



MONASH University

Intergenerational Ambivalence and Family Exchanges: Exploring Grandparent Childcare in Hong Kong and East Asia

Ka-Wing LO
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Abstract

Grandparent childcare links up family members across generations through provision of care; studying the dynamics of these childcare arrangements will illuminate how individuals navigate the social landscape of care provision. Grandparent childcare is common in East Asia where there are strong extended family cultures. However, in-depth research on grandparent childcare, social expectations and family roles remains limited. This thesis contributes to understanding the practices and experiences of grandparent childcare in the East Asian context at an important time for childcare policy development. Specifically, in the last five years, the governments in East Asia have been exploring policies for facilitating grandparent childcare to meet increasing childcare needs. My thesis focuses on the East Asian region, examining the grandparent care context in various countries in this region, followed by an in-depth study of the situation in Hong Kong.

This thesis documents grandparent childcare arrangements in contemporary East Asian families and explores the family processes and dynamics involved in care work. This study explores Hong Kong families' first-hand experiences of the interplay of policy support and household care provision for pre-school children. It focuses on grandparent childcare in working parents' childcare arrangements. It contributes to the evolving discussion on the ethics of care by looking at both the actual practices and values of childcare arrangements in intergenerational familial relationships.

Importantly, in East Asia, care is still very much viewed as a personal and domestic issue with a strong family focus; childcare remains largely absent from the public agenda. In this study, the existing family and childcare policies in East Asia, gendered divisions of domestic labour and care work, and the East Asian family cultures are taken into consideration to contextualise the qualitative analysis. Family relationships and negotiations of childcare are explored through the continuous interactions of informal and formal care. I conducted 26 semi-structured in-depth interviews with parents and grandparents which cover the childcare arrangements of 71 nuclear families and 53 children.

The findings show that the interplay between care and family dynamics is intricate and complex. Childcare patterns are shaped by personal lives, gender roles, family dynamics, community and society, policy infrastructure and welfare, and paid employment. Continuity and change are revealed concurrently in gender roles in care work: while grandmothers are still considered to be primary carers, grandfathers are devoting more effort.

I argue that grandparent childcare is an example of family capital: financial arrangements associated with familial childcare constitute a symbolic recognition of parents' responsibilities and are part of extensive intergenerational transfers. Grandparents' childcare experiences and skills are being mobilised as human capital. Family-based social capital is also utilised and developed during the close contact between the generations in arranging familial childcare. In sum, parents and grandparents strive to maintain family capital throughout the grandparent childcare arrangements. And they experience ambivalence with concurrent experiences of positive sentiments and negative emotions in their care routines. Whether parents and grandparents can successfully manage this ambivalence will affect the decision to continue, terminate or limit the existing grandparent childcare arrangements.

This study contributes to family studies with in-depth knowledge about informal care and family processes in a time of rapid economic and social development in East Asian countries. It offers insights into how families manoeuvre intergenerational pressures and opportunities while caring for the third generation. This knowledge is particularly indispensable for governments planning to regulate or support grandparent childcare.

Further study of grandparent childcare arrangements in other countries in East Asia to facilitate regional knowledge sharing and comparison is recommended, to draw attention to and development of care policy that benefits individuals with care needs in all families.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature:



Print Name: Sally Ka-Wing LO

Date: 31 May 2017

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an ordinary woman who survived the Chinese Civil War, WWII and the Sino-Japanese War, fled
from South-east China to Macao and finally put down roots in Hong Kong,
and experienced her extraordinary life as a factory worker, a small grocery store owner, a factory
owner, a full-time mother and a full-time childcarer for her grandchildren.
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Abbreviations and Special Terms

Abbreviations

ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ILO	International Labour Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
AUD	Australian Dollar
HKD	Hong Kong Dollar
	(In this thesis, I assume the exchange rate is HKD\$6 to AUD\$1, according to the exchange in early 2017)
the UK	the United Kingdom
the US	the United States

Special terms in Cantonese

Through the interviews, the informants used terms and names for family members and childcarers. To capture the original expressions of the informants, in quoting them, I maintain the original terms in Cantonese. The transcriptions are based on the simplest form provided in the Chinese Character Database developed by The Chinese University of Hong Kong (<http://humanum.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/Lexis/lexi-can/>):

<i>gung-gung</i>	maternal grandfather
<i>po-po</i>	maternal grandmother
<i>je-je</i>	paternal grandfather
<i>maa-maa</i>	paternal grandmother
<i>ze-ze</i>	the elder sister, a common way to address foreign domestic helpers at home
<i>ji-ji</i>	aunt, a common way to address foreign or local domestic helpers
<i>co jyut</i>	The first month after childbirth for confinement, literally called the 'sitting month', which is vital in Chinese traditional health concept for the mother

to recover after labouring. There are some strict rules to follow—such as having special diets and not going outdoors. The mother is expected to rest and eat. Therefore, it is common to have someone to take care of the mother and the baby after birth.

The carer is usually from the family, usually the baby's paternal or maternal grandmother. If both grandmothers are unavailable to help, then the family can hire a carer, who is called a maternity or confinement helper (or *pui jyut* in Cantonese, meaning 'accompanying for a month')

gaa jung

Literally, 'family use' and is the sum of money given to elderly parents by their adult children. It can be for family expenditure, supporting parents, or both.

lai see

Red packet, it is a traditional Chinese New Year gift, consisting of a red envelope with money inside; it means sending people happiness and blessings.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis is about the dynamics of grandparent childcare in East Asian families and the position of grandparent childcare in the childcare package available to working parents. This thesis contributes to knowledge of family and childcare policy by exploring Hong Kong families' first-hand experiences of household care provision, family relationships and policy support for pre-school children. It contributes to the evolving discussion of the ethics of care by looking at both the practices and values of childcare arrangements in intergenerational families.

I start with families' experiences of caring, as the nature of childcare and its deep connection to family relationships involves intense emotional processes. Looking into parents' and grandparents' experiences of familial childcare arrangements enables fuller understanding of the background and reasons that shape contemporary childcare issues. Family sociologists (Elliott, 2014; May and Bottero, 2011; Smart, 2007) link personal lives and relationships to social patterns and structures. Personal lives are shaped by social contexts and, at the same time, personal decisions influence society. It is important to look at the viewpoints of individuals and how individuals understand their relationships with others within the social world. 'The self can be thought of as a central mechanism through which the individual and the social world intersect' (Elliott, 2014: 24) and, therefore, understanding individuals in daily life must take account of all their interpersonal interactions in sociological study.

Next, locating childcare in a wider social and cultural background, this thesis examines how government policies and services, family values, and gender roles are interacting and shaping current childcare models in Hong Kong. I investigate how parents decide on optimal care plans for their children within the context of current available formal care, social cultures, family values, beliefs around quality childcare and child development, and family resources (human resources and financial resources). I explore how different generations within a family perceive their experiences of childcare, and how they negotiate their roles and identities when executing childcare plans.

Grandparent childcare is an important research focus because it is a common care arrangement and important element of intergenerational relationships in the context of current rapid social changes in the East Asian region. While it has been a central choice for many families, it is largely ignored in the planning of family policies. Recently however, governments in East Asia are trying to support grandparent childcare by providing subsidies or training. This research is, therefore, timely in exploring grandparent childcare in East Asia.

Statistics show that there are increasing needs for grandparent childcare all across the world. In the UK, for example, the total number of hours of childcare provided by grandparents in the years 2012-2013 increased by 35%, from 1.3 billion to 1.7 billion; and the estimated monetary value of grandparent childcare was £7.3 billion, almost double the value in 2004 (Grandparent Plus, 2013). In the US, 21.1% of employed mothers chose grandparent childcare as the primary childcare arrangement for their pre-school children in 2011; this statistic was 14.3% in 1990 (Laughlin, 2013). Almost 50% of grandparents in the US provided some kind of childcare (Guzman, 2004). In Australia, official statistics indicated that 19% of children between 0-12 years old were usually cared for by their grandparents in 2008; this number reached 22% in 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014; 2012; 2008). Statistics and research on grandparent childcare in East Asia are still scarce and scattered.

Structure of the thesis

There are nine chapters in this thesis. The first three chapters review literature on the concept of care (Chapter 2), the work-family context in East Asia (Chapter 3) and grandparent childcare (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 describes the methodology and approach taken. Three data analysis chapters follow: Chapter 6 on childcare decision-making by families, Chapter 7 on the current care patterns, duties and financial arrangements of grandparent childcare and Chapter 8 on intergenerational ambivalence. Chapter 9 is the conclusion.

I now offer an overview of the main themes of this thesis in the following section.

What is care?

Care is a complex concept. In academic discussions, care is understood as a spectrum of activities and services including, but not limited to, physical, emotional and financial care provided to the elderly, young children, the disabled, and patients with chronic illness. For childcare, the boundary can expand to include education and parenting. Care is most usefully understood from multiple perspectives including the social identity and relationships of carer and care recipient, the economic character of the exchange, institutional settings and so on (Thomas, 1993). Therefore, apart from attention to direct care activities, the concept of care covers preconditions or preparation for care and mental management (UN Women, 2014).

Care involves both practices and values (Held, 2006). Recent decades have seen the expansion of the concept of care practices: concepts such as social care (Daly and Lewis, 2000), caringscapes (McKie, Gregory and Bowlby, 2002) and the care diamond (Ravazi, 2007) have

emerged. These notions provide a wider panorama for understanding care through links with social environment, policy and community across time.

Furthermore, care practices are always linked with gender. Several ‘revolutions’ over the past decades illuminate evolutions in the gendered divisions of care work: the stalled revolution (Hochschild and Machung, 1989), the subtle revolution (Gerson, 1985; Smith, 1979) and ‘a men’s quiet revolution’ (Gerson, 1993). In terms of the values of care, the ethics of care perspective (Held, 2006, 1993; Ruddick, 1995; Gillian, 1982) has been developing since the 1980s, with its roots in feminist theories, to investigate the emotions and relationships of care. The practices and values of care are explored in Chapter 2.

Care contexts in East Asia

East Asia in this thesis includes China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. Singapore is included due to its comparability with Hong Kong in terms of economic and historical traits. These countries constitute a common grouping for academic comparison due to similar cultural and economic developments (Chan, 2005; Holliday, 2000).

The need for care is increasing in East Asia in line with demographic changes. This is explored in Chapter 3. In terms of childcare, critical global social changes have recently intensified attention to, and pressures, in this domain. Three key macro demographic patterns include decreasing fertility, increasing longevity and increasing female employment. These demographic changes have resulted in changes in family size and structures: multigenerational families and households are common, but the number of family members in each generation has decreased (Hagestad, 2006; Bengtson, Rosenthal and Burton, 1990). The duration of the family ties among these generations has increased due to longer life expectancy and better health conditions. The changes in family structures are coupled with changes in labour market participation, in particular for women keen to remain in or return to the labour market given their expectations of career development and the financial pressures of supporting a family in contemporary societies. The male-breadwinner family model is gradually being replaced by the dual-earner model, and this shift creates changes in care landscapes. There have been concerns about younger generations’ responsibilities for taking care of the elderly. At the same time, due to better health outcomes, the elderly are now not only the recipients of support but also able to support their families and descendant generations actively (Quah, 2003; 2009).

While these patterns are a global phenomenon, these trends have occurred later in East Asia than in Europe and in a more compressed manner. Taking the fertility rate as an example, there is a gap of around fifty years when the timing of the decline in East Asia and Europe is compared.

Europe experienced its fertility decline in two transitions across a decade, whereas East Asia's experience is one major transition compressed within half a decade with a severe plunge of the fertility rate to a new global low (Ochiai, 2011).

East Asian family cultures and practices are deeply influenced by traditional values. Key family values are part of an ideological system that guides social roles and ethics. A display of respect is expected towards people according to the order of seniority in social and family hierarchy; inside the family, this respect is shown in the form of filial piety. Harmony is highly valued and family members strive to achieve harmony and peace in relationships through respect and collectivism. Blood lineage and gender roles are very strong concepts and these are linked to kinship obligations and the closeness of relationships in an extended family. There are orthodox expectations and assumptions about the roles and responsibilities of family members in East Asian families; for example, mothers are expected to provide emotional support to children, and the eldest sons are expected to co-reside with and to support their ageing parents.

Governments in East Asia are currently playing a modest role in childcare. Care responsibilities are mainly shared between family and market, and support from the state is scant. The social policies in East Asia are more attuned to economic development. This distinctive system has been named the 'Confucian welfare state' (Jones, 1990), the 'East Asian welfare model' (Lin and Wong, 2013; Goodman, White and Kwon, 1998; Kwon, 1997) or the productivist welfare regime (Gough, 2000; Holliday, 2000).

As a result, care is still very much a personal and domestic issue. This was a common and important notion among my informants. When looking for care assistance East Asian parents begin with their personal networks and seek out solutions on their own. Informal childcare seemed to be an essential element in parents' planning of childcare. When I began looking into this topic, I found that discussions of informal childcare and grandparent childcare in East Asia are limited and scattered. There are many studies on childcare, but far less that pinpoint grandparent childcare as a special phenomenon for in-depth study.

Grandparents play a pivotal role in informal childcare in Hong Kong. This informal familial childcare option requires considerable negotiation and working out between the parents and the grandparents. However, previous studies have not focused on the grandparent-adult children relationships in childcare arrangements. In particular, this is a limitation in the existing literature on grandparent childcare and family processes in East Asian families. In East Asia, studies of parent and adult children relations target filial piety, but few have explored the dynamics of grandparent childcare in depth. An overview of existing research is provided in Chapter 4.

Establishing the research questions

My personal experiences have influenced my academic interest in grandparent childcare. My maternal grandmother looked after me from the time I was born. My parents asked my grandmother to help with childcare because we were a dual-earner family. I am my parents' first child and the transition to parenthood brought great changes to my parents' lives. They needed childcare and emotional support. In particular, my mother was eager to return to work as she was very interested and experienced in wool knitting techniques. She performed the quality checks for final products (both my parents worked in the wool garment industry but in different divisions within a factory). I lived with my grandparents and my parents came to see me after work and during weekends. This childcare arrangement lasted for six years, until I started my primary schooling. My mother wanted to spend more time with me and thus began working part-time. My father kept working full time and very long hours to support the family. My grandmother continued to provide occasional childcare during weekends and holidays. Grandparent childcare arrangements went smoothly in my family, and my parents always appreciated the help of my grandmother. For me, I am very grateful that I developed an intimate and close relationship with my grandparents, especially with my grandmother.

However, not all families in East Asia are satisfied with their familial childcare arrangements. I have met many people—friends, fellow students, colleagues, neighbours, service users and so on—who have shared their family stories of grandparent childcare. Many parents have described asking grandparents for assistance. However, smooth and satisfactory familial childcare arrangements did not occur in all cases. This seems incompatible with the traditional family values of harmony and support in East Asian extended families. Thus, the policy challenge for governments is to support intergenerational family relationships so they work for all parties.

My personal experience is not 'individual' but embedded in the social fabric of the 1980s: with robust industrial development in East Asia (my parents worked in a wool garment factory), young families were having fewer children and extended families fewer grandchildren (I was the only child and grandchild in my family at that time) and facing a lack of childcare services in the community, and so on. Reading sociology and gender studies offered me the theoretical background and perspectives to better understand these experiences of informal childcare at home, mainly provided by grandparents. These insights helped contextualise the problems and benefits of grandparent childcare. Therefore, I started my investigation focused on informal familial childcare, in particular, grandparent childcare. By locating this investigation in the context of the care ethics and care policies operating in East Asia and Hong Kong, I will examine how childcare works in the East Asian context.

In this study, I explore critical questions about childcare, about the provision of grandparent childcare and how these provisions interact with other social institutions. I ask:

- What are the drivers of grandparent childcare? What factors influence such childcare decisions?
- In Hong Kong, what are the patterns of provision of grandparent childcare and how do families negotiate these patterns?
- How do parents and grandparents see grandparent childcare and its value?

Methodological and theoretical approach

A qualitative research method is utilised in this research. Grandparent childcare is an emerging research topic that has not yet been fully explored, particularly in East Asia, where studies related to grandparent and family childcare are sparse and usually local studies. In relation to social policy studies and analysis, qualitative research has the ability to reveal thematic connections between policies and social life that are often considered in isolation. Such research can assist in the development of new perspectives for both researchers and policy-makers.

Fieldwork was conducted in Hong Kong from November 2014 to January 2016. In-depth interviews, in a semi-structured format beginning with a narrative approach, were conducted with 14 parents and 12 grandparents with children under six years old at home. These interviews cover the childcare situations of 71 nuclear families and 53 children. I also visited kindergartens, childcare centres and NGOs providing women's and family services, and talked to staff working in the field to understand current challenges and developments.

Grandparents in this study are in the age range of 50-70 years old, with most in their early sixties as they were born in the post-war baby-boomer period. Parents in this study are in the age range of 20-40 years old, most are in their 30s with between 1-3 children. Most parents are in paid employment.

I adopt a feminist approach for this research, and specifically employ the standpoint theory developed by Sandra Harding (1987). Feminist standpoint theory aims to study society from the viewpoints of women and other marginalised groups. Researchers who support standpoint theory privilege women's views—investigating their concerns, experiences and daily lives. In doing so feminist scholars advocate for taking the lived experiences of women and marginalised groups to underpin evidence-based inquiry. In my research, I have looked at carers' experiences in childcare provision in order to understand how my informants, mostly mothers and

grandmothers, balance care work with paid work or other roles, and how they perceive their roles as childcarers.

My theoretical framework for understanding childcare arrangements with grandparents draws upon notions of intergenerational solidarity, conflict and ambivalence. Drawing on the intergenerational solidarity model developed by Marc Szydlik (2008) and the standpoint theory by Sandra Harding (1987), I explored the needs and the opportunities in grandparent childcare, the cultural and social contexts, and the policy background in which grandparents were providing regular care to their grandchildren as a way to support the middle generation (the adult children). In the research process, I required additional conceptual and theoretical perspectives to build a more comprehensive understanding. Therefore, progressively, I have also included David Morgan's (1996) concept of 'doing family' and Janet Finch's (2007) 'displaying family', Harrington Meyer's idea of 'intensive grandparenting' (Harrington Meyer, 2014), and notions of 'synchronised parenting and grandparenting' (May, Mason and Clarke, 2012). The comprehensive analysis of social capital in Asian families by Stella Quah (2003, 2009) generates a foundation to understand the links between grandparents and social capital in the East Asian context.

Grandparent childcare

In Chapter 6, I enquire into how parents in Hong Kong make decisions about grandparent childcare. Childcare decision-making is a complicated process: it incorporates parents' employment status, grandparents' employment or retirement, current welfare policy and supports available, the cost of childcare, quality and expectation of childcare and foreseeable changes in family lives. Some parents use a range of childcare options simultaneously for a childcare schedule that suits their needs, and to avoid breakdowns in childcare arrangements. Childcare arrangements change over time in a family due to changes in parents' and carers' daily lives.

After analysing the qualitative data collected from the in-depth interviews, I document grandparent childcare patterns including frequency of care, grandparents' care duties, opportunities for grandparents to provide childcare, and the employment and retirement arrangements of grandparents.

Gender and grandparent childcare

In the detailed account of childcare arrangements in Chapter 7, gender roles in childcare across generations are illuminated. Continuity and change are revealed simultaneously. For instance, it

is common for informants to say that fathers and grandfathers are usually doing non-routine and less intensive tasks such as playing with children, but not participating in direct care.

However, the role of women as primary carers seems to be slightly loosening in the grandparent generation. It is very interesting to see that grandfathers are more devoted to childcare than when they were still fathers. Some grandfathers have even become the primary childcarers at home.

Family capital and childcare

This study contributes knowledge on the complexity of childcare arrangements and the use and mobilisation of family resources across generations. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986), Coleman's (1988, 1990) and Quah's (2003; 2009) concepts of social capital, I put forward the concept of 'family capital' which includes financial capital, human capital and social capital, for the examination of grandparent childcare and intergenerational dynamics. I argue that grandparent childcare is an expression of family capital and a practice of family capital development.

Social capital is a term that describes the connections among people. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus on social capital within a family. This study finds strong evidence that trust is a significant basis for familial childcare arrangements. Trust is the 'positive expectation of others' reliability' (Roberts, 2011: 696). It is an important element that holds carers and parents together. Trust is expressly important for childcare because children, especially newborn and young children, are vulnerable and defenceless. All parents, grandparents and staff in childcare services or kindergartens in this study brought up the topic of trust. Parents state that trust in the childcarer is decisive in their choice of childcare options.

This thesis shows that there are several dimensions of trust in childcare: the quality of care, physical safety, decision-making for contingency, and communication and transparency. Trust in the childcare relationship is rooted in direct experience, blood lineage, the closeness of relationships, and public opinions.

The financial arrangements associated with grandparent childcare are also examined. I find that there are complex implications in the monetary payments involved in childcare. These constitute not only a symbolic recognition of parents' responsibilities towards their own children but are also part of intergenerational transfers within a multigenerational family.

Intergenerational ambivalence

Grandparent childcare is an ambivalent experience for grandparents and adult children. Love, conflict and stress are mixed in the arrangements of grandparent childcare. Relations in family life and the intergenerational connections involved are not dichotomous: operating either smoothly or full of conflicts. They are complex. In grandparent childcare arrangements, apart from being a senior family member, a grandparent has another role: the caregiver of grandchildren. This combination of roles has created dilemmas for both parents and grandparents.

In Chapter 8, I examine the family processes and relationships in the context of grandparent childcare. I illustrate the concurrent appearance of positive sentiments and negative emotions experienced by grandparents and adult-children in their daily lives: stress, love and conflict. I explain how childcare becomes a driving force for change in family relationships. I aim to analyse these personal experiences and link them to the broader social structures and family roles to understand how they interact. I trace the patterns of ambivalence from cultural traditions, (Lüscher, 2002). In conjunction with an intergenerational theory of family processes, I examine the distinctive East Asian family cultural aspects to enhance regional knowledge.

Conclusion: Childcare, families and policies

In summary, this study explores childcare provided by grandparents within the context of social policy settings and the lack of provision of formal childcare in Hong Kong. It extends knowledge on family relationships and practical childcare arrangements.

At the personal and nuclear family level, I discuss how parents make childcare decisions. Care decision-making is not once-and-for-all; it is a long-term process occurring across the life-course. There are different childcare needs at different points in time due to changes in employment status and living location.

At the extended family level, using an intergenerational perspective, this study explores the experiences and views of the two generations: grandparents and parents (the middle generation) when providing care to the third generation (grandchildren). From the standpoint of parents and grandparents as carers, this study explores how emotions and sentiments are knitted into childcare decision-making and the practical provision of care.

At the state and societal level, care needs are not static but shifting. Due to rapid and compressed changes in families and the population in East Asia, and particularly with the

changes in political regimes in the 1990s, childcare has become an important topic in policy contexts (Peng, 2006), throughout the region.

This study enhances knowledge about informal care, childcare and family patterns in a time of rapid economic and social development in East Asian countries. It offers insights into how families navigate intergenerational pressures and opportunities while caring for the third generation.

In the next chapter, I lay the groundwork for the thesis by introducing the concept of care and the relationship with gender roles and social policy.

Chapter 2

Conceptualising care, childcare and social policy

This chapter provides an overview of the development of the concept of care since the 1980s when care became a critical focus in feminist studies and sociology. The dimensions of care emerging from this scholarship are then examined. This review demonstrates that contemporary understandings of care are broad: care encompasses all forms of domestic labour and work-family intersections and necessarily includes social policy and the interactions and operations of the broader society. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the links between care and social policy and end with an examination of how childcare in particular is shaped by social policy.

What is 'care'? The development of conceptualisations of care

The goal of this part is to briefly review the evolution of care concepts. The nature of care, including care practices and values, has been consistently investigated in feminist studies. Care provision consists of a wide spectrum of services to care recipients including the elderly, children, the disabled and patients. The boundaries of care provision are frequently blurred: care given to children can be linked to education and parenting; for other groups such as the elderly and those with disabilities may include health and medical care.

Recent studies acknowledge that care is integral in personal lives, family dynamics, community and society, policy infrastructure and welfare, and paid employment. Care includes actual care work and the emotional work of caring. In particular, the care models developed in the twenty-first century, namely the 'social care' concept (Daly and Lewis, 2000), the 'caringscape' (McKie, Gregory and Bowlby, 2002) and the 'care diamond' (Razavi, 2007), provide useful theoretical background for this research.

In the early 1980s in the UK and the US researchers began to focus on the nature of care in daily domestic lives. The analysis illuminated the links between informal care and family relations. The gender division of domestic and care work in daily lives was explored by the pioneers of care studies, Janet Finch and Dulcie Groves (1983), Hilary Graham (1983) and Clare Ungerson (1983). The key consideration at this stage was the daily arrangement of unpaid kin-based care work within a family. Traditionally women are the main care providers in a family and domestic duties in the private sphere are gender specified. Later Hochschild examined the ways in which working parents in the US with children under six years old arranged paid work and care work

in *The Second Shift* which showed that women continued to undertake most of the care in families (Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

In the second half of the twentieth and early part of the twenty-first centuries, although more women are joining or returning to the labour market, their expected domestic responsibilities have not been reduced, and men have not proportionally increased their contribution to the unpaid domestic and care work as compensation. A corresponding shift of time from work to home by men has still not been achieved (Doucet, 2006; Hook 2006; Allen and Webster, 2001; Willinger, 1993). This has been called a 'stalled revolution' from the women's viewpoint (Hochschild and Machung, 1989) and an 'incomplete transformation' from a gender equality perspective (Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny, 2011; Gornick and Meyers, 2003). This pattern of care in a household creates stress for mothers who combine paid work outside the home and care work in the domestic sphere.

The emotionally demanding and intricate nature of care work was documented and gradually the ethics of care perspective emerged. Hilary Rose stressed that care is related to positive emotions because care is laden with love. That is the origin of the term 'the labour of love' (Rose, 1983). Similarly, Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983) coined the term 'emotional labour' to explain the situation whereby emotions and feelings are important elements in the provision of care work. Emotion has since become an important component of the study of care provision.

Feminist care discussions

As an alternative to professional care ethics in caregiving industries such as nursing and social work, a group of feminist scholars, including Carol Gillian (1982), Virginia Held (2006), Nel Noddings (1984, 2002), Sara Ruddick (1995) and Joan Tronto (1993) proposed 'the ethics of care'. This approach investigates the relational and emotional aspects of caring relationships and discusses the ethical dilemma and decisions from a relational perspective. Advocates of the ethics of care believe that the prevailing ethical theories rely solely on universal standards of justice and normative ethics, and overlook the importance of interdependency and relationships among human beings.

At a very early stage of feminist care discussions, Graham (1983) argued that it is fundamental to clarify the meaning of care and what caring entails, so as to distinguish caring for and caring about. Later, Joan Tronto (1993) further argued that care should be understood both as an activity and as a disposition. Fischer and Tronto (1990: 40-43) defined care as a process of four intertwining relationships:

1. Caring about—identifying and being attentive to the other's needs and noting the existence of a need and making an assessment
2. Taking care of—assuming responsibility for care, to take action to address others' needs
3. Caregiving—the direct meeting of need, professionally or informally, including physical work and moral qualities
4. Care-receiving—the response from the one receiving care.

The ethics of care is not limited to a personal level but permeates through society. 'The ethics of care values caring relations and their associated concerns of trust and mutual responsiveness' (Held, 2006: 158). Applying this concept to the broader society, it is 'a system of social support that will encourage and facilitate forms of social interaction that are not based on individual competitiveness' (McDowell, 2004: 157). Care is about relationships, trust and mutual obligations as well as domestic labour.

The discussion of care was widened beyond the private domestic sphere of the family to address the dichotomy of paid and unpaid care, informal and formal care, and also public and private care. In other words, the need to recognise and account for government support of care provision and the care services provided by the market was highlighted, rather than perceiving care simply as labour stemming from the unconditional love of women in the private family sphere.

Bill Bytheway and Julia Johnson (1998) argued that the concept of a carer requires a social construction of individual experiences and stakeholders, including policy makers, researchers and pressure groups. Drawing on the history of the development of the 'carer' concept in the UK, Bytheway and Johnson argued that the 'carer' is actually constructed by the society. For example, for a period of time, a 'carer' was understood to be a single carer in a family who was usually a middle-aged woman. Later, there were views challenging the lack of attention to a male who gives care. 'Carer' was also identified as a care provider in formal services. No matter how the 'carer' is understood, Bytheway and Johnson point out that the care relationship is complex, and informal care should never be solely perceived as a primary carer providing care at home. Instead, it should be recognised as 'a collective response to perceived needs' (1998: 252) and the most important distinction is whether the work the carer performs is paid or not.

Towards a multidimensional view of care

Carol Thomas (1993), after careful examination of the existing care literature, proposed that 'care' should be explored empirically because:

care is both the paid and unpaid provision of support involving work activities and emotional empathy. It is provided mainly, but not exclusively, by women to both able-bodied and dependent adults and children in either the public or domestic spheres, and in a variety of institutional settings. (Thomas, 1993: 665)

Additionally, Thomas proposes a care framework of seven dimensions:

1. The social identity of the carer in terms of gender, familial, occupational, professional or sectoral roles
2. The social identity of the care recipient—age group or social group, ‘dependency status’
3. The interpersonal relationships between the carer and the care recipient based on family, friendship, stranger (contingent caring relationship)
4. The nature of the care-feeling state (‘caring about’) and activity state (‘caring for’)
5. The social domain within which the caring relationship is located—domestic (informal care) or paid or voluntary (formal care)
6. The economic character of the care relationship—waged, unwaged, normative obligations
7. The institutional setting in which care is delivered—the physical location of caring activities

In the twenty-first century, the conceptualisation of care clearly has a multidimensional nature; in particular, scholars include social policy and the welfare state in the analysis of all care arrangements. This perspective broadens the analysis of care by further linking the family and society. The ‘totality of care’ (Kovács, 2015) is gradually being conceptualised. In addition to care activities, care processes and the issues surrounding care activities, recent studies illustrate how and why existing gendered care arrangements came into practice. The ‘caringscape’ is a useful framework proposed by McKie, Gregory and Bowlby (2002) for exploring the spatial-temporal relationship between paid work and care. Acknowledging the multidimensionality and diverse nature of this framework is critical for understanding the social organisation of care work.

The ‘care diamond’ (Razavi, 2007) has been developed to show how care is provided in a society, especially in regard to those with intense care needs: children, the elderly and people with chronic sickness and disabilities. The model shows the balance between family/household, not-for-profit, state (federal/local), and the market for care provision in a society. The care diamond provides a strong conceptual framework to situate and compare care provision systems in society, as well as an instrument for cross-cultural or cross-country comparison of care

provision. It was also an important tool for my fieldwork when I encountered very complicated care arrangements in an individual family. The care diamond helped me to map the qualitative and detailed explanations of family care arrangements, which facilitated comparison and consolidated the analysis.

Social care is another concept that is increasingly adopted in the analysis of care in relation to the welfare state (Daly and Lewis, 2000). Daly and Lewis define social care as ‘the activities and relations involved in meeting the physical and emotional requirements of dependent adults and children and the normative, economic and social frameworks within which these are assigned and carried out’ (2000: 285). Daly and Lewis argue that the political and economic aspects of care required further development. Their social care concept helps to explore the intersection of state, market and family (including the voluntary sector) in the arrangement of care for children and the elderly. In particular, Daly and Lewis (2000) draw attention to three aspects of care. The first is care as labour—this focuses on the nature of care and how it is performed. The second aspect is about the care obligations and responsibilities; the aim is to study the role of the state in care and how this can be related to existing norms of care provision. The third aspect is to view care as an activity with cost, financial issues and emotional commitment involved; this challenges the dichotomy between the private and public sphere.

The dimensions of childcare

It is common to classify childcare into two categories: informal childcare and formal childcare (UNESCO, 2007; Bromer and Henly, 2004; Ceglowski and Bacigalupa, 2002). In its family database, the OECD social policy division arranged data collected into informal and formal childcare. Informal care is care ‘arranged by the child’s parent either in the child’s home or elsewhere, provided by relatives, friends, neighbours, babysitters or nannies and it is generally unregulated’ (OECD, 2014: 1). In combining the data from the OECD countries for this database with surveys, different definitions of informal childcare are revealed. For example, the European Union defines informal childcare as care provided by a professional child-minder at home setting or by grandparents or relatives (European Union, 2017). In Australia, Korea and the US, informal childcare is defined as non-regulated care provided by grandparents, relatives and non-relatives while payment is not the defining criteria (OECD, 2014).

UNESCO defines informal and formal childcare as follows: informal care and child-rearing is

‘care provided by parents and extended family mainly at home or sometimes at other family or in community settings. Formal, or organised care and education, can be divided into three subgroups: 1) organised care and education programmes, non-formal care or

education programmes for children at 0–2 years; 2) pre-primary education programmes and non-formal education programmes for children aged 3 and above; 3) primary education for children at 7–8 years.’ (UNESCO, 2007: Fig. 1.1)

In the US, the classification of childcare adopted by the US Census Bureau is based on the type of childcare provider (Laughlin, 2013). Childcare providers can be categorised as relatives or non-relatives. Relatives include parents, siblings, grandparents and other relatives in a family. Non-relatives include in-home babysitters, neighbours, friends and other non-relatives providing care, and the location of childcare provision can be either in the child’s or carer’s home. Within the category of non-relative care is the subcategory of ‘family day-care providers’ who care for two or more children outside the child’s home. Another type of childcare is ‘organised childcare facilities’ which include day-care or childcare centres, nursery school, preschools, kindergarten and Head Start programmes serving children from 0–4 years of age (Laughlin, 2013).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2010), formal care refers to ‘regulated care away from the child’s home’. The main types of formal care are before and/or after school care, long day care, family day care, and occasional care. Informal care refers to ‘non-regulated care, arranged by a child’s parent/guardian, either in the child’s home or elsewhere. It comprises care by (step) brothers or sisters, care by grandparents, care by other relatives, and care by other people such as friends, neighbours, nannies, or babysitters. It may be paid or unpaid’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

As seen from these definitions, the general classification of care sees formal care and informal care as distinct forms of care provision. But Clare Ungerson and Birgit Pfau-Effinger argue that informal and formal care are not easily distinguished or static. Their studies of the new European welfare states family care policies in the 2000s revealed that care formats keep changing. Ungerson (2004) reviewed the integration of formal and informal care within the family and found that people who need care are often provided with cash rather than services by their governments, so that they can employ care services themselves. Pfau-Effinger proposes a new form of care, ‘semi-formal care’, to identify the changes in welfare state policies (Pfau-Effinger, 2014; Geissler and Pfau-Effinger, 2005). ‘Semi-formal care’ therefore refers to care provided by family members within the social welfare context.

Whether this term is applicable to East Asia and Hong Kong needs further investigation because governments in East Asia do not play a prime role in coordinating welfare for the well-being of citizens. However, as I will discuss in the next chapter, the Hong Kong government has attempted to provide some formal programmes to assist parents with informal childcare such as grandparent childcare training and neighbour childcare programmes. These moves can be

considered a new form of 'semi-formal' care in the context of East Asia. Care can be provided by non-family members in Hong Kong and this falls outside of the government focus on familial support. When parents send their children to a childcare centre, or use a foreign domestic helper or local domestic helpers for childcare (to be discussed in Chapter 6), such arrangements are generally understood as market transactions. This can be considered a consumer-provider relationship or employer-employee relationship (Elicker, Noppe, Noppe and Fornter-Wood, 1997).

An important strand of research for this study is the relationship between parents and caregivers. Collaboration between parents and childcare teachers or family care providers is considered to be an important aspect of care, with the aim of developing a trusting and communicative relationship and, thus, benefit children's well-being (Roberts, 2011; de Ruijter, van Der Lippe and Raub, 2003). Shpancer (1998) reviewed the existing literature on the relationship between care-givers and parents in day-care and argued that it is different in informal and formal care settings as in formal childcare, the relationship is not familial but rather a consumer-provider relationship (Shpancer, 1998).

Change and continuity in gender relations and care provision models

As discussed, gender ideologies and gender roles play an important role in the allocation of domestic and care work. There have been some changes but the distribution of domestic work can still be predicted based upon gender (Forste and Fox, 2012; Hochschild and Machung, 1989).

To further understand the roles of women and men in work and family, Pfau-Effinger (2005) proposes five cultural models of family and care arrangements. These models illuminate the development of gendered household duties and the associated care policies (Pfau-Effinger, 2005: 329):

1. The family economy model
2. The housewife model of the male breadwinner family
3. The male breadwinner/female part-time carer model
4. The dual breadwinner/external model
5. The dual breadwinner/dual carer model

Care models are, therefore, transforming. Jane Lewis (2001) argues that the UK and the Netherlands have been moving from a male breadwinner model towards an adult-worker model (Lewis, 2001). In her comparative analysis of eight countries in Europe, Pfau-Effinger

(2005) found two paths of development in care arrangements using a gender lens. The first is the 'modernisation of the male breadwinner model', that is, evolving from men working outside and women inside the home to both men and women engaging in paid economic activities with the mothers stopping for a few years when the children are small. There is then potential for further development when both women and men work and share childcare. The second path of development is the emergence of the external childcare model, or dual breadwinner family model, meaning that both parents are working full-time in paid work. The OECD data also confirms that the increasing female and maternal employment has led to more families with both individuals in the couple in the labour market. Over 60% of families in the OECD countries are now following the adult-worker model suggested by Jane Lewis in 2001 (OECD, 2011).

In these Western countries, while there are changes in traditional gender roles within the household, with a greater acceptance of the non-familial roles of women (Sullivan, 2004), change has been slow and gradual. Oriel Sullivan (2004) synthesised research on gender and domestic labour in the US and the UK and found that from the 1980s there were signs of change in traditional gender roles. The change was more pronounced in women's roles: 'a greater acceptance of non-familial roles for women, particularly among younger women with higher levels of education, and a rather less clear movement toward acceptance by men of a more familial role' (2004: 212).

There is evidence that men are increasing their share of domestic work. Gerson (1993) describes the situation as 'a men's quiet revolution' (1990: 1), with some men increasing their participation in domestic work and fathering. Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny (2011) assess the convergence of gender roles in domestic work as an 'incomplete transformation'. Based on the economic and labour market trends over the past fifty years, the authors also argue that there has been a slow and incomplete gender convergence in domestic work. They suggest that year 2010 is the mid-point of a seventy to eighty-year process of gender equality. Their data, from a cross-national time use research in domestic work, revealed that the gendered division of labour in domestic work still prevails, with women primarily responsible for routine housework and care work, with men increasing their efforts in non-routine housework such as playing with children. While women in all countries were spending significantly more time than men on domestic work, women's domestic work time is declining gradually (Hook, 2006; Sullivan, 2004).

In practice, women's employment is affected far more than men's because of their disproportionate domestic and childcare responsibilities within a family. Usually mothers decide to work part-time, eliminate working hours and to choose jobs with flexitime or that lack a career ladder. A longitudinal time-use study of fathers' and mothers' paid and unpaid work in

the US shows that fathers are now doing more unpaid care tasks at home and mothers are doing more paid work. However, the increase in men's unpaid work is limited, while the increase in women's paid work time is substantial. The implication is that women are putting more effort than men into juggling the dual responsibilities (Sayer, Bianchi and Robinson, 2004). An Australian study further finds that a father's assistance is not necessarily substituting for the mother's childcare work at home (Craig, 2006). Fathers tend to increase their help in childcare tasks which are more flexible, such as reading and playing. Mothers are still constrained by the routine care tasks that need to be done following a daily timetable, such as feeding and bathing a baby.

Even if parents want equal work and care roles, their aspirations and choices are inhibited, especially for mothers; the balance of paid work or care is still difficult. While the expectation of society is that taking care of children is the parents' responsibility, parents find that they need financial and policy support in carrying out this responsibility.

The concept of the care deficit (Hochschild, 1995) identifies a deficiency in the supply of care in contrast to the demand for care in a society; it is clearly linked to women's labour and the gendered division of labour. Women enter the labour force to provide for their families financially due to societal and economic changes (to be discussed in Chapter 3); the family care pattern is changed. In the era of globalisation, the care deficit in the countries with better economic development eventually led to the purchase of the care services from female migrants from developing countries:

An older daughter from a poor family who cares for her siblings while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a migrating nanny who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country. (Hochschild, 2000: 131)

This pattern is commonly known as the 'global care chain' (Zimmerman, Litt and Bose, 2006; Hochschild, 2000).

In summary, while the meanings of care are shaped by gender roles and family norms, state policies related to care should not be neglected. Policies related to care are generally placed within the remit of family policies and childcare policies. In the next section the history and development of family and childcare policy will be elaborated.

Family policy, childcare policy and care support

Family policy

There is still no consensus on the definition of family policy (Henricson 2012; Neyer, 2003) and there are variations in family policy planning and its implementation in different countries. Bradshaw, Ditch, Holmes and Vilhiteford (1993), in a comparative study of child benefit packages in 15 countries, found the structure and level of policy varied within countries. Robila (2012) explains the intricacy of family policies as:

constituted of a series of separate but interrelated policy choices that address issues such as family care, poverty, domestic violence, and family planning. As such, family policy assumes a diversity and multiplicity of policies rather than a single monolithic, comprehensive legislative act. (Robila, 2012: 32)

There has been extensive discussion of the interpretations and definitions of family policy since the 1970s. Kamerman and Kahn (1978) categorise family policies into explicit and implicit. Moen and Schorr (1987) suggest that family policy is best understood as a widely agreed-on set of objectives for families, developed by the state. Aldous and Dumon (1990) limit the definition of family policy to actions by governmental bodies for families. Based on these different criteria, I will synthesise some significant definitions for this thesis. When reviewing the numerous definitions of family policy over the past three decades, it is possible to identify that family policy is generally defined based on three key dimensions.

First, there are narrow and broad definitions of family policies. Kamerman and Kahn define family policy broadly as ‘everything that government does to and for the family’ (1991: 3). Neyer (2006) also adopts a broad approach by including family law in family policy. Lorraine Fox Harding (1997) combines policy and law in her discussion of childcare issues; she uses the term ‘childcare law and policy’ to suggest law and policy are two systems yet interwoven. Some scholars have sought to narrow down the definition of family policy in order to provide a precise and accurate area for academic studies. Moen and Schorr (1987) identified family policy as a ‘widely agreed-on set of objectives for families, towards the realisation of which the state (and other major social institutions) deliberately shapes programs and policies’ (1987: 795). Aldous and Dumon (1990) limit family policy to actions by governmental bodies only. At the employer level, there is also ‘Family-friendly’ policy, which refers to programmes provided by an organisation to help employees with work-life balance.

Second, there are both implicit and explicit family policies. Explicit policies are designed to attain specific goals related to families. Implicit policies are not specifically or primarily targeted to families, but create indirect results for families. The purposes of developing family policy

include: increasing women's labour participation rates, strengthening the rights of children in education and health protection, minimising child poverty, enhancing individuals' family and work balance and so on. Kamerman (2008) found that some countries incorporate these purposes into a holistic approach to form a set of explicit family policies, whereas some countries have various implicit policies under different policy categories. Implicit family policy is also named the 'family perspective in policy making' (Bogenschneider, 2006: 31). There is also legislation that does not set forth goals for families, but will have a long-term effect on families. For example, compulsory military service for young male adults in Taiwan and South Korea is obviously not a family policy, but has a far-reaching impact on families. Based on her studies in Asia, Stella Quah (1994) observed that policies tend to affect families in a nation explicitly and implicitly. She indicated that:

'family policy may be defined as a comprehensive plan of action formulated to reflect shared social values and to attain defined social goals concerning the nation's families'... it is more common to find in any given country an array of policies and regulations that affect the family either directly... or indirectly...' (Quah, 1994: 125).

Third, there are diverse components outlined in the existing literature of family policies. Ooms (1990) constructs a fundamental framework for family policy based on four main family functions: (1) family creation, (2) economic support, (3) child-rearing, and (4) family caregiving. This framework is considered one of the founding concepts in the study of family policy. Bogenschneider (2006) defines family policy based on family functions. She explains that family policy should be organised around the four main functions of the family: marriage, child-rearing, financial support and family care. Ferrarini and Duvander (2010) further suggest that there are some other areas to be included: women's labour force participation and career chances, male care work, childbearing, child well-being (child poverty, parental time with children, infant and child mortality), and work-family conflict and stress. Thévenon (2011) synthesises various family policies in the OECD countries and identifies six main aims of family policies: 1) poverty reduction and income maintenance, 2) direct compensation for the economic cost of children, 3) fostering employment, 4) improving gender equity, 5) support for early childhood development, and 6) raising birth rates.

Indeed, studies have shown that family policy is being adopted by many countries with different directions and aims. Family policies in different countries are developed with reference to their particular social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. Based on the comparison and analysis of 22 industrialised countries in the 1980s, Gauthier (1996) proposes four models of family policy: (1) pro-natalist, (2) pro-traditional, (3) pro-egalitarian, and (4) non-interventionist. This model was widely adopted. Lohmann, Peter, Rostgaard and Spiess (2009)

identify three European Union family policy goals: (1) improve child wellbeing, (2) gender equality, and (3) balance work and family life. These goals were proposed at the European Summit in March 2007, at which the EU heads of state and government decided to set up a European Alliance for Families so as to create inspiration for more family-friendly policies through co-operation and sharing of experiences (Council of the European Union, 2007).

In this study, the narrow definition of family policy is adopted. Gauthier (2000) pointed out that most family policy studies have chosen a narrow definition due to the availability of data and scope. Gauthier has summarised the core and traditional components for family policy as follows: direct cash transfer, indirect cash transfer, leaves and benefits for parents, and childcare facilities, and these encompass the main functions of the family, as in the definition suggested by Bogenschneider and Ooms. Similarly, Thévenon (2011) develops a framework of family policy that includes leave entitlement, economic support and provision of services.

I primarily follow the narrow definitions proposed by Gauthier (2000), Bogenschneider (2006) and Thévenon (2011) because their definitions draw attention to three crucial elements of family policy studies linked to care provision for young children:

1. Parental leave entitlement
2. Provision of childcare services and facilities
3. Economic support, including direct and indirect support

These three crucial elements constitute core parts of childcare policy. Not all family policies are directly related to care or aim to address the care function of family. If the narrow definition is adopted, it is obvious that tax reductions and education allowances are not directly linked to care. If the broad definition is adopted, then family law, military service and housing policy are not attached to care in a straightforward manner. The subject matter of this thesis is childcare; choosing the narrow definition allows for a focused discussion of childcare concerns and childcare policies.

Childcare policy

Childcare policies are complex as government policies focused on children have often addressed care and education separately. This separation can be traced to the 15th century when some countries started childcare services for abandoned children (Bennett, 2011; Kamerman, 2006). Later in the 19th century, some European countries set up infant schools for children before they entered the education system. Service for early years, therefore, had two aspects: 'kindergartens' focusing on educational aspects and 'day nurseries' focusing on care provision

(Kamerman, 2006: 3). Some developments occurred after World War II, when Nordic countries tried to provide integrated care and education services to children. Some countries still have a split system of care and education, while some countries have combined them. These varied histories have generated different definitions of early childhood according to age in early childhood education and care (ECEC). Kamerman (2006) defined it as the period from 0–6 years, UNESCO's definition (2007) is from birth to the age of eight, and EU studies generally define childhood as 0–10 years (Moss, 1996).

