SUSTAINING MIDDLE-CLASSNES: STUDYING THE LIVES OF INDIAN WORKING MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN IN MALAYSIA

SALLY ANNE MALAR PARAMANATHAN

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FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA KUALA LUMPUR

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is middle-class Indian women in Malaysia; those who are mothers, are educated, and who hold professional jobs. This thesis explores the ways in which middle-class Indian mothers in Malaysia struggle to have an identity. These women have the achievements necessary for a national identity of successful working motherhood. But in reality, there are obstacles that debilitate their self-actualisation. This thesis also takes a look at the lives of the children of these mothers in an introductory manner. The children's lives are juxtaposed alongside that of their mothers, and their navigation of life is also accounted for.

Through the use of a qualitative methodology, the finding chapters looked at how Education, Time, and Work Experience affect the lives of these mothers and their children. It is found that children's education is crucial in the lives of middle-class Indians and they do all that they can to ensure their children do well in school. Middle-class values continue to remain entrenched through the monolith role of education. Furthermore, how the mothers and children manage time is examined and it is found that strict adherence to time-tables and schedules evidence a middle-class lifestyle for these mothers. Following that, the mothers' working experience is explored, together with the children's opinion on it. In talking about the challenges of paid employment, they raised the issue of discrimination based on hierarchical patriarchy and ethnicity. However, the pressures from their personal and private lives were often the more prominent. In the concluding chapter, the discussion on whether these mothers are able to sustain middle-class values is brought to a close. It is found that a certain degree of empowerment *is* achieved, but there are still areas of inequality to contend with.

ABSTRAK

Fokus kajian ini adalah wanita India dari kelas menengah di Malaysia; mereka yang merupakan golongan ibu, berpendidikan, dan bepekerjaanan profesional. Tesis ini meneroka bagaimana ibu-ibu India kelas pertengahan di Malaysia terlibat dalam pembentukan identiti mereka. Mereka mempunyai pencapaian yang diperlukan bagi memaparkan satu identiti nasional keibuan yang berjaya. Tetapi terdapat halangan-halangan yang melemahkan aktualisasi diri mereka. Tesis ini juga memperkenalkan kehidupan anak-anak ibu-ibu ini. Kehidupan anak-anak ini disandingkan bersama ibu-ibu mereka, dan perjalanan kehidupan mereka juga diambil kira.

Melalui penggunaan kaedah kualitatif, bab-bab penemuan melihat bagaimana Pendidikan, Masa, dan Pengalaman Kerja mempengaruhi kehidupan ibu-ibu ini dan anak-anak mereka. Didapati bahawa pendidikan adalah penting dalam kehidupan masyarakat India kelas pertengahan dan mereka lakukan apa yang mereka boleh untuk memastikan anak-anak mereka berjaya dalam pendidikan. Nilai-nilai kelas menengah terus kekal berakar melalui peranan monolit pendidikan. Tambahan pula, bagaimana ibu-ibu dan anak-anak mereka menguruskan masa diterokai dan didapati bahawa pematuhan kepada jadual waktu dan jadual kerja menonjolkan bukti gaya hidup kelas pertengahan ibu-ibu ini. Mereka juga tertekan untuk menunjukkan kejayaan dalam mengibu dengan meluangkan banyak masa untuk tujuan ini. Pengalaman kerja ibu-ibu ini juga diteroka, bersama-sama dengan pendapat anak-anak mereka. Semasa menceritakan cabaran pekerjaan, mereka membangkitkan isu diskriminasi berdasarkan patriarki, hierarki dan etnik tetapi tekanan dari kehidupan peribadi mereka lebih menonjol. Kesimpulan dibuat dimana dengan mengekalkan nilai-kelas menengah suatu tahap pemerdayaan dicapai tetapi dalam ruang lingkup tertentu mereka masih berdepan dengan ketidaksamaan.

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I start this page with the same sentence I used in the acknowledgement page of my Masters thesis, nineteen years ago:

The person who has finished this thesis is certainly different from the person who started it.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the two most important people in my life; my husband, Daniel Dharminder Singh, and my daughter, Qarlene Rishiqa Dharminder.

<u>Daniel</u>, you have often been the wonderful, taken-for-granted husband! Words cannot express how grateful I am for the multiple sacrifices you have made so that I can continue with this degree. With your pioneering work with Ignite, and my PhD starting at the same time, I can't believe we have made it thus far. Thank you for being the very present father who has enabled us to pull through as a tight family unit. You have been the stalwart and the anchor of my life. Thank you for showing me that I have wings to ride the storms, and how it is often not whether I can, but whether I want to.

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Thank you, my family, for shaping who I am today. I owe you two one – for life. :)

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LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

UN   The United Nations (an intergovernmental international organisation established in 1945 to promote international co-operation).

CEDAW   The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (an international human rights treaty for women, adopted by the United Naitons in 1979).

CRC   Convention on the Rights of the Child (an international human rights treaty for children, adopted by the United Nations in 1989).

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"Feminism's agenda is basic: ... It asks that women be free to define themselves...."

- Susan Faludi (1991, xxiii)

1.1 Preamble

The Indian community are an ethnic minority in multi-cultural Malaysia. Having come from India a few generations ago, the community has experienced multi-layered actualities as part of their historical processes. This thesis will look at a slice of this community's life; focusing on mothers and children of the middle-class. Various contexts, both past and existing, that have influenced the group of studied mothers and their children will be the focus. The background to the current context is vital, as it sheds light to the complexities of current lived reality. The next section will cover the historic past, and the rest of the chapter will explain the development of the thesis topic as a whole.

1.2 Ethnic Historicity

Indians were said to be existent in peninsular Malaya (as it was known then) ever since the late 1700s. According to Kernial Singh Sandhu, "Indian sepoys, lascars, and domestic servants were present in Penang from the very first day of its founding" (Sandhu, 2006, p.155). However, when the British advisers of the East India Company in Calcutta decided to increase their revenue by trading with Malaya, the import of Indian immigrants increased. These Indians played a major role in the colonial hope to expand the rubber industry in Malaya. Although Indonesian and Chinese immigrants were also employed, it was especially the Indian immigrants who were brought in to work on the large rubber plantations. A steamship subsidy was inaugurated in 1887, and two decades later, the

British formed the Indian Immigration Committee to encourage and supervise Indian migration (Sandhu, 2006).

Together with the Indian labour migration, professional, commercial and other non-labour migration was also occurring, although "comparatively fewer" in number (Sandhu, 2006, p.153). "Substantial numbers of English-educated Indians" began to arrive in Malaya (Sandhu, 2006, p.154); those who had benefited from the "colonial education policy" laid down by the East Indian Company in India (Holmes, 1967, p.18).

These men were needed to take up vacancies in the large administrative bureaucracies that the British set up here, in line with the system they had developed in India. Indian men was the major ethnic composition that filled up vacancies "in the rapidly expanding government services" in the late 1890s (Sandhu, 2006, p.156).

Although I will be referring to the blanket term of 'Indian' throughout this thesis, the Indians who came to Malaya were from diverse and complex ethno-linguistic compositions in India. Numerous historical references had only referred to Indians as from the 'North' or from the 'South'. Sandhu himself uses these convenient terms, and states that South Indians made up the majority of the Indian population with "the Tamil group" constituting "more than eighty-two percent of the total Indian population of Malaya" (Sandhu, 2006, p.160). In spite of this mentioned majority, it must be acknowledged that Sri Lankans, or the Ceylonese Tamils, were also part of the 'Indians' who came to Malaya (Rajakrishnan, 2006). Manickam (2010) gives a brief account to the other ethno-linguistic sub-groups that had also come into the country – the Ceylonese Tamils, the Telugus, the Malayalees, and the Chettiars from South India, as well as the Sikhs, the Hindustanis, the Sindhis, the Gujeratis, and the Bengalis from North India. Due

to the "ethnic, cultural, language, and class differences" of each Indian sub-ethnic group that resulted in complex and nuanced "divisions within the…[Indian] community", I choose to refer to the 'Indian' in general in the course of this thesis (Puthucheary, 2006, p. 347).

The Indian diaspora to Malaya in the late 19th century and the early 20th century is a chronicle of history where the female entity is hardly mentioned. History books showcase the entry of this population into a host nation, yet obscure the validity of a gendered lens (Bem, 1994). Bem had explained how androcentrism, or male-centredness, defines male experience as the norm, and female experience as a deviation from the norm (Bem, 1994).

While historical texts reveal that the majority of the early immigrants were male (Nanjundan 1950; Sandhu, 2006), this fact carries the hidden assumption that history is his-story: this explains how perceptions of social reality are male-based.

The rare mention of women in relation to migration into Malaya was actually found in a study prepared by S. Nanjundan, as the Economic Adviser to the Government of India, in Indians in Malayan Economy (1950). In this study, women were mentioned on three different occasions. In the first, Nanjundan explains how "much pioneering work" like jungle-clearing and rubber planting had to be done in the early years, and how "deaths from malaria and other diseases" were quite high among Indian immigrants (Nanjundan, 1950, p.11). These were the reasons why female labourers were initially very few. Other reasons that explain the initial shortage of female labour were:

> Since the average duration of stay of the labourer in Malaya was only three years and the country was at a considerable distance from India, the majority of the labourers did not take their wives and children with them to Malaya (p. 11).

The second reference to women was made after the author explained the 1938 ban on emigration. Pursuant to this ban, the only emigration that was allowed was for the "wives and children of labourers already resident in Malaya" (Nanjundan, 1950, p.33).

The third reference to women was also in relation to legalities, this time to female labour. "Female labourers in the estates" were mentioned, together with the supposed provision of "maternity benefits" and "a creche with food and attendants" - with regards to the stipulations of the Labour Code (1950, p.31). From these three accounts, we see that the approach to women was in relation to statistics and legislation. The experiences of these 'invisible' Indian women in coming to Malaya, and how their children were born in Malaya are absent entities in written historical texts.

Supernor (1983) mentioned Indian women but how they were "conservatively secondary and supportive of the men" (Supernor, 1983, p.138). J.R Daniel mentioned Indian women, but in relation to Christian women's "typical activities" (Daniel, 1992, p.136). There have been numerous Malaysian Indian female scholars who have reported on the arrival of the Indian community to Malaya. Amarjit Kaur (1973), Ampalavanar (1981) and Puthucheary (2006) are some of the noted ones. However, most of their accounts are with reference to the Indian population in general, and therefore, 'naturally' androcentric.

When Malaya gained independence in 1957, the problems with colonial powers were overcome. The freedom gained from external forces implies an internal collectively of solidarity and resilience (Gellner, 1983; Said, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1990). And yet historians were also realistic with regards to internal problems that would need to be addressed, even though a nation enjoyed external freedom from a foreign rule. Provencher mentioned issues that post-War freedom would not have resolved. In his words, "(i)f

nothing else, the Japanese occupation had increased the tension between the ethnic groups of Malaya" (Provencher, 1975, p.97). Gaining independence did not resolve problems of minority ethnic identity.

Meyer identified the internal "plural racial issue" (Meyer, 1966, p.86) as the fifth column that would call for new psychological orientations to deal with it. Sure enough, on 13th May 1969, just three days after Malaysia's 3rd general elections, the infamous racial riots occurred, as Malays reacted to the ethnic jibes of the Chinese. This signalled that a rising Malay class was not happy that migrants were having a proportionate share in the country's economic pie. In 1971, the government, under the newly-elected Prime Minister, Tun Abdul Razak, launched the New Economic Policy (NEP) as a solution to uproot the economic and social disparities which fuelled racial antagonism. Official statistics classified the racial groups only into "Malays and non-Malays" (Puthucheary, 2006, p.353).

Academic literature written in the 1970s confirmed the need to secure the Malay space as the main, in socio-economic terms. Hamzah Sendut (1976) gives an account of 'rapid' urbanization in Malaysia, showcasing the economic differences between the Malays and the Chinese. Many reasons justify "the economic disparity" of the Malays compared to "the more stabilized Chinese population" (Sendut, 1976, p.77). In 1971, the newly-formed National Unity Advisory Council requested for data "about income distribution in Malaysia" from the Economic Planning Unit and the Department of Statistics. Although 'Malay', 'Chinese' and 'Indian' communities were ethnically identified, statistics basically boiled down to how the "total Malay population" should be given priority over the "total non-Malay population" (Lim, 1971, p.71). The outcomes and conclusions of these works were in line with the national agenda: how the Malays needed

government aid because "non-Malays tend to hold a larger percentage of the higher echelon and better-paying jobs" (Lim, 1971, p.62). Recommendations in reducing income disparities included "restraints" that have "to be placed on the ethnic groups which dominate modern-type economic activities" (1971, p.106). In the light of greater economic disparities between the Malays and the Chinese, the Indian community as a minority was economically overshadowed.

The Indians continued to face other forms of hardships and opposition. The diasporic Indians living in Malaya supported political activities that were related to India. They envisioned freedom for India, and for themselves, through the party initiated by Subash Chandra Bose; the Indian Independence League (IIL) (Arasaratnam, 2006). But India gained independence without the help of this left-wing party. Nehru rode on the patriotism of these local Indians in the 1940s and 1950s, planning for a post-war, united South Asia. But this "vague and idealistic" idea did not come to pass (Thompson & Adloff, 1955, p. 60).

The local Indians faced great disillusionment when their loyalty to the leaders of their motherland could not make their lives any easier. They now had to embrace Malaya not as a host country that they could escape from and go back to India, but a country they had to call their own.

Perhaps what makes the situation worse for the Indians is that the Chinese were also an ethnic minority who were marginalised, but due to a few factors, they could progress in life. The Chinese were economically savvy, and they were willing to take risks. The Chinese dominance in the economy unconsciously "hastened the process of reducing Indian employment opportunities in the public service further" (2006, p.353). They were

also free of a divisive caste hierarchy, and "though diverse in terms of linguistic and geographical origins, they were much more homogenous culturally" (Muzaffar, 2006, p. 215). It is a sad predicament that their position within the macro context of society has always been measured according to economic achievement, and has therefore always proved insignificant. The emotions and experiences of Indian men and women's everyday life have not only been unspoken of, but also unidentified.

The Indian community per se as a minority group is still under-represented, although there have been recent political drives to minimize discrimination towards ethnic minorities. '1 Malaysia' was officially initiated by Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak on Malaysia Day, 16 September 2010. This was to emphasize the importance of national identity over all other identities, especially ethnicity.[1] Although a good move, this did not alter public discourses on the Indian community. Common issues of the past continued, and this only entrenched the perceptions of 'Indians' in Malaysian ethnography. In the words of Appudurai and Dass (2008), Malaysian Indians became a "polyglot group conveniently covered under the label 'Indian'" (Appadurai & Dass, 2008, p. 30).

Since "the majority" of Indian community belonged to the "'labour migrant class'", it is of course most suitable that the problems of the labour class are given main consideration in academic discourses (Appudurai & Dass, 2008, p. 30).

However, writers and analysts of academic discourses tend to focus on the 'problematisation' of these main issues, emphasizing only poverty-induced social ills. This approach tends to equate Indians only with social ills; thus negating all other aspects of life that Indians may also experience together with other ethnicities in the country. For

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[1]www.1malaysia.com.my/en/the-story-of-1malaysia

example, whenever the Indian 'middle-class' is mentioned, it is only in relation that they be challenged to alleviate the status of the Indian community in general (Appudurai & Dass, 2008; Tate, 2008; Manickam, 2010). These texts focus on poverty alleviation and political mediation. The situation of Indians, they surmise, is one which needs great political and social intervention. All three texts make a plea to middle-class Indians to come forward to initiate ethnic cohesion for the entire community. Any other concern that may affect middle-class Indians in general, like education, household consumption, or salary increase, is absent. This explains the "marginalisation of sorts of the Indian middle-class" (Muzaffar, 2006, p. 226).

In terms of media representations, Alagappar and Lean (2010) explore how a local newspaper frames the concerns of the Malaysian Indians. Based on a sampling period in 2007, the writers reveal the narrow "thematic frames" that surround the depiction of this group (2010, p. 173). 'Tamil language' and 'Tamil schools' seem to be the perennial topics that continue to be discussed. Interestingly Tamil schooling is only for the primary level in Malaysia, and this creates a very limited public profile of what it means to be Indian. This is especially so since there are only 523 primary Tamil schools in the nation today (Manickam, 2010). On 20th February 2014, a local daily, The Sun, carried an article that showed how a request for a secondary Tamil school was turned down by the Education Ministry.

Unconsciously, this example implies that the concerns of the Indian population at large are related only to learning Tamil in schools. This over-emphasis has the effect of perpetuating the Indians' marginality (Muzaffar, 2006). Larger contexts of potential progress, that are pertinent to the Indian community, as they are to the other ethnic components in the nation, are eclipsed.

Some scholars offer insight into why prominence based on ethnicity continues to be featured in the nation. Daniels (2005) mentions how Article 153 in the Malaysian Constitution supports the position of the Malays as the main ethnic group: "their political dominance and position as the privileged natives" was secured (Daniels, 2005, p.40). Ng et al (2006) also mentions "the exclusive domain of particular ethnic groups", referring to the Malays (Ng et al, 2006, p. 23). The Chinese, although an ethnic minority, possess educational and monetary strengths to subvert "Malay symbolic advantages"; remaining prominent in their position of minority (Daniels, 2005, p.177).

The Indians, on the other hand, do not have such advantages, and continue to be identified with labour class issues, like improvements in rubber estate living conditions or in Tamil schools. The middle-class Indian community in Malaysia continue their struggle for an identity posed by the internalization of contradictory notions of being an Indian in Malaysia, and yet belonging to the middle-class (Daniels, 2005).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis is to study the 'unseen' and 'unheard' lives of middle-class Indian women and children living in Malaysia. This is the statement of the problem. These women and children as a hidden community is problematized, and the exploration of their lives will cover sociological, ethnic, historic, and political viewpoints. This 'multi-focal' study is part of an emerging demand for space "for [the] recognition of fragile and previously … unspoken subjectivities" (Taylor & Spencer, 2004, p. 1). The identity of the women and children in this research needs to be explored within "the specific dynamics of the social context" (Taylor & Spencer, 2004, p. 4).

These individuals' lives are studied within the framework of patriarchy. In other words, the mothers and children I research on are expected to adhere to cultural assumptions of what 'woman' and 'child' mean in a Malaysian society, based on a patriarchal lens. These women and children struggle to fit into the fixed boundaries of class and ethnicity imposed on them by society's patriarchal norms. Being 'Indian' and economically well-off is not normative in popular narratives. This ambivalence is made complicated due to the shifts of globalisation faced by modern Malaysia. This is because their class position causes them to be roped in to meet the national goal of becoming a developed nation in a fast-progressing region. And yet, they are expected to do so with an identity that is not seen nor heard publically, let alone celebrated. It is within this complex social context, that the lives of middle-class Indian women and children will be studied.

1.4 The Research Questions

Although the research questions are subjective in nature, and developed according to the participants' willingness to elaborate on their perceptions, there are three broad research questions. The importance of the concept of patriarchy in this research is not mentioned to the research participants. This is to ensure that the women and children are unaware of the researcher's own hypothetical interests (the Hawthorne effect), which in turn will not influence their responses. The analysis of the findings will thus be more objective, as well:

1.4.1 "**How do you view your educational experience?"**

The mothers are asked to review their own girlhood experiences of going to school, and the approaches taken by their parents on education. They are also asked to convey their ideas of planning for their children's future.

The children are asked about their schooling experiences and how they view homework, tuition and school activities. Their parents' approach to their study patterns is also asked of the children.

1.4.2 "How do you manage your time?"

For the mothers, the detailed questions cover aspects of time-management including the time taken to commute (to and from work), do errands and housework, and look into children's activities. The mothers are also questioned on whether they had a support system, and if they spend any time on leisure.

For the children, the detailed questions cover their version of time-management; schooling hours, time taken to commute, tuition, and extra-curricular activities. The children are also asked if they have any spare time / hobbies, and whether they / their families spend time on leisure.

1.4.3 "How do you value the decision to work?"

The detailed questions cover issues pertaining to the mothers' growing up experiences (comments from their parents regarding their future working role), their current work experiences (both positive and negative aspects), and their perceptions about women's 'decision-making' work status from the perspective of a national socio-economic policy.

The children are asked on how they feel about having a working mother, and whether or not they would prefer a stay-home parent. They are also asked about their relationship with their mothers.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the perceptions and attitudes of working mothers and children in relation to their identity as middle-class Indians living in Malaysia. Patriarchy as a concept is operationalised, although not mentioned to the research participants.

The perceptions and attitudes of this group will be examined in relation to

(a)   Their educational experiences,

(b)   their understanding of time, and

(c)   their understanding of (the mothers') working role

1.6 Scope of the Study

In relation to the 'unseen' and 'unheard' aspects of the lives that are studied, I refer to the focus of education, time, and paid employment.

Education is a tool closely associated with middle-class concerns all over the world. This is strongly reflected in socio-economic studies, as will be referred to in chapter Four. The scope of the study also demarcates the importance of time, and the mothers' involvement in paid employment. These two factors are inter-twined, and are especially pertinent in household management. The quotidian lives of the research participants depend heavily on how time is divided between school, work, and the home. This will thus be the scope of middle-class Indian women and children.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research is of significance as it highlights the subjective and inter-disciplinary domain of identity. In the words of Taylor and Spencer (2004), "By studying social

identities, we gain insight into the complex range of factors influencing the way we see ourselves [and] the way we are seen by others…" (p. 4).

This is because the topic of middle-class Indian women has never been studied in academic narratives in Malaysia. The study of children is also highly lacking in this region, and my focus on child participation will be one of the first. It will also be one of the first qualitative pieces of research that considers the existence and changes of inter-generational practises.

From an ethnic perspective, local dominant discourses on Indians have generally been based on poverty, issues of Tamil schooling, or lifestyles within the rubber-tapping community. My research will be the first that considers the daily life of middle-class households; an approach that is new to ethnic discourses in Malaysia.

From a class-based perspective, literature review has shown that national middle-class narratives have only considered Malay and Chinese ethnicities. My work on middle-class Indian women and children will be the first that gives this minority group a chance to be studied. On many levels, my study on this 'unseen' and 'unheard' group will fill the gaps in numerous academic narratives, both locally and regionally.

1.8 Organization of the Chapters

This thesis will be made up of seven chapters. Chapter One will consist of the introduction to the research topic of middle-class Indian women and children. The background to the study, and the processes leading up to current contextualisation will be discussed. In Chapter Two, the concepts used and the theories referred to will be explored. This chapter will explain the theoretical framework within which the research sits. Chapter Three will

discuss the methodological framework from which the research is carried out. The approach taken, the methods used, and the limitations faced in the research will be covered. Chapters Four, Five and Six will then discuss the findings of the research; on Education, Time, and the Working Roles of mothers, accordingly. The thesis will then conclude with Chapter Seven. This last chapter will discuss how the theoretical and methodological frameworks have informed the findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"There was a strange discrepancy between the reality of our lives as women and the image to which we were trying to conform…I wondered if other women faced this schizophrenic split…. And so I began to hunt down the origins of the feminine mystique, and its effect on women who lived by it, or grew up under it"

- Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (1963)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter puts together the literature review, concepts, and the theoretical frameworks that are used in this study. The literature review will ensure an understanding from the reader's point of view of how certain words and concepts fit into the entire discourse of working mothers, and their children. Ultimately, the reading of this work is based on an inter-perspective approach. The framework explored here will enable a broader understanding to the research process, with no simplistic and clear-cut assessment of the data collection. The theoretical frameworks discussed here will also validate the approaches taken in chapter Three, where the methodology used for the research and findings are discussed. These frameworks will also help inform the qualitative aspect of the methodological framework of the next chapter.

2.2 Literature Review

This section will contextualize middle-class Indian women and children's place in Malaysia, and within the region of Southeast Asia. From this stance, I will discuss the existing gap in local academic work, with regards to the everyday lives of middle-class Indian women and children. I show how both these women and children's voices are set in a context of regional mutedness.

2.2.1 Working Motherhood

Becoming a mother has been seen as the accepted privilege of women over the centuries worldwide. In Embodying Women's Work (2008), Gatrell explains how the social role of 'woman' has always been in relation to "wifehood, motherhood and domestic labour" (Gatrell, 2008, p. 21). Classical sociological writings about women and work were based on the assumption that women's 'work' was principally to provide reproductive labour, and consequent care for children. The inequalities that women would have to face the moment 'home' and outside 'work' were divided was an issue raised by Sheila Rowbotham more than forty years ago (Rowbatham, 1972).

The burden of handling the dual roles of paid work and housework was raised by Germaine Greer also at that time (Greer, 1970). Yet, till today, discussions on the 'feminine dilemma' persist and women's main responsibility in the home continue to be unchallenged (Gatrell, 2008).

It was due to this universal (de)valuation on women's work that housework began to be counted as work in feminist research, so that women's roles at home could be valued. DeVault (1991) goes to great lengths to define housework as work, and elaborates with detail on how all the menial and tedious tasks of routine at home are done by the women. Early Marxist feminists, in attempting to justify the burden of housework women face under capitalism explained how capital and the state create added work for these women. As "consumption workers", the housewives buy 'things' and services to maintain human care within the household, and thus "what they are doing is work" (Weinbaum & Bridges, 1979, p.194). In the light of this, the call for domestic labour to command payment in accordance with its value was also put forward (Gardiner, 1979).

Talk about women's role in paid employment became prominent only after women's work at home was validated. Gatrell (2008) quotes feminist literature over the years where they finally had the space to challenge the age-old convention that women's place is only in the home.

In Asia, although women have always worked in fields, markets and other informal places, working motherhood became a subject of contemporary debate when work took on economic measurements. Quah asserts that "women have always worked", only that their "contributions to the household economy" have not been "socially recognized" (Quah, 2009, p. 113). With economic and global changes that affected the monetary earnings of each nation, 'work' had to carry official definitions. When 'income-earning' work was referred to officially and recorded as paid wages, only then female economic activity rates could be identified. These rates are an indicator of women's participation in the labour market (Quah, 2009).

The other progression in international narratives that enhanced working motherhood is the belief that women could, and should, have greater control of their own bodies. Beginning with sexual autonomy, this discourse of agency progressed into enabling women to challenge male privilege and 'power hierarchies' in family practices and employment structures (Gatrell, 2008). First-wave feminism focused on women's equal rights with men to take on paid employment.[2] However, it was second-wave feminism (from the 1960s onwards) that highlighted the effect of social constructions of women's identity that kept women at home: women lacked sexual autonomy (McAfee, 2014).

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[2]First-wave feminism focused on women's productive rights. It "catalogued women's economic oppressions which necessarily entailed claiming that all women should be equal citizens with men" (Scott, 1992, p. 12)

Working mothers seem to have a double hurdle to overcome when they decide to work. This dilemma was mentioned more than forty years ago. In The Growth and Development of Mothers (1973), McBride mentioned how "all the prejudices, myths, and ambiguities muddying the feminine role today" are seen "in writings about mothers" (McBride, 1973, p. 1).

Jessie Bernard (1974) had already mentioned how the difficulty to juggle between being a worker and a parent was never mentioned for men, but always for women. After more than a decade into the twenty-first century, working motherhood remains unsettled till today.

2.2.2 Women and Development: The Asian and Malaysian Context

At the global level in the late 1960s and early 1970s, women in the industrialized nations were fighting for legal access for women to have greater educational and employment opportunities.

It was in 1970 that the UN General Assembly called for the 'full integration' of women into national economic systems, and this birthed the period of Women in Development (WID) (Ng et al, 2006). The UN General Assembly declared 1975 as the International Women's Year, and subsequently declared the years 1976 – 1985 as the UN Decade for Women. The well-being of women continued to get attention, and in 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which explicitly set up an agenda for national action to end discrimination against women. These international declarations did affect regional and national policies.

For example, Malaysian academic literature like Hing and Talib (1986) and Karim (1990), emphasise the role of women in paid employment as proud examples of women's involvement in various fields. The affirmative emphasis at this time was understandable. Ensuing the United Nations (UN) declaration of 1976-1985 as the Decade for Women, the 1980s was a period of recognition for women in Malaysia. This was especially since Malaysia, as a UN member, agreed to the ratification of the CEDAW in 1995.

At this time, numerous women's organisations, either revitalized from their dormant existence, or suddenly impacted to form an identity, joined the Malaysian National Council of Women's Association (NCWO) as member associates.

This gave NCWO an added credibility as an umbrella body representing and uniting many women organisations that championed various women's concerns (Abisheganaden ed., 2004). As women's roles and contributions to society werebeing acknowledged in this way, academic narratives also began to prioritise a gender perspective in studies related to employment structures (Razak, 1992; Tan, 1995). The previous absence of a gender lens was now rectified, and the 'super' woman who could straddle both home and work began to be the image that spurred writings on women at this time.

In contrast, fewer books dared to offer a serious critique on the local positive accounts of women's progress. Cecilia Ng mentioned the stark inequalities that women faced in relation to work, as the nation strove to be 'rich' or 'modern'(Ng, 1999). Ng (1999) also clearly outlined how women were always associated with their reproductive role, and how mothers were seen as the epitome of nurturers for the future of any society. Shanthi Thambiah refers to "the clash in values" women have to contend with; oscillating "between the need to be productive and to be reproductive" (Thambiah, 2010, p. 57). Ng

et al (2006) and Ng et al (2011) are other works that prove the lack of 'progress' for women.

These texts question the positive changes that general women literature seem to celebrate, and highlight the continued areas of disempowerment. Asian governments seem to be the main culprit, as their political narratives continue to tandem women's working role with their domestic one, where the latter depicts women as caring nurturers of the family. The following section looks at this.

2.2.3 The 'Asian Family'

The position of women entering the workforce in globalizing Asia has received much focus (Stivens, 1998; Quah, 2009; Yeoh & Huang, 2010; Gottfried, 2013). Even so, their economic contribution to national income is usually shadowed by societal expectation of their nurturing role as mothers.

Tsuya and Bumpass (2004) explain how and why the family as a social institution has always held the position of primacy in Eastern society. Marriage and childbearing have been imperative and conjugal and parent-child relationships have been lifelong commitments. Kin and community define all human connections and the "patriarchal cultural heritage" (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004, p.133) entrenches the association of women with the wellbeing of the family. If the age-old 'feminine dilemma' is found with new twists anywhere in the world, it is in Asia. Tsuya and Bumpass prove that for Asian women, "family roles" and "employment" will continue to be a perpetual struggle (2004, p.143).

In Southeast Asian societies, pursuing modernization and the drive towards industrial capitalist expansion have further complicated debates around motherhoods. National 'development' for women would mean a large-scale entry of women into the public world of paid employment. While the economic and political domains are over-rated in the desire of nations to implement 'progress', the social context is also problematized.

The 'problem' exists because women have always been closely associated with the wellbeing of the private family unit. Within this, there are "strongly voiced social anxieties across the region focusing on issues of 'family' and 'culture' – especially the 'Asian Family' and 'Asian values'…" (Stivens, 1998, p. 2).

Women are entering the public paid workforce more than ever before in Asia. Being 'modern beings' in a 'modern' society may make these women feel they are participating in a global economy. The definition of nuclear households are changing to accommodate dual incomes - and working mothers. Being modern, urban and participating in globalization is just one driver to paid employment in Asia. The other driver would be the reverse side of urban economic growth; increased costs of living and inflation. This points to the need for women to work as stated by Quah (2009).

Although Quah does not spell out increased costs incurred in the running of modern households, she does claim that "practically everywhere" women's labour was necessary "for the economic security of their families" (Quah, 2009, p.112). Ariffin et al (1996) overtly say that "urbanization and the increased cost of living" cause "many urban families in Malaysia [to] depend on two incomes" (1996, p. 240). Dual income households are now not so much a performance of modernity, it's actually a symptom of

globalization because of an increase in costs of living for lifestyle and consumption patterns.

Hailed as 'the Asian Century', the 21st century is poised to showcase drastic changes in Asian women's gender roles, as their nations draw up economic policies to heighten 'growth' (Stivens, 1998). In Families in Asia, Home and Kin (Quah, 2009), Stella Quah studied ten Asian countries, including Malaysia. In her research on Southeast Asia, her findings of "higher levels of economic development" is inseparable from the evidence of "higher participation of women in the labour force" (2009, p. 172).

Quah defines this "economic development" as "manifested most acutely in the friction between family and work in the homes of dual-income couples" (2009: 162).

Apart from economic development, Quah (2009) cites "political ideology" as the cause of this friction between family and work (2009, p. 162). She shows that while nuclear dual-income households are increasing, there are few policies that support working mothers' needs. When Quah (2009) stresses that "critical family policy" needs "urgent attention in Asia" (p. 162), this is mostly due to the burden women have in preserving the values of the Asian family in spite of their labour force participation.

2.2.4 The Key Problem: Patriarchy

The definition of patriarchy given by Sylvia Walby more than twenty-five years ago still stands as exhaustive: "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p.20). Patriarchy remains entrenched as a worldwide phenomenon, even in industrialized nations. In Australia, for example, Pringle and Watson (1992) explain how international pressure has helped make 'women's

interests' a priority in public discourse. However, in spite of this, the inherent meaning is still for women to be objects or recipients of policy decisions, rather than being full participants in them. Referring to the 1990 Australian election campaign, the authors expose how major political parties competing for 'the women's vote' offered mere tokens like child-care packages and increased funding for breast cancer testing (Pringle & Watson, 1992).

Even in pursuing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), formulated from the UN Millennium Summit in 2000, international academic work exposes the surface value of many nations' adoption of the Millennium Declaration. Wejnert et al (2009) show how 'Improving Maternal Health' is a key feature in MDG from which nations draw up 'safe motherhood' policies and yet the authors disclose literature that show how economic and political reconstructions did not improve the lives of these mothers (Wejnert et al, 2009). These discourses on maternal health confirm older texts that had exposed how reproduction in the name of 'medical science' was sexually politicized (Homans, 1985).

In Asia, the insidious influence of patriarchy is similar. In Reversed Realities (1994), Kabeer provides an insight into the plight of working women in Bangladesh with regards to 'women in development'. Although the inclusion of women into national developmental narratives seemed a positive move, the reality of it was highly problematic. This was because women were still expected to take care of the family and home, in spite of their participation in 'development'. The Bangladeshi government made a bold move to include a pro-woman agenda in its developmental programme, but they also had to have the reassuring continuity that women would still be caretakers of the needs of the family (Kabeer, 1994).

Kabeer (1994) aptly points out that what was initially formed to champion women's development, now took on traditional feminized associations. 'Family' and 'community' development have to be inexorably linked with that of 'women'. In other words, Bangladesh was not ready for women to enter the policy processes as productive agents or household heads.

In the 21st century, structures of patriarchy continue to pervade the lives of women. Fatimah Saad (2006) continues to avoid the reality of inequality that confronts women, with sugar-coated affirmations like how efforts were taken "to enhance the effectiveness of the national machinery for the advancement of women and the development of the family" (Saad, 2006, p. 93). National machinery is portrayed as possessing the godfather role that will take care of women. However, realities prove otherwise. In spite of "government rhetoric on the need to advance women's status and discuss gender issues" (Ng et al, 2006, p. 63), women's relation to 'participation' in the labour market is still ubiquitously linked to the 'family'.

This is evidence of public patriarchy. In spite of finding a niche in contemporary gender narratives, the "modern Asian woman" still has to adhere to 'Asian values'; women in general still have to continue their roles as "bearers", "keepers" and "producers" of the Asian "vision of family" (Stivens, 1998, p.17).

Malaysia faces a similar scenario. Being an active participant in UN systems and targets, Malaysia prides itself in inserting aspects of 'progress' and 'development' for women so that national policies are aligned with international ones. But a closer scrutiny shows that this is real – "at least on paper" (Ng et al, 2006, p. 73, emphasis mine). For example, following the Beijing Declaration on Women in 1995, the Malaysian government

established The Ministry of Women's Affairs in January 2001. However, in only one month's time (February 2001), the inseparable link of 'women' to 'family' made the government change the ministry portfolio to be called the Ministry of Women and Family Development.

In 2004, the scope was further widened to include social welfare and development and the Ministry was now named Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development. Women's biological nature was not only legitimized into meeting the needs of the family, but also that of the community. The parking of 'women' with the 'family' and the needs of the 'community' under one umbrella clearly indicates the intrinsic belief in the Asian value of women being nurturers.

Such state-led initiatives as described above exhibits the power of public patriarchy. Nonetheless, private patriarchy is likewise potent, and is able to deter women from empowerment (Kabeer, 1994; Moghadam, 1994; Douglass, 2012). This aspect will be taken up further in the discussion of theory in chapter Two.

Vision 2020 was first initiated by Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammed, twenty years ago. His dream is kept alive by the succeeding Prime Ministers, as Vision 2020 continues to be the nation's benchmark to becoming a fully developed nation. In 2006, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi assured women that the Government would continue to "facilitate higher participation of women into the nation's labour force" and "review existing laws and regulations that discriminate against women".[3] In 2011 Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak continued to keep women on the agenda in the 10th Malaysia Plan.

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[3](2006, March 31). Point no. 57, Full text of the PM's 9MP speech to Parliament. *The Star Online Archives*.http://www.thestar.com.my/story.aspx/?file=%2f2006%2f3%2f31%2fnation%2f20060331170915&sec=nation.

Under the sub-section entitled 'Making the labour market more flexible', the Prime Minister said that "measures will be undertaken to increase female labour force participation rate from 46% in 2010 to 55% in 2015".[4] The gender agenda continued to be reiterated in the Prime Minister's 2012 Budget speech. A policy to "encourage at least 30% women" in top-management and decision-making positions in the private sector was initiated.[5]

Dual-income, middle class families are part of Malaysia's response and strategy for their participation in an 'Asian Century'. This adds pressure to women's 'dual-burden' syndrome, which will now be part of the "globalizing new orders of the region" (Stivens, 1998, p. 5). This is the local political context that affects the group of women in my study, the middle-class Indian women.

2.2.5 Middle-class Indian Women in Malaysia

The study of the middle-class is common when urban development or modernization is the focus in national narratives. Within this context, migration is key, as contemporary societies are influenced by global migratory patterns of ethnic minorities. Marlene Epp et. al., ed (2004) mention the emergence of middle-class Indian women in Canadian history, and Trocki (2006) mentions how middle-class Indian women fit into Singapore's new social order. In India, middle-class women have also been given the focus (Chakrapany & Kumar, ed.s, 1994). However, this class-based focus of women's development has not been picked up by writers of the Indian community in Malaysia. With the exception of literary narratives of fictional lives of Indian women in Malaysia,

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[4](2010, June 10). Reforming the Labour Market to transform Malaysia into High-Income Nation, 232. http://www.pmo.gov.my/dokumenattached/RMK/RMK10_Eds.pdf
[5]http://www.pmo.gov.my/?menu=speech&news_id=529&page=1676&speech_cat=2. It can be assumed that the targeted 30% women would come mostly from the proportion of married working women, the percentage of whom increased from 61.8% in 1995 to 63.9% in 2005 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 1999 and 2006).

academic studies on these women have been sparse. There has been no allusion to 'women' or 'female' involvement in the entire process of political or socio-economic struggle. This is the case with much of the existing material on Indians. Although Devasahayam (2009) accounts for changes and continuities that affect women in this region, the book lacks a particular reference to Indian women. When patterns of Indian women's involvement are highlighted, these efforts refer only to generalised statistics (MWFCD 2003).

This is such a contrast to the portrayal of Chinese and Malay women in local academic narratives. Unlike Indian women who came into Malaya with multiple differentiations of caste, culture, and language, Chinese women were seen to be more 'united'. Though living in harsh tin-mining conditions here, many of these women were exposed to the reform movement in China which was inclusive of women's empowerment (Lee & Tan, 2000). Unlike the majority of Indian women who were illiterate, these Chinese women had access to schooling. Their parents were willing to part with their meager savings so that their daughters together with their sons could get an education (Lee & Tan, 2000). Daniels (2005) mentions the economic power the Chinese have that enables them to overshadow other public celebrations, and unconsciously, to even subvert "Malay symbolic advantages in public spaces" (Daniels, 2005, p. 177). This symbolic advantage forms the backdrop in writings about Chinese middle-class women (Khor, 2010; Thimm, 2013).

