time, my mom told me, 'Why don't you just find a secretarial job, get married and have a happy family?' Well, that was exactly what she [Lisa's mother] did. But I was so fed up with the idea of having to repeat her life. So after graduation, I went to China. I was one of the only three British I knew in *Dongbei* [Chinese for 'Northeast China']…
> **Yang**: How did they [Lisa's family] accept your marriage to Qian, then?

Lisa: I guess I had always challenged their expectations right from the beginning of going to university; you see, then I went to China…they were used to me not doing what they wanted.

Becky: I always did quite well with my schoolwork, exams and so on. Then my teachers told me that I should aim for the best when applying for university. I did have a bit of a struggle when I got my undergraduate [degree] with a first. As all my friends told me that, 'You should definitely carry on' [with further studies], I continued to finish my Master's [degree]. After that, I still wasn't sure about what I'd like to do, so I decided to take a gap year in China. There I met Jun […]. When we decided to come back to Britain and settle down, I thought I had to find a stable job to support the family, because I was more or less prepared that it wouldn't be easy for Jun to find work.

For Lisa, the experience of higher education, and particularly her refusal to repeat her mother's life, provided strong momentum for her professional career. Beginning with a 'rebellious' rejection of her family's designated 'secretarial track' of life by earning her own way through university, she came to enjoy her career as a librarian, a section manager and then the director of a university library. The less dramatic life and career trajectories of Becky and Iris are in many ways representative of the experiences of many professional women today, who enter the professional world as a result of the expansion and equalisation of educational opportunities for men and women (Evans & Strauss, 2011; Gerson, 2010). In contrast with the professional women in dual-earner families, however, the three breadwinning British wives felt a 'weighty responsibility to support the family financially' (Iris). Whereas the middle-class professional wives in dual-earner families often expressed their desire for independence, their love for their job and so on, the three British wives' concern about their careers as the economic bloodlines of their families more closely resembled the opinions of male professionals, members of low-income families and lone parents (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000).

In a world in which male-centred tradition has been turned upside down, Becky, Lisa and Iris are at the frontier of changes in gender perceptions and roles. Nevertheless, their view of marriage is traditional in other respects. Although Lisa refused to repeat her mother's life, she longed for

a stable and lifelong marriage like that of her parents from an early age. Becky and Iris, whose parents had divorced when they were young, were keen to make sure that their children grew up in intact families. Despite their initial impression of Chinese men as, in Iris's words, 'stern and insensitive to affection', the three British wives' visits to China eradicated this stereotype and revealed in Chinese men the qualities they longed for in marital life—faithfulness and stability. Bold explorers to the Far East, Becky, Iris and Lisa also played active roles in their courtships—roles often assumed to be 'masculine' (Jackson, Kleiner, Geist, & Cebulko, 2011; McFarland, Jurafsky, & Rawlings, 2013). The seeming passivity of Qian, Jun and Zeng—which is viewed by Chinese as the virtue of *hanxu* (indirectly and implicitly expressing one's feelings), yet signifies apathy and a lack of masculinity to many Westerners (Yan, 2002)—was appreciated by the British wives. Iris described her experience of dating Zeng as follows:

> When we worked in the local school, Zeng was one of the few people in the village who could speak English. He was quite gentle and took very good care of me. As we got to know each other better, he often invited me over for meals…you know, I just felt something in the water that he might have liked me. Day in and day out, Zeng kept on taking care of me, but he just didn't crack it. So one day when he brought me a meal box over lunch at school, I asked him how did he feel for me. He didn't get the message at first, but he soon blushed and told me that he liked me.

The other two wives shared similar experiences. Describing herself as having a 'short fuse', Lisa confessed that she chased after Qian, saying that 'after getting quite close for a couple of months, I just couldn't wait for Qian to make the first move. So I just went for it!' For Becky, Jun's passivity was reassuring; 'if he didn't even take the first move to woo me, then it's unlikely that he would be a womaniser and woo others'. While it is clear from the preceding chapters that cultural conflict and negotiation constantly take place in inter-ethnic marriages, the experiences of the three families interviewed for this chapter reveal that cultural negotiation, mutual interpretation and wave-length alignment begin as early as the first expressions of affection in the courtship process, which enables intermarriage to occur in the first place.

Nevertheless, the Chinese husbands' parents and extended families did not appreciate the straightforwardness of the British wives. While chatting with me alone, Jun told me that his family initially thought of Becky as 'slutty', as according to Chinese tradition 'no girl should go about courting men'. Similarly, his friends expressed concern as to whether Becky was too 'easy'. The parents of Qian and Zeng were also worried that their individualistic daughters-in-law would fail to produce heirs. However, as the couples gave birth to children and the parents came to realise that their sons' settlement in the UK freed them from the one-child policy and allowed them to have more than one child, the migration and marriages of the three couples began to seem more palatable.

Indeed, men's practice of domesticity is somewhat 'new' and 'novel' of our times, which not surprisingly has attracted considerable attention. A brief exploration into the accounts of the three professional British wives suggests that the revolution of 'new man' equally requires that of the 'new woman'. Indeed, such a revolution, as reflected in the cases of Lisa, Iris and Becky, involves nuanced emotional contours and subtle conjugal dynamics that lie behind the apparently simple inversion of gender roles entailed in women's professionalisation. It is laden with tension, for example, between Becky, Lisa and Iris and their extended families on both the British and Chinese sides, as well as the weighty burden felt by the three professional wives as the major breadwinners for their families, who realise that the female job can be a serious lifeline and not just a matter of pleasurised personal fulfilment. Compared with the professional men's appreciation for their wives' domestic dedication in the families we have met in the previous chapters, the gratitude expressed by the three British wives for their husbands was disproportionately great. Above all, in an inter-ethnic context in particular, the inverted world in the three families has been also confronted at many other frontiers beyond the nuclear family.

The Many Faces of 'New Man'

Our understanding of the 'new man' has been largely restricted to its dictionary definition, which emphasises the roles of men and women as husbands and wives. Given a rising tide of individualism and the

prevalence of a nuclear-family model in Western societies in recent decades (Popenoe, 1988; Therborn, 2004), it is not surprising that the gender-role revolution has mostly evolved around paid versus unpaid work and the division of domestic labour between men and women as a zero-sum equilibrium. Yet the Chinese husbands interviewed for this research are entangled with complex networks of kinship and extended families, and their other roles as fathers, sons, brothers and so on are topics rarely discussed in the literature on the evolution of the 'new man'. As social roles are enacted and activated in social situations (Butler, 1988), it was not until I participated in family activities involving not only the three couples but their children and extended family members that the Chinese husbands' many faces began to appear.

I visited Qian and Lisa for the second time on a summer's day, when their sons, Mark and Josh, were home from university. I began by asking Mark and Josh how they felt about their Chinese father. First praising Qian for his strong presence throughout their childhood and in later years, from soccer practice to coursework and revision, Mark and Josh soon changed the tone by joking that Qian 'was a dictator sometimes'. Displeased with the joke, Qian was quick to deny the perceived slight. Lisa then joined in—'Qian is a bit of a dictator'—and recalled past debate about family decision-making:

> Remember what you said when I said we should take Mark and Josh to learn Chinese? 'There's no future in China!' But look at China now… And also the shed in the garden that you vetoed in the first place—where could we have put all the stuff if we followed your idea?!

Nodding in agreement, Mark and Josh went on to suggest that Qian often gave direct orders without offering much further explanation—something Qian considered perfectly normal when a father educates his children and makes decisions on behalf of the family. He made frequent reference to his own 'doctor' father, who was the authority in his family. Disregarding my presence, the family continued to argue about the authoritarian style adopted by Qian as a father and a husband. In contrast, Iris and Becky complained that their husbands were 'too indecisive'. 'Sometimes, how I wish he [Zeng] could make decisions for the family,

so I don't have to take charge of all responsibilities…working to support the family has been tiring enough,' said Iris. Unlike Qian, who is the eldest male among his siblings and thus has been used to leading family decisions, especially after the early death of his father, Jun and Zeng were the youngest sons in their respective families, who grew up pampered by their parents and under the protection of their siblings.[12] The different orders of lineage in their respective extended families not only conferred distinct modes of authority and responsibilities on Qian, Zeng and Jun, but significantly shaped their attitudes towards a man's role in the nuclear family as father and husband.

In China, the close-knit kinship system also requires different levels of filial obligation from male and female, elder and younger children. Emphasising the virtue of giving back to one's parents in return for their effort in raising children, Chinese tradition requires children to be respectful and obedient to their parents, and in the absence of a welfare state, to support elderly parents financially (Chan & Tan, 2004). Filial piety, therefore, has important implications for Jun, Zeng and Qian. The Chinese husbands felt an increasing sense of guilt at their inability to look after their ageing parents. This was especially the case for Qian, as his parents' eldest son. In Qian's absence from China, the responsibility for taking care of his elderly mother fell to Qian's younger sister, who often complained that it was unfair for her to have to do Qian's share— especially as their 'old fashioned mother' (in Qian's words) would still leave the largest share of her inheritance to Qian, as the eldest male in the family (Wakefield, 1998). With almost no knowledge of the English language, it would be difficult for Qian, Zeng and Jun's elderly Chinese parents to make a life in the UK. Moreover, the new immigration bill[13] states that Chinese parents can only be granted a long-term visa when their UK-residing child is their only child. This has made long-term immigration practically impossible for the parents of the three Chinese

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[12] The Chinese idiom *huangdiaizhangzi, baixinchongyao'er*—the emperor favours his eldest son (as the heir to the throne), and family members at lower levels favour the youngest son—suggests that elder male and younger male children are entrusted with different responsibilities and entitled to different treatments within the Chinese family.

[13] See: http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/files/publications/MRN-Immigration-Bill-briefing-Oct-2013.pdf, date accessed 11 February 2014.

husbands. As pioneers in the changing landscape of male gender roles, Qian, Zeng and Jun remain uneasy about the inconsistencies between these roles.

'New Man': An Inconsistent Revolution

I do not attempt in this chapter to generalise about the lives of Chinese husbands and their British wives, in part due to the limited number of cases examined. Nevertheless, the distinctive life experiences of the three families interviewed for this chapter provide rather important insights into the 'stalled' revolution in men's gender roles (Gerson, 2010; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Setting two cultures in potential conflict, inter-ethnic families are a distinctive and dramatic example of the tensions and dynamics of gender-role negotiation that may otherwise seem ordinary and mundane. Despite their impressive overturning of gender stereotypes in prioritising their wives' careers and not least their marriages over their own professional development, the progress made by these three 'new men' has been impeded by structural inconsistencies at the heart of the gender-role revolution.