Despite variations in age categories, this period is generally considered the most vulnerable and important stage in a child's life and the foundation for well-being throughout life. Economists have argued that early childhood is an important stage for human capital investment. Skill attainment at each stage will produce positive effects in the next stage, while the investment should be in early childhood to produce the greatest effect (Cunha, Heckman, Lochner, and Masterov, 2006). From the neuroscience and behavioural perspectives, early childhood is important for personal development, which is closely linked with physical and mental health; child development is the foundation for a sustainable society (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015). UNESCO has now adopted a holistic definition of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) which encompasses broad policy directions and areas of concerns. It is stated in the UNESCO report *EFA Global Monitoring Report – Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education* that:

Early childhood care and education supports children's survival growth, development and learning—including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development—from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal settings. (UNESCO, 2007: 15)

Many other international institutions adopt an integrated view of early childhood programmes and services, although different terms are applied to the concept. UNESCO uses 'ECCE' for early childhood care and education. The OECD uses 'ECEC' for early childhood education and care, UNICEF uses 'ECCD' for early childhood care and development, and the World Bank uses 'ECD' for early child development. In this thesis, childcare policy is the programme of policies and services for parents and families with children at the early childhood stage. The early childhood stage generally means the period before primary education, or the pre-primary period, before children enter the formal schooling system.

Approaches to early childhood care vary across cultures (UNESCO, 2007). International standards for childcare arrangements are not uniform, as different types of childcare can be identified in different countries. Kamerman (2003) comments that 'there is no agreed definition

of—or standards concerning—quality of ECEC programs cross-nationally and little systematic attention to this subject in the literature’ (2003: 10). Nevertheless, some patterns can be identified (Saraceno, 2011; Huston, 2008; OECD, 2001, 2006). There is a consensus regarding what constitutes childcare policy. Childcare policy is the state plan and programmes for the provision of a proper care setting for very young children. Childcare policy should, therefore, connect to family policies that support parents and families in arranging care for young children. Over the years, childcare policy has evolved in two key areas: parental leave provisions and childcare service arrangements. These are the ‘two pillars’ of childcare policy (Daly and Rake, 2004), areas of state intervention, which reveal governmental attitudes. A review of childcare policies in 27 European countries showed that childcare policy generally covers maternity and parental leave with compensation, childcare services and childcare allowances (Saraceno, 2011). These are the same as those elements covered by family policy (the narrow definition) previously mentioned.

The first pillar, ‘time to care’ (Lewis, 2008) or a ‘work-reducing policy’ approach (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004), is leave that allows parents to be away from their jobs to take care of children, such as maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave. Sometimes these leaves are summarised as ‘family leave’ (Zamarro, 2011). Family leave supports parental childcare offering a transitory suspension of current paid employment. This pillar can include building a family-friendly atmosphere in a workplace and employment protection during time away from paid work (Zamarro, 2011; Huston, 2008).

In UNESCO’s (2007) definition, parental leave is subsumed under organised care and education for children aged 0–2. When parents are entitled to take leave to care for children at home in the early years, the demand for public or organised childcare services decreases; therefore, this leave can also be considered as a form of childcare policy.

The second pillar of childcare policy is ‘time to work’ (Lewis, 2008) or a ‘work-facilitating policy’ approach (Jacobs and Gerson, 2004). It is the public provision of early childhood education and care, including childcare centres and pre-schools, so that parents can focus on their work and mothers can be released from home to rejoin the labour market after maternity leave. It provides parents with financial or service supports to alleviate the burden of childcare. This pillar can include tax credits, subsidies and formal childcare services (Zamarro, 2011; Huston, 2008). For policies directed at ‘time to work’, different governments focus on different areas of care infrastructure. The first type is childcare services provided by the state directly. The state childcare support in the Nordic countries (Iceland, Sweden and Norway) is always mentioned as an ideal model; compared to the OECD countries’ average of US\$2516, the Nordic governments

have invested \$6316 per child for formal childcare, a sum almost 2.5 times higher than average (Thévenon, 2011). Other types of support include tax credits provided in UK and childcare subsidies granted to parents in Australia.

‘Childcare is an area of state policy where it is extremely difficult to remain neutral and detached, because of the emotional processes which appear to be involved’ (Fox Harding, 1997: 7). The foregoing conceptualisations of care, family policy and childcare policy are important for childcare specialists, such as childcare staff, teachers, social workers, policy makers and legislators. It is also important for the public. This study aims to explore parental and grandparental experiences of childcare arrangements to illuminate how these complex areas of social policy shape family life and childcare decision-making.

In conclusion, the study of care has attracted more attention in the past three decades. Care is closely linked with gender roles and social expectations. Care should be studied from a multidimensional approach due to its complexity. In this thesis, I use the definition of family policy adopted by Gauthier (2000), Bogenschneider (2006) and Thévenon (2011), which includes: parental leave entitlement, provision of childcare services and facilities and economic support. I will use Lewis’ definition of childcare policy (2008) whereby both ‘time to care’ and ‘time to work’ orientations are included.

In this chapter, I reviewed and examined the literature on care and the relationship between gender and care. I have also outlined the existing discussions of family and childcare policy and have defined family policy and childcare policy for this thesis. In the next chapter, I will focus on the need of care and how governments in East Asia response to these needs with family and childcare policies.

Chapter 3

The East Asian work and family context

Major social changes have recently increased attention to the global need for care. Social changes in family structures, labour participation rates, demographic composition, gendered divisions of domestic labour, welfare provisions, policy directions, and the availability of childcare choices all impact on families and shape global patterns of paid work and care work.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline three global trends that influence care needs in the world and the East Asia. Three key demographic patterns are decreasing fertility, increasing longevity and increasing female employment. I will consider the impacts these trends have on care needs in the East Asian region and the responses of these countries. Family culture and gender ideology will be considered, to illustrate the complexity of care provision.

By reviewing the three macro trends that emerged in Western countries and have been followed by the East Asian region five decades later, I acknowledge that although there are some shared concerns regarding social changes in the family and paid employment, there are also varied responses. Different socio-cultural understandings of childcare, diverse needs and family policy objectives are in place. I will first provide background information about East Asia and Hong Kong, and outline the family values of the region before elaborating macro global trends

East Asia and Hong Kong: Background information

As noted in the Introduction, I use the term East Asia to refer to China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan for the following reasons. It is a common grouping for academic study due to similarity in cultures and economic development among these jurisdictions. For reference, according to the United Nations geographical groupings, East Asia includes China, Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region, SAR for short), Macao SAR, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), Mongolia and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Japan is categorised as an 'other more developed region' based on its economic profile. Taiwan is not a UN member state. Singapore is grouped under South-Eastern Asia (United Nations Statistics Division, 2016).

The specific reason for including Taiwan and Singapore here is that they share similar cultural ideologies with China, South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong. These ideologies include both Confucianism and Buddhism. The history of these ideologies can be traced back to the Tang

Dynasty (AD 618-907). Although Vietnam is also included in this Confucian classification, it is usually included into South-East Asia geographically and economically (Schoppa, 2008). While Singapore is often assigned to the South-East Asian region by location, it is included in this study as it is akin to Hong Kong in its British colonial policy legacy and its economic success as a trading port in the past fifty years. Despite these similarities, East Asian comparative studies also reveal many variations (Shin, Song, Kim, Ma, Tabuchi, Yap, Yip, Punpuing and Anh, 2013). Each jurisdiction in East Asia is unique.

The focus of this thesis is Hong Kong. Hong Kong's official name is the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Hong Kong has been an autonomous city of China based on the 'one country, two systems' principle since 1997. Before 1997, Hong Kong was a colonial city of the UK after the Opium Wars in the 1800s. The British rule of Hong Kong ended on 30 June 1997 and China regained sovereignty.

Hong Kong is a small city with very high population density. To be more specific, the area of Australia is around 7,000 times the area of Hong Kong, but the population of Australia is only three times more than that of Hong Kong. The population is 96.9% Chinese; others include Filipino, Indonesian, Caucasian, Thai and Japanese (Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Government, 2013b: 23). Hong Kong has become a well-developed economy relying heavily on international trade and finance. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in 2016 reached US\$60,070, and it ranks fourth in Asia and 12th in the world (International Monetary Fund, 2016).

Hong Kong is considered to have cross-cultural conflicts in care provision as 'east' meets 'west' (Chan, Ng, Ho and Chow, 2006; Cheng, Ip, Wong and Yan, 1998). Family and childcare policies in Hong Kong have been shaped by both its unique political history and Confucian family values. Hong Kong was a colony of the UK from 1841 to 1997 with its political and administrative structures developed by the British Hong Kong government (Chan and Lee, 1995). In term of social values, as in other East Asian countries, Confucianist teachings lay the foundation of the familial and relational ideologies of Hongkongers (discussed in the next part of this chapter). It is where traditional family values meet the British administrative-legal system in daily living.

Hong Kong is arguably to be found to be 'at the crossroad of modernism and traditionalism' (Chan and Lee, 1995), with its Confucian cultural tradition mixed with over a century of the British administrative-legal framework operating in daily lives (Chan and Lee, 1995: 83).

East Asian family culture

Culture is a crucial element in the study of care provision and policy because it shapes the familial ideologies and values of a country. The provision of care to family members is an important familial duty in the traditional Confucian family values and practices. I start with a brief history of Confucianism, followed by the overall broad concepts, and offer a brief analysis of the social codes and the moral standards related to family dynamics.

East Asian culture owes an enormous amount to the influence of Confucianism. Originating from China two thousand years ago, Confucianism became the foundation of Chinese culture and ideology. It later spread to Korea and Japan and then to other Chinese societies, including Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vietnam. Confucianism was spread at the same time as Buddhism and Taoism. Indeed, these three teachings are considered to be a harmonious aggregate under the title 'Saam Gaau' (pronunciation in Cantonese, meaning 'three religions'). Although Confucianism is generally used to represent the ideological system of East Asia guiding social roles and moral ethics, East Asia is best understood as embodying an aggregated ideological system (Schoppa, 2008; Asia for Educators, Columbia University, 2007). I, therefore, have adopted the term 'East Asian family values' in my data analysis chapters.

Confucianism: History and guiding principles

In East Asia, Confucian values have been observed as one of the strongest cultural influences in contemporary Chinese societies (Oh, 1991). Confucianism is the backbone of the philosophical cultural concepts in East Asia, as it offers a rational system of ethics covering family, education, government and social order.

Its origin and history can be traced over two thousand years, to the birth of its namesake, Confucius. Confucianism is the teaching and the philosophy developed by Confucius, or Hung Zi (in Cantonese), a philosopher, teacher and a politician in ancient China. His teachings were recorded as a publication called *The Analects* (Confucius, translated by Chin, 2014). This set of moral and ethical philosophies has been entrenched into the ideology and daily practice of East Asian societies. It is sometimes seen as a religion, but this is debated. However, East Asia's culture and life are guided by Confucian teaching, although people rarely call themselves Confucians, in the way that others may call themselves Christians or Muslims (Tu, 1995).

All Confucian values are interconnected through 'the five principal relationships', the 'three cardinal guides' and the 'five constant virtues'. The 'five human relationships' are the five main categories of human relationship in forming society, including 'father and son' (the relationship between parent and child), 'ruler and minister/people' (the relationship between government

and citizen), 'husband and wife', 'older and younger brother' (the relationship between siblings), 'friend and friend'. Of these five relationships, three are within the family: 'father and son', 'elder and younger brother' and 'husband and wife'. Hierarchy exists within in the five human relationships; those at the lower level should obey those at the higher. The rules guiding authority and power are the 'three cardinal guides', which include 'the ruler guides the citizens', 'the father guides his son' and 'the husband guides his wife' (Lin and Wong, 2013; Goodman et al., 1998; Kwon, 1997; Rozman, 1991). Finally, the 'five virtues' are the guidelines for moral standards: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity.

Hierarchy, seniority, respect and filial piety

The concepts of hierarchy, seniority, respect and filial piety are important in the Confucian culture given the 'five principal relationships' and the 'three cardinal guides' create a series of obligations and moral standard for all places in the hierarchy. Deference should be paid to seniors. Seniority is an important value in family, workplace, school and the general public. Young people are expected to respect their elders. Although age is a criterion in this social order of seniority and respect, meaning that the older generations receive more respect and power, the determination of roles and social order are not limited to age. There is no rule about the age at which a person can become the 'elder' of a family; instead, it is about relationships and roles (Park and Chesla, 2007). This unique Confucian concept should be understood as primarily concerning generations and hierarchies.

'Face' is an expected outcome of performing respect. 'Face', or 'saving one's face' to be more exact, is a way of communicating with others which will not embarrass or challenge them. When hierarchy and respect are applied to family, this means that young family members should listen to the teachings of the elder family members because they are full of wisdom and experience in their life journeys.

Filial piety is the respect performed in a family. It is a distinct practical concept applied only in a family and, in particular, is limited to the parent and child relationship among the five relationships (Park and Chesla, 2007). Filial piety in Chinese is illustrated by the character 孝 ('haau' in Cantonese). The same character is used in Korean and Japanese, but with different pronunciations. This character is combination of the two other characters: 'old' and 'son', and clearly communicates the concept of filial piety as the hierarchy and respect applied exclusively to the parent-child relationship. The older one is supported by the younger one, in particular, their children (Ikels, 2004). The concept of filial piety is elaborated in the classical Chinese text *Classics of Filial Piety* (see the English Translation *The book of filial duty* by Chen, 1908). In this

ancient text, five practices are required to perform filial piety: to obey parents, to support them and make them happy, to take care of them during sickness and in old age, give them a formal funeral, and to worship ancestors (including parents after they have passed away).

Filial piety is about reciprocity. First, children should take care of their parents in old age or during sickness to repay their parents' kindness in raising them. It is a return of care and love to their parents when the children have grown up and become independent. Second, filial piety is expressed through material reciprocity. Children provide for the material or nonmaterial needs of their parents. These behaviours can be driven by the awareness of moral obligations or the emotion of gratitude to parents (Kwan, 2000).

In contemporary intergenerational relationships in East Asian daily lives, it is expected that children should 'respect and care for their parents and the aged' (Sung, 1995: 240). There are three levels of filial piety (Chow, 2001). The first level is about supporting the physical and material needs of parents, the second level is about obeying parents in their advice and preferences, while the third level involves making parents happy and bringing them honour.

Blood lineage, extended family and harmony

The concepts of patrilineality and patriarchy are key features of East Asian families (Ebrey, 1991). These are particularly important for understanding the parenting ideologies of East Asian families. Patrilineality is related to descent and kinship. Patriarchy is about the inheritance of family property. The blood lineage is the basis of a family and indicates the kinship obligations and the closeness of relationships among the members of an extended family (Ebrey, 1991).

A son preference is reflected in the sex ratio at birth (SRB). A distorted sex ratio is common in Asia. For example, the ratio in China was 116 males to 100 females and the ratio in India is 111 males to 100 females (UNDP, 2015). This ratio is far higher than the global average of 106.1 (106.1 males: 100 females). In the East Asian region, the average sex ratio at birth is 115, slightly higher than the global average. The sex ratio at birth of the East Asian countries, by comparison, is: Korea 107, Hong Kong 107, Japan 106, Singapore 107. In China, there is a very skewed ratio in some provinces, such as the ratio of 138.7 in the Guangdong province in south-east China (Huang and Yang, 2006; UNDP, 2015). This high ratio in China is concurrently attributed to the prevalence of son preference and the one-child policy (Huang and Yang, 2006; Das Gupta, Zhenghua, Bohua, Zhenming, Chung and Hwa-Ok, 2003).

The notion of extended family should be understood as a form of collectivism. Collectivism is a cultural value in East Asian societies, in the workplace, the family and society as a whole.

Individuals see themselves as a part of the organised hierarchy, and it is common to consider 'we' instead of 'I'. In a family, the hierarchy is formed by the many generations that constitute the extended family. The kinship term used for each family member shows their specific status in the family hierarchy. For example, while a mother's sisters are called 'aunt', there are special terms for a mother's elder and younger sisters.

It is expected that collectivism and respect will create the ideal of harmony. Hierarchical status and relationship provide guidelines to individuals about how to treat people around them and the expected behaviours of each person in a family or society. By showing respect, including considering 'ourselves' instead of 'myself' (not selfish), saving the face of others, and not embarrassing others, harmony can be achieved in interpersonal relations. The teacher Confucius believed that by following the 'five relationships', the 'three rules' and the 'five virtues', peace and harmony could be achieved in a family and the society.

Traditionally, members of an extended family tended to live together or geographically close to each other, for example in the same village. In an urban area with crowded living spaces, it may not be possible to have an extended family living under the same roof. Instead, it is more common for family members to live in close proximity and to maintain close contact. This is termed the 'modified extended family' in urban areas by Quah, (2003:110).

Senior family members are considered the most valuable members of an extended family. Great-grandparents and grandparents receive respect from the younger generations not only because of their hierarchical status but also due to their wisdom and the experience gained in their life journeys. By the same token, the ancestors are paramount in East Asian extended families. Ancestors are senior family members who have passed away. They are believed to be the origin of the whole family. In remembering the ancestors and tracing the family origin, the importance of the continuation of the family and the family lineage are heightened.

Gender roles in East Asian families

The gender division of labour in East Asian families is influenced by Confucian philosophy. Under the concepts of the 'five principles' and the 'three rules', a father has authority over his wife and his children. In a traditional family, women are perceived as less capable than men, and their roles are related to nurturing (Ebrey, 1991). Married women are expected to obey their husbands and his parents. The wife is considered to be a new member of her husband's family, 'marrying into' his family and using the husband's family surname.

Within the nuclear family, the father and the mother possess different sources of power and parenting responsibilities. The husband/father is the head of the family, whereas the

wife/mother is the ‘inner master’, meaning that the mother is assigned in traditional culture to take care of domestic issues and labour. A comparison of parental roles is shown in Table 3-1 (Kim and Hoppe-Graff, 2001).

Table 3-1 Parental roles in traditional family under Confucianism

	Husband/Father	Wife/Mother
Family role	Head of the family	Inner master
Authority based on	Power derived from status	Emotional competence
Relation to children	Emotional distance	Intimacy
	Authority structure	Affectional structure

Source: Kim and Hoppe-Graff (2001).

The World Value Survey (2016) is a global research project about people’s values and beliefs regarding different aspects of their lives, including economic development, the emergence of democracy and religion. It contains questions that capture opinions and beliefs on gender roles. I have selected the data collected in recent three decades (1990-1994, wave 2 and 2010-2014, wave 6) to review current attitudes and determine whether there have been changes in perceptions of gender roles in East Asian countries.

The item ‘when a mother works for pay, the children suffer’ can illuminate how people perceive maternal employment in relation to family. In China, Japan and South Korea, agreement on this item has decreased sharply over the past three decades (Table 3-2). This is seen particularly in Japan, where the percentage of agreement dropped from 52.7% in 1990-1994 to 15.3% in 2010-2014. The sharp decline in approval of this item can be linked to the development of family and childcare policy in Japan. Decline in the percentage agreeing with this item is also seen in China and South Korea. This result shows that people in East Asian countries now find women entering the labour market for paid jobs more acceptable. More support for the families in which both parents are working helps them to balance work and care duties better so that, even though both parents are working, there is a perception that the care of young children will not be adversely affected too much and, therefore, they consider the children are not ‘suffering’.

A contradiction arises in the Hong Kong data: paid employment is perceived as favourable for mothers but not the children. While there is a high percentage (65.3%) of Hong Kong people who agree ‘when a mother works for pay, the children suffer’, there is also a significant percentage of 56.4% who acknowledge that ‘having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person’ (Table 3-3). The percentages of agreement in both items in Hong Kong are the highest among the East Asian countries.

Table 3-2 Change of value: ‘When a mother works for pay, the children suffer.’

	<u>Agree(%)</u>		<u>Disagree(%)</u>	
	1990-1994	2010-2014	1990-1994	2010-2014
<i>China</i>	60.4	42.4	38.2	47.1
<i>Hong Kong</i>	(no data)	65.3	(no data)	34.5
<i>Japan</i>	52.7	15.3	23.1	55.3
<i>South Korea</i>	71.6	55.2	28.1	44.3
<i>Singapore</i>	(no data)	43.1	(no data)	56.9

Source: World Value Survey (2016).

Table 3-3 Change of value: ‘Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.’

	<u>Agree (%)</u>		<u>Neither(%)</u>		<u>Disagree(%)</u>	
	1990-1994	2010-2014	1990-1994	2010-2014	1990-1994	2010-2014
<i>China</i>	23.5	43.3	49.4	26.6	20.8	21.0
<i>Hong Kong</i>	(no data)	56.4	(no data)	15.1	(no data)	28.5
<i>Japan</i>	12.9	49.4	45.0	32.6	14.2	5.6
<i>South Korea</i>	10.3	50.6	23.8	40.4	14.3	7.8
<i>Singapore</i>	(no data)	47.3	(no data)	39.3	(no data)	13.3

Source: World Value Survey (2016).

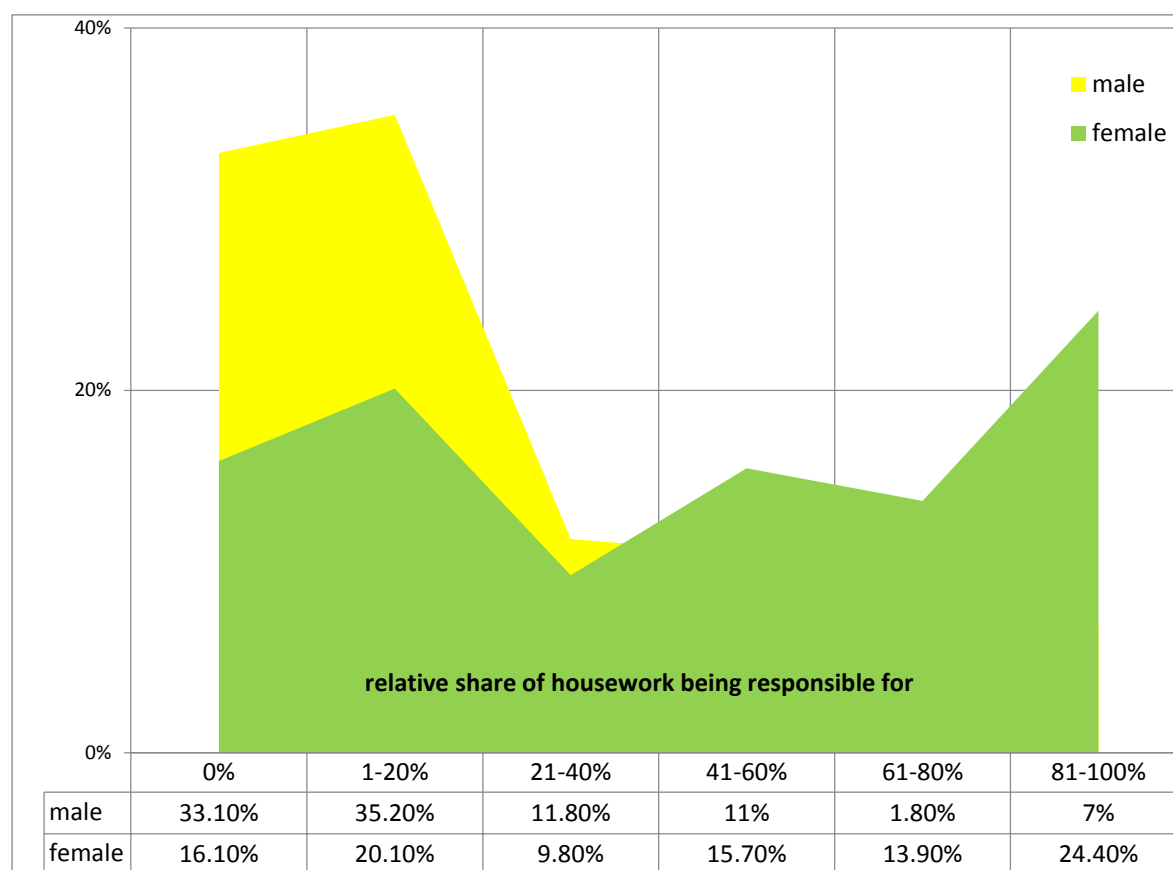
Why is there such a large percentage of people in Hong Kong who see a mother in paid work as not beneficial to their children? Does this imply that they think a mother is the best carer? By following up on these questions, it would be possible to trace traditional role attribution for women and whether the current ideology and social policies are supportive of women returning to the job market after maternity. Indeed, my informants spoke about their views and experiences of these values, and these will be analysed in Chapter 6.

A global comparison indicates that the concept of ‘women as the inner masters’ is still strong in East Asia. A study of the relative share of household work between husbands and wives (Fuwa, 2004) showed that, in all surveyed countries, wives did more domestic work than husbands. With a scale adjustment by Ting and Lam (2012), all 22 surveyed countries showed a positive value, revealing wives taking primary care of domestic issues globally. Japan was the only East Asian country in this study and had the highest value among all surveyed countries.

Apart from the gender roles expectation, regional studies confirm that the gender division of labour in household work is indeed very strong in East Asian families. In her comparative study of three East Asian countries (South Korea, Taiwan and Japan), Kim found that 'men spent much less time on housework than did women in all three countries, and this was not affected much by their wives' employment status' (Kim, 2013: 23). The relationship between paid work and domestic work has been somewhat neglected in studies of East Asian countries, especially in cross-national comparisons (Kim, 2013). South Korea, Japan and Taiwan are considered to have similar patterns of distribution in terms of gender and household work. These three countries are distinguished as the 'least women-friendly welfare states' (Kim, 2013: 9; Peng and Wong, 2008), as there is a lack of state support related to family policies and welfare. In her doctoral thesis, Hsu (2008) recorded the household labour division in China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. She found that women in East Asia do far more housework than men, in both absolute and proportional housework time. Asian mothers are, therefore, juggling work and family duties (Devasahayam and Yeoh, 2007).

In Hong Kong, while women are gradually taking up financial responsibility in the family, their responsibility for family care has not decreased. Unfortunately, in Hong Kong, there is a lack of longitudinal studies producing the databases used by Kan, Sullivan and Gershuny (2011) in their time-use analysis. However, in a one-off survey conducted by the government in 2003, it was shown that women were responsible for more housework (Figure 3-1). In conducting this survey, within each household, a person who was well-informed about the household housework arrangements was interviewed. The respondents were asked about the relative amount of housework that they were responsible for in their households. This survey showed that, compared to females, males were responsible for a smaller share of the housework. Approximately two-thirds (68.3%) of the males were responsible for 0%-20% of the housework in their household; 8.8% of males were responsible for 60-100% of the housework; while the percentage for women was 38.3% (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2003: 103).

Figure 3-1 Percentage of persons aged 15 and over by sex and relative share of housework undertaken (Hong Kong)



Source: Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG, (2003: 103).

Internationally, parents are nowadays facing additional stresses in taking care of children because of the influential ideologies of ideal parenthood. Again, through the gender lens, the pressure is particularly strong on mothers because of the contested but dominant ideologies of a 'good mother' (Johnston and Swanson, 2006). The public discussion of motherhood in the western context was first called 'intensive mothering' by Sharon Hays (1996) after her study in the US. This ideology demands that mothers should be the primary caregivers of their children. It is also 'construed as child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive' (Hays, 1996: 8). Hays explained that intensive mothering separates mothering from professional paid work and considers that mothering is necessarily outside market valuation because children are 'priceless'. Under this dominant account of motherhood, mothers have huge commitments with and to their children, and society has very high expectations of mothers. While the discourse of intensive motherhood is an international phenomenon, local culture must be considered to understand women's roles as mothers in East Asia.

Transformations of familial ideology in contemporary East Asia

In the 1990s, there was a burgeoning of studies on the changes in the Asian familial and moral ideologies. These studies demonstrated that, on the one hand, the traditional family values discussed in this chapter are still very prevalent as a guide to social roles and moral ethics; on the other hand, the expressions of these core values are changing in contemporary East Asia. Daily practices are becoming more pragmatic.

The transformation of traditional concepts was led by industrialisation, which changed people's lives sharply, including young people in China, Japan and South Korea who were leaving their villages for employment in the city and a better overall living standard (Janelli and Yim, 2004; Whyte, 2004; Ikels, 2004). In cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong, because of high land rent and limited living space, younger generations are now establishing their nuclear families in separate small households.

Changes in filial piety

During these transformations, the concept of filial piety was sustained, but there have been changes in the expression of respect to elderly (Ingersoll-Dayton and Saengtienchai, 1999). Sorensen and Kim's study (2004) confirmed with in-depth interviews that filial piety continues to be a dominant and influential family value in South Korea. Filial piety is still relevant content in moral education in schools. Contemporary Koreans maintain the value of filial piety as a natural reaction of love to parents and to continue their family lineage.

Nonetheless, their practices are becoming more pragmatic, for example, by not strictly following the traditional requirement for a three-day funeral. The practices of filial piety are more creative, such as preparing a classy birthday banquet or providing travel for parents (Sorensen and Kim, 2004). Almost all of the informants support their elderly parents financially, even though personal care through a co-resident arrangement is not manageable for all adult children. There are several reasons for this: the geographic mobility of younger generations and smaller families, for example, or where adult children move to the city for work and their elderly parents stay in the countryside. There are also cases where both the parents and adult children live in the urban area in the same neighbourhoods, but not in the same apartment (Sorensen and Kim, 2004; Sung, 2005).

Changes in women's role

The traditional family role of women has also been transformed, rather than destroyed, in contemporary society (Kim and Hoppe-Graff; 2001). While sons are still expected to take care of their elderly parents according to filial piety, daughters in East Asia now have more contact with their natal parents after they 'married out' and joined another family (Janelli and Yim, 2004; Whyte, 2004; Yi, George, Sereny, Gu and Vaupel, 2016). Traditionally, when a woman gets married, her responsibility is to her husband and his parents (because her husband, as a son, should take care of his elderly parents). She could be more isolated from her own parents as a result. Recent studies show that the eldest daughter in a family, and not only the eldest son, maintains close contact with her parents. Married women visit their natal family and provide care for their elderly parents. In some cases, married daughters are providing as much care as sons, including financial and in-kind support (Whyte, 2004). Of course, their responsibilities toward the husband's family remain the same as assigned by tradition. Thus, married women are now taking care of both their natal and new family (Janelli and Yim, 2004).

Education and family reputation

In East Asia parents tend to place considerable emphasis on education and learning. In part, this is due to the importance of the male blood lineage in Confucian philosophy, which also encompasses the reputation of the family. Consequently, personal identity is derived from the history and reputation of the family. In contemporary societies, education has become a means by which children will enhance their parents' and their family's reputation (Kim and Hoppe-Graff, 2001). Parents in East Asian families, therefore, invest much time, money and effort in education from when the children are small.

Mothers are usually more anxious about children's education. Learning is an essential element identified by mothers in their ideal childcare patterns (as shown later in the data analysis chapters). Women's roles are focused on nurturing in traditional Confucian families (Ebrey, 1991). When mothers return to work, the traditional duties of childcare are undertaken by others. Through women's greater involvement in the workforce, the role of nurturing and caring has gradually transformed to a focus on children's education. Consequently, a mother's role in a family is now primarily focused on children's education, rather than care provision. Mothers believed that quality childcare must include education; they want to include 'teaching' in childcare time. A mother's self-esteem and self-worth is weighted by the success of her children in their education (Kim and Hoppe-Graff, 2001; Sung, 1995).

To conclude, while gender equality in East Asian countries is improving, women are still expected to show obedience to males in their family: father, husband and son (Chang, 1998). Traditional ethics still impose a heavy moral requirement on women in contemporary society (Sung, 1995, 2005). In their study on trends in family attitudes and values in Hong Kong, Chow and Lum (2008) argue that Hong Kong has

become more heterogeneous over the last three decades. On one hand, the general public remained traditional, in that it is best to get married and have children, not to divorce, not to get involved in any extra-marital affairs or homosexual relationships, and to support the older generations. On the other hand, people are becoming more receptive, both for themselves as for others, towards divorce, remarriage, cohabitation, pre-marital sex, childlessness, and a less traditional gender role. (Chow and Lum, 2008: 3)

In the next section, I will give an account of the macro global trends and how these trends have affected East Asia in recent years.

The macro global trends in East Asia

The need for care has intensified in recent decades due to three key global trends: the fertility rate is decreasing, women are entering (or returning to) the labour force and populations are ageing. These three trends affect everyone in the world, however, the East Asian region has recently attracted much attention from economists, policy-makers and international institutions due to its extremely low fertility rate and the extended ageing process. The rapid pace of economic development in the last five decades has accounted for these swift demographic changes: life expectancy increases and fertility decreases with better income and improving education. Consequently, family structures and social values are transforming.

While these are global phenomena, these trends appeared in East Asia later than Europe and in a more compressed manner. There is a gap of around fifty years when comparing the timing of these trends in East Asia and Europe. Europe experienced the fertility decline in two transitions over a century, but East Asia's experience is one transition compressed within fifty years since the 1950s with a severe plunge of fertility rate to an 'ultra-low fertility' level (Ochiai, 2011).

Trend 1: Increasing female employment

Globally, female employment has increased significantly in the last five decades. Among the OECD countries, the timing of this rise has varied across countries. Some, including Australia, New Zealand, the Nordic countries and the US, demonstrated this increase in the early 1960s; in

the 1980s, Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain followed the trend (OECD, 2011). An International Labour Organisation report (2010) entitled *Women in labour markets: Measuring progress and identifying challenges* showed that the average global female labour force participation rate has increased since the 1980s.

The OECD found that the growth is linked to the increasing numbers of mothers re-entering or remaining in the labour market. In 2007, across the OECD countries, on average more than six out of ten mothers with children between 0-16 years old were in paid employment. Again, there is considerable variation among the countries: the employment rates for mothers in some countries are low (for example, Hungary and Italy), but the rates in some other countries are higher (for example, Canada and the US) (OECD, 2011: 36).

These variations suggest that there are region-specific or country-specific factors, such as national labour market conditions and the welfare state policy for the employment of women and mothers (Pettit and Hook, 2009). Another reason is that these countries are going through different phases of development (Ahn and Mira, 2002). The ILO report (2010) also showed that while there is a tendency for more women to join the workforce, the rate varies among regions and countries. Based on the OECD data, Ahn and Mira (2002) split the OECD member countries into three categories:

- The high participation group (over 60%)—U.S, Canada, U.K., Sweden and Norway
- The medium participation group (50%-60%)—Germany, France, Austria and Portugal
- The low participation group (50%)—Italy, Spain and Greece

Given the fact that there are variations in female labour participation rates in different regions, it is worth closely inspecting the situation in East Asia. According to the analysis of the ILO and national statistics, female labour force participation rates in East Asian countries have increased since the 1950-60s (Ochiai, Mari, Yasuko, Zhou, Seysujo, Nachiko, Fujiya and Hong, 2008). Data available from existing databases can help tracing the situation back from the 1970s (Table 3-4). Female workers are no longer considered the 'reserve force'. In the past, women would work to support the family in times of financial difficulty, but women have now become part of the regular financial support of the family (Ting and Lam, 2012).

It is not surprising to see a high female labour force participation rate despite a slight decrease over the period. It has been documented that countries in communist regimes have more female in the labour force than other regimes, and countries after communist had seen decreases in the labour force participation rate (Chase, 1995; Standing, 1978). China is still a communist regime but has been moving towards a new political-economy model of a Socialist Market Economy since the late 1970s with a series of dramatic reforms in all aspects of the society. The changes

in labour force participation rate in China may have been brought about by these reforms. However, an analysis of the effect of political reforms on employment is not the goal here, I therefore highlight on female labour participation rate according to age and life course.

Table 3-4 Female labour force participation rate in East Asia (%)

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015
China	n/a	n/a	72.7	70.7	63.5	64 (2014)
Hong Kong	41.0 (1971)	49.5 (1981)	47.9 (1991)	50.8 (2001)	53.0 (2011)	54.8
Japan	54.4	51.6	55.3	56.8	60.4	63.8 (2014)
South Korea	40.4	41.5 (1981)	34.5	50.0	52.6	55.1 (2014)
Taiwan	35.5	39.2	44.5	46.0	49.9	50.7
Singapore	31.1	43.8	48.8	50.2	56.5	60.4

Source:

International Labour Organization (2016);

OECD (2017);

World Bank (2014);

China (1990-2014 data)—World Bank (2014);

Hong Kong—Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government (<http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/>);

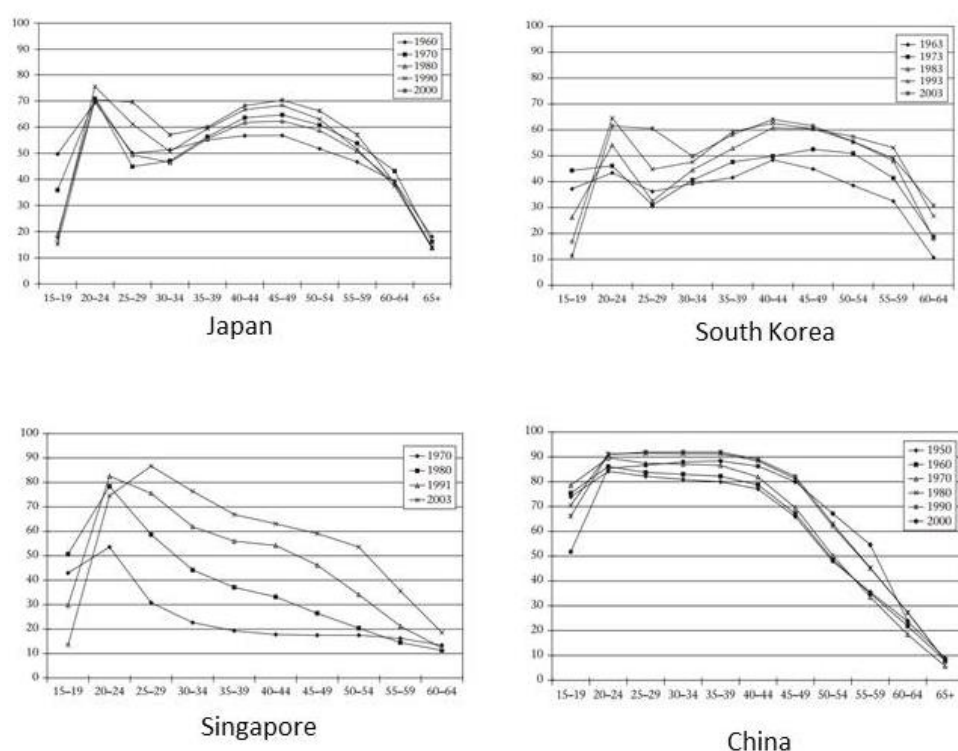
Japan—Labour Force Survey (<http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/roudou/index.htm>);

S. Korea—Statistics Database (<http://kosis.kr/eng/>);

Taiwan—Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan (<http://eng.dgbas.gov.tw>);

Singapore—Statistics Singapore (<http://www.singstat.gov.sg/>).

Figure 3-2 Female labour force participation rates comparison



Source: Ochiai, Mari, Yasuko, Zhou, Seysujo, Nachiko, Fujiya and Hong (2008)

Female labour force participation rates vary among East Asian countries if the life-cycle and age of women are taken into consideration. In Japan and South Korea, an 'M-shaped pattern' appears in female labour force participation by age (Ishizuka, 2014; Kinoshita and Guo, 2015). There is a sudden drop in the female labour force participation rates at the age of 25-29 and this increases gradually and moderately between 45-49; fewer women are in employment after having children and only return to paid work in their forties. In Singapore, the female labour force participation rate peaks in the twenties and decreases steadily after the thirties, because Singaporean mothers believe children's education is paramount and, therefore, they stay at home for this purpose when their children enter formal schooling. In urban China, a reverse U-shaped curve is seen, with an unusually high rate between the ages of 20 and 40. Women with small children can do paid work because of flexible role sharing between couples, informal childcare by family or domestic helpers from the rural areas (Ochiai et al., 2008). In rural China, most of the work is agricultural in nature and flexibility in time is possible, however, a heavy workload can make it difficult for mothers to balance work and childcare (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000).

In Hong Kong, the workforce reached 3.9 million in 2015 (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2016a: 23). Among that working population, 48.9% are women, and 51.1%

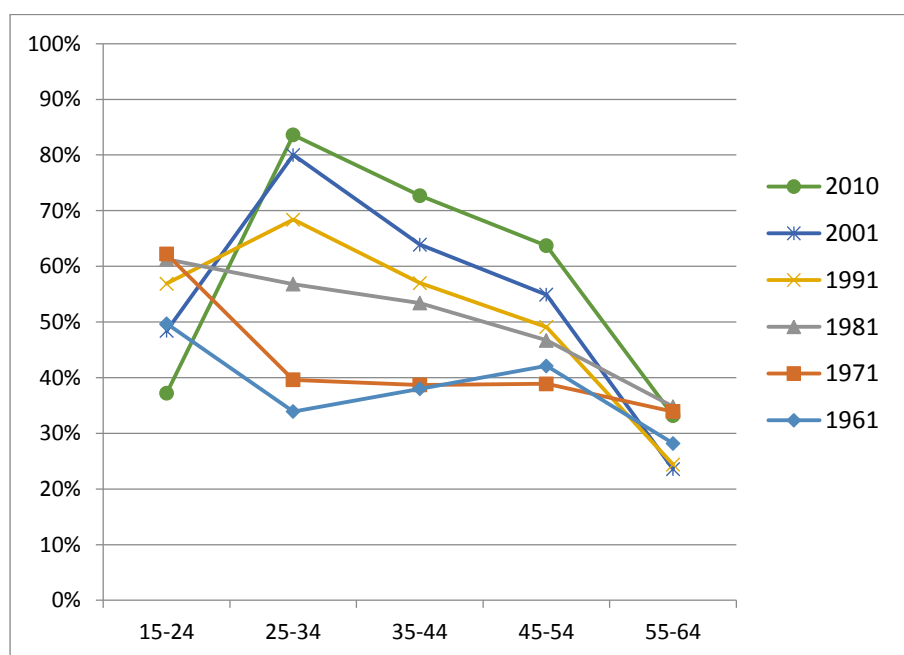
are men, meaning that the ratios of men and women in the labour market are approaching parity. As shown in Table 3-6, the female labour force participation rate has gradually increased over the past few decades. In the last ten years, the gap between male and female labour force participation rates has also been narrowed. The latest census statistics reveal that the age-specific female labour force participation rates, similar to China, also show a reverse U-shaped curve (see Figure 3-2). Among women in Hong Kong, the highest labour force participation rate appeared in the 25-34 age group. The labour force participation rates of women aged 25-54 have increased steadily over the past decades (Figure 3-3).

Table 3-5 The labour force participation rates by sex in Hong Kong

Year	Labour Force Participation Rates by sex (%)		
	Male	Female	Gap between male and female
1961	90.4	36.8	53.5
1966	86.1	41.0	45.1
1971	84.7	42.8	41.9
1976	80.6	43.6	36.9
1981	82.5	49.5	33.0
1986	80.5	48.9	31.6
1991	78.9	47.9	31.0
1996	75.7	47.8	27.9
2001	73.0	50.8	22.2
2006	70.9	52.6	18.3
2007	70.5	53.1	17.4
2008	69.7	53.1	16.6
2009	69.4	53.2	16.3
2010	68.5	51.9	16.6
2011	68.4	53.0	15.4
2012	68.7	53.9	14.8
2013	69.1	54.5	14.6
2014	68.8	54.6	14.2
2015	68.8	54.8	14

Source: Data from Wong, W. and Lo, S., (2012) and Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government.

Figure 3-3 Female labour force participation rates by age in Hong Kong



Source: ILO database (<http://www.ilo.org/ilostat>); Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, (2013a: 23).

Despite these changes in the workforce the traditional division of labour in the family— ‘men as breadwinners and women as homemakers’—is still considered to be the ideal family model in Hong Kong. Men are expected to be the primary financial supports of the household and women, ideally, should stay at home and take care of the family. While Hong Kong people still embrace this traditional family model, both men and women understand that it is hard to maintain this ideal in reality, due to increasing living costs in the city (Choi, Au, Wong, Liong, Wong, Lo and Chao, 2012). At the same time, due to a higher education level and the modern value of gender equality, women are now motivated to develop their career path and to be economically independent (Ting and Lam, 2012). The dual-earner family has become the norm nowadays.

Trend 2: Declining fertility rate and changing marriage patterns

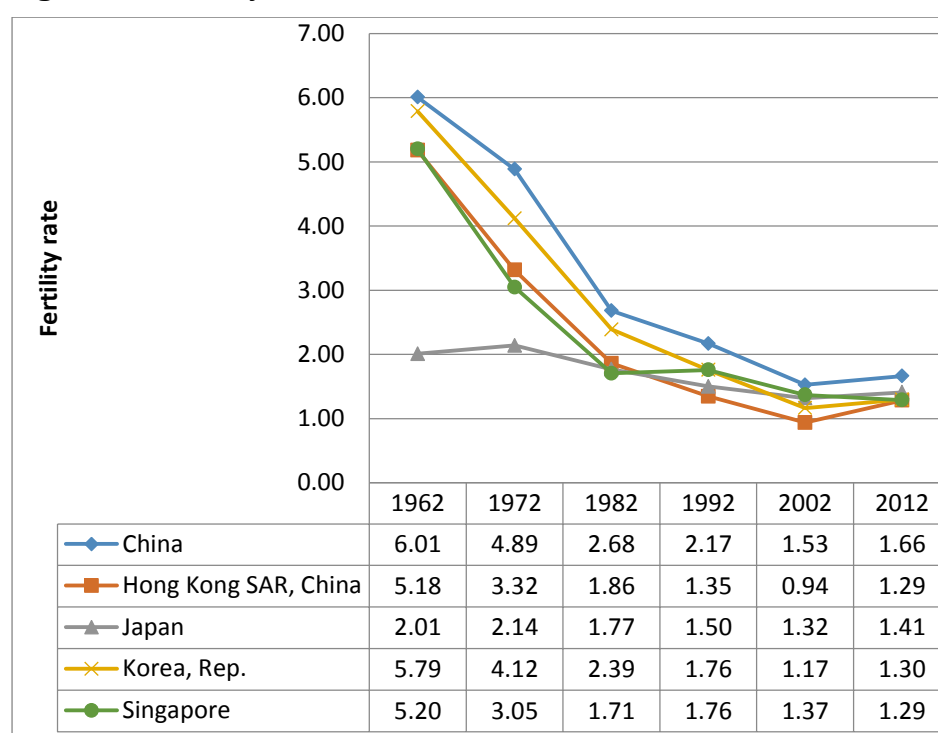
There has been a significant decrease in the total fertility rate globally over the past thirty years. According to the OECD statistics, the total fertility rate of the member countries was 1.7 in 2009, which was below the replacement level of 2.1, whereas this rate was 2.7 in the 1970s (OECD, 2011). The average total fertility rate among the OECD countries reached its lowest point at 1.6 children in 2002.