The mention of Malay women in academic texts is also suggestive of urbanity and progress. When Malaysia experienced a heightened economic growth in the 1970s, the "massive influx of a new labour force" was mentioned, of which "young women" and "Malay" were the "majority" (Ng et al, 2006, p. 22). Academic narratives on Malay

middle-class women are also existent in Razak (1992), Stivens (1998), Hashim (2010) and Chan et al (2013).

Narratives on middle-class Indian women, however, are absent. Appadurai and Dass (2008), Tate (2008), and Manickam (2010) do refer to 'middle-class' Indians, but this implies a gendered reference to the male minority who are expected to help mobilize change for the entire community. Reference to middle-class women, per se, does not exist. The mention of 'women' in Indian discourses are usually in reference to the majority of Indian women; those who are in the working class. Evidencing this is Omar and Hamzah (2003). Out of the twelve chapters that discuss women breaking boundaries in Malaysia, only one chapter refers to Indian women; those who belong to the plantation industry.[6]

As discussed earlier, it is appropriate that the needs of the majority be addressed; which in the case of Indian women, is socio-economic intervention. And yet, this emphasis creates an unconscious gap to the concerns of middle-class Indian women. Among their class peers in inter-ethnic literature, these women's voices are silent. This helps to explain the significant 'gap' in the gender representation of Indians as middle-class women. As previous references evidence, representations of Malay and Chinese women are situated in middle-class discourse, whereas the representation on Indian women is either silent or entrenched within the working-class domain. My research will fill this gap in middle-class discourse with the lived experiences of Indian middle-class women.

Contemporary Indian middle-classness was contextualized in section 1.1. Having parents and grandparents that had suitable non-manual jobs created for them by the colonial

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[6]Oorjitham, K.S Susan, Indian Women, Employment and Visibility, p19.

government in Malaya, these Indians enjoyed a higher 'market situation' than their working-class counterparts. This educated group of Indians easily gained social mobility, and enjoyed white collar and professional jobs. This is how they eventually became part of the middle-class in Malaysia.

According to Puthucheary (2006), a main channel for upward social mobility for the Indian community had been the civil service. A survey he conducted showed that the "children of clerks, teachers, hospital assistants, and technicians" were the ones who were "able to give their children the necessary English education to equip them for senior positions in the government" (Puthucheary, 2006, p. 358). Edwards and Roces (2000) quote statistics from the Malaysian Census, 1991, and found that urban Indian women had the highest participation rates in employment at 45% (2000, p. 22).[7] The statistics for Indian women correlate with the urban-educated children who were born in the 1960s – 1980s mentioned earlier. It is these women who will comprise of the middle class working mothers of my study.

Muzaffar (2006) explains how middle class Indians enjoy their position, and do not endeavor to improve the 'structural impediments' that the Indians generally face. Although not spelt out directly, the Indian middle-class working mothers would fall in this category; that they respond merely "to their own real and perceived loss of economic access and opportunity and to their own marginalization" (Muzaffar, 2006, p. 226). In spite of this communal lack that is frequently pointed out in the existing local academic narratives on ethnicity, my thesis will focus on more personal issues that the women face. Although the middle-class Indian working mothers now have the ability to have a tertiary

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[7]A more recent Labour Force Survey (2011) show that female labour force participation of Indians has become the lowest (43.3%) among the four categories of 'Malay', 'Other bumiputera', 'Chinese' and 'Indian', p 20.

education, a decision-making job that draws a good salary, and enjoy a nuclear-based household, this does not mean that their reliance on kinship ties is absent.

Although experiencing love-based marriages, and the ability to marry later, conjugal roles may still be more segregated rather than shared. Although many middle-class working mothers may experience forms of empowerment, a dependency on generational 'kinscripts' may still be evident. The deeper issues of identity and negotiation over roles and relationships continue to exist. These are some of the pertinent issues I will research on.

It is within the larger ideologies of 'the Asian Family Discourse' and Vision 2020 that I will study my subject. The study on everyday life experiences of urban working mothers in globalizing Malaysia is highly undeveloped. It is clear from my brief contextual overview that middle-class Indian women in Malaysia are more poorly studied than their counterparts. Thus my research will fill in a critical gap in both academic knowledge of women, and also popular and political knowledge of Indian women's lives. While being externally defined by economic and political forces, how these women rework the ideology of 'identity' within 'family', 'employment', 'ethnicity' and 'nation' will be interesting to note. It is my hope that my research may increase the possibility of giving this group of people a greater sense of voice and visibility.

2.2.6 The Concept of 'Child'

Fermon (1997) quotes Simone deBeauvoir as defining 'the child' as the pivot between having "contempt for women" and "the respect shown for mothers" (Fermon, 1997, p. 13). In many academic and historical accounts of literature, the child, as an individual persona, is found to be absent.

If ever children are mentioned, they are usually done so to highlight the role of parents or teachers or other significant adults. Gatrell (2008) explains how 'happy children' are integrally bound up with the image of a good mother, wise consumption, and a happy home. Erica Burman, a critical psychologist, said that "the category of childhood is a repository of social representations…the child exists in relation to the category of 'adult'" (Burman, 1994, p. 48). Reference to children's own views per se is absent. If women's identity is marred within a stereotypical image of femininity and motherhood, children's identity is marred with its portrayal only from adults' opinion.

In the 1960s and 1970s, much of the academic literature on children was based on developmental psychology; focusing on children's behaviour as 'outcomes', and not on who they were as individual social actors in society. Social competence, emotional wellbeing and cognitive development are some of the usual 'outcomes' highlighted in studies on children (Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Vasta et al, 1995). These outcomes had defined "childhood", when in actuality they were only part of "cultural narratives" that were "replete with social and political meanings" (Burman, 1994, p. 48). These definitions are actually 'ephemeral' cultural ideas that are to do with parental expectations on their children's abilities, and reveal nothing about the needs and perceptions of children (Woodhead, 1997).

'Childhood' was first addressed in European literature, but the power to construct it was still in the hands of adults (Holland, 1992). However, continuous advocacy of child participation by academics from "the global North" began to create a world-wide focus on children as persons in their own right (Beazley et al, 2009, p. 366). Eventually, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) entered into force, and was ratified more quickly, and by more countries, than any previous human rights instrument. The

CRC then provided theinternational age definition of childhood, covering the age range between 0-18 years.

As with the case of women, international sanctions for children made a big impact on policies and implementations carried out at national levels of UN member nations. The UN Violence Study revealed "candid and graphic accounts of violence" inflicted on children all around the world (Willow, 2010, p. 5).

Together with the emphasis on child 'protection', the approach taken in global child-based narratives have incorporated child 'participation'. Articles such as 'Children's right to be heard and effective child protection' are evidence of this approach (Willow, 2010).

2.2.7 Malaysia: Child Participation?

Children represent the future 'human resource' in the Vision 2020 programme. Under the 'Building a progressive and inclusive society' section of the 10th Malaysian Plan (2011-2015), almost half the key targets are for children. The need in line with national development is to create a "forward-looking, academic-driven and career-achievement" generation.[8] In line with the earlier discussion on how urban, dual-income households are a target of national policy, it is obvious that the children of these homes are also highly impacted by national policy in more ways that meet the eye.

By signing the World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children at the UNWorld Summit for Children in 1990, Malaysia agreed to prioritise children in their state policies. Since then, Malaysia continues its inclusion of children in its plans for nation-building. Publications like 'Profile of Children in

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[8]http://www.pmo.gov.my/dokumenattached/RMK/RMK10_Eds.pdf

Malaysia' and the 'Child-Friendly Cities Initiative' are examples of how local governance includes children's rights as a key component in their goals, policies, and programmes.10

In relation to research on childhoods, children's rights have meant different things to different regions. For example, implementing child rights in Malaysia would mean focusing on child protection,[9] whereas encouraging child rights in industrialised nations would mean increasing "children's agency and competence" (Beazley et al, 2009, p. 367).

This nuanced difference explains why in Malaysia, much of the reference to children would be in relation to adult intervention; problems parents face with "child-care responsibilities" (Ariffin et al 1996). Child participation, in relation to recognizing an individual child's agency, is conceptually still absent in local academic literature on children.

There are local studies conducted with children, although these have technical limitations. In their research on ethnic otherness, David and Yee (2010) study Malaysian children in kindergartens. Although the research did not specify the age range, children in Malaysian kindergartens are in the age range of 4-6 years of age, (before they enter primary school when they are 7 years old). Although original, adult techniques like questionnaires and interviews were not suitable for such young children, as proven by statements like "the children actually did not understand the concept" (David & Yee, 2010, p. 189). Another interesting research was the study on ethnic relations among Malaysian youth (Yee & Wong, 2010). However, the age range of the 'youth' was 15-40 years of age, which was

[9] http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/Fact_Sheet.Make_Your_Community_Safe_For_Kids_Eng.pdf,

http://www.unicef.org/ malaysia/Unicef-ProfileOfChildrenInMalaysia.pdf

inappropriately inclusive of children and adults. The focus was on 'cognitive competency' among a sample of more than a thousand people.

This evidenced another piece of quantitative research based on developmental psychology. Dealwis and David (2010) studied 'children', but the research participants were aged between 18-45 years, and the research technique was asking the participants to recall their childhood memories. Perhaps the one work that actually touched on young people's perceptions was Carmen Nge's discussion on race perceptions among Malaysians (Nge, 2010). However, although this research allowed the participants to air their frustrations on ethnic discrimination, their ages as university students was not in line with UN's definition of 'children' aged seventeen and under.

The inappropriate usage of methods and/or age ranges of these studies were not able to glean qualitative voices of children as participants.

2.2.8 The Inclusion of Children: My Studied Context

As the previous section has shown, there are notable existing gaps in regional and local academic work, as far as voices of children are concerned. As far as qualitative, age-appropriate boundaries are concerned, my research on Indian middle-class children will be the first in Malaysia. These children's perceptions will be studied, which will also help reveal the realities faced by other children in other families, framed within boundaries of class, ethnicity, and nationality, in modernizing Malaysia. From these children's perceptions, I will also be able to analyse if there are changes to inter-generational patterns of lifestyle among middle-class Indians. This can be telling of the future of this minority ethnic group.

As a full research project, I will explore the experiences of these children, and their mothers, in their journey of struggle and discovery, search and participation, as members of Malaysian Indian middle-class households.

2.3 The Conceptual Framework

The concepts referred to in this thesis are the global north, middle-class, kinscripts, cultural capital, identity, participation and agency. Because many of these concepts have been separately theorized in numerous global narratives, the curtailed meaning of these words in this thesis is laid out here. This helps to provide the caveat to the meaning of some of these concepts; which in themselves now possess multiple layers of interpretation in current academic texts. The definitions provided will help explain the boundaries of the concepts at hand, and how they are referred to in the findings chapters.

2.3.1 The Global North

The global North–South divide is an economic and political divide, where the North covers mostly First World countries. As was associated with the 'West', the North is defined as the richer, more developed region in the world compared to the South. The reason this definition of world systems is included here is because some scholarly articles referred to in the thesis have alluded to developed nations as 'the global North', and the not-so-developed nations as 'the global South' (Beazley et al, 2009; Corsaro, 2011). These narratives expose the inaccuracy of the East-West divide, as many nations in the West, like those in South America, are only Second World or Third World. Since North-South references are retained in a few of the discussions in the thesis, a brief conceptual definition is thus warranted.

2.3.2 The Middle-Class

The concept of 'middle-class' used in this thesis refers to the socio-economic position of the research participants. This is within the context of generational occupations which the participants' parents (especially the fathers) had, or which their husbands have. Even in class-based societies like the UK, that had strict definitions of class, 'class' has become more difficult to define. Today's diversely stratified society, quickened by globalization, causes the 'middle-class' to contain numerous nuances of how wealth is conferred, concentrated or dispersed (Woodward, 2000).

In my research, the usage of 'middle-class' as a concept is based on Max Weber's analysis of class. A Weberian analysis views class as a positional concept; where "a social class is merely a grouping of people who share roughly the same market position" (Taylor & Spencer, 2004). In a modernizing nation like Malaysia, this definition of class is more applicable than a Marxian concept of class that is based solely on ownership. Weber's concept of 'middle-class' includes everyone who is "positively privileged" in "their market position" by skill or services (Swingewood, 2000, p. 105). This privilege best explains the position of middle-class Indians in Malaysia. This is because the parents of the women in research (or in some cases, their husbands) occupied "a privileged position" due to the "skill" or the "kind of services" they could offer "in the market" (Swingewood, 2000, p. 105). Colonial rule helped define these positions as middle-class, and this is the same framework I also use in the thesis.

There have been academic texts that have theorized the definition of the 'middle-class' in political economic terms (Kahn 1999, Embong 2002, Saravanamuttu 2001). I do not refer to these definitions, as the thesis discussion on lived reality would then be open to even more nuanced interpretations than there already are. 'Middle-class' is a term that is

increasingly problematic due to the escalating importance of global economies in nation states. Hence, this thesis will refer to the term only in reference to the occupations mentioned above; either held by the women's fathers, or as in three of the cases, their husbands.

Appudurai and Dass (2008), Tate (2008) and Manickam (2010) are Malaysian works that refer to 'middle-class' Indians without the term being theorized. The reference to the middle-class in this thesis alludes to these few works, where the middle-class position in society is based on what the previous generation of Indians as civil servants was privileged to have, and passed down to the next generation. In other regional work, families in the middle-class range are also referred to, based on the framework on economic advantage and secure jobs (Quah, 2009).

These works help situate the position of the middle-class working mothers (and their children) of this thesis. Based on their market position of economic advantage and secure jobs, these women have more options in their lifestyle choices and consumer patterns. The socio-cultural aspect of being middle-class Indians in Malaysia is further elaborated in section 2.1.4.

2.3.3 Kinscripts

An analysis of kinship patterns is common in the study of families, especially in relation to inter-generational life-courses (Donner, 2008; Grover, 2011). To explore these inter-generational roles within a family, this thesis will use the use of the 'kinscripts' framework as devised by Stack and Burton (1994). How 'kinscripts' is more refined in meaning as compared to 'kinship' is that the 'script' of "multigenerational collectives" are passed down inter-generationally (Stack & Burton, 1994, p. 33). In other words,

generational cultural traits that are peculiar to a specific family line are passed down to the next generation through the services that are provided. For example, the women in my research talk about how their parents gave them educational guidance in their growing-up years. When these women become parents, their own parenting styles in education are a reflection of the support they received from their parents. This trait is then explored through the responses of these women's children; as they comment on how their parents guide them educationally. Through interviews and qualitative observations, the evidence of 'kinscripts' through the course of three generations can then be interpreted. Whether this norm is continued or transgressed, the findings chapters will reveal.

This "intergenerational transmission of family norms" through kinscripts is different to the average role of kinship in family studies (Stack & Burton, 1994, p. 34). For example, in a British study where nuclear families stayed close to relatives in vicinity, the extended family still did not provide "the protection and assistance traditionally afforded by kin" (O'Donnell, 1997, p. 63). "Adult children" receiving frequent "resources from their parents rather than the reverse" is a common narrative in the modern study of Asian families (Tsuya &Bumpass, 2004, p. 54). However, these services that are received, like taking care of grandchildren, are again part of the wider definition of kinship. Generational scripts that are influenced by "local ideological landscapes" and "wider socio-economic processes" are not intrinsic to these definitions (Donner, 2008, p. 40). The role of kinscripts in this work will also be looked at through the responses of both the adult and child participants; whether inter-generational values and agendas have been maintained. Thus, the kinscript framework will explore how far middle-class Indian families "have their own agendas, their own interpretation of cultural norms, and their own histories" (Stack & Burton, 1994, p. 34).

2.3.4 Cultural Capital

Pierre Bourdieu had explained how being in the dominant class did not just mean that they had economic capital, but that they also had social capital, symbolic capital, and cultural capital (as referred to in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). In this research, I will be using the concept of cultural capital to explain the advantage that the middle-class Indians had over their working class counterparts. This capital "is a product of history", and is transmitted inter-generationally (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34). This capital also causes the dominant culture to have "the legitimacy effect" where it has the privilege to own its "position in a certain field" (1993, p. 83, 155). Due to having educational qualifications, members of a dominant class thus enjoy a "socialized subjectivity" which Bourdieu also called 'habitus' (Swingewood, 2000). This "social space" is "clearly bound up with social class" (Swingewood, 2000, p. 212, 214).

In my work, Indian middle-class mothers are privileged over their labour class counterparts because their parents' class position enabled them to gain higher education and consequently, better paying jobs. Bourdieu explains that inherent within this privileged space, "possibilities for action" are further enhanced (2000, p. 214). This 'legitimized' edge brings cultural capital for those who enjoy the position, as will be explored further in chapter Four.

2.3.5 Identity

Towards the late 20th century, the question of identity began to be debated in social theory, where definitions of identity began to be questioned as 'real', 'perceived' or 'imagined' by scholars (Anderson, 1982). As a result, "an assertion of identity" has become academically prominent; resulting in the flourishing of identity politics (Moghadam, 1994, p. 20). In my thesis, although the concept of identity is a contested

phenomenon (Yuval-Davis, 1997), it is without a theorization to any one, strict disciplinary approach. The concept of identity used in this research is more broad-based, and part of "the individualizing tendencies of modern life" (Taylor & Spencer, 2004, p. 31).

In spite of personalized identities, the mothers and children of this research also, to a large extent, carry identities that external social structures have created for them. Power relations within intersecting gender, class, and ethnic dimensions are part of these external structures. How these women and children negotiate their identities amidst "specific historical trajectories" will also be examined (Donner, 2008, p. 40). Identity for this group will be explored as an "interface between the personal…and the social" (Woodward, 2000, p. 18).

Because the women and children of this research are part of a minority within a minority, the following nuances will also be conceptualized as part of their identity:

2.3.5.1 Minority

The women and children in this research are a minority; in a blend of gender / age, class and ethnicity. Institutionalized patriarchy also makes them a minority, both as women and as children. In a class-based analysis, middle-class Indian women and children are a minority; numerically and in terms of representation in dominant discourses, where their working class counterparts are the majority (Manickam, 2010). Ethnically, Indians in Malaysia are a minority. In a society where Malays, Chinese, and Indians are seen as the main ethnic composites of the country, Indians remain as the smallest component of this representation. Structurally, their identity is based on this notion of being a minority from all aspects.

2.3.5.2 Mutedness and Invisibility

Due to the structural limitations mentioned above, these women and children struggle to be heard. Figuratively, they do not have a voice. Muted group theory (Ardener, 1993) explain how there are groups in society that are made voiceless by the cultural hierarchy practiced in that society. I therefore use mutedness as an aural imagery, explaining the consequences of structural constrains on the women and children of this research. This concept is synonymous with being muted, only that this word is based on visual imagery, and not aural. Similar to being muted, this group of women and children struggle to be seen, also largely due to patriarchy. Existing gaps in academic and public narratives for 'middle-class' Indians cause the invisibility of these women and children to be accentuated.

2.3.5.3 Participation and Agency

Conceptually, participation in this research can be derived from a feminist standpoint, as explained further on in the Theoretical Framework section. The feminist framework exposes how the dominant group in society (through the patriarchal system) limits women's involvement in life. Women's subordinated roles then limit their 'participation' in all spheres of life.

A rights-based framework, as introduced briefly in chapter Three, also encourages women to participate in research. Participation is a growing trend in qualitative research, where individuals involved in research are no more just 'subjects' but 'participants'. Difference feminism that is rights-based in vein enables this aspect to be part of the framework. My intention in including 'agency' is to see the extent of 'participation' the researched women and children have; whether they have the means to be able to negotiate spaces in favour of themselves, amidst the structures of restriction they face.

In her fieldwork with middle-class Bengali women in India, Donner (2008) explains how young mothers legitimize the 'need' of medicalized childbirth, as it gains them some time and space to rest and be pampered by medical personnel. This is seen as "empowering" although it is "limited in its scope and depth by the constraints of a patriarchal family ideology" (Donner, 2008, p. 121). 'Agency' exercised by mothers and children in this research will be analysed in a vein similar to Donner's observation; that is, amidst structural constraints. Although the 'patriarchal family ideology' may remain unchanging, small aspects of change initiated by the mothers or children will be explored. Apart from 'participation', the conceptual aspect of 'agency' will also complement the concept of 'identity'; where individuals attempt to negotiate the boundaries that have defined their lives all this while.

2.4 The Theoretical Frameworks

This section discusses the two main theories that are the broad reference points in this thesis. The first theory I will look at is Difference Feminism. The discourse of mothering will also be analysed, where working mothers, within the site of middle-class families, contend with ideologies of power and patriarchy. These women's lived experience, coloured by various inequalities due to their minority status, will be the main analysis of this thesis.

The second theory that will be explored is the Theory of Childhood. How 'child' and 'childhood' have been viewed over the decades in various parts of the world will form the backdrop. In my research, the children's experiences as they grow up in a middle-class setting will be discussed alongside with that of their mothers.

Giving these two groups of people a voice in the entire narrative is central to the choice of theoretical frameworks.

2.4.1 Difference Feminism

Historically, the "question of woman" (Humm, 1992, p. 6) arose due to the absence of women as a social group in social life, in productive work, and even in 'knowledge' production. Mitchell and Oakley (1976) have pointed out how 'invisibility' has been cited as the main problem to women's position and status as a distinct social group. Institutional practice regarding women has been nothing but discriminatory. Even when systems of inequality were being studied sociologically, gender inequality was hardly recognized, even in the study of families (Mitchell & Oakley, 1976).

Throughout the years, feminism has strived to bring liberation to women, and yet, the history of the feminist movement has been rife with controversy. This is because various aspects of social thinking have been challenged, and each feminist view, eager to gain consensus, has posed what it sees as imperative questions about women, that other perspectives are said to have missed.

Essentialist, liberal, radical, Marxist, black, and many other branches have been some of the approaches taken by feminist advocates along the feminist continuum. Marxist feminism has been a strong addressee of patriarchy, as more and more societies contend with modern-day capitalism (Kabeer, 1994). And yet, in spite of its strength in positing women's subordination as a direct result of capitalism, the burgeoning middle-class becomes too problematic a phenomenon to Marxist advocates. This is also the primary reason why I did not use the Marxist feminist approach in this thesis, as the women and children belong to the middle-class.

The various feminist branches have been instrumental in exposing women's inequalities at particular times and places in history; and yet, all these veins cannot portray "universalized and normalizing accounts of women as a group" (Beasley, 1999, p. 81). With essentialist views that see all women's experiences as falling into a generalized one, certain groups of women will end up feeling alienated (Matlin, 2008). At the other end of the spectrum, postmodern feminism seeks to obliterate metanarratives, and embrace all forms of experience, as fragmented as each may be. While this is applicable for studying individualized interpretations of life, the elements of subjectivity and diversity is the order of this theory. This therefore makes postmodern feminism theoretically unsuitable for analysing specific groups of women in a society (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). The fluidity of perspectives which postmodernism celebrates makes the exploration of societal or behavioural patterns within society difficult. It is in this light that I choose to opt for difference feminism as the suitable type of feminism to frame my thesis.

Difference feminism, which is part of contemporary feminism, takes the different situations women are in into consideration. In the words of Caroline Ramazanoglu,

> Feminism is not a total social theory that can explain the connections between different forms of oppression. But the problem remains that the oppression of women is, in complex and contradictory ways, enmeshed in all the other forms of oppression that people have created (Ramazanoglu, 1992, p. 279).

The women in my research are affected by nationality and ethnicity, and the global economy. Difference feminism allows the identity of these women to be seen and analysed within these newer paradigms.

This explains why "the fixity" and the "very status of established categories" of feminism cannot be used to theorize the lived realities of middle-class Indian women in Malaysia

(Beasley, 1999, p. 83). The group of women in my research have inequalities that cut across numerous delineations. Their identity is also affected by the multiple power relationships that exist in the nuanced categories of nationality and ethnicity. This explains why other more specific branches of feminist thought cannot be used here, as they actually reduce women's identity to a single or dominant focal point (Taylor & Spencer, 2004). The *differences* that difference feminism advocate for give "theoretical space" to "the multi-faceted lives of women" in my research (Evans, 2005, p. 58). This branch of feminism is also in tandem with third-wave of feminism, where personal narratives of women illustrate "an intersectional and multiperspectival version of feminism" (Snyder, 2008, p. 175).

Difference feminism rejects meta-narratives that were suitable for women in specific situations in different ages. "The problem of feminine identity is better approached as a historically and culturally specific construct", and this succinctly explains the framework of difference for my research (McNay, 1992, p. 5). Difference feminism provides the lens to study patriarchal constrains for Indian women within a class-based context particular to multi-ethnic Malaysia.

2.4.2 Patriarchy, and Other Concepts within Feminism

Traditional definitions of 'patriarchy' refer to power exercised by *older* individuals in society (Bilton, 1996). Although the age component of patriarchy will also be looked at, the main analysis of the research will be gender-based inequalities faced by the women, and its effects on them. "Male domination" and "the power relationships by which men dominate women" will be the key (Bhasin, 1994, p.3). Either through state intervention, workplace norms, or household patterns, patriarchy is the 'metanarrative' that governs the entire scheme of things (Walby, 1990). Even as chapter One has outlined the effects

of patriarchy as an over-arching structural constrain, this section will offer a brief purview of how 'public' patriarchy is brought down to becoming a 'private' entity in the lives of the women and the children at home.

As the following sections will show, sometimes patriarchy is 'invisible' in the sense that it has become so normalized. Even as national structures are based on male-based power, women are 'naturally' subordinate to this power (Barret & Phillips; 1992, Bhasin, 1994). Moore (1988) shows how gender inequality flows from women's universal subordination to this patriarchal ideology. In the following sub-sections, the concepts referred to explain how private patriarchy exists, and can deter women from empowerment (Douglass, 2012).

2.4.2.1 The Home and Housework

The first place where a false ideology discriminates women is in the home, a site seen as suitable and synonymous for women only. Various feminist narratives have showcased the origins of this biased thought. Michelle Rosaldo explains how the public and private domains are gendered entities; the public-private divide reinstates the "asymmetry" in placing less importance on the private world, since it is associated as women's domain (Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974, p. 19). Davidoff (1976) explains how the natural beauty surrounding the privacy of the home enhances the 'pivotal' role of women to keep and nurture it.

Men, who were working in the public world filled with 'harsh' conditions (not suitable for women) could then escape and come home to the shelter and privacy of the home. In Walby's identification of the six structures that capture the practice of patriarchy in varied gender relations, the household is identified as the first site (1990).

Since the home has been identified as a gendered site carrying less value than the public world, feminist theory has continued to expound on the inequalities women face in relation to housework. Wilson says women doing housework is part of the "cult of domesticity" which patriarchy has helped create (Wilson, 1996, p. 17). Feminist writers have taken great pains to expose how housework should be valued. Delphy and Leonard show how "housework, household work and family work" done by women should carry the definition of 'work', and therefore be equally valued to work done outside the home (Delphy & Leonard, 1992, p. 75). DeVault explains the details of "household labour" done by women, and how that is unvalued because it is unpaid (DeVault, 1991, p. 1).

2.4.2.2 Motherhood and Mothering

Mothering falls into the "bracket" of the family, which thereby tends to display "the operation of an ideology of family life…that underwrite[s] prevailing relations of power" (DeVault, 1991, p. 18). The typical association of institutionalized mothering would be within the patriarchal framework already discussed. Although motherhood narratives carry "fundamental divides" (Nakano Glenn, 1994, p. 22), or other emphases, like alternative household structures (Youssef & Hetler, 1983) or single motherhood (Standing, 1998), these views will not be covered in this review as they are not within the locus of my study.

Sheila Rowbotham (1972) mentions how maternal parenting is a practice rooted in invisibility, where women's subordination is so deeply internalized. Sherry Ortner explains how a "woman's body and its functions…place her closer to nature" (Ortner, 1992, p. 254). This association gives rise to "compulsory motherhood" where "a woman's ultimate purpose" is seen in relation to being "a mother, and everything else she does is

secondary" (Coltrane, 1998, p. 90). Caroline Gatrell (2008) agrees by arguing how bearing and raising children, are seen to be 'natural' elements of mothering, and therefore not articulated as work. As a result, the entire process experienced by women in the labour of reproduction is swept away as 'non-work' in a patriarchal structure. Feminist narratives continue to question "meanings of mothering and motherhood" within the scope of gendered identities of family life (Nakano Glenn, 1994, p. 1).

Consequent to the above argument that views mothering as non-work, feminist thought seeks a corrective to such a demeaning interpretation by adding value to the maternal parenting role. For example, Walby says that 'reproductive' work should not be labelled separately from 'productive' work; all forms of labour done by women should be calculated as part of 'production' (Walby, 1990). Questioning the sole responsibility assigned for childcare to the mother is another way feminist thought refutes mothering as non-work.

Marxist feminists claim gender inequality in homes results from economic inequalities (Delphy & Leonard, 1992). Although Marxist feminism can be alluded to, especially in globalizing, capitalist economies, the women and children in this research face multiple other inequalities that are not only class-based. The mothers also work in these dual-income households; and this refutes the traditional Marxian thought of men being the rightful bread-winner. As Taylor and Spencer say, "the primacy of class politics has been challenged" (Taylor & Spencer 2004, p. 8).

Although motherhood is institutionalized, mothering experiences based on specific and variant contexts differ across the globe. Twenty-first century literature focuses on the otherness of stereotyped mothering experiences; 'stereotyped' meaning "the situation of

the white, American, middle-class" which "has been projected as universal" (Nakano Glenn et al, 1994, p. 3). Choosing to disavow the stereotyped view is in line with the stance of difference feminism that this work relates to the most. The women in this research will add their voices to the variant 'otherness' of mothers' lived experiences across the globe.

2.4.2.3 Working Motherhood

Another patriarchal structure that Walby (1990) identifies is within the economic level. Although women have now taken on waged labour, there are patriarchal mechanisms that keep them segregated from the main skilled, high-paying jobs. Current trends show that as more and more women take on paid employment, the discrimination they face is no longer based on the inequalities they face on the domestic front. The patriarchal structure they now have to overcome is at the workplace. Inequalities based on economic-base definitions as provided by Marxist feminist analyses need a corrective in a modern context where inequalities women face go beyond the simplistic economic-based reason. This is because "definitions of work and economy are themselves gendered" (Gottfried, 2013, p. 2). Gottfried explains the complexity of women at work when she asks, "What mechanisms…systematically disadvantage women in and at work, and how are differences among women structured depending on class, race and national origin?" (2013, p. 2).

Gottfried (2013) explains public patriarchy, linking gender and modernity. Although cultural notions of femininity may have changed, 'new' gender representations in society are still within the matrix of patriarchy. Gottfried (2013) also successfully explains how the rise of capitalism leads to the entrenchment of patriarchy in its basic structures. In the

words of Walby twenty-five years ago, representations of working women are still "within **a patriarchal gaze**" (Walby, 1990, p. 21, emphasis mine).

In spite of recent literature that expose working women's dual burden, working mothers have not been spared from household responsibilities. Regional literature has shown the difficulty of working motherhood (Razak, 1990; Quah, 2009). For many working mothers, the household continues to remain as "a site of patriarchal oppression" (Walby, 1990, p. 178), as these women are still held solely responsible for domestic duties. Although modern working mothers in Sweden and Denmark enjoy childcare facilities that accommodate their full-time working schedules, the scenario is different for working motherhood in many other parts of the world (Gottfried 2013). There is no euphemized "present-day reworking of the domestic" for many employed mothers (Stivens, 1998, p. 5). Many dual-income households remain strong sites of patriarchal dominance (Kabeer, 1994; Quah, 2009).

2.4.2.4 The Household, the State, and Globalisation

Globalisation causes economic changes, and these have an imperative effect on households. The "household" had remained "largely neglected in the study of…globalisation" (Douglass, 2006, p. 1). Only recently, scholars have put together the connection of how a growing capitalist economy, of a modern state, with its heavy emphasis on profitability, has a direct impact on householding (Douglass, 2012). Ranging from classical/political economics to Marxist/postmodern feminism, "the household as a 'mini-political economy'" has become the site and subject of much theoretical debate (Douglass, 2012, p. 3). Even in much earlier feminist literature, the 'politics' and 'economics' of motherhood is exposed, where policy makers and economists have the

power to create the institution of motherhood in line with the needs of the nation (Bernard, 1974).

What more in postmodern times where the creation of consumer/wife/mother is heightened, and where parenting roles in a capitalist economy take on added burdens of false responsibility. Buying the right diapers, getting the best medical treatment, and feeding quality formula for baby would be in line with being the ideal mother. Working mothers, especially, can end up feeling guilty of their work roles "in the context of oppressive narratives about 'good' mothering" (Gatrell, 2008, p. 77). Regional literature affirms Gatrell's view. Stivens (1998) explains how consumption is part and parcel of the new affluence, and this affects motherhood directly. Motherhood is thus ideologically extolled, through the relation of power in modern economies. Fuelled by nationalist ideology that seemingly empowers working mothers, the space women inhabit seems to get smaller and more restricted (Donner, 2008).

This scenario is exactly what Malaysia is facing. Belonging to the category of newly industrialized countries (NIC), Malaysia takes pride in being a capitalist, industrial economy. Within this development, there are a rising percentage of middle-class women who are fully engaged in paid employment. As explained in chapter One, making up thirty-percent in holding decision-making jobs has become part of the national agenda. Within this multi-layered context of differing interests of national and international concerns, "motherhood cannot be analysed in isolation" (Collins, 1994, p. 45). The role of the state *is* related to maternal employment. Sweden is one stellar model that combines "the highest female labour force participation with steady fertility rates" due to state support (Gottfried, 2013, p. 106).

In conclusion, the multiple ways a researched group of women needs to be studied is to include diverse "ways of knowing" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 4). Personal, familial, historical, economic, political, and global concerns intersect these women's lives, and only a lens that focuses on how different this slice of life is can qualify to be the representation of Malaysian Indian middle-class women (Zalewski, 2000).

Patriarchy remains a big part of the intrinsic power structure that permeates Malaysia, as the gendered theoretical lens shows. The primacy of the family to the Malaysian society is founded on religio-cultural mores that are patriarchal. The power of the state is a patriarchal structure as well. Global capitalist patriarchy is also identified, together with the effects of broad systems of domination that men have over women (Kabeer, 1994). Patriarchy is "indispensable"; as it explains women's subordination and it is "essential to capture the depth, pervasiveness and interconnectedness of different aspects of women's subordination" (Walby, 1990, p.1- 2). With the increasing overlap of discrimination caused by gender, age, ethnicity, and the minority status, the women in this research are a category that defies a simplistic solution (Beasley, 1999). Difference feminism allows for the study of these multi-layered forces, with all its "contradictions and complexities", both internally and externally (Zalewski, 2000, p. 70).

2.4.3 Childhood

The understanding of childhood has evolved globally, although there has been a greater attention to definitions of childhoods in more advanced nations, only because early theoretical and empirical works were done by researchers in those countries (Burman, 2005). In the history of childhood, only adult conceptions of childhood have existed (Corsaro, 2011). The focus has been adult sentiments towards children, and what methods of child-rearing are perceived as good and appropriate by the adults (van Blerk & Barker, 2008; Skar & Krogh, 2009). However, developments in defining children over the years

have contributed in childhood studies being included as an academic field of enquiry (Kehily, 2013). These processes will be discussed below.

2.4.3.1 The Historical Development: Adult Mediation

The 20th century saw a progression of society becoming child-centred. The work of Philippe Aries in the 1960s was one of the first to conclude that children should be treated separately from adults (Corsaro, 2011). Yet, early work following that of Aries was "concerned primarily with adult conceptions of childhood and not the lives of children" (Corsaro, 2011, p. 51). First world literature on children presented a stereotyped view of children in a few ways. The first was how early study on childhood focused on child development. In the 1960s and 1970s developmental psychology became a field of increasing interest to society, and especially to parents. Psychological theorists like Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg came up with general and universal claims where children were to be able to handle tasks of increasing difficulty, as their age progressed (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008).

However, critical perspectives began to expose the flaws of this theory. Gilligan (1982) exposes how developmental theory was biased in favour of male children, and Erica Burman points out to age differences between children brought up in different classes or cultures (Burman, 1997). The image of children presented by First World literature was also based on colonial interpretations. Nieuwenhuys (2013) refers to literature where African children were depicted as coming from the "inferior South" whereas the "northern Self" was portrayed as "hierarchically superior" (2013, p. 3). Gilligan (1982) also showed how white males were presented as superior. These critiques showed adult conceptions of children's development according to region, gender and age.

These critiques showcased how childhood in general is still used to secure the status of adulthood (Holland, 1992). In the 1990s, 'childhood' became more pleasurable, and the media highlighted the notion of being a child (Qvortrup et al, 1994). Since childhood was seen as a period of innocence, the images tended to give adults a notion of niceness; as adults could seek their own lost past through them. These developments were actually adult-centred, although they seemed 'child-centred' in name (Mayall, 1994). Behind contemporary advertising, "lies the desire to use childhood to secure the status of adulthood – often at the expense of children themselves" (Holland, 1992, p. 14). This example shows how children suffer 'age patriarchy', where adults have the power to dictate over the lives of children only because the latter are younger in age (Hood-Williams, 1990).

2.4.3.2 Modern Literature on the Theory of Childhood: Child Participation

With regards to literature of childhood in modern, affluent societies, the driving force behind it is consumerism. The 'needs' and the 'well-being' of the children are increased, in line with capitalist growth. These 'needs' are still mediated by adults (with power), without any input from children themselves (Holland, 1992). Not only do parents carry added false responsibilities, but children themselves have no input in what concerns them.

As observed, the general concept of childhood involves little agency and participation from the children themselves. The emphasis of childhood innocence in today's modern society also increases the issue of 'protection' for the child thus diminishing the aspect of 'participation' even more (Qvortrup, 2005). Since reaching adulthood is equated with completeness, the progress of children towards that imagined wholeness is protected and preserved. This affects children negatively as individuality, agency and "authentic participation" in children is then eclipsed further. The eventual perfection that is imagined

gives children a "waiting position" to become adults, and this creates a childhood with a generational limitation (Qvortrup, 2005, p. 5). Because children are in the 'waiting position' to become adults, 'individuality' and 'authentic participation' are eclipsed in the name of protection and preservation (2005).

Yet, there has been progress as far as child participation is concerned. In 1989, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); recognizing that children are the holders of their own rights and are therefore not passive recipients of charity but empowered 'actors' in their own development. In spite of cultural differences across the globe, childhood was seen as a separated space from that of adulthood. According to the CRC, this separated space that childhood enjoyed should also be preserved as a safe space, where adults should not be able to harm or cause violence to the children (Corsaro, 2011). Even as child participation is being encouraged in the theoretical frame of Childhoods, literature on children's voices from non-First World countries are increasing. The study of child participation in Brazil (De Castro 2012), lost childhood in Palestine (Netland, 2013), and girlhood lives in India (Chakraborty, 2009) are examples of work that focus on children's own voices. It is within this renewed framework of the theory of childhood that my research sits in. Instead of relying on what parents, teachers, or other child experts have to say about children, this research will allow the children to express their own views and feelings. The children will be "social actors in their own right" (Corsaro, 2011, p. 47).

As a member nation of the UN, Malaysia ratified the CRC in 1995. The *Profile of Children in Malaysia* (2013) was then published, in order to assess the nation's role in developing the needs of Malaysian children in line with the CRC. Although the CRC defines children as persons under the age of eighteen, the 'children' in my research will

be limited to those aged between ten to seventeen (10-17) years of age (reasons for this selection are given in chapter Three). It is within this context of child participation that the voices of middle-class Indian children in this research will be heard.

2.5 Conclusion

Difference feminism and the renewed theory of Childhood are the two large theoretical frameworks of my thesis. According to the feminist lens, patriarchy is seen as the overriding definition of power in all gender and social relations. Although scholars on gender from various branches of feminism have been quoted in this thesis, the critical observation is that these views fall in the category of meta-narratives (Swingewood, 2000). Many theories have been Euro-centric or even minority-based, and yet not suitable for the specific context of Indian middle-class women in Malaysia. Difference feminism is the key to study these women's lives, as this view considers how numerous inequalities affect women inter-sectionally; each reflecting patriarchal power one way or another.