First, if dictionary entries are believed to represent the general public perception and conceptualisation of a given object, the dictionary definition of 'new man' then crystallises the restrictive and inconsistent nature of the male gender-role revolution. The concept of a 'division' of gender roles, which has long been central to this revolution, conceals the nuances of everyday domestic experience—as if domesticity were all about divisible tasks. As Jun noted, domesticity often involves indivisible, although seemingly trivial, acts. Tasks as 'trivial' as picking up a scrap of paper from the carpet in fact require the utmost emotional engagement and iterated daily input from the housekeeper. It was only when Qian, Jun and Zeng actually began the work of housekeeping that they came to appreciate these details and develop a natural attachment to domesticity.

Second, the literature on the gender-role revolution has had a long and profound focus on observable role fulfilment, in the sense of *doing*. Comparatively little academic attention has been paid to the *feelings* that lie behind *doing* (Hochschild, 2013). This is particularly the case in the

study of men's gender roles, especially as men are traditionally associated with being less expressive of their emotions than women and are often treated as senseless beings. The emotional backdrop to role fulfilment offers key insights into the ways in which gender norms actually exercise pressure on individuals by engendering sentiments of shame, embarrassment, anger, gratitude, pride and the like. For instance, Qian and Jun's fear and anger in response to political surveillance and scrutiny as well as cultural marginalisation played an important role in their migration decisions. It is often precisely such feelings as shame (in these cases, instilled by the cultural imperatives of *daotiemen*, *shangmennüxü* and the like) that must be overcome and the sense of pride in male domesticity that must be appreciated for men to fully embrace 'new' gender roles. For the three Chinese 'new men', emigration has been a useful means of evading traditional gender norms by physically separating cultural metaphors such as *daotiemen* from their original (Chinese) context.

Third, the gender-role revolution has often been conceptualised in the 'horizontal' dimension of relations between a husband and a wife. However, the many faces of the 'new man' revealed here indicate that the revolution extends and should extend beyond the merely conjugal. As, for example, Qian, Jun and Zeng face awkward tensions between their roles as fathers, husbands, sons, brothers and so on, the revolution must move ahead on multiple frontiers. The challenges faced by the three Chinese husbands offer a vivid footnote to research on high-level ideational inconsistencies between Chinese family values (Hu & Scott, 2014), shedding light on the moral and emotional contours of these inconsistencies, which could be responsible for impeding the revolution of the 'new man'.

Certainly, the negotiation of one's gender identities and roles at home and at work is closely entangled with one's ethnic identity constructs that are closely anchored in different sociocultural and familial systems (Therborn, 2014). It is also closely anchored in the changing dynamics of socioeconomic development in China and the UK. On completing my fieldwork in 2013, I received the unfortunate news that Qian's mother in China had become quite ill, which exacerbated the tension faced by Qian between the role of a supportive husband (according to expectations of the 'new man') and that of a good son (according to the tradition

of filial piety). During my writing of this chapter, Qian and Lisa relocated to Hong Kong to be nearer to Qian's mother, while staying away from mainland China. Thanks to China's fast development and Britain's economic downturn, their relocation also offered an extremely promising means of advancing Lisa's career.

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8

Conclusion: Gender and Ethnicity Disentangled

I was a 'deconstructor' in my childhood. To satisfy an unfathomable curiosity as to how things work, I used to tear objects apart: first model cars, plastic pistols and handset radios, and later the television set and stereo speakers. I can clearly recall the stunned look on my parents' faces when they came home from work one day to find our new roller washing machine in pieces on the laundry-room floor. I was nine years old at the time. Although such a washing machine was a rare luxury in 1990s China, my parents were less surprised by its deconstruction than they might have been, having seen me demolish hundreds of objects. They decided that as I was old enough to learn, it was time to put an end to my 'craze' for destruction. Their solution was simple, but by no means usual. Instead of punishing me for breaking the washing machine, they ordered a blueprint of the appliance from the factory and escalated the challenge for me. 'Now that you are pretty good at breaking things apart,' they said, 'why don't you try to piece them back together again?' As they helped me to revive our washing machine, my parents insisted that I learn not only about its separate components—gears, springs and so on—but how they worked together to make the machine function.

I last recalled my childhood as a 'deconstructor' during a lecture on British literature in my first year at university. As the professor read the lines by William Wordsworth, 'our meddling intellect/mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things/we murder to dissect', my mind drifted away from the classroom to the washing machine I had once taken apart and re-assembled. Wordsworth was a Romantic poet, who rejected rationality and stressed the importance of appreciating things in their natural forms. He was probably right that we tend to lose sight of how things work when analysing and dissecting objects to identify their mechanical components (Wordsworth, Jaye, & Woof, 1987). Nevertheless, we can only gain a limited understanding of how things work without probing into their constituent components.

While exploring the ways in which people perceive and negotiate their distinct identities in an intimate yet somewhat estranged cross-cultural context, I have also been led to contemplate my own intellectual journey. From time to time, my thoughts have turned to my inherently Chinese upbringing, my experience as an academic in China and then in the UK. Throughout this project, what has surprised me most is my own struggle as an academic at the crossroads between two distinct sociocultural heritages, seeking to establish a transnational balance in my intellectual labour. Time after time, I have made notes in the margins of my interview transcripts, field-notes and chapter drafts on how I would have approached the same piece of empirical evidence differently if I were prioritising my Chinese or British intellectual psyche, or if I were addressing a predominantly Chinese or British readership.

My memory of dismantling objects as a child is certainly relevant to the Western forms of logical reasoning and scientific inquiry with which I have become familiar, as methods such as taxonomy and anatomy are widespread and deeply rooted in traditional Western learning, dating back to ancient Greece (Cohen, 1994). Despite my instinctive childhood eagerness to obtain knowledge through deconstruction, my upbringing and education in China instilled in me quite the opposite sentiment. The underlying logic of traditional Chinese scholarship is exemplified in the classic text of the *I-Ching*, whose influence is observable in areas such as Chinese medicine, politics and philosophy. Its central teaching—that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts—provides a solid ground for the

ideals of familism and political collectivism that have shaped the relationships between individuals and social institutions in China for hundreds of years (Nisbett, 2010).

After lengthy consideration of these two seemingly contradictory poles of social understanding, I realised that it is impossible for me to claim that one approach is better than the other. The two approaches have led me to distinct yet sometimes mutually complementary interpretations of the lives of the Chinese-British families who participated in this research. Again, however, I am reminded of my experience with the washing machine. Although dismantling gender and ethnic identities enables me to identify their components, the mental process of re-assembling these components brings them to life as functioning wholes that shape and are shaped by everyday experiences. In the preceding chapters, I have disaggregated the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families into distinct subgroups. In separate sections, I have then examined the individual perspectives of husbands and wives, their consensual accounts, their social networks and their connections with extended families at local and transnational levels. Now that the process of 'dismantling' is complete, I return in this concluding chapter to my experiences with the washing machine to piece together the jigsaw puzzle of how people 'do' and negotiate their distinctive intersecting gender and ethnic identities in an intimate cross-cultural context. To this end, I use a comparative approach to trace the divergent life trajectories of subgroups of the Chinese-British families described in previous chapters. First, however, I briefly revisit the themes of gender and ethnicity and their intersectionality with reference to Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage.

Gender, Ethnicity and Intersectionality: The Current State

A recurring theme of this research is the centrality of gender and ethnicity to Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage. Gender and ethnicity are by no means the only important components of the lives of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families. However, as I have demonstrated in this research,

they provide useful and indeed vital clues to the everyday lives of Chinese-British couples 'on the ground', as well as revealing how individual experiences are reflected in—or unconnected with—collective social trends such as individualisation and globalisation.

The placement of gender and ethnicity at the centre of my analysis is justified by the finding that gender and ethnicity both unite and divide the collective. On the one hand, gender, ethnicity and their intersectionality are constantly salient, as the 'sociocultural stuffs' (Wimmer, 2008)—the substantial content—of the lives of ethnically intermarried couples. Whether the couples actively confront or passively evade their gender and ethnic roles, they 'do' gender and ethnicity one way or another—implicitly or explicitly. On the other hand, the intersection of gender and ethnicity divides Chinese-British inter-ethnic families into mutually indexical and self-contained subgroups. The diverse ways in which people conceptualise gender and ethnicity erect intangible sociocultural boundaries that enclose distinctive sociocultural content. As asserted by Handelman (1977, p. 200), 'the "sociocultural stuffs" and the "boundary work" mutually modify and support one another. The former establishes and legitimises the contrast of the boundary; while the latter, often in response to the external conditions, modifies, alters the relevance to the boundary aspects of the former'. In this light, how are the subsets of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families distinguished in terms of their understanding of gender and ethnicity?

The distinction between work and family is perhaps the most ostensible demarcation of gender roles. Although their professional and family lives take different forms and have different meanings in China and the UK, the Chinese-British couples who participated in this research were roughly consistent in their views of the relevance of work-family orientation to male and female gender roles. However, the spheres of work and family did not only create a distinction between the stereotypes of professional men and domestic women; they also instigated a 'Mother War' in which professional wives and their homemaking counterparts vilified each other and glorified their own gender identities. This finding is consistent with that of Johnston and Swanson's (2004, 2006) study of mothers with different employment statuses. If symbolic interactionists such as West and Zimmerman (1987) are correct that gender is achieved through

continuous acts of social performance, one must ask why and how people relate to work or 'do' family and what goals they aim to achieve.

As individuals are closely embedded in familial and social networks (Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 1999), gender roles are almost always enacted in conjunction with the roles of important others at conjugal, familial, social and societal levels. Paradoxically, however, the obvious impossibility of understanding gender roles without taking to heart their interactional and relational nature is disregarded in several projects exalting women's visibility in the gender-role revolution (for example, Gatua, 2007). This is certainly not to discredit the women-centred approach to research that emerged in reaction to a social and historical context in which women existed only in the background of the world of men. Instead, in light of what many describe as the 'stalled' revolution and lagged adaptation of men's gender roles and values (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Scott, Dex, & Plagnol, 2012), we should remember to turn to men themselves for answers. Indeed, men's gender roles have undergone more nuanced changes than a mere categorical shift from work to family. While carrying out this research, I observed that the husbands who turned to domesticity often came to enjoy their everyday chores. Such attempts at domesticity also led them to realise the challenge and worth of seemingly mundane domestic tasks. Some of the Chinese husbands embraced house husbandry and moved away from patrilocal practices when their marriages were jeopardised by sociocultural and political marginalisation in China. The few examples of divorce also indicate that men's reluctance to respond to women's changing gender roles may lead to marital dissolution.

The Chinese-British inter-ethnic families were similarly divided by their conceptualisations of ethnicity. Not only do people's perceptions of ethnicity vary enormously, its presence in and absence from their everyday lives is defined in distinct ways. The Chinese marriage-migrant wives certainly laboured to make their ethnicity visible (by emphasising their role as 'bananas', for example) and thereby echoed their British husbands. Comparably, the Chinese professional migrant wives used the visibility of their 'Chinese-ness' to their advantage at work. In their family and social lives, however, they subtly re-conceptualised ethnicity as a matter of 'integration' rather than a reified identity. Alongside the 'Mother War',

an 'Ethnic War' is underway among the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families. The families inclusive of proud Chinese housewives and mothers have constructed their own enclaves, whereas the professional couples have moved away from the Chinese community both physically and emotionally. The off-tracker families occupy a mid-point between the two: some wish to return to Chinese enclaves, while others seek to separate themselves from the Chinese diaspora to facilitate their integration into the British community.