The pace of decrease in the total fertility rate varied between OECD countries—the decline began earlier in northern Europe and was slower in southern Europe (OECD, 2011). After a

period of decline, the total fertility rate began to increase again in the 2000s, but is unlikely to return to the level of the 1970s. The increase was generally around 0.2 to 0.3 in most of the OECD countries. The Nordic region is the only region that has been able to return to close to the replacement rate of 2.1 (OECD, 2011: 20).

These trends are also found in the East Asian countries. Following the trajectory of the Western countries, East Asia has also become ‘a region of extraordinarily low fertility’, with total fertility of only 1.4 (United Nations, 2013a: 15). World Bank data (2014) reinforces the trend of fertility rate decline in the East Asian countries since the 1960s (Figure 3-4). Frejka, Jones and Sardon (2010) collected single-year data over thirty years for the female population, and fertility data for East Asian countries to analyse childbearing patterns in this region. They identify the decline of the fertility rate as commencing in Japan in the mid-1950s. The fertility rate at that time dropped to the replacement rate. All other East Asian countries witnessed a rapid decline in fertility rates after that. The total fertility rates in East Asia countries are now among the lowest in the world, which is expressed by the term ‘ultra-low fertility’ (Jones, Straughan and Chan, 2009) or ‘lowest-low fertility’ (Goldstein, Sobotka and Jasilioniene, 2009).

Figure 3-4 Fertility trend in East Asia



Source: World Bank Data (2014), graph prepared by author.

Two phenomena should be noted concerning the low fertility rates in East Asia. First, there is a postponement of childbearing. Studies show that East Asia countries now have a mean age at first birth of almost 30 years (Table 3-6). Since 2010, the mean age for women to have their first child has been over 30. Women in East Asia are also having fewer children or not having children at all. There has been a growth in childlessness among women, in particular for women aged 40-44 years. The first-order births in Japan and Hong Kong have fallen off tremendously: around one-third of women born around 1970 are still childless. In Taiwan, for women in the same cohort, around 20% are childless. There are more first-order births in South Korea than other countries in the region, but data show that the number is consistently decreasing (Frejka, Jones and Sardon, 2010; McDonald, 2006; Sobotka, 2004).

Table 3-6 The mean age at first childbirth

	1970s	1990s	2010s	2015
<i>Hong Kong</i>	24.0 (1976)	28.8 (1996)	30.0 (2011)	31.4
<i>Japan</i>	25.6 (1970)	27.5 (1995)	29.9(2010)	29.9
<i>South Korea</i>	23.9 (1974)	27.1 (1998)	29.9 (2009)	31 (2014)
<i>Taiwan</i>	22.9 (1975)	27.6 (1995)	29.6 (2010)	30.6
<i>Singapore</i>	nil	27.7 (1995)	30.6 (2010)	30.5

Source:

Hong Kong—Census and Statistics Department, HKSARG (<http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/>);

Taiwan—Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan (<http://eng.dgbas.gov.tw/>);

Singapore—Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Republic of Singapore (2010);

Other—United Nations (2013a).

Many factors have led to low fertility rates in the East Asian countries. The rapid economic success of the 1970s was the primary reason—the economic surge was unanticipated. The associated remarkable educational advancement, especially for women, led to an awareness among the younger generations of life options other than traditional domestic roles (Frejka, Jones and Sardon, 2010).

The ‘marriage package’ (Bumpass, Rindfuss, Choe and Tsuya, 2009) is another important concept in understanding the low fertility rate in East Asia. The marriage package means that marriage, childbearing and childrearing are closely linked to form a combination, with marriage as the premise of parenthood. Childbearing out of wedlock is still considered inappropriate and thus is not a common phenomenon (Bumpass et al., 2009). In contemporary East Asia, cohabitation, instead of marriage, is more prevalent than before, but having children within a cohabitation relationship is still rare (Ochiai, 2014; Frejka, Jones and Sardon, 2010). Due to the

widespread presence of the ‘marriage package’ ideology, it is necessary to review family formation and fertility decisions in unison. Delayed marriage and low marriage rates have thus led to low fertility rates.

Table 3-7 The median age at first marriage in East Asia (female)

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010
<i>China</i>	--	22.4 (1982)	22.1	23.3	23.5	24.7
<i>Hong Kong</i>	23.8 (1971)	25.1 (1981)	27.7 (1991)	29.5 (2001)	30.3 (2006)	30.3 (2011)
<i>Japan</i>	24.7	25.1	26.9	28.6	29.4	29.7
<i>South Korea</i>	23.3	24.1	25.4	27.1	28.8	--
<i>Taiwan</i>	22 (1971)	23.4	25.6	25.7	27.1	28.8
<i>Singapore</i>	24.2	26.2	27.0	26.5	26.9	27.9

Table 3-8 The median age at first marriage in East Asia (male)

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010
<i>China</i>	--	25.1 (1982)	23.8	25.1	25.6	26.5
<i>Hong Kong</i>	30.2 (1971)	28.7 (1981)	30.0 (1991)	31.6 (2001)	32.8 (2006)	32.7 (2011)
<i>Japan</i>	27.5	28.7	30.3	30.8	31.1	31.2
<i>South Korea</i>	27.2	27.3	28.5	30.3	32.0	--
<i>Taiwan</i>	26.8 (1971)	27	28.2	29.2	29.7	31.3
<i>Singapore</i>	27.8	28.4	29.9	30.0	30.1	30.4

Source (Table 3-7 and 3-8):

World Bank (2016);

Taiwan—Department of Household registration;

Hong Kong—Hong Kong Census and Statistic Department;

Japan—Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications;

South Korea—Statistics Korea;

Singapore—Department of Statistics;

China—National Bureau of Statistics of China.

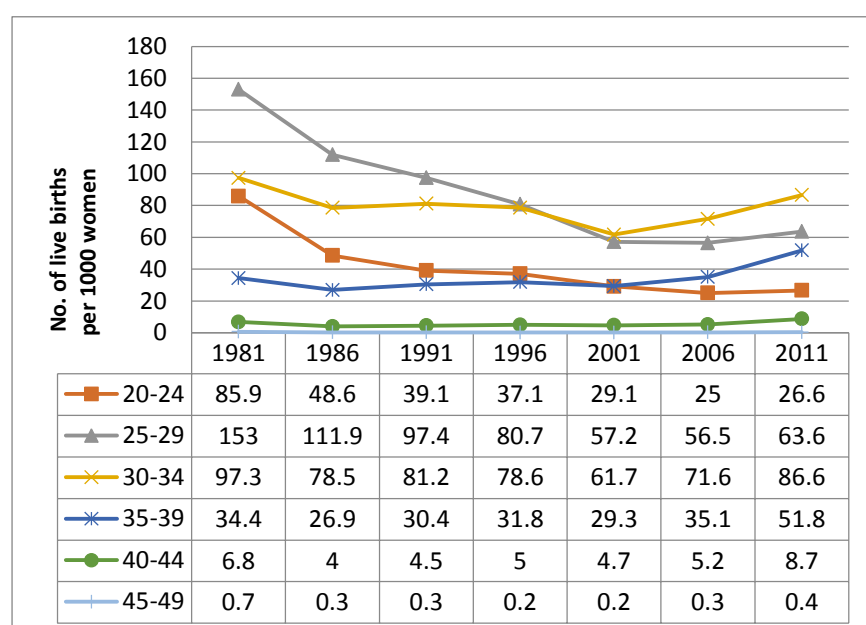
The median age at first marriage for all countries in East Asia has been increasing steadily for both women and men over the past forty years as shown in Tables 3-7 and 3-8. This data indicates that East Asians are delaying their marriage. There is less motivation for women to tie the knot for several reasons. As I have explained in this chapter, women in East Asia are expected to do most of the housework even when they are working full time; there is also a lack of support from governments to support women’s work-family balance. Jones (2005) suggests that these strong family obligations and expectations of women are one of the reasons women

delay marriage. The traditional family values and cultural expectations of women and marriage hamper women in making marriage decisions. Childbirth is thus also delayed because family formation and fertility decisions are considered together.

In Hong Kong, the median age of women at first childbirth increased steadily and has flattened out at around the age of 29-30 in recent years. The latest median age of women at first childbirth was 30.5 in 2012, compared to 25.1 and 29.4 in 1981 and 2001 respectively (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2013b: 44). Figure 3-5 shows the age-specific fertility rates for women in Hong Kong. Fertility rates have substantially declined for all age groups, in particular for younger women aged below 35. The fertility rate of the age group 35-39 has been low, but has started to increase in the past decade. This data shows that women are delaying their first births to a later life stage.

The total fertility rate in Hong Kong has declined drastically over the past few decades. It plunged from 2.67 live births per woman in 1975 to 1.3 in 2012, with the lowest of 0.93 in 2004 (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2005; 2013a). This decline resembles the trends in other East Asian countries and many of the industrialised countries, such as the OECD members, including the US, Iceland, France and New Zealand (OECD, 2007).

Figure 3-5 Age specific fertility rates in Hong Kong (1981-2011)



Source: Data from Census and Statistic Department, HKSARG, (2013b: 45).

Trend 3: The ageing population

In the 1950s, life expectancy was 65 years old for the more developed regions and 42 years in the less developed regions (United Nations, 2013b). Longer life spans have been expected in recent decades. It is estimated that in the years 2010-2015, life expectancy in the more developed regions and the less developed regions will be 78 and 68 respectively (United Nations, 2013b). The projection for the years 2045-2050 will increase to 83 years old for more developed regions and 75 years old in the less developed regions (United Nations, 2013b).

Table 3-9 Ageing in East Asia (2016)

	Population aged 60 and over	Statutory Retirement Age	Life expectancy At age 60 (2010-2015)	Life expectancy At age 60 (2045-2050)	Proportion in labour force (65+)
<i>China</i>	15.2% (209,239,000)	Male: 60 Female: 60	Male: 78.3 Female: 80.6	Male: 83.7 Female: 85.4	Male: 28.2% Female: 16.1%
<i>Hong Kong</i>	21.7% (1,581,000)	Male: 65 Female: 65	Male: 83.4 Female: 88.2	Male: 87.2 Female: 92.2	Male: 11.4% Female: 3.4%
<i>Japan</i>	33.1% (41,874,000)	Male: 65 Female: 65	Male: 83.0 Female: 88.4	Male: 86.8 Female: 92.3	Male: 29.7% Female: 14.5%
<i>South Korea</i>	18.5% (9,326,000)	Male: 60 Female: 60	Male: 81.5 Female: 86.5	Male: 86.2 Female: 91.3	Male: 42.2% Female: 23.4%
<i>Taiwan</i>	12.83%^ (3,004,374)	Male: 65 Female: 65	Male: 82.9* Female: 86.3*	(no data available)	Male: 13.6% Female: 4.6%
<i>Singapore</i>	17.9% (1,000,000)	Male: 62 Female: 62	Male: 82.5 Female: 87.5	Male: 87.0 Female: 92.3	Male: 36.0% Female: 16.5%

^ population aged 65 and over (Taiwan)

*Life expectancy at age 65 (Taiwan)

Source:

UNESCAP(2016) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific;
Department of Household registration, Taiwan.

When the trends were studied three decades ago, Cherlin and Furstenberg (1986) suggested that ‘for the first time in history, most adults live long enough to get to know most of their grandchildren and most children have the opportunity to know most of their grandparents’ (1986: 25).

Studies of grandparents in the family have been receiving more attention since the 1980s, due to these global trends of increasing life expectancy, decreasing birth rates and the tendency toward a smaller family size (Hagestad and Lang, 1986). These demographic trends first arose in Western societies and, thus, the scholarly attention to grandparenthood was initiated in Western societies. Early prominent works on grandparents encompassed grandparent roles in the family, grandparent and grandchild relations and the transition to grandparenthood (see Hagestad and Lang, 1986 for review; Bengtson and Robertson, 1985; Baranowski, 1982; Kivnick, 1982).

The first strand of study involves the relationships between elderly parents and their adult children, with a focus on care provision by adult children for their elderly parents. Within this strand, elderly parents are usually assigned a passive role as care recipients of the family and the adult children (Gans, Lowerstein, Katz and Zissimopoulos, 2013; Bonsang, 2009; Silverstein, Gans, and Yang, 2006). The second study strand was expanded to explore the caring duties of adult parents for their children and their elderly parents at the same time. The concept of a 'sandwich generation' was established to explain the middle-aged adults who are concurrently raising their children (the third generation) and caring for their frail elderly parents (the first generation) (Grundy and Henretta, 2006). The third strand of study involves grandparent and grandchild relationships. This strand began in the 1980s and is still an important research area, particularly in physical health, psychological health and gerontology studies (see Hadfield, 2014 for a detailed review of research in health aspects; see Stelle, Fruhauf, Orel and Landry-Meyer, 2010 for detailed examination of grandparent-grandchild relationship; see Hayslip and Kaminski, 2005 for a detailed review of custodial grandparenting).

Studies of intergenerational exchange and support between grandparents, parents and grandchildren within a family are mainly incorporated into the study of elderly people's well-being and family relationships (for example, Lou, 2010; Neely-Barnes, Graff and Washington, 2010; Stelle et al., 2010; Lo and Liu, 2009;). While this dimension is important in promoting grandparents' overall wellness, it does not directly address grandparents' contributions to the family. As Silverstein, Giarrusso and Bengtson (2003) indicated, 'the contribution of grandparents is an important but often overlooked resource in promoting optimal family functioning' (2003: 77). It is valuable therefore to adopt Quah's contention that Southeast Asian grandparents are actively engaging with their multigenerational extended families in terms of actual support and value transmission to their descendent generations (Quah, 2003; 2009) The documentation of grandparent childcare as a significant support from grandparents to their family will be further illustrated in Chapter 4.

Changing household size and family structures

The demographic changes described in the previous section have resulted in changes in family size and structure. Families nowadays tend to develop vertically rather than horizontally. The number of family members in each generation, that is siblings and cousins, is fewer than before, resulting in shrinking horizontal family structures. At the same time, the duration of family ties has increased due to longevity. This family structure is described as the 'beanpole family' (Bengtson et al., 1990: 264), or as the 'verticalisation of the family', that is, 'an increase in the number of generations in a family accompanied by a decrease in the number of family members within generations' (George and Gold, 1991: 72). This structure is also described as a 'top-heavy' family line with more older generations than younger generations (Hagestad, 2006). From the perspective of grandparents, the number of grandchildren sets is declining (Uhlenberg, 2005; Hagestad, 2006).

In the earlier discussion of East Asian family values, I examined the transformation of familial ideology in contemporary societies. It is interesting to note that while there is verticalisation of families, household size is diminishing at the same time. Extended family members are not necessarily living in the same household according to traditional practice. Therefore, the average number of household members shows a declining trend (Jones, 2012). This trend is on par with those in many advanced western nations. In terms of living arrangements, there is an increasing proportion of nuclear families.

For example, in Japan the percentage of three-generation households has decreased from 19% to 12.1% between 1985-2005; whereas couple-only and single-member households are becoming more common. The proportion of single-member households has increased from 20.8% to 29.5% between 1985-2005 and the number of couple-only households also increased from 13.7% to 19.6% in the same period (Usui and Tsuruwaka, 2012). In Hong Kong, the household size is also getting smaller, with an average of 2.9 persons in each household (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2013a: 12). As expected, the highest proportion of women and men live in nuclear family households, constituting 71.9% and 73.3% respectively of the female and male populations in 2011 (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2013b: 329).

Stella Quah (2009) argues that Asian family values are not collapsing but changing, if marriage, parenthood and kinship bonds are considered carefully. There is a tendency for the elderly to select a more independent life rather than having an extended household and living with children and grandchildren: they now tend to 'occasionally meet with children or grandchildren for meals and conversations' rather than adopting the traditional ideal norms of living together with children and grandchildren (Usui and Tsuruwaka, 2012).

In the following section I explore government responses to these family changes.

Responding to care need: the states and the families

The state can respond to childcare needs by developing family and childcare policies such as service provision, leave from employment, and compensation. In Chapter 2, I explained the connection between childcare and family policy in Western economies. In this part, I focus on East Asian countries.

A ‘care deficit’ (discussed in Chapter 2) arises when ‘the need for care is growing while the supply is declining’ (Hochschild, 1995: 337). Hochschild introduces this term to explain the situation in the US, where the need for care expanded because of changes in the global economy, family structures and the work conditions, but the supply of care decreased due to a lack of support from the government. The problem of the ‘care deficit’ (Hochschild, 1995), ‘crisis of care’ (Benería, 2010), or ‘care gap’ (Lewis, 2009) has an impact on work-family balance, especially for women. The care deficit has now become a commonly identified social phenomenon in other OECD countries (Mahon, 2002; Lewis, 2009). The transformation of male breadwinner-female homemaker families to dual-earner families exerts pressure on care provisions in the OECD countries (Mahon, 2002). Similarly, in East Asia, these changes have been described as the ‘undermining of the traditional basis of family life’ (Lin and Rantalaaho, 2003: 10).

In Chapter 2, I outlined family policy directions in Western nations, following Gauthier (1996), Lohmann, Peter, Rostgaard and Spiess (2009) and Thévenon (2011). Although family policies in general aim to improve people’s work-life balance, different practices are evident. The East Asian model is distinctive. In East Asian societies, welfare systems provide only minimal support in childcare and other forms of care (Ochiai, 2009). This has been named the ‘Confucian welfare state’ (Jones, 1990), and the ‘East Asian welfare model’ (Lin and Wong, 2013; Aspalter, 2006; Goodman et al., 1998; Kwon, 1997) or the ‘productivist welfare regime’ (Holliday, 2000; Gough, 2000).

Catherine Jones (1990) focuses on the cultural aspects of policy ideology in East Asia as whole—she suggests that Confucianism is a distinctive collectivist ideology shaping the welfare provision in East Asia. Similarly, Lin and Rantalaaho (2003) argue that the conservative governments in the Confucian Asian states put the care burden on families; the policy settings aim to support families to shoulder the burden of care and responsibilities. Therefore, welfare provision in East Asia tends to strengthen families rather than substituting for the family role in supporting individuals (Kwon, 1997).

When reviewing East Asian family policies through an economic-political lens, some scholars argue that economic policy is the primary focus of East Asian government visions. This strand of analysis is based on the capitalist states in East Asia; China is not included because of its communist ideology. For example Tang (2000), in his detailed and longitudinal study of the East Asian social policies, identifies a belief in 'trickle-down effects', which means that economic developments will gradually bring benefits to society and the people (Tang, 2000). Ian Holliday (2000) also suggests that East Asian governments tend to pursue economic development, and social policies are only supported for the purpose of fast-tracking economic growth. Wilding (in Holliday, 2000: 715) notes that there are at least nine common features of East Asian social policy:

1. low public expenditure on social welfare;
2. a productivist social policy focused on economic growth;
3. hostility to the idea of the welfare state;
4. strong residualist elements;
5. a central role for the family;
6. a regulatory and enabling role for the state;
7. piecemeal, pragmatic and ad hoc welfare development;
8. use of welfare to build legitimacy, stability and support for the state;
9. limited commitment to the notion of welfare as a right of citizenship.

As a consequence, parents in East Asia tend to seek non-government childcare solutions by themselves. When mothers cannot undertake all of the necessary care, they may either choose to leave paid work for childcare, or seek care assistance from other sources. The common solutions documented include employing domestic helpers and using family members (An and Peng, 2016; Chan, 2011; Ochiai et al., 2008; Yunus, 2005; Sung, 2003). I will explore the parental childcare decision-making process in Chapter 6.

Support from family members in childcare is customary in East Asia, and parents usually seek help from the children's grandparents (Ochiai et al., 2008). Even in the countries that have begun to eschew their traditional family policy stance and support childcare policies, such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan (An and Peng, 2016), childcare assistance from family members (usually the grandparents) dominates. In case studies, conducted by Ochiai and her team, families in China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan all received childcare assistance from grandparents and kin to various degrees and at different stages of the family cycle (Ochiai et al., 2008).

Some young people choose to avoid or delay the work-family conflict. For instance, in Japan young adults opt to delay marriage, resulting in a delay in childbirth or even childlessness. Jolivet (1997) identified Japanese mothers as over-burdened, as society emphasises childcare by mothers. With the social and emotional stresses faced by mothers, women are less willing, or even refuse, to have children, and Jolivet called this phenomenon 'maternal malaise'. It has been suggested that young women in other Confucian Asian countries develop strategies to avoid work-family conflicts: late marriage, delayed motherhood, or even childlessness, and outsourcing household chores are some of the responses (Castells, 1997; Ting and Lam, 2012).

As already noted, the expansion of welfare and services in the East Asian childcare policy schemes in the last twenty years has been linked to increasing social concerns about fertility decline. Governments have sought to engage women and the elderly to stay in the workforce and to facilitate parents combining work and care duties. In particular, the governments of Japan and South Korea are now putting more effort into supporting families. As shown in Table 3-10, Japan and South Korea have been improving support for parents by increasing the length and the compensation of maternity leave. They are also paying more attention to paternal leave so that fathers can participate in childcare duties. In terms of childcare services, the 'Angel Plan' organised by the Japanese government assists parents with childcare: around 11% of children under 3 years old and 32% of children between 3-6 years old are in day care services (An, 2013; Boling, 1998). In Korea, with the amendment of the Child Care Act in 1991, the Korean government expanded their provision of formal childcare services. The enrolment rate of children under one year old in centre-based childcare programme increased from approximately 10% in 2004 to 40% in 2011 (Ahn and Shin, 2013).

In Singapore and Taiwan, there is a strong policy focus on parental leave, including maternity, paternity and parental leave (An and Peng, 2016; Shin et al., 2013). In addition, parents in Taiwan and Singapore can apply for childcare subsidies from the governments once a baby is born.

Secondary childcare assistance is sometimes used to facilitate childcare when familial help is not available or sufficient. Hiring foreign domestic helpers to take care of children is legal and common in Singapore and Hong Kong. It is also legal to employ a foreign domestic helper in Taiwan and South Korea, but it is not as common as in Singapore and Hong Kong. Domestic helpers are usually from the Philippines and Indonesia. In the past, employing foreign domestic helpers in Japan was only permitted for diplomats and high-income foreign personnel; this has recently been expanded. Support for parents in China is still inadequate to match the needs, especially for young children below 2 years of age. There is a lack of day care provision in China. Some work units operated by the state provide childcare service for staff (Chen, Short and

Entwisle, 2000). There is also some use of rural domestic helpers throughout China. In Hong Kong, family policies are still far from meeting the genuine childcare needs of working parents. The piecemeal policies and services are described in the next section.

Family and childcare policies in Hong Kong

Historically, Hong Kong has not been considered to have a comprehensive set of family policies, but rather a small number of implicit family policies (Shae and Wong, 2009). Implicit family policies are government services or policies that do not aim to address family issues, but indirectly have effects on families (Kamerman and Kahn, 1978). Family policies in Hong Kong are also not organised as a package; instead, they are separate and independent policies and services initiated by different departments. I therefore use the term ‘family policies’ and ‘childcare policies’—in the plural form—for the Hong Kong case. Although the Family Council was set up in 2007 to work on family issues and policies, the Council so far functions primarily as a consultant in policy discussions, without the authority to coordinate policy implementation.

The philosophy behind these Hong Kong policies is to highlight the importance of parents and family in children’s development, therefore, state support is only residual. The same principle is also applied to the provision of care to elderly or other family members in need. The philosophy can be dated back to the early stage of welfare policy in Hong Kong. In the first social welfare policy paper, the family role in childcare and development was stated as followed: ‘The individual should be seen as a member of a family unit, for which there is no real substitute in the development of children as citizens’ (Hong Kong Government, 1965). In the subsequent policy document, similar statements are incorporated:

In the course of the future development of welfare services, emphasis will continue to be placed on the importance of the family unit as the primary provider of care and welfare, and thus on the need to preserve and support it. (Hong Kong Government, 1991)

Parents are responsible for taking care of their young children. That said, to assist parents who are unable to do so temporarily because of work or other reasons ... SWD and NGOs provide a wide range of day and residential child care services to meet their needs. (Labour and Welfare Department, HKSAR Government, 2012: 40)

Table 3-10 Maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave in East Asia

Leave	Maternity Leave			Paternity Leave	Parental Leave
Country	Length of leave	% of wage paid	Who provides the wage/benefit	Details	Details
China	98 days	100%	Social insurance	No legislation	No leave provided by central government, Breast-feeding / childcare leaves provided by local government
Hong Kong	70 days	80%	Employer	Since 2014, 3 days, 4/5 of wage paid	No legislation
Japan	98 days	2/3 of wage	Social insurance	No legislation	Since 1992, Payment provided since 1995 and increased to 50% of wage in 2007
South Korea ¹	90 days	100%	Employment insurance fund	Since 2012, 3-5 days, paid for 3 days, For company with over 300 employees only	Since 1987, Improvement since 1995+, 40% of wage For all children under 6
Singapore ²	112 days	100% (for the first and the second children)	Employer (the first 56 days) Government (after the first 56 days)	Since 2013, 1 week for All working fathers (SG\$2,500 allowance provided by govt)	Since 2013, childcare leave for 6 days for parents with children under 7 years old. 2 days for children aged 7-12
Taiwan ³	56 days	100%	employer	Since 2014, increase to 5 days, 100% paid	Since 2015, 60% of wage supported by Employment Insurance Programme, both fathers and mothers can take leave up to 6 months (but not concurrently)

¹ In South Korea, the provision of parental leave first appeared in 1987 for mothers only. Since 1995, there was a series of expansion and improvement including allowing fathers to take parental leave (1995), increasing the allowance from KRW200,000 in 2004 to KRW500,000-1,000,000 (40% of wage) in 2011.

² The current maternity leave in Singapore is 112 days. The provision of maternity leave started in 1970. Since 2001, the government has expanded the length of leave from 56 days to 112 days in 2013; the coverage is also expanded to all children (In 2004, this only covered to the fourth child of the mother).

³ The new parental leave arrangement aimed to encourage working parents to share the childcare responsibility by allowing both mothers and fathers to take paid parental leave for 6 months, and up to 2 years for unpaid leave according to the Act of Gender Equality in Employment since 2002. The allowance arrangement was according to the Labour Insurance Act in 2015.

Source:

Chan, Kennett and Ngan (2014);
Shin, Song, Kim, Ma, Tabuchi, Yap, Yip, Punpuing and Anh (2013)
Taiwan—Bureau of Labour insurance, Ministry of Labour

Disparate family policies in Hong Kong have generally aimed to provide parents with ‘time to care’. Most of the benefits for parents in Hong Kong are related to their leave from work, and direct support through childcare services is very limited. It has been stated in the Employment Ordinance (Hong Kong Law, Ordinance Chapter 57, 1968) since 1981 that a pregnant employee, employed under a continuous contract just before the start of maternity leave, is entitled to continuous ten weeks paid maternity leave, with a payment equal to two-thirds of their regular wages. After several amendments, maternity leave pay is now equal to four-fifths of an employee’s regular salary (Cheung and Holroyd, 2009; Cheung, 1997). The government also adopted a five-day work week for civil servants from 2006, with the aim of supporting work-family balance and reducing work stress (Hong Kong Government, 2013). In 2012, the government implemented a pilot trial of paternity leave in government offices. A full-time civil servant is entitled to a full three days paid paternity leave (Labour and Welfare Department, HKSAR Government, 2014). This is not yet stipulated in the Employment Ordinance, however, so it is not compulsory for employers to provide this leave.

In terms of financial support, the government has offered tax allowances to citizens with family responsibilities since 1947. These include: the married person’s allowance, child allowance, dependent brother or dependent sister allowance, dependent parent and dependent grandparent allowance, single-parent allowance, and the disabled dependent allowance. Tax allowances are not direct subsidies to citizens; instead they reduce the tax burden of citizens with family responsibility (Inland Revenue Department, 2013). The Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme provides a safety net for individuals and families facing financial difficulties. If the applicant is living with family members, the application must be on a household basis. The CSSA is to cover the basic needs of the poor families and is not specifically for care needs.

In the education area, free and compulsory education is provided to each child from primary school level one (6 years old) to secondary school level six. For preschool, nursery or kindergarten, parents are responsible for fees. The Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (PEVS) (Student Finance Office, 2015) was launched in 2006. Children who are attending local non-profit-making kindergartens under the PEVS can apply for a fee subsidy. The vouchers cannot be used for private kindergartens.

There are other services related to families with elderly and families in need or crisis. The Harmonious Families Priority Scheme (HFPS) provided by the Housing Authority (Housing Authority, Hong Kong SAR Government, 2012) offers priority for public rental housing applicants with elderly family members. This scheme encourages young families to live with their elderly parents so that they can take care of the elderly at home. Grandparent childcare was not one of the purposes when the scheme commenced in 1982, and the concept of grandparent childcare only appeared in 2016 ('A second chance at parenting', *Hong Kong Government News*, 2016; Social Welfare Department, HKSAR Government, 2016). Integrated Family Service Centres (IFCSs) are run by the Social Welfare Department and NGOs (with government subsidies) across Hong Kong, providing services to local families (Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong SAR Government, 2015). The general services include inquiries, outreaching, counselling and referral service. There are extended services provided to families in crisis, such as domestic violence, juvenile delinquency, street sleepers, and mental illness support.

In terms of childcare subsidies, I focus on childcare services provided by non-profit making organisations in this study. Non-profit making childcare centres can be considered as proxy state support for childcare as there are no public childcare centres or kindergartens in Hong Kong. The ECEC system is complicated due to an intricate classification of daily service hours, funding sources and monitoring authorities. Formal childcare support is limited in Hong Kong (see Table 3-11 for formal childcare services in Hong Kong). In 2014, there were only 676 whole-day childcare places provided by government-subsidised childcare centres for children aged 0-2. The number of children below 2 years old exceeded 100,000 in Hong Kong (Hong Kong SAR Government, 6 Nov 2013). For children aged 2-6, there were 47,817 whole-day places offered by non-profit making kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres in 2014/15 school year, among these places, it is estimated that less than 29,404 places are long whole-day care mode (Chan and Hung, 2015: 35). On a side note, whole-day care cannot fully cover normal office hours of parents, therefore, full-time working parents need long whole-day care support. To sum up, there are less than 50,000 whole-day and long whole-day government subsidised childcare places each year. However, as there are 318,700 children aged 0-5 in Hong Kong in 2014, there is a stark shortfall in places available (Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children, 2015).

Subsidies are available when children are attending kindergartens supported by the government. In the 2016 Policy Address, the government outlined a plan for free kindergarten education from the 2017-18 academic year. It is expected that 70-80% of the half-day kindergarten places will be free of charge (Hong Kong Government, 2016), but it is less likely to

benefit parents using whole-day and long whole-day services because this is only applicable to kindergartens but not childcare centres. Also, the existing subsidy programme is not applicable to parents with children under 3 years old, and the monthly cost paid by parents for each child in government-subsidised childcare centres is around HK\$5200 (approx. AU\$870).

Informal services have also been developed by the Hong Kong Government. After years of piloting and restructuring, there are two services available: Mutual Help Child Care Centre (MHCCC) and Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (NSCCP). MHCCC is a community-based service operated by NGOs by which parents provide mutual help in childcare for children under 3 years old. NSCCP is a government-initiated childcare programme operated by NGOs and volunteers. It is commonly known as the 'community nanny' programme. NGOs recruit women volunteers from their local community to provide care at centre-based care group or home-based childcare service.

In East Asia, in recent five years, governments have explored the opportunities for grandparents to provide childcare as a new childcare policy direction. Particularly in Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea, there have been reports on the provision of childcare skill training programme for grandparents (see, for instance, 'Forget maternity leave, Hong Kong calls on grandparents for childcare', *South China Morning Post* 2016; 'Family business: Korean grandparents demand more for child care', Reuters, 2015). The aim of these training programmes is to develop and update grandparents' childcare skills so that they can provide childcare for their adult children. In Taiwan (Executive Yuan, Taiwan, 2011) and Singapore (Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, 2017), the governments are providing subsidies or tax relief to families using grandparent childcare.

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Table 3-11 Formal childcare services in Hong Kong

	Aided Day Crèche	Nursery	Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres	Kindergarten (KG)
Service for	0-2 age	2-3 age	0-6 age (with Crèche and Nursery) 2-6 age (with Nursery only)	3-6 age
Renamed to (After 2005)⁴	Standalone Child Care Centres (Standalone CCC)		Nursery school, Kindergarten (KG), or Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres depending on the services provided (CCCs are attached to KGs to form KG-cum-CCCs)	
Monitored by	Social Welfare Department		Education Bureau- Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres	Education Bureau
Registered under	HK Law Chapter 243 Childcare services Ordinance	HK Law Chapter 243 Childcare services Ordinance	HK Law Chapter 279 Education Ordinance	HK Law Chapter 279 Education Ordinance
Classes offered	nil	Pre-nursery class	Upper Kindergarten class Lower Kindergarten class Nursery class Pre-nursery class	Upper Kindergarten class Lower Kindergarten class Nursery class
Focus	care	care	edu-care services	education
Quotas/number of students	Quota: 676 (<u>whole-day care</u> service quotas subsidised CCCs, there are 12 centres <u>directly subsidised by government</u>)	Quota: 14 (<u>whole-day care</u> service quotas subsidised CCCs, there are 12 centres <u>directly subsidised by government</u>)	Non-profit-making (for children 2-6 yo in 2014-15 school year - 47,817 whole-day kindergarten & KG-cum-CCC places - 29,404 long whole-day places - Around 700 childcare places for 0-2 years old (most of half-day care) Private independent⁵ - Number of students: 164 764 (year 2012/13)	
mode	Whole day	Mainly Whole day	Mainly half day	Mainly half day Some full day

⁴ the harmonization of pre-primary education was carried out in 2005

⁵ Information from: <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201310/23/P201310230399.htm>

Operating hours	8a.m. - 6p.m. (Mon-Fri) 8a.m. - 1p.m. (Sat)	<u>Half-day mode:</u> a.m session or p.m. session <u>Whole-day mode:</u> 8:45a.m. - 4:30p.m. (Mon-Fri) <u>Long whole-day mode:</u> 8a.m. – 6p.m. (Mon-Fri), 8a.m – 1p.m. (Sat)
Operated by	NGOs and voluntary organisations	NGOs, voluntary organisations or private bodies
Funding mode	1. Subsidised by government 2. Non-profit-making (only for 2-3 yo) 3. Private (for 2-3 yo)	1. Non-profit-making (NPM) 2. Private independent (PI)
Other service	- Occasional Child Care Service ⁶ - Extended Hours Service ⁷	- Occasional Child Care Service - Extended Hours Service

*Table prepared by author

⁶ Occasional Child Care Service and Extended Hours Service are ancillary services provided at existing childcare centres and kindergarten-cum-childcare centres. These services do not provide extra quota on the existing formal childcare quota, instead, it helps extending the childcare hours for current service users.

⁷ Extended Hours Service provide longer hours of child care assistance at some CCCs and KG-cum-CCCs to meet the social needs of families and working parents. The Operation hours of Extended Hours Service is generally from 6:00p.m. to 8:00p.m. (Monday to Friday) and from 1:00p.m. to 3:00p.m. or 8:00p.m. on Saturday.

In conclusion, traditional family values have long emphasised intergenerational exchange and mutual help in care provision in East Asian families, but the impact of increasing female employment, declining fertility, ageing population and changes in household size have meant childcare is coming to be seen as a policy issue rather than a private family matter. Unlike the governments in Western countries, the East Asian governments are still passive in care support. However, the alarming low fertility rate facing the region has pushed this policy issue to the forefront.

In this chapter, I have discussed East Asian family values, the effects brought by the global demographic trends in the region and how governments react to these changes in the societies. Grandparent childcare is one of the latest policy areas for development, but the policies are still emerging and likely outcomes are unclear. In the next chapter, I will review the existing literature on grandparent childcare.

Chapter 4

A literature review of childcare decisions and grandparent childcare

In the last chapter, I outlined the key trends of increasing female employment, declining fertility and ageing that lead to a growing need for childcare and increasing attention to the role of grandparents in extended families. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the international literature on childcare decisions made by parents and families. In particular, I explore grandparent childcare. I document what is known about patterns of childcare, the childcare decision-making of families, and the experience of grandparents as care-providers. As in the previous chapters, the Western experiences will be first described and followed by a focus on East Asia. In East Asia, grandparent childcare has become a growing area of sociological and family research in the past two decades.

Parents making childcare decisions

Childcare decisions cover a wide range of issues. These include the relationship between specific factors and final decisions by parents (Meyers, and Jordan, 2006; Peyton, Jacobs, O'Brien and Roy, 2001), childcare options and the health and physical outcomes of the child and the family (Bernal, 2008; Anderson, Jackson, Wailoo and Petersen, 2002; Phillips and Adams, 2001), childcare and employment of parents (Del Boca and Vuri, 2007; Leach, Barnes, Nichols, Goldin, Stein, Sylva and Malmberg, 2006), and childcare options for specific groups of parents such as low income families (Huston, Chang and Gennetian, 2002; Fuller, Holloway and Liang, 1996).

Complexity is found in the existing research. Income is the most important factor affecting childcare choice (The NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997), but parents from different income levels were associated with similar choices of care. While a study (Fuller, Holloway and Liang, 1996) found that low-income families incline towards centre-based care due to the better government subsidies, another study showed that mothers with higher incomes also prefer centre-based care for the older children (Erdwins and Buffardi, 1994). Whether children are sent to centre-based care also depends on service availability. Davis and Connelly (2005) point out that even within the US, there was a great variation in childcare arrangements across states in relation to services available.

Studies in the US have shown that parents perceive that they have limited choices in childcare. Anderson, Ramsburg and Scott (2005) found parents using subsidised childcare in the US generally considered only this one option for childcare. For parents who participated in the National Study of Child Care for Low-Income Families, just over half of them have considered more than one childcare arrangement, and almost one-third of parents had no alternative to their existing childcare arrangement (Layzer, Goodson and Brown-Lyons, 2007).

However, less research addresses all relevant factors shaping parents' decisions (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 1997; Peyton et al., 2001; Chaudry, Henly and Meyers, 2010). Peyton et al. (2001) examined the reasons for parents' selection of childcare in the US: family factors, including demographic characteristics, maternal responsiveness, and parenting stress; practical factors, including cost, hours, location and preference, were all included in the survey. Formal and informal childcare decisions were both included.

The complete childcare decision-making process was found to be dynamic: parents might change their preferences over time, given changing circumstances. Chaudry et al. (2010) identified three frameworks of childcare decision-making: a rational consumer choice framework, a heuristics and biases framework, and a social network framework. They argue that these three frameworks are complementary in understanding parents' decision-making. This finding implies that parents consider many factors in planning childcare and these factors are not constant. Therefore, analysis of childcare choices and patterns in my study should be aware of the possible changes over time and the reasons involved.

Grandparents as caregivers

Grandparents everywhere in the world provide help to their adult working children through childcare. Research on grandparents as caregivers has taken place since the 1990s and represents a developing field of study in family studies and sociology. Much of the early research is from the US (for example, Waldrop and Weber, 2001; Fuller-Thomson and Minkler, 2001; Bowers and Myers, 1999) and Australia (for example, Goodfellow and Lavery, 2003). Later research has come from the European region and includes comparative studies across European countries (for example, Thomese and Liefbroer, 2013; Zamarro, 2011; Hank and Buber, 2009; Share and Kerrins, 2009), and also studies of individual countries, such as the UK (Tan, Buchanan, Flouri, Attar-Schwartz and Griggs, 2010; Fergusson, Maughan and Golding, 2008; Gray, 2005; Wheelock and Jones, 2002), Spain (Brandis, 2003), Italy (Gattai and Musatti, 1999), France (Dimova and Wolff, 2008), Poland (Krzyszowski, 2011) and Ireland (Share and Kerrins, 2009).

In the East Asian region, such studies began in the 2000s. Grandparent childcare practices are documented in: China (Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011; Chu, Xie and Yu, 2011; Sheng and Settles, 2006; Silverstein, Cong and Li, 2006; Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000; Chen and Silverstein, 2000), South Korea (Jun, 2015; Lee and Bauer, 2010, 2013; Oh, 2006, 2007), Japan (Holthus, 2010), Taiwan (Wang, 2011; Sun, 2008) and Singapore (Low and Goh, 2015; Sun, 2012). While family care is usually considered to be a private and domestic issue, some discussions of family care and welfare policy have occurred in the last ten years (Frejka, Jones and Sardon, 2010; Ochiai and Molony, 2008).

In Hong Kong, there is no published work that focuses on grandparent childcare practices as the main theme of study. Consequently, existing information about grandparents providing care to grandchildren is from data extracted from local childcare research by Chan and Hung (2015) and Tam (2001). These two studies document the experiences and dynamics of grandparent childcare in Hong Kong through use of in-depth interviews with both parents and carers. These studies will be discussed later in this chapter.

In Western countries, there are different types of grandparent childcare patterns. Fuller-Thomson and Minkler (2001) developed a profile of grandparents in the US who provide extensive secondary childcare to their grandchildren. This study included 3,260 grandparents using the 1994 National Survey of Families and Households. In their study, four types of grandparent childcare patterns were identified: 1) Extensive caregivers (6.8%); 2) Intermediate caregivers (24.2%); 3) Occasional caregivers (23.3%); and 4) Noncaring grandparents (40.4%). Goodfellow and Lavery (2003), in their 'Grandcaring Study' project in Australia, reviewed grandparents' commitment to childcare and their views on contributions to their family, their personal sense of autonomy and independence. In the study, 32 grandparents were involved in in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect primary data, which were supplemented by the grandparents' journal writing. The four types of carers identified include:

1. **Avid carer**—grandparents who are family focused, with high care commitments and lower sense of personal free time and enjoyment.
2. **Flexible carer**—grandparents who are family focused, but also place some priority on their personal enjoyment.
3. **Selective carers**—grandparents who prefer more independent lives and privacy.
4. **Hesitant carers**—grandparents who plan to help with childcare but expect they have multiple roles in their lives.

In sum, there are some grandparents who provide minimal or no assistance in taking care of their grandchildren; for those who do contribute, there is a continuum of childcare patterns. The

different patterns of childcare provision need to be explored within specific demographic and cultural contexts to fully understand them (as I will outline in the following). Unexpectedly, there are few studies that have focussed on grandparents who are substantially contributing to the care of their grandchildren without becoming the main carer (Caputo, 1999).

The existing literature illuminates some factors shaping grandparent childcare. In Australia, Hamilton and Jenkins (2015) found that difficulty in accessing formal care is a key reason grandparents are involved in childcare. Thomese and Liefboer (2013: 417), however, suggest that formal childcare and grandparent childcare are not substituting for each other, but are two 'complementary forms of support'. The interactions of these types of care and, in particular, grandparental perspectives need more attention.

Fergusson, Maughan and Golding (2008) in the UK discovered that it is more likely for grandparents to be involved in childcare for grandchildren if the middle generation is in a single parent family or when the marital status of a child's mother changed in the first two years of the child's life. Guzman (2004) also agrees that single parent families in the US are more likely to seek help from grandparents for childcare.

Hofferth (1995) found low-income parents in the US were more inclined to choose informal care for their children as they are less often eligible for government service and assistance (compared with non-working families) and thus need to look for informal childcare due to its possible low cost. Reschke, Manoogian, Richards, Walker and Seiling (2007) similarly found low-income mothers in the US are likely to use grandmothers for childcare due to the key benefits of low cost and flexibility.

The level of education of parents was also an important influence. Mothers with a lower level of education in the UK are more likely to have grandparents taking care of their children. Mothers with better education might be more mobile geographically and may be assumed to have greater ability to cope with the transition to parenthood (Fergusson, Maughan and Golding, 2008).

National retirement pension funds and retirement ages will directly affect the possibility and supply of childcare provision from grandparents. In the UK, older women—between the ages of 50 to 70 years old—usually provide childcare to others, as this is often linked to the standard retirement age for women (Gray, 2005). Gray (2005) asked how the increased employment rate of older women would affect the informal childcare provision. 'A possible conflict may arise between grandparents' important childcare role and the policy objective of raising employment rates amongst the over 50s' (Gray, 2005: 558). A similar situation is found in China, which will be discussed in the next section.

Gender is an important factor shaping grandparent childcare. Existing studies reflect general patterns that show caregiving is women's work and that grandmothers, especially maternal grandmothers, provide primary care to grandchildren in both the Western and East Asian contexts (Fuller-Thompson et al., 2001; Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Chen, Liu, and Mair, 2011; Lee and Bauer, 2013). Griggs (2009) found grandmothers in the UK from lower occupational class backgrounds were more likely to give up their paid work or reduce their working hours to help with childcare at home. At the same time, there is evidence that grandfathers have also begun to contribute more. In the US, for instance, Guzman (2004) found that while over half of the grandmothers are providing childcare, one-third of grandfathers also reported taking care of their grandchildren. In the UK, both grandmothers and grandfathers look after their grandchildren (64% for grandmothers and 63% for grandfathers), although grandmothers are contributing more in terms of amount of time (hours per week) (Bryson, Brewer, Sivieta and Butt, 2012).

Research has found that in Western countries working parents consider the childcare provided by grandparents and family members to be high quality. Parents in the UK for example considered grandparent childcare to be the 'next best thing' if parents are not able to take care of their children (Wheelock and Jones, 2002). In formal childcare, children are being taken care of by 'outsiders' or 'stranger' and parents are not confident that their children are receiving good care and attention (Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

Grandparent childcare patterns in East Asia

Grandparent childcare is also prevalent in East Asia. In China, grandparents are spending over 20 hours per week on average in taking care of their grandchildren (Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011). Over 60% of working mothers are using kin-based childcare in South Korea with most support from grandparents (Lee and Bauer, 2010). It was estimated in Hong Kong, two-thirds of children are being taken care of by grandparents ('Why Hong Kong is failing its young families', *South China Morning Post*, 2015). In Taiwan, based on the Children's Living Conditions Survey, family members were main caregivers for children under 3 years old in 2004 (Wang, 2011).

Despite this prevalence, there are limited studies of grandparent childcare in the region. Some existing studies focus on formal childcare provision and family policies (Frejka, Jones and Sardon, 2010; Ochiai and Molony, 2008) but few address informal childcare. There are even fewer studies about informal childcare provided by grandparents. Among these countries, scattered documentation can be found, mainly in South Korea and China regarding grandparents providing childcare.

In South Korea, Lee and Bauer (2010) described the profiles of grandmothers who provide childcare to their grandchildren with data from the nationally representative survey of Korean Longitudinal Study of Ageing (KLoSa) (Ko and Hank, 2014). Other research in South Korea examined the health implications and care stress of grandparents providing childcare (Jun, 2015; Oh, 2006, 2007) and grandmothers' motivations in providing childcare (Lee and Bauer, 2013).