As for the children, the revised theory on Childhood explains the progression of how adult mediation is first identified, and then slowly removed, so that children will be able to have their own space for self-expression. The concepts of children sharing their views and gaining control are important, as this is how children view life. Through the focus on participation, children can now be seen as social actors who negotiate with parents and teachers. This approach refutes earlier work that had made sweeping generalisations about children based only on adult opinion.

This chapter provides the "authoritative theoretical production" for the centering of the research participants' voices (Spivak, 1988, p. 66). Living within middle-class ideologies, both formal and informal, the lives of these middle-class Indian mothers and children are

governed by structures of patriarchy, ethnicity, and nationality. Having a space for participation and negotiation, no matter how small, is crucial for their life stories to be validated in local narratives. Chapter Three will look into the methodology used to study these lives.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

"Research is therefore, seen as one of the ways of providing spaces in

which hitherto silenced people can 'be heard' and be recognized as

subjects"

-Edwards & Ribbens,1998, p.150

3.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by referring to the history behind the selected methodology that is used in this study. Important views of the past and the progression of methodological narratives over time will also be identified, thus giving significance to the choice of methodology in my piece of work. This will then inform the selected research design and the objectives of the research. Following this, the research questions, the choice of sampling, and the selection of research tools will be explained. Lastly, the fieldwork experience will be referred to, before the conclusion wraps up this chapter.

3.2 Methodologies and Approaches Used in this Research

This section looks at the methodologies and approaches used in this research; in capturing the lived realities of the mothers and the children.

3.2.1 Feminist Methodology

As with an analysis on theoretical frameworks, methodological frameworks were also originally criticized for the lack of inclusion of women. Abbot et al (2005) is a work from the twenty-first century that critiques the beginnings of research methodology that was found to be typically 'malestream'. This work echoes earlier work that had exposed patriarchal stereotypes in research work. Oakley (1974) had illumined how housework

was seen as too trivial to be studied because it was seen as women's work, and Smart (1976) had showcased how crime patterns were studied using examples of male deviance alone.

It can be said that the 1970s was the phase of exposing 'malestream' methodology in the global North; when "the very act of discovering sexism in scholarship" was first put forward (Reinharz, 1992, p. 11). It was only after this "reaction against existing sexist bias within the social sciences" did various feminist frameworks began to flourish (Stanley & Wise, 1990, p. 21).

During the phase when sexism in research was debunked, distinctive feminist research methods were introduced. Ann Oakley (1981) for example, argued that there was a feminist way of conducting interviews that was superior to the masculine way of doing it. In line with this, qualitative methodology was also said to be more suitable in studying women, against quantitative methodology that was perceived as more 'scientific' and masculine. This view fit into earlier feminist standpoint epistemology, where the standpoint of understanding women's experiences was seen as "a unified subject of consciousness" (Visweswaran, 1997, p. 595).

Yet, by the 1990s, this viewpoint also began to be criticized. With every aspect of life being measured with a feminist consciousness, feminist researchers began to do exactly what the male researchers were criticized for a few decades earlier; labelling every experience with a gender-specific lens. By claiming that qualitative methods of research were feminine, and that quantitative methods were masculine, feminists were merely perpetuating what 'malestream' methodology had done in the earlier years – a gender-based dichotomy in research. To overcome this, research methods per se began to

disengage from gender-based perceptions. There was nothing feminine about interviews, and neither was there anything masculine about statistics. For example, in reference to methodological concepts, "problems of epistemology" were "gender neutral", and 'objectivity' and 'evidence' were now "normative concepts" (Janack, 2004, p. 1-2). Efforts were made to overcome 'gender essentialism' (Visweswaran, 1997).

Feminist standpoint epistemology itself did not address academic, political or epistemological *differences* and implications that exsited *within* feminsim. Sandra Harding, one of the pioneers who focused on epistemology as the foundation of methodology, was eventually criticized by Stanley and Wise (1990). They pointed out how her accounts that celebrated the plurality of feminist epistemologies were actually absent of detailed attention to black feminism (Stanley & Wise, 1990). By failing to give space to 'differences of being', Harding's argument promoted universalism in her own epistemological approach. The existence of hegemony which was heavily criticized in patriarchal narratives was now being bred within feminism (Stanley & Wise, 1990).

The observation of how certain states of being could be silenced within a singular definition of feminism caused feminists of various branches to be sensitive to various standpoints where each had its own ontological and epistemological validity (Bart, 2000). Whatever form of 'oppression', 'minority' or 'other'ness each researcher intended to address, the research design could still be termed as a *feminist* research process. Visweswaran (1997) mentions how gender should not be the endpoint of analysis, rather one of the many "valid entry points" into "complex systems of meaning and power" (Visweswaran, 1997, p. 595). Metso and Le Feuvre (2006) explain how feminist methodologists should not use or prescribe any single research method over the 'non-feminist' ones. Therefore, the issue is not so much the usage of data collection methods

that are quantitative or qualitative; rather, that the research design and tools used in 'feminist methodology' will seek to protect and empower the gendered lives of the research participants. The feminist methodology as a whole should seek to develop more inclusive research relations and strategies for women. This methodological view is is in sync with the choice of having difference feminism as the theoretical framework of the research.

This line of thinking will define the feminist methodology that will inform the research in this thesis. In other words, although the methods employed here are no different to the methods used in non-feminist research, the 'methods' used here within this feminist research carries the definition of "women's *ways* of knowing" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 4). Reinharz's comment echoes Carol Gilligan's advocacy of 'a different voice' in her rebuttal of Lawrence Kohlberg's study on boys that favoured boys' moral standing over girls' (Gilligan, 1982). From her research on children of both sexes, Gilligan claimed that women think and speak differently from men when they confront ethical dilemmas, and that this is not inferior, as Kohlberg had claimed, but just different (Gilligan, 1982). Women's 'ways of knowing' clearly explains the acknowledgement and celebration of 'difference' within feminist methodology. Although patriarchy remains as the key mechanism in the oppression of women, other factors like racism and nationalism cannot be ignored (Ramazanoglu, 2002).

Even as the research framework adheres to principles of difference feminism in the previous chapter, the correlation in this chapter is celebrating the diversity of "women's reality" through feminist methodology (Bart, 2000, p. 209). This is because "various conditions which shape individual identities" can still fall within "feminist allegiance" methodologically (Bart, 2000). As aptly said by Reinharz, "diversity has become a new

criterion for feminist research excellence" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 253). This broad feminist framework that I choose as my methodological framework is part of the effort to "advocate the inclusion of women's experience" in accounts of society (Bart, 2000, p. 209). This approach also supports the "retaining" of "research participants' 'voices'" in "the production of research accounts" (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998, p. 1).

Based on DeVault's thorough study on feminist methodologies (1996), Metso and Le Feuvre (2006) have come up with three criteria that feminist methodology in general should be committed to. I will borrow the same bench-mark for the methodology in my research; that it should include women's lives and concerns, minimize the harms and control of the research process, and support research of value that can improve women's status (Metso & Le Feuvre, 2006).

3.2.2 Methodology for Children

Just as women were excluded and marginalised within earlier academic research, the experiences of children were also excluded in adult constructions of childhood. Just as earlier research methodology frameworks had to be re-worked to include feminist discourses, the hegemonic discourses (by adults) on childhoods likewise needed to be challenged with the actual voices of children.

Fionagh Thomson draws attention to the ontological assumptions and judgements researchers have before they carry out their research process (Thompson, 2007). Based on these assumptions, many methodologies frame 'children' and 'adults' in ways that impose a bi-polar and hierarchical model even before data-collection is done. Very often adult (powerful) and child (powerless) identities in research are reinforced. Holt and Holloway agree to this 'bi-polar' framework being unconsciously used in the

methodology of studying children. They explain that much of the representations of children in research have focused on them being 'less than' adults (Holt & Holloway, 2006).

Apart from thinking of children as being 'less than' adults, minimizing children's ability to feel and perceive can also be pre-conceived notions that are detrimental in the research process. For example, Matthew Benwell (2009) relates how his own bias could have discoloured the results of his research on children. Benwell entered the research process with children with a taken-for-granted notion that children usually avoid communication that dealt with pain or trauma. He admits that this psychological construction of childhood could have impeded his analysis of children's discussion on racism (Benwell, 2009).

Example of ontological assumptions like these can govern 'objective' research, especially when the researched are non-adults. This is especially so when 'the child', 'the adolescent', 'youth' and 'the girl child' are shown to be essentialist and power-driven (Beazley et al, 2009; Chakraborty 2009). Just as feminist methodology progressed from being merely acknowledged, into a study that accepted (and celebrated) multiple experiences of differences, methodology on children takes a similar path. Corsaro (2011) talks about "microlevel methods" that are "especially appropriate" in appreciating children's views (Corsaro, 2011, p. 52). These methods that will later be discussed can facilitate the contemporary study of children and childhoods, and accommodate the diversity of children's experiences.

3.2.3 A Qualitative Approach

Within the methodological frameworks mentioned above, qualitative methodology is preferred, and will be used in this research. The qualitative lens enables the capturing of

the research participants' 'voices'. This is because qualitative methodology encourages women's and children's voices and 'ways of knowing' (Reinharz, 1992). As aptly explained, "Researchers exploring aspects of domestic and intimate lives, and perhaps especially childrearing, will thus need to consider carefully whether or not the … method fit[s] with their epistemological approach to the topic" (Ribbens & Edwards, 1998, p. 16).

3.2.3.1 Participation

The aspect of 'participation' within the qualitative landscape of both women's studies and childhood studies became prominent due to the growing weight of United Nations' Conventions. Both the CEDAW and the CRC, as part of the United Nations system of human rights, have been used to validate 'participation' and 'agency' in qualitative research in globalized academic narratives. This would mean that the members of the research are no more research 'subjects' that get research done on them by researchers; rather, they are research 'participants' who share the dynamic process of translating research knowledge *with* the researchers.

Since Malaysia has ratified both the CEDAW and the CRC in 1995, it is fitting that participation be a key concept in the methodological structure I work with. In the words of Balagopalan (2013), 'participation' is "an active capacity to speak and narrate their lives as a way of facilitating a more participative implementation of the various provisions of the Convention and its promise of equality" (Balagopalan, 2013, p. 135).

In using methodologies that centre the voices of women and children, my research hopes to move us on from a preoccupation with 'victim' approaches that posit women and children as constantly disabled (Lister, 2003). Positions of vulnerability that women and children have been shown to occupy have been used to consequently validate (male) help

and control (Ennew, 1994). Sensitivity to the voices of mothers and children in my research will undo such positions, and enable them to be recognized as "active social agents as well as creators and users of meaning" (Beazley et al, 2009).

3.2.3.2 Reflexivity

This section recognizes that the interpretation of data is a reflexive exercise through which meanings are made rather than found (Mauthner et al., 1998). Both the mothers and the children were validated during the interview process, as analysed through reflexivity. The experience I had talking with the mothers and the children showed me that the researcher, the method and the data are *not* separate entities; rather they are reflexively interdependent and interconnected.

Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008) had identified four ways that reflexivity can be used in research, but I will only be referring to two of them in explaining how I use reflexivity in my research. The first aspect is how reflexivity is a 'multi-perspective practise': "the accumulation of various perspectives" that "helps to complement otherwise 'incomplete' research" (Alvesson, Hardy & Harley, 2008, p. 483). This would mean that the opinion of the researcher and the views of the research participants are both taken into consideration, in order to get a more 'complete' picture of research findings. The other practice of reflexivity that is perhaps more accurately used in my research would be the 'positioning practise'. Here the researcher's work is understood within a larger framework, where reflexive practises "are used to examine the fates of competing claims made by actors…in keeping with broader institutionalized norms, and how context, power, and historical circumstances combine to produce knowledge" (2008, p. 485). In other words, reflexive practices by the researcher "thus explore the broader social landscape within which research and researchers are positioned" (p. 485).

For example, many of the mothers I interviewed were initially interested to keep the interview as short as possible. When they were told the interview could be as short as 15-20 minutes, they were very happy, as they could then carry on with the rest of their daily schedule. However, in most cases, the interviews went on for more than 30 minutes, and in numerous cases, it took more than an hour. In two cases, the interview had to be re-scheduled, and yet the mothers agreed to do so, as they still wanted the time to talk with me. I can also say that there was no sign from the participants that they wanted the interview to end. Not a single mother looked at the clock, and in some cases, they were made aware of the time only because there was some form of interruption (examples: child walking in, domestic helper making a query, husband coming back). In fact, in a few cases, I could see that the mothers were actually disappointed when the interview had come to an end.

Based on a reflexive analysis, I feel the mothers enjoyed this opportunity to do things outside of being a wife and mother and they cherished this. They also felt 'important' during the interviews, and as mentioned earlier, they felt validated when I asked them how they felt about various issues. The time with the children was also found more fruitful. Some of the children were so happy to talk about their experiences that they showed disappointment when the interview session ended. Some children who were initially wary to talk to this strange 'aunty' who had come to visit (with a tape recorder and interview sheets), eventually warmed up, and responded happily. The interview time helped the women and children carve out a space where they could reflect on their lives in a relaxed manner, and have their opinions and choices in life acknowledged and validated. Reflexively, the contentment expressed by this group of research participants is also telling of their voices being unheard of thus far.

3.3 The Research Process

This section explains the various elements of the research process, beginning with the research objectives.

3.3.1 The Research Objectives

The research objectives are to understand the lives of minority Indian mothers who work, and their children, within middle-class Malaysia. My Research Questions are:

    (a)   What are women's perceptions, and experiences, of their identity as middle-class Indian working mothers,

        (i)   Through their educational experience?

        (ii)   Through their use of time?

        (iii)   Through their role in employment?

    (b)   What are the children's perceptions, and experiences, of their identity as middle-class Indian children,

        (i)   Through their educational experience?

        (ii)   Through their use of time?

        (iii)   Through their understanding of their mothers' role in employment?

My research is qualitative in nature, where the study type will be descriptive and contextualized within modern Malaysia; which is multi-ethnic and patriarchal.

3.3.2 Sampling Location

My research takes place in the Klang Valley, which overlaps the states of Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor. It is the national administrative, commercial and educational

hub. The main reason that the Klang Valley was chosen is due to its contextual relevance to the specifity of my research subjects, middle-class Indian working mothers. Currently the Klang Valley population is about 7.2 million, which is more than one-fifth of Malaysia's total population.[10] The Klang Valley conurbation currently experiences heavy in-migration, induced by opportunities of higher learning, and employment. Being defined as "the largest urban centre in the country", Klang Valley is also referred to as "the economic and cultural core in Malaysia".[11] This makes it a fitting site for my research that deals with class in an urban environment.

3.3.3 Sampling Design

The household definition of my sampling design will consist of women (and their spouses) who are Indians. The other fixed variables are:

(a) The families are nuclear, with both spouse and children living under the same roof. (The presence of parents or in-laws living in the same household will not be on a permanent basis).

(b) The women are mothers, and are not part of households where there are no children.

(c) The women are working in occupations that are full-time in nature (as opposed to work that is part time, from- home, freelance, or ad-hoc options)

(d) The women will be defined 'middle-class' (via historical positionings / Malaysian statistics / their own income bracket or positions in their current jobs / their husbands' jobs).

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[10]http://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2013/01/02/the-klang-valley-has-finally-arrived-to-be-in-a-top-spot-in-world-business.aspx/ (The Star Online, updated on 22.4.13
[11]http://etp.pemandu.gov.my/upload/Inside%20Investor%20%20Greater%20KL%20and%20Klang%20Valley.pdf

Only one child from each household (between the ages of 10-17) will participate in the research. In three cases, two children from each household were interviewed, due to the eagerness of the second child when they saw their sibling being interviewed. In these cases, the child who was more expressive was chosen over their sibling.

3.3.4 Sampling Techniques

For this research, a representative sampling frame had to be used, so that the studied population could be homogeneous with respect to the required variables under study. Two sampling techniques were used to find research participants who possessed the required characteristics. The first technique was snowballing. I knew three women who were working with women-based organizations, and they knew of many women through their social networks. This would be an ideal avenue to get potential research participants.

The second technique used was the systematic random sampling technique. This technique would narrow down the women contacts to those who had the variables needed for my study. I shared with the three influential women the variables I was looking for, and each of them provided me with a list of suitable women. Together with a few acquaintances I had, who also fulfilled sample selection criterion. I contacted each person one by one, to ask if they would do this research with me.

The systematic random sampling technique did not stop at the women. Whether they had children between 10-17 years of age was also a required criterion. Some women had to be turned away from the research process as they had children who were younger or older than the required ages. In total, the number of women chosen was 30 individuals. At least one child of each chosen mother was researched on (from the ages of 10-17). The study on children in this research is not gender-sensitive. In the light of children's voices being

scarce in this region, all the more I wanted to analyse children's opinions and experiences in general. Practically, many of the research mothers had male children who were willing to be part of the research, and including male children to participate in research together with the female children seemed the best decision.

3.3.5 The Research Tools

Before the start of the research process, both mother and child were informed of the objective of the research, the exact tools being used, and the requirement of their consent in written form. The participants were also assured that their personal names would be kept confidential; and that all information gathered would only be used as data for my research. By these considerations, ethics in research was practiced.

Ninety percent of the research was carried out in the homes of the mothers. Only three participants differed from the norm. One mother preferred the interview to be done at her workplace, as she had to wait there for her two children to arrive, before she could drive them home. Another mother preferred the researcher's home, as she was in-between running errands, and this arrangement was more convenient (and quiet). The third mother preferred a restaurant, as she had to wait in this location for her daughter's ballet class to be over.

3.3.5.1 Research Tools for the Mothers

As mentioned in section 3.1.3, qualitative methods are chosen for this research, as they enable personal experiences to be highlighted.

The semi-structured interview was the main tool that was used, which is "usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside everyday events"

(DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315) (see Appendix D). Although the questions of this type of interview are pre-determined, they are also open-ended; which allows for other questions to emerge out of the dialogue (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This method is personal, and gives participants the space to express the feelings and meanings dear to them. In the words of Kvale, the semi-structured interview is actually a "conversation", as there is "an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions", depending on "the stories told" by the participants (Kvale, 1996, p. 124). The unfolding of 'stories' are best fleshed out through "the unguarded practice of conversation" (Spivak, 1988, p. 66).

Informal chatting is used as the 'door-opener' to deeper conversations. This would help the conversation develop naturally, where the researcher and the interviewee are more joint collaborators in the research process (Oakley, 1981; DeVault, 1991). The researcher also hopes that by sharing the larger objective of the study (to attempt addressing aspects of inter-sectional identity not delved into before), the participants will feel that there is a larger cause at hand. This may motivate them to speak freely and openly, knowing that their answers are not mere responses to a rigid 'interview question'. According to the feminist framework that I use, my own experience in being an Indian middle-class working mother is an identification that will improve the dynamics of relationship between the 'interviewer' and the 'interviewee'.

The Daily Clock diagram was another tool that was used (see Appendix F). This visual tool helped participants to have a visual overview of their daily time use. This tool aids their spatial understanding of time-use, and indirectly made their interview answers on time-based engagements more accurate. Even as we live in a society that relies on visual

culture, ways of seeing are becoming equally important to ways of knowing (Rose, 2001).

This tool facilitates more detailed conversations in the interview process.

Although reflexivity was discussed earlier as an approach, it is also itemised as a tool here. In the course of my time with the mothers, reflexivity helped me gauge the context better, and look beyond the words that were used by the research participants. Even the unspoken words of the participants could be probed. In Donner's words, exploring "silences, omissions and withdrawal" can prove to be "equally informative…in the course of an interview" (Donner, 2008, p. 19).

The use of these three tools combined well in the research process. Triangulation is made possible, as each tool complements the other. The accuracy and depth of information that each tool gleaned individually could be verified and strengthened collectively.

3.3.5.2 Research tools for the Children

As for the mothers, the choice to use these tools has been informed by the methodological framework mentioned earlier. Research tools that are suitable for children is vital for the research to be effective. Naomi Bushin demonstrates why flexibility is vital in doing research with children (Bushin, 2007).

The tools used with the children are similar to that used with their mothers. The semi-structured interview that is child-specific is used. As with their mother, slots in the daily clock are filled (by the researcher) as the child spoke. As a researcher, I used a coloured pen to fill in the daily clock visual, as colour would heighten visual imagery (Rose, 2001). This tool enabled the child to have a better visual sense of their daily time-use. Their answers were unconsciously more accurate than if they had to speak of their daily

schedule without a visual tool. Reflexivity is also used with the children. Having perception in understanding what the children are saying beyond their words is necessary for rich data to be obtained. This suitable combination of methods can capture the 'complexities' of young people's lives and experiences (Langevang, 2007).

Throughout the research process for both mothers and children, the tape recorder is on. The audio recording is then saved using a code that is similar to the code used for a particular mother or child.

3.4 The Fieldwork Experience

The fieldwork experience is explained with detail in this section.

3.4.1 Contacting the Research Participants

I contacted each of these women (via telephone, or email) one at a time, asking them if they would agree to be participants in my research. The objective of the research was shared with them, and only when their consent was obtained, did I go further to ask for an appointment. Since I also had to interview one of the mothers' children, getting the child's consent was equally important. Due to this, I sometimes had to call back, so that the mother had time to ask her child whether they would be willing to do the interview.

Once I got the green light from the mother and the child, my strategy was to ask for an immediate interview session; in that week itself, or in the coming week. The reason I did this was because I found all the women very busy with their daily / weekly schedules, and asking for an appointment later than a week or two in advance usually did not materialize. By this approach, I worked with only the three or four women who gave consent for the interview, before I proceeded to contact the others on the list. In this way, I did not keep

any potential mother (and child) waiting too long to be interviewed. The only few times this approach was not followed through, was when the mother herself told me to contact her a few weeks later, when she, or her child, were not so busy.

3.4.2 The Research Procedure

3.4.2.1 The Preparation

Before each session with the research participant, I as the researcher, would make sure I had everything ready: the address (and directions to) of the home I was going to, the consent forms, the visuals, my note-pad (with detachable pages for each interview), and my tape-recorder. Practical aspects were also taken into consideration, like making sure my GPS (Global Positioning System for navigation) was working, my car had enough petrol, and that the timing of the interview was not during peak hours, where I could be held up due to a traffic jam. I also had to ensure that the battery of my mobile phone and tape recorder were fully charged. I wanted to make sure that there were no interruptions of any sort before or during the appointment. I felt that being punctual and having everything ready and organized were important indicators for the research participants to have confidence in the researcher.

3.4.2.2 The Fieldwork Experience

Once I arrived at the home of the research participant, I took a short while to introduce myself and talk about my research to the research participants. I did this especially for the mothers whom I had not met in person prior to the session. I found that making small or general talk prior to the interview was helpful in making the mothers and children comfortable.

In most cases, the mothers agreed to my suggestion of having their child do the interview first. I suggested this because the interview with the child was much shorter, and when it was over, the mother could then have the privacy of doing the interview with me. Only a few times did I do the interview with the child later, and this was due to the child being engaged with tuition, or having dinner at the time I was there.

I am happy to note that almost all mothers took their time to talk, and answer the questions posed to them. Quite a few of them were a little unsure of how the interview would proceed, and so their initial reaction was one of hesitancy. And yet, as the interview progressed, the mothers warmed up, and began talking freely. On many instances, the conversation veered away from the tight boundary of the question, and as a researcher, I let them talk freely.

'Participation' as a concept was practised during these interview sessions. By allowing the mothers and children to express themselves, the process of sharing research knowledge was taking place. This is how research participants engaged in the research process. For example, when some of the mothers veered into some 'not-related' areas of discussion, I did not stop them. By allowing them to participate freely in the research process, I came away not only with richer data, but with a better understanding of these mothers, and their views about life.

The interview process with each child ranged between fifteen to thirty minutes. Whereas with the mothers, the interview process ranged between thirty minutes to two hours! In one case, the mother was so excited that she could express herself freely, that the only thing that stopped her was that it was already dinner time for the family.

The actual process involved for both mother and child is as follows:

(a) I would show the individual the consent form, and explain why it was necessary. When the individual gave consent for the research, I would then ask for their signature on the consent form. I would assure the individual that their names were confidential, and would be withheld from being known. I informed the participants that their names would be recorded only by a code (starting with M for mothers, and C for children), and later on, I would give these codes a pseudonym (see Appendix G). I would then explain how the interview would proceed, and tell them to speak in the direction of the tape recorder, so that all that was being said could be captured clearly.

(b) I would then start the interview showing the Daily Clock visual. This helps the individual to visualize how their day is divided into 24 hours, and how their time-use can be recorded according to the 24 segments. For the children, using a coloured marker to identify their activities made the diagram more appealing to them.

(c) After this, the mothers are asked questions covering three main aspects (as per the Research Objectives in section 3.2.1). Most of the mothers took their time to elaborate, and this is a positive sign of their willing participation. The children were also asked questions, based on the three main aspects, as with the mothers.

After this process, I usually spent another few minutes at the home, just thanking the mother (and the child) for their time, thus giving a closure to the interviews. Occasionally, it was also at these casual times (without the recorder being on) that the mothers gave valuable insights to their lived experiences. These comments were quickly jotted down when I got into the privacy of the car, or when I reached home. These reflexive thoughts gave new insights to the entire research process.

3.4.3 Data Analysis

Once I reached home, I made it a point to follow a post-research procedure. Although this was a little tedious (especially on days that I felt tired), I knew this procedure would help validate the overall findings:

Firstly, I would save the audio recordings of both mother and child, and do a duplicate, for stand-by purposes. The codes for each recording is similar to the code given to the mother / child. Then, I would write down my thoughts about the day's research in my e-diary. I would jot down anything that I found could make a difference to my eventual analysis. Examples of these reflexive 'notes' would be the home ambience, the presence of the husband (in the background) during the interview, or any piece of information that the interviewee happened to reveal in passing, before or after the interview. These notes are put into a manual file/envelope that is created after each visit to a home. In this file, the biodata (including the interviewee's name, address, and contact number) of each mother and child, and the daily clock diagram that they filled during the interview are kept. This would enable me to retrieve any information I needed at any time; either for any clarification on the research, or for any future research. This procedure is done for all thirty households represented.

In the meantime, the transcriptions of each recording is looked into, at verbatim. The documents are done in MS Word, and then analysed manually. I do the analysis based on the thematic structures itemized according to the research objectives. I use colour codes for each theme, and analyse one script at a time. Triangulation was also exercised. For example, when a mother had given a piece of information regarding time in the interview,

I checked the Daily Clock diagram she filled, to see if the information she gave was the same.

After the fieldwork, the entire process of transcription and analysis took me about five and half months to complete.

3.4.4 Problems Faced

The main problem faced was that numerous mothers who were good candidates to be interviewed did not agree to go ahead with the research.

3.4.4.1 Too Tight a Schedule

Some were too busy to do the interview with me. A few mothers were contacted more than three times, and yet for each time, they said they were too busy to slot in an interview with me. Among this group were two very capable mothers who would have made 'perfect' research participants for the topic of my research, but these few declined the chance to be interviewed based on their hectic schedules.

There was one mother that I happened to meet up with (based on a snowballing contact), who was keen for the interview. I wanted to interview her very much, as she had a high-flying job, and seemed very successful in juggling her home life and career. However, she fell ill, and after her recovery, there was so much of work to catch up on that she could not fit in time to see me. There were another three mothers who were willing to do a telephone interview, but when they were told that I needed to see them in person, they declined to be interviewed.

3.4.4.2 Suspicion

Apart from being too busy, there were a few mothers who were suspicious of this research. After explaining to them the aim of the research, and telling them how non-threatening the questions would be, they were still not convinced to change their mind and do the interview. There was one mother whose husband had quite a public profile. After hearing that my research would cover issues of conjugal roles, she was afraid that my questions would encroach into her personal life with her husband, which would then expose his life. Even though I assured her confidentiality of name and identity, she refused to consent in doing the research.

3.4.4.3 Concern for Children

There were three mothers who declined participation based on the fact that I needed to interview one of their children. I found this strange, as I was willing to make two separate trips to their home, in order to fit into their free time. Two mothers said that their children had too many tuitions to attend, and would therefore not be free for any interview with me. One mother who had a very public profile said she did not want her children's private lives to be exposed.

3.4.4.4 Lack of Privacy

Another problem I faced (although only with 3 mothers) was the presence of the husband during the interview. There was one home where the husband came home early so that he could overhear what his wife was saying.

Based on my perception, only one husband who was around (but who sat far away from the interview place), seemed supportive of his wife's answers. His indirect involvement was the only one I classify as supportive, as opposed to the other two, which I term as

intrusive, or controlling. This aspect of the husband being around will be elaborated on in chapter Five.

3.4.4.5 'Going Native'

In the initial homes I visited, I struggled with 'going native' – where I was so involved with the conversation that was going on (with the mother and child) that I forgot I was a researcher. I had to remember to be involved enough to be engaging, and yet detached enough to draw 'objective' conclusions. For qualitative researchers, "ambiguity thus arises when we seek to simultaneously to serve an academic audience while also remaining faithful to forms of knowledge gained in domestic, personal and intimate settings" (Ribbens and Edwards, 1998, p. 2).

3.4 Conclusion

The chapter has shown the methodologies used for this research; namely, the feminist methodology, and the methodology for children. Both methodologies share the aspect of 'participation', where research participants were free to participate, and express their views in the research process.

In addition, reflexivity is also referred to within the frameworks, so that any other information that is gleaned beyond the actual research tools can also be included as findings. Although exercising reflexivity can be criticized as giving more power to the researcher (Alldred, 1998), this process is a double-edged sword that is able to add richness to the total research experience. Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008) explain how both researcher and research participants share in the data collection through the 'positioning practise'. This approach enables nothing to be lost, and where even silences can speak volumes (Donner, 2008).

Capturing the voices of the participants is crucial to this study, as this would explain the processes that the women (and children) have undergone, in their quotidian lived-in experiences. Gaining insight into their lives would warrant the use of qualitative research; where social processes can be examined, and contextualised. Short of doing an ethnography, the interviewing method is most suitable to draw out and interpret the hidden meanings embedded in the participants' lives. In the words of the well-known [participants'] lived world make interviewing an exciting and enriching experience" (Kvale, 1996, p. 124).

Having delineated the methodology that defines the research design, and the experiences of the actual research process, the next three chapters explain the findings.

CHAPTER 4: EDUCATION. HOW IT SUSTAINS INTER-GENERATIONAL MIDDLE-CLASSNESS

"So Tuesday and Wednesday I come back from school, I got maybe 40 minutes only to rest, then he [tutor] comes here…and I got Maths tuition also. Wednesdays only one class…Thursday also one class, and Friday I have one class… Oh and then Sundays also, in the morning…"

Sixteen-year-old Akash

"Two crucial middle-class institutions which can hardly be imagined separately…[are] the family and the school."

-Donner, 2008, p. 124

4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the role of education in the lives of Indian middle-class working mothers and their children. I begin by discussing the experience of their own girlhood in the context of being middle-class and Indian in Malaysia. Inter-generational influences will also be analysed, where the mothers and their parents share experiences in raising children with a priority on education. I will show how this inter-generational investigation provides rich data on the cultural and social expectations of middle-class Indians, and similar to Donner, I found working with "members of the same family belonging to different generations greatly rewarding" (Donner, 2008, p. 4). This chapter will also introduce the children's voices, depicting children's views on education, and their ideas

for their future. The inclusion of children in a larger discussion of mothering in Malaysia is a new field of study, drawing mostly from the contemporary field of children's studies.

The inclusion of children in this thesis is the first known contribution to the growing field of children's studies in Malaysia. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on how education plays a pivotal role in shaping the mothers' and children's identity and how inter-generational continuities help families cope with the increasing importance of education in middle-class Malaysia.

4.2 Education and Middle-Classness

The approach to education within families shows cultural difference between Western and Asian societies. In relation to education in the United States, McDermott (2008) writes about fostering "culturally sensitive parent-child-school-community relationships" (McDermott, 2008, p. 135). This case indicates how education exists as an entity that caters to the needs of society. Likewise, in the UK, when politicians are blamed for not subsiding education for the public, it is because the well-being of the population is seen as the yardstick for any educational reforms (Gillard, 2011). This is the approach taken to education in more advanced nations, where education is seen as a malleable agent that should cater to, and adapt to, societal needs. Sharan Burrow, writing about education in Australia mentions how the Australian Education Union demanded for justice at a time when there was "no legal basis by which education standards might be protected" (Burrow, 1994, p. 172). The goal for public education to be "constitutionally protected" is so that schools could continue to provide quality education to the students (Burrow, 1994, p. 171). This example also shows how education should be 'protected' so that it can be an agent that serves the needs of the society. These aspects exhibit how education

is viewed in industrialized nations in the 'West', or the globalized North. This is a vast contrast to the Asian perspective.

In an Asian context, education takes on a monumental role where societies and families have to adapt to its rigid frameworks. Education here has become a monolith of institutional importance, where individuals and families shape and change their lifestyles so that its requirements can be met. Quah explains how educational progress is one way a traditional community becomes a post-industrial one (Quah, 2009). She says "education helps the community to redefine its original stock of cultural traditions" according to challenges in the environment (Quah, 2009, p. 76). This change in tradition is important for the nation's "economic development"; which explains why "educational progress" is instrumental in progressing Asian societies (2009, p. 76). Quah's point of how the 'original stock' of traditions gets transformed by education is echoed by Donner in different words. Donner says education gives people "personal refinement within a modernized version of 'tradition'" (Donner, 2008, p. 126). Either way, it is education that plays the pivotal role in bringing change to tradition. Donner goes one step further than Quah in defining the role of education in progressive Asian societies; she says education is "an ideology of middle-classness" (Donner, 2008, p. 126).

In Southeast Asia, education is the feeder for middle-class notions of 'progress'. According to historical texts, the background of colonial influence helped in bringing about social segregation. Thimm (2013) talks about how ethnic exclusion and inclusion were introduced through the education system initiated by British colonial policies in Southeast Asia. While Singapore offered "the best education facilities for Indians" because it had "the most prosperous Indian merchants and professional men", the scenario was different in Malaya (Thompson & Adloff, 1955, p. 117). The British government did

not do much for the Indians in Malaya as "the majority of the Indians" were "estate labourers" (Thompson & Adloff, 1955, p. 117). Due to this, the 'social segregation' between Indians in "the rapidly expanding government services" and those in "unskilled labour" was entrenched (Sandhu, 2006, p. 156).

The findings of this chapter are based on the lives of the privileged few; "Indian children born in Malaya and educated in multiracial English-medium schools" (Arasaratnam, 2006, p. 201).

From the sample of women participants in my research, 60% of them had mothers who were housewives (including the mothers who gave up work when the children came along). This percentage shows the prevalence of the practice of normative household patriarchy among the non-manual labour migrant Indians in Malaya (Smith, 1952). Smith (1952) explains how household patterns were different in rural areas, where women were included in familial working units in peasant production. On the contrary, it can be said that the mothers of my research participants were part of the women who lived in towns, and succumbed to the challenges of the 'feminine dilemma'. This dilemma caused women to give up paid employment and be tri-united to "wifehood, motherhood and domestic labour" (Gatrell, 2008, p. 21). This is in line with the 'good mother' narrative which derives its strength from "the glorification of the housewife status" (Ng, 1999, p. 78). Only 40% of the mothers to my research participants had retained their paid employment after they gave birth. These women managed to maintain the 'good mother' narrative in spite of their jobs. Later discussion in this chapter will reveal how their daughters took on paid employment with a higher status, and with heightened tensions, continued the struggle of being a 'good mother'.

Twenty-two of the research participants' fathers had government jobs, which is in line with national statistics on Indian migration to Malaya. This is due to the establishment of British rule in Malaya in the late 1800s. The expansion of government services needed educated labour, which middle-class Indian migrants easily filled (Arasaratnam, 2006; Manickam, 2010). Although not theorized strictly, these Indian men (and their wives) were all termed as 'middle-class' (Manickam, 2010).

Although my research participants were randomly picked through stratified sampling, it is interesting to note that many historical statistics continue to be evidenced in the chosen sample's backgrounds. Historical literature showed that middle-class Indians took up jobs in the spheres of education, the police force, and hospitals (Sandhu, 2006), and one third (33.3%) of the sample's fathers were part of this category. Literature also proves that educated Indians took on supervisory and consultative roles both in the private sector, and in the governmental manual jobs (like in energy and the railway) (Sandhu, 2006). These men eventually managed to enjoy a middle-class status.

Arasaratnam (2006) speaks much of "the educated Indians" in his work on the early Malaysian Indians. His claim is that "the Indian educated classes" were "the earliest of the Indian settlers to look upon themselves as permanent residents of Malaya (Arasaratnam, 2006, p. 197). From this group, he defines the "middle-class" (2006, p. 198). Arasaratnam goes on to prove the middle-class preoccupation with education; how "the growth of education…for their children" became "an acute necessity" (2006, p. 201). It was this social context that shaped the research women's experiences of girlhood. Their answers to the interview questions discussed in this section provide evidences of their families' middle-class preoccupation to discourses of education.

Forty-nine year-old Navisha says, "I was lucky to have a father who was very supportive…and believed in education". Forty-five year-old Pushpa had a father who had a well-paying government job. Education for her was part of normative life. Pushpa says, "I've been in boarding school since I was 13, government boarding school… My father was a government servant." Because of her father's position in the government, Pushpa's girlhood experience was growing up with a government education, which also enabled her and her brothers to study 'overseas'. Forty-nine year-old Annabelle talks about how her parents instilled in her the importance of education, although due to the race card: "They said, 'you're an Indian, nothing is going to come easy for you', so we grew up with that. Things are not going to be handed to you".

These examples evidence the centrality of education in the lives of middle-class Indians. The next two sections discuss gender-based observations on the role of parents in inculcating the value of education in their girl children.

4.2.1 Their Mothers' Influence

There were participants who highlighted their mothers' influence on their educational progress. Forty-five year-old Lakshmi's mother was a secondary school teacher: "My mum recognized my capabilities and didn't let me slide…she pushed me in a lot of ways and I'm very thankful…that…she made me realize my capability." Although both her children were girls, Lakshmi's mother made sure her girl children did not allow structural hindrances to stand in the way of their capabilities. It was thirty-nine year-old Komala's mother who instilled the importance of studying hard in Komala's life: "It was very much my mum… she tells you the only thing that gets you wherever you want to be is [through] hard work and education… so we all understood we can't have everything; you know?"

Komala's mother was a housewife, but she had the insight to push her eldest daughter to achieve a better life than what she herself experienced: "That thing was always instilled [in] us… Education is the only thing… To do well in studies and put in the hard work…those were the motivating factors". Forty-five-year-old Letchumi spoke highly of her mother, as well:

> We come from a middle-class community, and my mother [who] was a housewife…felt that people around didn't respect her, so she instilled the fact that the only way out of poverty is education… She will make sure we studied. I was an average student in school but I think it paid off because I did my Masters, and now I'm doing my PhD. My mother was a person who really practiced the value of education.

These research participants' mothers had the foresight to realize that gaining social mobility was not just through the channel of getting married to a middle-class man. They understood that their daughters could push for a better life and move up the social strata through education. In general, this trait has been more common with the Chinese women migrants rather than with Indian women. Historical evidence mentions that many of the Chinese women who migrated to Malaya were former reformists or revolutionaries who escaped China, and set up schools locally (Lee & Tan, 2000). Chinese diasporic parents, although poor, were willing to invest in their children's education; even for their daughters (Lee & Tan, 2000). The instances forwarded by some of the research mothers on how their mothers influenced their education are again contrary to dominant discourses. Borrowing a phrase from Yujia Wang, it can be said that the mothers of Lakshmi, Komala and Letchumi were daring to go against the norm in "talking back to diasporic historicity" (Wang, 2012, p. 8).

Apart from the few cases mentioned above, most of the participants' mothers played roles that were associated only to issues of quotidian life. Some mothers preferred their fathers' approach even in non-educational matters. Forty-four year-old Devi said she didn't like

her mother's style of upbringing as she "used to scold us". Devi preferred her father's approach to life: "My father…he was a very relaxed person. He said, 'just go, carry on what you're doing."