Among the disparate findings of this research is the seemingly self-evident observation that gender and ethnicity do not operate separately. Of course, the idea of intersectionality between gender and ethnicity is not new (McCall, 2005; Walby, Armstrong, & Strid, 2012). However, although scholars have often reached the conclusion that 'women of colour' represent an understated and invisible social group (Crenshaw, 1991), my research on Chinese-British inter-ethnic families suggests the opposite. The husbands and wives who participated in my study were often willing to proactively and explicitly display their intersecting gender and ethnic identities. What is more, the widespread belief that the intersectionality between gender and ethnicity creates an inseparable whole (Lim & Skinner, 2012; Lutz, Vivar, & Supik, 2011) blinds us to the diversity of and subtle variation between the constructs of intersectionality used to promote various 'campaigns' in gender and ethnic 'warfare'.

Indeed, we have seen in the preceding chapters that the threads of gender and ethnicity interweave to create unique knots and that these diversified intersectionalities reflect vastly different lived experiences and unique symbolic meanings. In some cases, ethnicity is gendered. For instance, whether one works may define one's ethnic-integration status. Conversely, gender is ethnicised when female domesticity is linked with or attributed to Chinese-ness, as in some of the families under study. In light of the diverse constructs of intersectionality exhibited by the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families, current theories of intersectionality seem to provide limited insight into the intricate assembly of distinct, unique intersections.

Entangling Intersectionality: How Have They Arrived Here?

How have the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families arrived at where they are? What are the broader implications of the distinct constructs of intersectionality that characterise the subsets of Chinese-British families? As shown in Chap. 2, the distinct migration trajectories, namely marriage and professional, that led to Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage in the UK constituted watershed points in the families' divergent journeys. The baseline characteristics of the several subsets of Chinese-British families before marriage and migration were similar. The diverse intersectionalities observed in this research were created and recreated by individuals' responses to their baseline experiences; by the meanings and consequences of their decisions to act or not to act. Nevertheless, as discussed below, their divergent life trajectories resonate with wider social trends such as individualisation and globalisation.

Baseline: Prescribed Intersectionality

Coincidentally, a Chinese female friend came to me to seek some counsel a few days before writing this chapter. Knowing that my research focuses on Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage, she wanted to discuss her budding relationship with a British man. 'I don't know,' she said. 'I feel worried.' When I asked what her concerns were, she responded immediately as follows: 'I'm not sure if he's serious; how can I tell if he means it? You see, if I screw this up, it will be too late for me to marry anyone!' Of course, it was impossible for me to judge whether the British man, whom I had never met, was 'serious' about his relationship with my friend. Nevertheless, my friend's worries were all too familiar, as they echoed the concerns once shared by the dozens of respondents I came to know during the course of my research.

Early in their relationships, the couples knew little more about ethnic intermarriage than the stereotypes widely depicted in the mass media and prurient gossip. Some of the husbands and wives had clear gender aspira-

tions at an early stage. However, they only gained a full consciousness of their ethnicity when they met their partners. Like the friend who came to me for advice on her relationship, the couples involved in this research had rarely ever envisaged entering into an inter-ethnic relationship. Although equally 'unprepared' to date each other, most of the Chinese respondents viewed their dating as a route to marriage, while their British counterparts were unsure how to court across the cultural barrier.

In the absence of knowledge, people fall back on assumptions. Among the most pervasive stereotypes of men and women from China and the UK are as follows: docile Chinese housewives running up and down doing chores; romantic, open-minded and manly—yet unreliable—British husbands; self-centred British wives who leave their families behind; and chauvinistic Chinese men who practise dictatorship at home (Parker, 1995; Said, 1978). These sociocultural imaginaries, which emerge from the juxtaposition of gender and ethnicity, thus define the first set of intersections imposed on almost all of my respondents—professionals and homemakers alike—before marriage and migration.

These early stereotypes created from the intersection of gender and ethnic identities (hereafter 'prescribed intersectionality'), which were shared by various subsets of the Chinese-British families, are not new. Indeed, they reveal that despite globalisation, little has changed since Said (1978) showed eloquently that the discursive construction of the East as the traditional and backward Other was predicated on the idea of a developed and modernised West. It is important to ascertain whether and how people engage with and respond to this prescribed intersectionality, which exists in people's collective consciousness and is based on sociocultural imaginaries that are deeply rooted in everyday social history and popular discourse (Jayakody, Thornton, & Axinn, 2012).

The fact that people 'buy in to' and genuinely worry about such stereotypes indicates that they may also act in response to or in accordance with stereotypical perceptions. In other words, as argued by Anderson (2006), sociocultural imaginaries may have ideational and behavioural consequences in the real world. Unsurprisingly, the findings of the current research support the developmental-idealist theory that people's ideational stereotypes may motivate demographic change and forms of social mobility such as migration and intermarriage (Jayakody et al., 2012).

Indeed, although my informants engaged with and responded to the prescribed intersectionality in different ways, and took different pathways in life, a clear distinction emerged between the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families formed through marriage migration and those formed through professional migration. Certainly, the husbands and wives in Chinese-British inter-ethnic families do not always agree with each other on the pre-defined and prescribed intersectionalities. An interesting finding of this research therefore not only lies in how different adaptive strategies and life-course trajectories divide Chinese-British families into different niches but also that conjugal negotiations over potential differences between the husband and wife quite often take different forms and lead to different outcomes in distinct niches of families.

Fitting In: Fixed Intersection

The Chinese marriage-migrant housewives repeatedly told me that they simply 'followed' their British spouses to settle in the UK. In essence, this taken-for-granted gesture of 'following' indicates that the Chinese marriage-migrant housewives prioritised their marriages over their former professional careers in China. In more complex terms, 'following' defines a series of dynamics in the couples' courting, dating, marriage and negotiation of their everyday lives after marriage and migration.

Upholding traditional gender values, and with the stereotype of a 'good Chinese wife' in mind, the British husbands made the first move to find 'Oriental' spouses in China. Some of the Chinese marriage-migrant wives with more traditional gender values were keen to fit themselves into the prescribed intersectionality of 'homemaking Chinese wives'. Others with more ambivalent attitudes gradually adapted to this role, after being persuaded by the logical reasoning of their British husbands with a greater demand of 'local knowledge'. In both cases, the fear of becoming a 'left-over woman' (*sheng nü*), which is shared by highly educated and professional Chinese women (To, 2013), coupled with the imaginary idea of a modern and developed West, rendered intermarriage and migration an emotionally comforting and materially rewarding way out of the 'structural inconsistency' between life stages in China.

Although the marriage migrants actively chose—albeit with constraints—to 'fit in', this decision had unexpected consequences for the families' lives after migration. To a greater or lesser degree, the housewives' subsequent experiences of cultural and communicative barriers such as *yuyan* (Chinese term for 'language' and 'cultural understanding') consolidated their perception of ethnicity as an unchangeable essentialist construct, and thus of female domesticity as an exclusive Chinese characteristic. As a result, they actively aligned their gender performance with the notion of 'Chinese virtue' in an attempt to keep their intersecting identities consistent across different life domains. This consistency provided them with a much-needed sense of certainty and what Giddens (1991) calls 'ontological security' in the face of the numerous displacements to normative systems that occurred during intermarriage and migration.

Subjects' identity construction is both actively invested in and passively shaped by their 'linked lives'. I found that at home, the Chinese marriage-migrant housewives and their British husbands were largely connected by their mutually complementary exchange of unique resources, which constituted their key expression of 'love'. The exchange of what Zuo and Bian (2001) term 'gendered resources' was another major strategy adopted by the families to overcome their sociocultural and communicative barriers. By exchanging 'gendered resources', the couples transformed 'talking' about love into 'doing' love by fulfilling prescribed roles. They thus evaded potential barriers such as those presented by *yuyan*.

In social terms, the homemaking Chinese wives were embedded in a homogeneous local and transnational social network based on a mutual belief in domesticity as an inherent Chinese characteristic. This process of affiliation was often preceded by problematic or failed attempts to make British friends or other experiences of ethno-racial discrimination (Song, 2003). The wives were found to identify with 'like-minded' friends and align their external social lives with what they perceived to be their 'fixed' characteristics. Exalting domesticity as a 'Chinese virtue', they used 'ethnic inversion' (Song, 2003; Wimmer, 2008) to reconceptualise their failure to integrate with British society as the morally superior option. However, their emphasis on their 'banana' identities and their high hopes for their children's successful sociocultural integration strongly suggest

that the housewives' glamorisation of their own domestic identities and their vilification of 'selfish' professional mothers are bittersweet; they provide consolation as much as pride.

The emotional contours of the processes of intermarriage and migration should not be neglected. People's feelings not only provide immediate clues to how they relate to their lived experiences; they also explain why people respond to and act upon their experiences (in this case, their feelings) in certain ways (Hochschild, 1983). The Chinese marriage-migrant wives moved from anxiety (regarding their ambivalent gender roles) to pride and from isolation to a sense of belonging. Accordingly, their need to gain self-esteem and self-assurance drove them to conform to the prescribed intersectionality, which was also imposed by their British husbands and wider sociocultural imaginaries.

Although the sociocultural imaginaries of a developed West and a backward East are far from new, they have recently been liberated from the confines of individuals' minds. People from the East and the West no longer stay still and consider each other from afar. Diffusion across borders and the boom in communication and transportation in today's globalised world have led people to view the world transnationally (Vertovec, 2009). In the UK, the rising tide of individualisation has relegated traditional British husbands to an uncomfortable corner of the local marriage market. In China, the inconsistent gender revolution creates a dilemma for Chinese marriage-migrant wives. However, the solutions to these conundrums are no longer nationally, politically, socioculturally or ethnically confined. This is not to suggest that ethnic intermarriage and marriage migration are so prevalent that they exist as near-intuitive adaptive strategies. When the opportunity arises, however, ethnic intermarriage seems to offer a means of culturally matching gender-role values. Accordingly, marriage migration appears to provide a transnational solution to people's society-specific dilemmas.

The decision and act to 'fit in' to the prescribed intersectionality resonates with the ongoing discussion of widening gender inequality between the global north and south. In her book *The Servants of Globalisation* (2001), for example, Parreñas vividly describes the 'global nanny chain', whereby the progress of gender equality in the USA is enabled largely by the off-loading of domesticity to female migrant workers from

third-world countries such as the Philippines. Most previous discussion of this 'globalisation of domesticity' has been limited to the commercialisation of gender roles in market economies (Hochschild, 2012). However, the findings of the current research suggest that this transnational off-loading has extended even further: into the marriage market and the intimate contexts of everyday lives. It is worth noting that when this off-loading takes place, the resulting fixation of intersecting gender and ethnic identities only contributes to the objectification of these identities as exchangeable 'goods'.