In China, grandparent childcare is described as 'widespread' but 'loosely documented' (Silverstein, Cong and Li, 2006: 49). Most grandparent childcare research in China explores the One-Child Policy implemented in 1979 (Goh, 2009, 2011). Goh's in-depth study in Xiamen, a city on the south-eastern coast of China, found that almost half of the households have grandparents involved in childcare. The four-two-one care model, that is having four grandparents, two parents and one child in a family, means the only child at home becomes the centre of the family: the 'little sun' with the caregivers revolving around just like other planets in the solar system. Studies found that grandparents help to reduce the parents' childcare workload.

Factors shaping grandparent childcare in East Asia

There are different factors shaping grandparent childcare in East Asia. First, the residential pattern of grandparents is an important factor. Co-residence is an important factor in grandparent childcare (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000), but it is not directly linked with the amount of time given to childcare (Lee and Bauer, 2010). In Singapore, grandparent childcare is viewed as a common and convenient source of assistance if grandparents reside nearby (Sun, 2012). Due to hectic daily work schedules, some parents adopt the 'weekend parents' model of care where children stay in the grandparents' home during weekdays and parents have them at home during weekends (Zhang, 2015).

The employment status of grandparents and parents is the second factor. In China the official retirement age of women is 50 or 55; therefore many grandmothers actually retire to provide care to their grandchildren (Bian, Logan and Shu, 2000; Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000). In South Korea, grandmothers are more likely to provide childcare support to their adult daughters if they are in employment (Lee and Bauer, 2010). In 2013, in Hong Kong the Steering Committee on Population Policy (SCPP) of the government launched a four-month public engagement exercise in late 2013 to encourage public discussion on population policy and to invite submissions from the public. One of the main concerns was to encourage both female homemakers and mature citizens to re-join the labour force (Secretariat of Steering Committee on Population Policy, 2013: 15). Yet the decreased supply of childcare provided by

grandparents, if they stay in the labour market, may well inhibit younger female homemakers rejoining the labour force.

East Asian family culture, as outlined in Chapter 3, is another critical factor framing grandparent childcare patterns. The emphasis of the parent-son bond implies that the paternal grandparents have a larger responsibility to the grandchild. There is a special distinction of 'inner grandchildren' and 'outer grandchildren'. 'Inner grandchildren' are the children of sons and 'outer grandchildren' are the children of daughters. In China, it is more likely for grandparents to take care of the children of their sons (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000). The paternal grandparents' home is the second most commonly chosen location for childcare after the parents' own home (Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011). Although the traditional family ideologies are still customary, there are some changes taking place.

For instance, recent studies show that the custom of a strong parent-son relationship has weakened in contemporary East Asian families. Both maternal and paternal grandparents provide care to their grandchildren. Grandparents are giving more care to 'outer grandchildren' because the daughter's family is living close (Chen, Short and Entwisle, 2000). Grandmothers also believe that by providing support, their daughters will benefit by having an active life by remaining in the job market and avoid possible conflicts with their mothers-in-law. These findings reflect that western grandparent childcare patterns, in which maternal grandparental childcare are more common, is also prevalent in East Asia nowadays (Gray 2005; Fuller-Thomson, 2001; Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

Current literature finds grandparent childcare to be an important part of the mutual support of the two generations—the older parents and the adult children under the concept of reciprocity. This discourse is based on the moral system of Confucianism which defines family members' roles and responsibilities, the core concept of filial piety from children to parents and mutual interdependence within a family (Chu, Xie and Yu, 2011; Chen and Silverstein, 2000; Sheng and Settles, 2006; Schwarz, Trommsdorff, Zheng and Shi, 2010). These studies show the positive side of grandparent childcare, acknowledging the contribution of this informal childcare arrangement to family relationships.

Grandparent childcare patterns in Hong Kong

My key research focus is grandparent childcare in Hong Kong. Collecting appropriate and accurate childcare statistics in Hong Kong is difficult because there are no longitudinal official statistical data on informal childcare. Unlike in OECD or other East Asian countries, there is no national survey in Hong Kong covering childcare. For example, in Taiwan, the Women's

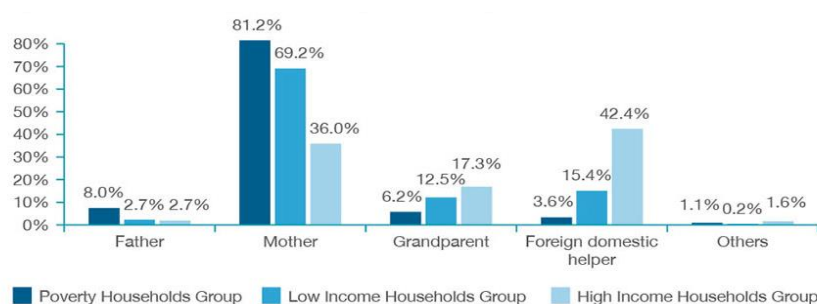
Marriage, Fertility, and Employment Surveys (WMFES), provides data on childcare, as does the Children's Living Conditions Survey. In South Korea, they have the Korean Longitudinal Study of Ageing (KLoSa) offering data about grandparents providing care to grandchildren.

Only scattered data is available in Hong Kong. For instance, although there are no direct statistics available in Hong Kong on the use of informal childcare, a childhood obesity study can provide some reference points. Among the 3682 respondents in the study by Lin, Leung, Hui, Lam and Schooling (2011), informal childcare was common when the children are 6 months (49.6 %), 3 years (46.6%) and 5 years (40.9%) but less so at 11 years (23.9%). Informal care here means children are being taken care of by grandparents, other family members, friends, or others. In sum, this type of care from family members is more intense for young children: over 40% below 5 years old.

The *Study on Child Care Services for Low-Income Families in Hong Kong* (Chan and Hung, 2015) showed that, overall, mothers are the primary carers for children under 12 in Hong Kong (55.7%). Grandparents appeared to be the most common secondary carers across families with different income levels, with 13.5% of children having grandparents as their main carers.

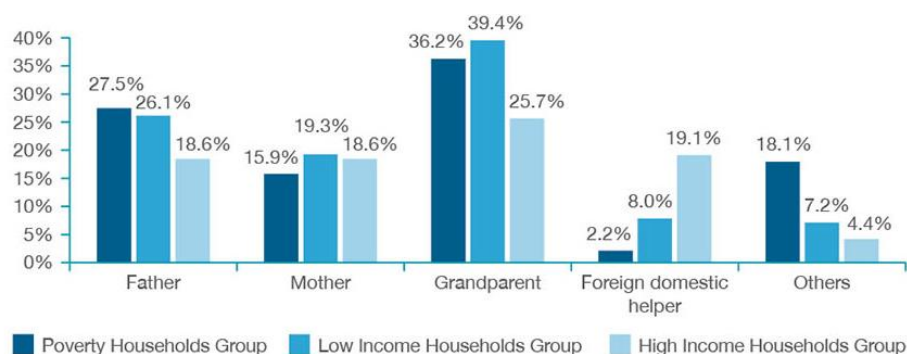
Yet, household income level is a critical factor in determining childcare options in Hong Kong when applying sub-group analysis (Chan and Hung, 2015). In families living below the poverty line, maternal care (81.2%, see Figure 4-1) is most likely with a grandparent to help out (36.2%, see Figure 4-2). For low-income families, mothers as the main carers dropped to 69.2% with more help from grandparents (39.4%).

Figure 4-1 Main carer for children under 12 in Hong Kong



Source: Chan and Hung (2015: 44).

Figure 4-2 Other carers for children under 12 in Hong Kong

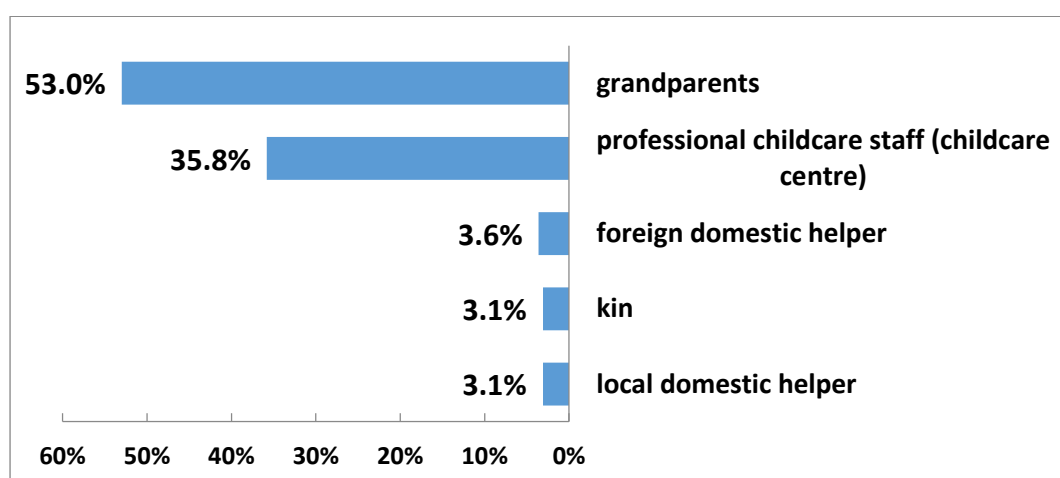


Source: Chan and Hung (2015: 44).

Co-residence with grandparents is strongly linked with the provision of grandparent childcare in Hong Kong. The Government report *Relationships among family members* in 2010 (Census and Statistic Department, HKSAR Government, 2010) showed that over 40% of the respondents who were living with parents reported that their parents assisted them ‘often’, and another 12% reported assistance as ‘very often’. For people not living with grandparents, almost 75% reported that they did not receive any help from parents in household chores and childcare.

Grandparent childcare is considered the best childcare option from the perspective of many parents. A recent survey found over 53% of Hong Kong parents believe that grandparent childcare is the best form of childcare when parents cannot care for children themselves, other options are shown in Figure 4-3. Professional childcare at a crèche is the preferred option after grandparents (35.8%) (Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children and Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education, 2014).

Figure 4-3 The best form of childcare other than parental care (Hong Kong)



Source: Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children and Council of Non-profit Making Organizations for Pre-primary Education (2014), figure prepared by author.

Tam's study (2001) also found that childcare by family members, grandparents in particular, is perceived as an ideal mode of childcare for Hong Kong parents. Parents affirmed that if their children are being taken care of by kin members (all are grandmothers in this study), they feel 'at ease'. Parents associated childcare provided by family members with positive attributes such as 'dependable', 'responsible' and 'unconditional mutual interdependence'. This is similar to the UK parents' belief that grandparent childcare is the 'next best thing' if parental care is not possible (Wheelock and Jones, 2002).

Tam (2001) was also interested in investigating why some are not requesting or receiving grandparental help. Parents cited disapproval of the older generation's child-rearing methods, as well as geographic location and heavy burdens on elderly parents. Informants in Tam's research raised several concerns: grandparents might spoil the children; grandparents might not provide adequate stimulations in intellectual and personality development for children; parents might lose their power and influence over children as grandparents might challenge parents' authority, especially in households with a domestic helper.

Tensions and ambivalence in grandparent childcare

Current studies document the experiences and emotions associated with grandparent childcare. Grandparents, who are providing childcare to grandchildren, agree that they have good relationships with their grandchildren and perceive watching them grow up is a rewarding experience (Goodfellow, 2003). In Bowers and Myers' study (1999) in the US, which involved a sample of 101 grandmothers with grandchildren aged 14 years old or below, they found that almost all of the full-time caregiving grandmothers described their relationship with their grandchildren as 'excellent' or 'good'. Many of the part-time caregiving grandmothers reported that they have 'excellent' relationships with their grandchildren. Goodfellow and Lavery (2003) reported the relationship developed between caring grandparents and grandchildren among Australian families is strong: as one informant said 'it is more than childcare' (2003: 17).

Grandparents often view taking care of grandchildren as an act of love and enjoy this 'second chance' at parenting (Ochiltrie, 2006; Wheelock and Jones, 2002). Grandfathers, who did not give care when their own children were small, may see grandparent childcare as an opportunity for redress (Ochiltrie, 2006). Overall, key sources of satisfaction are pleasure in sharing a child's life, and a new sense of purpose and direction for life (Waldrop and Weber, 2001).

Childcare is not always enjoyable for grandparents, however. Stress is a common problem among grandparents in the US providing full-time childcare. Compared with part-time caregivers, full-time caregiving grandmothers reported having less energy and vitality, and

these are linked with feelings of burden and stress (Bower and Myer, 1999). In Australia, the informants in Goodfellow and Laverty's study (2003) reflected that caring work is 'physically and emotionally exhausting', for example, it is very demanding for them to lift or carry young children. Childcaring limited their own social activities, resulting in less personal enjoyment of free time.

Some grandparents in Singapore are hesitant to offer childcare help to adult children because they expect to enjoy their retirement lives and do not want to take up care burdens at this stage of life (Teo, Mehta, Thang and Chan, 2006). In-depth interviews with grandparents in China found that grandparents were facing problems when providing regular care to grandchildren. These problems included physical exhaustion, a lack of reward from adult children and the loss of personal time for leisure and social activities (Goh, 2009).

In reality, conflict and challenges often arise during the care process. At times, grandparents felt that their childcare services are taken for granted. Adult children might assume that they are always available, and might come to collect their children late. Grandparents wished the middle generation would better respect their needs (Goodfellow, 2003). Tensions arise over family obligations and the freedom to pursue their own interests; between intergenerational responsibilities and retirement choices; and between their own work and childcare work (Goodfellow, 2003; Lee and Bauer, 2003; Gattai and Musatti, 1999).

Grandparent childcare can be viewed as a response to changes in intergenerational dynamics (Goh, 2009; Yan, 2003; Guo, 2001), where social and economic power has shifted from the older generation to the younger generation. Chen, Liu and Mair (2011) in their study of grandparent childcare in China, described grandparent childcare as a 'clear divergence from China's traditional cultural pattern of intergenerational exchange' (Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011: 527). East Asian values emphasise support from adult children to elderly parents according to the moral value of filial piety, as discussed in Chapter 3; ageing parents' help in childcare provision now alters this relationship. In China, Goh (2009) discovered that providing childcare for the middle generation is considered to be one of the 'reminders' to the middle generation of performing filial piety. Grandparents are willing to take care of their grandchildren by limiting their recreation, careers, and social networks, as they consider this is a way to extend their family lineage by helping their adult children to raise the third generation. As the younger generation is now less willing to support their parents, the latter have to develop other strategies to 'remind' their children about filial piety and their responsibility to take care of the elderly. The power structure in Chinese families has undergone some changes.

In conclusion, from the review of existing literature, there is limited research on the dynamics of grandparent childcare as a key form of informal care. Most of the existing studies examine parents' views and needs and investigate the demographic factors (such as employment status, education level and marital status) underpinning why parents require help from the grandparents. Thus current studies of informal childcare emphasise the demand side. In contrast, the studies of formal childcare highlight the supply and quality of childcare services and the formulation of policy (Bryson et al., 2012). Informal childcare is commonly addressed as a 'private' issue. These conflicts remain hidden and implicit in the public sphere. Parents, usually mothers, work on childcare through 'interpersonal relations and everyday organisation' as well as personal preference and values (Saraceno, 2011: 79). In the following chapter, I outline the conceptual framework and methodology used in this study.

Chapter 5

Methodology and theoretical approach

In this study, I use a sociological and feminist approach to explore grandparent childcare. I adopt the theoretical concepts of intergenerational solidarity, conflict and ambivalence to understand how the childcare decisions are negotiated, how family members' roles in childcare are developed and the factors they have considered. Using a gender lens, I ask questions about the social and economic structures related to caregiving. From a feminist standpoint, I explore the experiences of childcarers in order to understand informal care and grandparental care provision in relation to policies and services in Hong Kong.

This chapter mainly aims to introduce the theoretical concepts that I apply for this study and how these concepts construct the scene for analysing grandparent childcare in contemporary families. Next, I will elaborate the research methods and operations including the interview process. A profile of informants will follow to provide sample characteristics.

Intergenerational solidarity, conflict and ambivalence

To investigate the characteristics and patterns of grandparent childcare practice, an intergenerational perspective is adopted in this study. The literature review in the previous chapter indicates that grandparent childcare in East Asia is related to the intergenerational dynamics and socio-economic power relations among generations (Goh, 2009; Yan, 2003; Guo, 2001). I begin with the notions of family relations as understood by the 26 informants in this study. While my primary focus was relationships between the adult children and their elderly parents, there were multiple layers of interaction. Grandparent childcare is an informal childcare arrangement within a family across at least three generations involving the grandparents, their adult children and the grandchildren are involved. In some cases, the interactions may include the great-grandparental generation. If great grandparents are alive, grandparents may need to consider these care obligations in negotiating childcare.

Scholars have argued for the importance of intergenerational perspectives. Szinovacz (1998) urges consideration of the 'multiple linkages among grandparents, grandchildren, and the middle generation (the grandchildren's parents)' (1998: 258). Gunhild Hagestad (2006) argues eloquently that a 'three-generational perspective' must be adopted in the current family studies due to 'the unprecedented duration of intergenerational ties and shifting the balance between old and young in family lines' (2006: 315).

As outlined in Chapter 3, due to increasing longevity and changes in families, the duration of family ties is increasing, and grandparents are performing more functions and roles in families. Bengtson argues, the multigenerational bond will be 'a valuable new resource for families in the twenty-first century' (Bengtson, 2001: 14) and the multigenerational family structures are becoming 'a complex web of interconnected, vertical connections' (Hagestad, 2006: 319).

This study draws on the intergenerational solidarity theory proposed by Marc Szydlik in 2008. Szydlik (Igél and Szydlik, 2011; Szydlik, 2008) provides a comprehensive intergenerational solidarity model encompassing opportunity, need, family and cultural-contextual structures.

1. Opportunity structure: the resources for solidarity that promote or prevent social interaction, such as geographical distance.
2. Need structure: the need for solidarity such as financial or emotional needs.
3. Family structure: the history of family contact, relationships and roles expectations.
4. Cultural-contextual structure: the societal background and political and economic regimes including the labour market, the housing conditions and so on.

This model addresses the intergenerational relationship and it provides a framework to incorporate the formation and dynamics of family relationships. Szydlik's model of intergenerational solidarity builds on the development of this concept over the past three decades.

Intergenerational solidarity theory was first proposed by Bengtson and his colleagues in the early 1980s for critically examining the relationships between adult children and their elderly parents. It has been applied to gerontology in studying adult children's support to elder parents (Hodgkin, 2014; Klaus, 2009; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso and Bengtson, 2002; Whitbeck, Hoyt and Huck, 1994), and recently it has also been applied to grandparents' decisions about childcare for their grandchildren (Igél and Szydlik, 2011). Recent studies on intergenerational family relations frequently rely on the Intergenerational Solidarity Model (Hogerbrugge and Komter 2012; Voorpostel and Blieszner, 2008; Wood and Liossis, 2007; Chun and Lee, 2006; Silverstein, Gans and Yang, 2006).

Bengtson's model focuses on the relationship between parents and children as adults (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991). It is defined as social cohesion between generations (Bengtson and Oyama, 2007) and intergenerational cohesion between parents and children once the children grow up and create their families (Bengtson and Roberts, 1991). Bengtson and Roberts conceptualised intergenerational solidarity as 'multifaceted' and 'multidimensional' (1991: 856) featuring six dimensions (Bengtson, 2001):

1. Associational solidarity (frequency of contacts among intergenerational family members and types of common activities shared).
2. Affectual solidarity (emotional closeness and understanding; perceived reciprocity in positive sentiments).
3. Consensual solidarity (agreement and concordance with other family members in values and attitudes).
4. Functional solidarity (helping and resources exchange among family members).
5. Normative solidarity (commitment to familial roles and obligations).
6. Structural solidarity (geographic proximity between family members).

The concept of conflict was also addressed in subsequent studies to reflect the negative effects of intergenerational support. Working with 2,044 informants from 328 families in the US, Silverstein, Chen and Heller (1996) found that family support is crucial to mental wellness, but this support might also become counteractive and create negative effects. Bengtson also included conflict in analysing exchanges between parents and adult children in another study (Parrott and Bengtson, 1999).

To further enhance the comprehensiveness of the model, the concept of ambivalence was proposed. Ambivalence is the simultaneous existence of contradicting feelings and emotions. Lüscher and Pillemer (1998) first proposed the theoretical concept of intergenerational ambivalence and argued that ambivalence should not be equated to conflict. Instead, it should be considered as 'an attempt to account for the simultaneous coexistence and opposition of harmony and conflict in intergenerational relations' (Lüscher, 2002: 591).

Ambivalence is the 'bridging concept between the social structure and individual actions' (Connidis and McMullen, 2002b: 559). Connidis and McMullen have suggested there are two dimensions of ambivalence: sociological ambivalence, which relates to social structures; and psychological ambivalence, which focuses on individual experience. In recent years the term intergenerational ambivalence has been adopted in family relations research. In particular, changes in population and family structures, and gendered roles in caregiving have reinforced the value of this concept in family studies (Lüscher and Pillemer, 2004; Connidis and McMullen, 2002a; 2002b).

Applying the concept of ambivalence in family studies illuminates how expectations within families are understood and negotiated (May, Mason and Clarke, 2012). Ambivalence is produced when there are contradictory attitudes and actions required by social norms and roles (Lüscher and Pillemer, 1998). Individuals are constrained and governed by social norms and structures; therefore, contradictions in socially structured relations are duplicated or mirrored

in interpersonal relationships, including families. During relationship negotiations, individuals are likely to experience ambivalence (Connidis and McMullen, 2002b).

Solidarity and ambivalence are useful concepts for understanding the broader context of grandparent childcare, furthermore, the concept of 'doing family' is also used in this research to capture finer meanings and interactions.

Family practices and family obligations: How family members interact

'Doing family' is a concept developed by David Morgan (1996) which identifies little fragments of daily life that operate in 'wider systems of meaning' (Morgan, 1996: 190). Morgan argues that it is more important to understand how individuals (social actors) behave as a family by observing family practices, rather than simply understanding how people define their identity as a family member. Finch (2007) later developed the related concept of 'displaying family'. To make family practices effective, the meaning of the practices must be delivered to and to be realised by others and thus confirm these relationships are family relationships. By understanding how families display themselves, Finch argues that it is possible to show how family members view themselves as a 'family' through a set of 'family practices', to 'convey to each other and relevant audiences that certain of their actions constitute 'doing family things' (Finch, 2007: 67).

Family processes in an individual family do not come about in a cultural vacuum (Smart, 2007; Morgan, 1996) and should be understood from 'wider systems of meaning' (Morgan, 1996: 190). As outlined in Chapter 3, 'doing family' in East Asian family culture means that hierarchy is emphasised, and adult children and their spouses are considered the descendant generation of the elderly parents. Therefore, the children and their partners tend to, and also are expected to, accept the decisions of elderly parents. With the arrival of the newborns, the adult children have their own descendant generation. Once grandparent childcare starts, grandparents get involved. Whether or not they live in the same place, the grandparents can now intervene in their children's nuclear family. For adult children, before having their own children, the sense of 'my family' is not so obvious and the boundary between the elderly parents' family and adult children's family is not apparent. The arrival of the first child creates new forms of family practice.

Family obligation in the East Asian context is 'a collection of attitudes and behaviours related to the provision of support, assistance, and respect to family members' (Fuligni and Zhang, 2004: 180). Acknowledging family obligation outlines the social and personal expectations on each individual such as care-giving responsibilities (Quah, 1998, 2003, 2009, 2015); and thus the

associated choices and actions. The family obligations of children from Asian families usually extend into their lives as adults (Fuligni, Tseng and Lam, 1999). Children are taught the moral values of filial piety and responsibility to the family; children are also expected to consult family members, to consider the needs and wishes of the family in all decision making (Fuligni and Zhang, 2004; Fuligni, Tseng and Lam, 1999). These values are sustained and passed on from the senior generations to younger generations (Quah, 1998, 2003, 2009).

I argue that these family ideologies are decisive factors in defining childcare options and the negotiation process, as these provide the yardstick to determine the 'correctness' of a decision, and the optimal amount of childcare assistance from family.

Feminist standpoint theory

Feminist research perspectives are adopted for this study. In particular, I draw on Sandra Harding's feminist standpoint theory (1992, 2004) as the methodology to explore the care experiences and examine childcarers' contributions to families and societies.

Feminist scholars have led research into the dynamics of care and challenged earlier understandings of 'family' (Chambers, 2012). They have examined the social practices of paid work and care work, reproduction, sexuality and mothering, and how these interact within society with other institutions (Connell 1987, 2004; Harding, 1987). It has been argued that conventional knowledge has been developed based primarily on the lives and experiences of men, and the situations of women are not adequately reflected and recorded in the research and public policy processes.

Harding (2004) argues that knowledge is socially situated. Different standpoints are produced through social hierarchies. Standpoint is the location from which one sees the world. Feminist standpoint theory challenges the objectivity and neutrality of traditional science because it fails to consider the experiences of women and other marginalised groups, and feminist ways of thinking. Harding argues that some social locations are better starting points for the production of knowledge, offering the opportunity for researchers to challenge the fundamental assumptions of the worldviews (Harding, 2004).

Therefore, feminist standpoint theorists focus on the voices and perspectives of marginalised groups, and urge that research should begin with their lived experiences. Their social situations ensure they are aware of issues that the mainstream groups do not encounter. Standpoint theory focuses on the causal relationships between experience, knowledge and politics. It aims to explain how different kinds of politics and power struggle witnessed by the marginalised will bring about the production of knowledge (Harding, 2004).

In this study, the informal childcarers are my focus due to the lack of discussion and recognition of their contributions to families and societies. As outlined in Chapter 2, caregiving is still considered a domestic and family issue, especially in East Asia. Informal care is most often provided by mothers and grandmothers, and it is a social expectation that women are the carers. Men who want to give full-time care are inhibited by social expectations around being the breadwinner in the workplace (Liong, 2015; 'Full-time father', Ming Pao Daily, 2009: D01). As Harding argues 'starting off research from women's lives will generate less partial and distorted accounts not only of women's lives but also of men's lives and the whole social order' (Harding 2004: 128). This is particularly crucial in relation to reproduction and childcare.

Although traditional economics studies production and optimal personal decision-making, 'reproduction' and domestic production, including unpaid care work, are often neglected. This absence has impacts on inequality in paid care labour too which is mainly borne by women (Fisher and Tronto, 1990; Hochschild, 2000). Care is still not being valued, although it constitutes between 7 to 63% of the monetary value of GDP of countries world-wide (Budlender, 2008). Budlender has argued that given the amount and value of unpaid care work, it is 'too large to be ignored in economic decision making' (Budlender, 2008: 38).

Feminist methodologies support an in-depth analysis of the gendered work-family experiences of both men and women. Researchers who support standpoint theory focus on the views of the caregivers, mainly women—their concerns, experiences and daily lives. Consequently, feminist scholars advocate taking the lived experience of women in order to undertake scientific and evidence-based inquiries, particularly in relation to care.

There have been critiques of feminist standpoint theory for its possible turn to essentialism, in terms of viewing marginalised groups as in unitary terms (for example, Gill, 1998; Hekman, 1997). Harding (1992), however, emphasises that feminist standpoint theory does not aim to interpret the lives of the marginalised group. She contends that it aims to provide 'a causal, critical account of the regularities of the natural and social worlds and their underlying causal tendencies' (Harding, 1992: 583).

Feminist research has brought care into view by illuminating women's caring responsibilities and practices (Held, 1996; Noddings, 1984; Gilligan, 1982) as outlined in Chapter 2. Care ethics challenges the traditional moral development theories. Gilligan (1982) has argued for 'an ethics of care' that is about compassion, maintaining relationships, noticing and responding to needs and taking care of others. 'The idea of care is thus an activity of relationships, of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone' (Gilligan 1982: 73).

After explaining the research perspective and theoretical approach, in the next section, I discuss the research methods — the ‘specific sets of research practices’ (Stanley and Wise, 1991:26) — I used.

Research methods

According to Shapiro, Setterlund and Cragg (2003), the nature of research questions and the type of fieldwork data required influences the selection of research methodology. As I am interested in how parents and grandparents understand and feel about their childcare arrangements, qualitative research methods are the most appropriate for this purpose. In particular, I adopt qualitative research methods influenced by feminist standpoint theory to provide the methodological framework.

Qualitative research

A qualitative approach is usually chosen for research topics that are not fully explored or developed (Mason, 2002: 19), such as grandparent childcare and the complex care and familial relationships involved. Second, together with the standpoint theory, qualitative research is a reliable way of ‘capturing individuals’ views’ and ‘examining the constraints of everyday life’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013: 16), as it allows for the investigation of the everyday social lives of informants. Third, qualitative methods are effective in ‘securing rich descriptions’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013: 16) and avoiding generalisations. The global and regional literature reviews of grandparent children in Chapter 4 confirm that the care patterns, arrangements and family dynamics are variable and intricate. This research aims to build understanding the diversity of these relationships in the context of Hong Kong.

Qualitative research can also make specific contributions to social policy, when individual and social frameworks merge such as in family and childcare policy. In 2015, a special volume in *Journal of Family Studies* explored the contribution of qualitative research in social policy development. In the editorial, Michelle Brady (2015) pointed out that qualitative studies have the ability to ‘reveal connections between domains that are commonly considered in isolation’ (2015: 2). This study explores informal childcare and its linkages with social policy and formal childcare. It contributes to existing knowledge of childcare by drawing out the experiences of grandparents, their adult children and the grandchildren for which they both care.

As a preparation for fieldwork, an archival policy review was carried out in order to provide context for the interviews. After the preliminary study, I tracked down the following major categories of documents at the beginning of the data collection: social welfare policy papers

(such as White Papers, Programme Plans); Policy Addresses by the British Governors (before the handover in 1997) and by the Chief Executive (after 1997); documents of the Legislative Council on family policy; and reports related to family policy by the Hong Kong Government. This information was synthesised in chronological order to observe and track the family policy directions and the development of childcare service provision by the government (see Chapter 3 for discussion). These materials offered valuable insights into the historical development of family policy in Hong Kong, and provided background information for my conversations with informants and NGO staff.

Interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were utilised to explore informants' views and attitudes on the research topic. In addition, from a feminist perspective, Graham (1984) suggested that a 'semi-structured interview' is a 'principal means' for data collection by feminists because it can 'achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives' (1984: 112). The format was semi-structured in the use of some basic key questions to start the conversation with the informants, and then used follow up questions built on their responses. This allowed me to seek clarification and further explanation of important points and ideas. This social research method has been developed from an interpretivist perspective that seeks to use social research to address the complexity in which people view their lives (Travers, 2013). The main purpose is to understand the situations rather than making generalisations or predictions based on the information collected.

The fieldwork phase of this research project occurred in Hong Kong from December 2014 to January 2016. Hong Kong was the main location for data collection. I conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews with three key groups of stakeholders:

Group 1: key policy stakeholder (government officials, NGO representatives and policy advocates);

Group 2: parents (who ask grandparents to help with childcare);

Group 3: grandparents (who provided childcare to their grandchildren).

In Group 1 I recruited government officials, policy advocates and NGO representatives in Hong Kong. I sought their views and insights on the development of childcare policy in Hong Kong over the past half-century. However, despite contact via emails and phone calls, only a small number responded. The Social Welfare Department was willing to respond to questions via email only. The response from NGOs was stronger; however, there was a preference for

informal discussions rather than recorded interviews. I adopted observational approaches in these contexts. I visited the organisations and attended some internal meetings and conferences. Informant Group 2 consisted of parents in Hong Kong with children aged under 6 years old. They were invited to share their experiences as vital stakeholders in care patterns and because their childcare options and decisions are affected by policies and services. Informant Group 3 consisted of grandparents who are providing childcare to their pre-primary school aged grandchildren. They were also invited to share their childcare experiences as critical aspects of the childcare map in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, early years services—childcare and early years education—are targeted for children under 6 years old. My focus here is early years care before school begins. Parents were recruited through childcare centres, women's groups and family centres. Flyers were only posted with explicit organisational permission.

Ethical Considerations

Approval was granted by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) on 4 November 2014. During the fieldwork, I did not collect personal identification data such as an informant's full name, Identity Card number, or any other sensitive personal information. Contact numbers were collected only to arrange interviews. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the in-depth interviews began.

Based on my previous work experience in social services centres, I understood that these interviews could be emotional because we would be talking about experiences related to family and children (Jendrek, 1994). I reminded each informant before we started our conversations that they could pause or stop at any point of the interview without explaining the reasons. I also prepared a leaflet with information on welfare and counselling services.

Interview guide

I prepared a set of interview questions before conducting the semi-structured interviews. Having an interview guide is important in allowing people to be interviewed in a systemic and comprehensive way, while allowing different experiences to be collated (Pepper and Wildy, 2009). The complete set of interview guides is attached in Appendix I.

Preparation for interviews

Before meeting an informant for a face-to-face interview, the explanatory statement, in both English and Chinese, were sent to them via email. I then negotiated the time and venue for the interview (Traver, 2013). In addition, at the start of each interview, I explained all the documents again verbally in Cantonese and invited them to ask for clarification of any uncertain points.

The use of short questionnaire allowed the recording of some personal details such as age, self-defined income level, occupation and monthly expenditure on childcare. Some informants felt uncomfortable in filling out the questionnaire and skipped questions or offered a very general answer (See Table 5.1 and 5.2 for details).

I used the original English version of the consent form and read the statement when required.

Recruiting informants

Recruitment processes of all groups commenced simultaneously in November 2014 in Hong Kong. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling was employed to recruit parents (Group 2) and grandparents (Group 3). Recruitment was conducted by NGO referral and promotion, including child care centres, women's groups and family centres. Recruitment details were also circulated through social media networks, mainly Facebook and Whatsapp. The snowballing effect was effective for the parents group but not for grandparent groups.

Initial inquiries were all from mothers with very similar backgrounds. For example, there were four mothers who contacted me all from the same district of Yuen Long. Yuen Long is a new town area in the north-west part of Hong Kong, in which many young families are living because rent or apartment prices are affordable.

An interesting finding from the recruitment process was that there are many mothers' groups using social media and instant messaging applications. The formation of these groups is often based on some specific criteria, such as the children's year of birth, living location, caring practices (such as breastfeeding or baby-led weaning) and similar needs (such as looking for pre-nursery class or kindergarten). Mothers set up online forums or groups in social media network and instant messaging applications including Facebook and Whatsapp for information exchange related to their children: children's food and nutrition, playgroup, shopping tips for toys and clothes and selection of schools. At the beginning of the recruitment, I found the flyer was being circulated among some mothers' groups; therefore, all the potential informants who contacted me were mothers with relatively similar backgrounds or living conditions. It took

more time to reach more diverse groups, such as contacting parents in different districts or occupations by circulating the flyers to more discussion groups with various topics.

The use of online forums or chat groups as information exchange is a very interesting phenomenon among Hong Kong mothers. I noticed that some mothers, even after they migrated to another country, still formed local social media groups among themselves for childcare information exchange. Parents with children attending nursery class and kindergarten often create an informal information network. This is particularly important in the Hong Kong context, as formal childcare under 2 years is uncommon; so parents are seeking out these opportunities. In the second round of recruitment for both Group 2 and Group 3, I sent the flyer and invitation email to a broader group of local NGOs, including labour unions, workers' groups/associations, student associations and alumni associations. Again, I received a number of inquiries from mothers, but still no inquiries from grandparents or fathers. However, a number of grandparents did express interest in participating through their adult children: this occurred even if that middle generation was not interested.

Parents usually scheduled interviews in the evening during weekdays, and during weekends. Interviews were often re-scheduled due to these women's busy schedules. Parents tended to use WhatsApp when communicating with me. Grandparents used the phone. Some grandparents communicated with me through their children or their in-laws.

Conducting interviews

For parents and grandparents, I used semi-structured open-ended questions in the interview process. Story telling or narrative was embedded in the semi-structured interview. I began by asking each informant to explain how grandparents came to be involved in childcare and asked why they wanted to talk with me about grandparent childcare issues. These open-ended questions opened up parents' and grandparents' background and their experiences of informal childcare.

Plummer (1995) has argued for the 'sociology of stories'. Unlike traditional theories of narrative focused on story structures or plots and chronological account, Plummer proposed a focus on 'the interactions which emerge around story telling' (1995: 20). The value of storytelling in research is that it illuminates the important social role of the stories: 'the ways they are produced, the ways they are read, the work they perform in the wider social order, how they change, and their role in the political process' (1995: 19). Stories are the 'joint actions' which include a constant interaction between the story tellers and the listeners/consumers.

This approach was of particular value as many of these parents and grandparents believed that their experiences are unimportant. They felt that childcare is a private family responsibility and, therefore, required encouragement to describe their daily care arrangements. This lack of social and cultural value for the work of carers may also form part of the stress these parents describe. At the end of some interviews, when I thanked the mothers for their time and sharing, some responded with gratitude to me: I was very surprised. Mothers revealed that the interview was important for them because they cannot disclose the stresses of childcare to other family members. They found talking to the researcher an opportunity to vent their frustrations and worries about the family conflicts created by childcare arrangements. Women considered it was impossible to talk to their husbands about their uneasiness with grandparent childcare, as it would sound like a complaint about their parents-in-law. Some mothers mentioned that their husband was overly respectful and obedient to his paternal parents' notions; making childcare worries very difficult to talk about at home.

Data analysis: Thematic analysis

During the fieldwork process, I noted down repetitions, metaphors, transitions, similarity and difference, missing data and theory-related materials (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Drawing upon the qualitative methods developed by Denzin and Lincoln (2013), Attride-Stirling (2001) developed the 'thematic networks analysis' approach. It is a representational tool for structuring and delineating the themes that emerge from the data, and building links from original data to interpretation. Attride-Stirling proposes systematising the themes from the lowest-level ones derived from the textual data, then middle-order ones by clustering the closest lowest-level themes, and then the super-ordinate themes that link up the middle-order themes. Gradually a web-like thematic structure will become visible.

My thematic analysis follows Attride-Stirling's procedures. I made field notes during and after each interview. From these notes, I developed a pre-analysis coding framework with middle-level themes including 'childcare options', 'grandparent childcare', 'childcare centres', 'couples' division of labour', 'kindergarten' and 'parents' information sharing'. These were identified mainly by frequency in discussion. I then returned to the procedures of 'thematic networks analysis' by first reducing the size of the data through coding. I read over the 26 transcripts and divided the data into sections, with reference to the theoretical framework set up in the first part of this chapter and the pre-analysis codes.

I thus reviewed the data at least twice and began identifying themes in this way. However refining themes was an ongoing and continuous cycle throughout the analysis. I did not limit the

number of the new codes to avoid the risk of overgeneralisation. Thus, the number of themes expanded from the pre-analysis codes after I finished reading the transcript set for the first time.

Cross-cultural research

My research is in English but the interviews were conducted in Cantonese. Cross-cultural qualitative research necessitates translation. Cross-cultural research is common but academic exploration on translation as a research process is rarely found (Wong and Poon, 2010; Temple and Young, 2004). It is an important methodological issue because not only languages are involved but also the cultures and power of the translators. While it is assumed the translation is neutral and technical, Wong and Poon (2010) found that translators understand and interpret the same interview transcript in various ways depending on their ages; social status; cultural, academic and professional backgrounds.

In this study, I translated documents from English into Chinese for informants' reference. Most people in Hong Kong have good English language proficiency. However, older people may have lower levels of English proficiency because learning English was not compulsory when they were in school. These documents included invitation emails, the explanatory statement and a short questionnaire for parents and grandparents to fill in after an interview. After translation, I asked local researchers and parents to proofread the translated version, to make sure the content in written Chinese was clear.

The challenge in this study has been the translation of interviews which convey the informants' subjective experiences. All the interviews were conducted, transcribed, and first coded in Cantonese. Transcribing and coding in the original language retained the authentic meaning of the informants and avoided losing or interrupting the data. Translation of the codes was carried out after the first round of analysis. The verbatim transcripts were only translated when I needed to include them as quotations in my writing.

According to Polkinghorne (2007), the validity of a qualitative study increases if the gap between the meanings of informants' experiences and the meanings interpreted by the researchers can be narrowed. As the researcher, interviewer and translator, I was able to fully understand the contextual meanings of the informants' expression, and minimise losing or misinterpreting the meanings. Moreover, the translated quotations of the informants were read by native English speakers to check the intelligibility of the translations.

A summary of key concepts

To sum up, three main concepts are adopted in this study to explore family relationships and dynamics in the grandparent childcare context: intergenerational solidarity, intergenerational conflicts and intergenerational ambivalence.

Intergenerational solidarity is the social cohesion between generations in a family in the form of mutual help, value consensus and sharing, and a pursuit of common good and benefits. The dimensions of solidarity in a family include associational, affectual, consensual, functional, normative and structural (Bengtson, 2001).

Intergenerational conflict examines the negative side of family relationships in contrast to solidarity: the disagreements and tensions between generations within a family. These situations of conflict can be verbal, disagreements for childcare rationale and conflictual feelings.

The concept of ambivalence must be adopted for comprehensiveness in this study (Lüscher and Pillemer, 1998). Two dimensions of ambivalence, namely sociological ambivalence and psychological ambivalence, can usefully illuminate the social roles and norms of family members in relation to childcare and also their emotions about care provision.

This study is a qualitative study which aims to sociologically explore how grandparents in Hong Kong are providing childcare to their grandchildren for their adult children. This study does not intend to propose any testable hypotheses related to informal childcare and family relationships. Drawing on standpoint theory, it documents the lived experiences and practices of grandparent childcare in East Asian families in Hong Kong, asking the informants to share their experiences; it locates these experiences in the social, cultural and policy background of Hong Kong.

This study does not either aim to collect quantitative data on family dynamic such as the actual frequency of conflict (for example, 3-5 times per day) or the actual amount of economic support (for example, HKD5000 of monthly sum given to grandparents from adult children for childcare assistance provided). Instead, this study takes a phenomenological perspective and looks into the themes and reasons of the support and conflict, and the attitudes and the management strategies towards the ambivalence (Clarke, Preston, Raksin and Bengtson, 1999).

In the next section, I provide a profile of each of my informants: 14 parents (13 mothers and 1 father) and 12 grandparents (11 grandmothers and 1 grandfather) contributed to this study.

Table 5-1 Informant profiles (parents)

Name (pseudonym)	Mother/ father	Work responsibilities/ occupations	Age	Partner in employment	Education level	Income class (self-defined)	Number of children and Age of children
Leah	mother	part-time music teacher	30+	yes	university	middle class	1 (22 months)
Winnie	mother	clerk (manufacturing firm)	34	yes	secondary school	working class	1 (16 months)
Cindy	mother	accountant	33	yes	university	middle class	1 (19 months)
Jade	mother	account clerk	33	yes	secondary school	working class	1 (19 months)
Sofia	mother	property management	35	yes	secondary school	working class	2 (4 years old, 18 months)
Ruby	mother	clerk	37	yes	secondary school	working class	1 (20 months)
Amber	mother	housewife	36	yes	university	middle class	2 (2.5 years old, 5 months)
Natalie	mother	teacher	35	yes	postgraduate	middle class	2 (4 years old, 2 years old)
Harper	mother	teacher	33	yes	university	middle class	1 (1 year old)
Billie	mother	social worker	34	no	postgraduate	not specified	2 (5 years old, 3 months)
Katelyn	mother	engineer	35	yes	postgraduate	middle class	2 (5 years old, 2 years old)
Ronan	father	risk management	35	yes	university	middle class	2 (5 years old, 2 years old)
Serena	mother	part- time model & online shop	32	n/a	secondary school	working class	1 (15 months)
Mina	mother	clinic assistant	25	yes	secondary school	working class	1 (8 months)

Table 5-2 Informant profiles (grandparents)

Name (pseudonym)	Grandmother /grandfather	Age	No. of grand- children	No. of adult children	Work responsibilities/occupations	Partner in employment	Education
Judith	grandmother	58	3	2	childcarer at home (previously for other family members)	yes	primary school
Loretta	grandmother	64	2	2	school bus service, quit for grandparent childcare	no	primary school
John	grandfather	65+	2	2	retired	-	-
Martha	grandmother	56	3	2	taxi driver, quit for grandparent childcare	yes	lower secondary school
Grace	grandmother	62	4	3	retired	n/a (separated)	lower secondary school
Rosa	grandmother	61	2	2	retired	yes	secondary school
Susanna	grandmother	63	3	4	housewife since she had children	Part-time job	primary school
Belinda	grandmother	63	2	3	housewife since she had children	Part-time job	(not mentioned)
Alicia	grandmother	60	1	(not mentioned)	housewife since she had children	no	primary school
Sharon	grandmother	62	4	2	clerical assistant in university, full time	no	primary school
Geraldine	grandmother	64	1	2	clerical assistant, quit for grandparent childcare	n/a (separated)	primary school
Miranda	grandmother	59	3	4	housewife since she had children	yes	primary school

Profile of informants

1. Leah

Leah is around 30 years old, with a child of 22 months. She is a university graduate and had been working full-time. Since her child was born, she quit her job and became a full-time carer at home. When the child was at 15 months old, she asked the maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother to help with childcare because she planned to work again. Both grandparents come to her apartment to provide care. Paternal grandmother will come with her foreign domestic helper. Leah planned the childcare arrangements. Her husband rarely helps with childcare physically such as feeding or bathing, but he did share his views on childcare. With the grandparents' help with childcare, Leah then returned to the workforce as a part-time music teacher. She believes that by working, although the income is a small amount, she can help support her family financially and have some 'pocket money' for herself.

2. Winnie

Winnie is 34 years old, with a 16 month old child. She is a full-time clerk in a manufacturing company. She and her husband have lived in the same household with her parents-in-law since their marriage. With the birth of their child, the paternal grandparents became the carers of the baby after Winnie returned to her workplace following maternity leave. She identifies herself as working class, and she states that cost is an important consideration for choosing childcare. Her income is low and this limits her choices. She prefers sending her child to childcare centre, but it is not affordable. Grandparent childcare is the only possible option considering her employment status and the childcare costs. Her husband does not help much in childcare, either physically or financially. She is looking forward to sending her child to nursery school at 2 years old, as she can apply for government subsidy to assist with the fee.

3. Cindy

Cindy is 33 years old, and her child is 19 months old. She is a university graduate and a full-time accountant. She and her husband live very close to her parents-in-law, and thus the paternal grandparents help taking care of her son every day. The care arrangement has changed in the last few month to cope with their working hours and to avoid conflicts among the two generations. The grandparents come to pick up the child and take him to their home. They bring the child back when his parents return from work at around 7 pm. A local domestic helper prepares dinner for the parents every afternoon, but she does not take care of the child. Cindy believes that grandparent childcare issues have resulted in conflict with her in-laws, which did not occur before her son's birth. She is planning for new childcare arrangement such as employing a foreign domestic helper to minimise the grandparents' involvement.

4. Jade

Jade is 33 years old, with one child of 19 months old. She discussed childcare arrangements with her family when she was pregnant and moved to her mother's home with the baby, and the maternal grandmother is the main childcarer. Her husband comes to see her and the baby every day after work but does not stay overnight. Jade actually prefers being a full-time mother at home and not returning to the workforce, because she does not want to rely on others for childcare. However, her family needs a dual income to sustain them financially. She has considered sending her baby to a childcare centre but the cost is unaffordable and the services are limited.