Fifty-two-year-old Veera said she didn't like her mother's style of motivating her through comparisons:

> My mom used to say … to us, 'this aunty's son is doing this, this aunty's son got this, got that'. My father was different. My father used to always believe each of us are different, cannot compete, cannot compare.

The participants in this study learnt valuable lessons from their mothers. Forty-three-year-old Sujata said,

> My mom, she was a wonderful lady… She did not really tell me, "okay, you do this, you do that". All she advised me was "learn to drive. Because if you learn to drive, then half the battle is won."

Forty-one-year-old Selvam recalls how her mother's advice helped her keep her priorities in life: "I think my mom had ingrained it that family and children come first before career la… And maybe that has been the main [yardstick]".

These observations are in contrast to the father's influence in the children's education as discussed in the next section.

4.2.2 Their Fathers' Influence

From the women participants' comments on their educational upbringing, it is obvious that the majority of them related to their fathers. Fifty-two year-old Veera appreciated her father's advice to keep up the tradition of studying hard and yet not having to compare herself to other family members. Even when it was time to choose a majoring subject in university, it was Veera's father who helped her decide what she wanted to pursue. Her

father quelled her first preference of archaeology: "So what kind of worms are you digging, you know? In Malaysia, what is the scope of doing archaeology, are you crazy?" He then suggested his daughter pursue something that would be relevant to the country's economy: *"You go and do something in English".* Veera agreed to major in this, and "the rest is history", confirming that she remained in language-based work till the present moment.

Fifty-year-old Neeta also spoke highly of her father, who had come from India. Living in a large community-like area away from the city, Neeta's father used to help prioritize studies not only with his own children, but with all the children in his community. Neeta says,

> My dad told the carpenter he wants to make tables for the children. He will get someone to clean the place and all of them [the children] will go there and study, and they help each other out…all studying together.

Due to Neeta's father's influence, she proudly says, *"My brother was the first to enter university in the community."* Forty-four year-old Devi claims how both her parents were "*very open-minded",* but she had a preference between the two*: "my father, especially."* Forty-three year-old Sujata has fond memories of her mother, saying *"I used to be very close to her",* and yet she admitted that it was her father who was the 'disciplinarian' at home, and who inculcated the value of doing well educationally. As in the case of Veera, Sujata also chose her career based on her discussion with her father: "My father…initially wanted me to do medicine…because his side, his siblings, children and all, were all in the medical line…I said, 'I'm not interested.' … Somehow I took a liking to teaching".

This aspect of educational discussion and negotiation with the male parent is telling of gender patterns of authority in Indian middle-class homes. DeVault explains how "expert advice" and "an orientation toward expert discourse" depend on the subtle yet definite

opinion of men (DeVault, 1991, p. 219). This evidences that the role of fathers in prioritizing education for their children is a common practice among the participants' girlhood experiences.

From the above discussion on parental influence in their daughter's education it is obvious that kinscript patterns have influenced the girlhood experiences of the women participants in my research. It was found that it was mostly the fathers who influenced the participants in their educational endeavours, and it was mostly the mothers who played a role in their daily social life. Of course, there were variances of normative experience, and these were also observed and mentioned. As explained in Chapter Two, one of the culturally-defined domains of kinscripts is kin-work, which means "the consequence of culturally constructed family obligations defined by… family needs" (Stack & Burton, 1994, p. 35). Children's education was defined as 'family needs' in middle-class Indian families, and 'family obligations' in meeting this need was met mostly by the fathers. In this sense, kin-work was integral to patterns of normative patriarchy where the father as 'breadwinner' and 'head of the house' initiated the meeting of their children's educational needs. From a gendered lens, patriarchy explains why the 'formal' inculcation of educational importance came from the research participants' fathers.

The research participants' fathers saw their roles as vital for the upkeep of their newly-gained middle-class status; especially since they were an ethnic minority in Malaysia. Maintaining economic stability due to the importance placed on education proved very much to be a middle-class script, and one that should be passed down to the next generation. From early on in life, fifty-two year-old Veera was reminded of her family's middle-class status. Her parents kept saying, "We came as an educated group. We came here to work for the white guys, with the British. They put us in all these offices, we were

holding big positions, we didn't come here as labour force". In Malaysia, as far as the scope of education was concerned, my research proves that it was patriarchy that established the Indian middle-class site. This is contrary to Donner's research that claims that middle-class motherhood and education are intertwined (Donner, 2008). However, this chapter also shows middle-class Indian households in Malaysia facing a shift in the parental gender patterns of influence in education, in the next generation.

4.3 The Next Generation: Investing in Education

4.3.1 Investing in Private and International Education

Even in the 1970s, regional academic literature had already mentioned the importance of children's education. Mothers' concern with the "rising level of education" and the "growing consciousness of…economic opportunities" in Singapore was already addressed at that time (Wong, 1976, p. 33). In more recent literature, Donner talks about how Asian middle-class societies have evolved into placing greater importance on educational strategies (Donner, 2008).

This is the pattern followed by mothers in "middle-class Singaporean households" (Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p. 37). This section will discuss whether Indian middle-class mothers in Malaysia follow a similar trajectory.

From the research sample of thirty participants, twelve participants sent their children to private schools. Of these, three of the private schools teach the Malaysian syllabus, and two teach an American home-schooling syllabus. The other seven schools follow the British education system. The decision to go for private education is part of the rising trend among middle-class Malaysians to emulate 'Western' middle-class ideals of

education.[12] The mothers interviewed in this study are of the opinion that local government schools are not good enough, and that a private education would prepare their children better for the future. Thirty-nine-year-old Karishma grew up in a home environment that could be termed upper middle-class. Since she herself worked in an international school, her children were naturally sent to that school. Thirty-nine-year-old Prema said her "circle of friends [are] all middle-class" and putting their children into private schools was seen as the norm. Some of the mothers thought that this decision was practical because they intended to send their children overseas for their tertiary education. Being familiar with an international syllabus locally would definitely make it easier for the children when the time to go abroad took place. Forty-five-year-old Pushpa and her husband studied in local schools but got to study in universities abroad with government aid. However, they do not foresee a similar transition for their children, and hence, put their children in an international school.

In spite of the growing approach to private / international education, there were different reasons why the children were steered in that direction. Three of the twelve mentioned schools actually taught the Malaysian syllabus. In two cases, the parents wanted the children to study according to their own pace, and enrolled the children in an American home-schooling system. Fifty-one-year-old Pamela and thirty-nine-year-old Karishma sent their children to private schools because they themselves were educators in those institutions. The majority of the sample mothers still sent their children to local government schools. From this majority, many households still intended to send their children for a private pre-university education, or even overseas for their tertiary

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[12]In the last five years, the number of international schools has more than doubled from 41 to 87, and still counting, say Pemandu and NAPEI sources, in 'Million ringgit schooling', article in *Sunday Star*, 11 August 2013, p 19.
The Private and International School Fair has also run for the 3rd consecutive year in July 2014, http://eventsnonstop.blogspot.com/2013/06/private-international-school-fair-kuala-lumpur-2013.html#

education. They felt that attending a local government school prior to that would not pose as a problem. Forty-four year-old Sheena had no problem with her children studying locally before she sent them abroad for tertiary studies. On international schooling, she says, "very expensive…I don't want to waste my money about RM20,000 - RM30,000 a year…" and she also finds an "international syllabus…taught by our locals" redundant. Sheena rather got her children to study locally and just "invest… time in reading English books" so that going overseas later would be easy.

4.3.2 Tuitions

Many Malaysian parents believe in sending their children for tuitions, in addition to the children's schooling hours.[13] Attending 'tuition', or going for extra classes privately as an enhancement to the lessons learnt at school, has become an integral part of the urban educational environment locally.[14]

These tuition classes take up a major component of many children's time outside school. These tuitions are part of the regional focus on study subjects like Science and Mathematics.

As the research shows, it was the mothers who initiated much of the planning in the arrangement of tuitions. Some mothers inserted the tuition times during the weekdays, so that the children could be completely free in the weekends. Other mothers did the reverse, by having time for these extra activities only during the weekends, so that the weekdays were only meant for school and homework. Other mothers slotted in tuition and extra

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[13]"School is not enough" say more and more Malaysian parents who believe in tuitions, quoted from http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/leisure/2013/10/31/msians-consider-tuition-%E2%80%98money-well-spent%E2%80%99/

[14]http://www.tuitionplaza.com/articles/abackgroundguide.htm. These tuition services are carried out by private tutors who either teach in centers, or provide home services.

classes randomly on any day, without a definite pattern, depending on the availability of tutor/class near their home. Whatever mode each mother chose, it is clear that these engagements were deemed important, and even necessary in the lives of their children.

Fifty-one-year-old Pamela has a teacher coming to the house for "a one to one tuition". She claims her teenage son is "very playful" and that is why she has to "put him down for tuition for Maths and Accounts". Forty-seven-year-old Mahesh has arranged tuition for the children in locations that are about twenty kilometres away from their home. When asked why these faraway places were chosen, she responded, "I know all the teachers there you see...Not so good teachers here [at home area]". Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali has her husband drop the children for tuition after they have lunch in their grandparents' home, and picks them up after work. Thirty-nine-year-old Komala has arranged for tuition near the home, which her children go to almost every day. During their interviews, some mothers never mentioned that there were tuition times for the children.

For example, forty-seven-year-old Kumari, forty-nine-year-old Shirani and forty-nine-year-old Ramani were so intent on the detailed description of their home-based tasks; they did not mention how the child goes for tuition from school or from the baby-sitter's house. These tuition times were mentioned by the children (Lavinya, Andrew, and Varsha), in their account of their daily lives. Thirty-nine-year-old Karishma provided her children with personal tutors who came to the house to teach: "We push our kids more now because the competition is a little bit greater…I think I bug them far more than I was ever bugged…Now I feel that everyone is doing so well…where would our kids stand?"

These comments are similar to Donner's research when she said that "mothers and fathers worry more" as educational achievement becomes a middle-class preoccupation (Donner,

2008, p. 126). These families see the cost of time, money, and distance as necessary so that their children are better equipped to face the future.

Of course there were mothers who took on a more relaxed approach to their children's education. These were not the norm, and were a minority. Forty-seven-year-old Kumari does send her children for tuition and checks on them, saying, "… make sure that they've got all their work in order and all that. And yet she also ensures that we watch a lot of TV together."

Forty-four-year-old Devi did send her children for tuition, but only so that they did not end up failing any subject in school. She allowed the children themselves to take the initiative for their own future. Forty-six-year-old-Mathi also didn't believe in tuitions, and is quite happy that her children cope with studies on their own. She confessed that she "used to emphasize a lot on children's education those days but now I am…quite relaxed."

These examples prove that there were households that did not conform to normative pressures faced by middle-class families. These few families felt that the children's own hard work would be sufficient for doing well in school. However, within this small-group, there were mothers who tended to absorb their children's homework and revision times into their caring roles. In other words, some of the mothers who did not send their children for tuition ended up performing the role of tuition master themselves. Forty-one-year-old Selvam, for example, did not believe in tuitions at all, but spent much of her time at home helping the children with their school work: "I refuse to send them for tuition…going for tuition at this age just irregulates the child… If ever they get any marks or grades, it's what I do at home."

This added trait of 'ideal mothering' is further discussed in Section 4.2.5.

4.3.3 Extra-curricular Activities

Being involved in co-curricular activities as part of the formal schooling curriculum has been implemented by Malaysia's Ministry of Education for many years. The national curriculum has encouraged students' overall development, and the word 'holistic' has been popular in recent academic narratives.[15] In my research sample, most families adhere to this holistic focus on education. In other words, apart from the involvement in tuitions, the educational interests include being involved in a host of extra-curricular activities.

However, meeting the intents of the National Education Policy is just one level of why the mothers prioritize extra-curricular activities. The more accurate reason is due to "public discourse on correct parenting", that shapes mothers' attitudes towards their children's extra-curricular activities (Donner, 2008, p. 132). Indian "middle-class motherhood" in Malaysia is similar to the pattern found in Donner's research (Donner, 2008, p. 132). Sending the children for lessons in piano, tennis, or Mandarin, are some of the examples of extra-curricular activities that the mothers make the children pursue. These activities exhibit "successful parenting" that is linked to the middle-class lifestyle that these families engage in (Donner, 2008, p. 132).

Thirty-nine-year-old Karishma made her children undergo a strict time-table on weekdays, but on weekends, badminton is 'compulsory': "I like them to go for sports…it's free and easy, we meet friends…[it's] very social…that's how we spend

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[15]The word 'holistic' is often used in academic narratives in the nation. For example, The Preliminary Report – Executive Summary, Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 carries the phrase, "The Malaysian school curriculum is committed to developing the child holistically along intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions…", pdf, www.moe.gov.my

weekends". Thirty-nine-year-old Prema inserts the co-curricular time in the weekdays, as well. She says, "Both the boys are doing music, so we have a system…one is doing the music, one is doing reading time…then we swap". On Saturday mornings, Prema says that the children have "… Mandarin tuition, followed by either guitar class or piano". Forty-five-year-old Harbajan emphasizes academics for the children, but also "music class" and "art and craft". In fact, her children are so involved in music, that almost all of Saturday is spent for band practice. For thirty-nine-year-old Kalpana, both her children are heavily involved in "creative arts", where practice sessions take up many weekend hours, especially for rehearsals prior to presentations. However, her children's weekday schedule is also inclusive of activities; music for her daughter and football for her son. Forty-four-year-old Sheena explains how the weekends are as busy as the weekdays, "My daughter has her tennis, her *sangeetham* [vocal lessons], her *veena* [Indian classical instrument] …". Forty-three-year-old Sujata says her two boys were part of a football programme at the club for six months in a year, and they only get home after 8pm. On weekends, forty-one-year-old Selvam sends her children for cycling or swimming, while fifty-year-old Neeta takes her children for football. In the words of thirty-nine-year-old Prema, what these mothers do for their children is to "try to give them a balanced childhood."

From the examples above, we see how this "multitude of activities" is part of a development that is clearly a middle-class, consumer-based trait (Donner, 2008, p. 133). Donner had explained how a more "economically determined process of stratification through educational achievement seems to have set in" in middle-class India (Donner, 2008, p. 126). This similar trait is occurring in Malaysia, where the role of a middle-class family now takes on a more specialized feature in ensuring the children's future is based on 'balanced' educational successes.

In spite of this 'holistic' approach, most mothers still see the weight of a tertiary education above all other forms of involvement. Thirty-nine year-old Prema says, "Our basic for them is [to] get a basic degree in whatever field they want, and after that they can do whatever". Forty year-old Vanie gave a similar answer. Although she gives her children the leeway to be involved in numerous co-curricular activities, she says she would find it difficult if her children want to do "something creative" instead of getting a degree: "I can't accept [that] easily… I didn't tell them to do law and medicine, [but] I want them to do something more relevant".

4.3.4 A Stable Job Versus Tertiary Education

A few mothers specified the importance of a job rather than a tertiary education. Although fewer mothers gave this response, it was still a normative answer for the Indian middle-class community, where "the wage mentality" of a stable job was more important than the possible high returns of a risk-taking job (Lourdesamy, 1980, p. 10). Forty-five-year-old Letchumi is blunt in her attitude towards her difficult son,

> I have no ambition for him… [I tell him] "can you just get a decent job and I don't care what you want to do as long as you get up every morning and tell me you want to go to work…" Sometimes he will ask me, "do you want me to be a pilot or a doctor?" I said I don't care.

Forty-four-year-old Devi also targets any good job for her children,

> We don't want to tell them "Oh you must be this; you must be this". You all decide what you want…And we also told them… "We will give you all what is needed for you until the stage, what you need. But after that, buying a house, buying a car, everything is on your own."

These two examples are contrary to normative middle-class discourses in the sense that a University education is not emphasized. And yet, getting that stable job is strongly implied, and this is still within 'the wage mentality' of Indian middle-class households.

4.3.5 Educational Influence: The Shift from Fathers to Mothers

In this discussion on the involvement in children's educational progress, the mothers' role seemed dominant. A few mothers did mention the aspirations of their husbands for their children. For example, thirty-eight-year-old Anjali says her husband wants their son to be a doctor: "My husband is already mentally like…getting my son to be a doctor…you know, that Indian mentality? At least one [child] must be a doctor."

Even in recent popular literature, a stable job status is very important for Indians and this includes being a doctor, a lawyer, or an engineer[16]. Forty-three-year-old Sujata mentions how her husband had said "let her choose whatever she wants" in relation to their daughter's future. Although these random examples show that the women's husbands did make sporadic participatory statements to their children's future, there was no clear example of shared conjugal roles in this responsibility. The research showed that the quotidian actions relating to the children's lives were still dominantly the mother's concern.

In my findings there seems to be a prominence in maternal influence on children's educational performance. The role of the fathers in this aspect, as with the other aspects of involvement at home, was quite inconspicuous. During the interview, the mothers were not asked overtly to evidence their husbands' involvement in their children's education. However, the daily clock tool and the interview questions on time-management revealed that it was the mothers who played a prominent role in this aspect.

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[16]'ReTamil', an online portal for Malaysian Indians carried an article that had stated, "Ask any Indian child what they want to be when they grow up and they will tell you, doctor, lawyer or engineer…", article dated 21 May 2014, www.retamil.com/indian-youth-political-awareness/

Forty-five year-old Harbajan says, "My husband…he is his own boss… He is very flexible with his time and he is basically working any time; for him, weekend, public holiday, it doesn't matter". Juxtaposed against her detailed account of her children's schooling progress, tuition schedules, and meal plans, what is inferred from Harbajan's comment about her husband is that he is completely unaware of how his children fare in school. Only the mother is aware of their daily schedule, saying, "I've got activity arranged for them each day…basically music class, my daughter has BM and Maths…she has a teacher who comes on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday [and] Saturday is band". When asked about the children's future, Harbajan says,

> "At this time, they are too young, so they should be excelling in what they are doing now…I see what they are good at and ask them, like [son] is very good in Physics so I told him 'based on your strength, you would probably go into something to do with Physics'…"

This mother's answer speaks of her confidence and familiarity with the children's daily life patterns, and skills. Through her answers, Harbajan also reveals the 'gap' of involvement and knowledge by her husband. His leaving of responsibility pertaining to the children's education to his wife can be strongly inferred. Both forty-nine-year-old Navisha and her husband have high-profile jobs that bring them home late, but Navisha's answers are similar to that of Harbajan: she knows the children's daily time-table, and knows how they are progressing towards their desired future careers. Navisha says,

> When the report card comes, or they don't do their homework, then they get it from me… I don't expect straight 'A's [but]…they know very clearly that money goes into it and I want to see some results… I don't see the need to push them in one direction but I do give them the push when I see fit.

This mother's comments again reveal the non-involvement of the father in the children's education. The 'I's in these mothers' narratives are telling of a singular involvement in looking into the children's studies; not something that was shared with a spouse.

Studying this phenomenon within the kinscripts framework, it is found that there has been a shift in family obligations and responsibilities. Although the researched mothers had their own fathers play a prominent role in guiding their educational futures, their own maternal role was the dominant one when it came to their own children's educational future. The shift in kin-work shows the current trend of mother's holding both the "family leadership" role and the "caregiving" role (Stack & Burton, 1994, p. 36). Between the generations, there has been a patterned shift of gendered kinscripts in kin-work priorities, as far as involvement in children's education is concerned.

This shift is not only a gendered, inter-generational one, but also one that is influenced by the educational status of the women. Many of these women enjoyed a higher status than their own mothers, as they had the privilege to be highly educated (some in well-known international universities), have high profile jobs, and aremarried to men who had higher-paying jobs than that of their own fathers. In terms of social mobility, these women were able to experience an upward trend.

This status-enhancing factor has indirectly helped the women feel validated in speaking up for their children's education. This instance is similar to Donner's findings on middle-class mothers in India, who although were stay-home mothers but they were educated (2008). These educated women felt superior because they could help their younger children cope with kindergarten lessons at home, while their uneducated peers could not. My research confirms Donner's findings on the middle-class, although my research participants are fully employed. Being educated has qualified them to look into their children's education.

And yet, this observation leaves a searching question mark with regards to the role of the fathers. Although education became a factor that had enabled Indian middle-class mothers to educate their children, why did that enablement *replace* the parental role played by fathers? Why couldn't both parents, now equally educated, be involved in educating their children? Previous narratives have proven how women in dual-income households continued to juggle housework single-handedly in spite of their joint working roles with their husbands (Gatrell, 2008; Quah, 2009; Thambiah, 2010; Ng et al, 2011). This unfair burden is exemplified even in the area of educating the children. Like housework, and childcare, educational interjections imposed on the lives of the children have now become part of "discretionary mothering" practices in middle-class Asian families (Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p. 33). The occurrence of this scenario is also proven in Indian middle-class households.

From this analysis, the sacrifices these mothers make in relation to their children's progress show how much the Indian middle-class mother-child relationship seems to be bonded through preparing the next generation for a successful life. The father's responsibility in inculcating the value of education in the children has been passed over to the mothers.

Being engaged in children's educational priorities has now become a "key project of mothering practices" (Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p. 32). It is now the mothers who sustain middle-classness among Malaysian Indians.

4.4 Children's Voices on Their Education

Based on the description of kinscripts as a dynamic process that "maintains lifetime continuities, sustains intergenerational responsibilities, and reinforces shared values", the

voices of the next generation should also be given consideration (Stack & Burton, 1994, p. 35). In her critique to Chavkin and Maher (2010), Martins suggests how "research on family" should include "the experience of other family members" (Martins, 2011, p. 102).

European literature had shown that children's voices existed in normative literature merely as a reference to society's social or political climate (Burman, 1994). Matthews et al (1999) had asserted that "a culture of non-participation by young people is endemic within the United Kingdom" (1999, p. 135-144). This proves that even in First World countries like the UK, young people were provided with limited opportunities to engage in discussions about their economic, social and environmental futures. Participation was conceived to be an adult activity, even in developed nations.

Making children conform to the norms of the adult world is more applicable in other parts of the world, especially in the global South. Citing childhood patterns in Ghana, Twum-Danso (2009) mentions how "at the core of the very notion what constitutes childhood is respect and obedience, highlighting, once again, the centrality of these values to the socialization process" (Twum-Danso, 2009, p. 385). This is in line with the discussion of chapters One and Two, where the initial definition of 'childhood' was shown to be a mere construct of adults' opinion. The implication to that construct is that children's experience should encompass the inculcation of values that give adults the rightful place in society.

These discourses prove that children's own thoughts and experiences are hardly taken into consideration in the shaping of individuals in society's lived experience. It is in the light of such discussions, that this chapter will introduce the opinions of the participating mothers' children.

Since education is an essential pivot in middle-class discourses, including children as research participants in this chapter seems most suitable. This inclusion of children in this research enables an inter-generational study on education. The children's experiences can be compared and contrasted to that of their mothers'. Additionally, in light of research on children's voices being scarce in this region, childhood experiences become even more fitting for this research. As with the mothers, the children were also given the daily clock to comment on, apart from the interview questions. The daily clock showed how much their time was taken up with school, homework, tuition, and extra-curricular activities. The children's comment in the interviews supplemented their time-based lives as shown by the daily clock. This data from the children also helped triangulate and validate the data from their mothers.

4.4.1 The Children's Schooling Experience

The children continue to prove how important education is in their lives, as going to school is compulsory. Almost all the children were in the morning session, which means schooling hours ended between 1pm to 3pm. Only a handful of children schooled in the afternoon session, which means their mornings were free, and that school time ended at 6.40pm. All the children have more or less normative schooling experiences, where they enjoyed some aspects, and disliked others.

Many children have favourite subjects and teachers. Twelve-year-old Sathia says, "My Maths and Science teachers are my favourite, because when I'm not good, they will be patient and teach". Sixteen-year-old Kiren says he likes "English" very much as the teacher is "very open, very friendly [and] doesn't teach by the book."

The children also have subjects and teachers that they dislike. Fifteen-year-old Varsha says, "Some teachers… they pick on me. So it's a bit annoying because I don't know what I did, and then they shout at me". Twelve-year-old Vinosh says he dislikes a particular teacher, "because he always picks on me…Like, if I and many of my friends play in class, he always tell… 'Vinosh, sit down!'"

Many of the children have good friends and enjoyable activities. Twelve-year-old Vasantha says, "I like friends…and a lot of activities, so it's fun to go to school". Sixteen-year-old Lavinya says the same thing, "I love school…[and] I have a lot of friends… At home, I'll walk around not knowing what to do…so I'd rather be in school and have something to do".

And yet some of the children also spoke of unpleasant experiences with friends now estranged. Seventeen-year-old Nathan experienced a change of school, and when asked about having a best friend, he said "no, not from here". When asked about friends in general, Nathan says, "some [are] here, but [they're] not that close". Some children faced a change in the system, and it upsets them. Sixteen-year-old Jigna says, "The way my school is run…their focus is so messed up…It's frustrating…so I don't really enjoy school now".

These comments show that the children find it normative in going to school; where they have a fair share of pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

Both the Daily Clock and the Interview tools both proved the high level of involvement of the children with educational engagements. On most of her school days, eleven-year-old Shireeni has a driver that picks her up from school and takes her straight for tuition.

These tuitions take up between 2-3 hours. Fifteen-year-old Gauri says that apart from schooling hours, "basically, it's just homework". Her weekdays go just like that, where school, "stuff like homework…[and] Science and Maths" tuition take up all her time. For sixteen-year-old Jigna, life is a little more hectic as she is involved in competitive dance. She explains how her life is after school: "I go to my mum's shop and she packs lunch for me, and I eat in the car". Her driver then takes her straight to dance school till 7pm. When she reaches home, there is only time for a "shower" and "homework". When asked how she manages such a strict regime, Jigna says, "I have no choice".

Apart from school, twelve-year-old Kavita has a life made up of "homework", and "revision", which she does even in the weekends. And this is not inclusive of her tuition times, that are "…from Tuesday to Friday 5pm-7pm, and then Wednesday…5pm-7pm, and 8pm-10pm". Sixteen-year-old Lavinya has many school activities. She says, "I stay back quite a lot, so when I am staying back and I have homework, then I'll be with my friends, and we'll do it together". For Lavinya, staying back "practically every other day" is not a chore, and she enjoys it, as she is with friends.

With a few cases of extremity, these examples seemed to reflect the pattern for all middle-class children, where their non-school time was mostly taken up with homework, tuitions, and extra-curricular activities.

4.4.2 The 'Reality': Limited Leisure Activities

Most of the children did not have time to spare for a hobby or so. Nathan and Andrew, both seventeen-year-old boys, are the rare examples of children who have free time to enjoy. Nathan could enjoy "cycling" or "hanging out with friends" in the evenings, and

Andrew enjoys his "Xbox" and "video games" as indoor games. He says, "I play football, and I also fly RC plane[s] with my dad" as outdoor games.

For most of the other children, this is not so. Fifteen-year-old Gauri admits that she has "no" hobby apart from "bath[ing] my dogs during the weekend". Yet even this was curbed due to soon-coming examinations: "Now I have PMR, [so] I ask my dad to bath the dogs". Twelve-year-old Sathia says "tennis" is his hobby, but when pressed for details, it was found that the game was more a "compulsory" co-curricular activity. Sathia also admits: "I finish it [homework] up as fast as I can [because] TV is nice." Watching TV seems to be a sneaked-on luxury for him. Eleven-year-old Shireeni talks about herself having to go for 'tuitions' and admits that her limited time to relax happens just before her mother gets home from work: "Sometimes my mother will take out the Astro card and then I don't know what to do. So, I'll play with my brother's PSP. Sometimes, if got Astro card, I'll run upstairs and watch TV". Eleven-year-old Kumar has tuition every day after school, and when asked about his hobbies, he answered "mostly nothing". When asked about what he does to relax, Kumar's answer is "I got no time".

Examples like these confirm that spontaneous activities are pursued less and less by children in modern societies. Many Indian middle-class children get involved in extra-curricular activities as part of the 'holistic' education that has been presented either as an educational policy, or as an accepted norm of middle-class culture. "Spontaneous play" is increasingly being replaced by "adult-controlled, planned and organized activities" (Skar & Krogh, 2009, p. 339).

Just as literature on globalizing motherhood spelt out the various inconsistencies and irregularities that working mothers face, literature where children's voices now show the

consequences that children have to face due to market and state interventions' on their growing up experiences. Skar and Krogh (2009) talk about how children in Norway don't associate with nature anymore in their games. Outdoor games and spontaneous play are reducing, and this also limits "the opportunities for children to explore and create their own play spaces" (Skar & Krogh, 2009, p. 343). Other literature from the global North also addresses the "disconnect between children and nature", and how this "disorder" could actually lead to "physical and mental health concerns" (Hasseldahl, 2011, p. 2). If these issues occurred in developed nations where the pursuit of education is not so stressful, what will be the outcome of lack of play in Asian children's lives?

From a reflexive point of view, the overdose of "organized care and activities" and the limited time for "outward exploration" made me feel very sad (Skar & Krogh, 2009, p. 342-343). It was with much disappointment when I found how my own childhood experiences differed so greatly to what children in today's middle-class households go through.

Attributes associated with normative childhood, like having the freedom to make mistakes, or the time to look into creative ways of playing, were missing from the lives of the research children. The lack of spontaneous play experienced by the research children also shows the high expectations that Indian middle-class families have on their children. In the pursuit of educational excellence, the children are bereft of having time to enjoy a hobby or to play.

These instances are left out of glossy accounts of national policies that claim to 'preserve' the family unit and at the same time push for a rise in increased 'productivity' of dual-

income households. Children born in this rat race face other negative consequences. Having woken up at 6.15am and getting home after 4pm, eleven-year-old Shireeni mentions how tired she is when she gets home from school and tuition: "Sometimes I just chuck my bag away and go to sleep…sometimes I don't change out of my school uniform". It can be inferred that this nap time is forbidden because Shireeni admits, "Then suddenly at 5 or 6 o'clock my mother comes back [and] I rush downstairs and go change" in order not to get a scolding. Fifteen-year-old Varsha gets up at 5.45am and stays up late to do her homework. Due to this, afternoon naps are essential: "I need to rest (giggles). I think it's catch-up time sometimes, the body needs the…because like, I have to wake up early".

Varsha also complains about both her parents nagging her when she doesn't study, "My mom…will maybe nag…[about] my room…or something like '[go] study' or something like that. My dad will also nag, or sometimes he will just deprive me… [from] play[ing] the iPad. And then when I ask, he's like 'no'." At times like these, Varsha feels her parents do not understand her, and she feels like telling them, "Never mind. Just go to work". Twelve-year-old Sathia was looking forward to doing the research interview with me after I finished interviewing his mother. But because he had gone through a long day in school, he was so tired, and his mother's interview had to be cut short to accommodate his. Physical tiredness and desiring some free time seemed to be a commonality in the lives of the children.

These children's negative experiences are actually due to "the connections between families' class positions and the nature and quality of children's education" (Brantlinger, 2003, p. 9). Living a life centred on educational achievements reflects the parents' focus on maintaining the class position which they have gained. Brantlinger (2003) states that

the middle-classes in the United States use their class position to gain advantages for their children's schooling experiences. Unlike Brantlinger's study (2003) that highlighted middle-class intervention within the schooling system, the mothers in this research were more focused on their children's *daily* engagement with school, tuition and extra-curricular activities. Although many of them were also able to negotiate and rationalize school advantages for their children, their priorities were more in line with their children developing a quotidian *lifestyle* that prioritized education. The targets these mothers hoped to achieve through their 'mothering techniques' were inculcating "educational strategies" for their children (Donner, 2008, p. 124).

Donner's words are proven true in the lives of my research participants; when she had claimed that "the family" and "the school" were "two crucial middle-class institutions which can hardly be imagined separately (Donner, 2008, p. 124).

4.4.3 The Role of Kin Members in the Children's Education

One more aspect that defines the children's educational experience is how family members outside their own nuclear family are also involved in the process. In Chapter Two, the role of kin was highlighted (Grover, 2011; Stack & Burton, 1994), and this section will refer to the role of kin from the children's perspective. All the children belong to households that are nuclear in arrangement (even though three of the participant children had their grandparents living temporarily with them, at the time of the interview).

Studying the role of grand parenting in contemporary societies is becoming a common feature due to "the ageing revolution" taking place at "the international, regional, and national levels" (Mehta, 2005, p. xiii). Due to "the emerging childcare gap" in many developing nations, grandparents are looked upon as the most convenient people to take

on informal childcare (May, Mason & Clarke, 2012, p. 151). Although the role of kin will be developed further through the mothers' voices in the next chapter, this section will study the children's comments regarding their grandparents.

Twelve-year-old Sharmila says that every Saturday, "I go to my grandma's house." She is there for the whole day: "I have lunch…[I] go to ballet…and then I go back to my grandma's house. Either I go to the park or meet my cousins…[and] I come back at 7pm, have dinner, shower and change into my pyjamas." Sharmila then goes back to her own home to sleep at past 10pm. Although fourteen-year-old Pravin did not mention his grandmother as part of his family, his mother Devi had mentioned how both her children were brought up by their grandmother (in another state) in their first three years. In her interview, forty-four year-old Devi had said, "That part of it was handled for me very well…both of them [children] had the same thing."

As for fifteen-year-old Varsha, she goes to her grandmother's house after school for "lunch and sleep". Seventeen-year-old Michael and his siblings used to spend all of their afternoons after school in their grandmother's home. They could nap, shower and have meals there. When asked who he talks to the most, or confides that when he has a problem, Michael's answer was his "*grandmother*". Likewise with sixteen-year-old Lavinya, who says, "My grandmother and I are quite close…so whenever I have a problem if my parents are not there, then she's the first person I'll go to."

These children's responses show that kin, especially grandmothers, are important in their lives. In these instances, their grandparents' homes are a safe and convenient space for the children to go to after school, or when needed. This is similar to the realities of other Asian societies, as well. Donner's work showed how "grandparents…look after

grandchildren temporarily but for prolonged periods of time" in Bengali communities in India (Donner, 2008, p. 136). Mehta and Tang (2010) show how grandparents are included in care-giving in Singapore households. Kin plays a vital role in inter-generational continuities.

Yeoh and Huang (1995) claim that having a domestic worker seems to be the strategy of most middle-class households in Asia. Yet the majority of women in my research show their preference to rely on their own parents or their parents-in-law for help with childcare. From my research, it is evident that albeit indirectly, these grandparents help with the education process that their adult children prioritize. Kinscripts as a concept is practiced in the lives of Indian middle-class children; where their grandparents play a role in continuing family patterns that they had developed in their parenting years. In the lives of my research participants, the kinscript that is most strongly passed down is the priority of education in maintaining class positions.

4.5 The Children's Ambitions

The last aspect to be considered as part of the children's responses to their schooling experiences is their views on their future careers or their ambitions. The children's mothers grew up in a context where some of them chose to go into lines of work that were suggested by their fathers. They trusted their fathers' opinion of the market situation, and obtained a job that was suitably middle-class. However, some of the mothers had dared to venture into careers that were not recommended. The 'cultural habitus' that these mothers had, allowed them the freedom to choose their own careers, as chapter Six will show.

A few of the children were honest to admit that they had no idea what they would pursue in University. Seventeen-year-old Michael had only a few months of secondary school left during the interview, but he openly said "not sure" when questioned about what degree to pursue. When asked if he had any idea what to pursue, seventeen-year-old Andrew said, "Not really la. Maybe dad will help me…" When asked whether she had any idea what line of work she would like to take up, twelve-year-old Sharmila honestly said, "not yet".

For some of the children, their parents' conscious or unconscious input plays a part in their educational desires. Twelve-year-old Sathia wants to be an accountant, or work in the bank like his mother. Eleven-year-old Shireeni wants to be a doctor and a news reporter. When asked why she wants such a variant combination of work patterns, she says "[being] a news reporter was my father's choice because news reporter can go all over the world". Sixteen-year-old Akash wanted to be a pilot, but when he started wearing glasses, that was the end of that dream. "Maybe I'll do aircraft engineering" he said, but quickly added, "Then I thought again…my father wants me to do medicine. So it's between engineering or medicine". Both Vinosh and Nathan want to have their fathers' occupation for themselves. Twelve-year-old Vinosh said, "I want to be [a] neurosurgeon, same like my father". Seventeen-year-old Nathan wants to be an engineer like his father.

These comments prove how parents still desire to steer their children into courses and degrees that would prove beneficial later on. It is interesting to note that in spite of the support that many parents gave their children in their choice of career, getting a tertiary education seemed to be the unspoken imposition on each child. This was evident in the daily patterns that the mothers encouraged and oversaw. In the words of forty-four year-

old Devi, there were only a handful of parents who told their children that "you have to do it on your own".

But as the children's quotidian lifestyle showed, the underlying importance of getting a good education remains the foundation of Indian middle-class upbringing in Malaysia.

Although Indians are said to have an inclination to become medical doctors, there were two mothers who did not want their daughters to take up medicine as their future careers. Both fifteen-year-old Gauri's parents were doctors, but "they [parents] said don't be a doctor", she said. In another household, forty-three year-old Sujata said that her father had wanted her to pursue Medicine, but she herself had declined it. Now, married to a surgeon, she said she would never allow her daughter to become a doctor. From her own experience of juggling home and paid employment, Sujata feels that her daughter's choice to be a working mother would be difficult enough, without having to face the challenge of studying to be a doctor. These instances prove the continued importance of the mothers' own opinion, especially in the light of their assessment of their children's future, based on their own (negative) experiences. These examples reveal the protectiveness, and control, of Asian parents, especially over their girl children.[17]

Some of the other children were allowed to choose fields that were different from that of their parents. As introduced in chapter Two, the concept 'cultural capital' is associated with privileged classes; where individuals within the structure of society are able to have, and exercise, agency (Swartz, 1997).

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[17]The trait of being 'overprotective' by Asian parents is portrayed as normative behavior in some literature, as in www.mysahana.org andhttp://www.indiaparenting.com/raising-children/128_913/drawbacks-of-overprotective-parents.html

Both of sixteen-year-old Lavinya's parents were consultants in various fields. When asked if that is also what she wanted to do, Lavinya says, "I thought of that when I was growing up, but I decided that that wasn't me. So accountancy…that's my ambition now, to be a management accountant." Fifteen-year-old Varsha wants to get into the business line: "I have a plan, but I'm not sure whether it will work out…it's like creating my own environmentally friendly notebooks".

The individual subjectivities that these two children exhibit is interesting to take note of. When Lavinya says "I decided that that wasn't me", it suggests an independent thought process where she could gauge whether she wanted to follow her parents' footsteps, or not. She was able to exercise agency to the point of having a self-concept independent of her parents' influence. Varsha also displays a sense of creativity that speaks of individual agency. Having a mother who had to follow her father's wishes in her educational development, Varsha has the maturity to say "I have a plan", and the adaptability to add "I'm not sure whether it will work out". This form of willingness to try (and fail) celebrates the freedom of choice that middle-class children like these could enjoy.

Sixteen-year-old Kiren wanted to be a software / graphic designer as he really enjoyed doing computer graphics, but recently he had dabbled with the idea of being a pilot. When asked how his parents feel, he says, "I think they would be fine." This is confirmed with the interview I had with his mother (Sheena) who says that she and her husband would support any career option their children choose. In her interview, forty-four old Sheena had explained how she supported Kiren's childhood dream to be a professional tennis player, but he himself had discarded this dream in his early teens.

Sixteen-year-old Jigna wants to be a professional dancer, and says her parents support this decision. This is also confirmed by the interview with her mother, Shalini. Although forty-two year-old Shalini had said she would prefer her children to pursue a 'relevant' / non-creative degree, she had made all efforts to support Jigna in her choice of pursuing a dance degree. Preparing special meals, hiring a driver, and arranging for gymnastic classes (to enhance her daughter's flexibility in dance) are evidences of forty-two year-old Shalini's supportive role.

4.6 Conclusion

4.6.1 Education in the Mothers' Lives

This chapter has reviewed how Indian middle class mothers, and their children, position the role of education in their everyday lives. The findings reveal how education seems to be a fixed entity in the lives of Indian middle-class families and in this way the findings support research from across the globe which suggests that education and middle-class identity intersect strongly. National policies encourage dual-income households from an economic point of view. However, schooling hours in the nation do not accommodate working parents. Whether the child belongs to the morning or the afternoon schooling schedule, there is the assumption that someone will be at home when the child gets home. Although there have been criticisms targeted at tuition centres, it is these centres that accommodate the school-going child before or after school hours. Since tuition centres can be seen as sites that offer safe spaces as well as educational enhancement, many middle-class parents prefer that their children attend tuition (under the supervision of a few responsible adults), rather than have their children be 'latch-key kids' who go home to an empty house. This is the reality that most urban, dual-income households face.