Opting Out: Fluid Intersection

In sharp contrast to the inter-ethnic families formed through marriage migration, most of the working professional migrant Chinese wives had a clear career orientation at an early stage. This is evident from their conscious initiation of professional migration to the UK to 'opt out' of the 'structural inconsistency' in China. Rather than 'following' their husbands to the UK, they migrated to the UK to advance their careers and met their future husbands at university or in the workplace. This separation of marriage and migration indicates that career settlement and advancement played key roles in the professional couples' decision to marry.

Departing from the prescribed intersectionality, the professional couples, and particularly the Chinese professional migrant wives, have actively laboured to de-stigmatise the stereotypical imaginaries. At home, they have in a sense achieved this goal, as the British husbands' actual experiences of their professional Chinese wives are in sharp contrast with the early images accumulated from dated feudalist Chinese classics such as *Hong Lou Meng* (*A Dream of the Red Chambers*). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that such de-stigmatisation at home quite often involves lengthy negotiation between the husbands and wives, and still causes clashes from time to time. At work, however, the prescribed intersectionality still permeates the British labour market, as the professional Chinese migrant wives are both rewarded and patronised for being stereotypical Chinese women.

Conceptualising gender and ethnicity as flexible acts of performance (West & Zimmerman, 1987), the professional migrant wives were actively engaged in 'choosing' their intersecting identities in distinct spheres of life, albeit within the bounds of social and cultural structure (Song, 2003). They fragmented their life domains into home, work and social arenas and constructed each as a self-contained realm housing a situated identity. In the forefront of social life, they practised professionalism to separate themselves from what they perceived to be peripheral Chinese enclaves. This increased their perceived ethno-social status. At work, they wielded the identity of a 'womanly Chinese woman' as a professional strength. At home, however, they turned against the prescribed intersectionality, and the identity of a 'manly woman' became salient. This fluid intersection allowed the working professional migrant Chinese wives as well as their British husbands to shift between distinct configurations of intersecting gender and ethnic identities to generate symbolic currency in each specific situation. This strategy was particularly important in light of the conflicting ideals of their various life domains.

At home, the professional couples are knitted together by their homogamous status and homogeneous interests, which they described to me as 'real love'. Although the professional migrants boast a considerable command of English proficiency, the British husbands still perceived their wives' ability to express nuanced and subtle meanings to be limited—both literally and metaphorically. The professional couples responded to the barriers in *yuyan* quite differently from the families formed through marriage migration. By investing in common interests such as art galleries, music and so on, the couples managed to 'talk' about love in a language externalised in the form of artistic artefacts and expressed in abstract terms. Ambivalence, as argued by Vaillant (1977), is itself a strategy to resolve difference and tension.

Socially, the couples have made considerable effort to 'opt out' of the Chinese diaspora in the UK and cut loose from extended family ties in China. The refusal of outside help from their extended families, particularly on the Chinese side, hints at a heightened sense of individualism—a principle that stresses individuals' responsibility for their own livelihoods (Jamieson & Simpson, 2013). Due to the lack of heterogeneous labour division between the professional couples and external help from their

extended families, these families are largely reliant on social institutions and the marketplace in such aspects as childcare and domestic outsourcing.

Although the families attempted to avoid feeling indebted to others, they seemed unable to prevent related undesirable feelings, especially as the life domains they sought to keep separate impinged on each another. The professional couples often described sensations of 'guilt' arising from, for example, the inability to participate more fully in their children's lives. In response, they worked to detach themselves emotionally from work and domesticity alike, facilitating their shifts in identity between the fragmented areas of their lives. The professional couples were consoled not by the ontological fixedness of their identities, like the Chinese marriage-migrant wives, but by their ability to exercise control over their lives and their shifting identity constructs. As we have seen, their fear of losing control of their lives was at the heart of their anxieties about being unable to 'opt out' and define their own identities.

In many ways, the professional couples are vivid examples of the increasing individualisation of modern societies. They bargain for the room for manoeuvring (Jamieson & Simpson, 2013; Therborn, 2014) and avoid anchoring themselves to the moorings of the prescribed intersectionality. Scholars such as Ebert (2012), Irwin (2005) and Yan (2009) have argued that due to the growing sense of individualism in neoliberal economies, individuals increasingly perceive themselves as responsible for their own decisions and behaviour, and even their own existence. Such identity fragmentation has quite often been perceived as a defining feature of post-modernity (Giddens, 1991). However, just as our entry into a post-modern society is torn between the dying orders of an old world and a new world that is powerless to be born, the Chinese-British families of working professional migrant Chinese wives were torn between the familial ideals of Chinese society and the individualisation imperative of British society, and thus struggled to draw lines between their life worlds, such as the spaces afforded to nuclear and extended families.

Although 'opting out' freed the professional Chinese-British couples from the prescribed intersectionality to a lesser or greater degree, it also entailed problems. When moving between social situations, the professional couples defined their identities primarily by the realms they were

not currently occupying. For example, they expressed pride in the happy family photos in their offices; they used their careers to elevate their status above that of marriage migrants; and they fell back on their Chinese femininity to gain advantages at work. Therefore, their intersectionality is not defined merely *in situ*, as argued by many scholars (Burke & Stets, 2009; Goffman, 1959) but often by the act of *cross-referencing* between situations. Nevertheless, this somewhat tautological tail-chasing exercise continues to generate meanings for the lives of the professional Chinese-British couples.

Stepping Back Towards Fixed Intersectionality

Whereas most of the professional Chinese-British couples 'opted out' of the prescribed intersectionality, a few 'off-tracker' families inclusive of former professional Chinese migrant wives returned to this intersectionality of 'feminine Chinese housewives'. If fluid intersectionality is characterised by belief in an individual's capacity to manoeuvre, and fixed intersectionality involves the objectification of an ontological self, 'stepping back' should entail a shift from belief in what one is capable of doing to what one 'is'; that is, a movement from self-reliance to entrusting responsibility for the self to others. How and why have some of the families involved in this research 'stepped back' to the prescribed intersectionality?

The 'off-tracker' families with formerly professional migrant Chinese wives did not begin by explicitly rejecting the prescribed intersectionality. In a sense, the wives simply followed the momentum of their educational and career pathways into professional migration. However, they were all frustrated to some degree by the limited employment prospects of a female migrant worker in the British labour market. The 'off-tracker' professional migrant wives tended to regard their work as merely jobs rather than careers. For instance, Fang perceived the field of chemical engineering as essentially a man's world, and Emma viewed her job as mechanical and repetitive. At the same time, the work done by each British husband was conceptualised as a continuous, long-term career, and the increasing domestic demand of these careers further encouraged the formerly professional Chinese wives to step back from the professional world into

domesticity. Essentially, a baseline opinion shared by the off-tracker families is that marriage is more important than a woman's professional career.

However, the process by which the 'off-tracker' professional migrant wives conformed to this pro-marriage bottom line was not as straightforward as it seems. First, the magnetism of their former professional lives made it difficult for the professional migrant Chinese wives to cut loose from their connections with former colleagues. Second, it took considerable persuasion and negotiation for the wives to entrust their British husbands with the responsibility for their livelihoods. This process often entailed forms of material and symbolic exchange between the husband and wife, such as common investment in real estate or children. Although the families were not eager to opt into the prescribed intersectionality, they did not resent doing so. As a result, the prescribed intersectionality of good Chinese housewives and manly British husbands provided the families with a workable prototype that enabled them to make the transition from the individualistic model to the 'gendered resources' model of exchange at home (Zuo & Bian, 2001).

As we have seen, therefore, the families' journey back to the prescribed intersectionality entailed in each case an ideational alignment of family and social life with the essentialist view of an intersecting gender-cum-ethnic identity. Interestingly yet paradoxically, the earlier professional experiences of the 'off-tracker' Chinese wives earned them authority as leaders in the Chinese community, as the heads of women's associations and the like. The sense of pride they gained from their leadership roles in these ethnically Chinese communities somehow compensated for the lack of inherent achievement in their former professional lives.

In many ways, the experiences of the 'off-tracker' families inclusive of formerly professional migrants resembled the findings for both fluid and fixed intersectionality. However, their act of 'stepping back' heightened the underlying dynamics and emotional contours of the reorientation of their directions in life, the restructuring of their social and familial relations, and adjustments to their attitudes towards and conceptualisations of work, family and marriage. The process of stepping back, which anchors individuals into ready-made sociocultural imaginaries, tends to *fixate* intersecting

gender and ethnic identities and thereby fit individuals into pre-existing sociocultural 'niches' (within familial and social networks, for example). This is not to suggest that individual identities are reified objects; rather, the respondents were seen to reify their own identities.

Marching Forward Towards Fluid Intersectionality

Although marriage migration to the UK was usually initiated by the British spouses, some of the Chinese marriage migrants instigated their own marriage migration. For example, Xiu's marriage migration to the UK was driven by her gold-rush optimism, and Cora and Rita's migration was fuelled by curiosity. The three Chinese husbands were partly forced to leave China by cultural and political marginalisation. Parallel to the process of 'fixation', the 'off-tracker' families formed through marriage migration and the families inclusive of Chinese husbands experienced a 'fluidisation' of their intersecting gender and ethnic identities—voluntary or otherwise. As a result, former marriage migrants such as Xiu, Cora and Rita toiled to break away from the prescribed intersectionality of homemaking Chinese marriage-migrant wives, and Chinese husbands such as Qian, Zeng and Jun worked hard to re-invent their prescribed identity of chauvinistic Chinese men.

The 'march forward' has not been smooth for the Chinese-British families. Xiu, Cora and Rita's original perceptions of the UK as a wonderland were soon replaced by frustration at their inability to secure jobs and feelings of boredom and isolation caused by communicative barriers. Instead of turning to the Chinese community for solace, like most marriage migrants, the wives were encouraged by individualistic husbands such as Dan and Cary to overcome their boredom by finding jobs. Some of the British husbands provided crucial local know-how in helping their wives to secure employment. Others, such as Cary, secured jobs for their wives via British friends. With the help of Fred, Xiu managed to find a job through the Chinese contacts she met at a mah-jongg table. Despite her material reliance on the Chinese network, Xiu came to find the mah-jongg-table chitchat unbearable, due to the emphasis on the prescribed intersectionality in conversations about domesticity, childcare and the

like. As a result, Xiu had to 'fluidise' her connection to her Chinese friends by detaching herself emotionally from the Chinese enclave.

Comparably, the British wives with Chinese husbands became the breadwinners for their families. Qian, Zeng and Jun—like the professional Chinese-British couples—worked hard to separate the different dimensions of their lives. Despite pioneering a change in husbands' gender roles, they remained tightly bound by patrilineal and filial obligations such as looking after their elderly parents. When educating their children, they near-intuitively played the stereotypical role of the severe and authoritarian Chinese father.