5. Sofia

Sofia is 35 years old, with two daughters aged 4 and 18-month. She is a full-time staff member in a property management company. Her highest educational attainment is secondary school. She and her husband live near his parents, and they help taking care of the two granddaughters in the daytime when the parents are working. The grandparents are now taking care of four grandchildren at the same time, with the assistance of a foreign domestic helper at home. The other two are the children of Sofia's brother-in-law. Sofia prefers being a full-time mother but her husband's income is not enough to support the family expenses. The elder daughter is now attending half-day kindergarten. Sofia is planning to send the younger daughter to nursery school when she is 2 years old. She believes that her children will benefit from the social life with a group of peers. Sending children to a centre or kindergarten can also reduce conflict with grandparents over childcare arrangements.

6. Ruby

Ruby is 37 years old, with a 20 month old son. She is working full-time as a clerk. Her highest educational attainment is secondary school. Ruby spent the first month after childbirth at her mother's home. After the month of rest, Ruby's mother kept helping with childcare, and Ruby herself moved back to her parents-in-law's home. However, later *po-po* (maternal grandmother) could not continue as the baby's carer because she cannot handle the care work for both the baby and *gung-gung* (maternal grandfather, Ruby's fathers) at the same time. Ruby had to ask the paternal grandparents for help. Ruby is very disappointed with this arrangement. She comments that the paternal grandparents are not good caregivers, in particular their standard of hygiene concerns her. Although they are not in tension, the relationship between Ruby and her parents-in-law is not harmonious. They always have disagreements over childcare and parenting practices.

7. Amber

Amber is now 36 years old and she has two children. She is a university graduate. She previously worked full-time. She quit her job and became a full-time mother after she gave birth to her second child. She lives within walking distance to her parents allowing them to come every day to assist her with childcare. The grandparents leave when her husband is back from work. Amber's husband

shares care work in the evening such as bathing the children and tucking them into bed. Amber believes that intergenerational transfer and inheritance within a family is valuable, and this is the reason she decided to have children and ask the grandparents to be involved in childcare. Calling on grandparents to be childcare providers is not an easy task for Amber as she has many minor disputes with her parents over the daily routines of childcare such as feeding. She puts much effort into explaining to her parents her rationale in childcare practices.

8. Natalie

Natalie is 35 years old; she is a full-time teacher in a secondary school. She has a postgraduate degree. She has two children aged 2 and 4. She has been living with her parents, and this living arrangement remained the same after she married; her husband is also living with her parents. Natalie's father is working in China during the week, and he is only at home during weekends. Natalie's mother is the live-in babysitter, taking care of Natalie's children at home. They have also hired a foreign domestic helper so the grandmother can have some free time for herself, or engage in part-time work. The two children also attend half-day kindergarten: the elder one in the morning session and the younger one in the afternoon. Natalie and her husband are happy with the current arrangement of childcare with assistance from the grandmother plus a helper at home. They learn caring and cooking skills from the grandmother, which they find valuable. They do not have any plans to change the current childcare arrangement.

9. Harper

Harper is a full-time teacher in a primary school, and her working hours are different from the normal office hours: she needs to arrive at school at around 7:30 am (instead of general office hours starting at 9:00 am) for the class preparation. She is now 33 years old and has a 1 year old daughter. Her mother-in-law is the babysitter from Monday to Friday, so that Harper and her husband can work full-time. The baby originally stayed at the grandmother's home during the week, but later they changed the caring arrangement, with grandmother coming to their home during day-time to take care of the baby. Harper finds that the grandmother's care is very important as it allows her to return to work without worrying about her baby. However, the increased contact with her mother-in-law has led to more conflicts over minor care issues. The intimacy between her baby and the paternal grandmother is sometimes envied by Harper.

10. Billie

Billie is 34 years old. She has two daughters, the elder one is aged 5 and the younger one is just 3 months old. The first child was being taken care of by maternal grandmother, and the second child is now being taken care of by Billie's husband. He is now studying at university for a part-time degree course with lectures held in the evenings, so he is the carer in the daytime. When Billie comes home after work, he heads to his lectures. In our interview, Billie compared the two scenarios—

grandparent childcare and parental childcare. She found both advantages and challenges in these two childcare arrangements. She is happy with grandparent childcare, but in terms of parenting, parental care allows her and her husband to apply their parenting and teaching style in a flexible manner. In addition to her job as a social worker and from her experiences and other parents' sharing, she also witnesses various childcare issues in wider society.

11. Katelyn

Katelyn is 35 years old. She works full time, she is an engineer specialised in building and construction. She has a son and a daughter aged 5 and 2 respectively. Both Katelyn and her husband are working full-time. The son was taken care of by his paternal grandfather at Katelyn's home. When their daughter arrived, she employed a foreign domestic helper, and then also looked to the maternal grandmother for help during weekdays. Therefore, the childcare arrangement is complex: the paternal grandfather, the maternal grandmother and the domestic helper are taking care of the children every day from 7am to 7pm at Katelyn's home. Later when the paternal grandmother retired, she pitched in and freed up the maternal grandmother's time to help another daughter.

12. Ronan

Ronan is Katelyn's husband. He is also 35 years old. He is specialised in risk management and calculation. He is keen to participate in childcare: he bathes the children and reads story to them every evening. He is also enthusiastic about arranging activities for his children. He organised an English playgroup for his children and his friends' children, so that the children can have some social and play time with their peers. For him, the paternal grandparents should have more responsibility in taking care of the grandchildren than the maternal grandparents due to the traditional family ideology. However, Ronan and Katelyn have no plans to change the current childcare arrangement. There has been occasional disagreement and argument between them in organising childcare. For instance, during the transition to parenthood, they argued over whether the paternal or maternal grandparents should be involved in childcare and the details of the arrangement.

13. Serena

Serena is 32 years old, she is a single mother with a 15 month old child. She was a full-time model and she quit her job after giving birth to her son. For the first eight months she was a full-time mother, but then utilised the grandparents, who are living in a close proximity, to look after her son in the afternoon, allowing her to do some part time modelling work and manage her online shop. She has been searching for childcare services in her community but lacks information. She once found a service point for Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project (discussed in Chapter 3), but the application procedure was tortuous. She was unable to provide income verification as requested by the service centre because there were no payment advice documents from her casual jobs. In the

long term, she hopes she can have full-time employment when her child starts kindergarten at 2 years old.

14. Mina

Mina is 25 years old; she gave birth to her baby boy eight months ago. She is working in a clinic. She and her husband co-reside with husband's parents. Therefore, the paternal grandparents—who are also working full-time—help with childcare. They employ a foreign domestic helper from the Philippines. In sum, the childcare arrangement is a combination of assistance from the grandparents and a foreign domestic helper. Previously she has considered asking her parents to help but they are busy at work; she also considered using her grandmother (i.e., the baby's great-grandmother) but she is already helping her uncle with childcare. She wants to keep her full-time job, as being financially independent is her concern. Grandparent childcare improves her relationship with her parents-in-law because the baby becomes their common topic in daily conversation.

15. Judith

Judith is 58 years old. She is mother of two adult children and grandmother of three grandchildren. She has occasional casual employment. She is taking care of her granddaughter (her son's daughter) during weekdays. She is very experienced in childcare—she helped her younger sister with childcare when her own adult children did not have their babies yet. Later when her adult children gave birth to their own children, she started grandparent childcare. Her first grandchild from her daughter stayed with her during weekdays and only went home during weekends and holidays. The same care schedule was made for the second grandchild from her son. In the case of her third grandchild—her son's daughter—it is different, as Judith travels to her son's home every day and she does not stay overnight.

16. Loretta

Loretta is now 64. She has two grandchildren. Amber (another informant) is her adult daughter. Loretta retired a few years ago from her previous job with the school bus services. Loretta is now a full-time carer for her two grandchildren. Loretta and her husband go to Amber's home every day. Loretta was offering to help because her daughter returned to her full-time job after her maternity leave. However, a few months later, Loretta's daughter left her job and became a full-time mother. As her daughter needed extra support after the second child was born, Loretta keeps helping.

17. John

John is in his mid-60s and was a technician in the ship maintenance industry. He retired few years ago and was enjoying his retirement life—mainly meeting friends and travelling. However, their daughter asked him and his wife Loretta (another informant) to help with childcare, which entails going to his daughter's home every day to help with childcare and household chores. Both John and

Loretta are getting frustrated on some occasions in taking care of the grandchildren because their daughter does not want them to look after them in their own way but insists on teaching them the latest caring and parenting trends.

18. Martha

Martha is 56 years old and is providing childcare for three grandchildren at the same time. She has two adult children. She was a taxi driver but resigned to help her son to take care of his first baby 10 years ago. His son's marriage was not stable, and his wife was not willing to take care of the baby. Therefore, Martha was first helping with childcare and later became the main carer of her first grandson when the parents decided to divorce. Her grandson lives with her, and Martha's son, a single father, calls in every day to chat with his son and visits during weekends. Later, Martha's daughter had her first baby. Her daughter originally wished to use grandparent childcare but worried that Martha's care burden was too heavy, so she employed a foreign domestic helper at home, and then asked Martha to help teaching the maid and doing some grocery shopping. Martha's assistance is particularly important when her daughter gave birth to her second baby. Martha enjoys taking care of her grandchildren and she feels the respect and trust from her adult children over childcare issues.

19. Grace

Grace is now 62 years old. She has three adult children and four grandchildren. She is divorced and living alone. Grace is now providing childcare for three of her grandchildren. She helps her son to take care of his 3 year old daughter (usually three days per week) and, whenever required, assists her two daughters in taking care of their children at their homes. At the beginning, she resigned from her job and provided childcare for her eldest daughter. However, after she was diagnosed with cancer, she stopped childcare while receiving treatment. She felt guilty for not being able to help and for bringing trouble to her children's families. Once she recovered, she helped again with childcare but usually she does so at home and through supervising the foreign domestic helper, instead of providing direct care to the grandchildren. She enjoys the time with her grandchildren, and she believes that elderly should help their adult children with childcare so that they can go to work without bother.

20. Rosa

Rosa is 61 years old. She has two adult sons and two grandchildren. She was working in a wedding dress company before she started taking care of her first grandchild. The shop closed down and her son pleaded with her to help with babysitting. She agreed and then did not look for another job. Later her son employed a foreign domestic helper, so Rosa's duty switched from providing direct care to supervising the helper and watching the grandchild. When the grandchild started kindergarten, the grandfather pitched in and picked up the grandchild after school every day. Since then Rosa can

enjoy some free time and only helps with occasional childcare during holiday and summer break. She disagrees with the parenting methods used by her son and daughter-in-law, but follows their lead in order to avoid conflict them.

21. Susanna

Susanna is 63 years old. She has four daughters. She has been a full-time housewife since her children were very small. Her husband is the sole breadwinner of their family and had been working full-time until he switched to part-time employment once the family financial burden was lessened as the children have grown up. Susanna has taken care of all three grandchildren in the past five years. She first helped her eldest daughter, Katelyn (another informant), to look after her two children at their home. Katelyn's father-in-law also assists with childcare, as he is retired. Therefore, Susanna, the paternal grandfather, and a foreign domestic helper take care of the two children together every day. Susanna also helps her second daughter with babysitting; staying at her daughter's home during weekdays. She expects to look for part-time job when her daughters need less help from her. Her two younger daughters are still in school so she wants to work part-time and support her family.

22. Belinda

Belinda is 63 years old, a mother of three adult children. She retired few years ago and started childcare when the first grandchild was born. She is now taking care of two grandchildren aged 4½ years old and 10 months old. They are the sons of her eldest son. Her daily work starts before 8 am and continues until dinner is finished and the children have gone home with their parents. She takes her elder grandson to kindergarten every day and then takes care of the younger grandson at home. She is also responsible for all domestic work including meals preparation for her family and the grandchildren's parents. Belinda feels that taking care of the two grandsons is similar to working full-time with a packed daily schedule. Her husband is working full-time and he helps with feeding and playing with the grandchildren when he is at home.

23. Alicia

Alicia is 60 years old and has a 2 year old granddaughter. This is the first baby of Alicia's adult daughter. Alicia has been out of workforce for many years therefore is free to do childcare. She takes care of her granddaughter every weekday for around five hours at her daughter's home. The paternal grandmother also takes turn to babysit every day allowing both grandmothers to have some free time each day. The two grandmothers also supervise a foreign domestic helper employed by Alicia's daughter to share the household chores. Every day after childcare, Alicia returns to her home to do her own housework and to run errands.

24. Sharon

Sharon is 62 years old. She has a full-time job in a university as a clerical assistant. Thus, she can only take care of her grandchildren after work and during weekends. In the daytime, her retired husband is the main carer of the grandchildren. They have three grandchildren coming every day, they are aged 10 years, 8 years and 20 months. They are the children of Sharon's eldest son. Sharon's husband takes care of the youngest grandson every day by himself. The two elder children come to her home after school. Sharon and her husband watch over them as they do homework and play before dinner. Sharon does the grocery shopping and prepares meal for her family and her son's family every evening after work. Her son gives her a monthly *gaa jung* ('allowance'). Sharon also has another granddaughter at 15 months old. This is the only child of Sharon's daughter. Sometime Sharon's daughter visits Sharon and stays at her home for a few days, and Sharon will occasionally help with childcare as well.

25. Geraldine

Geraldine is a 64 year old divorcee living with her daughter's family. She takes care of her grandchild along with a foreign domestic helper. The baby's paternal grandmother also helps them out occasionally, so that Geraldine can have some free time. Geraldine was working in a small company when she started providing childcare. As she found it difficult to combine the two, Geraldine resigned and became a full-time carer, in order to reduce the care burden of her adult children. Her provision of childcare was a family decision, as her monthly income was lower than that of the adult children, she quit in order to stay at home to look after her grandchild.

26. Miranda

Miranda is 59 years old. She is a full-time homemaker with three daughters and a son. She began providing childcare with the birth of her first grandchild five years ago. When another daughter gave birth to a baby, Miranda began helping her out during weekdays. She continues to care for her 5 year old grandchild during weekends, along with her daughter's second child. This schedule of care leaves Miranda without a free day for herself. Miranda finds that the care standard nowadays is much higher than when she raised her own children, citing standards of hygiene as an example. In the case of disagreement about caring practices with her daughters, she tends to follow their instructions. She sees her childcare role invaluable for her family because she contributes to the grandchildren's health and growth.

In conclusion, becoming an informal carer is not merely a family arrangement. Much effort is needed to understand the complexity of the arrangement, in particular with the interaction of the various perspectives and discourses elaborated in this chapter. Qualitative interviews with 14 parents and 12 grandparents provide rich data on contemporary childcare practices and experiences. In the

following three chapters, I will explore the complex story of contemporary grandparent childcare and to make sense of their experiences of the surrounding social and cultural circumstances.

Chapter 6

Childcare decisions: Choices, constraints and considerations

The previous chapters have set out the theoretical and methodological bases for my discussion of familial childcare arrangements and intergenerational dynamics. In the following three chapters, I move on to the families' lived experiences of East Asian family cultures, social changes and the existing policy setup, and the translation of these concepts and experiences into daily practices.

This chapter first explores the contexts and factors that influence parents' decision-making about childcare: parents' childcare options, factors shaping decision-making, reasons for choosing particular types of childcare, especially informal childcare and grandparent childcare. I find that childcare decision-making is constrained in many ways and some parents use a range of childcare options concurrently to form a childcare package. Childcare arrangements change over time in a family due to changes in parents' and carers' daily lives. Trust emerged as a key driver of childcare decision making for the parents in my study. I first adopt the family capital framework to analyse how trust and social capital is illuminated in grandparent childcare.

Key attributes of childcare decision-making

Elimination of childcare choices and factors affecting the arrangements

In Hong Kong, parents perceive that they have limited childcare options. The three most common types of informal childcare are grandparental, child-minders and foreign domestic helpers (Tam, 2001). In Tam's study, half of the informants agreed that hiring domestic helpers is not their preferred option, but it is often the only feasible solution.

In this study, I found that when parents discuss childcare options, they mean 'feasible options' that suit their situations and needs. In arriving at a course of action, parents consider all the 'possible and available options', including those offered by a family, the government or the community. Parents eliminate many options through a multifaceted and dynamic consideration of various factors and current situations. After elimination, they identify all 'possible and available options', then choose the best, even though the final option is not necessarily ideal for them.

I found childcare decision-making includes many factors such as employment status and career plans, family finances, transportation to work and for pick-ups, quality of care by the carer, benefits for the children and family relationships. Parents' expectations of childcare and child development are also important.

Jade's story gives a sense of the complexity of childcare decision-making. Jade is a working mother with a toddler of almost 2 years old. At the beginning of the interview, Jade outlined her elimination of childcare choices. She talked about how 'possible and available options' were reduced to 'feasible options' and further to 'real' options, taking employment, family resources, financial ability and expectations into account:

At the very beginning, we (Jade and her husband) knew that we must both go to work; it was impossible for us to stop our paid employment. Therefore, the option of being a full-time mother was not feasible at the outset. We then considered if our elderly family members could help: such as my mother or my mother-in-law. My mother-in-law had already said that she would not help, so I could only rely on my mother. I didn't consider childcare centres ... that is crèches for working-parents. I checked the price, and it was too expensive, and there is a very limited quota. I know some mothers apply for childcare centres places during pregnancy to shorten the waiting time. Therefore, once I knew my mother would help, I stopped checking with childcare centres. I feel better if my baby is with my family. (Jade, mother of one child)

Hong Kong parents do consider family economic conditions as an important concern in raising children—they all emphasise family expenditure, the cost of accommodation and family income when discussing their childcare choices. If cost was the primary concern, however, the lowest cost options would be chosen. But parents in this study did not always choose the most economical childcare options. Thus, family economic resources are not the only factor in childcare planning.

Trust is intertwined in all childcare decision-making. It was repeatedly mentioned by all informants—not only parents who entrust their children to the carer, but also carers and even for institutions providing childcare. It is common to converse about trust in formal childcare—whether or not parents have confidence with a particular childcare centre, the quality check index available (such as carer-child ratio) and the word-of-mouth reputation. On top of that, trust was frequently cited in this study with the focus on informal childcare and direct contact among parents and carers. The relationship of trust in informal childcare is my key focus in this chapter but before discussing this in depth I consider economic influences.

Family economic conditions and childcare decisions

Family economic conditions are a critical concern in raising children. A new birth means an increase in expenditure of the family, and families in Hong Kong are encountering the fastest escalating cost of living. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is an official index recording the movement of cost of living. In the last decade, the CPI of Hong Kong has seen sharp increases in the private housing rents and the food prices. The current annual increase is around 4% per year (Hong Kong Monthly Digest of

Statistics, 2014). A recent survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2016) shows that Hong Kong ranks second in 'the ten most expensive cities to live in', up from the ninth in 2015. This survey covers the price of food, drink, clothing, household supplies and personal care items, home rents, transport, utility bills, private schools, domestic help and recreational costs.

Due to these inflating living costs, dual-income families are more common than in the past. Winnie says that the main reason she planned to have a baby was that her parents-in-law are willing to help with childcare. She knows that she must be in paid employment in order to support the family; her husband's income is not enough to cover the living costs of the whole family even while they are living with parents. If the grandparents refused to help, she actually would have reconsidered having a baby.

If my parents-in-law did not say yes to our childcare request, and unless my husband's salary could cover the living expenditure of the whole family, I could not consider having a child ... Usually my husband gives money to his mother for family expenses and he does not give me a penny. For the daily necessities of my child, such as formula milk and diapers, I pay for the cost. If I do not have enough money, I will ask my husband for some more. (Winnie, mother of one child)

For Leah, she returned to work when her son was 15 months old. She could only work part-time. Her current monthly salary is therefore lower, but she still considers her financial contribution important for her family. Her husband also feels her salary helps with some expenses.

If I do not go to work, then we have a salary less; if I go to work then we have one more salary. My salary is not that much; my husband sees this as my 'pocket money' for my own expenses. (Leah, mother of one child)

Facing similar problems, Jade distinguishes her current family financial situation from that of her childhood.

My mum took care of me when I was a child, my mum was a full-time housewife and my dad was the sole breadwinner of the family. This pattern is impossible now, except if the husband is working in a high-paying job, then the family budget can be maintained. Now my husband and I earn around HK\$10,000 each; the total sum is only barely enough for the family expenditure. (Jade, mother of one child)

Accommodation as a struggle for young parents

The overinflated property market constitutes a large part of the high living cost. According to the latest Household Expenditure Survey conducted by the Hong Kong Government, 35.8% of household

expenditure was recorded for housing in 2011; this was 20% in 1981. In contrast, food accounts for 27.3% of total household expenditure (Census and Statistics Department, 2016b). The cost creates a lot of stress for parents.

Finding accommodation is a struggle for families, especially for new families and young parents. For many people in Hong Kong, and in East Asia, buying a flat is the ultimate life goal. Getting a home means a stable and comfortable family life. Investing in the property market is also wealth creation. A popular colloquial saying in Hong Kong to describe the move to first property is 'to get in the car'. To 'get in', having a down payment (around 20-30% of the property price) is the first step. When the market soars, building a down payment becomes tough for people living on average wages. Thus, rental becomes common. Rental properties are also very expensive.

Jade explained the current situation for her generation:

There is no way out. The prices are overly high. Many people are working day and night to pay the mortgage loan. Even if you do not have mortgage payments, you still need to pay a monthly rent, which is at least HK\$6000-7000 per month; it is already a big proportion of the monthly salary. (Jade, mother of one child)

For Natalie's original family, high property prices are a cross-generational issue. Natalie and her husband currently live with her parents, and the maternal grandmother helps taking care of Natalie's two children. Natalie's parents could not afford to buy a flat and they have rented since they were married. When Natalie got married, the new couple purchased an apartment, which is bigger than Natalie's rental and asked her parents to move in, to save the cost of renting another flat.

Why do we live with my parents? You know, the property price in Hong Kong is very high, my parents were unable to buy their own flat, and we have been renting a flat. When I got married, I wanted to get a flat for my new family, and then move out. Nevertheless, my parents will need to pay the high rent by themselves if I do not live with them. So then, we planned to live together, and my husband agreed. Finally, we got a larger flat and live with my parents who help us taking care of the children. (Natalie, mother of two children)

Living with parents after marriage is not rare in Hong Kong, but Natalie's case of the newly-weds living with the wife's parents is not common. In Hong Kong, people still prefer the traditional custom of moving in with the husband's family after marriage if they are not moving to another place. It is still rare for the husband to live with the wife's family, which is called 'the outer family' (maiden home) in Cantonese. As discussed in Chapter 3, these traditional family practices are loosening up in contemporary society, creating some changes in daily practices.

The cost of living and the financial burden of families in Hong Kong are emerging as critical issues. Moreover, the weight and significance of these financial issues have intensified over the past three decades. This is pronounced when the new parents compare their financial burdens with those of their own parents starting a family thirty years ago. Although there has been considerable work on the challenges facing low-income families (Huston, Chang and Gennetian, 2002; Fuller, Holloway, and Liang, 1996), in my research, the financial burden of accommodation was a problem for all families. These are families with stable incomes, not entitled to social security, and they identify themselves as middle-class families, but making both ends meet is still difficult. For this kind of family, the dual-earner model is crucial to maintaining their lifestyles and obligations and childcare services are a necessity as full-time parental care is impossible.

Childcare decision making is a continuous process

Childcare decision-making is a continuous process by parents throughout the childhood of the children. It is not a one-off decision. It is active and dynamic. Parents evaluate and reconsider the childcare arrangement recurrently. Parents plan for rearrangements of childcare based on evaluations of their current childcare arrangements; the alteration of their way of living due to changing jobs or employment status; changes of the current carer; and so on.

Generally for infants aged 2 or below, grandparents provide childcare when parents need to work. At the age of 2, it is usual for children to start pre-nursery class (only for ages 2 to 3) or kindergarten (starting from at age 3) depending on parents' choices. Sending children to pre-nursery class and kindergarten relieves some of the grandparental care burden. Sofia's younger daughter is almost 2 years old. She is applying for pre-nursery class for her younger daughter as a way to reduce her mother-in-law's workload of childcare.

At the beginning my mother-in-law enjoyed taking care of the babies, but now she has four grandchildren, the care work is very heavy for her... my younger daughter is now almost 2 years old, if she gets admitted to pre-nursery class, then her grandmother will have less of a burden. (Sofia, mother of two children)

I have made a promise to my mother. Usually parents send their children to kindergarten at 3 years old; there is discussion about whether parents should send their children to PN (pre-nursery) class at 2 years old. I didn't have a strong preference for school, but after having this baby, I decided to send him to school earlier, even it is expensive. This reduces my mother's care burden, and the child can try school and group life too. (Jade, mother of one child)

Some parents believe that having both grandparents and foreign domestic helper is the best combination of informal childcare at home.

I feel better this way. When the foreign domestic helper first arrived, she is a stranger to me. I didn't feel at ease if she is the only one taking care of my baby. There are so many news reports of crime and child abuse by the helpers, even if I have a webcam installed at home to monitor, I can't look at the webcam all the time when I'm at work. So I need a family member to help ... if there's no one at home, the helper will be very free and will not work seriously ... grandparents can help deter the helper from slacking off in baby care. Grandparents give me a sense of security. If they can't help, then probably I wouldn't have a domestic helper, and I'd quit my job and do childcare myself. (Mina, mother of one child)

Initially, Mina did not consider employing a foreign domestic helper as her apartment seemed too small and having a non-family member in a small home was not convenient. However, she finally needed to employ one, so that she and her husband could keep working full-time; the paternal grandparents could also maintain their paid employment; and it would not put all the burden on the grandmother.

Childcare choices and considerations

Parents in interviews generally mentioned several 'possible and available' childcare options for their toddlers. These options include childcare centres (crèches in some parents' term), foreign domestic helpers, local domestic helpers, Neighbour Support Childcare Project (NSCCP, an informal childcare programme started by the Hong Kong Government to initiate childcare support from neighbourhood) and grandparent childcare. Apart from maternal care, parents generally considered some of or all of these choices during their organisation of their own childcare package.

In Hong Kong, a working mother's choice of childcare option is often a compromise solution, rather than their ideal style of childcare. As outlined in Chapter 4, while parents consider that family members and grandparents are the best informal childcare option, the actual choices were different from parents' ideal picture: only 30.1% (n=23) of the respondents (with children under 4 years old) had family members help as a childcarer. Almost half of the respondents with young children under 4 years old (49.3%, n=37) employed foreign domestic helpers (Tam, 2001).

The survey conducted by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (Chan and Hung, 2015) also revealed that some parents found their current childcare arrangements unsatisfactory because the needs of their children are not met. The percentage of parents satisfied with the current childcare model among high-income families was 71.9%, and this rate went down to 61.4% for low-income family; and further down to 53.7% in lowest income household group.

Parental care as an ideal care model

Parents tend to have high expectations of their childcare arrangements. Generally, the ideal is maternal care. In the case of Serena, for instance, she is a single mother who separated from her partner after having their first child and took care of her son by herself until he was 7 months old. He then spent half a day at his maternal grandparents' home so that Serena could work part-time. However, maternal care is still her ideal care option:

Don't try to be a working mum if you have other options. There are many 'first times' in children's early years. Once you've missed it, it's gone. If you can't witness it, the 'first time' is gone forever. If possible, try to be full-time mum ... If I was able to choose again, I'd still choose to take care my baby by myself. I saw his first smile and I had tears, it was so touching. You can still see his smile, but I captured his first smile in his life. (Serena, mother of one child)

Grandfather John also explained how his daughter perceives maternal care:

She said her children are growing very fast in the first four to five years, so she needs to give them more love and attention in these years. She quit her job and became a full-time mum. Because she needs to watch their every minute, she doesn't want to miss the special moments and memories. For paid work, she can still do it when the children grow up. What she means is that, she needs to take care her children that way so she won't miss the memories of their childhood. (John, grandfather of two children, father of two adult children)

However, most often, these ideal pictures cannot be realised for economic reasons.

Actually, I want to look after my children myself, but the economy in this society doesn't allow me (to do that). It costs you HK\$40-50 dollars for lunch for one person, it is impossible not to work. (Sofia, mother of two children)

Parents have mixed feelings about non-parental childcare. For Jade and Sofia, parental care is the best option, yet not feasible. Jade asks her mother to help with childcare so that she can work full-time. She generally has a positive and respectful relationship with her mother, and she learns many care techniques from her. However, she believes that it would be best if she could be a full-time mother at home. Currently, she can only spend two hours with her child at home after work. For her, the quality of these interactions is not satisfactory because she is tired after work. She feels she cannot play or teach during this time and has minor arguments with her mother that she would not have if she could care for her child full-time.

Most mothers in this study crave a caring pattern in which close observation of children is possible, so that they can keep track of their growth. Jade understands that her child has changing physical and learning needs. These needs include nutrition, language, communication and social skills and

bodily strength. She believes that parental care allows adjustments to be made flexibly. For example, if she finds that her child is not eating well, she changes the combination of food. She can also spend free time with her child in outdoor fun and games. From her perspective, other carers generally do not observe the child so closely.

Some mothers also express ambivalence about whether they are emotionally ready to be a full-time carer. The daily childcare routine is very hectic: feeding, bathing, playing and teaching, cleaning up the home, and so on. Parents also need to teach discipline and to develop their children's good habits. Parents find it very challenging to be patient and calm when children disobey.

My EQ (Emotional Intelligence Quotient) isn't good enough to handle my children at home. I don't think I can do it myself. My friends all believe that I can handle care work efficiently because I love children so much. But the reality is another thing; after the long holiday of Easter, I know I can't take care of children at home full-time. People think that I wouldn't smack my children; no, I do smack them when I get angry. Especially during feeding, if they don't eat properly—this situation really drives me crazy. I can't control my anger and I'll smack them. (Sofia, mother of two children)

Apart from parental childcare, parents concomitantly consider a range of other options: childcare within the family by grandparents or relatives, childcare centres subsidised by the government, local childminders offering day care, neighbourhood childcare programmes initiated by the government, employing a foreign domestic helper, or using a local domestic helper. In the following sections, I will explain how parents perceive each of these external options in their decision-making process.

Childcare centres and community childcare services

All parents in this study see childcare centres as one of the 'possible and available options', but they generally eliminate this option because it is not feasible. When parents talk about childcare centres, they generally mean the crèches or nurseries that care for children less than or at 2 years old (see Table 3-11 in Chapter 3 for the difference between crèches, nurseries and kindergartens in Hong Kong). While sending children to kindergartens is a common way of childcare, parents see this as an educational opportunity rather than childcare. Another current trend is to send children to Pre-nursery (PN) class when they turn 2 years old.

Among the parents I interviewed, only a few mothers seriously planned to use childcare centres and had found out about them. The high cost was often prohibitive and parents tended to have contradictory feelings toward childcare centres. On the positive side, they believe that the carers, or 'teachers' (a common way to describe childcare staff) are qualified and experienced so that they can provide professional care and education to children. However, parents have many concerns about

sending their children to childcare centres, in particular about health risks. Parents are anxious their children will get sick at daycare.

I heard that children always get sick in childcare centres because of the spreading of illness; therefore, I won't consider childcare centres anymore. (Billie, mother of two children)

I haven't considered a (childcare centre) at all. This is because I always hear from other mothers that there are many germs in those centres. I have a friend, her mother (maternal grandmother) can't help with childcare because of health issues, and she sent her baby to childcare centre. Finally, she hired a helper at home, and refused to send her baby there because the baby was always sick. (Sofia, mother of two children)

Inflexible operating times lead to difficulty for some parents. Existing childcare services do not cover all work patterns. Some centres provide an extended hours service (Social Welfare Department, HKSAR Government, 2015): generally from 6-8 pm on weekdays and 1-3 pm on Saturdays (two hours after normal service time). However, for Harper, the extended hours still do not cover her working hours.

If parents are working regular office hours, that should be okay. If their office hours begin at 9 am, then they can take their children to the childcare centre at around 8 am, and pick them up after work at 6 pm. But for me, I need to arrive at the office at 7:30 am, so I need to leave home at 7 am at the latest; the childcare centre still hasn't opened, so it's not practical for my case. (Harper, mother of one child)

Parents are concerned about the limited childcare quota in Hong Kong and the long waits that will occur. Instead of passively waiting for a vacancy parents search for other childcare options.

I have checked the service charges of baby nurseries, the price is high and the quota is small in Hong Kong ... I know parents need to wait for a long time for the service ... There is only one centre in my district, which is extremely limited. (Jade, mother of one child)

If the service is available for me, I am ok with it. Comparatively speaking, I will feel better if my baby is at childcare centre rather than being taken care of by *ze-ze* [foreign domestic helper], but the problem is that the service is very limited. I have friends sending their children to childcare centre and the service is good. But we will need to wait, I heard from my friends that they need to submit the application once they get pregnant, I really have no idea about the waiting time. (Harper, mother of one child)

Despite concerns, parents sometimes see childcare centres as a solution to conflict with grandparents (The analysis of family conflicts will be elaborated in Chapter 8). Winnie was considering sending her child to a childcare centre. Winnie's parents-in-law take care of her child

during the daytime, but Winnie has serious conflicts with them about the type of care needed. Winnie thinks a centre will be better because the carers are all qualified, with knowledge and experience; and also she may change services if she is not satisfied. This is impossible with grandparent childcare, especially because she lives with her in-laws.

I have disputes with my in-laws about the child's food—what to eat, and what not to eat ... I think if my child is in childcare centre, the carers have abundant experience, and won't give unhealthy food to my child ... the carers won't work recklessly, they have learnt how to take care of childcare, they are all qualified and have been awarded the 'license' [professional certification] ...

I pay for the childcare service, I can complain if there is a serious problem, or I can switch to another childcare centre or stop going to the centre, I can choose. But with grandparents taking care of my child, what can I do? (Winnie, mother of one child)

However, sending her child to childcare centre is not possible at the moment because full-day childcare is expensive. Grandparent childcare is the only option for her once she takes the childcare fees into account.

If the fees weren't so expensive, I really want to look for a childcare centre for my child. I heard that it's really expensive. Now *Je-je* and *Maa-Maa* [paternal grandfather and grandmother] offer care to the child, so other than daily living expenses such as formula milk, I don't need to pay extra costs. If the child is in childcare centre, still I need to buy formula milk and diapers, so the total childcare cost at the childcare centre will be very expensive. (Winnie, mother of one child)

Whether considering childcare centres as a practical option or not, most parents I interviewed did not seek information about the formal childcare services available in the community. Most of them did not visit a potential childcare centre to enquire about the daily routine, to see how the carers interact with children or conduct a policy check. Parents were clear that they did not collect childcare service information or conduct comparisons: the concerns about the costs and quality are primarily word-of-mouth from other parents and their friends.

Interviews with parents suggest that they do not have much knowledge about childcare services and facilities in their community and in Hong Kong. Some parents were unaware of options that are available. In particular, parents have limited understanding of the Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project, commonly known as the 'community nanny' programme. This is a government-initiated childcare programme operated by NGOs and volunteers. Some parents confuse this government programme with self-employed local domestic helpers.

I have searched online for childcare centres. I live near Junk Bay [a new town area in Hong Kong], so I looked for a centre nearby. I tried to look for a centre which accepts newborns, as most of these centres only accept children of 2 years old or older. I can find some centres but the locations are too far away from my home, finally I found one which suits my need, but I found that it had already closed down when I visited it. (Mina, mother of one child)

Yes I did visit some centres and wanted to apply, because the price is cheap, it's about twenty dollars [Hong Kong dollars] per hour. However the application process is complicated, I need to show a lot of verification. For example, as I couldn't provide income statement for my previous work because those were freelance tasks, I needed to take an oath at a government office about my previous job. My baby was so small at that time, and it's very difficult for me to visit various departments for all the verifications and applications; finally I gave up. (Serena, mother of one child)

Both Mina and Serena finally gave up their search for childcare centres and planned for other options. Mina adopted a care arrangement with a foreign domestic helper and some grandparent childcare, although the grandparents are still in full-time employment. Together with her husband, she has four working adults and a full-time domestic helper to take care of her newborn. Serena stopped her freelance job and took care of her baby because she cannot find suitable childcare service. When the baby was around 6 months old, she started her part-time job again because her elder parents provided childcare for her.

Foreign domestic helpers

Hiring a foreign domestic helper as in-home helpers and carer is very common for Hong Kong middle class families. Since the 1970s, foreign domestic helpers have been allowed to work in Hong Kong to relieve the pressure of housework on local families. In 2012, 312,395 domestic helpers were working in local families, half of them were from the Philippines, and 48% were from Indonesia. (Immigration Department, 2013). While they are contributing to Hong Kong families through household chore support, due to very limited living spaces in Hong Kong, conflicts between the helpers and the employers are frequently reported. Trust in the helper, as a non-family member, is another source of ambivalence regarding this type of employment relationship (Tam, 2001).

Few of the parents in this study hired foreign domestic helpers because they are using grandparents for childcare, but they did consider at some stage employing a foreign domestic helper, or *ze-ze* in Cantonese (literally means 'elder sister'); this was seen as one of the 'feasible options'. For instance, Cindy is planning to move to another district partly to mitigate disputes with her parents-in-law about childcare. Moving to another district will provide her with more top and elite kindergartens

from which to select. As moving away from parents-in-law will lessen her help from the family, hiring a foreign domestic helper is her solution.

Maybe I will employ a domestic helper. I'm planning to move out, totally move out of this district. The first reason is for my child's education, the second reason is that I want to change the childcare. I don't want my child to be spoiled [by grandparents], but I'm not sure if this plan can be carried out successfully ... (Cindy, mother of one child)

In Billie's family, both Billie and her younger brother wanted to ask their mother to help with childcare, but their mother indicated that she would only take care of the first grandchild. Billie's first daughter was the first grandchild of the family; therefore, the only 'quota' of grandparent childcare went to Billie. For Billie's brother, whose baby was born a year later, hiring a foreign domestic helper was his final choice.

Actually, for my brother, there is no one who can help him with childcare except my mother. I'm lucky to have my baby first. My girl is just one year older than her cousin [brother's daughter], my mum helped me out every day, and my brother finally employed a foreign domestic helper. (Billie, mother of two children)

While parents perceive employing a foreign domestic helper as a feasible option, they have concerns about this choice. Generally speaking, the most common concern is about the living space. In Hong Kong, most of the households are in a high-rise building and the area of each apartment is very limited. For public housing in Hong Kong, the internal average floor area was 12.9 square metres per person in 2013. The government currently does not collect statistics on the average living space per person in private housing (Hong Kong SAR Government, 5 Jun 2013). Professor Rebecca Chiu of the Department of Urban Planning and Design at the University of Hong Kong, in an interview with *Ming Pao Daily*, calculated that the average living space per Hong Kong person is 159 square feet, that is, approximately 14 square metres ('Hong Kong living space 150 square feet per person', *Ming Pao Daily*, 2014). Limited living space thus creates inconvenience and embarrassment in daily living.

We don't have extra space at home for accommodating a live-in foreign domestic helper. I can't arrange a place for her to sleep. It's not nice asking the helper to sleep in the sitting room. (Leah, mother of one child)

Cindy and her family considered having a foreign domestic helper to assist the grandparents in childcare and housework, but the grandfather and the father said no to having a female 'stranger' at home.

At the beginning, I wanted to employ a foreign domestic helper, so the helper can assist us. Later we didn't do it because my husband and my father-in-law, they don't want to have a stranger, who's also a female at home, so I gave up the thought. (Cindy, mother of one child)

Generally, parents see a number of possible problems in using foreign domestic helpers at home for childcare. Although this is a feasible childcare option, parents prefer to consider a *ze-ze* as an assistant in household work instead of the main caregiver.

If there are no financial considerations, I might use a foreign domestic helper, but the helper won't take care of the child the whole day. I wish the helper to assist me with my heavy burden of housework such as cleaning clothes, washing the milk bottles etc. If I have someone helping with housework, then I can spend more time with my child. (Jade, mother of one child)

Local domestic helpers

Parents tend to be more positive about using local domestic helpers as carers, because of a shared cultural background. Most of these helpers are native Hong Kong women or female migrants from China.

I think of recruiting a local helper, maybe someone living close to me. I know there are two childcare patterns if you look for a *ji-ji* ['aunt', meaning local helper here], you can ask a *ji-ji* to come to your home and take care of your baby, or you can send your baby to a *ji-ji*'s home, and pick the baby up after work. I considered using a *ji-ji*. (Harper, mother of one child)

Sofia identified that childcare cost is a fundamental problem with local domestic helpers. Employing a local helper is more expensive than a foreign domestic helper. The minimum allowable wage for foreign domestic helper is HK\$4,110 per month (approx. AU\$685) (Labour Department, 2015). A local domestic helper is usually paid an hourly rate. For example, if the hourly rate is HK\$70 (approx. AU\$12), then working for 8 hours per day at home will cost HK\$560 (approx. AU\$93). The monthly rate for a local helper will be around HK\$14,560 (approx. AU\$2,426), including one day off per week. This sum is equal to the three months payment for a foreign domestic helper. Also, since a foreign domestic helper lives in the employer's home, the actual working hours are much longer and flexible.

Although the focus of this study is grandparent childcare, whenever my informants talked to me about their grandparent childcare experiences, inevitably they discussed other childcare options. Their reflections showed that they did consider the other options discussed in this chapter. Next, I will focus on their views on grandparent childcare.

Why parents choose grandparent childcare?

In this study, the grandparent childcare arrangements adopted by the parents were variable and complex. The arrangements are determined by diverse factors including the modest cost and time involved, the quality of care, and the intimacy developed between the generations.

Cost and time

High living costs are one of the key factors for choosing grandparental childcare, as many families cannot afford alternatives. In the case of Winnie, grandparent childcare reduced her daily expenditure. Finance is always important for Winnie and her husband because their salaries are not high, and they have to be cautious in spending money to make both ends meet. Also, as they need to financially support their paternal parents, grandparent childcare is the best choice because it is free.

I need to work and the same goes for my husband. Our baby is being taken care of by *je-je* and *maa-maa* [paternal grandpa and grandma], so then the expenditure won't be that much. Yes, I can work, can earn money and at the same time, I don't need to pay extra for childcare by a nanny or a childcare centre ... (Winnie, mother of one child)

However, grandparent childcare is not always or only a low-budget option. In this study, grandparent childcare is adopted across all income levels. For parents with lower incomes, grandparent childcare is a cost-effective way of childcare, because they do not need to pay the childcare cost regularly to a childcare centre or domestic helpers. Nevertheless, grandparent childcare can be expensive for some families.

It is actually very expensive to ask grandparents for childcare, but I don't mind about the cost ... I give my parents-in-law HK\$10,000 dollars [approx. AU\$1700] each month ... I prepared two sets of baby essentials—one set at my home, another at my parents-in-law's home—two baby beds, two cookers. It's expensive to arrange in this way, but it's okay as long as all of us find it convenient ... and so far there are no complaints from my parents-in-law. (Cindy, mother of one child)

Living in close proximity or even in the same apartment is another reason for grandparent childcare. Co-residence with elderly parents creates simple arrangements for childcare at home. Some parents and grandparents move into the same apartment or live in the vicinity to facilitate childcare arrangements.

Because we live very close, so for example, I go to my parents' home for dinner several days per week; we didn't discuss childcare directly. It is very natural, I go to their home frequently then leave my baby there and I go to work, and that's it. (Serena, mother of one child)

I did not directly ask grandparents for help. I live with my parents-in-law, so it's very natural [they help with childcare] ... my father-in-law has night shift all the time, so he's at home in the daytime, and my mother-in-law goes to work very early and comes back early, so usually she's at home for one-third of the day, When they're at home, it's very natural for them to look after my child. (Mina, mother of one child)

However, at the same time, co-residence means a forfeit of individuality and privacy. Apart from pursuing a sense of stability with a dwelling, the need for personal space is another important reason for getting a flat. Ruby, for instance, lives with her parents-in-law, and after her child was born, she asked her mother (maternal grandmother) to help with childcare. After a few months, her mother refused to help long-term because it was too stressful to take care of her husband with limited mobility and her baby grandchild at the same time. Despite foreseeing conflicts between herself and her parents-in-law regarding child-rearing, Ruby had to bring her child home and entrust her parents-in-law with childcare. Ruby has no extra budget for paying childcare services or hiring a helper. As she expected, there are serious disputes over childcare with her parents-in-law. In particular, the grandparents have a habit of collecting junk and salvaging old electrical appliances, which Ruby worries about in terms of safety and hygiene. She talked about her plans for future:

I'm working hard now so that I can move out of the home of my parents-in-law. I want to have our space with my husband and my child; I want a place of my own. The place I'm now living in doesn't belong to me, if I rearrange the home settings or move the grandparents' stuff, I feel like I am bothering them. I don't want to create any friction with them. The only way is to move out—the three of us, but we don't have this ability now. If we move out, we still need to plan for childcare, and then a big sum of money will be involved—for rent, for a domestic helper and so on. We can't afford. Therefore, there's no solution for the disputes at present, I can only remind myself not to fret. (Ruby, mother of one child)

Grandparent childcare as quality care

Most of the parents in this study count on grandparents to look after children, and feel confident that the care will be good enough, even if it is not expert.

Once my mum said yes to my childcare request, then I stopped considering a childcare centre. I know there are childcare services available in the community, but I feel better and safer using family members as carers. (Jade, mother of one child)

For childcare, because my mum promised to help me, I didn't find out about other options. Some of my friends talk about sending their children to a childcare centre, from 8 am to 6 pm, they pick them up after work. I can also send my daughter there, but my mum isn't working

and she can help, so there's no need to send the children to a childcare centre. (Amber, mother of two children)

Some parents do believe that grandparents can teach the children by example. Families also see teaching and caring for grandchildren is a 'cultural imperative' (Mjelde-Mossey, 2007). For the parents and grandparents in this study, grandparent childcare is more than simply childcare and babysitting, it is about teaching and passing on of traditions and conventional and socially accepted behaviour. Leah, for instance, appreciated her father teaching her son about their family history. He also took him to family gatherings, so that he will get to know his family tree and learn East Asian family values of respect and harmony.

My mum can instil our family values in my child by looking after him, such as how to get along with people and how to be polite. My mum is very friendly to her neighbours and this is a value I hope my son can learn. This is something I can't teach by just explaining to him, this needs to be taught by example ... My mother's behaviours and attitudes are good, so my child can always learn from grandma. (Jade, mother of one child)

At the same time, parents believe that the intimacy between the baby and the carer is one criteria for good care, and except for parents, only grandparents can provide the baby with this sense of intimacy.

I need to rely on the elderly at home for childcare; we [my husband and I] estimated the childcare expenditure and can't afford to have a domestic helper, and we don't want to have one. Relying on my mother [for childcare], I can feel the intimacy. (Jade, mother of one child)

However, if the values and beliefs of the two generations do not match, grandparent childcare may create more problems than benefits. The experience of conflict related to teaching by example will be further illustrated in Chapter 8 on family conflicts in childcare arrangement. I will focus on the positive side of grandparent children in the next section.