The Indian women in my research belong to an ethnic minority that has experienced forms of discrimination, in spite of being middle-class. The other ethnicities in the middle-class enjoy a cultural or monetary advantage like the Chinese (Daniels, 2005), or government-secured policies like the Malays (Stivens, 1998). And yet the Indian women in my research have done extremely well. They are seen to enjoy a better status than their mothers.

Some of them have achieved a higher state of social mobility than what their parents have enjoyed. Some of them hold jobs that rank even higher than the jobs their fathers had held (see Appendix 3). And yet, although these women face restrictions at their workplace, the glass ceiling exists more so within the home. Being given the responsibility over their children's education is not a positive change. Rather, this shift is still informed by a patriarchal ideology because the need to respond to 'ideal mothering' is perpetuated (Martins, 2011). The absent father who has relinquished his responsibilities to his children's educational needs is not chided; but the 'good' mother is made to feel that she should step-up her already intensified, mothering role. While the government encourages dual-income households and on paper, supports family 'values' (which includes safety), a gendered perspective points to how women are yet again held responsible for both their jobs and their homes. The lack of synchronism between government policy and the lived realities of middle-class families results in the continued perpetuation of working mothers' dual burden.

Unlike Donner's interpretation that sees men as "relegated to the sidelines" (Donner, 2008, p. 133), my research shows that Malaysian Indian men have the freedom to choose to stay out. Most of the men enjoy their identity from the position of headship that

patriarchy gives them; socially, politically, and in ethnic dimensions. The men enjoy a space that denies women and children from entering it.

Perhaps the only way that a sense of agency is identified in the lives of these women is the way that some of them chose a career path that was contrary to their parents' expectations. Although this was made possible through cultural habitus that the middle-class enabled, these choices speak of a tiny attempt that the mothers tried to create for themselves. Some of the mothers encouraged their children to also choose a career path that was not normative. Perhaps this speaks of a space that the mothers try to create for their children, in relation to identity-formation. However, on the flip-side, some mothers consciously stopped their children from taking on educational paths they deemed too challenging for their daughters, based on their own experiences. Although this can be interpreted as maternal concern, these actions also evidence a sense of control or restriction on the children's choices for their own futures. An increase in social mobility has not necessarily resulted in offering children a greater freedom in career options.

The middle-class focus on education is still prominent among Indians in Malaysia. However, where it was the fathers who had made educational decisions for the children, it is now the mothers who play this instrumental role. In other words, the Malaysian Indian middle-class constitution has undergone a gender shift in its preoccupation with education. Mothers, and no more fathers, are responsible for the children's future choices. Does this gendered shift imply that the deeply-patriarchal communal narrative has been challenged? This will be discussed in chapter Seven.

4.6.2 Education in the Children's Lives

Children, thus far an often-excluded group in academia, have been included in this research. This also indicates the possibilities of a wider regional relevance of the children's voices into inter-generational concerns of middle-class existence of an ethnic minority group (Van Blerk & Baker, 2008).

Middle-classness continues to remain entrenched in these Indian children's lives through the monolith role of education. Although their individual experience differs in terms of the school structure and system, collectively their lives are based on schooling, homework, tuition, and extra-curricular activities. The role of grandparents has been key in many of the children's lives, where their role as indirect care-givers is indicative of global patterns (Gray, 2005). In the case of this research, kinship help is seen more prominently through kinscripts; how the priority of education for the children is absorbed even by the grandparents.

This research has also shown that spontaneous play times for the children are scarce. Some of the children had to exercise 'deviance' in making attempts to 'create' spaces of time to relax. These instances imply patterns of non-conformity, as these times for relaxation were actually 'stolen' from the time allocated for studies or homework. The Indian culture sees respect and obedience to parents as normative, and yet, some of the children have also started choosing career paths that seem to defy their parents' wishes. This trait differs from that of the previous generation that focused on middle-class jobs that were functional and stable. Because the children's parents now have the money, more creative options as potential careers are now present.

As discussed earlier, another factor that affects children's voices in their choice of their own educational pursuits is what a few mothers want for their female children. These mothers want to spare their female children from certain challenging occupations, based on their own life experiences. Therefore, although the children generally enjoy a greater sense of cultural habitus, in relation to their exercise of agency, there are a few who are deprived of agency because they are female. These are the nuanced restrictions that the females of the next generation face.

This chapter evidences the value of education that still defines Indian middle-class identity. However, inter-generationally, there are shifts in gendered identity. Although social mobility has increased, expectations and responsibility on women have increased. However, in other ways, there are traces of agency. This community has succeeded in maintaining their class identity. There is a possibility of these women and children having a voice as middle-class Indians of Malaysia.

CHAPTER 5: TIME. HOW IT SHAPES THE MOTHERS' AND CHILDREN'S LIVES

"I think my whole life is based on a clock"

- Forty-three-year-old Sujata

"I got tuition…so Tuesday and Wednesday I come back from school, I got maybe 40 minutes to rest, then he [tutor] comes here… Tuesdays, I got tuition here, and I got Maths tuition also. Wednesday, only one class here, Thursdays also one class, and Friday I have one class once a month… Oh, and then Sunday also, in the morning"

- Sixteen-year-old Akash

5.1 Introduction: Female Time Management in Globalizing Asia

In this research the focus on families and time is rooted within the larger context of a globalizing Asia, where variables of the socio-political economy and modern definitions of the family are rapidly changing. In Quah's detailed account of fast-paced economic development in Asia, she cites how Japan, and the four 'little dragons' of Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan are able to "compete successfully in international markets" (Quah, 2009, p. 110). The global success that these Asian economies enjoy is tied back to "the social definition of gender roles" that these Asian countries have (Quah, 2009, p. 110). In other words, women taking on paid employment explain how the definition of gender is now "represented in the exigencies of a modern economy" (2009, p. 110). This proves how much the economy impacts the study of time-management that employed mothers engage in, in Asia.

According to Douglass (2012), the social, economic and political change in globalizing Asia also explains the importance of the 'household'. Moving away from older research

that had defined the home only as a place away from 'work', more recent narratives have begun to analyze the home front as a contested space that can be theorized and defined as a 'household':

> "in the latter half of the 20th century the household was overtly repositioned by both government and (global) capital as an institution charged with the reproduction of labour for the labour market and as a unit of consumption for goods and services purchased in the market". (Douglass, 2012, p. 7).

In this definition of household, "the gender dimension of householding" is part of the measurement (Douglass, 2012, p. 4). It is within this larger gendered context that time-management is studied in this chapter. The intention of this chapter is to analyse how crucial daily time-management is for Indian middle-class mothers and children in dual-income households.

In her study on Asian married women who are working, Quah used "One-role" and "Two-role" ideologies to define the phases of life women went through with regards to work; from being housewives to women who had paid employment (Quah, 2009, p. 111). Quah claimed that many women found themselves "struggling for congruity" with regards the "contradictory" roles they had to juggle (Quah, 2009, p. 124). This aspect is similar to what working women endured in early Malaysia, as they were held responsible for managing their private world successfully in spite of their public life engagement (Kaur, 1986). Women's 'success' or 'failure' to meet the unspoken demands of work and family explains their preoccupation with time-management. Even in advanced nations, shared conjugal roles are not much practiced in dual-income households (Quah, 2009).

Earlier studies in the West have exposed how women were compelled to stay home, and had their status reduced to the menial tasks they performed in the private space (Gavron,

1966). Later feminist studies began to magnify the extent of housework and childcare, and the planning involved in daily domestic life (DeVault, 1991; Delphy & Leonard, 1992).

Discourses of motherhood and work peppered the second wave feminist movement, with the stage set for 'mother wars' – a battle between being stay-home versus being employed mothers. Vavrus (2007) pointed out how media narratives in the United States still supported pre-feminist notions for mothers to stay home full-time. Evans and Kelley (2001) did address employment preferences by working mothers in Australia, but the vein of their study was in support of "full-time homemaking" (Evans and Kelley 2001: 28). Knudsen and Waerness (2001) surveyed the lack of support for working mothers in the UK, although this nation had a longer history in women's liberation than other European nations. In 'Moms Hating Moms: The Internalization of Mother War Rhetoric', Johnston and Swanson (2004) showed how sentiments attached to mother 'types' was stirred up between mothers themselves, as they strove to prove who the 'good' mother was over the 'bad' one.

Amidst such narratives, other studies, both qualitative and statistical, accept the reality of mothers taking on paid employment. Recent studies continue to show how motherhood intersects with employment in women's lives (Christopher, 2012). Regionally, there have been studies of time-management for women who are involved in homework, or work from the home (Quah, 1987; Ludher, 2002). Attempts by the Malaysian government have also resulted in a work-from-home pilot project initiated in 2010.[18]

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[18]Newspaper article entitled 'Work-from-home scheme enters second phase', *The Sun*, 19 April, 2010

Critically, these narratives stem from a patriarchal base that seeks to judge mothers' time-use; whether these mothers' time-use qualifies them to live up to the 'good mother' narrative. Ironically, studies that analyze time-use by fathers still show a low involvement with children or home-based affairs (Pacholok & Gauthier, 2010).

This chapter will study whether things have changed in the current Malaysian setting of a middle-class urban household. Strategies that middle-class Indian mothers use in managing the day to maintain employment, housework, child rearing, and personal responsibilities will be examined in this chapter.

5.2 The Mothers' Time for Office Work

In my research on middle-class Indian mothers and their children, I found that the stringent time management working mother's undertake is often understood to be one of the main differences between working mothers, and those who do not work. Forty-three-year-old Sujata said,

> Being a housewife, like what my mother was…[is] not so stressful because you're at home…your mind is just focused on one, which is your home. Whereas when you are…a working mother, you tend to be moving between two worlds…and sometimes both do not…pity you.

Sujata's experience of working versus non-working motherhood was drawn from her own mother's experience, who lived "within the institutional setting of her husband's work" (Delphy & Leonard, 1992, p. 242). As the mothers I worked with have full-time jobs, all of them spend a set portion of the day away from the home.

Hing and Talib (1986) had addressed issues faced by Malaysian women in dual-income households. Yet, what they addressed is more the national-level implications that are based on an analysis of existing statistical data. Stivens (1998) on the hand has addressed issues faced by middle-class mothers, but this is more in relation to their continued

reference to traditional domesticity. The issue of time-management drawn from women's personalized, subjective lives has not been mentioned.

The daily clock diagram (Appendix F) was used to analyse the mothers' pre-work and post-work schedules. In the findings of this study, many mothers take about an hour in the morning to drop their children off at school and/or commute to work. Thirty-nine-year-old Kalpana gets up at 6am. She says, "[it] is like average Monday to Friday…and then get the kids ready for school and all that…[I] send my daughter to school at 7am and go to work". Forty-four-year-old Devi also gets up at 6am. She says, "Then I prepare breakfast for them. Then I will normally get myself dressed full, then I will wake up my small one [and] dress her up. Then I will leave the house about 7.30am to work". Although office starts at 8.30am, Devi says it is alright for her to arrive 10 minutes late: "The office knows. I've advised them…so they give me leeway."

For some mothers, the errand to drop the children off at school is done by their husband, father, or an older child. For others, a school bus, van or personal driver comes to pick the children up.

On an average, the mothers get home from work at about 6.30pm. One or two mothers have the privilege to get home much earlier on certain days. This is because they are allowed to do work at home, or are able to clock-in longer hours on other days. Forty-two-year-old Shalini explains her fluid work schedule:

> I don't know how many calls [I have] … after 9 o'clock in the morning [but]…I cook lunch on days I can manage…and then I'm off to work by 11am. Sometimes I have meetings and that depends where my meetings are… sometimes [the] driver [is] not available [and] I will have to pick the kids up.

The flexibility the mothers have at the workplace is used to arrange errands at the home front. Some mothers can get home in the afternoon if their workplace is near the home, or if their work schedules are flexible. Thirty-seven-year-old Hannah picks her children from school and gets home on an average of 4pm - 5pm. As a legal consultant, forty-six-year-old Mathi can get home at 3pm if there are no cases or consultations. As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, work-time flexibility is highly cherished by many of these mothers.

But for some mothers, reaching home after work any time between 7pm - 9pm is normative. Thirty-nine-year-old Kalpana says, "Work is 8.30am - 6pm, that's official working hours. Normally, I'm home by 7pm - 7.30pm". Fifty-year-old Cathy is a medical practitioner, and though she gets to come home in the afternoon on some days, she needs to get back to work at 5pm "until 9pm, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday". She explains how tiring this is:

> I drive a lot. [In the] mornings, I don't sit at the clinic. We are panels for most of the major companies, and they have clinics in their factories, so I go in with my nurses… So [there is] a lot of driving.

Forty-nine-year-old Navisha says,

> If I'm home by 8pm, everyone feels I'm home early. If it's late, it can be midnight, but not all the time. Otherwise [it's] 9 – 9.30pm… I [can] come back earlier like before 8pm but that would mean really leaving things behind and [it will] load up the following day.

These mothers can only see their children in the late evening. Having to work long hours or at fixed times also means that the remaining time for these mothers to look into family, personal or other matters was also fixed. These 'non-work' times will now be studied in the following section.

5.3 The Mothers' Time for Housework

In past literature, the 'home' has been bombarded with a proliferation of literature that has attempted to emancipate women from being associated with it because it has been a site that associates the drudgery of housework with what women need to do (DeVault, 1991; Delphy & Leonard, 1992). And yet, even when women were liberated to take on paid employment, they were still associated with the 'home' and 'housework' (Yeoh & Huang 2010; Douglass, 2012). Even though many working mothers have the same amount of time spent at home as their husbands, home space continues to be gendered, and domestic labour continues to fall on women. Recent literature continues to affirm old patterns of difficulty in how women in paid employment struggle to find time to do housework (Quah, 2009; Baker, 2012). The remaining sub-sections will discuss how the mothers manage their 'non-work' time at home, and what priorities they pursue in this short time that they have.

5.3.1 Domestic Help

Employing domestic help has become one way that middle-class households are coping with the demand of housework (Donner, 2008; Yeoh & Huang, 2010). Although this pattern is supposedly emerging in more and more global-cities, in my research domestic workers did not always factor into the everyday lives of middle class mothers and their children.

Although they have limited time for housework, the majority of mothers in this research do not prefer the services of a domestic helper. Among the few who do, a pattern is evident: these mothers rely on domestic helpers only for household chores, and not for anything to do with their family's wellbeing.

Forty-one-year-old Selvam has a routine to follow at home when she gets back from work. She is grateful for "the physical help" which her domestic helper can give. Selvam explains, "At least the windows are done. The basic cleanliness or upkeeping is done…[and] we eat all meals at home… she [the maid] can do it [the cooking]". Forty-year-old Vanie is happy that her domestic helper is "pretty hands-on". She explains,

> I have a menu to match for the food items…it's a monthly menu for four weeks, and they [menu] tell you what's for breakfast, lunch and dinner…week 1, Monday, week 2, Monday, [and] the maid is very independent.

Vanie has her domestic helper follow this detailed schedule so that her own time at home is freed up to spend with her children. She talks about her children look forward to have time with her: "They tend to wait for dinner…and they enjoy the fact [that] that's the time we really catch up, over the meal…what their friends said, any issues in school…"

Prema and Kalpana, both thirty-nine years old, are two mothers who still manage to come home and do the cooking. Their domestic helpers are only given instructions beforehand to prepare the items that are to be cooked (in terms of cutting, cleaning, marinating). These examples show how these mothers rely on domestic helpers as part of their time-management strategies at home. Domestic helpers are relied on to handle house chores, so that the mothers can enjoy their limited time at home with their children.

In spite of the above examples of mothers who employ domestic helpers, twenty-four of the mothers who participated in this research do *not* have the help of live-in domestic helpers employed by the family. Some mothers opined strongly in choosing not to have live-in domestic help. Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali affirms: "I don't believe in maids".

Although employing live-in domestic help would be a tremendous help for busy working mothers, there are four reasons why the majority of the research participants do not have one.

One common reason shared by the mothers without helpers is the notion that these maids needed so much supervision and management, that it was as good as the mothers themselves doing the chores. This point makes them decide to manage on their own, even though it is often tiring. Forty-four-year-old Sheena says, "Yes, I had [a maid] for ten years… She left and another one came and she ran away. So that stress is too much. So I'd rather do it [house chores] myself". Sheena has been managing such for the past three years. Forty-three-year-old Sujata cites the same reasons in not finding a replacement maid for the one that had left: "I need someone to look after the kids when I'm away…but then again, it's also the case, you see…she can just open the door, allow someone else [in], so the security problems are always there."

In addition, Sujata finds that work done by domestic helpers "not up to par", and she ends up "wondering why I am paying her when I'm also doing it [housework] with her".

Another reason cited by some mothers who opt not to have live-in maids is because their children are older, and total supervision is not necessary. Fifty-two-year-old Veera had had domestic helper when her children were pre-schoolers, but now they are teenagers, she has no problem managing: "I will come home and do all my housework, then by 6pm, I will start the cooking going…as I am cooking, I put the clothes in the machine". Veera adds, "The other fellow [eldest] can drive, so he takes care of his own things. So certain days…I would…ask him [to]…go drop [sibling for tuition] [or]…go pay the bills. So it helps".

These mothers quote their children's independence, as well, as a result of not having a live-in help. Fifty-year-old Cathy says,

> "Now that the maid is sent off, I hardly have time… My husband wasn't keen to take in another one because the children will not learn to do things on their own. At least now they know how to wash…sweeping, mopping all they can do".

Forty-three-year-old Sujata said similar things once there was no maid:

> "I feel my kids also become more independent. There's more shouting than ever, but I get them to be more independent. They have to learn to clean up after everything…My husband was commenting, 'there's more cleaning now than there was before the maid'!".

The third reason some mothers cite for being able to manage without domestic help is due to time factors. Either their children's schooling hours suit their after-work hours, or the mothers enjoy work flexibility that eased their after-work agenda. Forty-four-year-old Devi says her daughter's day-care hours, and her son's schooling hours fit in perfectly with the time she gets home from work: "Once I have picked up my daughter…it's about 6.45pm. Then I come back I pick up my son at 7pm from school, [so] yes, that works out…7.15pm I reach home". Forty-four year-old Mary says, "My children have some lesson everyday between 3.30-7pm…so I drive them here and there, and then I'm home [with them] by 6.30, 7pm". Mary could time her after-work hours with the children's activities, after which, she could drive them home. Thirty-seven-year-old Hannah would be at her workplace till about "average 4 or 5pm". By this time, her children would have finished school activities, and she could pick them up, and they could come home together. Forty-three-year-old Sujata and thirty-eight-year-old Anjali both enjoy lunch-hour flexibility; they can sometimes drive to their children's school to catch up with them, before going back to work. The mothers' workplace being so near the children's school made this possible.

For some of the mothers, the above reasons also come with the fact that they are able to enjoy their own parents' role in taking care of their children in the after-school hours. This will be discussed further in the next section. Apart from that, the flexibility of working hours that some mothers rely on is instrumental in their ability to cope with domestic work. This aspect of work hour flexibility will be discussed further in chapter Six.

The fourth reason why these mothers can manage without a live-in domestic help is because they can rely on cleaners who come in for a fixed time on a certain day or two in the week. Fifty-two-year-old Veera says,

> I do not have a maid. But I have this Indonesian maid that comes once in two weeks. But her job is just to clean the windows and climb up and clean the fans, lights and that kind of thing.

Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali says, "Once a week I get cleaners to come in…and they are there for about at least four hours". Forty-four-year-old Mary has a cleaner come in on Saturdays for a few hours. Quite a number of these mothers who managed without live-in domestic help readily confess that they hardly cook, or allowed their homes to be messy. Forty-five-year-old Letchumi says, "We would have finished everything [meal] at the club or at my mum's place". For Letchumi, this is the routine, so that once they reach home, she only thinks about getting her son ready for bed. Forty-four-year-old Sheena says her house is "messy and all [but that] doesn't matter la".

These examples show how housework is secondary to these working mothers' priority of time at home. Apart from females being referred to as domestic helpers, some of the mothers have engaged male helpers for different types of work. This is discussed in section 5.2.3.

In analysing middle-class life in India, Donner says that "every household…employed servants", especially when the women became mothers (Donner, 2008).

Donner elaborates how the ability to enjoy "the availability of servants" evidenced the women's class position (2008, p. 108). In her research, the definition of 'housework' included "the supervision of maidservants" (2008, p. 116). This was especially important as these mothers did not take on paid employment, and they felt that their "roles" of wife and mother were "opposed to such public engagements" (2008, p. 3). Being middle-class was "an important marker of status" (2008, p. 108).

In my research, having domestic help is not seen as a marker of middle-classness. Rather the majority of the participants pride themselves that they do *not* have any domestic help. Another difference between Donner's work and mine is the seeming lack of preoccupation of the Malaysian mothers with housework. Housework is often regarded as a mere necessity, and the careful planning of chores and household tasks referred to by Donner seems minimally considered in the Malaysian research mothers' lives. The biggest contrast to Donner's research is that the Malaysian mothers take on paid employment. For these mothers, the role of motherhood is not exclusive, and it can encompass a public role engagement like full-time employment.

Both my research and Donner's study engage with middle-class Indian women. Although the Indian mothers in Malaysia do have a diasporic connection to India as their fore-mothers' homeland, the current influences have shaped these women's lack of preoccupation with housework in a different way. Donner's sample women were heavily influenced by the "*bhadralok*" culture of the upper-castes (2008, p. 56). In the Malaysian Indian sample, the mothers are the ethnic minority; both in middle-class mothering, and

in nationalist constructions of motherhood. Because of this, the Malaysian women are unconsciously in competition with the existing narrative of middle-class mothering.

As shown in chapter Two, these women are the focus of national strategies in "reforming the labour market";[19] they have to work hard at the workplace and the home to fulfil the demands made of them by the state and their family. Maintaining the status of being middle-class Indians adds to the pressure faced by these women to perform in both the public and private domains. The pressure is compounded even more by them being minorities.

The next section continues to looks at another form of support that some of the mothers have, in studying their time-use at home.

5.3.2 Kinship Ties

The sociology of age gives grandparents the position of social and emotional eminence due to the seniority of their age (O'Donnell, 1997; Mehta, 2005). However, with improved medical science that increases life expectancy, and with changing social trends in modern societies, the role that grandparents play has increased. Even in normative nuclear households in the West, grandparents living close by are called upon to care for their grandchildren (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004; Mehta, 2005; Brannen, 2006).

In India, kin support has been very valuable in the evolvement of families (Donner, 2008). Even in nuclear families, extended kin support is crucial in maintaining the relationship between spouses, especially if there are children involved in the household dynamics

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[19]from www.mysinchew.com/node/40194

(Grover, 2011). In Singapore, grandparents are expected to take care of their grandchildren, while the parents go to work (Devasahayam & Yeoh, 2007). In my research, the role of kin, in the form of urban grandparents, is also vital in many of the households. These grandparents play a role in the area of informal childcare.

One interesting feature that is observed is that many mothers needed the support that their parents or parents-in-law can provide. Thirty-nine-year-old Komala manages her weekdays with the help of her parents. She explains,

> I'm lucky in that sense that my parents are willing to do that…that they can keep an eye, you know?... For example, kids' tuition, kids' activities…My dad actually send[s] and picks them up. And I thought that that can keep him busy…it's actually a win-win thing.

Komala continues,

> My mom very much just… to take care of the kids…I can really like you say, relax…there's a meal at home…and good hands, and not just somebody, and you think ok, what's going to happen, you don't have to think like that.

Their presence means a lot to Komala because her father could drive the children around, and her mother could cook and do the basic house cleaning. She says this help is instrumental as she comes home only at 9pm or so: "The support system that I have–without it, I can't. I really can't".

Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali talks about the help she receives from her in-laws:

> I go pick up the kids from school, have my lunch at my mother-in-law's place, and then I go back to work. Then I'm done by 5.30pm, so I go back to my mother-in-law's place and pick up my kids…um, also have food catered…I will get the food everything and go back home. The time I really have for myself is probably on those few Saturdays that I send the kids to my parents' place. One thing my husband and I are lucky is that we have two sets of parents. Weekdays one side take care, on the weekends, at least one more is able

These comments show that the role of the children's grandparents is vital. These working mothers would not be able to cope with their short after-work time at home without such help.

Other households also display a lifestyle pattern where the grandparents' role is essential. Forty-five-year-old Pushpa drops her daughter off at her mother's house every Saturday, as her mother helps take care of her children in the weekdays. Forty-year-old Vanie says, "If the kids are sick and I can't come back, either my mother or mother-in-law will take them to the doctor". Vanie adds that when she and her husband went overseas with friends recently, both sides of the grandparents took care of the children: "The kids had a ball of a time, and my parents as well…it worked out because the in-laws also wanted the time with them".

Thirty-seven-year-old Hannah talks about how close her youngest daughter is to her mother*:* "My mom is taking care of her…also so difficult to get a babysitter so my mom said ok, she will take care for me la…so that's why she [daughter] get attached to my mom."

Unlike Donner's research where households were inter-generational and patrilocal, my research participants' households are nuclear, and either matrilocal or patrilocal. In fact, some households were far away from either side of the families, and resorted to visiting them only during the holidays. In terms of space and independence, the Malaysian mothers have less physical ties to a joint family system compared to their Indian cohorts. Although these mothers mention the supportive role of their parents, or that of their parents-in-law in relation to how they manage time, I would also like to explore their own conjugal roles as part of the analysis of their support system.

5.3.3 Conjugal Roles

The concept of shared conjugal roles has been pursued in discourses on the family since the 1970s, but whether actual changes have occurred since then is debatable. Ever since Ann Oakley (1974) refuted the claim that the percentage of shared conjugal roles among Britain's industrialising families was growing, there has been little improvement (Haralambos & Holborn, 2000).[20] With reference to the practice of shared conjugal roles in advanced nations, Quah makes a forthright comment, "after some five decades…no definite signs of such fundamental change are evident…" (Quah, 2009, p. 112).

In my study of the mothers' time-use, there are a few examples where the husbands do show some form of involvement in housework. Fifty-year-old Neeta proudly says of her husband, "He's the one in charge of ironing". When forty-seven-year-old Mahesh didn't have a maid, she says, "My husband ha[s] to do [the] sweeping and mopping". Fifty-two-year-old Veera says, "Sometimes weekends my husband cooks". Thirty-nine-year-old Komala says, "Slowly the [children's] father is taking to going to the night market". Fifty-year-old Cathy's husband is a rare example who displays shared conjugal roles: "My husband does. He does the marketing, he does the cleaning, he does the cooking. Major cooking, he does. Buying, cleaning all he does".

This household does not have a maid, and although both spouses have jobs with long hours, Cathy's husband's job is a little more flexible. In most of the households, there is one errand that typifies many husbands' role; it has to do with driving. Many husbands

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[20][3]Ann Oakley critiqued Young and Willmott's research on shared conjugal roles, by pointing out that the conclusion was based on only one research question, "Does your husband help to take out the garbage once a week?". Oakley claimed that the incompetence found in the text of a singular question made the research findings on shared conjugal roles invalid and unreliable.

help to send and pick up the children from school to tuition or back home. This aspect of help will be picked up again later in the chapter.

Apart from these few examples, it is found that in most households, husbands play a minimal, almost negligent role, in household matters. Although both spouses have limited time at home after work, the wives are still expected to look into the domestic affairs. Forty-three-year-old Sujata gives a blunt description of an after-dinner scenario: "You know men, they have got this thing, dump everything into the sink". Forty-four-year-old Sheena openly says, "It's difficult training my husband". Forty-five-year-old Pushpa candidly talks about her husband, "He's an Indian man who wants the wife to do everything… My husband will never pick up his plate, he was brought up in that environment".

In relation to how working mothers manage limited time at home, many of them manage on their own, or receive support from domestic help, or from parents or parents-in-law. Only a few mothers enjoy shared conjugal roles, in spite of all households in this research being dual-income in nature.

On a reflexive note, I was also interested to have a view "inside the black box: the gendered household" as mentioned by Douglass (2012, p. 7). During the interview sessions, the sensory perceptions that I picked up from the mothers' talk and from the ambience reveal a context where patriarchy is not evidenced in abusive ways. However, in a handful of cases, some mothers are more open to air their grievances against their husbands. Thirty-seven-year-old Hannah confesses,

> Another reason why I started working is [because] my husband never gives me any income; you see? The house provision all, normally, he will buy la. So I can't do anything beyond that…so I need to have my freedom, you see?

Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali is open about the lack of conjugal help she receives,

> But again, I don't see that one hundred percent. Again, it's always about him first.… So I used to get very frustrated about that, you know…because I'm too exhausted, because I have to balance between the kids and my work.

In fifty-two-year-old Veera's home, the interview time became restricted once her husband came home from work. Although he was told that the interview was personal and that the interviewer and interviewee needed privacy, the husband still chose to sit in the far corner of the same space (in the hall). Veera continued the interview in undertones, as she wanted the freedom of expressing herself without her spouse overhearing what she had to say.

Nuances of patriarchy are also evident in the findings through the differentiating approaches the participant mothers have toward help rendered by males versus help rendered by females. These women prove that "catering to a man is built into a cultural definition of 'woman'" (DeVault, 1991, p. 161). For example, many women did not comment on their husband's lack of conjugal involvement overtly. Forty-nine-year-old Shirani brushes it aside that she does almost everything for the children herself; her reasons are because "My husband…he's busy most of the time". /

Help received from other males in the running of the home is also not given negative scrutiny. For example, forty-three-year-old Sujata is happy that a "van" (referring to the male hired driver) is able to bring the children back from their tuition. Forty-nine-year-old Navisha has a long-standing male domestic help in her home. Both thirty-nine-year-old Karishma and forty-two-year-old Shalini have employed a male driver to take their children for co-curricular activities. Reflexively, it is interesting to note that these mothers appreciate the assistance that these non-family males give. This is in contrast to some of the research mothers' comments in reference to female domestic helpers.

The observation of this nuance reveals that some mothers feel they have the power to criticize female domestic helpers due to the gendered dynamics of household chores more than due to unacceptable services. This is part of "the intimate inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangements between the genders" (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275). Due to cultural and historical backings, male forms of help tend to be appreciated more.

5.4 The Mothers' Time for Their Children's Educational Needs

Within a globalizing Asia the household is a modern economy, mimicking and mirroring the changes occurring throughout the region. Within Malaysian household educational engagements and educational negotiations are learned in the home, and thus the home-front is a site of educational citizenship, where young people learn the educational morals and values that are pivotal to their academic success (Donner, 2012). This complex context continues to carry gendered meanings that affect women directly (Quah, 2009).

In the previous sections, the involvement of the mothers in housework was evident, either with the aid of domestic help or their parents and their in-laws. The support system was necessary so that time for the children could be prioritized. This section will continue to accentuate how mothers carve out time for their children's educational needs.

The mothers' perceived nature of the child's well-being is crucial to the way they participate in their children's activities. For example, forty-one-year-old Selvam has a full-time domestic worker at home: "At least the windows are done. The basic cleanliness or upkeeping is done [and] we eat all meals at home". But the aim is so that Selvam can spend all her after-work time helping her children with school work: "I just feel it's also

satisfaction for me when I teach, and I know they get certain grades. I also know that, ok, this is quite possible…so I said, 'no tuition'."

Forty-seven-year-old Mahesh also has a full-time maid to look into the cooking and the washing up, but her time would be spent helping her daughter with homework: "I'll be sitting with her".

Apart from schoolwork, many of the mothers have their children enrolled in extra-curricular activities. Forty-four-year-old Mary says, "My children have some lesson everyday between 3.30pm-7pm [and] some music lessons, so I drive them here and there". Fifty-year-old Cathy says, "When the tuition teacher change[s] the timings, we are all in a fix because [we] have to take leave just to send them…I send them [for] tuition everywhere, for my daughter, [it] comes up to RM900".

These examples show that while mothering practices continue to be important, the approach to childcare has taken on a different dimension. The children's well-being is now measured in terms of them doing well at school, and at being involved in extra-curricular activities. This is part of "successful parenting" where bringing up the new generation of children "in a fully-developed consumer society" focuses on educational progress and individual development (Donner, 2008, p. 132). Yeoh and Huang (2010) talk about middle-class mothering in Singapore where a good mother is not only a nurturer, but an "educational agent" who supervises her children's education "as a key project of mothering practices" (Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p. 33). Importantly, having full time domestic help freed up crucial time for mothers to 'sit with the children'. This usage of time for children's educational advancement is certainly a marker of middle-classness in this study. Even for women without domestic help, the luxury of carving out time to

'sit with the children' is a defining characteristic of middle-classness which often urban poor peers cannot undertake.

These women's perception of the success or the failure of their mothering role is further defined by the minimal role that the fathers play in childcare. The findings also show that in many cases, the husbands' only help was with transporting their children to and fro, from school and other activities.

In spite of his minimal role, the superiority of the father figure is still upheld, although he is physically 'absent' in most ways. For example, forty-nine-year-old Shirani handles the children's lives almost single-handedly, as her husband often works late. Many of Shirani's narratives are in the vein of how the family carries on, without the father: "I'm out with the kids. I bring them out" and "I bring my kids along. My husband can't make it…". Shirani also refers to a weekly social gathering they attend: "Every Tuesday we…go as a family…me and the kids. My husband…he's busy most of the time…". The only task Shirani has mentioned which her husband does is to "send him [son]…for tuition".

And yet, when the children do something that requires discipline, her response is, "For me, everything [is] 'I'll tell your dad'. That's the only thing I can do… 'I'll tell daddy', that's it… 'wait till your father gets home'". Shirani's conditioned approach to the given situation shows her belief that her parenting role is secondary to that of her husband's, although the entire responsibility of childcare is hers. The good mother is never good enough, as existing perceptions of gendered roles show.

5.5 Collective Leisure Time with the Family

The need for leisure has become more clearly defined in modern, industrialised societies, as forms of it have also diversified (Gershuny, 1992). As with other forms of lifestyle, leisure has taken on varying meanings for middle-class individuals. In comparing middle-class lifestyles in Singapore and Malaysia, Singh mentions how "Malaysia's urban professionals" are part of the citizens who "enjoy a comfortable lifestyle" and spend on "non-essentials such as 'recreation and other'" (Singh, 2011, p. 287).

When it comes to using a gendered lens in time-studies, leisure is one more component that shows a "leisure gap" for women (De Vault, 1991, p. 55). The battle to carve out free time or non-work time within the home mirrors global discourses of 'good time management' which values productivity and consumption as essential markers of citizenship. This is in spite of the fact that "the increase in women's work intensity seems to have detrimental effects of women's health as well" (Floro, 1994, p. 176).

I spoke to mothers in my research about how the family enjoys leisure collectively (either at home, or away), and what this says about the larger concerns of the family as an Indian middle-class household. The mothers' individual preoccupation on having 'down times' or 'me times', where their emotions and interests are genuinely engaged are important to be analysed (Rojek, 1995). Using reflexivity as part of my methodology, I have scrutinized how these down times are inserted in their work schedule, either randomly, or in an organized way. The time spent (or not spent) for these different aspects of leisure will contribute to the construct of these mothers' identity.

It is found that very few families enjoy leisure in the form of going away for holidays as a nuclear family. Forty-year-old Vanie says, "It's very rare we go for a holiday without

the kids". Forty-four-year-old Sheena says, "Usually once a year we go off somewhere…during school holiday[s]". Fifty-year-old Neeta says, "At least twice a year we will go out somewhere, go to Penang, or Kuala Terengganu, Johor, Malacca, once, twice a year". These are the rare households. In a few households, the spouses go off for holidays together, without the children. Forty-one-year-old Selvam says she and her husband usually plan for all to "go for a holiday…twice a year la".

In other households, spouses enjoy holidays with a group of adult friends. Forty-year-old Vanie says, "It's very rare we go holiday without the kids, but once a year we try to make it as a group, but we make it short…Last year…we went skiing to Melbourne".

Forty-seven year-old Mahesh says, "Sometimes his friends we go, all husbands and wives, about six to eight of us". In other cases, the husbands are not included. Forty-nine year-old Ramani goes travelling with her friends, without her husband: "These friends of mine …in 2010, I think, we started our trips together…we don't mind going to India…in December, I'm going with my friends to Vietnam…" Once a year, fifty-two year-old Veera makes it a point to go for a holiday with one of her three children,

> If I'm going on a holiday, I try to take one of them with me…in February, we went to Sri Lanka…earlier, I've taken the elder one to Tibet…I've taken the other one to [the] US, so I try to have that time with them la, you know?... That's my bonding time with them.

For many other families, they have such close ties with the extended family, that 'holidays' means travelling to be with their relatives in their homes. For example, forty-four year-old Mary speaks of holidays in relation to "my parents…in India" or "my husband's brother in Sabah". Fifty-two year-old Veera says, "Every December…we go out as a family, including my parents and my sister… That's something my father initiated…we all sacrifice every December…that's the family part".

Forty-seven year-old Mahesh's family is close to the extended families on both sides, sharing different holidays with different groups of relatives: "Actually holidays with my sisters, children, family, all…sometimes we go with my husband…we make a trip on and off with his brothers and sisters". For forty-four-year-old Devi, during both school holidays and free weekends, "we go back to my mom's place in Raub". Thirty-seven year-old Hannah's holidays are only to her parents' home in another state.

Samuel (1996) discussed trends in women's leisure, based on changing socio-economic developments of modern nations. Among the research participants of this research, the concept of leisure was not so much a time to get-away, but it was more connected to catching up with relatives and kin. This proves that for middle-class Indian families in Malaysia, it was more important to spend free time with kin members. This cultural tradition practiced in these households was unlike trends in other middle-class households, where the pursuit of more socially isolated holidays was the norm (Samuel, 1996; Munro & Madigan, 1999).

Apart from going away for a break during a longer period, some mothers and their family enjoy leisure in more casual or frequent ways over the weekends. Thirty-nine year-old Komala says that weekends were when the family eats out, and where the children get to choose theme dinners.

One day it is "let's go Italian" and another day it is "let's go Thai". Forty-four year-old Mary says Saturdays are "family day[s]" where they get up late, relax, and have meals outside. Fifty-year-old Neeta and family play games occasionally, either football or badminton in the field or board games at home. Forty-nine year-old Navisha and thirty-

nine year-old Karishma both say that they and their husbands sometimes worked so late that their family time was everyone getting into their bedroom once they got back from work; just to talk or enjoy a movie together on TV.

Even in these more regular times of relaxation, collective family leisure is also not common among the families in this research. Findings prove that few families enjoy collective leisure time. For these few, going window-shopping or having a meal in a restaurant is the usual free-time endeavour. Only a handful of families have the fathers being engaged with children for leisure. Only two fathers play outdoor games with their children (in Sujata's and Neeta's households), and only one father goes to the movies with his children (in Veera's household). Other versions of family free time show the fathers being absent. For forty-seven year-old Kumari, relaxation time means sharing it with her two children: "We watch a lot of TV together".

For forty-nine-year-old Shirani, "I bring my kids along" and "my husband can't make it" peppers her conversations regarding family outings and gatherings. Except for a few households, leisure time shared between spouses is also rare. Komala and Kalpana, both thirty-nine, share their leisure time for TV with their husbands. Forty-six year-old Mathi says, "My husband and I, we just watch some movies". For forty-five year-old Harbajan, she and her husband are engaged in a common activity: "My husband and I actually conduct a weekly class teaching yoga".

These are the few households where leisure times were shared between spouses. These few subtle examples prove that there continues to be an existing gendered pattern in the family's free time; where family holidays are spent with relatives, and within the nuclear unit, where fathers played a negligible role. There are examples of more egalitarian forms

of leisure, but these are few. Unlike Donner's research (2008), there is no purposeful neglecting of the father by the mother, from her mother-child relationship. In this research it is more how the 'stay-away' father figure of the non-leisured space of social life continues to be evident in the leisured space of the family unit. In these situations, the mothers display an attitude of resilience in coping with what is 'normative' life for them. In most households, the family's leisure, or non-work time, is synonymous with activities that are pursued with kin members, or what mothers pursue with their children, without their husbands.