Unlike the professional couples, the 'off-tracker' families formed through marriage migration did not actively seek to separate their life worlds and fluidise their ethnic-cum-gender identities. In a sense, it was necessary for them simply to 'make do' to fluidise their identity constructs and overcome the social constraints placed upon them. The families de-anchored themselves from the fixed male and female roles prescribed in China and the UK. They creatively and flexibly mobilised their available resources to mould their identity constructs and thereby adapt to sociocultural constraints.

Fixation and Fluidisation in Action

It is clear that the intersecting gender and ethnic identities are multidimensional and multilayered and predicated on unique systems of logic. However, it must be noted that despite their differences, the distinct clusters of families also share certain characteristics and experiences. Due to the interaction of distinct life-course dynamics, subjects are not merely 'at' reified intersections; rather, they are actively and continuously engaged in the construction of intersecting identities that both create and erase symbolic social boundaries. Inevitably, the gender and ethnic options available are limited by subjects' distinctive social positions (Song, 2003; Waters, 1990). Therefore, it is vital to understand 'fixed' and 'fluid' intersections not as different states of being, but as two distinct ongoing everyday social practices—namely fixation and fluidisation—in action. This requires us to treat sociocultural structure as, in Swidler's

(1986) words, a 'creative toolkit' that allows subjects the space to devise personalised strategies. In this light, even those who abide most stringently by the prescribed intersectionalities are actively engaged in maintaining their stereotypical sociocultural imaginaries in the real world. To a lesser or greater degree, people creatively invent and re-invent their own intersections and the meanings for such intersections, drawing on the social and cultural materials available to them.

Practical Implications

The invisible hand of social policy is continuously politicising, intervening in and shaping the lived experiences of the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families involved in this research. Of course, people engage with social policies in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, their divergent responses to these policies widen the divide between subsets of Chinese-British families. This may have important implications for policy-makers working in the areas of migration, ethnic and racial relations and sociocultural engineering.

Immigration policies directly impinge on people's experiences of marriage and migration. Over the last few decades, the UK's immigration policies have become increasingly stringent. In addition to population control, a core principle of these policies is that immigrants should be afforded limited access to public resources made available by British taxpayers (Julios, 2012; Spencer, 2002). The resulting financial requirements for a British citizen to sponsor a non-EU spouse, together with the wage threshold for professional workers to qualify for a work visa, have filtered the population of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families to produce an extremely homogenous middle-class group. As documented by many scholars (Anderson, 2013; Carver, 2013), these filters have marginalised the British social underclass and young career-starters in the intermarriage market.

British politicians often claim that the multicultural ideal has failed to justify tightening immigration control. Criticising migrants for forming enclosed enclaves in parallel with 'mainstream' British society, David Cameron argued that migrant groups are unwilling to integrate, creating a 'kind of discomfort and disjointedness' across Britain (Watt & Mulholland, 2011). However, the insights provided by the families who

participated in this research suggest the opposite. Even the Chinese wives who were discouraged by communicative barriers expressed high hopes that their children would integrate closely with British society. Yet the immigration categories of 'marriage migration' and 'professional migration' were found to both symbolically and geographically separate the professional and marriage migrants: the former were valorised over the latter, and the two groups exhibited different residential tendencies.

The use of intermarriage by many social scientists and policy makers as an indicator of the cohesion and integration of different ethnic groups may be problematic (Kalmijn, 1998; Spickard, 1991; Weber, 1978 [1922]). Inter-ethnic union means vastly different things to different people (Song, 2009)—even to the different subsets of Chinese-British families investigated in this research. As a result, integration and cohesion are themselves defined in multiple ways (Song, 2009). Evidence of the restriction of marriage-migrant Chinese wives to Chinese enclaves, and their use of ethnic inversion to build their self-esteem, suggests that the use of intermarriage to indicate cohesion and integration is in some ways counterproductive.

The UK's employment policies have exacerbated gender-cum-ethnic segregation in the British labour market. Employers are legally required to prioritise job opportunities for British citizens unless non-British citizens offer special affordances that are otherwise unavailable in the local marketplace (Alcock, 2014). These 'specialties' have often been interpreted and operationalised in terms of a fixed intersectionality between gender and ethnicity, rather than a matter of skill or expertise. The patronising treatment of 'ethnic-minority women' only segregates such women further.

The effects of social policies are felt not solely in the public sphere but also in people's intimate everyday lives. The sanctified definition of 'love marriage' becomes a matter of morality, distinguishing between 'true' love and 'suspicious' love. Despite the apparent resistance to utilitarian 'passport' marriage and transaction unions, however, the UK's immigration policies rely heavily on itemized evidence of economic exchange such as joint bank statements and utility bills (Carver, 2013). The policies are somewhat tautological in their pursuit of a moral high ground for 'genuine' love free from ulterior utilitarian motives while depending at the same time on a utilitarian economic logic.

Similarly, the post-migration programme of sociocultural integration has created an official definition of 'successful' immigration. Accordingly, the professional couples perceived the Chinese marriage-migrant wives as stereotypical 'failures'. This exacerbated the existing gulf between the marriage migrants and the professional migrants by instigating an 'Ethnic War' among the Chinese-British families. Although these political agendas are designed to promote the sociocultural integration of ethnic minority groups into a supposedly 'mainstream' British society, they actually establish new forms of segregation.

The above criticism does not suggest that the principles underlying immigration control and sociocultural integration are unreasonable. However, the empirical evidence reveals that some of the policies are counteractive and counterproductive in reality. Laws and regulations define what people should and should not do. It is widely acknowledged that laws and social policies often permeate everyday lives and shape individuals' moral ideals. As people actively engage with the implications of and affirmative action taken by the legal system, such policies do more than place embargoes on behaviour. It is thus essential to investigate people's interpretations of the symbolic meanings of social policies 'on the ground' to determine not just *which* goals social policies should be designed to achieve, but *how* these goals should be realised.

Epilogue

In the past several decades, the number of ethnic intermarriages between mainland Chinese and British has undergone a rapid rise since China's 1978 economic reform and open-door policy. The practice of intermarriage has also gained wider popularity and acceptance among mainland Chinese. Nevertheless, despite much speculation and far-fetched popular media portrayals of intermarried couples, the lived experiences of inter-ethnic families remain understudied. Against the backdrop of fragmented approaches to intermarried couples variously as migrants, ethnic minorities and gendered individuals, I underline the need to focus on inter-ethnic families that simultaneously experience these multiple identities. I also emphasise the insights we could gain from incorporating the

concept of intersectionality into the study of intermarriage, as well as the insights from intermarriage that could contribute to expanding the current intersectionality theory.

I explore people's lived experiences and reveal distinctive sub-groups of Chinese-British families formed through distinct immigration pathways and followed divergent life-course trajectories. This research therefore challenges the widespread assumption that Chinese-Western marriages form a more or less homogenous group in social and cultural terms. Instead, as gender and ethnicity entangle in distinct fashions through the dynamics of encounter, courting, marriage and migration, intersecting gender and ethnic identities serve to differentiate and stratify the first-generation Chinese-British inter-ethnic families in the UK. As argued by Lévi-Strauss (2003 [1978], 20) that 'there are always contradictory tendencies at work—on the one hand towards homogenisation and on the other towards new distinctions', the normalisation of Chinese-British intermarriage in a globalised world entails the emergence of nuanced distinctions within the intermarried families we have met in this research. As I have demonstrated, such distinctions are both imposed from top-down and engaged with from bottom-up. It shapes intermarried couples' attitudes and behaviours, regulates their intimacy and emotions, and structures their conjugal, familial and social relations.

By tracing through the families' distinct life-course dynamics, I argue that it is key to approach intermarriage as an evolving experience rather than a one-off static phenomenon. I argue the need to depart from the traditional idea widely applied to the study of intercultural psychology and communication that intermarriage represents the engagement between two *a priori* cultures, gender-sex-power systems, familial institutions and the like (Berry, 2008; Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2010; Rodríguez-García, 2006) but rather as the engagement of two ongoing social processes because both the Chinese and British social and familial systems and cultures are constantly undergoing change, not remaining static. As we have seen in this research, it is the individuals' unfolding experiences in one society that lead to their subsequent migration, out-marriage and distinctive adaptive strategies in the face of life changes. Due to international migration and increase in cultural exchange, neither structural constraints nor individual agency are now limited to national borders.

Evidence of clashes between individualism and familism in the transnational connection between nuclear and extended families underlines the importance of examining inter-ethnic families to understand the changing patterns of migration and familial systems across the globe.

This research also problematises the neoliberal rationale that has dominated research on intermarriage for decades (Becker, 1991). It adds to an emerging awareness that economic and status exchange can no longer explain the diverse patterns of today's intermarriage. Instead, findings from this research support the concept of 'developmental idealism' that lifts the role assumed by cultural values and sometimes stigmas in fashioning demographic change (Jayakody et al., 2012). Concurring with Farrer (2008), today's intermarriage embodies complex exchanges of social, cultural and symbolic resources, which are otherwise devalued in one's local marriage market. More to it though, I underline the importance of approaching intermarriage as an ongoing experience because such an experience represents the act of (re-)evaluation itself as to what are considered as valuable and exchangeable social, cultural and symbolic resources by the Chinese and British spouses in the first place.

As the first study of people's lived experiences in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage in the UK, the purpose of this book is documentary as much as analytical. In part, the qualitative nature and limited number of cases covered in this research can be attributed to my intention to explore rather than to diagnose, to raise questions rather than to provide answers. My exploration of Chinese-British intermarriage provides researchers in the fields of ethnicity, gender, family and migration studies with important food for thought. Emphasising the mechanisms underlying identity construction, the life-story approach provides a powerful tool for disentangling intersectionality. The multilevel framework of life stories provides rich contextual information on the situated construction of individual identities in terms of *place* (Elder & Giele, 2009), and the focus on *time* over a life course provides in-depth insights into the dynamic scaffolding of the observations that gender is ethnicised and ethnicity gendered. The life-story approach reveals that immigration trajectories are ongoing dynamics that structure everyday lived experiences across time and place, and thus play a powerful role in the construction and reconstruction of individuals' identities.

For a long time, inter-ethnic families have been regarded by scholars as a 'special' type of transnational families (Williams, 2010). In many ways, ethnic intermarriage does involve a transnational shift in labour in aspects such as extended family connections, migration and social networks. Nevertheless, as I hope to have shown in this research, inter-ethnicity—the intimate engagement of ethnicities in the family and beyond—is more than just a type of transnational familial connection. In an increasingly globalised world, it is no longer enough simply to view the world transnationally. As different countries and cultures engage with and change one another in more intimate ways than ever before, and as social orders are constructed and re-constructed in the resulting inter-ethnic spaces, we should aim to develop a subfield of sociological inquiry into the intimate interface between ethnicities and cultures.