Family capital and grandparent childcare

I use social capital theory to inform the examination of grandparent childcare arranged within a family. First, the resources of the families will be examined. Second, the mobilisation, utilisation and preservation of these resources will then be analysed. I begin my examination by first referring to the conventional concepts by Coleman (1988, 1990) and Bourdieu (1986) in terms of social capital. Next, I adopt Stella Quah's framework interrogating Southeast Asian families and social capital (2003; 2009) which refocused attention on the transmission of social capital through the important roles of senior generations in extended families.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is noteworthy that Coleman (1988) suggests an analytical framework focused on 'family background' and its relationship to children's educational achievement in schools. Coleman touches on three critical elements of family background: financial capital, human capital, and social capital. Financial capital is the wealth or income of a family and thus the physical resources that it can support. Human capital is the parents' education and parents' potential for aiding children's development. Social capital is the relationship among the children and the parents, and other family members (Coleman, 1988; 108-110).

Bourdieu (1986) discussed the three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social. Coleman and Bourdieu share similar views on the capacity of social capital. They both see it as the social connections and network that an individual can utilise and be beneficial to the individual. Social capital is intangible, therefore, less attention is paid to its function. When a social network is developed and maintained, the individual of this network can share the capital possessed by the network. In connection to a family, being a member of the family enables sharing in the family's capital: financial, human and social capital, to be more precise, I refer to the family-based social capital here.

Drawing on Coleman's analytical framework (1988, 1990) and Quah's emphasis on the importance of senior family members (2003, 2009), I put forward the notion of family capital for the purpose of the examination of grandparent childcare. Family capital in this thesis is conceptualised as the valuable resources with which a family is endowed and develops, and which can be utilised by family members when they need support. I argue here that grandparent childcare is an expression of family capital and a practice of family capital development. In other words, grandparent childcare is a mobilisation of internal family resources across generations.

While social capital is embedded in an individual social network that helps shaping the opportunities and identities, the concept of family capital has been applied in some recent studies in order to focus on resources within families (Belcher, Peckuonis and Deforge, 2011; Tam and Chan, 2010). I will show in the following section and the next two chapters that grandparent childcare is arranged because family capital is being deployed; grandparent childcare also facilitates the accumulation of family capital. The social capital within families will be discussed in the next section. The human capital and financial capital will be analysed in Chapter 7. The development or preserving of family capital through grandparent childcare will be illuminated in Chapter 8.

Social capital and Trust

The OECD defined social capital as 'networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups' (OECD, 2007: 103). Networks

can be friends, family networks, networks of former colleagues. Social capital can be in the form of bonds (links to people based on common identity such as friends and family), bridges (a shared sense of identity such as colleagues and associates) and links (to people further up or lower down the social ladder) (OECD, 2007: 103).

Social capital generally includes the connections among people, and these can be within or outside a family. Social capital here means the connections and bonds within a family since family dynamics are the foci of this thesis. I will also use the term 'family-based social capital' for the sake of clarification.

The family is the first place where social capital is developed (Quah, 2003, 2009). According to Winter (2000: 5), 'family life [is] the bedrock of social capital'. As such this family-based social capital contributes to family bonding and stability, and provides the resources to extend beyond the family network into the society (Winter, 2000).

In terms of understanding the social capital within a family, Coleman's framework is particularly useful for this study as it addresses the context of dual-earner families in contemporary societies. Coleman (1990) argued that there are three aspects of social structures through which social capital is retained and transmitted in the childrearing context. The first one is the intensity of parent-child relationships, which involve the time and effort parents spend on the children. The second is the emotional contacts and intimate feelings in the family. The third is the continuity of the relationships that have been established. The framework is not only applicable to parent-child relationship between infants and parents in this study but also between the grandparents and parents, and the concern for the continuity of connections within the family.

Specifically addressing the East Asian context, Quah's examination of social capital among generations in extended families (2003; 2009) and the discussion of the family caregiver role (Quah, 2015) are valuable. They integrate the family values and behaviours which are acknowledged and expected in East Asian families and thus contribute offer a vital perspective on why and how East Asian families have evolved, especially in regard to intergenerational familial connections.

Trust is closely linked with social capital. Coleman (1990) and Putnam (2000) have defined trust as the key component of social capital. For Putnam, social capital refers to 'connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putnam, 2000: 19). Fukuyama (1995) has gone furthest in situating trust as the basis of social capital. He believed that the rational choices model of maximising economic gains is insufficient to explain human and societal behaviours and choices. From the viewpoint of political economy, he believes that the level of trust lying under a society affects its economic development because of the transaction cost influenced by trust. He contends:

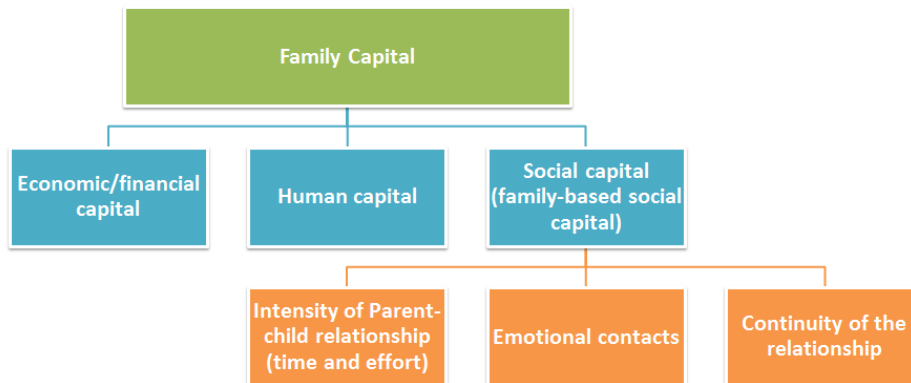
Trust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community ... Social capital is a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family, as well as the largest of all groups, the nation, and in all the other groups in between. (Fukuyama, 1995: 26)

In contrast, there are other researchers arguing that trust should be considered as an outcome of social capital rather than the basis. For example, Woolcock (2001) located trust as a consequence of social capital. Field (2003) also reckoned that trust should be considered separately from social capital, although the link between them is indisputable. Social capital and trust are, therefore, connected concepts used to explain forms of social cohesion in the disciplines of sociology, economics, politics and policymaking.

While trust can be a pre-condition or a consequence of social capital; for my informants, trust was central in choosing childcare option. Trust was crucial in determining current childcare choices, parent-carer relationships and perceived advantages of diverse childcare options. The notion of trust in care relationships follows similar complexities in social capital and trust, it is difficult to tell whether trust is the cause or the result of an existing care relationship. Many of the current studies on trust and care provision encompass relationships and dynamics of patients and healthcare practitioners (Dinç and Gastmans, 2013; Musa, Schulz, Harris, Silverman and Thomas; 2009; Gilson, 2003; Hall, Zheng, Dugan and Camacho, 2002; Mechanic, 1998). Existing studies of childcare service provision confirm that trust is embedded in all childcare relationships: public service, family members, domestic helpers, nanny, childminder and so on. In the academic discussion, the focus has often been placed on trust in public services (Roberts, 2011).

As Roberts has argued, trust is important and complex in the provision of health, education and childcare because the quality is difficult to measure and monitor, and the vulnerability of users is high (Roberts, 2011). Trust is a relational concept, something that exists 'between people, people and organisations, people and events' (Gilson, 2003: 1454). In the following sections I explore the dimensions of trust in grandparent childcare.

Figure 6-1 The concept of family capital in this study



Social Capital, trust and childcare

Childcare represents a significant form of social capital (Quah, 2003; 2009; Gray, 2005). Grandparent childcare provided within a family is particularly relevant to the social capital possessed by families. Children's first contact with people older than their parents is usually with grandparents and relatives in their family. Quah believes that there are two positive aspects in the grandparent and grandchildren relationship to which family studies should pay special attention: first, 'grandparenting builds a bridge for the senior generation to become actively engaged in the present and to project themselves into the future' (Quah, 2009: 90). This serves as a way to spur involvement of its senior citizens in a society. Second, the connection across generations can enhance the transmission of values to the younger generations. Grandparents have knowledge of cultural and familial traditions and by communicating with grandchildren, they can transmit this to the younger generations, and help to build up the sense of identity and belonging.

Trust is an interactive process in childcare relationships. Parents entrust their children to carers so that they can carry out their other duties, usually paid employment. Carers provide assistance and perform the care routines on behalf of parents. If trust exists, their duties can be carried out with attention to mutual expectations. Parents will be confident that carers will provide competent care to their children and cause no harm. For the carer, their care skills will be respected by the parents.

In the interviews with them, the grandparents, in their role as carers, elaborated their perceptions of the trust existing between themselves and their adult children. They agreed that trust is the foundation of care relationships.

Actually, if you ask your family members to take care of your children, even if you ask someone outside your family to look after your children, you must trust the carers. No matter who is the carer, you must trust him/her. If there is no trust, the carers will find the job very ticklish. If

there is no trust ... the relationship cannot be maintained. (Martha, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

I am very happy to take care of my grandchildren because my adult children trust me. This point is really important. Although I'm not very skilful in childcare, my adult children are confident that I'll try my best to take good care of their children. Reciprocally, I feel that I can relieve their burden. (Grace, grandmother of four children, mother of three adult children)

Notions of trust in childcare can also be shaped by word-of-mouth comments, public opinions and media information. For instance, Harper prefers a childcare centre to foreign domestic helpers. Her friends send their children to childcare centres and her friends are generally positive. Sofia also indicated that local helpers recommended by her friends or family would be a good option. Some parents cited negative news reports regarding foreign helpers abusing the children in their care.

It is useful to outline specific aspects of trust and how these aspects adjust in different circumstances (Mechanic, 1998). In this research, I discovered four dimensions of trust in childcare relationships.

First, blood lineage is a primary consideration in the creation of trust. A similar cultural background was of value if consanguinity did not exist between them. Harper considered, for instance, employing a local nanny because she believes that a similar cultural background will support similar childcare practices, such as a typical local diet with Chinese porridge, rice, and steamed foods. Harper also expects it will be easier to communicate with a local nanny rather than a foreign helper. She reviewed all the 'feasible childcare options' for her family:

If simply considering trustworthiness, then of course family members are the best, then a local nanny and foreign helpers will rank the last. (Harper, mother of one child)

In terms of childcare, rather than domestic chores, parents tend to trust grandparents rather than foreign domestic helpers. In contingency decision-making, parents believe that family members will make better decisions for children. The lack of trust, or unease with foreign helpers in childcare, is linked to seeing them as 'outsiders'.

You cannot guarantee the helper treats your child well at home because parents are out for work. We have no blood relationship, this won't be a lifelong relationship, and it's only a job ... At base, they are an 'outsider'. (Leah, mother of one child)

My son is very happy that I help him with childcare. He likes this arrangement, because he is sure that "our person" is helping. He thinks it is better than employing foreign domestic helper. "Our people" are better than an "outsider". He can be sure that we will not abuse and beat the child. (Judith, grandmother of three grandchildren, mother of two adult children)

For Sofia, grandparent childcare is the most trusted option because of blood lineage and the experience they have.

Our elderly parents are very experienced in childcare. They touch the baby's forehead with their palms and they can tell if the baby has a fever. People with no childcare experience and those who are not an "insider" won't pay attention. (Sofia, mother of two children)

Second, parents tend to trust a carer with ample childcare experience. They are confident in grandparents because they felt that their elderly parents are experienced carers.

If you ask your elderly parents to take care of your children, then you must trust them. They were able to raise you ... it's not possible that they don't know how to take care of a child, just that the care practices might be different from the past. (Geraldine, grandmother of one child, mother of two adult children)

Third, the motivation for care provision is another factor. Parents are concerned about a carer's motivations for childcare: this affects the establishment of trust. Roberts' study in the UK (2011) found that a focus on profit and money undermined parental trust from parents about carers. It was not profit making that worried parents per se, but parents did not feel comfortable with the prioritisation of profit and money. Parents and grandparents in this study related their childcare arrangements to natural love and care within a family.

Working in Hong Kong is very tough. If my assistance can relieve their burden and let them go to work with less worry about their children, for me ... I think it's very good. I can really do something for them. This is voluntary, meaning that I will not count the monetary payment as long as I can help. (Grace, grandmother of four children, mother of three adult children)

Fourth, communication and transparency are important in establishing trust. Parents want to know the daily details of the childcare routine; when issues arise they expect the carer will prioritise the interests of the children. Jade valued her candid mutual communication with her mother:

[The advantage is] Trustworthiness ... My mum is the carer ... I can discuss with her the care practices, I can learn from her, or she can listen to me for the latest care trends. As long as "our people" take care of my baby, then I feel really good. I don't have to worry when I'm working, and I don't need to check with the carer regularly in a day. (Jade, mother with one child)

It's very important to have good communication between parents and carers. If you keep your thoughts to yourself only, and guess the partners' feelings [either the parents or the carers] then after some time there will be resentment between the two sides. There must be mutual trust. Look, you entrust your child to your elderly parents because you trust the grandparents

to have ample childcare experience, therefore you shouldn't question their care practices.
(Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

Lucy Gilson (2003) distinguished different types of trust using the concept of 'voluntary trust' (2003: 1454), which has two elements: strategic trust and moralistic trust. Strategic trust lies between complete trust and complete distrust depending on how much uncertainty is involved; it is related to a calculation based on the relationship (Gilson, 2003; Gambetta, 2000). Moralistic or altruistic trust, on the other hand, is a belief about how people should act. It is either trust or distrust, and no comparisons and calculations are involved. It is evident that the East Asians interviewed for my study assume positive behaviours by family members and thus moralistic trust is generated and expected. The value of moralist or altruistic trust is both intrinsic and instrumental (Gilson, 2003) and involves respect and facilitation of cooperation. It will further generate more trust by providing an example to others (Mansbridge, 1999). Informants repeatedly mentioned that they trust family members as 'insiders'.

Trust in childcare relationships emerged as a key theme in the interviews. Trust was mentioned by all participants, even though I did not raise it specifically. Trust is embedded in the relationship between the carers and the parents, and it can be between people (family members and helpers) or among individuals and organisations (childcare centres and NGOs) (Gilson, 2003). Parents stated that trust in the childcarer is decisive in their selection of childcare options.

In existing work on informal childcare by grandparent or family members, trust is revealed to be an important factor in the making of childcare decisions in both Western and East Asian families. (Wheelock and Jones, 2002; Tam, 2001; Meltzer, 1994). Parents find that love and trust are two critical and valuable qualities in grandparent childcare. In formal childcare, children are being taken care of by 'outsiders' and parents are not confident that their children are receiving good care and attention. Parents consider grandparent childcare to be positive for the well-being of their children (Wheelock and Jones, 2002). In Hong Kong, Tam (2001) found that parents consider childcare by family members and relatives as the ideal mode. Trust and love are the outstanding quality in childcare provided by 'our people' including grandparents or family members.

This was echoed in my interviews and conversations. All parents, grandparents, and staff in childcare services and kindergartens mentioned trust. It is multidimensional: trust is a reason for adopting a particular childcare option; an advantage of using that childcare option; a compliment to a carer from parents or on the quality of care service. In visiting NGOs and kindergartens, staff also mentioned the trust of parents as a valuable asset, one they aim to develop with parents.

Trust, however, is not a panacea to all childcare issues. Some parents decide not to carry on with familial care arrangements even though there is high trust in the intergenerational relationship. In

the case of Cindy, she has chosen grandparent childcare before other options although it is more expensive—she needs to prepare two sets of baby gear (one set at home and another set at the grandparents' home) and also provides financial support to the grandparents to show appreciation and reciprocity. However, in order to preserve the harmonious relationship at home, Cindy is planning to give up grandparent childcare due to the conflicts with her parents-in-law. The conflicts will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

In this chapter I proposed that grandparent childcare is an example of family-based social capital which, along with trust, was crucial in childcare decision making. In the next chapter, I will look at the diverse practices of grandparent childcare and how families organise their financial and human capital.

Chapter 7

Diversity and similarity in grandparent childcare

In this chapter, I explore in detail the negotiations and arrangements regarding who gives care, gender roles, care schedules, tasks undertaken, and the financial arrangements involved in grandparent childcare. As the major themes come into view in the analysis it should be kept in mind that grandparents providing childcare are not a homogenous group and provide diverse types of care following different patterns drawing upon available human and financial capital.

In Coleman's study (1988), human capital specifically refers to the parents' knowledge and education. Applying this concept to grandparent childcare, human capital here is the skills and knowledge possessed by grandparents. Parents bring grandparents' human capital into their transition to parenthood and childcare needs. As I will illustrate in this chapter, in grandparents' caring duties, grandparents give up their leisure or work time and also utilise their care experiences and skills in order to give care to their grandchildren. In the case of financial capital, it is the wealth or income of a family and the physical resources that it can support using that wealth (Coleman, 1988). In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the financial arrangements related to grandparent childcare, as enacting the concepts of filial piety and the intergenerational transfer of wealth.

Motivations for providing grandparental childcare

As previously outlined, there are growing numbers of grandparents spending longer periods of their lives with their family and grandchildren. The scope of grandparenting is changing and diversifying (Arber and Timonen, 2012). Choices by grandparents on how to engage with family are leading to a different landscape in grandparent childcare (Arber and Timonen, 2012). Whether grandparents are in formal employment or not, and no matter how the caring patterns are arranged, they often share similar reasons for helping their adult children as their adult children had for seeking support.

Some grandparents talked about obligations to support their adult children in general. Parents' support to children in their decisions therefore extends to the next generation. When the adult children have their own children, the grandparents, in the same fashion, also get ready to help with childcare. For example, grandparents Loretta and John shared that they always stand behind their daughter even when they do not fully agree with her decisions. Grandfather John was sometimes frustrated by her approach to childcare, as it is more restrictive than his own. At times, he felt that his style of care, which raised this daughter, was disparaged. Despite these emotions, John insisted his role is as a supporter to his daughter.

Well, when she was still in school, she wanted to have a working holiday in Australia, I supported her. I think if you pluck up the courage to have an adventure outside then you can go. She asked me, “Dad, please let me go away for a year”. I asked her about her plan. She explained to me, it was “looking for jobs everywhere and then exploring new places”. I was okay with that as long as she wanted to do it. I’m very open-minded. If she wanted this experience it was perfectly up to her. I had no problem with that ... Then [in recent years] she wanted me to help taking care of her children, if she wanted to take care of the baby by herself, and yes go ahead. If she wanted me to help, then I offered help. As long as my daughter feels good...[then it is okay for me]. I’m only there to offer assistance. (John, grandfather of two children, father of two adult children)

Grandmother Grace felt that the elderly at home should look after grandchildren. She viewed this care work as a duty.

When my children need support, then I think I need to offer my assistance. I don’t know, maybe I’m very traditional in this aspect. Well ... I think elderly parents should help [with childcare], support the adult children, so that they can concentrate on their work without worrying their children, with grandparents at home, they will feel relieved, even if there’s already a domestic helper at home. (Grace, grandmother of four children, mother of three adult children)

What I’m thinking is that, I want to help my children. Then they can go out to work without worry, and that’s it. (Sharon, grandmother of four children, mother of two adult children)

Some grandparents presume that it is ‘natural’ to help because they received help from their parents when they were young. It is a family tradition. These grandparents understand the benefit of having their own parents’ assistance in childcare, and they want this for their adult children.

I worked in a factory, sewing clothes. The salary of a sewing job at that time was counted by piece; I did as many pieces as I could. In the past we can bring the clothes back home and work, and send them back to those small factories; they were very close to my home. Sometimes, I went to work for a few hours. It was fortunate that we had a grandmother here, that is, my children’s grandmother, my mother-in-law. Sometimes, in the afternoon after my children were back from school, I brought them to grandmother’s home for a few hours so that I could work; my husband picked them up after work. (Grace, grandmother of four children, mother of three adult children)

At times, some take this parental support for granted. They think that their parents should offer help to them when they need it. Amber recalled the *co jyut* time, she was angry that her mother did not come to help because her mother was still working full-time:

After I gave birth to my baby, my mum was still employed ... Then my dad came to my home and took care of me, you know what, I had to have take-away packed meals from restaurants for that whole month. I am still very angry about this. My father is a man [meaning that not good at cooking] and he came over to my home every day at around 9-10 am, and I tried to use the time to rest while my father looked after the baby, so he wasn't able to cook. So I had to have take-away meals for the whole month! (Amber, mother of two children)

Grandparents are motivated to provide care and support to their adult children also because they are concerned about their well-being. First, elderly parents believe their adult children have a difficult time in contemporary society, with heavy financial and work burdens and their family responsibilities. They want to share and ease these family responsibilities.

I aim to help my daughter, yes, so that she won't need to struggle. She can work with minimum worry about her children at home. So I help her to share. (Alicia, grandmother of one child)

Even if parents can manage the high living costs, the grandparents in this study still want to reduce their physical and psychological stress. Grandmother Susanna's daughter and son-in-law have professional jobs with high and stable incomes. They have enough to support their whole family, including paying off the mortgage, paying the cost of the children's extra activities and playgroup, having a foreign domestic helper and for paying Susanna monthly for childcare. Grandmother Susanna understands that financial issues are not their main burden, but she keeps helping them to reduce their stress.

Because my daughter is working, and my son-in-law is also working ... they work hard to make a living, especially because they are paying off a mortgage. This is a binding force for all Hong Kong families. If I can do it, I will try my best to help them, they have heavy burdens, and I still have the ability to give care [meaning she is not too old], so I help, that's why I look after the grandchildren. (Susanna, grandmother of three children, mother of four adult children)

Grandparents tend to prioritise their adult children's well-being over their own, motivated by love (Lee and Bauer, 2013). Many grandparents reflected in the interviews on the difficulties and challenges of childcare, including the lack of personal rest and leisure time; decreased physical strength as they aged; hectic daily childcare schedules; the stress caused by childcare and juggling childcare at their adult children's home; and care work at their own home. Despite these strains, grandparents insist on helping, with the aim of a better life for the next generation.

I've been taking care of this grandchild for 10 years, running around, starting from early in the morning, keep working the whole day, and life goes on like that, it's so far okay. My concern is that my adult children have a stable life, and the children are doing well, and all of them having

a steady and balanced life, then I'm okay with that. (Martha, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

I always worry that my daughter [and her husband] don't have enough energy for work the next day, because my granddaughter always wakes up at midnight. I would've retired in the next year anyway, and in this case, maybe, I can retire earlier and help my daughter take care the baby. So I quit the job one year before my official retirement. Starting from February this year [2015], I've started full-time care for my granddaughter ... (Geraldine, grandmother of one child, mother of two adult children)

For Sofia and Amber, grandparental care rests on an offer, or even a request, from the grandparents. The paternal grandparents are enthusiastic in providing care for grandchildren, because they enjoy the time with children. They also have strong beliefs that they should take care of *their* grandchildren (not only their adult children's children), this will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

Before I got married, my parents-in-law had indicated that they will take care of their grandchildren, they are very proactive, they said they want to be the carers, because they love children so much. (Sofia, mother of two children)

Before I have children, my mum asked me if I plan to have children, she said she would help out with childcare ... she worked as a nanny when I was a child. I think she really enjoys taking care of children. (Amber, mother of two children)

Employment, retirement and childcare arrangement

Paid employment, including parents and grandparents' employment, had an impact on grandparent childcare arrangements. For some grandparents, who are retired or where grandmothers have been full-time at home, these decisions may be easier. For grandparents who are still in employment, when they are planning to provide grandchild care, they need to consider some vital questions. Table 7-1 shows the employment status of all the grandparents in the families in this study.

Table 7-1 Employment status of 47 grandparents in this study

	<i>Grandmother</i>	<i>Grandfather</i>
<i>Quit job for childcare</i>	5	2
<i>Retired</i>	17	8
<i>In paid employment</i>	4	11
<i>TOTAL</i>	26	21

Adult children are hesitant to ask their parents to resign from their employment and become full-time childcarers. These parents are unable to pay the same amount of monetary reward and fringe benefits as those provided in elderly parents' formal employment. However, many grandparents did re-organise employment to assist in childcare. According to Hong Kong Government official statistics, in the age group of 50-54, 64.2% of females and 91.8% of males are still in the labour force. At the age of 60-64, which is usually considered to be the time for retirement, 26.2% of females and 56.2% of males are still participating in paid work. The labour force participation rate notably decreases to 3.7% for women and 14.3% for men after age 65 years (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2015: 101). In the data collected for this study, 4 grandmothers and 11 grandfathers were still in paid employment. Some of these employed grandparents had concerns about financial issues (Grandmother Rosa), insurance and retirement plans (Grandmother Geraldine) and the possibility of returning to the job market (Grandmother Susanna) when the adult children do not need grandparent childcare.

In the interviews with 26 informants, the data collected covers the childcare provision situations of 47 grandparents. Among these 47 grandparents, 17 grandmothers and 8 grandfathers had already retired or were not in paid employment when they commenced childcare. For instance, Grandmother Alicia is the maternal grandmother of her granddaughter; she looks after her with the paternal grandmother. They take turns to help so that the workload can be shared and there is always a grandparent at home to supervise the foreign domestic helper.

No, both of us are not in paid employment. If we are working then we can't go to my daughter's home to help. If we are working then we don't have time. (Alicia, grandmother of one child)

Ronan and Katelyn planned to use the grandparents and a foreign domestic helper for childcare when their first baby was due. At that time, both the paternal grandfather and maternal grandmother were not in paid employment, so both were available to help with childcare. The paternal grandfather helped taking care of the first child and the maternal grandmother helped to take care of the second baby a year later. As already mentioned, some participants gave up employment to help their adult children with childcare. There were five grandmothers and two grandfathers in this study who left jobs to assist their adult children with childcare. Grandmother Martha, for instance, discontinued her full time job as a driver 10 years ago to help her son to take care of his newborn. Her son was very busy with his work and her daughter-in-law was not willing to take care the baby. Therefore, Martha stepped in to help. Later her son and daughter-in-law were separated, so she pressed on with her care tasks to ensure her grandson had a stable family life. In the case of Grandmother Rosa, she worked until her company closed down; her son was happy because she was available to help him with childcare for the upcoming baby. Rosa did not look for another job.

Originally I was working, when my grandchild was almost 1 year old, she was born in April, then in the February next year I quit my job. Before ... [When] I worked full-time, we had a foreign domestic helper at home with childcare, and the paternal grandmother would come over some time, maybe every other day or when she was free ... (Geraldine, grandmother of one child, mother of two adult children)

This phenomenon of grandparents leaving the job market so that parents can join the labour force is called an 'intergenerational trade-off' in the labour market (Hamilton and Jenkins, 2015: 58). In a recent study about grandparent childcare and labour market participation in Australia, Hamilton and Jenkins observed that many grandparents reorganised their own employment to provide grandchild care, and to enable their adult children to engage in paid employment. In Australia, grandparent childcare is the most popular form of childcare: statistics show that around 22% of children are regularly taken care of by a grandparent (compared with 14% attending long day care) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014).

One common point for these informants was that the 'intergenerational trade-off in the labour market' tends to happen if grandparents are working in precarious industries such as textiles (Grace), or in semi-skilled jobs such as a driver (Martha) or a clerical assistant (Geraldine).

Retirement

Retirement allowed grandparents to spend time with the grandchildren and to handle routine tasks. For some grandfathers, this is a new experience. Grandmother Sharon explained to me how her husband started taking care of the grandchildren:

Ten years ago, the children's parents were working, and I was also working, so we asked my sister-in-law (younger brother's wife) to look after the baby. At that time, my husband has just retired, so in the morning my sister-in-law would do childcare, and my husband would babysit in the afternoon from 1 pm. My husband prepared lunch for the granddaughter, feeding her with porridge and milk. After work I usually came home at around 5 pm, then I would prepare dinner, and the baby was with us until her parents were back from work. (Sharon, grandmother of four grandchildren, mother of two adult children)

In another example, Cindy said:

When I was pregnant, my father-in-law had already indicated that he was very keen to take care of the grandchild. So my mother didn't say a word at all about her interest. Later, when I asked my parents-in-law if they could help with childcare, my father-in-law, who was still working on a contract basis, and he kept renewing the contract, he immediately told his

company that he wouldn't renew his contract anymore because he needs to take care of a grandchild; he felt so thrilled about this new care 'job'. (Cindy, mother of one child)

Ruby's father-in-law resigned from his employment for childcare. Ruby's original plan was to rely on her mother for childcare, but after a few months her mother could not shoulder the burden of taking care of a baby and her frail husband. Ruby then sought help from the paternal grandparents. She did not expect her father-in-law to give up his paid employment. She had been expecting the grandmother to help. Although it was decided that the grandfather would be the main carer, as the mother-in-law's salary is higher, Ruby is very unhappy about it, because she is concerned about the quality of care.

I asked my mother-in-law for help, and she said she would resign and take care of the baby full-time. When I moved back to my paternal grandparents' home, then I realised that the grandfather quit his job for the baby, because the grandmother's salary was higher. I wasn't happy with it. Grandfather is now retired, he is 65 years old, his hygiene isn't good probably because of an impairment in his sense of smell. As he can't smell if the diaper is wet, he won't change the diaper and therefore my baby has diaper rash. He won't wipe the baby's mouth neatly after meal, I don't know what to do with that, I can only tell my husband. (Ruby, mother of one child)

Grandparents limiting childcare

Though many grandparents are providing limitless care to grandchildren, some grandparents want to contain their provision of childcare. Grandparents want to preserve their leisure time after retirement, their current employment or to protect their health, and the relationship with adult children.

Ruby's mother is one of the grandmothers who enthusiastically took care of her daughter in the postpartum period and helped with infant care. However, she was also taking care of her frail husband at the same time. Ruby took extended leave in the first four months after delivery. During that period of time, Ruby and her mother took care of the baby together. On the first day Ruby returned to work, her mother told her that she was unable to handle care for both the baby and the grandfather. She asked her daughter to seek other help.

After my baby was born, and throughout the *co jyut*, I stayed at mum's home. I thought to myself my mum will be helping with baby care. But then in the 4th month, she suddenly talked to me, saying that she didn't want to take care of my baby anymore because it was too much for her. I have no other way out, therefore I brought my baby back home and *je-je and maa-maa* [paternal grandfather and grandmother] now help with childcare. (Ruby, mother of one child)

Natalie's mother, similar to Ruby's case, is willing to help with childcare. Whereas Ruby's mother set limits only after she attempted to provide help and realised it was beyond her ability, Natalie's mother set the limits from the outset through maintaining a paid part-time job. Consequently, Natalie's mother is not available all the time for childcare. The part-time job acts as a buffer when her adult children ask for help. Natalie employs a foreign domestic helper for when the grandmother is not available.

Grandma is young and in vogue, she is not the homebound type. She enjoys going out and enjoying her own time, or having a walk outside. That's why she'd already stated that she wouldn't help me full-time, she'll only help me part-time ... She feels that childcare will occupy too much of her time, and she needs free time for herself ... (Natalie, mother of two children)

Some grandparents, such as Jade's mother-in-law, refuse to help with childcare to protect their own time and leisure activities. Avoiding providing childcare also means minimising the possibilities for conflict with adult children.

Grandma refused to help, because she is clear that taking care of a child means giving up all her freedom. She has many hobbies, and she won't give up her hobbies. In addition, she understands that taking care of a grandchild will lead to increasing conflict with the next generation. Plus, children are so active and energetic; she believes she won't have the stamina for a young child. (Jade, mother of one child)

Gender and childcare

While there is continuity in gender roles in childcare over the two generations I interviewed, some gender transformation in the domestic and childcare sphere can be observed. Mothers and grandmothers are still the main carers for children, but some fathers and grandfathers are willing to undertake childcare and can develop their caregiving capabilities.

As discussed earlier, my data shows that the 'intergenerational trade-off in the labour market' is highly gendered. If parental care is deemed necessary, mothers leave employment. In my participant group, there are three mothers who left the labour market and became full-time mothers while concurrently using grandparent care. Another two mothers pointed out that they want to be full-time mothers but it was, at the time, financially not possible. Five grandmothers made similar decisions to leave employment to assist their adult children with childcare.

Furthermore, in the daily work of childcare, mothers and grandmothers provide direct routine care such as preparing meals, nappy changing, bathing the children, sending them to school, arranging

activities and supervising homework. Fathers and grandfathers usually do less intensive tasks such as playing with the children.

The fathers in this study are always associated with their employment. There was only one father in the research choosing to be a full-time father for his two daughters but this coincided with his postgraduate study. Family members explained that fathers are busy with very long working hours and have no time and energy for childcare. Interestingly, many mothers who explained that fathers are busy at work so cannot help with childcare, are also in paid employment, juggling work and family roles.

Winnie (working full-time) is living with her parents-in-law and using grandparent childcare at home. Although both of them are working full-time, Winnie is the main carer after work:

[My husband] does not help much, but he is actually quite tired after work, so he cannot help much. (Winnie, mother of one child)

At the beginning of her interview, Sofia told me that initially her husband was very keen to take care of their two daughters. She then started complaining that her husband helped less now:

Researcher: Just now you mentioned that your husband helps you in taking care of children, and you two have a good division of labour ...

Sofia: He did more in the past, but now he helps less, maybe his job is really tough. Now he doesn't help with feeding at all. I do all the feeding. Even on Saturdays and Sundays he won't help. (Sofia, mother of two children)

Mina (working full-time) spoke about the gender inequality in childcare in her home. Her husband will only play with the child leaving her to bear the brunt of childcare responsibilities.

Because my husband is quite lazy, no, not lazy really; but men tend to think that mothers can handle the care. He'll watch the child, no, only play with him. Well, there is mum and a domestic helper at home, so nappy changing isn't his business anymore, he then only needs to play with the child. Also, a male won't care about these, usually only the mother will care, that's why the clothing, the food, the toys are all prepared by me. (Mina, mother of one child)

Jade (working full-time) shares a similar gender division of childcare: Jade and her mother take charge of the daily care routine and her husband plays with the child. Unlike Mina, Jade feels comfortable with this division of labour.

My husband helps, but he has a similar situation as me: working full-time, so we can only see our child after work. Usually my husband can't have dinner with the child so I've slightly more time than him with our child. My husband helps a lot, he has his ideas about teaching children,

his ideas are slightly different from me in terms of the concept, but it's not a problem ... I can balance our different views and it's okay for me.

Basically my husband believes first-hand and direct care in daily living should be performed by me and my mother. Then he wants to plan how to play with the child. My husband's role is mainly playing with him, because play is really important in children's development. (Jade, mother of one child)

The pronounced division of care between routine care tasks and leisure activities between mothers and fathers is also found between grandparents too. Some of the grandmothers complained about their spouses providing no or minimal assistance in taking care of their grandchildren.

At that time, I was helping taking care of my grandchild [my daughter's child], my husband didn't help at all. If he was at home, he might help a little after work. He was working, so he could not look after the baby, he only played with the baby. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

In the case of Martha and her husband, who are taxi drivers, she quit her job when their elder son needed help in childcare; whereas her husband kept his full-time driver job.

[Same as me] He is also a taxi driver. He doesn't help much at home. Sometime he works till very late ... I can't rely on him regarding care work. Only when I need to go down and buy something, then I can ask him to watch the child for a really short while ... One time, I went down to pick up our younger grandchild after his piano class, when we came back, there was a mess for me to tidy up. He [my husband] was at home with my elder grandchild, there was a sudden rainstorm and rain splashed onto my bed through the window. He is macho and doesn't care about this household thing, he doesn't care whether the window is closed ... He said he didn't know. So really I can't rely on him. If I rely on him, I'm even more stressed, I've got a lot more to worry about. (Martha, grandmother of three grandchildren, mother of two adult children)

The conversation between Grandmother Loretta and Grandfather John offers some intergenerational reflections on these patterns. They have been taking care of their grandchildren for almost three years.

Loretta: Many young people want to have children, when they become parents then they know their mum's hardships in taking care of children, well, you men will never understand this, am I right?

John: About children issues, do you think I don't know? It was different in the past, you

need to separate it.

Loretta: [talks to the researcher] He never took care of children ...

John: [talks to the researcher] I did take care. And I need to explain to my wife, because my work was very dangerous, if I didn't rest well, there might be accident ... I was working in ship maintenance and repair, I needed to climb up to very high inside the ship and disassemble the cover layer of the ship, and the working environment was dim, if I missed my step then, well ...

While Loretta showed discontent, in this same interview, Loretta appreciated her spouse for his patience in taking care of the grandchildren.

Sometime he is annoyed if the baby keeps crying, but he keeps his patience all the time for the baby and soothes the baby. It is difficult because we really don't know why the baby cries. (Loretta, grandmother of two grandchildren, mother of two adult children)

Grandmother Rosa also recounted her experience of sharing the workload with her husband in taking care of their two grandsons.

When the second grandchild was born, the first one started school, then my husband worried that I couldn't handle so much work ... also there was a new foreign domestic helper, because the previous one wasn't good at infant care. So they changed the helper ... then grandfather also worried that the helper couldn't manage two children at the same time. Then he proposed sharing the work: with grandmother sending the first grandchild to school in the morning and he'd pick him up from school in the afternoon. Since then grandfather has been taking care of the children every day at the son's home. Gradually I go less. (Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

Grandmother Belinda also compared the care work provided by her husband to two generations: their sons and their grandsons. She found that her husband has actually changed his attitudes and behaviours when he has become a grandfather.

I don't know why, men, when they are growing old, their mindset and behaviour ... changes a lot. For his own son, he wouldn't help feeding or nappy changing. Now, for his grandchildren, he is willing to do so, very strange. For example, if he knows the grandchild's nappy is wet, then he'll change it himself. In the past, when his son's nappy is wet, he'd shout, "mum, the nappy is wet, need to change the nappy!". Sometimes, when I'm busy, or I need go downstairs to buy things, then I'll prepare the meal and ask my husband to feed the grandchildren, he won't refuse, "sure, I'll feed baby soon!". He usually plays with the children but if I ask him to do routine care job, he can do it well. Our daughter-in-law said, "Grandpa, I think you're really

great, you can manage to take care of the baby, you don't need be humble and say you don't have care skills". (Belinda, grandmother of two children, mother of three adult children)

Some grandfathers have become primary childcarers at home. Grandfather John compared himself as a father to his son-in-law, recognising change and his son's greater contribution.

His [the baby's] father is really awesome! He works till very late each day, when he's back home, he'll help bathe the children and washing dishes, if we [I and grandmother] aren't here, each of them need to take care a child, the elder son is still young, so both dad and mum need to tuck them into bed, it's not an easy job. The household chores, we'll finish as much as we can, so as to lessen their burden, but still it's very stressful for him, he needs to wake up early in the morning for work again, and he's really tired after work. He's really nice to his children, even it's hard, he keeps helping with childcare ... (John, grandfather of two children, father of two adult children)

Some fathers are also feeling a need to be involved in childcare, and to spend more time with their children. Ronan arranges extracurricular activities for his children. For example, he believes that English is important for children in preparing their language skills for primary school, so he arranged a small English playgroup with his friends. The day I visited his home, he has just picked up his son from the English playgroup and met me at the metro station. Ronan is also keen to take care of his two children, he always pitches in to bathe and feed them. His wife Katelyn appreciates her husband's effort in sharing the care work.

Harper expressed the same sentiments:

Actually daddy is involved a lot, sometimes some mums say that their husbands don't help, but my husband contributes a lot, sometimes I go to work, and daddy takes care of her the whole day, from washing her face, brushing her teeth in the morning to tucking her into bed at night. Daddy can handle these tasks well, and baby loves to be with daddy too. (Harper, mother of one child)

However, fathers and grandfathers were generally not willing to talk about care. I was only able to interview one grandfather and one father in my fieldwork: most of the information about men's involvement in care work came from mothers and grandmothers. As explained in Chapter 5, the interview recruitment commenced with circulating flyers at NGOs and parents' network on social media. All enquiries were from women—mostly mothers and some were female relatives or daughters of grandmothers. When I was arranging interviews with mothers, I would ask them if their husbands would like to attend; only one was willing to attend the interview. The most common reason: 'he said he has nothing to say about childcare, mothers will be the best to explain the care arrangements'.

Withdrawing from paid employment to provide childcare at home is complex in terms of gender roles. A father not participating in full-time employment is considered unusual in East Asia. Full-time fathers describe the stress of comments from their family, friends and neighbours. ('Full-time Dad', 2009; Liong, 2015). If the wife in a family is the sole breadwinner, the husband will be criticised as 'eating soft rice' (a direct translation from Cantonese), meaning a man who lives off a woman other than his mother. This is considered an insult. It is a difficult decision for a man to choose to quit his job and be a stay-at-home father. While it is still quite rare for fathers to provide full-time childcare or practical care, more fathers are engaging with their children through play activities.

In contrast to social expectations about fathers, there is a rising cohort of 'new grandfathers' who focus more on their caregiving role (Buchanan and Rotkirch, 2016; Mann, 2007). There is also an indication that some grandfathers are playing a central role in the lives of their grandchildren. In East Asia, although considered unusual, recent grandparent studies confirm that grandfathers are becoming important carers, and in some cases full-time carers, of their grandchildren (Thang, 2016; Huang, 2014). In this study, among the 14 parent informants, seven parents reported that grandfathers are actively contributing to care; and among the 11 grandmothers I interviewed, three of them reported that their husbands actively share the care workload at home.

Overall speaking, both fathers and grandfathers are less constrained by caregiving compared to mothers and grandmothers. Women are still the prime carers at home and thus face multiple roles related to caregiving.

Women's family responsibilities: Juggling multiple roles

All grandmothers in this study experience substantial burdens of family care with multiple care roles. Many are taking care of their nuclear families and extended families: grandchildren, children, spouses and their elderly parents. They are juggling several family roles and care responsibilities simultaneously.

Some grandparents are expected to spend more time with their elderly parents. Grandmothers are often carers for great-grandparents, generally over 80 years old. Grandmother Judith's parents are now over 90 years old, they are healthy and able take care of themselves; therefore the care burden is not too heavy for Judith and her siblings. Judith's younger sister is now co-residing with their parents, so Judith can rely on her sister to look after them:

My parents are delighted if my siblings and I visit them, they enjoy having meals with us, but we seldom gather for a meal because all of us are busy. Usually we can only meet during

festivals. Usually I chat with my parents only on the phone. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

Judith feels that her grandchildren's care is much busier than a paid job, because 'there are working hours for a normal paid job, but not for childcare'. Similarly, Grandmother Rosa arranges to visit her mother once or twice a week. This requires considerable travel so she squeezes in time to see her mother, before picking up her grandchild from school or during public holidays.

Some grandmothers have to rush back to care duties at home after helping their children's families. For example, Grandmother Susanna used to provide childcare at her first and second daughters' homes; but she cannot neglect her domestic work at her own home. She needs to take care of her husband who is still working and her other two younger daughters who are still in college. She is the only one responsible for cooking, grocery shopping and all domestic duties. 'Therefore I hasten to go home every evening ... I have to prepare dinner for the two daughters at home, I am so busy, just finished the childcare work then hurry to take public transport home.'

These hectic routine tasks and multiple roles mean many grandparents agree that physical well-being is a concern. Some grandparents mentioned that they are happily compliant with their adult children's requests for childcare; however the final decisions depend on their health conditions but not their preferences. In discussing the relationship between physical health and caregiving, many grandparents used the word 'laborious'. Grandparents in this study are in the range of 50-70 years old, mainly in their early sixties; most of them feel that their physical strength is deteriorating. Grandmother Belinda compared her current physical fitness and that of four years ago, when she was taking care of her elder grandson:

I'm now taking care of the younger grandson, I feel it's a bit difficult. I feel tired easily, when I was taking care of the elder grandson, I didn't have this feeling of fatigue before ... Also the baby is gaining weight and I find it very hard to lift him up and carry him around. (Belinda, grandmother of two children, mother of three adult children)

Grandparent childcare patterns

In this section, I document the diverse patterns of grandparent care in terms of time given and duties undertaken. Despite the pivotal role that grandparents play in informal childcare, which requires plenty of negotiation between the parents and the grandparents, there has been limited attention paid to the grandparent and adult children relations in childcare arrangement (Ingersoll-Dayton, Neal and Hammer, 2001; Ward, 2008). Previous studies have explored the time spent on childcare (Fuller-Thomspon and Minkler, 2001), and the grandparents' personal sense of commitment and

contribution (Goodfellow and Lavery, 2003). In particular, there is little literature on grandparent childcare and the family processes in East Asian families. In East Asia, studies on parent and adult children relations target filial piety, but not necessarily within the childcare context. Developing more nuanced grandparent carer profiles and caring patterns of Hong Kong is difficult because there is a lack of official statistics and record. Although approximately two-third of families adopt grandparent childcare in Hong Kong ('Why Hong Kong is failing its young families', *South China Morning Post*, 2015), further details about the caring patterns are not available.

My interviews with parents and grandparents cover the childcare patterns of 53 children. These children include informants' children and grandchildren, and children of informants' family members. For example, when Billie told me about her childcare decisions, she described the childcare decisions of her younger brother too. These stories have been useful in building my understanding. In analysing grandparent childcare patterns in this section, however, I have relied on data collected from the parents and grandparents who are involved in the care work for each particular child. The following analysis is, therefore, based on the caring patterns for 42 children, who had been taken care of or are now being taken care of by grandparents. Each child has an individual care schedule set up by his/her parents and grandparents. I summarise the care patterns based on two dimensions: frequency of care and grandparents' care tasks.

Frequency of care

Basically there are two frequency types: regular care and occasional care. Most of the grandparents in my study are providing regular care for their grandchildren, and some are providing occasional care. Regular care means a relatively stable schedule and frequency decided by the parents and the grandparents. It can be regular in terms of the days of the week (for example, Monday to Friday) or a fixed number of days (for example, three days per week). Some parents also adopt occasional care, which works on a flexible schedule or ad-hoc basis. Parents seek help from grandparents whenever they are unable to care for their children by themselves.

Table 7-2 shows the grandparent childcare patterns by the frequency of care based on 42 children with childcare details mentioned in this study. It is important to note that the total number is more than 42 because some children are being taken care of by more than one pattern, or the pattern has been modified.

Table 7-2 Grandparent childcare patterns by frequency of care (based on 42 children with childcare details mentioned in this study)

Regular Care (34 children)	Regular weekday care (for parents who are working regular office hours from Monday to Friday)	Day care (15 children)		15
		Overnight care (15 children)	With parents	9
			Without parents	6
	Flexible workday care (for parents who have irregular work schedules, such as rotating day off, shift work, part-time and so on)	Day care (3 children)		3
		Overnight care (1 child)	With parents	1
			Without parents	0
Occasional care (18 children)	On-demand care (arrange only when parents need help, no regular schedule set)	Day care (12 children)		12
		Overnight care (1 child)	With parents	1
			Without parents	0
	School holiday care (usually occurs during school holidays, in particular summer or winter break)	Day care (3 children)		3
		Overnight care (2 children)	With parents	0
			Without parents	2

Regular weekday care

Among regular care, the most common pattern of grandparent childcare is ‘regular weekday care’. There are 30 children in this study who have been cared for in this way. Parents work typical business days between Monday to Friday. When the parents go out to work, the grandparents step in. Grandparents usually start their care work in the morning before the parents leave home, and take care of their grandchildren until the parents return home from work. Most of the parents and grandparents in this study followed this childcare pattern.