5.5.1 The Mothers' Own Leisure Time

On a reflexive note, I tasted first-hand on how tight most of the mothers' schedules were when undergoing the interview process. Many mothers who agreed to give time for an interview chose times that were in-between errands outside the home, or at home. Many participants asked to meet during very precise times – after cooking, during ballet class, before tuition, or before dinner time and a narrow window were carved out to do interviews.

Ensure on a quotidian basis for many mothers comes in the form of watching TV. This is the most convenient form of relaxation that most mothers do on a regular basis. Forty-four year-old Devi makes an interesting comment: "I just need to watch TV. That's why I need to sleep late because I need to watch TV". Devi confirms that TV time is the only thing she has for herself. And yet, even in this, it is never sitting down long enough: "[It's] just sit for a while, you know? Even watching TV, I can't even finish a movie…it's just like…a small small rest". Forty-seven year-old Mahesh never gets to relax on weekdays, "unless I sit and watch TV for a while". Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali says that she tries to catch up with TV comedies during the nights – "something light that don't require

thinking." After a long day, forty-three year-old Sujata tries to wind down with TV, but she comically adds, "Sometimes I wonder if the TV is watching me or what". Forty-four year-old Saro gives a similar, but blunter answer:

> I don't have a life…I'm stressed. I do steal a bit here and there, when I feel like tearing my hair out, I'll sit in front of the TV, but I don't know what I'm watching and…I'm so sleepy that I'll be falling asleep in front of the TV.

Other mothers enjoy reading before bedtime as their form of winding down. For fifty-year-old Neeta, 9-10pm every day is "reading time". For thirty-nine year-old Komala, reading "magazines [or] certain types of story books" happens only on Saturday nights. Fifty-two year-old Veera used to wait for her husband and her sons to go out for movies, before she got to enjoy reading a book "or catching up with the newspaper or something". Forty-five-year-old Lakshmi says, "Because my work is so heavy and I do a lot of journal reading, my easy reading is all junk. I don't read books with a lot of depth. This is like fiction, adventure, romance, that kind of thing".

For many other mothers, even casual forms of leisure seemed non-existent. Their non-work time was only to recover from their busy work schedule, or to catch up with the undone. Forty-four year-old Devi says,

> I have no time for myself…In fact sometimes when I have my dinner; it's already almost 10pm... So it's like the time is not enough for me…because I'm running around, I have to do everything, so just putting this here and there…so it's too much for me.

This situation is similar for thirty-seven year-old Hannah, where once dinner time is over, and things are washed up, she is ready for bed. When asked about leisure, forty-four year-old Saro gives a short, quick answer of "no la", followed by reasons of "housework" and "[son's] tuition". For forty-three year-old Sujata, free time means catching up with sleep: "Every chance [I] have, I'm sleeping…sleep is a luxury now".

Although there has been an increased participation in women's leisure patterns in developing nations (Samuel, 1996), this research proves that most days for the research mothers were filled with 'paid work', 'housework' and 'children's concerns'. There are mothers who enjoy casual forms of quotidian free time, but these are few. For many, their 'non-work' is mostly associated with the children's free time' or catching up with errands that did not get done; like marketing or cooking. For others, any non-work time was converted into catching up with much-needed sleep.

The findings also reveal how space at home continues to be gendered, and favours the male. Forty-one year-old Selvam says of her husband who enjoys watching TV as his own leisure time:

> There are some days where he will just come back and sit at his TV and we're all like in the room and he'll possibly behave as if we don't even exist. It's like 'I need to be on my own now, don't bug me'…

Forty-four year-old Mary says, "My husband is very particular. When he's home, we all should be home. Especially I should be [at] home".

Although it is historically and culturally accepted that the home is associated with women, it is less accepted that home space continues to evidence patriarchy. Findings in this research confirm that perceptions of leisure for males are respected, and followed through by the women and children. "The concept of home" continues to embraces "the social relations within it"; thus still accentuating home space as male-dominant (Munro & Madigan, 1999, p. 107). Leisured space of social life confirms non-leisured space, even within the home: "The household as a whole is simply more intense work for its female members" (Young & Dickerson, 1994).

Because of the amount of activities that needed to be done in a day, most mothers prefer to live a routine life to maximize the time in the day required to complete all tasks at hand. The next section will explore, through reflexivity and through interview data, whether there are mothers who reject the non-leisure culture, and who consciously create leisure time for themselves. These leisure times mean not having to meet the children's or the family's needs. This is what I will call the mothers' own 'me time'.

5.5.2 The Mothers' 'Me-time'

The variable analysed in this section is different from the variable of leisure pursuits done by the whole family in the previous section. This down-time or 'me-time' is a time span that can be defined as the mothers' own. The experience I had talking with the mothers showed me that reflexively, the researcher, the method and the data are *not* separate entities; but rather interconnected. Through a reflexive exercise, meanings are made through the interpretation of data (Mauthner et al, 1998).

During the interview process, I found that the one research question I asked which gave me a connection with the mothers was the question 'How do you find time for yourself'? In almost every case, I found that this one question brought down some form of initial resistance between researcher and the research participant. I found that this question also spoke volumes of the research participant's initial response to the researcher. Their sudden warmth and freedom in conversation after that one question told me that they did not have to live up to the image of being a perfect mother during the research process. If they started the interview with a presupposition that they had to impress me with how they lived life meticulously (especially since my first thematic question was about Time), they could now be free of such a 'researcher bias'. This one question on their 'down-time' seemed to give them the assurance that the researcher was validating their need for it,

after all. Perhaps this interview actually gave them a 'handle' on what a down-time could be, and they enjoyed sharing their stories.

Some of the mothers enjoy having a social network of girlfriends. These mothers claim that this circle of friends is what keeps them going. Fifty-year-old Neeta says that she and her secondary school friends still kept in touch, and made it a point to go out once in two months' or so. Recently, when they had all turned fifty, they spent a night in a hotel and "painted the town red"! Thirty-eight year-old Anjali has a group of girlfriends whom she meets up with once in a couple of weeks. She says, "Spending time with your girlfriends makes a big difference…it's quite therapeutic". Thirty-seven year-old Hannah also has a group of girlfriends to go out with: "We'll go for movie or we'll go for lunch". Forty-four year-old Mary also has a group of girlfriends with which she has "a ladies' time". Thirty-nine year-old Prema says, "When I want to go out with my girlfriends, he [husband] is very supportive…maybe once in 6 weeks…yeah, it is also important not to be absorbed, everything around the kids. It's important to have friends".

Some mothers have their down time when they do something they enjoy. Forty-four year-old Mary likes to pamper herself: "I go and do my hair…it's a leisurely thing…then I do nails…I do massages and all". This sort of pampering was also the way forty-year-old Vanie relaxes; she slots in "facial", "reflex[ology]" and "mani-pedi" frequently. However, Vanie explains the context:

> Usually the kids go to bed by 9.30pm, so I plan everything around the house. So my facial lady will come around 9.30pm, or a reflex…[I] do the things I still want to do, in the house. Kids don't like me going out…that's how I manage.

A few mothers enjoy having a 'spiritual' time. Forty-four year-old Sheena is very involved in prayers and meditation: "That's the one [thing] that keeps me going…so I try

not to negotiate on that". Forty-six year-old Mathi and forty-nine year-old Annabelle enjoy reading religious texts as it calms them and gives them peace.

Some mothers find the times where they could be alone as their 'me-time'. Although this could refer to the time span in between errands, the fact that they get to do this alone gives them a sense of a physical, mental and emotional space. Fifty-two year-old Veera says, "[Its] a bit crazy la, but sometimes at 9.30 or 10pm, I'll be watering my plants. But it's nice, you know? Just sitting out there watering your plants, nothing to think or worry about…". Forty-three year-old Sujata finds such 'alone' times therapeutic as well. In her two 'free' hours while her children are having piano lessons, she enjoys buying groceries and being on her own: "At the same time I go to the nearby restaurant and have my dinner…and…I just spend my time like that, you see? And I actually relish that period of time because it's like…just me." Forty-one year-old Selvam finds the wee hours of the morning ideal for her alone time:

> Mornings la [because] nobody bugs me. I get up very early, even Saturday, Sunday. I will get up at 5am…for me, it's like I'm on my own. Nobody bugs me, I don't have to talk to anyone…that one hour is enough.

Part of the reason I intended to pursue the study of the mothers' 'me time' was to see if the mothers gave themselves permission to gain some form of cultural space from the conflicting ideologies of dominance that they lived in. I wanted to see if they tried to carve out a space for themselves where they could relax, reflect on their lives, and feel validated as individuals. This would also be part of the 'modern' forms of leisure patterns that women in contemporary societies were beginning to participate in (Samuel, 1996). In spite of some positive examples of such cases, it is found that many of the mothers did not have such a time. For many of them, sleep is the only luxury they felt that they could afford.

For some of the women I interviewed, the avenues to pursue solace in order to work on themselves at a more personal and introspective level does not even exist. For forty-four year-old Devi, she does not join her husband and his friends to go clubbing, and chooses to stay alone at home: "So I don't have an avenue…I don't have that circle of friends…I just keep to myself, you know".

And even among the group that enjoys a social network, there are those who longed for something deeper. Thirty-eight year-old Anjali is one mother who talks about how hard it is to have time to self-reflect. Although she has good girlfriends, she does not have time to think about issues. Ironically, it was her bosses at the workplace who helped her confront herself. "You have to stop being operational", they told her, "you have to be more strategic. You have to start thinking more". Anjali explains how this is so difficult: "When I'm at home… I'm so hands-on with the kids, I'm exhausted. So I don't have the quiet time to be able…to reflect and think, you know".

And then there are the many women who did not know what the notion of 'me time' was prior to the interview. The mothers in this category understand what it means to try and recover from a busy day, like watching a few minutes of TV, or reading a book before falling off to sleep. But generally, they are not familiar with the notion of having a space they could call their own. What proved this deduction was my interviewing experience in two homes. In these cases, the participants' husbands were also at home, and they did not seem to understand that the interview had to be conducted personally between myself and their wives. I sensed that these husbands could not accept that their wives were having a private conversation with a researcher in a space which they were not allowed to dominate.

The lack of 'me-times' only goes to show that within the ideology of the family and the ideology of the home, women are hindered from having a space they can be empowered in. Although the domestic domain is ubiquitously linked to women, the social space of home continues to be defined by dominant ideas of patriarchy (Munro & Madigan, 1999). Most mothers used the locale of home to negotiate 'good' mothering techniques more than a space for their own self-identity. There is a small created space in the mothers' own understanding of personalized leisure time.

5.6 Children's Use of Time

In her critique to Chavkin and Maher (2010), Martins suggests how "research on family" should include "the experience of other family members" (Martins, 2011, p. 102). Moreover, growing scholarship on children's rights points to the importance of considering children's own views and opinions on matters that effect, or have the potential to affect them. It is in this light that this chapter will introduce the views of the participating mothers' children. As mentioned in chapters One and Two, children's voices in regional academic narratives have been universally either absent or sparse until the mid-1990's (Corsaro, 1997; Qvortup, 2005). The usual reference to children are based on what expert voices say about them; that of paediatricians, teachers, or parents (Burman, 1994).

As per findings in chapter Four, children's voices in this chapter are also from child participants from the age range of 10-17 years old. Methodologically, the same research tools are used, including interviews and daily clocks. What the children said about 'school' time (their experiences in school, and being involved in school-related activities) was covered in chapter Four which was on their education. This chapter will consider what the children did in their non-school time. Implications to their responses will be analyzed, as well.

5.6.1 Children and House Chores

In Donner's research on middle-class households in Bengal, there was no investigation of children's contributions to household work (Donner, 2008). Housework was done by "employed servants", and the female owners merely looked into the "supervision of maidservants" (Donner, 2008, p. 108, 116). In this research, the frequency of children's participation in household work is studied, as part of the children's daily time-use, giving voice to the often under-studied members of a household.

Eleven year-old Kumar helps out at home, in "sweeping the floor, wiping the glass tables, [and] sometimes washing the pond". Sixteen year-old Akash also does house chores: "Once in a while, I do gardening; rake out the stones and all. Then when someone needs to dry the clothes, I put it out. I [also] wash the plates". Twelve year-old Vinosh says he washes the dishes, or take the folded clothes upstairs, but it depends on what his mother asks for, randomly. The situation is similar for seventeen year-old Nathan: "whatever asked by parents". Sixteen year-old Kiren grins when he is asked about house chores: "[I'm] supposed to…refill water, tie rubbish". He admits that if he shirks doing it, then his mother ends up doing it. The children's interview responses reflect family expectations that do not prioritise house chores. The children's involvement in these minor tasks done in a random manner proves that. Fifteen year-old Varsha justifies why she does not do housework:

> [Laughs] I'm the type of person that wants to do something that can bring me further in life…not like [housework]…no progress! Become dirty again. That's why I don't really…clean my bed? Why should I fold my blankets? It's going to be messed up again, like… still [have to] do the same thing!

Twelve year-old Narein clearly says "nope" when asked about chores. Twelve year-old Kavita does not even mention house chores; her interview responses reveal that her times

at home are either studies-based, or to "rest and watch TV". Although still in primary school, her ambition to be "a doctor" seemed to qualify her lack of involvement in any form of housework.

The comments by the child participants in this research exist within a continuum of those who perform house chores on a regular basis, those who do so at an ad-hoc basis, and those who don't do any at all. The responses from the majority of the children fall between the category of ad-hoc involvement and no involvement at all. The rather fluid approach to housework performed by children indicates parental expectations that are not fixed. This is because housework involvement is of minimal importance compared to the high priority placed on education. Middle-class parents see their primary role as preparing the next generation for a bright future. Making the children do house chores regularly is definitely not part of "discretionary mothering" practices in contemporary middle-class Asian families (Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p. 37).

Two interesting factors were observed throughout the research. The first is that in certain homes that had the services of a live-in domestic help, the children are still made to help out with chores here and there. Twelve-year-old Sathia helps out with minor tasks although there is a full-time domestic help at home. Some homes do not have domestic maids, and yet the children did not do any housework. Fifteen-year-old Varsha is an example: "Instead of folding my clothes, I have this sack, and I just stuff everything inside"!

The children's responses to house chores again affirm the inconsistent expectations of the mothers. It is obvious that parental focus is on their children's educational future more

than any other skill or trait that can benefit the children in their adult life.[21] Of course this trend also means that it is the mothers who absorb full responsibility for housework; whether with full-time domestic help, or without. Another interesting point to note is that the responses from children seem to indicate a break in normative gender patterns. This is because from the sample of child participants, there are many boys who do house chores on a regular basis. Even the boys in the pre-adolescent age had said that they helped their mothers with ad-hoc requests. On the contrary, there are many girls who did not help with house chores at all. For example, the only housework that fifteen-year-old Gauri had to do was to "bathe my dogs during the weekend". And yet, "now I have PMR [national-level examination], [so] I ask my dad to bathe the dogs".

These observations challenge normative gender socialization discourses in Malaysia - that girls are trained for housework and boys are not. The findings from the child participants in this research did exhibit "gender essentialisms" as far as housework was concerned (Burman, 2005). Tinklin et al (2005) discuss adolescents' views on gender roles at home, amidst other things. The young people in that research believed in equality between the sexes, but "their views were tempered…by the inequalities that they saw around them… in their own families" (Tinklin et al, 2005, p. 129). With regards to the minor detail of doing house chores, the findings in this research shows that in attitude, and in behavior, the children do not conform to patterns of gender role stereotyping. Doing house chores, whether consistently, randomly, or none at all, do not implicate girls' involvement more than boys; rather, the priorities placed on the 'needs' of education superseded, and obliterated the expectations of stereotyped gender roles.

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[21]Singapore is one nation that is beginning to admit that their education system needs a revamp. The Singapore Education Minister was quoted in saying that although their education system has been esteemed internationally, it was found incompetent in producing graduates who could work in a "'VUCA' environment – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous", NST Singapore, 26 September 2013, front page article.

5.6.2 Children and Leisure Time

As evidenced in Chapter Four, the time that the children have for non-school-related engagements is limited. The findings recorded in chapter Four also revealed that time for spontaneous play (or hobbies) that are not part of structured extra-curricular activities, is also limited. In this chapter the children participants were asked not only what their hobbies were, but whether they had a favourite place in their home. This dual-question was done in order to triangulate a relation of the children's hobbies or leisure activities to specific places at home (if there were). When children spoke of their favourite place in the home, it would also be telling of what they enjoyed doing in their free time. This was the objective of the two-part interview question. Whereas their answers to their favourite place at home could reveal something about the construction of their identity; either personally, and collectively as middle-class Indian children in Malaysia. This finding cannot be gleaned from the children's answers to tuitions, school work and revision.

Sixteen year-old Lavinya enjoys watching TV, and likes the living room best, as it is also the TV room:

> The living room is like where my family usually is. So if I have like a problem or I have a funny story to tell, I know everyone's going to be there, so that's the first place I think of going to.

Likewise with twelve year-old Sathia, who likes "mom's room [because the] TV is nice".

Such comments confirm that the children's favourite leisure activity and favourite place is the same. This finding also reveals that these children choose 'favourite' leisure and place in association with other family members. Munro and Madigan (1999) define "the concept of home" as an entity that should embrace, and be inclusive, of "the social relations within it" (1999, p. 107). What the children in this study enjoy doing in their

favourite place, like watching TV, is also related to the family members they get to watch TV with. Davies' research (2012) is based on how "face-to-face contact" is the way children "constitute their closest relationships" (Davies, 2012, p. 8). Therefore, when sixteen year-old Lavinya says "the living room is like where my family usually is", she reveals that the living room is her favourite space that conceptualizes family for her. In Davies' words, it is here that Lavinya has access to "practice, imagine and constitute" her closest relationships (Davies, 2012, p. 8). The activity performed in this favourite space is also an indication of what makes the children "feel connected" with their family (2012, p. 8). Watching TV together is a clear example of how children find their identity through "the regularities of routine family life" (Davies, 2012, p. 15). As the children admit in Chapter Six, time spent with family members is something they look forward to very much.

Apart from having time with other family members, a time-use analysis into the children's leisure time also reveals their desire for privacy and individualized space. Fourteen year-old Vasantha likes to "dance", but yet she says this 'hobby' is part of her school activities. As for her favourite place at home, it is her "bedroom" because she can "do everything" there. Twelve year-old Narein loves playing "football", but claims his favourite place is his parents' room: "because there is the only place where I can think about myself… and I can relieve all my stress there". Seventeen-year-old Michael enjoys playing "basketball" but says his own room is his favourite place: "[I] can do my own thing". Sixteen-year-old Akash also enjoys outdoor sports like "badminton [and] football" but looks forward to having time in his "study room" where he can do "anything, play computer, relax."

In his study on youth culture, Arnett says, "As globalization proceeds and cultures worldwide are integrated further into the global economy, previously cultures that uphold collectivism are likely to become more individualistic" (Arnett, 2005, p. 30).

The children's answers to what they do in their free time combine both a preference for an actual hobby and a desire for self-discovery. Not only do they pursue a hobby in their free time, but also a personalized space where they can negotiate their own identity (Munro & Madigan, 1999).

Other children continue to define their free time through their favourite pastime and their favourite place at home. Sixteen year-old Jigna loves reading during her leisure time, and her favourite place is her room: "I can just sit in my room for hours dancing and reading. If nobody is at home, I can just be inside there". Seventeen year-old Andrew looks forward to times he can video game, and the guest room downstairs is his favourite place: "My Xbox [is] inside. So I study there…play my video games there. So it's more time there la". Although his youngest sister would also come into this room occasionally "to play with her dolls", Andrew doesn't mind, because it's only "once in a while". This guest room is mostly his own to enjoy.

Other children continued to describe their free time pursuit and favourite place interchangeably. Fifteen year-old Gauri says she has no hobby, and yet she quickly adds that being "outside with the dog" is her preferred place. In her free time, twelve year-old Kavita watches TV, and she relates this activity to a particular chair which she calls her favourite place: "This chair because sometimes I can rest and watch TV. Kavita's definition of favourite pastime and favourtie place reveals the overlapping entities of her free time.

These children define their free time not only through their hobbies, but also through a specific space that they can personally relate to as their favourite place. This space enables them to not only relax but also to negotiate their self-identity and be themselves. This ability positions these children as active participants in the process of discovery of their own lives. It is interesting to have a glimpse of these children's perceptions; where "identity becomes based less on prescribed social roles and more on individual choices" (Arnett, 2005, p. 32).

5.7 Conclusion

5.7.1 Time in the Mothers' Lives

In Quah's analysis of the gender issue in the lives of Asian working mothers, the choice of adjectives is telling; "contradictory ideologies" and "conflicting social pressures" speak of these women's struggle for congruity (Quah, 2009, p. 124, 127). Managing time well in their attempt to combine both home and paid employment obligations is crucial. The Indian middle-class working mothers in my research face the same unenviable difficulty "to reconcile disparate social expectations" (2009, p. 124).

The fixedness of their time at home, and the minimal role played by most of their husbands explain the conclusions that can be drawn from these mothers' time-management patterns. It is fascinating to note that even from an econometric investigation of time-use within families, a similar pattern to sociological studies is evidenced. Based on economic modelling of statistical correlations of time-use within the family, European economists show the "advantage of the husband" from their findings (Beblo, 2001, p. 84). As introduced here and analyzed further in Chapter Six, the flexibility of work schedules that many mothers enjoy is a big factor that helps them cope with the demands made on their time.

Another aspect that helped the mothers manage time better was their relative relegation of housework as a low priority. From the findings, the positive aspect in relation to the dual-income household is that fewer mothers were interested in "the public, respectable face of the home" (Munro & Madigan, 1999, p.117). This can also be tied to the earlier finding of how housework has become an area that has lost its importance in the hierarchy of what is urgent. Reflexively, some mothers didn't mind the interview being done amidst unfolded laundry and paper-scattered table-tops. But then again, this relegation of housework did not mean that the mothers had more free time. It was done so that more time for children's needs could be accommodated. As Donner (2008), and Yeoh and Huang (2010) have shown, this trend is evident in other modernizing Asian societies as well. The 'intensive mothering' ideology of the 1980s and 1990s (Christopher, 2012) is not a thing of the past; it persists in a 21st century consumer-based capitalist society. The only difference is that it has shifted its approach from preoccupations with housework and children's physical needs to children's educational needs.

Assistance from parents and parents-in-law were important factors in helping middle-class Indian women cope with being working mothers. Many of them had their children's grandparents care for them in different ways, while they were away at work, and also whenever it was required during the weekends. The role of urban grandparents among the Indian middle-class community only goes to show how important their adult daughters' work was viewed, and also how important their grandchildren's educational needs were. Their role in absorbing the demands of time placed on their daughters or daughters-in-law is becoming a common trend in dual-income households in urban societies (Gray, 2005; Brannen, 2006; Mehta & Thang, 2010). The importance of kinscripts that was identified in the previous chapter is evident here as well; where grandparents willingly

help out their daughters take care of their children, so that the children's educational future is not hindered in any way.

Contemporary definitions of the 'household' show how a national economy within a globalizing one relies on the household to sustain it (Douglass, 2012). And yet, what is conveniently left out from these global economic narratives is the discussion of "social relations within the household" (Douglass, 2012, p. 7). This is exactly the situation in Malaysia's national policy. Echoing Vision 2020, the 10th Malaysian Plan (2011-2015) targets "empowering women [as] a key agenda" so that women's percentage in "decision-making" and "labour force participation" can increase.[22] Yet together with this key agenda come challenges that need to be overcome: ensuring that we remain a "moral and ethical" and "a fully caring society".[23] The grandeur of the broad-based economic plan has to be actualized by gendered individuals whose role would be needed in "revitalizing the household" (Douglass, 2012, p. 4).

It is a common, taken-for-granted assumption that it is the wives and mothers in these households who will build and uphold the 'moral', 'ethical' and 'fully caring' society. In its recent record, International Labour Organisation has included the options of "reducing the burden of housework through better infrastructure" and "reducing the burden of care work through the provision of care services" (ILO Global Employment Trends for Women, 2012, p. 36, 37). The existence of these options strongly implicate that such structures are still lacking. Quah does mention how "governments in Asia" need to help households achieve their goals (Quah, 2009, p. 66), but "critical family policy areas that

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[22]5 from www.mysinchew.com/node/40194, www.parlimen.gov.my [pdf].
[23]from Mahathir Mohammad's speech on the 9 challenges to overcome, as he introduced Vision 2020 in 1990.

require urgent attention" remain at the "identification and discussion" level (Quah, 2009, p. 162).

From the framework of these broader realities, it is evident that Indian middle-class working mothers are pressured to be found successful in their mothering. The thematic concern of time-management in this chapter evidences the extent these women's internal scripts are influenced by mothering ideologies.

Adding vulnerability to their already pressured role, these women have "intimate inner workings" of patriarchy to contend with, evident through ethnic and class-based contentions (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275).

In the findings on leisure, many households had their holidays with other kin members. A desire for "notions of 'togetherness' and communal life" was evident (Munro & Madigan, 1999, p. 117). And yet, unlike the women, many husbands had their own personalized space for leisure within the home. This finding reflects how men have the conquest of space outside the home, and inside of it (Samuel, 1996). Although it was evident that leisure is a component that is not fully embraced by the participant mothers (as the fewer cases of 'me time' section proved), there were traces of "individualistic imperatives for space" (Munro & Madigan, 1999, p. 117). These small yet visible signs prove that these women were intentional in meeting their own needs, apart from always having to accommodate the needs of the family. From these minor instances, I borrow the glimmer of hope which Donner talks about when she describes agency in the form of "the rhetoric of self-development" (Donner, 2008, p. 177). The limited personal space that some of the mothers talked about through their 'me-times' reveals that these women can

"create a space where their individuality has to be recognized" (Donner, 2008, p. 176); if not for the rest of society, then at least for themselves.

5.7.2 Time in the Children's Lives

Asking the children about their involvement with housework revealed how all of them experience a rather ambiguous socialization into domestic tasks. This is because some of them are asked to help out at home, and yet their participation is not regulated, nor disciplined if not undertaken. The children's answers reflect their mixed perceptions with regards to their responsibilities in this area. This is because housework is a 'by-the-way' engagement, and parents (mothers) prefer to necessitate educational pursuits, rather than household chores.

In this research, spending time with the other family members is an important issue for the children. Davies' research helps explain how spending physical time with family members is important for children in their constitution of family (Davies, 2012). Another aspect that is evidenced from the children's answers to the dual-question is the children's desire for privacy. This aspect echoes Arnett's research on "bicultural identities" that refers to young people who are in tandem with local identities (that prefer kin and family) desire global ones too (that seek for personal space) (Arnett, 2005, p. 23). Using the words of Munro and Madigan, the children's definition of their favourite leisure pursuit and favourite place is a combination of notions of familial 'togetherness' and "individualistic imperatives for space and privacy" (Munro & Madigan, 1999, p. 117).

On a reflexive note, being able to give children a chance to be heard has given me, the researcher, a rewarding experience in the research process. Getting to hear the children's voices for this research was only preliminary work, and further investigation into these

children's lived experiences of being Indian and middle-class in Malaysia is required. The children's participation reveals important insights into their perceptions of identity.

By including them as participants, the research provided them "the space and time they require in communicating the complexities of their lives" (Langevang, 2007). As an often excluded group in academia, including children is an important step that enriches data on social relationships within modern households.

Even as 'education' and 'time management' have been shown to be aspects of Indian middle-class 'householding', the picture is not complete without discussing the mothers' engagement in the public domain. Together with the children's views on their 'working mothers', the relationship between female employment and class-based identity will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: THE MOTHERS' EMPLOYMENT: ITS INFLUENCE

"The decision-maker job portfolio…it's not easy... I think it boils down to the person.

For me, it was about family, and you'll have to give up something…"

A thirty-nine-year-old mother, Prema

"No, I don't want any parent to stay at home. I need my space."

- A fifteen-year-old child, Gauri

6.1 Introduction

Since the turn of the century, women's participation in the workforce has become a common feature in narratives on economic development, particularly in Asia (ILO, 2000; Wichterich, 2002; Gottfried, 2013). This chapter looks at the roles of Malaysian Indian middle-class working mothers in their public spaces of employment. Challenges faced and underlying issues that affect these women's work experience will be explored. As with the previous two findings chapters, this chapter will continue to review the ideological constrains of patriarchy in the lives of working women. The voices of children sharing their opinion of their mothers' working roles will also be detailed. The chapter re-affirms the context of the participants as middle-class citizens of an ethnic minority, living in dual-income households.

As discussed in chapter One, conceptually, the 'middle-class' is easily defined in societies that have developed on the basis of class-based stratifications. The United Kingdom, for example, is a nation where class-consciousness, class domination, and class struggle are normative themes in academic studies (Swingewood, 2000). In Asia, in contrast, class has not been defined so easily in studied contexts.

The histories of Asia with its caste systems, and clan hierarchy make "class" a very grey tool of social analysis. Although Quah (2009) studied academic efforts on families in ten Asian countries, a strict class-based perspective was lacking. This helps to explain why in my study, 'middle-class' Indians is still a phenomenon that is being grappled with. As explained in chapter Two, the economic status enjoyed by the research participants is the strongest factor used in this study, in the definition of being middle-class.

Although not nuanced into varying levels of the middle-class, the positions that the interviewed mothers belong to range between the 'upper middle', the 'middle middle', and the 'lower middle'. In relation to that, the issue of 'choice' versus 'necessity' that some mothers face regarding going to work rests on lifestyle choices and consumer patterns. For some in the sample group, their choice to work is mainly to be involved in something constructive, or to build a career. Here work is defined as paid employment, and does not include unpaid work in the home, nor social or voluntary contributions outside the home. Choosing to work is part of these women's needs. For women in this category, their husbands' high-paying jobs (and possibly their joint inherited/invested assets) are assumed to be sufficient for the family's well-being. These mothers can therefore enjoy their salaries for 'extra' purchasing power and for themselves or for miscellaneous household products.

For some other mothers, the choice to work is determined by lifestyle choices; mainly to have enough income to spend on their children's education. Although these women have a desire to have a career to pursue, these mothers see it vital for them to be able to afford to enrol their children into established schools (some private), have expensive extra-curricular pursuits, or be able to give them a good tertiary education (some overseas).

This is also the pattern followed by working mothers in other Asian countries (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004). The choice for these mothers to work is so that their income can supplement that of their husbands' for the sake of their children's educational future. However, some other mothers in this study had to work as a dual-income was necessary for the family's daily life maintenance. Although all three categories of mothers placed importance on their children's educational future, the type of middle-class life they experience covers a diverse range.

What also needs mention in line with the presented diversity is that the pressure to take on paid work for these mothers was never expressed explicitly during the interviews. As having children was viewed as a natural process for married women[24], taking on "paid job obligations" was also viewed in a normative manner (Quah, 2009, p. 124). This could be seen when some of the mothers explicitly said they chose to take on paid employment; although they had options in being a housewife. During the interviews, when asked about the downsides of their employment experiences, no mother talked about the dilemma of wanting to stay-home as one of the factors.

6.2 The Participants' Socio-Economic Background

In Donner's work on middle-class motherhood in India, being staying-home mothers was the ideal (Donner, 2008). This pattern was inherited from their mothers and their grandmothers before that. In my study of Indian middle-class mothers, some were the first generation of women that were taking on paid employment. However, the others were following their mothers' footsteps in working outside the home. Out of the thirty

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[24]The only question that addressed childbirth issues in the Interview was whether the mothers wanted children straight away, or whether they wanted more time to consider motherhood. Based on this question, there was no mother who brought up any personal preference she may have had in wanting to build a child-less family. Based on triangulated questions, there was also no mention of the mothers desiring 'no children' families.

women who were interviewed, fourteen of their mothers were employed. From this selection of mothers, three were nurses, and nine were government-school teachers (either in primary or secondary schools). The two mothers who became housewives after their children were born were also government school-teachers before they stopped work.

As historical evidence proves, nursing and teaching were the typical two jobs that women took on in early years of the nation's formation (NCWO, 2004; Sandhu & Mani ed, 2006). This was because these jobs were seen as 'natural' extensions of what mothers do at home as nurturers. Since the workforce was seen as 'masculine', these 'feminine jobs', were therefore, socially accepted as appropriate occupations for women to venture into.

The teaching profession was the main job that the majority of the research participants' mothers pursued in their work life. This is reflexive of what took place in middle-class India, where the teaching job was one of the first job options women were allowed to engage in (Chowdhry, 1992; Rajan, 1993). Middle-class Indians in Malaysia followed the same trajectory. This is also because the teaching job provided many benefits for women who were mothers (NCWO, 2004). It was a job where the duration of work was only half a day, and being a government-based job, it was perceived as 'secure'. Having a secure job that had governmental backing was also an important criterion for Indians: "the Indian preference for security of permanent wages" (Sandhu, 2006, p. 168). Therefore, teaching seemed the perfect working option for educated Indian mothers to take up because it provided a monthly salary without fail, school holidays, and a pension upon retirement.

Although the research participants were randomly picked, it is interesting to note the chosen sample evidences many historical statistics (Smith, 1952; Gomez, 1995; Sandhu & Mani ed, 2006). For one, the majority of middle-class Indians worked in government

jobs created by the British in early Malaya. Jobs in the spheres of education, the police force, and hospitals were taken up by middle-class Indians. This is shown in my sample, as four of the research participants' fathers were involved with government schools either as teachers, or head masters. One father was in the Police Force, and three fathers were involved with the Health Ministry. A few Indians (especially the north Indians) took on supervisory and consultative roles in the private sector, also as my sample shows.

Seven of the research participant's fathers were in this line, either as a Supervisor, Manager or Consultant. A few Indians who held supervisory roles in the governmental manual jobs like in energy and the railway eventually managed to enjoy a middle-class status. Even this is evidenced in the sample of the research participants' fathers.

A small number of the participants' fathers were uneducated and had low-paying jobs like being a barber, a lorry driver, or a food stall operator. These few families experienced an inter-generational upward social mobility, as their daughters married men who had middle-class jobs. This small sample is likewise parallel to the lesser percentage of the socially mobile middle-class Indians in Malaysia (Manickam, 2010).

From this purview, it is seen that most of the mothers in the research maintained their socio-economic position by marrying husbands with middle-class jobs, and also by remaining in middle-class employment. Two of the research participants had more senior positions than their husbands, although in both cases, the spouses were involved in the same designations as their wives; the academic line. These two cases exhibit the wives having a greater capacity for decision-making in their occupations compared to their husbands.

From an inter-generational gender analysis, many of the interviewed mothers experienced 'upward social mobility'. Although 'middle-class' in my findings is not nuanced into upper, middle, and lower, some of the research participant mothers experienced intra-class upward mobility, due to their husband's job positions, or their own. Even for those who had working mothers, their own professional jobs have a higher status or a much greater income than what their mothers had. Some of these mothers were Managers and Senior Managers, Associate Deans and Professors, Senior Officers, Corporate Lawyers and Business Stakeholders. In social referencing, these are "grade 1 category" jobs or "upper echelon occupations" (*Yayasan Strategik Sosial,* 1999, p.10).

Tracing the historical progression of jobs which middle-class Indian migrants were involved in is necessary so that the context that the research women came from can be better understood. These historic and cultural structures accounted for the 'positioning' of the working mothers in their middle-class status.

6.3 The Participants' Entry into the Workforce

This section looks at the factors that influenced the mothers' choices as they enter work-life. The effects of inter-generational influence will be highlighted in this section. The mothers' working experience will then be explored, giving attention to the positive and negative aspects of working life. Special focus will be given to how they perceive their status at work, and in line with government policy, their capacity for decision-making in their employment.

6.3.1 Parental Influence on Daughter's Choice of Employment

This section looks at parental influence in socialising children into their adult roles. More than fifty years ago, parenting began to be prioritized as the key agent of socialization in

academic literature in advanced nations. "Favourable socialization" that would produce good citizens with "a strong inner self" was promoted, and likewise, "unfavourable socialization" that could cause dysfunctional members of society with "weak inner direction" was discouraged (Simpson, 1962, p. 517). Half a century later, family studies in advanced nations continue to emphasize the ubiquitous role of parenting (Becker & Thomas, 1986; Carneiro & Heckman, 2003, Christopher, 2012). My research sits in the Asian context where parenting skills are accentuated even further through the effect of culture and tradition. The research by Tsuya and Bumpass (2004) has this very similar context. The parents they researched on in Japan and Korea did not have "other interests" like "self-oriented consumption", a dominant discourse that is more associated with parental roles in advanced nations (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004, p. 38).

Rather, parenting patterns found among families in Asian nations tend to evidence focused pursuits, like prioritizing their children's educational and future needs (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004); Donner, 2008, Chavkin & Maher, ed., 2010).

Some of the research participants' mothers were housewives, but they played a part in encouraging their daughters to study well. Thirty-nine-year-old Komala's mother was a housewife, but she "always instilled" in her children that "[the] social economic position is important."

Due to her mother's positive influence, Komala could gain entrance to the university, which was uncommon in her family. Forty-five-year-old Letchumi tells of her mother who was also a housewife: "She felt that people around didn't respect her so she instilled the fact that the only way out of poverty is education…she will make sure we studied...My mother…really practiced the value of education." Letchumi also did her mother proud by

going on to obtain two university degrees. These examples prove that these research participants' mothers had the vision for their daughters to experience upward social mobility through a good education. Their own lack of education was used as a motivating factor in their parenting approach.[25]

A few of the research participants are not graduates, and yet, they experienced parental motivation to do well in their careers. Both thirty-nine-year-old Kalpana's parents were teachers and encouraged Kalpana to pursue a stable, income-generating job: "Go for teachers' training…it's the safest, or work in the bank." But when she told them that she lacked interest in such jobs, they encouraged her to pursue what she wanted: "One thing my parents are like that…once you finish, move out. Get your own job and start[life]." Kalpana also explains how her sister "was the brains" but didn't want to go to university, and "wanted to take up fashion designing" instead. Her father "was very upset…[but] he paid for her to go to fashion school." This freedom to choose their career was something that Kalpana's paternal grandmother was not happy about, yet it was a decision that both her parents supported. Forty-four-year-old Devi is not a graduate, but says that her father encouraged her and her siblings to pursue any field they wanted: "My father especially… never really pushed us ... he said, 'just go, carry on what you're doing.'". This gave Devi the freedom to get any job she wanted. She has stayed on at the same job for 21 years, as "the benefits are good". These examples prove some parents supported their daughters' preference in finding a job that they liked, and which they could hold on to as career options.

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[25]This trait is similar to what Asian popular literature evidences. For example, in *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), Amy Tan portrayed how migrant mothers want their daughters to achieve the success goals of the new society they live in, which they never had.

6.3.2 Positive Parental Influence On Employment: Cultural Capital

As much literature on middle-class Asian families exhibit (Donner, 2008; Quah, 2009), parenting is almost synonymous with an "obsession with children's academic success" (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004, p. 77). However, for many of the research participants, the educational support which they received was part of acquiring a space for themselves where they could enjoy a form of independence.

For example, thirty-nine-year-old Karishma explains how her father's valuable advice sustained her in her career: "We were always told that [it] doesn't mean that [if] you're a girl, you should just get married…my dad used to tell me to never depend on a man to provide for you." For Karishma's father, a career would keep his daughter from being dependent on a husband.

These Indian middle-class parents (like Karishma's father) wanted their daughters to experience the ability to be free in choices and actions, which is telling of an inter-generational gain of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu 1993). As was discussed in chapter Two, and elaborated on in chapter Four, Bourdieu's usage of this concept is to explain how members of a higher class have the liberty to explore possibilities beyond their domain of life, as the cultural knowledge they possessed had been 'validated' generationally. This was "the legitimacy effect" that enabled middle-class parents to preserve, and pass down educational capital to their children (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 85).

This "inherited capital" of having the space to explore options, and question the norms, eventually becomes "apparently natural, innate, capital" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 177). This then validates and enables the mothers of this research to exercise agency.