In 2001, around 1.2 % of the UK population self-identified as belonging to a 'mixed' ethnic group; and this has grown to be 2.2 % in 2011, giving rise to mixed-race as the fastest growing ethno-racial group in the UK (Aspinall & Song, 2013). As intermarriage is responsible for the production and rise of 'mixed' ethno-racial identities in multicultural societies (Song, 2003; Aspinall & Song, 2013), the importance of understanding how first-generation intermarried couples construct and negotiate their own identities goes far beyond the couples and families themselves. The results from this research suggest that mixed Chinese-British identity as much as Chinese-British intermarriage could conceal highly diverse life experiences. Whereas families of Chinese marriage-migrant wives held high hopes for their children to veer away from Chinese enclaves and integrate into a 'mainstream' British society, families of working professional migrant Chinese wives expected the opposite and actively cultivated their children as multilingual and multicultural individuals. Meanwhile, it is also clear that the Chinese-British families' expectations towards their children are subject to changes over time—contingent on their perceptions of wider social dynamics in China and the UK at a global scale. As intermarried couples' own identity constructs could explicitly determine their childrearing strategies and implicitly shape their children's socialisation experiences, the examination of intergenerational relations between parents and children in inter-ethnic families promises a potentially fruitful direction of future research.

Lastly, whereas many scholars make a special case for their research, I hope to do just the opposite to end this book. The Chinese-British families I have met have undergone what might seem extremely unusual experiences. However, insights into and empathy with their everyday lives and feelings may lead us to conclude that they are not so different after all. Instead, intermarried couples experience the vicissitudes of everyday lives in a somewhat unusual context. In this research, I attempt to underline the extraordinary nature of their seemingly ordinary everyday lives.

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Appendix A: Studying Family Life in an Inter-Ethnic Context

This methodological appendix details the research design, including the characteristics of the sample and the methods of data collection and analysis. It presents particular concerns arising from studying everyday family and social life in an inter-ethnic context as well as relevant strategies in overcoming these concerns.

General Approach

The social group of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families in the UK is unobserved and undocumented in most quantitative social surveys. The top-down approach widely used in traditional research, which addresses intermarriage as a demographic phenomenon, provides only limited insights into the lived experiences of Chinese-British couples. Moreover, this approach is not appropriate to the current research, for practical reasons. Consistent with the substantive research questions and theoretical motivations, I adopt a primarily exploratory research design, which is thus capable of reaching 'hidden' social groups and exploring everyday

lived experiences 'on the ground' (Iosifides, 2013). Qualitative research is a particularly powerful tool for addressing the nuanced and subtle interactions of social life. As I also aim to shed light on wider social dynamics at national and transnational levels through the examination of everyday lives of intermarried couples 'from below', I analyse secondary data obtained from nationally representative surveys in both China and the UK to contextualise and 'situate' the analysis of my first-hand qualitative evidence.

Consistent with the life-story framework, the methodological design of this research has a multilevel, multidimensional and bottom-up structure (Elder & Giele, 2009). Central to this multitiered research design is the concept of 'social embeddedness', which describes the generation of individual identity—whether self-reflexive or interactive—through subjects' connections and interactions with others, and shows how the social forces shaping gender and ethnic identities interconnect at multiple levels of society (Bott, 1957; Bourdieu, 1985, 1990; Ferree, Lorber, & Hess, 1999; Pink, 2012).

As no previous research has focused specifically on Chinese-British inter-ethnic families, I conducted a small-scale pilot study in December 2011 to 'obtain an overview of the overall process' and to 'determine the dimensions and boundaries of the project' (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010: 235). The pilot study was carried out in an informal manner, via casual conversations with the members of three Chinese-British families about topics they deemed relevant to their lives (Garfinkel, 2002). The results helped me to design and establish a direction for the subsequent fieldwork. The fieldwork for the main study was carried out over 20 months, from January 2012 to August 2013, at multiple sites across the UK. I used multiple sources of data to gain a holistic and exhaustive understanding of the lives of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families. Life-story interviews were used as the primary instrument of data collection, accompanied by both participant and non-participant observations to capture everyday life in action. Quantitative survey data were also analysed to contextualise the individual, family and social lives of the Chinese-British families with reference to wider sociocultural settings. Box A.1 summarises the research design.

Box A.1 Summary of research design
- Qualitative exploratory design
- Multiple, multi-level and multi-dimensional sources of data
- Bottom-up ethnomethodological approach
- Secondary quantitative survey data used for contextualisation

As qualitative research requires a large quantity of relatively unstructured data, the processes of data collection and analysis must be made as explicit as possible (Inmon & Nesavich, 2007). In the following sections, I elaborate on the details of the research design and its empirical execution. Particular attention is paid to the challenges and specificities of studying family life in an inter-ethnic context.

Sample Selection and Recruitment

Sample Selection

Box A.2 presents the criteria for sample selection and shows how the sample of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families is further restricted by external sociocultural circumstances in China and the UK.

Box A.2 Summary of sample selection

Researcher-imposed selection

- First-generation Chinese and White British
  - Socialised in China or the UK up to 16 years of age
  - Self-identified ethnic status ('Chinese', 'White British')
- Legal marriage recognised in China and/or the UK

Circumstance-imposed selection

- Generation/age (mostly married after late 1978)
- Socioeconomic status (British immigration policy)
- Educational status (British immigration policy)
- Most Chinese spouses have urban origins

Snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012) was used to recruit 29 Chinese-British families residing in the UK at the time of research, based on two criteria. First, the selected Chinese and their White British spouses were required to have been socialised in mainland China (that is People's Republic of China, excluding Taiwan and the former colonies of Hong Kong and Macau) and the UK, respectively, up to 16 years of age. This ensured that each couple sufficiently represented both Chinese culture and British culture. Whilst a 'first-generation Chinese' individual is easily defined as someone who was born and grew up in mainland China, the concept of 'native first-generation White British' is less well defined, due to the multicultural nature of British society. Whereas 'British' is generally perceived to denote nationality, 'White' is more frequently perceived in racial terms (Song, 2003). Moreover, as the cases presented in this book reveal, Chinese-British intermarriage entails issues of migration, visa clearance and so on, which make the definition of first-generation 'Chinese' or 'British' subjects even more complex. Ethnicity, nationality and race must be considered. However, complex as these concepts may be, the selection criteria used in the current research were based more practically on participants' subjective ethnic self-identification as 'Chinese', 'British' and/or 'White'. Self-identification is crucial, as an individual's subjective perception of his or her ethnicity may substantially influence his or her ethno-racial experiences, especially as ethnic identity is in large part a matter of active 'choice', albeit restricted by skin colour, sociocultural position and so on (Song, 2003; Waters, 1990). The subjects' nationalities at birth and their experiences of socialisation were also factored into the sample-selection process. For example, a native-born Chinese who lived overseas before reaching 16 years of age was excluded from the sample.

Second, I limited my focus to legal Chinese-British ethnic intermarriages formed in either China or the UK, because non-married cohabitation and alternative relationship structures are largely invisible among Chinese ethnics in the UK (ONS, 2012b). This invisibility may be attributable to the traditional Chinese moral values that prohibit pre-marital sex and cohabitation (Hu, 2016). Although it has been reported that the recent trend of individualisation in China has relaxed restrictions on unmarried cohabitation (Yan, 2009), people are still likely to be reluctant

to report unmarried cohabitation. This is reflected in a plethora of evidence from social surveys conducted in the China. For example, as few as 0.29 % of the respondents in the China Family Panel Studies 2010, and a similarly small number (0.14 %) in the China General Social Survey 2010,[1] identified their relationship situation as 'unmarried cohabitation'. In contrast, more than 10 % of the respondents in the UK Longitudinal Household Panel Survey reported being in an unmarried cohabiting relationship in 2011–2012.[2]

Although I imposed no further restrictions on the sample-selection process, Chinese-British inter-ethnic families residing in the UK have some additional unique characteristics. First, as ethnic intermarriage in China—especially with people from Western countries—was subject to strict political scrutiny before China's 1978 economic reform and open-door policies, it is not surprising that most of my informants were in their 20s, 30s and 40s at the time of research. Second, 26 of the 29 families were comprised of British husbands and Chinese wives, while only 3 of the families were composed of British wives and Chinese husbands. These proportions roughly correspond to observations at the population level that the number of Chinese women significantly exceeds that of Chinese men in the intermarriage market (Charsley, Storer-Church, Benson, & Van Hear, 2012; ONS, 2005).[3] Third, the sample reflects the nature of Britain's immigration policy, which is highly selective in terms of income and education (ONS, 2005, 2008). All of the families involved in my research belonged more or less to the middle class, according to both subjective identification and indicators of material wealth such as housing conditions, occupation and income. Lastly, although I attempted to diversify the places of origin of the Chinese spouses in accordance with China's internal diversity, it is worth mentioning that most of the Chinese

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[1] In the China Family Panel Studies 2010, 96 of 33,600 respondents reported 'cohabitation', and in the China General Social Survey, 16 of 11,783 respondents reported 'cohabitation'. The results of both nationally representative surveys indicate the rarity of unmarried cohabitation or the unwillingness to identify oneself as cohabiting in China.

[2] Data from the 2011–2012 wave of the UK Longitudinal Household Panel Studies with a valid sample size of 37,900 respondents from Great Britain, excluding Northern Ireland which is also excluded from the sampling frame of this research.

[3] The existing data only document Chinese who marry individuals from other ethnic groups. No specific data are available on Chinese-(White)-British marriage.

spouses involved in this research were from an urban background. This is understandable, as the initial inter-ethnic contact necessary for marriage is more likely to take place in more international urban areas in China (Farrer, 2008). Meanwhile, people from urban China enjoy greater educational resources, including a higher standard of English-language education (Hannum, Park, & Butler, 2010), which is a vital enabler of intermarriage. However, shared urban background notwithstanding, the places of origin of the 29 Chinese spouses spanned a large region of China, from both north to south and east to west.[4]

Of the 29 families, 22 had at least one child. With families drawn from locations from Scotland and the Midlands to East Anglia, Greater London, North West England and Southern England, the sample also boasted considerable geographical diversity within the UK. The geographical characteristics of the families' places of residence in the UK also varied considerably, from urban areas as metropolitan as central London to suburban neighbourhoods and rural areas, which maximises the geographic diversity of my sample. The occupations of the husbands and wives in the 29 families were highly diverse.

In addition to the main sample of 29 families, interviews were conducted with 4 divorced Chinese women formerly in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriages. Unfortunately, I was not able to interview their ex-husbands, necessitating extra caution when interpreting the potentially one-sided accounts of the four divorcées. Although the primary focus of the research was people's lived experiences in Chinese-British inter-marriage, the four cases of divorce provide a unique perspective on the exploration of 'difficulties' and 'conflicts' between intermarried couples that may lead to marital dissolution.[5]

Due to the lack of accurate statistics on the population composition of Chinese-British families in the UK, I cannot claim to have collected

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[4] Different regions in China may have different customs relating to family and gender values. For example, Hu and Scott (2014) have found considerable internal variation in family and gender values across China's west-east span. The sampling process took this internal variation into account by diversifying the places of origin of the Chinese spouses.