Sofia, for instance, works as a full-time clerical staff member in a property management company. Every weekday she or her husband sends her elder daughter to kindergarten, and then transports their younger daughter to the paternal grandparents’ home, which is just a block away from home.

Researcher: The routine of a weekday is to send the elder child to school, then send the younger child to grandma’s home. The elder child finishes school at 12 noon; then Grandma takes care of them at home in the whole afternoon?

Sofia: Exactly, until we get off work. Then we bring our children home. The next

day, the routine begins again.

Katelyn is an engineer working in a government office. She has a son aged 4½ and a daughter aged 3. Katelyn and Ronan have modified their childcare arrangements several times due to changes in the grandparents' employment and the children's school or activity schedules. Currently, Ronan's parents, who live nearby, come to their home to look after their children every weekday. Previously the maternal grandmother cared for the children when their second child was born. She lived further away from them, and it took around 30-40 minutes to come to Katelyn's home. They have employed a foreign domestic helper for additional assistance. As Katelyn said:

We selfishly think that our children should stay in our home, that is why we asked our parents to come to our home for childcare, instead of taking them to their grandparents' home. The grandparents stay in our home every weekday from 7 am to 7 pm, just as in formal employment. (Katelyn, mother of two children)

While it is common for grandparents to provide day care, some grandchildren stay with grandparents overnight as well. Of 42 grandchildren in this study, six grandchildren are taken care of by grandparents during the week and stay overnight with them without their parents.

In Billie's case, her mother helped take care of her first baby in the postpartum period. Billie felt that she needed all-embracing support from her mother in baby care. Her first child received care at her mother's home. Billie returned to work after maternity leave, and grandmother childcare continued. The baby stayed at her grandmother's home from Monday to Friday overnight and Billie and her husband only took the baby home during weekends. The grandmother here was actually taking care of the baby round the clock on her own, although the parents visited each weekday evening.

Grandmother Geraldine similarly provided 24-hour childcare because she lived with her daughter's family. Geraldine is currently offering full day and night care for her granddaughter. She resigned from her full-time job 10 months before the interview was conducted. Her original plan was to retire in the coming year at 65 years old, but she could not get enough sleep because she wakes up several times a night to soothe the crying child. Geraldine became the full-time and primary carer of her grandchild for the benefit of the child (so that she can have intensive care even in the night-time), the parents (so that they can have enough rest for work), and for herself (to avoid daytime fatigue at paid work).

Flexible workday care

Another grandparent childcare pattern, which also follows parents' work schedule, is 'flexible workday care'. Some parents do not have standard weekly or daily work schedules. For example,

Grandmother Judith's daughter-in-law works in hotel service, which is usually shift work. Judith's daughter-in-law uses grandparent childcare regularly and intensively. The general pattern is to take care of the grandchildren five to six days per week without a fixed daily schedule depending on her roster.

Leah is a part-time music teacher. She arranges flexible grandparent care but for less hours than other informants. For most weekdays, she takes care of her son at home by herself. She is eager to re-enter her profession, so now she works two days a week from 9 am to 5 pm. Both the retired maternal grandfather and the paternal grandmother are willing to provide childcare. Once she confirms her working schedule for the following week, Leah will ask her father or her mother-in-law to see who can help with childcare.

Occasional care

Some parents use grandparents for occasional childcare. There are two types: 'on-demand care' and school holiday care. For example Serena has arranged 'on-demand care' with her parents. She is a 32-year-old single mother having broken up with her partner before her son was born. She stayed at home for a number of years to take care of her son, but since returning to work doing freelance modelling jobs and running her small-scale online store, she asks her mother for help.

Grandmother Grace provides extensive 'flexible' childcare to four grandchildren aged from 3 to 9 (and a few months after the interview, her son's second child was born, bringing the number to five grandchildren). She started looking after them when her first grandchild was born and, in the past, provided regular childcare for them. Nowadays her adult children will ask her advance if they need her help, allowing Grace to arrange her schedule to accommodate their needs. On the day of the interview, she was at her second adult child's home; she was helping him to take care of his first daughter now aged 3. On other days, she would be helping one of her other adult children. Grandmother Grace described to me her childcare arrangements over the previous nine years, and I followed up by asking about the weekly arrangement:

Researcher: All your four grandchildren have their own caring childcare patterns, and you help different adult children on different days, am I right?

Grace: Yes, you can say so. In a week, say, I'll go to one family for 2-3 days, then go to another family for 1-2 days.

Researcher: Is this schedule fixed?

- Grace: It is relatively fixed recently, usually I go to my son's home from Thursday to Saturday, because they have things to do on those days, so they need my help for a few days each week.
- Researcher: So currently you spend three days a week with this youngest grandchild.
- Grace: Yes, it is actually very flexible. Sometimes they are free to take care of the baby, and then I won't go over.
- Researcher: For the other grandchildren, will your son and daughters ring you when they need help?
- Grace: Yes, yes, it's like that. Having a lot on my plate ...
- Researcher: So actually, are you taking care of them 7 days a week?
- Grace: Not all 7 days for sure. Usually 6 days only
- Researcher: So which day is your own day off?
- Grace: Sunday, usually I don't need to help on Sunday. It is quite flexible; sometimes I don't need to spend all seven days on childcare.

Grandparents generally work to the needs of the parents' employment, however demanding the care time schedule. Grandmother Judith offers intensive childcare based on an irregular schedule. Judith comes to her son's home to look after the granddaughter whenever she is needed. She compares 'regular weekday care' from Monday to Friday mainly during office hours (when she helped her daughter a few years ago) and 'flexible workday care' (currently with her son):

When she (my daughter-in-law) is off then I don't need to go over to her home. If she works on that day then I must go, her day off isn't on weekends, it's not fixed. Usually they have days off during weekdays, they [my son and his wife] are working in hotel services. In the past when I helped my daughter for childcare, her days off were on weekends so there was no problem at all, as weekends will be my days off too. So I could meet my friends for playing Mah-jong [a game originated in China, similar to board game], for short getaways trips, but now I rarely join these activities. If my friends want to meet me, I'll ask my daughter-in-law to take a day off so that I can have a day off too, but I rarely ask them to take leave from work for me ... The most difficult part is that ... I don't have a fixed schedule of leave. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

Leah is working part-time so she needs the grandparents' help to babysit her 22-month-old son, usually twice a week. Originally, she only sought help from her father, but later she also asked her mother-in-law to help:

Researcher: Do the maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother take turns to help?

Leah: Not exactly, I need to see who is available to help. Previously I kept asking *gung-gung* [maternal grandfather], but I kept him very busy with childcare, so later I also asked *maa-maa* [paternal grandmother]. I didn't feel good because I occupied a lot of *gung-gung's* personal time. (Leah, mother of one child)

Leah's parents and parent-in-law need to negotiate the childcare time in a somewhat different way to regular weekday care:

Leah: The grandparents sometimes said, 'why do you ask at the last minute?' They aren't free on that day, so I need to adjust my time.

Researcher: So when they aren't available to help, you'll change your own schedule to accommodate their care time?

Leah: Yes, I adjust according to their schedule, sometimes it's difficult to change my work schedule though.

Researcher: But will you still adjust based on their availability?

Leah: Yes, because they also have their own routine, for example, *maa-maa* does activity classes every Tuesday and Thursday... so I can't ask her for help on those two days. And she told me in advance, 'I'll be free every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, so you can ask me if needed. People say that usually mothers-in-law aren't kind to daughters-in-law, but I'm really fortunate, she's willing to accommodate my needs, and I'm so grateful.

Occasional care is also organised during school holidays, in particular in the summer from July to August every year. Sofia uses paternal grandparent childcare during weekdays for her two young children. Sofia's parents-in-law take care of four grandchildren, including the children of her husband's siblings. As some of these grandchildren are in school, they seldom have four children at home at the same time. However, when there is no school during the summer break, it is very difficult for the grandparents to take care of them at home, even with the help of a foreign domestic helper. Therefore, in the summer break, Sofia sends her elder daughter to the maternal grandmother's home for weekdays and picks her up after work. Her mother cannot help with regular

childcare because of a disability. But she can handle day care for a short period of time during the summer.

Grandmother Rosa used to provide regular weekday overnight childcare to her first grandson when he was a newborn. Later when the second grandchild arrived, her son decided to employ a foreign domestic helper and then Rosa's husband also helped by picking up the elder grandchild from kindergarten. Rosa was less involved in daily childcare. As the elder grandchild is now in school, the parents need more help during the summer break. Currently the grandfather helps with weekday daycare at the grandchildren's home, and Grandmother Rosa helps during the summer break at her home.

Regular care and occasional care are not mutually exclusive. Parents and grandparents use a mix of the patterns mentioned. Serena needs occasional care from her mother due to her freelance work. She also wants regular time for her small business. The childcare pattern is now a combination of occasional 'on-demand care' (when she has a freelance job) and regular care (for her online business).

Live-in care

Living with grandparents is most associated with overnight grandparent childcare. Grandparent childcare can be either the cause or the effect of co-residence with grandparents. Some parents and grandparents plan for this while for consider living together because they are planning for grandparent childcare. This arrangement is associated with the concept of familial exchange and obligation, as in Natalie's situation described earlier in Chapter 6. In Mina's case, as she did not move to a new flat after getting married and has been living with parents-in-law, grandparent childcare happens 'naturally'.

So then, we plan to live together in the same flat, and my husband agreed. Finally, we get a larger flat and live with my parents; then they can help us taking care of the children. (Natalie, mother of two children)

I don't need to ask them intentionally, because I'm sharing a residence with my parents-in-law. Therefore, it [the childcare arrangement] comes very naturally. (Mina, mother of one child)

Another example of co-residence is Grandmother Miranda who stays at her daughter's home on weekdays to help her with full-time childcare. Five years ago when her first daughter had her first baby, she began staying there on weekdays. Recently when her second daughter has her first baby, Grandmother Miranda again offered her assistance in the same way.

During the first postpartum *co jyut*, I stayed with my daughter at her home. Since then, I stay at her home from Monday to Friday. On Saturdays and Sundays, or holidays, I go to my own home. Basically, my daughter's office time, from Monday to Friday, is also my work time, including night time. (Miranda, grandmother of three children, mother of four adult children)

Unending care duties

Another striking finding is that grandparent childcare tends to be an unremitting job. Once grandparents have started providing care for grandchildren, family members expect their elderly parents will continue to help with childcare. During the interviews, parents were very focused on explaining the caring pattern and decision-making in relation to their children (eight parent informants have one child only; six of them have two children). Grandparents however were often taking care of several grandchildren at the same time, or have taken care of several grandchildren over the years. As noted earlier, the patterns varied with some grandparents providing care at their adult children's homes; some adult children sending their children to the grandparental home; and in other cases these two patterns happen concurrently because several adult children are involved in the grandparental care schedule. I asked about each of these schedules to develop a clear picture of the types and the duration of care.

Sharon and her husband, Wallace, have been looking after their grandchildren for ten years. Sharon is still working full-time as a clerical assistant at a university, so she can only help after work. In the daytime, Wallace is the one looking after the grandchildren. When I asked Sharon to tell me about caring for her grandchildren, she asked:

Do you mean telling you about my experiences since I started childcare? If yes, then it was ten years ago, my eldest granddaughter is now 10 years old. And now we've got a new member—my youngest grandson is now 20 months old. (Sharon, grandmother of four grandchildren, mother of two adult children)

During the week, Grace basically provides care to all of her grandchildren (from her three adult children) and has done so for nine years. For Grace, the obligation is on the grandparents to ease the burden for their adult children, even though she faces her own health challenges.

I was working, my youngest daughter got married first, and she asked me casually if I was interested in take care of the grandchildren ... my childcare work started from that time ... that grandchild is now 9 years old, so I started childcare nine years ago. Intermittently, I have been providing care to this eldest grandchild. Then other grandchildren arrive ... the next one was my elder daughter, she gave birth to a baby girl, then I helped her, then the youngest daughter had her second baby, then I helped her, I went around from family to family like this.

When I was taking care of the baby of my eldest daughter, when the baby was 4-5 months, unfortunately, I was diagnosed with cancer. Then I stopped my childcare work for at least 2 years and received medical treatment: surgery, chemotherapy and electrotherapy. Then when the second baby of the youngest daughter arrived, I'd recovered already and I went to her home, not really taking care of the baby because they employed a Filipino domestic helper, I stayed at their home, watched the child and supervised the helper, not really taking up any care tasks actually. (Grace, grandmother of four grandchildren, mother of three adult children)

Grandparents' care roles and duties

It is obvious that families are using their human capital in taking care of the third generation. Parents are calling on grandparents' care skills and experience in their childcare arrangements. Grandparents are performing a wide range of tasks. In this study, parents and grandparents described a wide range of grandparent childcare tasks, including direct care to grandchildren, preparation for care, household chores, supervision of foreign domestic helpers, children's leisure activities and homework supervision (UN Women, 2014). Table 7-3 shows the list of care activities mentioned by grandparents and parents of the 42 children (with care routine details).

Table 7-3 List of duties mentioned by informants ranked by frequency

<i>Care duty mentioned by grandparents or parents</i>	<i>Number of children(in this study)</i>
<i>Buying food for the child</i>	30
<i>Cooking for the child</i>	30
<i>Feeding</i>	28
<i>Leisure (go to the playground or have a walk)</i>	27
<i>Buying food for the child's parents</i>	26
<i>Cooking/meal preparing for the child's parents</i>	24
<i>Sending/pickup from school/after school activities/playgroup</i>	13
<i>Midnight care of the child</i>	13
<i>Bathing the child</i>	12
<i>Supervising foreign domestic helpers</i>	11
<i>Simple teaching (reading books, writing, singing)</i>	9
<i>Cleaning related to the child (washing the feeding bottle, clean the floor after feeding)</i>	8
<i>Supervising child's homework</i>	8
<i>Laundry</i>	6
<i>Cleaning home for the parents</i>	3
<i>Participating in playgroup/class with the child</i>	1

It was evident that once they take up caregiving roles, grandparents perform ‘mental management’ (UN Women, 2014) including ‘tasks of coordination, planning and supervision. Though this is not easy to quantify in terms of time, these additional tasks can cause mental and emotional strain’ (UN Women, 2014: 11). Grandparents giving full daycare take on planning and coordination, much as mothers generally do.

Natalie sees her mother as her teacher in childcare and is very grateful for her help. She learns many care skills from her mother, such as making traditional herbal tea to treat the baby’s minor constipation and a traditional Chinese medicine to help her baby sleep better.

My elder son tried the remedy, because his bowel movements are not stable, sometimes he has constipation, which annoys me, and I tried the remedy, and it works! I think my mother is really knowledgeable, I know nothing about these, and my mother has different traditional remedies for different symptoms ... all of these are taught by my mother. So with my mum, I feel the sense of security, especially during “the sitting month”. My mum is very caring, she made me soup, and all her efforts and teachings are important, without her I really wouldn’t know what to do ... I think this traditional wisdom in childcare is really valuable. (Natalie, mother of two children)

Grandmother Rosa agreed to help her son with childcare six months before the baby was due. She made lots of preparations such as purchasing baby clothing and making *goeng cou* for her daughter-in-law. *Goeng cou* is a specialty for *co jyut* with ginger stewed slowly in sweet black vinegar. In Chinese tradition, it takes around two months to prepare the ginger and the vinegar, so that the vinegar will be infused with the flavour of ginger. Trotters and hardboiled eggs will be added once *co jyut* begins. This is supposed to give the new mother warmth with the ginger, calcium with the trotter and vinegar, and protein with eggs.

My last job ... I worked in a wedding gown shop, but once we knew it would be closed down soon ... I thought to myself at that time, my daughter-in-law is pregnant, maybe I can help them if I’m not working. Later my son asked me to help with childcare, and the timing was just perfect. My job ended and then around half a year later my grandchild arrived. I didn’t look for another job in between, and I prepared for the childcare, buying baby clothes, and making *goeng cou* in advance. I could take my time to prepare. (Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

Grandparent childcare also involves emotional burdens. Some grandparents reported feeling anxious and restless when they are not taking care of their grandchildren. They also worry if the babies are doing well without their physical care, especially when their grandchildren fall ill. The emotional burdens that come along with the care responsibilities are rarely mentioned in the literature.

I'm anxious. If he [her grandchild] isn't feeling well, on the next day I'll be awakened by my worry early in the morning, even I don't need to babysit him that day. And I miss him the whole day. Even if he's physically okay, during the long holiday days, he'll miss me and ask his father to call me, 'Dad, I miss grandma, Whatsapp to her, and I want to talk to her', even the child misses me. (Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

When Grandmother Miranda leaves her daughter's home, she starts worrying:

When I leave and go back to my own home, I worry ... can my daughter handle all the tasks? I want to be with them all the time, then I'll feel at ease. I always worry that they can't manage all the care task well by themselves. (Miranda, grandmother of three children, mother of four adult children)

Financial negotiations with grandparent childcare

In this section, I illustrate various forms of financial support and exchange and examine how parents or grandparents assign meaning to this form of the resource exchange. In the context of childcare, grandparents help their grown children by providing childcare to the grandchildren. In this study some parents give money to grandparents regularly, some provide them with other assistance, while others buy gifts for grandparents or offer nice meals or family vacations on occasion.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the notion of reciprocity is the key to understand filial piety. It is understood that children will take care of parents because parents looked after and nurtured them when they were young. Taking care of elderly parents is an act of reciprocity, an expression of gratitude for their efforts in raising them. In East Asian societies, various practical forms of contemporary filial piety can be observed: co-residence with elderly parents, providing financial support, accompanying in-kind support (Chu, Xie and Yu, 2011; Giles, Wang and Zhao, 2010; Kim, 2010; Takagi and Silverstein, 2011; Teo, 2010; Tse, Chan, Leung, Chochinov, Meimeyer and Pang, 2012)

In Hong Kong, the general expectation is to provide regular financial support to elderly parents (Chow, 2001). It is usually in the form of a monthly payment because the salary is generally paid on a monthly basis in Hong Kong. When an adult child receives his or her salary, a portion will be given to the parents. In Cantonese, this sum of financial support, usually provided on a monthly basis is called *gaa jung*, which can be directly translated to 'family use', or 'family expenditure'. In an official household survey by the Hong Kong government, with the sample of 10,000 households and a response rate of 75%, 61.2% of the older people who had monthly personal income identified

financial support from children as their main source of income (Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR Government, 2009).

My study confirms that payment from adult children to elderly parents is a very widespread practice. In the 26 parents and grandparents who attended interviews with me, 12 parent informants (out of 14) provide monetary support to their elderly parents. Ten grandparent informants (out of 12) mentioned that they have received or have been receiving money from their adult children. The monetary payment is usually in the form of giving cash or transferring an amount to the grandparents' bank account.

However, it is arbitrary and hasty to assume that grandparents are paid to provide grandchild care, although they are receiving payment. First, it is customary, and a societal expectation, for adult children to provide monetary payment to elderly parents, and it exists with or without childcare. The meaning of this payment can be a sum covering the daily expenses of a family, the payment for childcare, and financial support to elderly parents or a combination of all these meanings.

Second, families are reluctant, to talk about money in family relations where loving care rather than rewards should be emphasised. On the one hand, adult children might feel ashamed if they do not provide payment for grandparents for taking care of their children. The grandparents might resent this too. According to the traditional family values, if adult children are able to support elderly parents, it is considered an achievement of the elderly parents; proof of successfully raising their children (Chou, Chi and Chow, 2004). Financial support from adult children to elderly parents is a display of support, respect and concern.

Grandparents too do not want to focus on money. In the interviews, when asked about financial arrangements, my informants tended to explain it very briefly, especially the amount of payment. I sometimes prompted them by saying, 'some previous studies/informants mentioned various forms of support between parents and grandparents in childcare arrangements, for example, in-kind, family vacation, emotional support or money, can you let me know the form in your family?' They were then more willing to elaborate, moving beyond monetary reward.

These practices are guided by filial piety. As noted earlier, there are three levels of filial piety (Chow, 2001). The first level is about support of physical and material needs of parents, the second level is about obeying parents, and the third level involves bringing parents honour so they are happy and pleased.

The meaning of these payments to elderly parents is complex. This payment can cover the daily expenses of a family, financial support to elderly parents or a mix of both. Childcare arrangements further complicate this; this amount may also include payment for grandparent childcare and the expenditure for children. The amount may be paid monthly, annually or occasionally.

Parents clearly try to minimise the expenditure of elderly parents on childcare. In western literature about the financial arrangements between adult children and elderly parents, helping adult children and their families financially is a prevailing phenomenon (Harrington Meyer, 2014). In providing childcare to grandchildren, grandparents are spending their earnings to cover the expenses incurred in childcare. These include daily necessities such as food, childcare centre fees, educational fees; and other expenses such as gifts and toys. In contrast, the parents in my study prepare all the daily necessities of childcare, mainly formula milk powder, nappies and clothing, so there is no need for the grandparents to spend their own money when taking care of their grandchildren. Parents believe that grandparents commit a great deal of energy and time to taking care of the grandchildren. While they do not spend much money on childcare, most of the grandparents provide food for their grandchildren, various types of porridge and snacks with fresh ingredients for babies being weaned. They are also generous in buying toys and snacks for their grandchildren with their own money.

They pay separately for the childcare cost. For example, the nappies and the formula milk, I count the total sum for these expenditures and let them know by the end of each month. For buying the ingredients of porridge, I won't count that in because it is difficult to calculate. Usually I buy some meats and veggies for our meals, then I take some ingredients from there to make porridge. I'm his grandmother and I'm very happy to provide meals for the baby. I only count the nappies, milk powder and clothing. (Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

Leah uses grandparent childcare for two days a week. She has never discussed childcare costs or financial payment with her parents or parents-in-law because the care work is occasional. Usually she gives *lai see*, or red packet, to parents and parents-in-law. Leah said she gives big *lai see* to her parents and parents-in-law at Chinese New Year, because this important Chinese festival is a good chance to present gifts.

No, [I don't give money to grandparents regularly], I have thought about this ... money isn't involved in our childcare ... I prepare all the food and nappies in a bag, so the grandparents don't need to buy this and that for my baby, I hope they can handle the care task for one day without too much difficulty ... I try to make things simple, and I prepare everything, they can see it and use it easily. (Leah, mother of one child)

Yet, most grandparents in this study received money from their children. Among my 26 informants (14 parents and 12 grandparent informants), 20 of them made regular payments from parents to grandparents: this is the information I focus on here. Two grandparents indicated that the payment is arranged annually or occasionally. In one case, the parents have been paying off a mortgage for the grandparents instead of a monthly payment.

Mina's monthly payment to her parents-in-law is only for family expenses. All four adults—grandfather, grandmother, her husband and Mina—are working full-time but on different office schedules. They cohabit and take turns to care for the infant. Mina has also employed a foreign domestic helper for household chores. Mina gives a monthly payment to her mother-in-law but she does not consider this as a childcare payment or that she is supporting her parents-in-law.

Is that support to parents-in-law? I give *gaa jung*, but I don't think I'm supporting them, well ... I give my mother-in-law a sum monthly, there's no need to give to father-in-law separately. I give that monthly sum to my parents-in-law, they prepare meals for us ... Usually, I'm responsible for the baby's necessities, over 99%. If it's really expensive, I will ask my husband to pay. I'm paying our helper from the joint bank account with my husband. (Mina, mother of one child)

Some parents provide additional amounts of *gaa jung* while their elderly parents help with taking care of the grandchildren. Seven of them specified that additional amounts reflect the grandparents' assistance in childcare. Cindy is not certain how much her husband previously was paying to his parents monthly, but since they have started grandparent childcare, she also offers a payment to her parents-in-law.

I don't know if my husband gives *gaa jung* to his parents, I didn't care before the baby arrived. Now they are helping with childcare, and I give my parents-in-law 10,000 dollars [approx. AUD\$1,700], I transfer the sum to their bank account each month; it's very convenient for both of us. (Cindy, mother of one child)

Grandmother Judith has been receiving monthly *gaa jung* from her adult children, and the amount has increased due to childcare. 'Our arrangement is monthly payment in a *gaa jung* format, of course before the childcare the sum was smaller'. For Jade, the monthly payment to her mother is a combination including financial support, childcare and family expenses. Sometimes she purchases special gifts at Chinese festivals for her parents. She also tries to limit her mother's expenditure on her child.

Before and after marriage, I provided a regular amount of *gaa jung* to my mother. I'm her only child, she is retired, so I must give her financial support. My husband gives my mom a small sum, to thank her for helping with childcare. As the son-in-law, he thinks that it's a lot of work for his child, so he must show his gratitude by giving some more money. During traditional Chinese festivals, we'll also give parents some money; we consider it as a gift to parents during the festival, and not because of childcare.

Basically, my husband and I will take care of all the expenses for childcare, so my mum has no need to pay with her own money. She sometimes buys snacks and bread for my son. Nappies, I

prepare. Mum doesn't need to buy anything, not even the bottle liquid cleanser; I prepare everything. My mum can spend the *gaa jung* as she likes. (Jade, mother of one child)

Other than monetary payment, some other forms of exchange occurred. Sofia said the grandparents were unwilling to receive payments for childcare. Her husband did help them with their mortgage in the past and sometimes they pay some bills. They perceived the resource exchange to be about mutual assistance:

They didn't want money for childcare ... we aren't paying the grandparents. They refused when we offered. They adore him [Sofia's husband]. My husband sometimes helps them with their mortgage payments. They now have two apartments, maybe those can be counted as our contribution. They don't accept our money, sometimes they even give money to my husband, and worry that he can't make ends meet ... sometimes we help to pay the bills.

Leah also talked about other gifts too.

I don't pay *gaa jung*, ... I won't pay them like a domestic helper; we never calculate that way ... I bring them to restaurants for meals. Grandmother enjoys *yum cha* [having tea and *dim sum* in a Cantonese teahouse], so we will have *yum cha* together. Sometimes when I come back at night to pick up my child, we may go out for dinner (Leah, mother of one child)

For some parents, providing financial support to elderly parents is impossible due to their income; some parents are using grandparent childcare because they cannot afford any other form of help. Serena is a full-time, single mother. She quit her job after the baby was born, so it is very difficult for her to give parents *gaa jung*:

I can't afford to pay *gaa jung*; my current part-time job isn't enough to give money to my parents. Usually during festivals, I buy gifts for them, or take them out to restaurants for meals. My parents don't say much about the family expenditure. (Serena, mother of one child)

Payment as a symbolic reflection of parental responsibilities

Many grandparents felt that adult children are primarily responsible for their own children. Grandparents are only to help.

Therefore, it actually all depends on how they [the adult children] want their children to be taken care of. They have their own responsibility to their children. (John, grandfather of two children, father of two adult children)

And I think it's really important to let the mum and dad know that, when you have your own children, you won't be as free as before. (Belinda, grandmother of two children, mother of three adult children)

Suggestions, yes I will give them suggestions, but at the end, I believe taking care of the children is the parent's responsibility. (Grace, grandmother of four grandchildren, mother of three adult children)

While payment is involved in childcare, grandparents and parents do not see this as a market relationship; instead, it is symbolic of these parental responsibilities.

Sometimes I hear from my friends, they help taking care of the grandchild but the adult children never pay them. I think if the adult children are making money, and if the grandparents help with childcare, they must pay—regardless of the amount of the payment. For me, my adult children give me a few thousand each month, but I really do not mind how much they give me. If there is no payment, then grandparents are actually raising the children for the adult children. Grandparents want to buy gifts for the grandchildren, that's another issue. But if you ask a grandparent to help, you might pay more than just normal *gaa jung*. Actually, it's really difficult to calculate childcare costs. I occasionally prepare meals for my adult children's family, and I don't count the cost, I really don't mind. But if it's a regular care arrangement, then the adult children should be responsible, at least to cover the basic expenditure. But if it's occasional, even if they offer payment, I won't accept. I don't need money urgently. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children).

Payment as intergenerational transfer and accumulation of financial capital

Family capital comprises financial capital, which means the income or wealth of a family, as discussed in Chapter 6. On top of the concept of filial piety and reciprocity, some families see the childcare financial arrangement as an intergenerational resource transfer. Giving *gaa jung* or other financial support is actually shifting the money from one generation to another, but still within the family. Family members expect to protect and accumulate family financial capital by asking 'insiders' to take care of childcare and thus the money flow within the family. From the perspective of parents, Jade wants to keep the money within the family instead of flowing out to an 'outsider':

First, it's an economic issue, if I employ a foreign domestic helper or send my baby to a childcare centre, I need to pay the salary or childcare fee. But if I ask my parents to help, then when I pay slightly more *gaa jung* for childcare, it will be in my family members' pockets. (Jade, mother of one child)

Some grandparents too feel this. From the grandparent's view, paying them for childcare is not essential; instead they have a desire that the adult children to keep the money for their families and the third generation.

I think ... two generations should coordinate and harmonise, to make both sides feel good. It's meaningless to argue over money and it hurts the relationship. I think the elderly parents should understand that even if the adult children can give you a big sum, maybe it's better for them to keep some money in reserve for their own families. For us as elderly parents, there's no reason for us to keep lots of money, because finally the money will be theirs [i.e., after she passes away, her property will be shared out to her children], so maybe just let the adult children give us less money and reduce their burden, this is what I think to myself. (Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the diversity in grandparent childcare arrangements of Hong Kong families. While each family has its own arrangements, some similar themes, including gender roles, the grandparents' retirement, the grandparents' sense of obligation, women's multiple care burdens and the financial implications of childcare payment become visible in the analysis. In the next chapter, I will move on to explore the intergenerational connections and tensions brought about by, or illuminated by, childcare arrangements.

Chapter 8

Ambivalence: Navigating intergenerational relationships in childcare

In this chapter, I focus on family processes and family relationships in the context of grandparent childcare. I examine both the positive sentiments and negative emotions experienced by grandparents and their adult-children. I explore how childcare creates changes in family relationships. I aim to analyse these personal experiences and link to broader systems of social structure and cultural structure to understand how they interact and reproduce in society. I also trace the patterns of ambivalence in a range of cultural traditions (Lüscher, 2002).

I found the processes of negotiation of grandparent care to be complex and creating considerable ambivalence for all involved. In grandparent childcare arrangements, a grandparent has a role beyond senior family member, as caregiver for grandchildren. This combination of roles creates dilemmas for both parents and grandparents. This sense of contradiction was present in all interviews. For example, grandparents often said they did not agree with their adult children about childcare issues, but then they will put themselves in their adult children's shoes, saying that they might have the same thoughts given such situations. Disputes in childcare and parenting styles are not only due to contradictions in the familial roles of grandparents and parents, but are also related to cultural changes across the generations.

I proposed in Chapter 6 that the concept of intergenerational family capital developed from Quah's studies in Southeast Asian context was useful for discussing the trust relationship between parents and grandparents. In this chapter, developments and advancement of family capital are illustrated through grandparent childcare. Nonetheless, social capital within some families is diminished due to disagreements surrounding caregiving. Therefore, while care provided by grandparents is appreciated, some families plan to discontinue this arrangement, in order to protect the social capital within their families by avoiding further disputes between the two generations. I will start with the positive emotions in the first part of this chapter.

Intergenerational connection, love and contentment

The feeling of love and satisfaction involved in grandparent childcare was a common theme, repeatedly articulated by all the informants. I will discuss three relationships in this part: between grandparents and grandchildren; among the extended family; and between grandparents and adult children.

Grandparents and grandchildren

Grandparents and their grandchildren develop strong emotional bonds through caregiving. Despite the conflicts that will be discussed later in this chapter, all of the grandparents and parents described emotional closeness between the grandparent carers and the grandchildren being cared for. Grandparents found the development of close relationships with grandchildren made the care work worthwhile and this loving and intimate relationship is highly valued.

Grandmother Martha has been helping her son, who later became a single father, to take care of his only child. The grandchild is at Martha's home every day; the father can only come to see his son on his day off. For Martha, being with her grandson is very enjoyable. The childcare arrangement has been running for ten years already as she recalled during our conversation:

When he was small, the time when he hadn't started talking yet, when I looked at him, I felt happy. He's a sweetheart and makes people happy. When I hold him in my arms, that feeling ... I really enjoy the feeling; it alleviates my physical tiredness. I really love being with him every day. My friends said I am too hectic taking care of this child, I don't think so and I really enjoy the time. I want him to have a stable and healthy life. (Martha, grandmother of three grandchildren, mother of two adult children)

In addition to this sense of fulfilment, grandparents can also feel the care and love from their grandchildren in return. Grandmother Grace recounted, 'Every time when I see this grandchild, she hugs me and say "grandma, grandma!'. All of my grandchildren are warm and sweet to me'. Grandmothers Rosa and Belinda echo this:

My elder grandchild really knows how to make people happy, he's a sweet talker. Sometimes I play dumb and tell him, 'grandma is very tired', there was once when we went to the playground, I said to him 'I feel very hot and my leg is painful, I'm really tired ...' The little boy squatted down next to me and looked at my leg, then asked me, 'Grandma do you feel pain?' and asked me many questions about the pain. He's cheerful and caring. I'm very happy. I adore this child so much, and my hard work is worthwhile, this is really sweet. (Rosa, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

Grandfather told the child, 'Your grandma is not feeling well today, so you need to take care of her for me, and remember to look after your younger brother too'. And my grandson replied to my husband, 'yes grandpa, I know, I'll do it.' He's only 4 years old. (Belinda, grandmother of two children, mother of three adult children)

The close bonding between grandparents and grandchildren brings gratification and this positive atmosphere is emotionally contagious within the extended family.

The extended family

Parents believe that strong family ties are developed through grandparent childcare. The grandparental childcare arrangement means other family members are also visiting more frequently than they would otherwise. The grandchildren become a focus of the family; strengthening the connections of family members through caretaking for children is a common 'family practice' for 'doing family' (Morgan, 1996), as discussed in Chapter 5.

Mina is living with her parents-in-law, and they help to look after her child (8 months old at the time of interview). Mina felt that childcare at home had improved her relationship with her parents-in-law. It is now more natural to chat with her parents-in-law about their grandchild. She also felt that the rapport among the whole family is developing.

My sister-in-law, that is, my husband's elder sister, is very fond of my baby. She loves to take my child for an outing; she loves children, but hasn't had her own child yet. And because of my child, she comes home more frequently. Having my child as a new family member, the atmosphere at home is different from before, the atmosphere is positive, I feel that we are working together for the benefit of this child. (Mina, mother of one child)

Harper shared similar feelings of everything revolving around the new family member, 'Our conversations are about this grandchild, and the whole family has been livened up'.

For Leah, grandparent childcare not only allows members of her big extended family to meet her son, but also helps her son to understand his extended family:

I want my son knows that there is not only daddy and mummy in this world. Daddy and mummy also have their daddy and mummy, and that is his *gung-gung and po-po* [maternal grandfather and grandmother]; and *je-je* and *maa-maa* [paternal grandfather and grandmother] ... it is good that my dad always brings my son when he meets our relatives, so my son can meet my uncles and aunts, that is, his grand uncle and grand aunt. And he will know who's who in our big family. Both my husband and I have a big family, and we don't know how to greet them by the kinship terms. It's valuable for my child to know the family relationships. Who are the senior family members ... and he'll know he's not the only one in the world, there is consanguinity in his family. (Leah, mother of one child)

Grandparent childcare can enhance family relations as a whole because it reveals the importance of care. In particular, a significant transformation occurs between the child's parents and the grandparents.

Grandparent and adult children

Because of grandparent childcare, contacts between parents and their elderly parents increase. This both facilitates communications and creates tensions in the relationship. Leah feels that the grandparental childcare arrangement motivates her to visit her elderly parents and this has improved their relationship. Both the maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother help with childcare. These patterns facilitate family visits.

I spend the whole day taking care of my child, I don't have extra energy to go out on weekdays, and usually we go out on Sundays because my husband has a day off. But we won't go to my parents' home, usually we go somewhere else to relax. Sometimes my mum calls me and asks 'when will your son come to my home?' and yes, I realise I haven't seen my mum for a while ... the child becomes a motivation to visit my parents, we go to their home, play and have dinner with grandparents, I think it's really good. This strengthens our relationship. (Leah, mother of one child)

For Mina, grandparent childcare provides a channel to communicate with her mother-in-law, who is also living in the same household.

In the past ... maybe ... because my husband also works full-time, when I went home earlier than my husband after work, wasn't much to talk about with my mother-in-law. Our relationship wasn't bad, but not as close as friends were. With the newborn, we have more chance to chat and communicate. The baby is our bridge. (Mina, mother of one child)

Grandparent childcare increases the frequency of contact among the grown children and the elderly parents, but different results are observed in different families. On the downside, some informants said more frequent contact indeed intensified their conflicts and led to verbal combat with family members having a damaging impact on the relationship.

Intergenerational tensions in childcare

Grandparent childcare arrangements bring a new role to the grandparent: the caregiver and all grandparents experienced stress. In Chapter 2, I discussed parent-carer relationships in non-familial support. The familial care supports I documented in this study show different concerns.

Challenging seniority? Contradictions in grandparents' capacity as a childcarer

Many parents found it difficult to ask grandparents for particular types of childcare because it is viewed as a challenge to grandparents' knowledge and senior position in the family. All parents in this study were keen to learn about latest the parenting trends. Parenting trends are ever-changing

and there are many channels for information sharing, such as social media, communication applications, blogs, online tutorials and video-sharing websites. Parents want to know what is best for their children and during our interviews, parents mentioned a lot of specialised parenting terms, such as 'baby-led weaning' and 'messy play'. By contrast, grandparents are confident with their care skills because they have successfully raised their children; they do not seek out other forms of information.

This abundance of childcare and parenting information is paradoxical for parents. On the one hand, parents feel that they are empowered and become knowledgeable by sharing and receiving information with other parents. On the other hand, being flooded with parenting knowledge results in some mothers feeling that they are getting overwrought about their children. Some mothers told me that they respond intensely and impulsively to some minor problems. Winnie explained to me how active the sharing group is,

We [mothers] are exchanging information 24-hours non-stop, yes it is really 24-hour: some mums are sending information while they are breastfeeding baby at midnight ... Sometimes we have a mums' gathering ... I read a huge amount of information and I am captivated. (Winnie, mother of one child)

As expected, most of the members of these online social groups are mothers. They share their childcare experiences in these groups with people they do not know. The discussions cover a wide range of topics, including shopping advice for baby gear; childcare centre or kindergarten selection details; breastfeeding experiences, children development and psychology; work-care conflicts and stress; personal emotions, family issues and couple relationships. Some of them received information about my study through these parents' groups. Mothers told me that they contacted me after receiving information from groups, mainly through groups in WhatsApp and Facebook. They were very interested in talking to me about the childcare arrangements and their emotions and experiences.

In part because of these pressures, adult children seek to teach or instruct elderly parents these new childcare skills, which reinforces elderly parents' feelings of stress and may demoralise them. Some parents expect grandparents to be learners. Parents expect they can give instructions, and grandparents will follow. Amber said,

I must tell my parents clearly my expectations. I'm the main carer for my children, I tell my parents what to do during childcare time because they don't know ... but sometimes they don't follow my instructions, I know that. But still I need to tell them, and I hope they don't digress too much ... if you ask them to take care of your children, you really need to give them suggestions and advice. (Amber, mother of two children)

For East Asian family culture, this is opposite to the cultural standard of obedience to parents. Grandfather John's response to the instructions from his adult daughter captures the disheartened feelings of most of my grandparent informants:

Her [the adult daughter] care style is different from my old care style, but to be very frank, I think to myself only [I did not express this to my daughter], 'you and your siblings are raised by me with my method. Also, do you think I intend to harm my grandchildren? Of course I won't, of course I'll use the best method that I know'. (John, grandfather of two children, father of two adult children)

Parents do understand that it is difficult to ask grandparents to learn new care skills. Jade believes her mother has her own deep-rooted set of care styles, 'My mum is already over 60 years old and is past the time for acquiring new skills ... it's not easy for her to listen to me, but I will try my best'. Winnie has the same thoughts, 'my parents have had a few children; all of us are already in our thirties to forties, my parents will think "why is the way that I fed my babies now problematic, I raised my children with those methods?"'.

It is even more difficult when parents and grandparents are in conflict about care. While all parents appreciate the grandparents' efforts in childcare, admiration for grandparents' caring skills and knowledge is not common among my informants. As illustrated in this section, most of the parents in my study complained about the contradictory care values and styles of the two generations. Some adult children consider that their elderly parents' care styles are already obsolete. Winnie explained, 'our elderly parents raised us in this way, this doesn't mean they can raise their grandchildren in the same way'.

Winnie has been bothered by continuous disputes with her parents-in-law about childcare. She explained this using language teaching as an example:

The grandparents always use rude words; I don't want my child to talk in such an impolite manner. If this happens in childcare centre, I can lodge a complaint, because I'm the service user. I can even quit that centre if I don't agree with them. But how can I talk to my parents-in-law about my discontent? (Winnie, mother of one child)

Billie said that maternal grandparent childcare operated very well in her family, but there were still conflicts.

This relationship is very puzzling. I'm now the mother of my children, and I ask my mother to take care of my children. However, I'm very clear that my expectations of my children are different from my mother's expectations for me. This is because of generational changes. When I want to tell her to follow my way, I find it difficult to say. My mother brought me up,

how I can challenge her and tell her ‘mum, your care styles don’t work anymore?’ (Billie, mother of two children)

From intensive parenting to intensive grandparenting

The ideology of ‘intensive mothering’ as identified by Sharon Hays (1996) recognises the dominant expectation that mothers should be the main caregivers for their children. Good parenting should be time-intensive: ‘day-to-day labour of nurturing the child’ (Hays, 1996: 115); emotionally fully immersed with the children: ‘listening to the child’ (Hays, 1996: 115), ‘meet[ing] children’s wishes’ and so on; and following expert teachings. This highly gendered parenting model advises mothers to be child-centric and focus intensely on the child’s well-being. In the last two decades since Hays’s study and analysis of ‘intensive mothering’, there have been increasing studies on the parenting and motherhood as an international trend (see Arendell, 2000 for a detail review; Walls, Helms and Grzywacz, 2016; Johnston and Swanson, 2007; Hochschild, 1997).

Christopher (2012) has subsequently proposed a new concept of ‘extensive mothering’. It is a way for working mothers to redefine intensive motherhood in a feasible way for their context. While mothers work, they also identify themselves as the primary carer because they are ‘in charge’ of, and making daily decisions for, their children even as significant work is undertaken by others. ‘Extensive mothering’ in this context means mothers’ tasks for their children stretch out to a wide range of tasks instead of participating in practical daily care tasks, and mothers are responsible for their children’s well-being even if the care is not provided by them.

The concept of mothers’ self-identification as ‘in charge’ is widespread among the families I studied. Most of the working mothers delegate daily care tasks to grandparents or helpers. Mothers are using various strategies to exercise their role as ‘in charge’: instructing the grandparents about parenting skills, telling grandparents about their expectations, arranging activities for children, reading books and playing with children after work during the quality one to two hours, and so on.

Extensive mothering practices are a compromise between parental care and work. In Chapter 6, I found that mothers see parental care as the best option; they crave for a care pattern that allows close monitoring of children. As Jade said,

I don’t have much time for my child; most of my time is allocated to my full-time work and daily errands. Children can’t go to bed too late. So I only have two hours with my child every day. I can’t keep teaching him in that two hours. I need to chat with him or watch TV with him for a while. Then I call it a day ... I believe the best way is to take care of my child by myself. My practice in childcare is different from that of my mother, due to changing times. Our concepts and the ways we tackle the same problem are different. Sometimes I have conflict

with my mother, but the discussions are friendly so far. (Jade, mother of one child)

Some tensions are more significant however: Winnie disapproves of the care style of her parents-in-law, and there are continuous disputes, she said 'quarrels are meaningless; I'm the baby's mother, if we all focus on my child's well-being, why don't they listen to me!' Jade has had similar thoughts, 'When I don't agree with my mother on care styles, usually I follow her, but I also wish my mother would listen to me.'

With mothers being 'in charge', and empowered by the expert teachings, they tend to have high expectations of childcare quality. However, much of the care work is delegated to grandparents. Mothers are the decision-makers and grandparents need to execute all these instructions and plans. This is not an easy task for most of the grandparents.

This study found that intensive mothering is stretching to become intensive grandparenting. Madonna Harrington Meyer (2014) studied grandmothers in the US, who are now juggling childcare duty and paid employment. Her study found that grandmothering is intensifying. Similarly in my fieldwork based in Hong Kong, grandmothers some with their spouses, are spending a huge amount of time on their grandchildren.

For example, Miranda moves from one adult daughter's home to another, helping with the grandchildren and staying overnight at each daughter's home. Grandmother Martha is taking care of three grandchildren at the same time, with one grandchild living in her home and the other two grandchildren at their own home. Martha left her paid job and now spends her time caring for these children and arranging events such as piano classes or after school tutorials.

Grandmothers Loretta and Miranda compared the current expectations and care styles from those of their time when their children were still small. Grandmother Loretta said,

Now we have three adults [mother, grandmother and grandfather] to take care of two children at the same time, I still feel it is very strenuous, what happens if my daughter just does it alone? That's why I understand why some mothers get postpartum depression. Comparatively speaking, in the past, I took care of two children by myself, [and took care of another child as her job], I found it easy at the time, and my husband went to work so I was on my own in the daytime. (Loretta, grandmother of two children, mother of two adult children)

This strong sense of responsibility and accountability becomes a significant source of stress to grandparents in taking care of their grandchildren. Grandmother Grace said, 'I didn't feel so much stress when I was taking care of my own children in the past, but now I'm taking care of my

grandchildren, the stress is really huge'. Grandparents perceive that they are accountable if the grandchildren fall sick or are injured.

Grandparents also experience the pressure when the parents are not staying overnight with the children, 'The child stays overnight at my home, and this is a great pressure, as the child's parents aren't with me, if something happens, I'm fully liable,' said Grandmother Judith.

Due to this strong sense of responsibility, grandparents are making intensive efforts in all their care tasks. Grandmother Judith explained the details,

I must be very careful and attentive to the infant all the time, because the infant is too small, and might choke or gag on the food or milk when feeding; the first six months are really hard and stressful, I need to observe the infant all the time, the whole day, I can't be slack. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

What makes this care role more difficult for most grandparents is the time gap since their last childcare experiences. Grandmother Miranda said, although she has four children, all of them have grown up, she needed to learn all the childcare tasks again,

At the beginning it was hard to adapt, it took time to familiarise again—task by task, even holding the baby, and I needed to practice again. In the first month it was really challenging, I need to set up my care routine: when to feed, when to do grocery shopping ... because my own children have grown up already and I've forgotten how to take care of them as infants.