Some relied on this aspect of agency as they negotiated with parental authority in pursuing

a career that they wanted. Forty-four-year-old Sheena explains,

> "Actually, doing my degree in accounting was a decision by my father. So I went
> to do accounting, not knowing what it was. So when I started working as an
> auditor in Price Waterhouse, I didn't like it. I decided to try teaching. And when
> I tried teaching, I really enjoyed it, because I think to me…I have this gift from
> God…[in] being able to impart knowledge. And from Day 1 until
> today…teaching…gives me a lot of satisfaction."

Forty-three-year-old Sujata's story is similar:

> My father… initially wanted me to do medicine… because his side, his siblings,
> children and all, were all in the medical line… so he wanted me to do medicine.
> He said, "India is a very nice place for you"… and I said "I'm not interested".

Sujata explains her decision in her career choice,

> "I can vividly remember, I was sixteen or seventeen when I actually told myself I
> would… start out as a teacher first, but my end outcome would be a lecturer. You
> know, I've like, paved my career path… And then, I remember talking to my dad
> about it. So he just encouraged me… he just said, "okay, you want to do it, fine.""

There were also other mothers who made a decision to pursue a career path that was not

chosen by their parents. Forty-five-year-old Harbajan chose to study law on her own

accord. She says, "When I was young, I already wanted to do law…the legal profession

always fascinated me." Forty-year-old Vanie chose the banking line on her own accord;

knowing and embracing the challenging environment she wanted to work in. Forty-five-

year-old Lakshmi chose the medical line from a young age: "I wanted to do medicine all

the while. It was never my [parents'] choice, it was always mine."

Some mothers dared to venture into their own business. Thirty-nine-year-old Prema's

parents did not mind whatever degree she pursued at University, but after working as a

Manager in an international company for twelve years, she decided to start a business in

cake decoration. Forty-two-year-old Shalini hesitated to start her own business, but eventually dared to start her sculpture and design shop, on her own initiative.

The Indian community is one where kinscripts define the actions of younger members of the community. And yet, as the mothers accounted in the examples above, many of them were able to decide on their career choices independently from their parents' wishes. What seems to be telling is that in most of these cases the negotiation processes that the mothers had regarding their career options were mostly with their fathers. As it was stated in chapter Four the father figure was central to these women's educational future, the father figure also continued to be central in the discussions on their careers.

Another important aspect that is derived from the findings is how Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' is exercised. As some of the participants admitted, they were reminded from a young age that the previous generation of their family migrated to Malaya as middle-class. The middle-class operates according to its own cultural framework, which is internalized through socialization within the family. For Bourdieu, "the transmission of cultural capital" is "an inherited capital that has the property of being an embodied, and therefore apparently natural, innate, capital" (Bourdieu, 1993, p.177, emphasis original). Therefore, apart from the generalised cultural normatives like "artistic tastes, style in dress, and eating habits", what is also transmitted inter-generationally are "perception, thought, taste, appreciation and action" (Bilton et al, 1996, p. 357). This "socialized subjectivity" is demonstrated in the ability of the participant mothers in being able to make individual choices that differ from required expectations (Swingewood, 2000, p. 212).

For Bordieu, cultural capital is "clearly bound up with social class" (Swingewood, 2000, p. 214). This explains the courage of some of the mothers to move away from normative occupations and venture into new ones. Having the privilege to rely on "structuring principles" of the past, these mothers had "the necessary properties" to actively exercise agency within the present context (Swingewoord, 2000, p. 214).

This idea of inter-generational gain is also found in Donner's work on kinship (2008). Although she does not use Bourdieuian vocabulary, her "rereading of kinship" is similar to Bourdieu's idea of how the next generation gains from the cultural capital of the previous one (Donner, 2008, p. 39). This idea is similar to the finding of my research. The middle-class 'framework of meaning' facilitated the participant mothers to exercise agency, and achieve academic, and eventually occupational success. In this sense, inter-generational influence was key in these women's entry into paid employment.

6.3.3 Negative Parental Influence on Employment

In spite of the positive inter-generational influence that has been key in many women gaining economic independence, some of them experienced 'negative' parental influences. In these cases, the mothers' private role as nurturer (and home-maker) was prioritized over the opportunity of having a fulfilling career.

Thirty-nine-year-old Prema explains how her choice of career is her own. Her parents were not really interested in what line of work she went into after getting a degree: "They were only concerned about my brother…as long as he got his degree…" Forty-five-year-old Pushpa says, "I'm actually the eldest in my family", which also means that she had to take on many responsibilities that her two younger male siblings did not have to:

> "When there's a problem at home, I get the first call. Which is why I've moved into [another housing area]. We used to live three streets away from my parents,

and then it was just becoming a lot till the point my son asked me, "why is it always you?" Not just my parents, I'm also managing my uncle and aunty."

Even after getting married, having a professional job to handle, and her own family of two children to run, forty-five-year-old Pushpa was expected to continue her responsibilities with kin members. She finally had to draw the line and moved to another location:

> "I think it took a toll on our marriage to an extent that he [husband] felt that he wasn't given enough priority… That's why I made that move. It was hard… extracting myself from my parents, but I'm glad I did it. It helped my marriage. In terms of my nucleus family, I think we're doing a lot better."

The priority given to male siblings in Indian families is a historical reality observed many years ago: "The Indian community was generally not keen on educating their womenfolk" (Ampalavanar, 1969, p. 284). This explains why the brothers of the research participant mothers could choose whichever job prospect they wanted, whereas they themselves had to be responsible in taking care of their families when they grew up. Pushpa's example shows how she had to 'break away' to have her own life. Apart from valuing male siblings more (by allowing them to shirk certain responsibilities), patriarchy was also evident in the parental advice given to daughters to focus on their husbands and their children. Forty-seven-year-old Kumari talks about the advice she had received from her parents: "You need to get married and get out of the house. We don't want an unmarried daughter in the house at all in the family."

The association of women to home-making was reflexively confirmed during the research process. Kumari talks a lot about herself and her children, and her husband's minimal role in the running of the home was easily inferred. Kumari's husband's heavy work schedule is also mentioned as a justification for his lack of involvement in the lives of his wife and children. This shows that Kumari carries on with life almost as if she were a single parent.

Her parents had said, "Make sure you get a job, get a husband, and get married", and she had fulfilled their wishes. Whether the man she married would be a good husband or a good father was immaterial. Forty-one-year-old Selvam says, "My mum had ingrained it that family and children come first before… career."

These words became a self-fulfilling prophecy in Selvam's life, as her decision to reject promotions at her workplace echoes the priority she has had for her family's well-being. The situation is similar for Selvam's two sisters who had pursued professional jobs: "Look at both my sisters… one went into accounting… she went up to manager, then she eventually quit her job and she had the kids… One went into law… she took… a step backwards, and she works as a copywriter now."

These decisions were made for the sake of their families, thus proving Selvam and her siblings' conformity to the values their mother instilled in their girlhood. Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali also speaks of her father's 'negative' advice,

> "My dad used to tell me, 'Don't be over-ambitious, don't try to become the General Manager or whatever, because you're a woman. Your place is at home. Your place is with the kids. Do not expect that from your husband."

These words are also proven true in Anjali's experience in raising the children. She couldn't expect much from her husband, as her father had predicted long ago: "[Husband] wasn't ready to really um, commit so much to the kids…[he] wasn't willing to slow down".

Thirty-seven-year-old Hannah says she was fortunate to go to a good school that was well-known for its educational excellence: "My parents used to say, 'you better study, you know? Look, we don't have a proper education [and we have to] work so hard for money. So if you all study… you will survive."

And yet, the reality is that Hannah was married off as early as twenty years old, through an arranged marriage. The "proper education" that was planned for her was secondary to the prospect of being married off. Reflexively, during the interview process, Hannah revealed how her husband ruled the home according to his wishes, and how she was left out of the major decision-making processes. Hannah lived her married life with a non-conjugal identity.

These examples show the downside of parental influence in the research participant mothers' journey of self-identity. The patriarchal habitus that devalue women in relation to men was transmitted inter-generationally. Due to the minority status of the Indian community, most literature addressed issues of poverty and marginalization that affected this community as a whole, without being gender-sensitive. And yet, cultural knowledge on the influence of patriarchy is sufficient to explain how negative assertions play a role in causing Indian working mothers to have a lack of confidence in their public roles. This is because they are constantly reminded that the main role of being 'female' is in the private sphere, as wife and mother, in service to the men. This discriminatory process that Indian women face in Malaysia is similar to what Indian women experience in India (Kumar, 2005). Any form of empowerment these women struggle to gain through their work life is also a struggle to defy the debilitating construct of 'woman' that had been passed down to them.

6.4 Juggling Paid Employment with Motherhood

Structurally, economic prominence became the reason developing nations began looking for more labour power (Douglass, 2012). And in Malaysia, as with other newly-industrialising nations, female labour was tapped into to meet this growing need (Quah,

2009). Even as the previous section looked at how their middle class background affected them in their choices to work, this section will study the effects of their work experience, both positive and negative.

Just to be away from the domain of 'home' was enough reason to enjoy work, for some mothers. When asked if she had considered being a stay-home mother, forty-seven-year-old Mahesh says, "No. You knew from the beginning that even with the kids, you will just carry on". Fifty-one-year-old Darshana talks about her work life: "Yeah, I would like to work as long as I can. I don't have the craving to stay at home. But my sister…she's craving to stay at home". Forty-four-year-old Devi also says that she has never considered being a stay-home mother; working was seen as the normative progression in life. Forty-two-year-old Shalini says she could never be a home-maker:

> "I cannot, that will drive everybody nuts... I think I will be the one who'll regret it [not working], because for me, it's very important I have some goals as some point, and I think I'll drive him [husband] nuts if I'm at home all the time…"

In their working experience, almost every one of the research participant mothers said that they enjoyed being constructive and being challenged. The 'mind' work was appealing to most of them. Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali says she kept changing designation positions at her workplace: "That kept me going…something new…that kept challenging me. So I found that satisfaction there, you know? Mental satisfaction." Forty-year-old Vanie was clear about her bank work: "I can still have a career there, I can still contribute and I can still be happy in an environment where it's still challenging…"

The 'people' factor is another strong reason forwarded by the mothers. Thirty-nine-year-old Komala talks about her Human Resource job, "My background is marketing… then I was given the opportunity to do human resource… I did it, and within a year, I was actually given a promotion". Because she is a people-oriented person, Komala did well:

"So I really like that part that I'm able to satisfy people". Forty-seven-year-old Kumari says her workplace was more "like an extended family kind of thing", where everyone looked out for one another. Because of this relationship with the people at the workplace, Kumari says "It's not a difficult thing being in the office."

Helping people is what motivated other mothers. Fifty-two-year-old Veera was in the teaching line, and says, "I was meant to be a teacher… I think it sort of fits my personality… it's nice because you meet with young people." As a legal consultant, forty-six-year-old Mathi enjoys helping people through "difficult matters that you are able to settle". Being in the medical line, forty-five-year-old Lakshmi says, "I feel really blessed that I've touched someone and made a difference."

Although these women's statements affirm the people factor in their work experience, deeper implications that are not articulated can be drawn. Gottfried (2013) mentions how geographies of power can be systematically brought into an integrative feminist framework. In other words, from a feminist point of view, one of the reasons why the women could have felt empowered by the 'people' factor is because they had gained "a vantage point" in relationships at the office (Gottfried, 2013, p. 37). Based on multiple "power relations" that are enacted "in a single place across different spaces and on multiple scales", these women would have felt superior when they could deal with, and provide solutions for, both women and men who were spatially inferior, and more so, for those who were spatially superior (2013, p. 37). For example, in the office 'family' that forty-seven-year-old Kumari speaks about, her role could be an extension of her motherly role at home which makes her feel empowered. For forty-six-year-old Mathi, settling important disputes that involve men could give her the superiority that she symbolically lacked.

Of all the positive reasons forwarded by the mothers, it was the issue of flexibility that stood out the most. Thirty-nine-year-old Prema enjoys the flexibility in her business, as she could replace hours whenever she is free. Forty-five-year-old Harbajan enjoyed the flexibility in not being office-bound: "In between I also did consulting whereby I managed to do things which were still money-making [and] at the same time I didn't have to be office-based". Forty-nine-year-old Navisha works long hours at her job, but admits that she has some space: "There's some level of flexibility. If I have some family issue, we've worked it out, we've managed." Forty-four-year-old Devi can go in to work later than the norm because she has to drop her children off at school: "The office knows…so they give me leeway".

It can be suggested that this form of flexibility is unique to working mothers in Malaysia. Work 'flexibility' for Japanese women would mean that they resort to part-time work (Kumagai, 2005). For some Singaporean women, work 'flexibility' would refer to those who experience the positive effects of a global economy, but who are still not relieved from intensive mothering (Yeoh & Huang, 2010). Some women in Malaysia, as the women of this research prove, can enjoy a form of flexibility where they are able to combine a local full-time job and home care comfortably.

Most mothers value their work flexibility mainly because they can have some extra time to manage household matters, or to be more specific, the needs of the children. And yet, this issue of flexibility did not come easily. Some of the mothers had to work extra hard to enjoy the type of flexibility awarded to those in middle or higher management. Others had to forgo higher, better-paying positions, so that they could enjoy the space which lower management gave. The problem is related to the age-old general opinion, which sees "parenting as fundamentally female", and "a career as fundamentally male"

(Schwartz, 1994, p. 135). Employers know how to keep the services of qualified working mothers in middle management. By proposing a 'mommy track', employers allow a mother flexible work patterns, while still reaping "the benefits of her experience" together with "the top level of her abilities" (1994, p. 139).

The mothers in this research did not obtain flexibility at their workplace 'naturally'. In other words, they had to work for it, or make other sacrifices in order to have access to flexibility. Being a long-standing staff, forty-seven-year-old Kumari had access to certain lee-ways: "I've been with the same firm for twenty years now…[so] it allows me the flexibility to do what I want." Forty-four-year-old Devi says, "I've been in this line for twenty-one years…the benefits were good…that's why I have stayed on". Due to Devi's seniority in the office, "they let us do everything. My boss lets me…report directly to her…that working environment is just nice for me." Forty-seven-year-old Mahesh has worked twenty-seven years in the same firm. She says that the bosses recently "gave me a promotion, just…two months ago", but chose to decline it: "I think I'm comfortable there with what I'm doing…and I'm not that career-minded". Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali also stayed on for many years with her one job, as the company allows her time-outs for the sake of the children: "I decided la to keep going, and partly it's because of my working environment. [Be]cause the timing is so perfect for a mother, you know". Recently Anjali benefitted from her commitment to her company when they offered her a share-holder position, which she took up.

While these mothers claim contentment for the flexibility they enjoyed at work, the 'need' they have for this space is telling of the real issue at hand: stereotypical demands on women for home and childcare responsibilities, in spite of their other work roles (Ehrenreich & English, 2010). This theme continues in recent literature on women and work. Gottfried (2013) spoke of how women had "adjusted their investments in skill

acquisition" so that "family responsibilities" could be accommodated (Gottfried, 2013, p. 58). This reality is echoed in the findings of this research; some mothers had to give up more lucrative positions or jobs for lesser ones for the sake of the children.

For example, forty-one-year-old Selvam chose not to take the higher position offered to her because of the time-factor. She explains how "Administrative or management work…will just make me sit there for the whole day. I won't be able to get away, and I don't think [I] want that for now. At least not for the next ten years." Selvam prefers her current position that allows her to leave the office the moment she can, so that she can go home to be with the children. Because she is highly qualified in her field, forty-five-year-old Harbajan could afford to do consulting work from the home for a few years:

> "It wasn't steady income but I did [it] because I wanted to be with the kids and I found satisfaction. Actually I think I'm lucky to have been able to do this because it's not like mother[s] have much choices these days…"

Forty-nine-year-old Shirani was a purchasing executive with a top corporate company, but resigned and chose a much more relaxed job: "Then… I can be with the children at home, so that's why I left my job." Forty-nine-year-old Navisha was in a high-profile legal line "for [the] Southeast Asia region" but she was "coming home [at] 11pm, and going out early in the morning".

She spoke on how her second child missed her, and that was why she had to change jobs to a less-taxing one:

> "For two weeks she didn't see me… so she cried. Actually that broke my heart and I made an immediate decision to stop work… [although] I was quite senior and they were going to offer me partnership in a couple of months… looked around for something that I thought can give me work-life balance…"

Thirty-nine-year-old Prema was working in an international company, where she had to deal with regional matters. Soon, it became difficult: "In the high performance culture,

you will get [a] sms at 10pm. so it's quite stressful in that sense and I guessit came to a point where…I wasn't a good mother…the stress gets to you." Prema knew she had to give up her lucrative job and she started her own business where she could manage it at her own time. Forty-year-old Vanie worked in an international company that took her overseas a lot, but when her children were toddlers, she stopped work for five years. Although she did get back into work and is currently a manager in her firm, the position came with a cost: "It's taken a toll on my career and I'll probably be at a higher level today if I didn't take time out. But the five years did bring me much joy…I think they [children] appreciate my efforts."

These examples prove that although flexibility is the aspect enjoyed most at the workplace, the ability to enjoy it has come with a price that the mothers had to intentionally pay. They had to make decisions that favoured the children and the family at large, over their careers. Early feminist work in Malaysia claimed that women would gain equality with men when they took on paid employment (Hing & Talib, 1986). But this has long been proven wrong (Ng, 1999). Patriarchy, seen through the "inner workings of…distinct arrangements between the genders" is evidenced through the findings of this research (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275).

This echoes the work by Tsuya and Bumpass (2004) who record similar findings in dual-income households in Japan and Korea. The "double shift" performed by women is common (2004, p. 89). Other regional literature on gendered employment also proves working mothers' 'dual burden' as a fact that does not have to be proven anymore (Quah, 2009; Yeoh & Huang, 2010). Although more and more married women are involved in the public space (ILO, 2012, Gottfried, 2013), their work identity is still very much wrapped up with their motherhood. Even as national narratives celebrate middle-class,

dual income households as the suggested 'type' in bringing in revenue, the findings of this research affirm that it is the mothers who bear the brunt of it.

6.5 Women in Decision-making Positions

Discussion of the relationship between women, work, and national development has been evident from the 1970s. Kabeer (1994) elaborates on the key role that women-in-development (WID) played, bringing attention to the unspoken value of women's economic roles. Bullock (1994) explains how gender-and-development (GAD) refines the WID approach to include the social and economic systems that women belong to. The impact of macro policies on women's lives became more evident as developing nations became players in global economies (Douglass, 2012).

In June 2011, the Malaysian Government mandated a 30% target of women representation at senior decision-making and corporate boards by 2016.[26] Beneath the noble intention of eliminating gender segregation/inequality at the workplace, this was also the most ideal way to lure the women population to engage in income-enhancing employment structures. The mothers in this research were asked how they personally felt in their current jobs, with regards to holding 'decision-making' jobs. Many of the mothers felt positively inclined towards the idea of having such jobs.

As a Senior Manager, forty-year-old Vanie did not see her job as anything else apart from being a decision-making position: "I wouldn't even think it's not a decision-making job… I wouldn't want to be in a job where I'm not empowered because I want to make a difference."

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[26]The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development has been given the mandate to prepare potential and qualified women for directorship roles in Malaysian public-listed companies. They aim to do this is through the formed agency NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW), officially launched on 1st July 2006. [http://www.niew.gov.my/background.html]

Some of the women experienced such a positive work experience that the gender issue was not a point of contention at all. Having a job that dealt directly with a Ministry at the national level, forty-nine-year-old Navisha agrees that she is in a decision-making job: "I think I am… I head the department… a lot of things we do impacts the market… to be fair to the men, we don't look at each other as men or women. We look at each other as colleagues".

Thirty-nine-year-old Komala, a manager in an international financial institution, agrees that the decision-making position suits her:

> "It feels good. Definitely…it feels good…we…have a lady CEO who can stand up and say 'this is how I want it to be' and everybody listens. There's no gender difference. It's the person sitting in that seat who tells [you] what needs to be done."

Forty-seven-year-old Kumari's feelings of being empowered make her more sympathetic with her subordinate staff who face similar struggles:

> "I think being in this position where I'm a decision-maker, I empathize a lot more with people with families. I think that is the biggest advantage that you have with somebody with a family like yourself…That's why I got staff that stay with me for fifteen, sixteen years, you know. That's why it's like an extended family [here]."

Malaysia's policy initiative does show signs of being women-friendly. In talking about the globalized woman, Wichterich (2002) comments on women in Malaysia: "The models by which individuals plan and shape their lives are clearly changing. There is greater freedom and opportunity in the tense space between new-industrial and old-patriarchal dominance" (Wichterich, 2002, p. 28). The above-mentioned examples of mothers in this study did have experiences that prove this view true; where in the name of national policy, they enjoyed "the promotion of equality of opportunity" in decision-making (Bullock, 1994, p. 103). Unfortunately, for other working mothers, the 'old-patriarchal dominance' still loomed large over their work experience.

For other mothers, gender differences did play a part in their decision-making experiences. Thirty-nine-year-old Komala explains how some of her peers and friends belonged to companies where the decision making positions were male dominated: "There was a lot of sexist remarks, my friends they tell me… because the top [ranks] are still male-dominated".

Although thirty-eight-year-old Anjali enjoys her decision-making position, however, there are issues of patriarchy to contend with:

> "There is an imbalance in terms of how people do their jobs... there's one person who's not pulling his weight, you know, despite his position… and he's getting very good returns… The rest of us have to put in so much effort… so that really bugs me, [the] inequality part."

Another aspect of the "old-patriarchal dominance" which was evident was discrimination based on hierarchical positions (Wichterich, 2002, p. 28). The 'system' hindered some of the mothers from feeling that they had 'decision-making' roles at the work place. Although holding a relatively senior position in a company of the education industry, forty-one-year-old Selvam has mixed feelings about decision-making: "As an educator… [you have] the influence to empower and change situations when it comes to young people… but when it comes to the system, no, no, I don't think so." Selvam gives an interesting account on how higher management decisions make her feel inferior. She gives the example of how her management had sent the staff a 'fun' email asking them for their wish-list at work:

> "I'm like, 'if you're serious about getting what I want, then you send me a serious mail asking me exactly what I want, which we have already said three times around'… yeah, the system is such… I don't' have much hope with the system, the system always looks at R.O.I. [return on investment] … So, if the system works that way, then I don't think I matter, or what I say matter[s]. It is the calculation that matters."

Some mothers find that working with colleagues who still belonged to the old school of thought a frustrating experience. Forty-three-year-old Sujata says she enjoys the decision-making elements in her job, where as head of a department, the position "makes you be more critical". Yet at the same time, there are other occasions where

> "[As] a government servant, you 'menurut perintah' [follow orders] … After so many years in the service, I think to myself, well, this is why things never get better…basically this is how the system runs. People go on a very impressionistic mode… they feel… this is how it should be and therefore… no thinking is involved."

Forty-five-year-old Harbajan talks about her experience, "You're with somebody who has been there for forty years. They worked their way up…they have never been exposed to any other environment. So when you want to do things in a more open way, that's not really possible."

This unfortunate slowing down of the process is also quoted by forty-nine-year-old Navisha: "Unnecessary things you're asked to do because people need to be updated or need to have an idea or whatever… projects with unrealistic deadlines". She found "managing people" in these categories "stressful". These mothers find the 'system' they work in debilitating; where 'decision-making' is slowed down by adherence to structural impediments.

Another barrier to what could be empowering decision-making experiences is to do with the mothers' ethnicity; being Indian. Thirty-nine-year-old Kalpana's job is assisting the Managing Director, but she "had a lot of problem … because they didn't like that an Indian was [there]." Kalpana adds, "In my head, I must prove to myself because I'm an Indian girl, especially to the Chinese". Forty-four-year-old Saro faces a similar situation, as her clients are mainly Chinese, and being accepted by them was important: "My hair

is very messy, really terrible, so…twice a week must wash…and go out and blow. At least look presentable".

Ethnic differences can also play a part when the mothers hold higher positions. Fifty-year-old Cathy implies that her subordinates, who are from the dominant ethnic group, find it hard to take correction from her: "They're not sincere, cannot work hard. If their time is 8.30am, they will come in 9.15am to work. They still walk in slowly. Scold them also like that…that race is like that la".

Perhaps the instance of ethnic difference that really exposed work-place discrimination is in forty-five-year-old Lakshmi's story. As a professional, being Indian made her lose out to the dominant ethnic group in promotions:

> "My parents never told me that I've to be better than the next person because I'm Indian. But after…I start working, that's when you realize that it really makes a difference, your ethnicity…I was passed over for my first promotion…I would have gotten it maybe a year earlier but because of my ethnicity…My friend who sits with me, if she is going to have that criteria, I'll have to double that. And that is my own realization."

The negative preferential treatment some of the mothers had to face on the basis of ethnicity shows how reality differs from paper-based national narratives. Such instances explain the incongruent reality between policy ideals and actual experience of women holding 'decision-making' positions. Culturally, the women of this research face processes of discrimination from hierarchical restrains of patriarchy (both in gender and in age) and ethnicity. These factors are part of the glass ceiling that obstructs middle-class Indian women from being empowered in their decision-making jobs.

6.6 The 'X' Factor: Private Patriarchy in the Lives of Working Mothers

In the early 1980s, when economic growth and prosperity were contributing to national development, Prime Minister Mahathir started the 'Look East' policy that could guard "national culture"; where "the logic of capitalist industrialization" and "traditional values" could be reconciled (Wichterich, 2002, p. 136). Although middle-class Malay women were implied in the upkeep of these 'traditional values' (Wichterich, 2002), these strains of patriarchy in policy continue to be directly evident in the lives of the middle-class Indian mothers in this research.

During the interview process, the mothers were allowed to 'deviate' from the actual interview questions, and were not interrupted in the course of their answers. This was allowed not only to enable them to fully participate, but also that their somewhat irrelevant answers could be found to have meaning, based on a reflexive approach. In the process of a reflexive analysis, all the seemingly 'out-of-topic' answers were quite telling of what the mothers really felt about work and their identity. The reflexive approach used during the interviews exposed another work-life frustration that many mothers experienced. It was an issue related to the home, and more accurately, to their husbands.

During the interview, forty-year-old Vanie was asked to explain how she manages stress at the workplace. In the process of talking about it, Vanie suddenly makes mention of her husband: "You know what men are like…[he] give[s] me that 'don't worry about it'… He's in a very stressful environment but he can leave it and come home and chill. It does get to me at times". After the mention of her husband, Vanie continues talking about her stress-management at work:

> "This week I've had five presentations and you're presenting to about 500 people… here was pressure, there was stress, the fact that I had to work over the weekend. Every job there's pressure… to perform at work. If the kids are sick and I can't come back… my mother-in-law will take them to the doctor. I'll call the doctor, tell him my son's coming in and what for."

This flow-of-thought shows two aspects of how Vanie views her work-life stress. First, she contrasts her husband's cool and relaxed manner in being able to handle stress, to her own inability. His "don't worry about it" seems to show her how superior he is in stress-management compared to her. "It does get to me at times" shows how Vanie wishes she could express the same calmness her husband does. The second aspect that Vanie's stream-of-consciousness reply exposes is the other responsibility she has to look into: "if the children are sick". Her children's needs are also her preoccupation when she is busy with work. This analysis reveals that Vanie is unaware that the main reason why her husband can maintain his composure when he gets home from work is because he does not have to think about running the home or handling the children. He is free to "come home and chill" because his wife is the one who absorbs the 'invisible' work of running the household while she is at work.

For thirty-eight-year-old Anjali, information about her husband is similarly expressed when she speaks about the challenging aspects of work. Anjali was very excited when she had two opportunities at promotion, but the 'stress' of it was actually the husband:

> "I told my husband about it…you know, all this while, he never really took my career very seriously… [when] things progress for me in this company… he say[s], "okay la it's good" and all of that but if it came to putting my job ahead or putting his work ahead, it will always be his. Mine never, because [he'll say], "tell your boss la you coming late and whatever" … it's not about me keeping my job, you know".

The question on work difficulties reveal the lack of support Anjali receives from her husband: "I don't see that 100%. Again, it's always about him first… then only my job comes… so I used to get very frustrated about that, you know." Anjali's story is an example of private patriarchy that she experienced even with her father. And this impasse affected her at her workplace in other ways:

> "My father has always been the dominant force in my life, you know... But now I've come to a point in my career where I'm the person that makes the difficult

decision and it makes me very uncomfortable sometimes, and my boss knows that".

The 'inner workings' of patriarchy that Anjali experienced as a child, and as a married woman, are still hindering her from moving forward in her decision-making job. From these examples, we see that the downside of work is not so much what happens at the workplace, but more in relation to the mothers' frustration of being held solely responsible for home affairs.

These cases prove that the 'negative' aspect of work is actually a reflection of how the women's working identity is inexorably linked to their domestic identity. Amidst current efforts to encourage Asian employment structures to make it compatible for working mothers, state-led and ethnic-based structures in Malaysia continue to legitimize patriarchal practices in dual-income homes. The ghosts of the private domain could be the bigger nemesis to bring down rather than women-debilitating employment structures. This will be discussed further in the conclusion.

The context of my research is within Asia, where patriarchal structures affect women's involvement with wage work; especially when there is a regional emphasis on a globalizing economy (Mehta, 2005; Quah, 2009). In spite of this, it must be added that patriarchy continues strong in other parts of the world, even in first world nations. Gottfriend (2013) explains how gender segregations, both vertical and horizontal, continue to thrive in Europe and North America.

6.7 The Children's Experiences

6.7.1 The Background

Previous chapters have discussed how the mention of 'children' has often been a construct of adults' opinion. In this chapter, any previous mention of 'children' has been in the context of the mothers' point of view. The normative implication is that the children's experience should encompass a similar belief in priorities or values that the mothers themselves express. This will not be the case in this chapter, as it has not been so in the previous chapters. This section will take into consideration the children's own thoughts and experiences about their mothers' working role. I affirm again Martins' suggestion on how "research on family" should include "the experience of other family members" (Martins, 2011, p. 102).

Although in an introductory manner, this chapter will include the children's voices as equally important to that of their mothers, especially in relation to an inter-generational analysis.

In relation to working mothers, literature has been ubiquitously linked to how children are affected; with most references claiming a negative correlation. This has created the 'feminine dilemma', a construction stemming from the master status of 'bad mother' that working mothers have carried with them over time. Fortunately, there has been much effort that offers a corrective to this distorted view. Literature shows how other factors are far weightier in affecting children instead of mothers' choice to stay home or work outside (Fox & Bruce, 2001; Cheo & Quah, 2005; Kolak & Volling, 2007). Literature that had theorized external inequalities also aid in countering the faulty perception that mothers are bad when they work (DeVault, 1991; Delphy & Leonard, 1992; Nakano Glenn et al, 1994).

As paid employment outside the home has become a permanent feature to contend with in global motherhood, academic discourses now present this feature of working motherhood as a given (Kabeer, 1994; Wichterich, 2002; Douglass, 2012). Currently, macro structures in Asian economies that were once lauded are now seen as causations to the inequalities that exist. The problematization of social, economic and political structures shift the blame away from employed women in dual-income households to the nation's political will (Tsuya & Bumpass, 2004; Quah, 2009; Gottfried, 2013).

This is the context from which the voices of the child participants in this research will be studied. Apart from childhood studies being absolutely new in the nation, this research will also offer an alternative to the regional approach to studies on children that have been seen to concentrate on 'at risk' children or those in 'problem groups' (Beazley et al, 2009). Middle-class Indian children have the opportunity to air their personalized views on working motherhood, and their own choices of career options.

6.7.2 Work or Stay-Home: Children's Preferences

In relation to parents working, the question posed to the children was whether they would like one of their parents to be a stay-home one. The reason that 'mother' was not specified in the question was so that the children could have the space to prefer their father to be the stay-home parent if they wanted.

Some of the children did say they preferred one of their parents to be at home, and not to work, though they did not specify which. When seventeen year-old Michael was asked this, he said yes, he would like that, so that there could be "someone to talk to". Twelve year-old Sharmila also says yes to the question, "because I get to spend more time with

them and we can go out and stuff". Sixteen year-old Jigna gives a comical answer to the flipside of one parent being at home: "I wouldn't be able to study because we'll just talk… it will be very disruptive. During exams, we just sit and talk or lie down with dad and watch TV… such a distraction". Sixteen-year-old Lavinya loves the idea of whichever parent being around: "What I enjoy most [is] just being around people…so I just like being with my family… So even when I'm studying, I'm studying downstairs where my mom is because I just don't like being alone". Fourteen-year-old Pravin likes the idea of a stay-home parent, but the reason is different: "[If] one of my parents at home, then, they can send me anywhere, anytime"! Eleven year-old Kumar specifies that he prefers his father to stay-home rather than his mother: "Father is more fun, mother is more strict"! These comments echo what the children had also said in chapter Five; that they miss spending family time with their parents.

Past academic literature has often considered mothers' decision to work or to stay-home as the pivotal determinant to children's development (Vavrus, 2007). Even from viewing labour with an economic lens, reference to the "marginalization of caring labour" has implicated women's negligence, if they decide to take on paid employment (Barker & Feiner, 2009, p. 41). And yet the above comments by the children prove that the issue at hand is deeper than the preference for one parent to stop working and stay at home; rather, it has to do with the concept of spending time together. Davies (2012) mentions how "the visual dimensions of relationships" speak of the "non-visual sensory dimensions" that are important in children's interaction; like "spending time together" and "sharing in…family activities" (Davies, 2012, p. 8). Although the 'work' and 'stay-home' entities were forwarded to the children through the interview question, the analysis proved that they preferred the interpretation of 'time' and 'family' in their answers. The desire for 'quality'

time at home seemed to be the dominant response that came across, as opposed to a simplistic dichotomy of one parent staying-home or working.

Some of the other responses by the children confirmed further that 'work' or 'stay-home' was not the issue for them. Sixteen-year-old Kiren talks about "pros" and "cons"; saying that it would be "nice" if one parent stays at home, but then again, there would be "no privacy [or] freedom". Fourteen-year-old Pravin also uses "pro and con" in his answer. He mentions how he would like either of his parents to be free to drive him around if they were not working, but he adds the downside to it, "No, as in like…I dunno, like no privacy la, I think they know whatever I'm doing and all…and always they're here". Sixteen year-old Akash also has a mixed response for this question: "Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's ok la".

His hesitancy in replying this question could mean that he cannot find a reason why he would want one parent to stay at home. The pause in his answer also implies that he has probably not considered an alternate arrangement to the current one of both parents working. Fifteen-year-old Gauri clearly indicates that she does not want one parent to stay at home: "No. I need my space". Another fifteen year-old, Varsha, also does not want a stay-home parent: "Because my mom will maybe nag…on my room…or [to] study or something like that. My dad will also nag, or sometimes he will just deprive me [of playing] the iPad. So it's like…never mind, just to go to work."

This longing for privacy is not only mentioned among the adolescent-aged children. Eleven-year-old Shireeni has similar tendencies about a stay-home parent: "I'd love that but sometimes I don't like it because I want to do my own stuff".

The children's comments show that the current arrangement of both parents working is the preferred mode among the majority of them. Although they value time to be together as a family, they also value the space they have where they can be themselves. This confirms the children wanting to develop their own self-identity.

6.7.3 The Children's Views of Their Mothers

The last aspect to be considered is what the children think of their mothers. The children's general view and perception of their working mothers is juxtaposed against their answers to whom they would go to first, if they had a problem to talk about.

There were a few children who could not specify what they liked best about their mothers. Sixteen year-old Kiren says he likes "generally everything" about his mother. Fifteen year-old Gauri says, "I don't know…I just love her".

The other children could be more expressive. For some of the children, their relationship with their mother is more like being with a friend. Fifteen year-old Varsha has high praises for her mother: "She's very open. Like, I can tell her actually, anything… She's strict, but then she's good natured as well". Sixteen year-old Jigna says, "She's like a friend…I can tell her anything without her judging". For twelve year-old Kavita, what she likes best of her mother is "Going shopping together and sharing secrets". Fourteen-year-old Vasantha says, "She's fun to go out with".

For some of the children, their mother is the disciplinarian. And yet, their responses show that they still appreciate their mothers. Eleven-year-old Shireeni says, "She's done a lot of stuff for me…she's wonderful". Sixteen year-old Akash candidly talks about his mother, "She gets angry very fast, but she also cools down very fast. She forgets a lot of

things fast [too]". Twelve-year-old Vinosh is hesitant in his answer to what he liked best about his mother: "I don't know how to say…like when she gives you things to do at home, then when you do it, you know you've done a good job, then she says 'good'".

It is also interesting to note that for most children, their mothers would be the first person they would go to, if they had a problem. Even in some of the households where the mother is the disciplinarian, the children still prefer to go to their mothers. This is the generalized answer from the children, although there are a few children who claim they would rather go to a friend or teacher in school, or to a grandparent. What is also inferred from this data, is that the father figure is generally a 'run-away' one; who could not be approached for solving of personal issues. This aspect is discussed further in the conclusion.

6.7.4 The Children's Individuality

Literature on children in the 'global South' has rarely displayed children "as competent social agents and creators of meaning in their own right" (Beazley et al, 2009, p. 366). This is because in a question-answer setting, normative Asian socialization causes children to prefer 'right' answers rather than thought-processed ones (Wong 2004).[27] This is similar to what was said of children in Ghana, where "they struggled to answer straightforward questions, so desperate were they to make sure the answer they gave pleased…the adult" (Twum-Danso, 2009, p. 387). While the children's responses in this research could have had traces of adult-pleasing tendencies, many responses from the children proved that normative wrong. This is because many of the children gave answers that were 'contrary' to the views of their mothers.

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[27]A Singaporean newspaper article says the same, 'Big push to nurture all-round students', *NST Spore*, page 1, 26.9.13.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital or "distinctive status markers within a culture" could have also played a part in explaining how children raised up in a middle-class environment could benefit from certain cultural norms that gave them confidence (Beazley et al, 2009, p. 375). The children's sense of individuality continues to be evident in the following discussion.

The children are asked whether the profession they want to pursue in the future had anything to do with the profession their parents were in. Twelve year-old Vinosh wants to be a doctor, "same like my father", he says. Seventeen year-old Nathan also wants to follow is father's career: "he's an engineer".

However, this form of emulation is rare among the rest of the children. Sixteen-year-old Kiren could identify why he did not want to follow his parents' footsteps: "No, I don't like teaching". Rather, he was thinking of options like: "There's two, pilot or software/graphic designer". Fourteen-year-old Vasantha says "not really" when asked whether she wants to be an engineer like her father, or a lawyer like her mother: "I want to be a doctor" was her reply. Eleven-year-old Kumar does not want to be a consultant or a manager like his parents; he wants to do his "own thing", which might be becoming a "software engineer". He adds that his parents did not know about this probability; "not just yet". Sixteen-year-old Lavinya also does not consider being a consultant like both her parents are: "I thought of that when I was growing up, but I decided that that wasn't me. So accountancy, that's my [strength]... That's my ambition now, to be a management accountant".

Although the children's views on their career were discussed in chapter Four, it is re-visited here briefly in the light of analysing their desire for agency. Except for a few children, many of them have their own ambitions.

Some are even able to be unsure about their choices, implying a sense of freedom in being able to take their time to decide. By being able to identify what they are personally good at (and variant to either of their parent's occupation in some cases), prove that individual choice and preference are important for these Indian middle-class children.

6.8 Conclusion

6.8.1 The Mothers' Work Lives

In this chapter, the mothers' work experiences within ongoing processes of socio-economic change have been shown to have positive effects on their identity. Apart from allowing these women to enjoy physical mobility, public space involvement has given them an added sense of empowerment. 'Decision-making', the word that alleviates an average middle-class job to one associated with national policy, has made many of the mothers have a sense of cohesiveness in relation to their work identity.

In the course of talking about the aspects of work that they enjoyed the most, there is one observation that is clearly noted in the narration of these women's experiences. In most cases, the most positive aspect of work is related to work flexibility. The mothers value the flexibility at work the most because it gives them the space to accommodate home-based involvement. As analysed in chapter Five, this explains why time-management is crucial in the work-life juggle of middle-class Indian mothers.