[5] As discussed in the section on data analysis, the accounts of the divorcées, as well as the retrospective accounts of the couples in the main sample, should be interpreted with caution due to potential emotional and memory-related bias.

a 'representative' sample, though certain characteristics of the target population, such as its skewed gender ratio, are reflected in my sample. However, the major purpose of this research was to explore in-depth how people in Chinese-British families in the UK experience and make sense of their lives, and how their lived experiences illuminate wider social processes such as individualisation and globalisation.

Sample Recruitment

The families were approached through personal contacts, Chinese restaurants and community centres, churches, workplaces of both British and Chinese origin, and so on. I attempted to maximise the heterogeneity of the sample to capture the potential diversity. Indeed, my various means of accessing the sample directed me to distinct social spaces and social groups to which Chinese-British inter-ethnic families relate in different ways. Diversifying the channels of sample recruitment is crucial to the study of work-family gender role orientations as much as ethnic identification. For example, while workplace contacts proved helpful in connecting me with working professionals, social clubs such as Chinese tea gatherings provided me with access to homemaking subjects who did not participate in the labour force.

I attempted to recruit families and collect data until what many qualitative researchers referred to as the point of 'saturation' (Bryman, 2012). However, as asserted by the ethnographer Allison Pugh (2009, p. 35), 'an assiduous observer is in some ways continually surprised, as most thinking, living people we observe are not predictable, except in the broadest terms'. The 'saturation' in my research, therefore, largely refers to the repetition of broad life-story themes, which nonetheless often elicit subtly different sentiments among my respondents.

Notably, the ethnicity of my contacts with the Chinese-British families reflected the subjects' 'ethnic preferences'. Whereas for some families the use of a Chinese contact seemed to ensure mutual trust, allowing me to gain access to the families, in other cases a mutual British friend was afforded more credibility. In many instances, I began to collect data even before I met up with the participants, as several of the mutual contacts enthusiastically 'briefed' me on their intermarried friends.

Although I had expected to find it difficult to access a sufficient number of Chinese-British families to carry out the fieldwork, the recruitment process was surprisingly smooth. Instead, my greatest difficulty lay in the establishment of mutual trust and rapport at an early stage, despite mutual friends' assurances of my credibility and my academic background. The Chinese-British inter-ethnic families seemed to be caught between their wish to have a voice and their concerns about the consequences of participating in my research. From an early stage, the couples were highly sensitive to my presence in their lives. Their dissatisfaction with the far-fetched media portrayals of ethnic intermarriage made them suspect that I might be 'just another "paparazzi" with a malicious aim to dig up some scoop', to quote Damien after he knew me well. Comparably, Fang and Terry (introduced in Chap. 2) responded to my initial email with the formulaic remark that 'all happy families are alike'. The same attitude was taken by several Chinese community organisations on first hearing about my research. However, as the families gradually came to know me better and to support my initial motivation for conducting this research—that is, to refute popular stereotypes—mutual trust was gradually established. The lengthy research period (20 months) also helped to maintain and deepen this sense of trust. All of the subjects participated voluntarily; three families rejected my initial invitation, and another family agreed to participate but withdrew from the research before our first formal interview.

As snowball sampling was used to recruit the families, I was mindful of the fact that families belonging to a close-knit social network may communicate with each another about the interview content and thus devise 'pre-emptive' answers in advance. I was also aware that the inter-ethnic families might 'selectively' introduce me to additional contacts, leading to a selection bias (Mason, 2002). As the emphasis of the research was the family lives of Chinese-British couples rather than the inter-family interactions between Chinese-British families, I decided to limit the number of families drawn from the same social circles. However, this is not to suggest that I failed to address the social lives of the 29 families. Indeed, only rarely did the intermarried couples express a willingness to put me in contact with their Chinese-British intermarried friends. In most cases, my respondents were recruited through third-party non-intermarried friends or impersonal organisations.

Once my contact had confirmed a family's willingness to participate, I usually proceeded with the recruitment process by mailing/emailing the family a more detailed introduction to the research, with a proposal for an initial meeting. At this stage, the families were informed that I would interview the couples both together and separately, and that these interviews might touch upon sensitive issues pertaining to their family lives. They were also informed of their right to refuse to answer any of my questions, to withdraw from the interview process and the research at any time they wished, and so on. In most cases, I requested that the participants sign the consent forms after the first informal meeting, giving them the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns and make informed decisions as to whether and how to proceed with their participation.

Multiple Multilevel Sources of Data

The data were collected from multiple multilevel sources to fully contextualise the subjects' lived experiences. Table A.1 below summarises the instruments used for data collection and the specific (types of) data generated from each instrument.

Micro-Level Life-Story Interviews

I conducted 108 life-story interviews with the 29 families and 4 divorcees, comprising 36 couple interviews with the 29 couples, 67 individual interviews with the husbands and wives of the 29 families, and another 5 individual interviews with the 4 divorcées. With the exception of one family, in which the British husband was not willing to be interviewed separately, I interviewed all of the couples both together and separately. Despite ongoing debate on the order in which individual and couple interviews should be conducted (for example, Butcher, 2009; Reis & Judd, 2000; Sigel & Brody, 2014), I conducted most of the couple interviews first, followed by the individual interviews, as this method has been shown to help me to identify potential conflicts between husband and wife. The couple interviews allowed the couples to construct

Table A.1 Data collection instruments

Level of Data	Instrument	Focus
Micro-individual	Individual life-story interview	Individual life stories (including basic demographic information), attitudes and feelings. Particular focus on experiences prior to marriage and migration, and personal experiences of and attitudes towards marriage and migration
Micro-couple	Couple life-story interview	Life-story approach to experiences of first encounters, courting, dating and marriage, family relationships and children at a dyadic couple level
Meso-familial/social	Participant and non-participant observation	Interaction between the husband and wife, and the couple's interaction with extended family members and friends; attitudes towards extended family and social life
Macro-national/transnational	Secondary survey data from China and the UK	Population-level data on gendered education and career development; attitudes towards ethnic, family and gender values in both China and the UK

consensual accounts (Daly, 2007). Therefore, the accounts provided in these interviews should be interpreted as conjugally moderated narratives. Nevertheless, disagreements still occurred during many of the couple interviews, providing clues to potential tensions and conflicts to be explored further in the individual interviews.

The life-story interview is an in-depth qualitative interview designed to capture the individual experiences and expectations that are deemed 'relevant' by subjects from their current positions in life. It is a special type of qualitative interview that emphasises continuity between time and place, and is thus a particularly powerful method of tracing the internal logic of geographic and social mobility throughout life-course dynamics (Elder & Giele, 2009). As noted by Thompson (2004), the key aim of this method is to reveal the social meanings underlying experiences.

The interviews with both couples and individuals had a semi-closed structure that followed the life-course sequence. The interview schedule provided only general guidelines, and specific questions and interview

directions were tailored to particular cases. The questions were designed to enable the narrators to construct life stories. Consistent with the life-story framework, the interviews addressed the two key dimensions of time and place (situation). In the temporal dimension, emphasis was placed on the subjects' experiences of migration, marriage, children and work, and their social/community lives and so on, although early experiences such as education and family upbringing were also covered. In the situational dimension, the interviews expanded from the centre of individual experience to nuclear family life and then to interaction with extended families and friends. Although some of the same questions were asked in the interviews with couples and the interviews with individuals, the couple interviews focused more on the joint experiences and family lives of the couples after marriage and migration, and the individual interviews focused slightly more on personal experiences, opinions and feelings both prior to and after marriage and migration.

The interviews, which ranged from 20 minutes to 3 hours long, were audio-recorded where possible; otherwise, detailed notes were taken. The place and time of the interviews were at the participants' choosing. While some participants preferred to meet for the first time in third-party public places such as cafés and pubs, others preferred to be interviewed at home. Notably, a participant's choice of interview setting may itself contain important information about the participant's social and personal life, as well as his or her perceived interpersonal distance from the researcher (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). As the interviews were conducted with gaps of a few weeks to two months, I often participated in the families' social events—such as parties and family outings—during these intervals. The changes in the participant-researcher dynamics were considerable as the families gradually welcomed me into their personal lives.

Language may pose particular difficulties in interviews with inter-ethnic couples. I conducted most of my interviews with the couples and the British spouses in English. In some cases, the British spouses could speak fluent Chinese and almost near-instinctively used Chinese phrases in our interviews without my prompting. The individual interviews with the Chinese wives were usually conducted in Chinese, although English phrases were used by some of the wives from time to time. I discuss the issue of linguistic 'code-switching' further in the section on data analysis below.

Meso-Level (Non-)Participant Observations

To understand participants' lived experiences 'from within', it is vital to gather information that respondents deem 'relevant' (Garfinkel, 2002). I conducted participant observations and non-participant observations during the interviews and at events such as family gatherings, parties, and community and church services to capture the dynamics of 'linked lives' in action. I was also able to informally interview the children, extended families and friends of the couples on various social occasions. Field notes were kept accordingly. The information gathered from significant others not only provided a different, alternative perspective on the intermarried couples, the views of family and friends may also have important implications for the familial and social relationships and life decisions of the 29 couples. Observation richly contextualises the enactment of everyday lives on a daily basis *in situ*. It also forms part of the triangulation process used to confirm the reliability and validity of information, which is key to qualitative research, especially as a life-story account may be affected by the speaker's memories and current position in life (Perks & Thomson, 1998; Portelli, 1981). Due to the fine distinctions between levels of involvement with the subjects of investigation (Bryman, 2012), the difference between non-participant and participant observations may not be as clear as it seems. In this research, non-participant observation usually took place during interview sessions, as I noted down the subjects' nonverbal, physical expressions. In contrast, participant observation was conducted chiefly during my interactions with the families and their friends on various social occasions. In addition to the observational process, I collected biographical documents such as photos, letters and so on.

Macro-Level Survey Data

To locate the Chinese-British inter-ethnic families within wider sociocultural contexts at a national and transnational level, secondary quantitative data from nationally representative surveys in both China and the UK were analysed. The major datasets used in this research were obtained from the China General Social Survey, the China Family Panel Studies, the East

Asian Social Survey, the World Values Survey, the International Social Survey Programme, and the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Survey (otherwise known as 'Understanding Society'). The datasets were selected to contain relevant measures comparable between China and the UK. To provide contextual information on sociocultural settings in China and the UK, with specific relation to the life-course experiences of the 29 Chinese-British families, I descriptively analysed relevant measures of gendered participation in education, employment and domestic work, as well as attitudes towards family and gender values and so on.

Data Analysis

NVivo (Version 10), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis package, was used to help manage, organise and analyse the data obtained from the interviews and observations. Although textual transcripts were available, I also analysed data collected from audio recordings. The analysis of audio files allowed me to detect subtle tones and vocal interactions that would have gone largely ignored in textual analysis. Analysing both textual and audio records also enabled me to identify the emotional contours of the narratives, such as excitement, sorrow and surprise, which provided key clues to how the participants related to their life-story content.