The busy daily care routine is another source of stress for grandparent taking up childcare responsibilities at home, as outlined in the last chapter. Grandmother Judith recounted her extensive list of care duties:

I have no extra time at all. We get up early in the morning, then go to school, I'll purchase food from the market with my younger grandchild after sending the elder grandchild to school. Then we go home and do household chores, then rush to pick the elder child from school as he's having AM sessions only. I start cooking once we get back home, after that the children will rest a bit. They have many after school learning classes too, so I need to send them to these classes. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

Parents recognise this issue. Seniority is highly valued in East Asian societies and filial piety is an important moral standard for adult children. Children are expected to take care of, support, obey and bring happiness and satisfaction to their parents. Asking elderly parents to perform childcare, adult children feel that they are violating the moral standard of taking care of elderly parents by giving them more care duties. Leah said,

I need their help but ... I know I've occupied my parents and grandparents' time, they have their own leisure time after they retired, I always worry that I might have brought them too many troubles, affecting their daily lives. I've mixed feelings myself.

In the first section, I discussed grandparent childcare as a way to 'display family' connections and develop the family relationships in a positive manner. However, sometimes relationships may worsen.

The other side of the coin: Worsened relationships

Tension, disagreement and conflict are frequently mentioned by parents and grandparents. Families recounted in-law conflicts, unexpected intrusions into adult children's families, and generational differences in childcare styles. In the following sections, I explore the context and content of conflicts between the two generations. As noted in the definition of the key concepts in chapter 5, the situations of conflict narrated by the informants include verbal conflict, disagreement on childcare rationale and an opposing feeling with each other.

'The sovereignty of my home': The in-law relationship

In this study, in-law conflict is more obvious than conflict with the adult child's own parents. Among my informants, disagreements usually arise between the grandchildren's mother and her parents-in-law, and are more likely with the paternal grandmother. Indeed complaints about in-laws dominated some interviews. For many families in this study, friction escalates when two women in the same lineage are expected to perform similar duties for 'my family'. From a grandmother's perspective, 'my family' includes my son's family, whereas for the new mother, 'my family' is her spouse and their own children. There are gendered expectations that women will take up the care duties at home, both physically and emotionally. This kin-keeper role is also about the family division of labour. Due to these expected duties, women tend to be more aware of family relationships, the boundaries and the roles of members.

East Asian family culture is essential here in understanding the situation. The female is the 'inner-master' in the East Asian context as outlined in Chapter 3. Women tend to be more aware of their kinship roles in family culture than men. For the daughter-in-law, the newborn baby gives her a new identity as the mother of her own family. This is the actualisation of her role as the 'inner-master' of her family instead of simply a member of the mother-in-law's family, she can make decisions about her own family.

Cindy describes this conflict as an issue about 'the sovereignty in my own home' as a metaphor for her gloomy relationship with her mother-in-law. Cindy wants to protect 'the sovereignty of her home' at two levels: the actual environment and the decision-making. First, she has the feeling that her mother-in-law is physically 'intruding into her own family'. During her *co jyut*, her mother-in-law came to visit her and her baby every day, and she stayed at her apartment for a number of hours. Cindy found that it was very difficult to rest with her mother-in-law around. Second, in childcare decision-making, Cindy feels that her mother-in-law comments too much on her care choices, in particular over breastfeeding.

[The problem in our relationship] is due to arguments about taking care of my child. At the same time, I believe it's a problem of 'sovereignty' of my own home, when someone intrudes into my family, I hear lots of lots of comments directed towards me, and this actually hurts our relationship seriously. If the whole thing happens again, I don't think I'd ask them (the parents-in-law) to look after my child. (Cindy, mother of one child)

Winnie is living with her parents-in-law and they are looking after her son so that she and her husband can work. She always wants her son to go to a childcare centre but their family finances do not allow this.

If you ask me whether utilising paternal grandparent childcare is a good idea, I'd first ask you 'who is in charge of this home?' If your answer is the parents-in-law, I'd tell you to work hard, earn more money and save more money for sending your child to childcare centre. You need a carer who will listen to you, understand what is good to the child, and is able to communicate. (Winnie, mother of one child)

Grandmother Loretta explains the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship as 'subtle and delicate'. She thinks that although the mother-in-law is also the family member of her daughter, it is a small gap that makes a big difference. There is no problem for a mother to teach the daughter, but if mother-in-law talks to the daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law may feel offended and uncomfortable. Grandmother Judith echoes this view:

If I discuss with my daughter, whether she agrees or not, she won't be angry, but if it's my daughter-in-law, she might be angry with me, she feels that you are finding fault or criticising her, this wouldn't happen to my own daughter. This is normal, many of my friends repeat the same story, they don't agree with their daughters-in-law.

Serena said a new mother usually does not mind how her mother takes care of the grandchild, but may be wary of how her mother-in-law does. At the same time, the mother-in-law tends to be very cautious around her daughter-in-law's care practices.

Ruby said, 'my mother has spent many years with me, she knows me well, she is clear about my temperament and characters, she understands what I want, the relationship with my mother-in-law in not like that.' Ruby recommends that other parents use maternal grandparent childcare, but should never use paternal grandparents as caregivers.

Mina does have her parents-in-law to help because they are living under the same roof. She is paying lots of attention to the in-law relationship, worried that something might happen if she is not handling it well. 'My husband can have an angry outburst at home to her mother, because that's his home; similarly, I can have a temper tantrum with my mother, but of course not with my mother-in-law'.

Sofia tries to identify the reasons behind her in-law intergenerational conflicts. She explained that her mother-in-law blames her on many occasions, such as being home late after work. For her mother-in-law, 'the son is her sweetheart, the daughter-in-law is only an outsider', so she never blames Sofia's husband for coming home late or not helping at home because he is busy at work (Sofia is also working full-time). Sofia feels that '[her] mother-in-law is weird, always feeling that [I] snatched her son, when we got married, she asked my parents why my husband and I wanted to move out from their home'.

In my study of grandparents and adult children conflict does not only appear among in-laws, but also happens between grandparents and their own sons or daughters.

'The paradox of grandparenting': synchronised parenting and grandparenting

According to May, Mason and Clarke (2012) 'the paradox of grandparenting' is the contradiction and negotiation in the relationships among the three generations: grandparents, adult children and grandchildren. In Western families, it is the coexistence of the two contradicting cultural norms of 'being there' and 'not interfering' in grandparenting. In their UK research, May, Mason and Clarke examined grandparents' views about parenting and grandparenting. They found many tensions between the norms of limited involvement in the younger generations' lives on the one hand, and the practices of giving support on the other hand. Grandparents have a high level of consensus on self-determination for adult children and grandchildren. This means that grandparents should not interfere in their adult children's family and should have less involvement in their grandchildren's lives. On the other hand, grandparents agree they should be always be supportive, and grandparents are actually providing substantial and practical support to the adult children and grandchildren.

Similar contradictions have emerged in my study in Hong Kong. Some grandparents think that they should not interfere in their adult children's care styles but at the same time, they give suggestions and advice.

I don't agree with my adult children sometimes but I won't interfere into their way of teaching. I'll talk to them privately about my views, they might not agree, I still voice them, but I won't insist or instruct them to follow me, and we won't argue ... I give suggestions only. I think teaching children is their responsibility; I'm only watching and helping. (Grace, grandmother of four grandchildren, mother of three adult children)

I won't insist, I won't. Those children are theirs, they think that's the best for their children, I'll let them do it. There's no point to insist on my way. But, I'll give them suggestions, tell my adult children my views, it's okay if they don't listen ... we [grandparents] are just assisting them in childcare, I give my advice if they don't follow, there's nothing I can do. To be very frank, I brought up my two children, and they are now adults ... of course I use the best method to take care of my grandchildren too. (John, grandfather of two grandchildren, father of two adult children)

Ambivalence arises when both grandparents and adult children see the issues of the third generation as 'my' business. Grandparents have plenty of first hand parenting experience and feel an obligation to the younger generations in their family, which drives them to participate in nurturing their grandchildren. For grandparents, the children being taken care of are 'their children' as well as their grandchildren; these overlapping roles are difficult to manage.

Similar to the coexistence of the contradicting ideas of 'being there' but 'not interfering' in grandparenting in the UK, East Asian grandparents in a traditional patriarchal family structure see the third generation as 'my grandchildren' within the family lineage. Therefore, the contradiction of 'my children's children' and 'my grandchildren' arises. In particular, the concept of 'my grandchildren' is more important among paternal grandparents. There is a special concept of 'inner grandchildren' and 'outer grandchildren'. 'Inner grandchildren' are the children of 'my son' who bears the same family name and this means an expansion of 'my family'. Inner children are the ones who can inherit the family's reputation and wealth.

The sense of possession in the family looms large when paternal grandparents intervene with the fertility decisions of their adult children. For example, Winnie actually did not plan to have children because she and her husband did not want the financial burden. However, as her husband is the only son of her parents-in-law, if she did not have a child, the blood lineage stops. Her parents-in-law promised to help with childcare if she was willing to have a baby. The offer of childcare assistance from her parents-in-law was an important motivation for Winnie as she could not afford other childcare options as mentioned in Chapter 6. Katelyn also said that the concept of 'inner grandchildren' meant she must adopt paternal grandparents' childcare, which was not her preference. Her mother was available and willing to help taking care of her first baby, and she

preferred having her own mother to come and help out. However, her husband and paternal grandparents believed that they had primary responsibility to take care of their 'inner grandchildren'. Apart from the family roles, some conflicts are related to the external environment. I will discuss the changing care trends which eventually lead to different care practices and expectations among the two generations.

Generational differences in infant care

Conflicts in childcare approaches often centred on three things: self-care; food and nutrition; and discipline.

Self-care and safety

Some grandparents believe that children will acquire and develop self-care skills gradually, and intensive training is not necessary. Therefore, more assistance should be provided for very young children. Some parents, on the other hand, think that offering abundant assistance will spoil children, and negatively affect their ability to learn. They do not want their children to be over-reliant and think adults should not be too protective towards children.

Sometimes my grandchild can't do something by herself, then I must help her simply because she can't do it. But her parents won't help; her mum will ask her to try. Sometimes her mum blames me, "Grandma you shouldn't help her, she's grown up now, she shouldn't get so much help". The parents want their daughter to do everything by herself, even for putting socks on; we can only help when she really can't do it. For grandparents, we usually want to assist the child to finish the task. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

[My daughter] always ask her children to do many things by themselves ... asking them to vacuum the floor, put clothes into the washing machine, hang clothes on clothesline, my daughter teaches them many household chores, this isn't a bad idea, but the children are still too young to learn these, don't you think so? (John, grandfather of two children, father of two adult children)

From the parents' viewpoint, grandparents are over-protecting the children.

When grandma takes care of my first child, she tends to be nervous and over-parenting, in their generation, they aren't willing to 'let go' and let children explore. For example, when going to the playground, grandma will tell my child, "play around here, don't go to that area, and you must hold my hand when you walk up and down stairs ...". Therefore, my elder daughter has low motivation to explore her surroundings. She's very obedient, and

complies with rules all the time, because she follows the teaching style of her grandma. My husband thinks that for children nowadays, this isn't good, children should explore, but grandma keeps teaching her "you must hold my hand otherwise you will fall". My elder daughter is quite timid. Now my husband always tells my daughter, "you are grown up, not a child anymore, and even if you fall down, it's okay". Grandma's good intention was to ensure the child's safety. I think for a child, it's okay to fall and cry. Grandma is too protective. (Billie, mother of two children)

In particular, toddlers' self-feeding is a common point for arguments between parents and grandparents. At the age of 1-2, when toddlers are learning self-feeding, grandparents tend to offer some help as children are not using their utensils skilfully. However, parents believe that the baby must finish a meal entirely by themselves, without adults' aid, to acquire the skill.

When I told my adult children that their baby isn't eating much, they ask me if I feed her baby. Yes of course I feed her, because she's not willing to eat, so I must feed her. Then they blame me, 'don't feed her, let her eat by herself ...' Then I get irritated. My intention is to make sure the baby eats, for example eating porridge, when she was too young, I had to feed her, she couldn't feed herself actually, of course when she's around 2 years old, she should start eating by herself. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

Grandfather John: Sometime after eating for a while, he doesn't want to scoop anymore; I will help him finish the remaining small portion of food by spoon-feeding him. That's normal, yes? He still has appetite just that he lost interest in scooping ...

Researcher: But this isn't allowed?

Grandmother Loretta: Not allowed. My daughter won't allow it. The baby must scoop the food and eat by himself for the whole meal.

Food and nutrition

Disputes about nutrition indicate important differences in parents' and grandparents' views of feeding, weaning and introduction of adult diets to young toddlers. Parenting styles and expectations are always influenced by parenting experts in public debates (Long, 2004). The parenting advice from the experts is contradictory and parents are confused. Given a variety of parenting suggestions, parents might also find it very difficult to set the expectations and manage the care work of their children.

First, many parents in this study have the expectation that special meals should be prepared for young toddlers, but mostly grandparents provide an adult meal. Grandfather John explained the

request from his daughter, 'in the past, children eat with us; but now we need to cook separately for children, without any flavour—no salt, no sugar added'.

Second, the prevailing 'healthy diet' nowadays is different from in previous generations. When preparing a separate meal for children, parents believe that meals for children should include more servings of vegetables than meat. Sugar, oil and salt must also be reduced. In contrast, the grandparents tend to prepare more meat, as they think meat is nutritious. When grandparents were children and teenagers, they went through years of austerity during the post war period; for them, food, especially meat, is something rare and precious in their diet. This is an argument about the best diet for children. Parents are trying to gain a sense of control in their children's lives (Afflerback, Anthony, Carter and Grauerholz, 2014; Afflerback, Carter, Anthony, and Grauerholz, 2013; Mukherji, 1997).

The elderly tend to have more meat in meals, but our principle nowadays is 'more vegetables and less meat'. They always have more meat than vegetables in each meal. I must talk to them clearly on this point. However, even if I talk to them, they may not follow. Sometimes, they give less rice to the child; of course the child would love meat and vegetables more than rice. It's really strange, everyone knows that carbohydrates are important, but they can't do it in a child's meal. (Amber, mother of two children)

Winnie also explained that the 'adult food' in her mind is totally different from that in the grandparents' understanding. Her parents-in-law sometimes include Chinese ham and salted fish in their meals, and sometimes let her child try snacks and soft drinks. Winnie views these as 'adult food' not suitable for a child. For grandparents, the weaning child can eat anything but in a small portion; whereas for Winnie, her child should consume food with 'less flavour and light'. 'Grandparents say the children can eat everything now [after weaning], what they think is suitable food is different from what I imagine ... which I don't agree with at all'.

Cindy especially mentioned breastfeeding as an embarrassing situation. Her mother-in-law talked a lot about breastfeeding, which made her feel very stressed and uncomfortable. It is because mothers see breastfeeding as a personal project, in which planning, researching and learning are important aspects. Also mothers associate this project with pleasure and empowerment (Avishai, 2007), therefore they feel that they are challenged despite the effort they have made.

Every time when she asks whether I have enough milk for my baby, I feel enormous stress. I'm so annoyed because I have poor breast milk supply. Then she keeps challenging me by saying having formula milk is better. We have very different concepts about breastfeeding: she used formula milk for her children in the past, she didn't try breastfeeding at all. (Cindy, mother of one child)

Discipline

Sometimes there are divergent views between parents and grandparents on disciplining children. Both parents and grandparents have concerns about children's discipline, they want to provide discipline to the children so that they will behave well in the public and at home. With the same goal in providing discipline however, parents and grandparents have dissimilar preferences in relation to parenting styles.

In the grandparents' generation, they used mild corporal punishment on their children, such as smacking and spanking lightly, to discipline children when they did not behave. Corporal punishment is to 'use physical force towards a child for the purpose of control and/or correction, and as a disciplinary penalty inflicted on the body with the intention of causing some degree of pain or discomfort, however mild' (Australia Institute of Family Studies, 2014). The desired outcome is that children will listen to adults' instructions and behave.

For the grandparents in this research, using mild physical force is a way of showing that they are not easy-going or a 'pushover' carer. They want their grandchildren to take their instructions and teachings seriously. They expect to show that they are in charge in this childcare relationship. Both Grandmother Grace and Grandmother Martha felt that children can spot adults' weakness; if they know that their parents or grandparents are not stern, and that negotiation is possible, they will not listen and obey. Therefore, they believe adults should show their authority occasionally by mild physical punishment such as spanking and smacking children's palms.

For parents, physical punishment is not accepted. Parents now prefer lecturing their children when they are disobedient. Nagging and scolding are adopted instead of mild corporal punishment. It is generally recognised in the middle generation that the parent-child relationship should be more democratised, with more power and choices offered to children. They want them to understand why something is wrong. They tend to use a verbal approach to punish children by repeating the message and scolding them.

Grandparents found it very difficult to cope with their grown children's means of disciplining children. While smacking is not allowed, the parents scold their children angrily. Grandmother Martha takes care of her grandson intensively because his single father's job is shiftwork. At the same time she also occasionally helps her daughter to look after her elder child.

Maybe because he [the grandson] has lived with me since he was born, it's easier for me to discipline him. I really smack him. For my daughter's child, it's different. She and her husband have their own way of teaching, they prefer lecturing than smacking. I really don't have the same patience as them. Also, because they have a domestic helper, therefore, all of us need to cooperate in disciplining the children. Every carer has a different character, for me, I am soft-

hearted, not stern enough, I know I have this problem, so my grandchildren tend not to listen to me ... sometimes they throw a tantrum, because they know I'll soothe and comfort them ... yesterday my daughter asked me again to play deaf to the children's requests during their tantrums ... (Martha, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

Table 8-1 outlines elements of solidarity described by the informants in the interviews.

Managing intergenerational contradictions

In my research, care from family members was regarded as unconditional and natural. Setting rules and obligations in this relationship contradicts the value of trust among family members. Therefore, parents and grandparents try to develop other approaches to deal with these tensions and contradictions. Parents and grandparents developed these approaches of conflict management as a way to preserve family social capital. They do not want to destroy the connection and relationships among family members due to childcare arrangements.

Diplomatic packaging of instructions

As setting rules is not an accepted norm in grandparent childcare, both parents and grandparents seek to adopt good communication skills to facilitate the negotiations. However, while good communication is a common solution for many problems, it is a vague term. When prompted, informants said that 'communication' means the technique of conveying messages clearly between the two generations.

Most of the parents were aware of their incompatible roles in their grandparent childcare relationships, and communication skills were parents' preferred techniques for handling this situation. They needed to be very careful in expressing their expectations about childcare to grandparents. Many told me that instructions needed be 'packaged nicely' and presented to grandparents politely, in order to ensure the grandparents do not feel they are being challenged.

It's not easy to speak out. If you employ a helper, you can instruct the helper, and she must listen to you. If she doesn't listen, you can scold her. But I can't do this if the carer is my senior family member, so when I talk to them or ask them to follow something, I must be very skilful: package my requests nicely and politely. Even if I want to be firm on some points, I can only say it in a mild way. (Harper, mother of one child)

I need to package my expectations and instructions nicely; not to make grandmother angry, so it won't damage our relationship. This is really important for grandparent childcare relations.

If the carer is a domestic helper employed by me, in such an employment relation, I suppose the carer will get my instructions and work accordingly, and I can check with her work progress. But I can't do this to the grandmother. (Billie, mother of two children)

Grandparents also consider the importance of communication. For them, 'communication' is not about presenting requests in a polite way following the rules of respect and filial piety. Instead, they see the need to open up their minds to accept new ideas from the younger generations.

For example, Grandmother Susanna said:

Keep learning as you are ageing, such as how to communicate and get along with others. Being elderly, we need to keep notice of things happening around us, don't agonise about one unhappy thing, don't keep that in the heart, keep an open mind no matter what happens, I keep learning all the time. (Susanna, grandmother of three grandchildren, mother of four adult children)

Leah appreciates her parents for keeping abreast and up-to-date with social trend, they do not want to stay fixed in their ways; they are willing to try using smart phones and new mobile apps, and remain energetic such as through travelling. This made the communication with elder parents much easier for Leah.

Using maternal grandparents as a better option

East Asian mothers are now more inclined to ask the maternal grandmother to help with childcare. Despite notions of blood lineage and filial piety, maternal grandparents tend to offer more assistance in both the Western (Hank and Buber, 2009; Gray, 2005) and East Asian contexts (Lee and Bauer, 2013; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011).

While the concept of patrilineal family is still strong in East Asian families, many parents in this study are using maternal grandparents in childcare. Also, grandparents in my study reveal that they do not take the concept of 'inner/outer' grandchildren seriously. Grandmother Judith first helped her daughter to take care of her two children, and later her daughter asked her to help her younger brother to take care of his new born baby instead. Some friends commented to her, saying that she was more inclined to take care her own 'inner grandchild'. Grandmother Judith said she had not even considered this; she only helped out according to her adult children's needs. Similarly, Billie's mother did not have a special preference in having and taking care of 'inner/outer grandchildren', so she told Billie and Billie's brother, she would help take care of the first grandchild born despite the 'inner/outer grandchildren' concept.

The first reason for parents asking maternal grandparents for childcare is to avoid direct contact with a woman's mother-in-law. As discussed, for some families, more contact means more conflict. Both parents and grandparents felt mothers and daughters get along better; even if they have conflicts over childcare, it can be settled easily and they will not be angry with each other for a long time. But if the same thing happened between a mother- and a daughter-in-law, it can be a long-term problem. Parents compared their own parents and parents-in-law and explained to me that their parents-in-law are unreasonable.

The second reason is that families nowadays are less bound by Confucian values and tend to be more pragmatic in childcare arrangements (Lee and Bauer, 2013; Chen, Liu and Mair, 2011). Parents consider whether the elderly parents are available and suitable for childcare or not rather than just lineage. Billie and her husband asked the maternal grandmother for help because they trusted her more. Billie's husband knows that his own parents tend to spoil the children.

Indeed, some of the parents who are now using paternal grandparent childcare suggest not asking parents-in-law for childcare assistance to avoid possible troubles and problems. Cindy and Ruby attributed the fading relationships with their parents-in-law to childcare. And because of their depressing experiences, they concluded that using parents-in-law for childcare is not a satisfactory option for their family. Ruby is now living with her parents-in-law. She stayed at her own mother's home for the *co jyut*, and expected her mother would help with babysitting the children. Later her mother found that it was an unbearable burden to take care of both Ruby's sick father and Ruby's baby. Therefore, when the baby was 4 months old, Ruby moved back to the paternal grandparents' home.

When I went back home, I expected there'd be problems, and there'll be changes in our relationship [with parents-in-law], and finally this really happened, following my expectation. I don't complain to them directly; I talk to my husband and let him talk to his parents. In terms of the relationship, all of us can sense that, it is unhappy, with some anger too, from both sides. I feel that the relationship is changed, similarly they won't talk to me directly but my husband has told me. The relationship was not like this before having the baby. This change only happened after grandparent childcare. So if you tell me you will ask parents-in-law to take your child, I'd suggest you to give up this thought ... don't live with them and don't ask them to take care of your baby. This has really affected our relationship. (Ruby, mother of one child)

Harmony as the guiding rule

Avoiding conflict between the two generations is another method for handling the grandparent childcare relationship. Some grandparents and parents do not work on clarifying their roles and

relationships. Instead, both sides try to avoid confrontations over childcare. Grandparenting and parenting both involve the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, financial, social and intellectual development of children (Davies, 2000). In negotiating their roles, some grandparents disentangle the concept of grandparenting (and parenting) and confine themselves to only part of their roles. Some grandparents in this study alleged that their roles are simply carers who take care of their grandchildren's physical needs such as feeding and playing; they are only to watch them and make sure they are safe at home. They let their adult children attend to other needs. Grandmother Grace said, 'I think teaching children is their responsibility; I am only watching the children and helping out'. Grandfather John said, 'therefore, it all depends on what my daughter wants, she has her own responsibility [as a mother]'.

When my daughter scolds or teaches my grandchildren, I'll walk away for a while, I won't say a word, I don't want to interfere when my daughter is teaching her children. If I interfere by asking her not to scold my grandchildren, my daughter will blame me. (Miranda, grandmother of three children, mother of four adult children)

Sometimes I'm angry, but I won't voice it ... we always see each other; it's totally pointless if we feel abashed after an argument, I rather not take care of the baby if the situation becomes worse. (Judith, grandmother of three children, mother of two adult children)

We rarely argue, I have a high level of tolerance ... I won't utter a word, and they won't chide me either ... I find it very difficult to have the same thought as my adult children on some occasions ... I try to pander to them, to follow what they want ... although I don't think their way will work. (Miranda, grandmother of three children, mother of four adult children)

In negotiating the childcare roles and positions, some parents relinquish control over the grandparents' care styles to avoid conflict with them.

[If there is conflict] I won't insist. This is because they take care of the children quite well for most of the time. My friends also asked me to swallow the anger because I'm now relying on my parents-in-law for childcare. If you rely on them you need to tolerate ... I adjust my emotions by telling myself they're nice to my children, so as to balance my anger ... but it's hard to tolerate, I can't do it anymore and I share my feelings with my mum and friends and groan a lot. (Sofia, mother of two children)

I won't want to reach an impasse in our relationship because we're living together. I accommodate even I'm furious ... For something that I think I must stand firm, I'll do something my parents-in-law want and brush them off, then I get back to my original idea later. (Mina, mother of one child)

In this chapter, I have shown how the transition to parenthood and grandparenthood with the arrival of the third generation leads to redefinition and renegotiation of family roles. Conflicts happen when the two generations have different expectations of their roles in childcare arrangements. In this study, I found self-care training, safety, diet and discipline are the main points of conflict between parents and grandparents over childcare. Expectations are usually hidden, and when the two generations have frequent contact due to childcare, conflicts arise. The two generations manage their relationship by improving communication, packaging their requests courteously, following the other side's advice and holding their tongues.

Table 8-1 A summary of the relationships between the parents and grandparents regarding childcare

Name (pseudonym)	Mother/father /grandmother /grandfather	Couple relationship on childcare (for the parents only)	Relationship between parents and grandparents*	Degree of conflict (high/medium/low)	Main aspects of solidarity mentioned
Leah	Mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Slight conflict 	1. M-maternal GF	low	Affectual Structural Normative
			2. M- paternal GM	low	Associational
Winnie	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care mostly by mother - Slight conflict 	M- paternal GM & GF	high	Associational Structural
Cindy	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care mostly by mother - medium conflict 	M- paternal GM & GF	high	Associational Affectual Structural
Jade	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - care decisions mainly by mother - Care mostly by mother 	M- maternal GM	low	Associational Affectual Structural
Sofia	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care mostly by mother 	M- paternal GM & GF	high	Associational Affectual Functional Structural
Ruby	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care mostly by mother 	1. M- maternal GM	low	No details
			2. M- paternal GM & GF	high	Functional Structural
Amber	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care by both father and mother 	1. M- maternal GM & GF	high	Normative Structural
			2. F- maternal GM & GF	low	

Natalie	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care by both father and mother 	M-maternal GM	very low	Consensual Normative Structural
Harper	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care by both father and mother 	M-paternal GM	medium	Associational Affectual Structural
Billie	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care by both father and mother 	M-paternal GM	medium	Associational Affectual
			F-paternal GM	medium	
Katelyn Ronan	mother father	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions and care by father and mother - Conflict between couples 	M-paternal GF	low	Associational Normative Structural
			M-maternal GM	low	
			F-paternal GF	low	
			F-maternal GM	medium	
Serena	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care by mother only (single mother) 	M-maternal GM & GF	very low	Associational Functional Structural
Mina	mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care mostly by mother - Slight conflict - 	M- paternal GM & GF	medium	Associational Affectual Structural
Judith	grandmother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions and care by father and mother 	1. Paternal GM- M	medium	Associational Functional
			2. Paternal GM- F	very low	
Loretta John	grandmother grandfather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother - Care by both father and mother 	Maternal GM & GF-M	high	Normative Structural
Martha	grandmother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care decisions mainly by mother 	1. Maternal GM-M (Martha's daughter)	medium	Associational Affectual
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Care by grandmother - Parents divorced 	2. Paternal GM-F (Martha's son)	low	Associational Affectual Normative

Grace	grandmother	- Care by both father and mother	1. Paternal GM- M & F (Grace's son)	medium	Associational Affectual Functional Normative
		No details	2. Maternal GM- M (Grace's daughter)	medium	
		No details	3. Maternal GM- M (Grace's daughter)	medium	
Rosa	grandmother	- Care decisions mainly by mother	1. Paternal GM-M (Rosa's daughter-in-law)	medium	Associational Affectual Normative
			2. Paternal GM-F (Rosa's son)	low	
Susanna	grandmother	- Care by both father and mother	1. Maternal GM-M (Susanna's eldest daughter)	low	Functional Normative
		No details	2. Maternal GM-M (Susanna's 2 nd daughter)	low	
Belinda	grandmother	- Care decisions mainly by mother	1. Paternal GM-M (Belinda's daughter-in-law)	medium	Associational Affectual Functional Normative
			2. Paternal -F (Belinda's son)	medium	
Alicia	grandmother	- Care decisions mainly by mother	Maternal GM-M (Alicia's daughter)	low	Affectual
Sharon	grandmother	- Care decisions mainly by father	Paternal GM & GF-F (Sharon's son)	high	Associational Structural
Geraldine	grandmother	- Care decisions mainly by mother	Maternal GM-M (Geraldine's daughter)	low	Associational Functional Normative
Miranda	grandmother	- Care decisions mainly by mother	1. Maternal GM-M (Miranda's eldest daughter)	medium	Functional Normative
		- Care decisions mainly by mother	2. Maternal GM-M (Miranda's 2 nd daughter)	medium	

*Note:

M = mother F = father

GM = grandmother GF = grandfather

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Grandparent childcare arrangements in Hong Kong involve complex practices and values. This qualitative research has outlined the relational and emotional connections among the people involved in grandparent childcare: the solidarity, conflicts, ambivalence and dilemmas. This concluding chapter will summarise the factors influencing the arrangement and patterns of grandparent childcare found in this study.

Factors influencing grandparent childcare

At the beginning of this thesis, I listed key research questions guiding my research. I now address these questions in turn:

- What are the drivers of grandparent childcare? What factors influence such childcare decisions?

I found that the key factors influencing grandparent childcare decisions are twofold. Firstly, grandparent childcare is interconnected and infused with East Asian family traditions. Reciprocity is cherished in East Asian families. On the one hand, grandparents feel that they have the obligations to help their adult children because they had received assistance from their antecedent generation. On the other hand, the adult children are aware of and observe filial piety; they have a strong sense of commitment to support, obey and bring satisfaction to their elderly parents. In calling on their elderly parents for childcare, which can be a time-consuming and painstaking duty, the middle generation see themselves as failing to comply with the moral standard of filial piety. Yet, at the same time, childcare can bring their elderly parents a strong sense of gratification and opportunities to develop intimate intergenerational relationships. For the adult children, in relation to family traditions, there are both positive and negative outcomes when their elderly parents are called on for childcare. The middle generation attempts to manage this ambivalence by providing support to their elderly parents in cash or in-kind, thereby fulfilling their duty to support their parents, cover the family expenses and ensure their responsibility for their own children.

Secondly, grandparent childcare is shaped by a lack of options. Some parents utilise grandparent childcare due to limited other childcare options. Some parents hesitate to search for what they perceive to be limited services, particularly during the hectic time of new parenthood. Although some new parents give up searching after initial unsuccessful attempts,

others are able to locate public or subsidised services, but then give up due to the cumbersome administrative procedures, the high costs and unaccommodating service schedules.

For some parents the ideal childcare package would entail a combination of grandparent childcare and regulated care offered by public services. Not only would this benefit the child by providing the advantages of both forms of childcare, but would ease the care burden on grandparents. However, this combination is very difficult to achieve especially for children under 2 years of age.

- In Hong Kong, what are the patterns of provision of grandparent childcare and how do families negotiate these patterns?

There are diverse patterns of grandparent care in terms of the time given and duties undertaken. The arrangements and negotiations for these patterns are complex and shaped by different factors, including family members' employment status and anticipations, childcare expectations, childcare cost and living locations. Childcare arrangements in contemporary society usually do not involve only one option. It is very common to see parents using several childcare providers at the same time to balance their care and employment schedules and to meet their childcare needs. Grandparent childcare is usually included in a family's childcare package, either as regular care or occasional care.

The key finding is that grandparent childcare remains highly gendered. There are more grandmothers providing care than grandfathers, and grandmothers tend to undertake more actual and direct care work. In choosing between continuing paid employment and caregiving, it is usually mothers or grandmothers who leave work to become primary caregivers.

Grandparent childcare is forced on mothers, especially poorer mothers who must work long hours to survive and live well in contemporary Hong Kong. Grandparent childcare appears to be their only option when childcare cost and flexibility in care time are considered.

Grandfathers' efforts in childcare tend to be more relaxed and fluid. They mainly play with and entertain the grandchildren, with fewer grandfathers acting as the primary childcarer. However, from a generational perspective, more grandfathers are doing childcare than fathers, and they also put more effort into childcare than the time when they were still fathers.

The tensions due to childcare are obviously more serious between women in a family because care falls more on women due to social and family role expectations. This further intensifies the belief that care is a natural skill and the duty of women.

Grandparent childcare is becoming more intensive. Being entrusted by parents to give care to their children, grandparents experience a significant amount of stress from their care

responsibilities. Added to this is the need for grandparents to also try to meet the expectations of their adult children. Therefore, grandparents are spending more time and giving more focused attention to the grandchildren. It is very common to have one-on-one care, or even three to four grandparents taking turn to provide care in a family. They also keep a watchful eye on all the details related to caregiving.

- How do parents and grandparents see grandparent childcare and its value?

Grandparent childcare is highly valued by parents and grandparents as a substitute for parental care due to the inherent advantages of flexibility in care time and patterns and the possibility of low childcare cost. The responsiveness of grandparents to the needs of their adult children is an advantage of grandparent childcare. Grandparents can accommodate the childcare schedules of their adult children, and thus provide support either through regular childcare based on their office time or occasional care to fill the gaps in the schedule. This arrangement allows parents to adopt a mix of informal and formal childcare to fulfil their childcare needs. Grandparent childcare is considered to be more adaptable than other childcare options.

Grandparent childcare is about trust. The strong sense of trust also makes grandparent childcare highly valued. All parents in this study agree that trust is the foundation of care relationships. A kinship relationship is the key component of creating trust. A similar cultural background is also of value if blood ties do not exist between parents and carers. Grandparent childcare encompasses these two key components. The motivation of care provision is also critical in building trust. Families in this study relate their childcare practices to natural love and care from grandparents rather than profit-making. This moralistic trust (Gilson, 2003) is intrinsic and instrumental, and thus facilitates the cooperation by generating more trust.

In addressing the research questions, two overarching themes emerged that extend the knowledge of grandparent childcare in the East Asian context—the cultivation of family capital and the common experience of ambivalence.

Family capital

Despite the variation in childcare arrangements, each of the parents in this study regularly uses grandparent childcare. In order to examine the mobilisation of internal family resources across generations in grandparent childcare arrangements, I adopted the conceptual framework of family capital, which encompasses the human capital, financial capital and family-based social capital.

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of capital (1986), Coleman's study (1988, 1990) of family background and children's performance in school, and Quah's framework for the sustainability and transmission of social capital in Asian families (2003, 2009), I proposed in this study that grandparent childcare is a form of family capital and a practice of family capital development. In organising grandparent childcare, families are making use of the human capital within the family as grandparents apply their childcare skills and experience in assisting the middle generation and for the benefit of the third generation. Financial capital is better preserved when grandparents give up their paid employment to offer childcare at home; usually, the childcare cost is much lower than the market rate. Family-based social capital is involved since the bonding and connections among family members are crucial in the childcare arrangements. The relationship is mutual: grandparent childcare is arranged because families utilise the social capital, and in return, the connection is strengthened through the childcare arrangement. In the case of some families, however, they try to retain harmonious intergenerational relationships by minimising grandparent childcare due to the conflicts it engenders.

Ambivalence in childcare

Emotional processes are inevitable in caregiving. Feelings of contradiction and powerlessness are evident in the childcare experiences documented in this study. Some parents find that while their childcare needs are settled, the current care arrangement is not their ideal one. For example, some mothers want to practice maternal care but the family financial situation does not allow this. Some parents look for childcare services in the community, however, access to such services is limited.

Childcare provided by families enhances family solidarity and the intergenerational exchange of wealth and support but increases conflict at the same time. As analysed in Chapter 8, the tensions are due to the contradictions in deep-rooted familial roles, gender roles, parenting expectations and the gap between generations. The tensions are also related to cultural changes over time and not only occur between family members, but, as shown in the previous chapters, also exist between genders (couples, daughter-in-law and mother-in-law) and generations (between adult children and elder parents).

Families try to negotiate their roles and positions to reduce the conflict and ambivalence in grandparent childcare arrangements. As these ambivalences are deep-rooted in the complex system of family, gender, state and culture, it is not an easy problem to ameliorate.

This analysis of family capital and ambivalence in childcare contributes insight into macro questions of the ethics of care, and the development of family and childcare policy in the East Asian region.

The ethics of care

The ethics of care concerns interpersonal relationships and the provision of care. For care theorists, contextual details are important in any discussion of care. Prevailing and traditional ethics lay stress on the relationship between the society and individuals. Care theorists, in contrast, bring family into the comprehension of ethical behaviours.

Family capital and family values are critical in East Asia families. The value of filial piety, reciprocity, mutual help, respect, and so on are enduring moral standards. The emphasis of Confucian values provides the foundation of the development of care ethics for East Asian families. However, a strong sense of family obligations does not guarantee smooth childcare arrangements at home. While harmony is a traditional and common goal among family members, this does not solve all conflicts and contradictions within a family.

Trust is a fundamental element in the parent-childcarer relationship. Similar elements have been found in foundational studies in East Asia (Quah, 2009). Parents prefer to provide parental care for their children; if this is not possible, they entrust the daily childcare routine to their parents (the children's grandparents). If parents consider utilising a childcare centre or domestic helpers for childcare, they also make their decision based on whom they trust. This trust can mean someone with connections such as a helper recommended by friends or family members; a centre that someone had attended; or a place they have already visited and observed.

Policy

I argue that the volume and prevalence of grandparent childcare will increase in the times ahead. The demographic developments outlined in Chapter 3, including increasing female employment, changing family structures and the ageing population suggest the need for childcare is increasing and also offering increasing opportunities for informal care in intergenerational families. At the same time, East Asian family policy ideologies only allow for limited support from the state. Grandparent childcare therefore is a convenient way to meet the 'care deficit'. It also possesses some features of quality care perceived by parents and families,

with a very long history of family care, and beliefs that familial care is the best for children due to the intimacy and love.

More evidence confirms that the use of informal and formal care is complementary rather than a substitution (Allen, Lima, Goldscheider and Roy, 2012; Peek, Zsembik and Coward, 1997). Specifically in childcare, a recent study also suggests that formal childcare and grandparent childcare are two 'complementary forms of support' (Thomese and Liefbroer, 2013: 417). However, the important linkage between social institutions and care is still vague in East Asia. The conflicts and tensions created and imbedded in familial childcare arrangement are largely neglected by the policy makers.

'It takes a village to raise a child', an old African proverb says. With the evidence from this study, I argue that care should be a matter for the whole society. I challenge the confinement of care to the intimate circle of family even for those cases in which a family is solely using informal childcare, as their childcare choices have necessarily taken into account factors outside the family. Care policy is 'part and parcel of the current restructuring of the welfare state, a restructuring that involves both a recasting of the overall relationships between family, market and state, and a transformation of gender relations and norm' (Morel, 2007: 618). My investigation of the childcare decision-making shows that parents consider a cluster of factors involving other social institutions in a society. While childcare options seem to be a personal choice of the parents, it is shaped and underpinned by available resources in the society and the family, the belief of good care, employment and financial ability. This is similar to childbearing decisions as discussed in the global macro demographic trends (Chapter 3), when people are asking why young people are having fewer children or no children in East Asia, the 'marriage package' of marriage, childbearing and care burden needs to be considered all together.

Another issue is the support and recognition for grandparents who provide childcare service. Although grandparents provide childcare for their adult children to ease the burden of work-family balance, their contributions to childcare provision are neglected by the wider society. Despite the varied reasons for choosing grandparent childcare, financial support is an important issue. Some grandparents are already retired and living on their own savings; others are actually quitting their paid employment to look after their grandchildren; others limit their working hours in paid employment to juggle childcare and work roles. In this way, the work-family balance problem is now extended to the grandparent generation. Family-friendly workplace policies, such as parental leave and flexible working time, can help parents to mitigate the stress of childcare, but grandparents are not entitled to a full range of these policies. Policy development needs to be extended to address this.

In Australia, for example, government agencies and NGOs are now working together to tailor policies for grandparents who care for grandchildren, so as to give them support and flexibility between care work and employment ('Ageing population to require grandparent-friendly workplaces', *Courier Mail*, 2010; Council on the Ageing, 2014). In the US, advocates urge the government to recognise the critical role of grandparents in childcare by providing leave and an insurance fund (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2013).

The new proposal in Hong Kong for promoting grandparent childcare aims to decrease the demand for formal childcare and to free mothers from childcare and allow them to return to the workforce. As discussed in Chapter 3, in promoting grandparent childcare, the governments of Hong Kong, Japan and Korea have started training programmes for grandparents. In Taiwan and Singapore there are subsidies provided to families using grandparent childcare.

The Hong Kong Government has been giving a lot of publicity to the positive side of grandparent childcare through advertisement and reports ('A second chance at parenting', *Hong Kong Government News*, 2016; Social Welfare Department, HKSAR Government, 2016). If the government is keen to introduce policies promoting grandparent childcare, then it is necessary to understand the considerations of parents and grandparents. Studying family processes and dynamics are indispensable. It is important to appreciate the synergy generated by mutual support between parents and grandparents in childcare, but at the same time, the complications and issues should also be addressed. This study implies that, for some families, there are intergenerational problems in childcare that are unable to be negotiated and managed by themselves. Policy options should support different options for parents to fulfil their care duties during the transition to parenthood and this might include support for grandparents too.

Personal statement

I shared my personal connection with this thesis in the Introduction—the grandparent childcare experience in my family. My maternal grandmother was my main carer as my parents were both working full-time. The year I started this study, my grandmother was 82 years old. She suffered a minor stroke and began to deteriorate physically. In her final days, she was frail and hospitalised. I flew back home and spent every afternoon with her for an entire month. It was impossible to send my grandmother to a government-subsided nursing home for professional care due to the long waiting lists. Therefore, the women in my family, my mother, my aunt and me, learnt new caring skills from the health care professionals—tube-feeding, wound-cleansing, simple physiotherapy exercises, massage, and so forth—with the hope that she might recover. Care provision is a strenuous process of learning and practicing. Also, this

care arrangement was possible only because my mother and my aunt are retired and I was on leave. Despite the strain, the three generations (my grandparents, my parents, and me) created an important shared memory.

The sociological and feminist approach I used in this study illuminated key elements and dynamics embedded in the caring process. Among the various types of caregiving, I have explored the patterns, choices and combinations of childcare provision with a focus on grandparents' important role. Various institutions within the community simultaneously buttress the provision of care in society. Therefore, the dynamics of care—both needs and provisions—can only be understood by considering the interplay between the family/household, the state, the market and the non-profit-making sectors (Razavi, 2007).

My grandmother passed away in December 2014 after the research proposal for this thesis was confirmed by my faculty. During her life, my grandmother was a working mother, a full-time mother, and then offered assistance to her adult children in taking care of their young children; then she received care from her descendants in her old age.

Care is needed by every human being at different stages of our lives. Caregiving is a skill that needs to be acquired by training and learning. Love and family relationships do not create care skills naturally, but these do provide the motivation and the obligation to learn the skills and to provide care. Personal expectations, family capital, employment, gender ideologies, social policies and state support all contribute to shaping the childcare provision patterns.

If care is valued in the society, and the government is plays a role in supporting and valuing caregiving, the childcare provided for me and the care my family arranged for my frail grandmother would be very different. The one who received care would not be weighed down by a strong sense of guilt for being a burden to his/her family.

I hope this thesis has provided knowledge and ideas related to childcare, which will contribute to the valuation of care work and the development of care policy in the future, so that all members of society can undertake care duties and receive needed care in their life. Although it can be painstaking and demanding, there is love and satisfaction in a caring relationship, and this should be supported by enlightened policy makers.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview guide

For Parents:

Begin with storytelling:

Could you please tell me how did your parents come to involve in childcare for you?

Why do you want to get into talk with me on the issue of childcare?

Semi-structured interview questions (to be chosen according to the narration by the informants)

- Which children are being taken care of by grandparents? (Prompts: age, gender).
- When did the childcare by grandparents started?
- Why are you asking your parents for help in childcare? *
- How did you ask your parents for help? *
- How did you and your parents decide on the childcare time and arrangement?*
- What are the advantages for having your parent(s) to help taking care of your children?
- What are the challenges for having your parent(s) to help taking care of your children?
- What is the value of your parents' childcare role?*

*the most important questions

For Grandparents:

Begin with storytelling:

Could you please tell me how you come to be a grandparent childcarer?

Why do you want to get into talk with me on the issue of childcare?

Semi-structured interview questions (to be chosen according to the narration by the informants)

- Which children are you caring for? (Prompts: age, gender).
- When did the childcare by grandparents started?
- Why are you taking care of your grandchild(ren)?*
- How did your adult children ask you? How did you and your parents decide on the childcare time and arrangement?*
- What are the rewards of providing care for your grandchild?
- What are the challenges of providing care for your grandchild?
- What is the value of your role as childcarer?*

*the most important questions

Appendix II: Major government documents reviewed in this study (in chronological order)

Year	Policy Paper
1965	White Paper - Aims and Policy for Social Welfare in Hong Kong
1966	Lady Gertrude Williams' report
1973	White Paper - Social Welfare in Hong Kong: The Way Ahead
1979	White Paper - Social Welfare into the 1980s
1981	White Paper on Kindergarten Education
1991	White Paper - Social Welfare into the 1990s and Beyond
1991	Hon. Lee Martin moved the motion on childcare
1994	Hon. Hui Yin-fat moved the motion of family policy
1997	Policy Address 1997
1998	The Five Year Plan for Social Welfare Development in Hong Kong – Review 1998
1998	Policy Address 1998
1999	Policy Address 1999
2000	Policy Address 2000
2001	Policy Address 2001
2001	Hon. Law Chi-kwong moved the motion of family policy
2002	Policy address 2002
2003	Report on Task Force of Population Policy
2003	Policy Address 2003
2003	First Report of the HKSAR under the UN Convention on Rights of the Child
2004	Policy Address 2004
2005	Policy Address 2005
2005	Harmonisation of Pre-primary services
2006	Policy address 2006
2006	Enhancing Population Potential for a Sustainable Future
2007	Policy Address 2007
2008	Policy Address 2008
2008	Neighbourhood Support Child Care Project
2009	Policy Address 2009
2009	Second Report of the HKSAR under the UN Convention on Rights of the Child
2010	Policy Address 2010
2011	Report on Long-term Social Welfare Planning in Hong Kong
2011	Policy Address 2011
2012	Policy Address 2012
2013	Population consultation paper – “Thoughts for Hong Kong”
2013	Policy Initiatives of Home Affairs Bureau
2013	Policy address 2013
2014	Policy address 2014
2015	Policy address 2015
2015	Population Policy: Strategies and Initiatives
2016	Policy Address 2016