Wichterich (2002) talks about the 'tiger economies' of Southeast Asia that are the "miracle of high-growth rates"; caused mainly by women who have "served as the accelerator of economic growth" (2002, p. 2). This explains why Malaysia is ranked fifth in the urbanization scale of Asian economies (Quah, 2009). And yet, beneath this 'miracle', Asian women "find themselves struggling for congruity" (Quah, 2009, p. 124).

In talking about the challenges of paid employment, the working mothers in this research brought up issues of discrimination based on hierarchical patriarchy and ethnicity that seemed to impede their growth as women (Bullock, 1994; Wichterich, 2002). And yet, although the pressures of their working life trajectories are addressed from an external stance, the pressures from their personal and private lives were often the more prominent. Although the mothers have quoted ethnic discrimination and bureaucracy as work-based deficiencies, the one recurring drawback that most mothers mention in their decision-making job pursuits is the lack of support from their husbands. Findings in this research show that it is the patriarchal relations at home that continue to be the main contributor to the 'glass ceiling' that stops women from being empowered in their work identity.

Although the findings in chapter Five suggest that most husbands do not challenge their wives' workplace credibility openly, it is nonetheless evident from a reflexive analysis that many husbands did not support their wives' career advancements the way the wives were hoping they would. The subtle need for the women's husbands to feel superior is best explained through Moghadam's view of power that is evident through "households and their gendered character" (Moghadam, 1994, p. 30). Moghadam (1994) explains how the household tends to be unconsciously omitted from serious discussions about patriarchy and world capitalism. And yet, "it is within the household that the idea of a self is constructed" (1994, p. 33). Gottfried also alludes to male superiority within the

home through reference to the "intimate geography of power" that exists at the "local scale of the household" (Gottfried, 2013, p. 37). It is this notion of power that "informs gender relations" between husbands and wives at home (Gottfried, 2013, p. 37).

Thirty-eight-year-old Anjali mentions how "it will always be his [husband's job] first" when there are any spousal discussions in negotiating time-management for the children's needs. Twelve-year-old Vinosh mentions how his father could be on-call anytime of the day, and the family has to dovetail their life according to this job demand.

In spite of home space often being accepted as 'feminized', husbands continued to display their spatial authority even in this space. Forty-one-year-old Selvam says of her husband, "He will just come back and sit at his TV and we're all like in the room, and he'll possibly behave as if we don't even exist". In such a situation, Selvam tells her children, "Don't ask Appa anything". Forty-year-old Vanie says how her husband can leave the "stressful environment" of his workplace "and come home and chill". These examples expose how these women's husbands' lives can be clearly demarcated between 'work' and 'non-work'. In reality, home space falls into the geography of male power (Gottfried, 2013). For middle-class Indian working mothers, although many hold decision-making jobs, home spaces also spell work, and more so, disempowerment.

Quah confirms how in most Asian countries, "there is no clear evidence of state intervention to introduce or promote family goals" (Quah, 2009, p. 66). A lack of federal child-care, and schooling hours that do not correspond to work schedules, continue to implicate the working mother's role in caring labour. The Malaysian government continues to support visas for foreign domestic worker and work permits for migrant

workers.[28] However, these moves do nothing to solve the problem at the core in households, as patriarchy continues to be perpetuated. As Moghadam says, "it is the state that legislates the existence of households and it is within households that struggles against the state and other collectivities are conducted" (Moghadam, 1994, p. 36).

The Indian middle-class women in this research have shown resilience at their workplace. Many of them have shown commendable work skills, putting in long hours of hard work, which have gained them the flexibility they needed. Their interview responses have evidenced a sense of fulfilment at the workplace, having proven their worth in holding 'decision-making' jobs within gendered work sites. This is a sense of empowerment they have gained. In terms of having an identity within national narratives, these women show much promise. However, a fuller sense of identity eludes them as they struggle to overcome the patriarchal framework at home that shadows their personal lives.

Kabeer's identification of the household as a primary site for gender inequalities remains unchallenged in these women's lives, in spite of a thirty-year societal progress (Kabeer, 1984). In Donner's words, as long as their "individual fulfilment and happiness are inevitably linked to men's roles", these women continue to suffer an empty-shell identity (Donner, 2008, p. 131).

6.8.2 The Children's Lives

The middle-class Indian children in my research have been privileged to follow the trend associated with "developed childhood studies" that focus on "children's agency and

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[28]The Malaysian government supports domestic worker visas and migrant worker work permits, for investment purposes: http://www.mida.gov.my/env3/index.php?page=employment-of-foreign-workers

competence" (Beazley et al, 2009, p. 367). More than ideas 'about' them, these findings showcase their own voices. Conclusions can be made from the main three findings.

Through the first finding, what the children are saying is that they are comfortable with the existing arrangement of their dual-income household. The point of contention for them is not whether one parent should stop working; rather it is whether they could have the time to spend together as a family. This confirms the "normative dimensions of children's conceptualizations of family" (Davies, 2012, p. 9). In spite of that, the children's responses also evidence that they enjoy personal space to be at home on their own, and to be involved in what they wanted. This double-edged finding exhibits the children's ability to negotiate between desired time with family, and a sense of independence that they could enjoy for themselves. Although this trend cannot be typically associated to middle-classness per se, it is obvious that middle-class Indian children do have the liberty to desire self-expression in individuality.

The second important finding is in relation to the children's opinion of their working mothers. The majority of the children make mention that they would approach their mother more than friends or other family members to talk about any problem. For most of them, the mother is still the significant other. This finding is crucial as it refutes older literature that claims that mothers are 'bad' when they take on paid employment. In fact, these findings infer that children end up more wholesome and independent when they come from dual-income households.

From this finding, the 'absent' father figure can also be inferred. Although all households represented are made up of families where both parents live under the same roof, there is no explicit reference of any child preferring to approach the father when in need. There

are households where the mother is the disciplinarian, or where the child finds the father the more 'fun' parent; yet even in these homes, the children prefer to go to their mothers when they need to. Parenting in these Indian middle-class homes is still a maternal affair. This finding continues to refute literature that claims that mothers are 'bad' when they take on paid employment.

The last finding identifies the children's sense of individuality, as with the first. In an older American study on children's well-being, Bretherton and Watson (1990) had researched on children's preference for a career, in relation to that of their parents'. They found that the children's self-appraisals were "strongly linked" to their "perceptions of their parents' strengths and weaknesses"; implying that the children were defined as 'well-adjusted' because they chose career preferences in line with what their parents wished (Bretherton & Watson, 1990, p. 6). In my research, the children are able to articulate their own career choices, while still being 'well-adjusted' within the family. This speaks volumes in terms of the children's ability to exercise independent thought. Even as international research has begun to refute perceived notions that children from the Global South are passive (Beazley et al, 2009), this research confirms that Asian children, in the form of middle-class Indian children of Malaysia, are able to claim space and negotiate their identity as individuals.

The research participants' experience with decision-making employment in chapter Six brings the discussion of Indian middle-class mothers' and children's lives to a close. Through these three chapters, part of their story is now recorded for the first time in middle-class narratives in Malaysia. The next chapter will bring a conclusion to the discussion of their lived reality.

CHAPTER 7: THE CONCLUSION

The working mother – "the point of connection between home and the world…pulled in two directions, responding and adjusting both to internal family dynamics and also to the world outside".

(De Vault,,1991, p. 76)

"A critical analysis of motherhood highlights how ideas of the self…[and] of women's roles…are related to a history of the present".

(Donner, 2008, p. 62)

7.1 The Thesis in Review

In Papanek's (1994) discussion of how identity is socially constructed, she mentions how group worldviews combine to make up the conception of the "ideal" person (Papanek 1994: 42). In this thesis, within the context of desired 'ideal'ness, as defined by the broader framework of the Malaysian society and the narrower mores dictated by being an ethnic minority, we have glimpses into the lives of middle-class Indian mothers and their children. Throughout the thesis I have shown that mothers and their children actively engage with, negotiate, and embrace both universal and local markers of middle-classness. These individuals' involvement with education, time-based lifestyles, and public employment reveal this.

7.2 Discussion on Education

In chapter Four, we see that middle-class Indian mothers in Malaysia have a priority to draw on higher levels of education to establish middle-classness. Fifty-two-year-old

Veera's father had said to her, "We came as an educated group…we were holding big positions".

Drawing on Donner's views, it can be said that "educational achievement" is an "ideology" (Donner, 2008, p. 124) that is perpetuated amidst the middle-class Indian community in Malaysia. The research participants' parents ensured that their daughters took an educational route that would secure their future. The findings show that it was more the fathers' role than the mothers' that helped shape the educational direction that the participants took in their girlhood experiences. However, in their adult lives, it is they, and not their husbands, who play a greater role in their children's lives. I understand this to be a reversal of gendered parenting roles in education over the two generations. This can be read as education moving towards the realm of mothering and duties around mothers, and away from an area of expertise once possessed by patriarchal heads of the family.

Many years ago, Aline Wong had identified how it was the "working women" among the Singaporean Chinese who had to come up with solutions for their "children's education" (Wong, 1976, p. 30). Almost forty years later in the same region, but in a different ethnic group, research shows a similar finding: how middle-class Indian mothers in Malaysia are also finding solutions for their children's educational needs. As other Asian research on modern motherhood has shown (Donner, 2008; Yeoh & Huang, 2010), mothers today not only take on paid employment, but also the role of being sole educators to their children. The relinquishing of responsibility by the children's fathers to the mothers demonstrates the patriarchal space of dominance men enjoy within their households. By further relegating their responsibility in the private sphere, and relying on the expertise

of their highly educated wives, on matters pertaining to their children's education, the working women's competence is demonstrated.

The concept of kinship also reveals how the extended family is still very important to the families represented in this research. Many grandparents take care of the grandchildren while their mothers are at work. By providing shelter, food, transport from school, and supervision in their grandchildren's schedule before and after school, these grandparents provide the space and opportunity for their daughters and daughters-in-law to continue full-time employment. They fill the existing gap that the government has created when they fail to provide for parental support for dual-income households, including adequate and affordable childcare.

Seen with a broader perspective, this 'strategy' enables middle-class Indian families to sustain the middle-class trait of prioritising education for their children. This evidences how kinscript is practised among middle-class Indians. Middle-class Indian women can continue working, and their children can continue having their school-related schedules met. This pattern also proves how cultural capital continues to be perpetuated among middle-class Indian households in their educational attainment. The idealized priority of education continues to shape these inter-generational family relationships. Bourdieu (1993) had explained how consequent generations benefit from "the laws governing the hereditary transmission of cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 154). This is seen in the context of this research. Indian middle-class families in Malaysia are enabled to sustain their kinscript of educational advantage.

The middle-class Indian children in this research fall into the category of what De Castro calls "conservative participation" (De Castro, 2012, p. 57). The meaning of this is found

in children's normative participation around the world; in school, and with education: "to attend classes, to be attentive during classes, to study and do the homework" is part of their normative experience (De Castro, 2012, p. 57). The Indian middle-class children in this research conform to those similar lifestyle patterns that prioritize schooling, homework, tuition, and extra-curricular activities. Spontaneous play is something that these children hardly enjoy. However, there are small indications of agency that the children reveal. For example, there are occasions where homework is done hurriedly, or with friends, so that there is also time to relax. Although the children comply to the normative lifestyle pattern in the domain of education, there are traces of agency when the children dare to prefer a career option not in line with their parents' wishes. The cultural capital that the middle-class has afforded them enables them the confidence not only to express their views, but to offer views that are contrary to that of the key educators' (their mothers). These traces of participation and agency are class-based privileged space.

7.3 Discussion on Time and Leisure

Recent official findings advocate "making time-use more equal between the sexes" (ILO, 2012, p.20), but this is still absent in the lives of Indian middle-class mothers in Malaysia. The findings of chapter five, which reviews time issues and for mothers and children, merely compound the tightness of time-management felt by the working mothers.

Findings reveal that most of the research participants spend their non-work time to look into their children's education. Daily time-management decisions involving what time to leave for work in the morning, or what time to leave the office to reach home in the evening, still revolves around the children's educational schedules. Chapter five reveals

how the mothers dovetail all of their non-work and in-between work times to suit their children's schooling or tuition times.

Whether with the help of live-in domestic help or not, data gained from the daily clock research tool proves that most mothers run the home regimentally. "The gender dimension of householding" reveals the fixedness of the mothers' time schedule (Douglass, 2012, p.4). In line with other research on Asian middle-class families, Indian middle-class families in Malaysia also prove how "discretionary mothering" practices are tied securely to their children's educational futures (Yeoh & Huang, 2010, p.37). Unfortunately, what compounds the burden of these women's mothering role is their experience in segregated conjugal roles. Their husbands play a minimal role at home, both with house chores and with meeting the children's needs. Ehrenreich and English (1994) explain how "changing diapers and picking up socks" are not "hormonally programmed" women's work (1994, p. 143); rather, "child-raising is a social undertaking" and therefore, something that can and should include "fathers" (1994, p. 143-144, italics theirs). In spite of a lack of joint childcare by both spouses, the mothers continue to ensure that the home schedules continue to run clock-work. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the trait of middle-class mothering is sustained.

Time-based findings on leisure also reveal that only a few households follow the normative middle-class trend of going away for holidays by themselves as nuclear families (Singh, 2011). As for most middle-class Indian households in this research, spending holidays with wider kin members is more important. In this sense, it is obvious that kinship ties are still integral to these middle-class Indians.

As for the children, the chapter on time reveals what the chapter on education had already shown: a preoccupation with school and education. The interview questions based on the daily-clock research tool shows how the children's lives are filled with school-related activities. Findings reveal how the children 'steal' time to play games, either indoors or outdoors. There are occasions where homework is done hurriedly, or with friends, so that there is also time to relax. These instances are indicators that the children desire to break out of the stressful routine of school-based activities.

Although many of the children show that their daily experience of life in a dual-income household is normative, findings show that simple family occasions, like going to the park, or going out for a meal are indicated as preferred times with the family. This indicates how these middle-class children's urban lifestyle of lacking spontaneous play and time with the family is similar to other modern societies in the world (Skar & Krogh, 2009; Davies, 2012).

7.4 Discussion on the Mothers' Employment

Current literature continues to expose "the persistence of gender segregation" in "patterns of work and employment" around the world (Gottfried, 2013, p.43). The findings of chapter six confirm this.

Most of the women in this research are employed in 'decision-making' jobs; the phrase used in national narratives to depict jobs that are perceived as empowering, and status-enhancing. As far as the concept of "geography of power" is concerned, women are now able to share employment "spaces" that were normatively masculine in the past (Gottfried, 2013, p. 37). While this may be a point of celebration, findings show that even decision-making jobs continue to contain elements of inequality. The findings from

chapter six show how Indian middle-class working mothers find older, patriarchal systems still at work in their office experience. The 'glass ceiling' also exists in variations of ethnic discrimination, where the mothers' advancement in their career is hindered due to their ethnicity. As foretold by Wichterich (2002) more than a decade ago, although 'decision-making' is part of "world market integration", it does not guarantee "women's advancement" (Wichterich, 2002, p. 28).

And yet, these forms of inequality are not the main for the participants of this research. The worse type of inequality that the women face stems from the gendered relationships they have at home. During the interview process, some of the mothers' responses deviate from work-based issues to difficulties of time-management faced at home. The unspoken pressure is due to feeling alone in the course of running the home, and especially of looking into the children's education. Public attitudes towards women in dual-income households may have improved, but for the women in this research, their workload is even more intensified than women who are home-makers in husband-as-breadwinner homes. Being middle-class and lacking shared conjugal relationships in dual-income household arrangements leave much to be desired for the research participants (Quah, 2009; Gottfried, 2013).

Findings showcase that the children want more than just a parent to stay-home. Their comments reveal that they really desire for more quality time spent as a family (Davies, 2012). And yet, many children actually indicate relief that both parents were working, which can be interpreted as their desire for space and privacy. This latter response is not only made by the older children (aged 14-17 years), but by the younger ones as well (aged 10-13 years). The ambivalence in the children's responses echo the normative emotional

and psychological nuances of adolescents, where dependence and independence are desired simultaneously (Atal, 2005).

The children also have interesting responses to make in connection with their working mothers. Most of the children indicate that their mothers would be the first person they would go to, if they faced a problem. This is even the case in the homes where the mother is the disciplinarian instead of the father. These answers reveal two important factors: that the 'bad' working mother narrative is proven wrong, and that the 'absent' father figure continues to exist. This confirms findings of the previous two chapters that reveal the fathers' limited role in the lives of the children's education, and in most of their leisure times.

7.5 Overview

The research findings in this thesis showcase an attempt by Indian middle-class working mothers to challenge steeped patriarchal practices over generations. They have gained ground in negotiating gendered space in education, time-use, and work life. However, points of contention remain. National narratives that claim women empowerment and 'gender equity' can be a mere conceptual "rhetoric" that is "co-opted to serve goals that is antithetical to feminism" (Barker & Feiner, 2009, p. 44). The reality of spousal relationships within the household, or what is termed "inside the black box" is another (Douglass, 2012, p. 7). These areas continue to be the stumbling block to the empowerment of middle-class Indian women.

Just as these women used cultural capital, for example, to enable themselves to consider career paths that were not gender normative in Malaysia, they have to deconstruct the limitations set on them. Findings show that these women have succeeded in sustaining

middle-classness for themselves and their children. While this is an achievement, the women need to understand that a middle-class identity can be a "space for both accommodation and resistance" (Barker & Feiner, 2009, p. 44). Donner (2008) elaborates on this aspect when she relates to how "conditions" and "practice" can be "both subordinating and providing the conditions of agency" (Donner, 2008, p. 177). In other words, the women need to realise that the ground which helped them exercise agency can be the very ground that causes them a re-subjugation.

The introductory inclusion of children as research participants in this research fills a gap in recording children's voices in studies on families in this region (Martins, 2011). From the perspective of a larger platform, Asian academic narratives thus far have portrayed children as passive victims of adult interventions (Beazley et al, 2009). The children's voices in this research will challenge that stereotypical portrayal. The children's views are also juxtaposed against their mothers' responses, within the thematic 'patterns' evidenced by the findings chapters. This aspect adds richness to this research, as some of the children's views question, contradict, or illumine a different angle than what their mothers had expressed. Although not analysed with depth, the children's counter-opinions shed new light to Indian middle-class inter-generational relationships within the domestic space.

The responses of the research children also reveal how the younger generation is more familiar with postmodern concepts like "difference" and "ambiguity" (Swingewood, 2000, p. 223). Some of the children's responses that seemed to contradict their mothers' values are only an indication of how a different set of values seems to motivate this generation (Unicef Report on Adolescence, 2011). In this research, middle-class Indian

children's identities do display "opportunity" and "potential". These characteristics are pivotal in the lives of "the emerging generation" (Unicef Report, 2011, p. 1, 2).

From a global perspective, the agency practiced by some of the children follow notions of "universal entitlements" more than "particularistic preferences" (Papanek, 1994, p. 44). In other words, these children's notions of 'freedom' and 'individuality' are more in sync with globalized ideals, and have little to do with ideals propagated by the society they live in (Arnett, 2005). Their responses indicating their preference for space and privacy at home depict how important a personalized construction of identity is. Although middle-class Indian children value time with family members, their preoccupation with individualistic concerns reveal an inner disposition that prioritize their personalized personhood above external expectations placed on them. The children do not depict the need to present a united front to others, as their mothers had (Atal, 2005). Although the children do refer to various forms of subtle discrimination which they face in school, they do not lament of any lack of ethnic cohesion that they experienced. They are more interested to talk about what they like and what they want in the future. Using a reflexive analysis, I find these aspects depicting agency.

7.6 Implications of the Study

Studying the lives of middle-class Indian women in Malaysia has been pivotal in giving a deeper understanding to narratives that seek to explore the lived realities of ethnic-based and class-based demography in modernizing Malaysia. The effect of globalization is currently a phenomenon that is faced by all nations, and State-led policies attempt to maximize the consequences of globalization. This study has contributed in displaying how macro, structural decisions affect the lives of individuals within a particular strata of society.

Studying the lives of children is also significant, as young people's views are rarely taken into consideration, even in research about them. The existing gap in child-based research is addressed by this research.

Using a gendered lens as a theoretical frame has enabled me to analyse the narratives through a gender-sensitive approach. How women deal with specificities may defer from how men deal with them. Through participation, and reflexivity, this study contributes to research practices that seek to adhere to key elements in qualitative research methodology. This is necessary in producing findings that are rich and authentic.

This study contributes to schools of thought that deal with gender and age, as well as identity. The nuances of ethnicity, class, and national policy add richness to qualitative research.

7.7 Limitations of the Study

Although the research experience was a rewarding one, there were limitations faced.

    (a)   Practically, some mothers turned down the offer to be interviewed due to personal constrains. These women could have given meaningful contributions to the study based on their occupational status or their home experience.

    (b)   As for the interviews with the children, some of them had no experience speaking with an adult stranger they had not known previously. Shyness, the lack of familiarity with the interview setting, the inability to find the right words, and the unconscious ontology to provide the correct answer were some of the inhibitions I observed, in the children relating their experiences.

(c)   The fieldwork had to be streamlined to glean certain thematic answers only. Whereas, the study of identity with all possible nuances is tremendously broad-based and attempting to encapsulate participants' lived experience into a few topics was a challenging feat. For example, the word 'Indian' has been used to generalize the 'type' of the community. In reality, the existing sub-ethnic components could have played a part in the participants' understanding of their identity, whereas the research did not have the scope to take this aspect into consideration.

7.8 Concluding Statements

'Indian middle-classness' as an identity, was created by the diasporic generation of Indians who came from India. Having secure 'middle-class' jobs and comfortable lifestyles made this group of people aim at sustaining their position for the future generations. The quotidian lifestyle of the mothers and children in this research is proof of that, as they are preoccupied with education, time-management, and work-life; all middle-class concerns. As middle-class Indian women continue to be recruited as decision-making labour power in urban, capitalist Malaysia, they form the rising rates of dual-income households; thus fulfilling national narratives. And yet, the tension lies in how these women and children have remained muted and invisible in national narratives; in spite of their middle-class status. Although relative in significance, the record of their voices in this thesis is an initiative of inclusion in gendered and class-based academic narratives.

Indian middle-class mothers have exercised "agentic engagements" in gaining gendered spaces on many levels (Baker, 2012, p. 342). And they have successfully been able to sustain middle-classness. However, patriarchal strains within the 'black box' of

household relationships remains the proverbial skeleton in the closet that still exists (Douglass, 2012). Together with patriarchy represented by ethnic and structural constrains, Indian women (and children) need to get past current impasses.

The seeds of gaining empowerment begin with inner realization. It is my hope that this group of women and children be able to defy the generational constrains that have kept them 'invisible' from public narratives. They need to continuously 'create a space' of practised agency so that their identity can have a trajectory that takes them beyond the existing boundaries of their current "middle-class imaginations" (Donner, 2008, p.176).

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS PRESENTED

PUBLICATIONS

1. (Pending). Talking Back to National Narratives: Discussing Anti-Normative Patterns of the Asian Ageing Experience Through the Lives of Educated Indian Women in Malaysia. In *Growing Up, Growing Old: Times and Seasons, vol.2*. Oxfordshire, UK: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

2. (2015). Battling with ourselves: Exploring how far Indian middle-class working mothers in Malaysia are able to negotiate gendered spaces. *Asian Women,* vol.31, no.2.

3. (2012). Which nation do I belong to? How middle-class Indian women in Malaysia negotiate diasporic identity and local nation-building. In *Border Terrains: World Diasporas in the 21ˢᵗ Century*. Oxfordshire, UK: Inter-Disciplinary Press.

PRESENTATIONS

1. 6 May 2016: 'Talking Back to National Narratives: Discussing Anti-Normative Patterns of the Asian Ageing Experience Through the Lives of Educated Indian Women in Malaysia'. *The 2nd Global Conference on Growing Up, Growing Old: Times and Seasons. Prague, The Czech Republic.*

2. 24 June 2015: 'Undoing Past Silences: Exploring national identity in the lives of employed mothers and their children among middle-class Indians in Malaysia'. *10th Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies, Asian Research Institute National University of Singapore. Singapore.*

3. 25 September 2013: 'If you want Development, you need Superheroes!'. *The Euraxess Science Slam ASEAN Competition 2013, Singapore.*

4. 12-14 July 2011: 'National Agenda in Women's Magazines: Exploring the link between government policy and the representation of working mothers in popular print media'. *International Conference on Malaysia-Indonesia Relations V (PAHMI V), University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.*

5. 4-6 July 2011: 'Which nation do I belong to? How middle-class Indian women in Malaysia negotiate diasporic identity and local nation building'. *The 4th Global Conference on Diasporas: Exploring Critical Issues, Oxford University, United Kingdom*

APPENDIX A: RESEARCHER'S LETTER OF VALIDATION
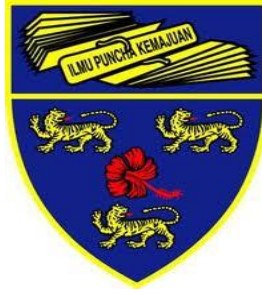
Sally Anne Malar Param (University of Malaya ID: AHA 100016) is currently doing her PhD research at the Gender Studies Department, of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Her research involves being in touch with Indian working mothers in the Klang Valley.

I,
_____
_____ hereby agree to be part of this research on a voluntary basis.
I am also assured that my name is withheld from all documented findings, and that all data collected is only to be used for research purposes.

……………………………………………….
(signature)
DATE:

APPENDIX C: STANDARD OBSERVATION SHEET

STANDARD OBSERVATION SHEET

RESEARCHER: SALLY ANNE MALAR PARAM / UNI. MALAYA

DATE OF SESSION:
TIME OF SESSION:

RESEARCH TOOLS USED:

DATA SEQUENCE:

PLACE OF DATA COLLECTION:

WHAT FACTORS MAY HAVE INFLUENCED THE COLLECTION OF DATA DURING THIS SESSION?

RESEARCHER:

ADULT / CHILD:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLACE WHERE DATA WAS COLLECTED :
(INCLUDE WEATHER)

INTERRUPTIONS / DISTRACTIONS:

OTHER COMMENTS:

RESEARCH INTERVIEW: Questions for Mothers

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION	DETAILED RESEARCH QUESTION	METHOD
0. Explain research		CONSENT FORM
1. What are the impacts of ethnic identity on the mothers' lives?	. When you were growing up, was being 'Indian' part of your ascribed identity? Any reference to relatives in India? . Was your behavior / performance in school compared to siblings / cousins / friends? . In your teens/early adulthood, were u made aware of the socio-economic importance (the 'middle-class' phenomenon) through family, relatives? Eg. in pursuing a particular degree, in securing a particular job.	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
2. How do mothers value their decision to work?	. Why did the mothers choose to work? Were their choices to work influenced by their parents / husbands? . Do the mothers get a sense of personal achievement by working? . What aspect of work do they enjoy? . What aspect of work do they dislike? . Do they see themselves as holding a decision-making job? . Do they see themselves as part of intended national statistics to put more women in decision-making jobs?	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
3. How do these MOTHERS manage time at home?	. How long does it take you to commute to /from work? . How is housework / rest of errands done? Do you have any help? . How are the children's activities looked into? . How do the mothers (and fathers) spend time with their children? . Do you have time for leisure? Is there a 'me-time'? . How do you manage stress?	SEMI-STUCTURED INTERVIEW and the DAILY CLOCK CHART
4. What are the women's experiences as mothers?	. Was having children (experiencing motherhood) a natural / straight away decision? . What are your struggles of being a 'good' mother? . What is their idea of planning for the 'children's future'?	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

RESEARCH INTERVIEW: Questions for Children

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION	DETAILED RESEARCH QUESTIONS	METHOD
1. What are the impacts of schooling on children's lives?	What's your favourite subject? - Do you like your teachers? - Who's your favourite teacher? Why? - Which teacher do u dislike? Why? - If you have a serious problem, would you go to any one in school?	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
2. Tell me about their family	- How many people are there? - What do you enjoy doing as a family? Why? How often does that happen? - Who do you enjoy talking to the most in your family? - If you have a serious problem, is there one person in particular that you would go to, in the family?	SEMI-STUCTURED INTERVIEW
3. How do the children feel about being at home?	- Which is your favourite place in the home? (Why?) - What are your hobbies? - Do you have chores to do at home? How often / or who does them for you? - When/where do you do your homework? Does anyone help you?	SEMI-STUCTURED INTERVIEW
4. How do the children feel about their mother's working role?	- What does your father do at work? - What does your mother do at work? How do you feel about this? - How would u feel if mum or dad stayed at home full time? Why?	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
5. What are your dreams for the future?	- Do you like to pursue either of your parents' careers? Why? - What do you want to be when you grow up? Why? - How do your parents feel about this?	SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Daily Clock
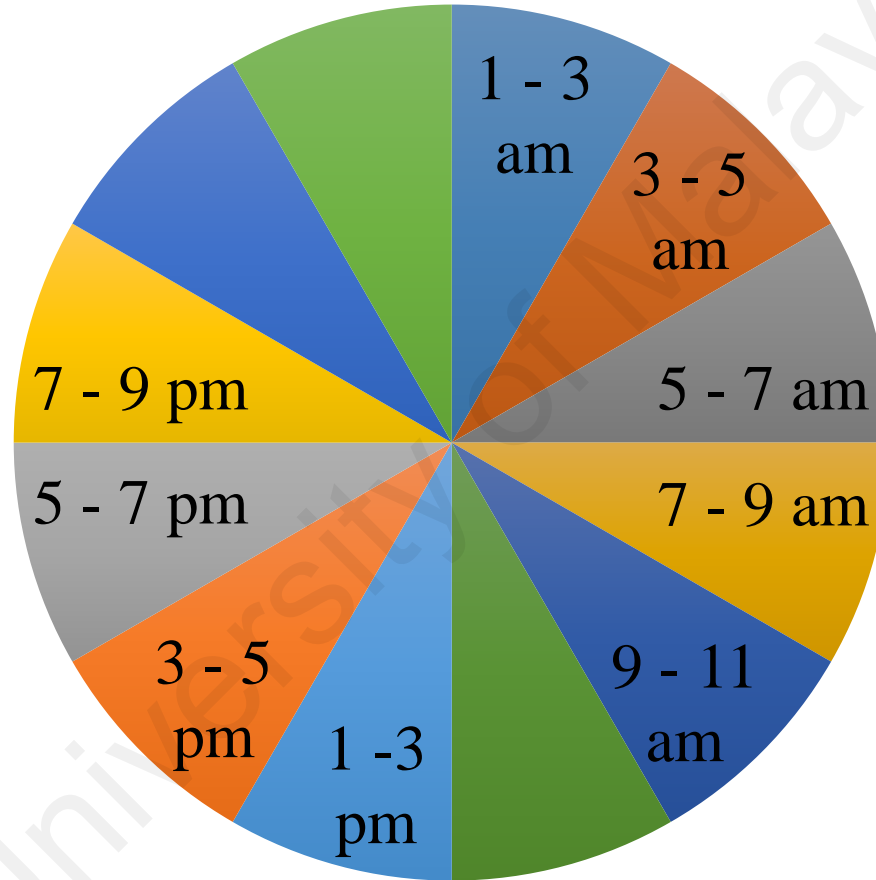
	Pseud	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	No. of Siblings	Age	Education	Job Description	Husband's Job	Religion	No. of Children
M001	Sheena	Nurse	Technician (JKR)	4 (3rd Child)	44	UPM (MBA)(Local)	Assoc. Dean	Lecturer	Hindu	3/eldest (boy)
M002	Sujata	Housewife	Head (Teachers Training College)	3 (1st Child)	43	UPM (1,2), UKM (PhD)	Senior Lecturer	Medical Surgeon (Neurosurgery)	HIndu	3
M003	Mary	Nurse	Engineer	4 (1st Child-grandparents)	44	Masters, India	Deputy Principal	Engineer	Christian	2/older(boy)
M004	Veera	Housewife	Police Officer	3 (1st Child)	52	UM(BA), UK(MEd)	Senior Lecturer	Consultant (Educ. Line)	Hindu	3
M005	Komala	Housewife	Broadcaster (RTM)	7 (3rd Child)	39	UKM(BBA)	HR Manager	IT Consultant	Hindu	2/older (boy)
M006	Selvam	Teacher (Primary School)	Executive Officer (Min. Of Health)	3 (2nd Child)	41	UM(MeSL)	Senior Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	HIndu	2/older(girl)
M007	Anjali	Clerk (Telekom)	Manager (Telekom)	1	38	Masters	Head of Marketing	Lawyer (Own Company)	Hindu	3
M008	Hannah	Home-maker	Lorry Driver	6 (1st Child)	37	STPM (did not pass)	Pre School Teacher	Lecturer	Christian	4
M009	Devi	Housewife	TNB Meter Reader	7 (7th Childl)	44	STPM	Senior Accts Officer (MAS)	Operations Manager (Pacific World)	Hindu	2/Older(boy)
M010	Mahesh	Housewife	Barber	6 (4th Child)	47	SPM	Operations Officer (Affinbank)	Businessman(Private)	Hindu	2
M011	Kumari	Govt. School Teacher-Housewife	Storekeeper (TNB)	4 (4th Child)	47	UM(Masters)	Environment Consultant	Consultant (Private)	Hindu	2
M012	Neeta	Housewife	Hospital Asst. (Singapore)	9 (8th Child)	50	MBA	Senior Lecturer	Executive (Federal Auto)	Hindu	3
M013	Shirani	Housewife	Supervisor (Private Co.)	9 (8th Child)	49	SPM	Pre School Teacher	Businessman(Private)	Christian	3/middle(boy)
M014	Mathi	Housewife	Food Stall Operator	4 (4th Child)	46	University Of London (Twinning)	Lawyer	Engineer	Christian	2
M015	Ramni	Housewife	Chief Accountant(ICI)	4 (1st Child)	49	STPM (Teachers' Training College)	Teacher (Govt. School)	Insurance Agent (Unit Manager)	Hindu	3
M016	Letchumi	Housewife	Railway Guard	4 (3rd Child)	45	UPM(MBA)	Lecturer	Businessman	HIndu	1

APPENDIX G
Mothers' Excel Sheet Data

M0 17	Annab elle	Housewife	Teacher (Govt School)	4 (1st Child)	49	Form 6 (Teahers' Training)	Teacher (Govt. School, Assunta)	Electrical Engineer	Christi an	3
M0 18	Prema	Teacher (Govt. School)	Property Manager (Private)	3 (1st Child)	39	Uni. Tech. Sydney	Business Owner(with partner)	Lawyer	Christi an	2
M0 19	Saro	KIndergarten Teacher	Construction (High Post)	3 (2nd Child)	44	SPM	KIndergarten Teacher	Risk Manager	Hindu	2
M0 20	Pamela	Housewife	Stenographer (Min. Of Defence)	4 (1st Child)	51	SPM	Admin Executive	Supervisor(Non-Academic line)	Christi an	3/youngest(girl)
M0 21	Navish a	Teacher-Homemaker	Scientist (Rubber Inst. Research)	4 (3rd Child)	49	Degree	HOD	Finance Director	Hindu	3/eldest(girl)
M0 22	Vanie	Artist	Educ (World Bank)	3 (3rd Child)	40	Uni College London, Imperial	HR Senior Manager, Ambank	Chartered Engineer	Hindu	2/older (boy)
M0 23	Karish ma	Used to help husband	Businessman(Properties Investment)	2 (1st Child)	39	India(Basic Degree-Arts)	HOD(Malvern International College)	Businessman	Hindu	2
M0 24	Shalini	Housewife	Tax Consultant	2 (1st Child)	42	Monash (Psychology)	Sculpture and Restaurant owner	Textile Industry	Hindu	3/middle(gi rl)
M0 25	Cathy	Staff Nurse(govt)	Hospital Asst. (Private)	2 (2nd child)	50	Manipal	Medical Doctor	Dentist	Christi an	3/middle(bo y)
M0 26	Harbaj an	Nursing	Govt. School Teacher	3 (1st Child)	45	Degree	Lawyer	IT Consultant (Partnership)	Sikhis m	2
M0 27	kalpan a	Teacher (Govt. School)	Teacher (Govt. School	4 (1st Child)	39	SPM	Personal Assistant	Sales	Christi an	2/older(girl)
M0 28	Pushpa	Housewife	Civil Engineer(Govt.)	3 (1st Child)	45	Degree	Legal Counsel	Architect	Hindu	2/older(girl)
M0 29	Darsha na	Housewife	Supervisor DBKL	5 (3rd Child)	51	SPM	Admin Asst.(Medical Co. Supplier)	Bank Exec.	Hindu	2/older(girl)
M0 30	Laksh mi	School Teacher(Govt, Secondary)	Chief Clerk	2 (1st Child)	45	MBBS	Radiologist Doc/Assoc. Prof	Gynae	N/A	2/older(girl)

APPENDIX H
Children's Excel Sheet Data

	Pseud	Age	Gender	No. of Siblings	Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Education	Type	Religion
C001	Kiren	16	Male	3/eldest	Assoc. Dean	Lecturer	Form 4	Government	Hindu
C002	Vinosh	12	Male	3/eldest	Senior Lecturer	Medical Surgeon (Neurosurgery)	Primary 6	Government	HIndu
C003	Nathan	17	Male	2/older	Deputy Principal	Engineer		Private	Christian
C004	Akash	16	Male	3/youngest	Senior Lecturer	Consultant (Educ. Line)	Form 4	Government	Hindu
C005	Kumar	11	Male	2/older	HR Manager	IT Consultant	Primary 5	Government	Hindu
C006	Divya	10	Female	2/older	Senior Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Primary 4	Government	HIndu
C007	Navina	11	Female	3	Head Of Marketing	Lawyer (Own Company)	Primary 5	Government	Hindu
C008	Priya	14	Female	4	Pre School Teacher	Lecturer	Form 2	Government	Christian
C009	Pravin	14	Male	2/Older	Senior Accts Officer (MAS)	Operations Manager (Pacific World)	Form 2	Government	Hindu
C010	Kavita	12	Female	2	Operations Officer (Affinbank)	Businessman(Private)	Primary 6	Government	Hindu
C011	Lavinya	16	Female	2	Environment Consultant	Consultant (Private)	Form 4	Government	Hindu
C012	Narein	12	Male	3	Senior Lecturer	Executive(Federal Auto)	Primary 6	Government	Hindu
C013	Andrew	17	Male	3/middle	Pre School Teacher	Businessman(Private)	Form 5	Government	Christian
C014	Vasantha	14	Female	2	Lawyer	Engineer	Form 2	Government	Christian
C015	Varsha	15	Female	3	Teacher (Govt. School)	Insurance Agent (Unit Manager)	Form 3	Government	Hindu
C016	Krishnan	11	Male	1	Lecturer	Businessman		Private	HIndu
C017	Evelyn	13	Female	3	Teacher (Govt. School, Assunta)	Electrical Engineer		Private	Christian
C018	Jacob	9	Male	2	Business Owner(with partner)	Lawyer		Private	Christian
C019	Kiresh	13	Male	2	KIndergarten Teacher	Risk Manager	Form 1	Government	Hindu
C020	Michael	17	Male	3	Admin Executive	Supervisor(Non-Academic line)	Form 5	priv/gov_syllb.	Christian

Children's Excel Sheet Data

C021	Geetha	17	Female	3/eldest	HOD	Finance Director	Form 5	Private	Hindu
C022	Sathia	12	Male	2/older	HR Senior Manager, Ambank	Chartered Engineer		Private	Hindu
C023	Shantini	13	Female	2	HOD(Malvern International College)	Businessman		Private	Hindu
C024	Jigna	16	Female	3/middle	Sculpture and Restaurant owner	Textile Industry		Private	Hindu
C025	Judah	16	Male	3/middle	Medical Doctor	Dentist	Form 4	priv/gov_syllb.	Christian
C026	Simran	14	Female	2	Lawyer	IT Consultant (Partnership)		Private	Sikhism
C027	Shireeni	11	Female	2/older	Personal Assistant	Sales	Primary 5	Government	Christian
C028	Sharmila	12	Female	2/older	Legal Counsel	Architect		Private	Hindu
C029	Chitra	17	Female	2/older	Admin Asst.(Medical Co. Supplier)	Bank Exec.		Private	Hindu
C030	Gauri	15	Female	2/older	Radiologist Doc/Assoc. Prof	Gynae	Form 3	Government	N/A