The interviews conducted in Chinese were translated into English. Due to the cultural differences between the two languages, Chinese-English translation almost always forces translators to decide between literal and metaphorical translation (Valerie & Tin-Kun, 2010). While the former method communicates meaning in another language in culturally equivalent terms, the latter retains 'original' linguistic features. To ensure the precision of my research, I sought to restrict my translation to the original words in Chinese. When I suspected that the meaning of a specific Chinese term would get 'lost in translation', I retained the Chinese term and explained its meaning in greater detail in a footnote. The phenomenon of 'code-switching' between English and Chinese was also very prominent in the interviews with Chinese-British families. For example, the Chinese wives tended to include English phrases in their Chinese nar-

ratives, and the British husbands used Chinese terms in their English narratives. 'Code-switching' is a complex linguistic phenomenon. However, as Auer (2002) indicated, the use of terms from another language in adulthood often indicates that the associated concepts are 'foreign', as the speaker lacks proper culturally equivalent terms. Paying attention to code-switching during my data analysis helped to shed light on how the Chinese and British cultures penetrate and influence each other at the intimate interface of inter-ethnic families.

The data were archived and preliminarily analysed after each interview session. This helped me to devise my subsequent interview strategies and identify directions for further exploration. After the completion of my fieldwork, all of the data were systematically analysed using a combination of theoretical, open and axial coding. NVivo was particularly useful during the first stage of the coding in identifying the most regularly occurring codes; the second stage of the coding was conducted manually. The initial codes were then merged, grouped and where necessary deleted to produce core codes for the life-course experiences of the Chinese-British families. The participants were anonymised to remove their names and identifiable information. The linguistic features of the names were retained. For example, English pseudonyms were used in cases in which the respondents preferred to be addressed by English names, and vice versa for Chinese names.

When analysing qualitative data, one should note that data obtained from discursive discourse are often unobtrusive and reactive (McNabb, 2004). This means that the generation of qualitative and especially textual data is a complex process, and that once produced, such data are often multifunctional and multivocal. Therefore, the data were treated as active discursive spaces for the production of accounts (Bryman, 2012), with particular attention paid to points of consistency and discrepancy in the following areas: (a) how the subjects constructed coherent logical systems for their lived experiences, and (b) whether and how their accounts differed temporally (that is, in transition) and across situations (Daly, 2007). Comparison has been widely used by researchers to determine the properties and dimensions of specific concepts. I conducted comparisons both between cases and within cases. For example, as seen in Chap. 2, comparisons between cases helped to differentiate between the immigra-

tion trajectories and family-work orientations that define distinct sub-groups of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families. Meanwhile, within-case comparison helped to identify (in)consistencies and transitions in individual life courses.

Comparison was also a helpful method of dealing with the highly subjective and potentially biased nature of life-story accounts (McAdams, 1990; Thompson, 2004). As life-story accounts reflect subjects' current interpretations of their life experiences, the representation of such narratives as near-factual life events may endanger the validity and reliability of research (Elder & Giele, 2009). I analysed the participants' life-story accounts to gain insight into how they experienced their current lives, and why. Yet it is also important to cross-validate the reliability of such accounts; not entirely for the sake of 'objectifying' life events as facts, but chiefly to provide a thorough understanding of the participants' diverse and subjective representations of life events. Even if a participant had wilfully or mindlessly 'lied' about a certain 'fact', it would still have been necessary to verify the reasons for his or her narrative choices. This verification was achieved by comparing the different versions of accounts of the same events provided by the husband, wife, children, extended family and friends. Although consistency between versions may help to validate the 'authenticity' of certain narrative events, particular attention was paid to instances of inconsistency and discrepancy.

It should be noted that my purpose in analysing observational data was to systematically document the diverse lives of Chinese-British families as much as to identify the distinct systems of logic underlying the interplay between gender and ethnicity. Although the approach taken in this research does not fit the strict anthropological sense of ethnography (Fetterman, 2010), I sought to immerse myself in the lives and social environments of the Chinese-British families explored in the research. Observational data such as photo albums, documents and field-notes were analysed to enrich the interpretation of the life stories. Cultural artefacts such as Chinese paintings on the wall or Chinese rice-cookers in the kitchen all offered indispensable clues to the organisation of the everyday lives of the 29 families.

The analysis of qualitative data was as much an exercise in self-reflection as a means of probing into the data generated from my fieldwork. The

participants were encouraged to construct their own accounts, and I tried to minimise my intervention in their narratives, providing only the facilitation necessary to maintain the flow of each interview. Nevertheless, I inevitably 'co-authored' their life stories to various degrees, as I 'intruded' upon their discursive spaces as a 'cumulative member' (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, readers should remain aware of my position as a Chinese man and its potential implications for the research findings.

Indeed, as a male researcher, I benefited from a perspective different from that of traditional research on gender studies, which have been conducted mainly by female scholars (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Nevertheless, I remained mindful of issues pertaining to social desirability and performativity, and did not deliberately use my gender or my ethnic identity as a male Chinese to create a sense of 'identity empathy' and thereby avoid either negative or positive 'gender/ethnic display' (Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999). Inevitably, however, my identity may have influenced the processes of data collection and analysis. For example, I found that the husbands felt able to make negative and sometimes almost derogatory remarks about their wives to me, which would have been unlikely if they had been interviewed by a female researcher. In complete contrast with 'identity empathy', emotional empathy was a key part of my research practice, allowing me to identify subtle and nuanced feelings and the implicit emotional rules that lie behind observable and explicit logic (Hochschild, 1983).

Stata was used to analyse the secondary quantitative data. Appropriate weights were applied to factor in the surveys' sampling-selection techniques to ensure that the results were representative at a population level. As different measures from different surveys were analysed in slightly different ways, the methods used to treat the quantitative data are described in detail alongside the presentation of specific pieces of statistical evidence.

Data Presentation

The writing-up process is key to the study of social life (Clifford & Marcus, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to briefly discuss the presentation of data in this book. Two aspects of the organisation of data and the style of presentation are worth noting.

First, due to the lack of previous research on the lived experiences of Chinese-British inter-ethnic families, I have presented a descriptive account of the life experiences of Chinese-British families in Chap. 2. This enriched the subsequent theoretical discussion with specific insights gained from the members of real-life Chinese-British inter-ethnic families. It also underlined the importance of adopting a life-course perspective to further explore the complex, subtle dynamics of identity construction in Chinese-British ethnic intermarriage.

Second, I sought to retain the multilevel and multidimensional structure of the life-story framework when presenting my findings. Although each of the empirical chapters is arranged in a slightly different way, the sections within each chapter generally concern the perspectives of the husband and wife, both separately and together; their relationships with extended family and friends; and the position of the family within wider society. Further to the theoretical skeleton outlined and discussed in Chap. 3, each empirical chapter engages more specifically with ongoing debates on inter-ethnic families, cross-cultural communication and so on. A basic guideline to each empirical chapter is the internal logic that navigated the respondents throughout their diverse life courses as individuals and families. As I approached the lived experiences of the respondents from the current point in time and space, I took the current state of the 29 families as the starting point of exploration. Next, I traced the participants' life experiences backwards and their expectations forwards to explore how and why they had arrived at their current positions.

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Appendix B: List of Informants

Family ID	Pseudonym	Age	Immigration pathway	Work-family orientation	Ethnicity of social life	Child
1	Susan	73	Marriage	Family	Chinese	3
1	Damien	76	migrant	Work	Mixed	
2	**Monica**	60	Marriage	Family	Chinese	3
2	**Bob**	60	migrant	Work	English	
3	**Guihua**	38	Marriage	Family	Chinese	2
3	**Garry**	44	migrant	Work	English	
4	Sarah	36	Marriage	Family	Chinese	2
4	Park	39	migrant	Work	English	
5	Micah	34	Marriage	Family	Mixed	2
5	Felix	43	migrant	Work	English	
6	Jenna	32	Marriage	Family	Mixed	2
6	Adam	41	migrant	Work	English	
7	Julia	32	Marriage	Family	Chinese	2
7	Tom	45	migrant	Work	English	
8	**Weiwei**	28	Marriage	Family	Chinese	2
8	**Barry**	50	migrant	Work	English	
9	Rita	32	Marriage	Family	Chinese	0
9	Cary	38	migrant	Work	English	
10	**Xiu**	42	Marriage	Work	Chinese	0
10	**Fred**	72	migrant	Work	Mixed	
11	**Cora**	30	Marriage	Work	English	0
11	**Dan**	40	migrant	Work	English	

Family ID	Pseudonym	Age	Immigration pathway	Work-family orientation	Ethnicity of social life	Child
12	**Fang**	36	Professional	Family	Chinese	2
12	**Terry**	37	migrant	Work	English	
13	**Yiyi**	32	Professional	Family	Chinese	1
13	**John**	25	migrant	Work	Mixed	
14	**Emma**	28	Professional	Family	Mixed	0
14	**Daly**	28	migrant	Work	English	
15	Haipin	58	Professional	Work	Mixed	3
15	Peter	62	migrant	Work	English	
16	Sujuan	54	Professional	Work	Mixed	1
16	Dominic	62	migrant	Work	Mixed	
17	**Ming**	35	Professional	Work	Mixed	1
17	**Collin**	45	migrant	Work	English	
18	**Linda**	35	Professional	Work	English	2
18	**Derek**	39	migrant	Work	English	
19	Meng	35	Professional	Work	Mixed	1
19	Sam	36	migrant	Work	Mixed	
20	Yihua	32	Professional	Work	Mixed	1
20	Darren	34	migrant	Work	Mixed	
21	Yu	32	Professional	Work	English	1
21	Ron	38	migrant	Work	English	
22	Qing	27	Professional	Work	Mixed	1
22	Carl	28	migrant	Work	English	
23	Meilin	25	Professional	Work	Mixed	0
23	Billy	31	migrant	Work	English	
24	Shalai	24	Professional	Work	English	0
24	Mike	24	migrant	Work	English	
25	Lihua	23	Professional	Work	Mixed	0
25	Bert	23	migrant	Work	Mixed	
26	Siyu	23	Professional	Work	Mixed	2
26	Jason	25	migrant	Work	English	
27	***Qian***	52	Professional	Family	Mixed	2
27	***Lisa***	52	migrant	Work	Mixed	
28	***Zeng***	38	Marriage	Family	Mixed	1
28	***Iris***	40	migrant	Work	Mixed	
29	***Jun***	52	Marriage	Family	Mixed	2
29	***Becky***	51	migrant	Work	Mixed	

Divorcées	Pseudonym	Age	Immigration pathway	Work-family orientation	Ethnicity of social life	Child
1	Hanna	64	Professional migrant	Work	Mixed	2
2	Liz	55	Professional migrant	Work	Mixed	0
3	Jan	47	Marriage migrant	Work	Mixed	2
4	Yao	36	Professional migrant	Work	Mixed	0

Note: Pseudonym reported. Family ID in bold: Chinese spouse. Name in bold: cases cited in Chap. 2. Family ID and name in *italics*: Chinese-British families with Chinese husbands

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