Raising Global Families: Parenting, Immigration, and Class in Taiwan and the US

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Introduction: Anxious Parents in Global Times

In her controversial best seller *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, Amy Chua, who was born and raised in the United States, used the label "Chinese mother" to describe her style of strict parenting in contrast to softer "Western" parenting.[1] Published in early 2011, soon after the financial crisis hit American economy, *Battle Hymn* and the media sensation around it stirred both the American middle class's shattered sense of economic security and increasing anxiety about China's rise to global superpower. For instance, the *Wall Street Journal* published an abbreviated account of Chua's book with the title "Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior." A 2011 *Time* article asked, "Chua has set a whole nation of parents to wondering: Are we the losers she's talking about?"[2] The book's cover delivered an unmistakable reference to Chinese culture, with the title presented to resemble a red-inked woodblock stamp with the Chinese characters for "tiger mom" at the center in a stylized archaic script.

Ironically, when marketing a translated version of the book in China, the publisher "Americanized" the title and cover.[3] The Chinese title became *The Ways I Mother in the US: Childrearing Advice from a Yale Law Professor*, and the cover bore a picture of a smiling Chua standing before a US flag. Although Chua labeled herself a "Chinese mother," she nevertheless became an "American mother" once the book traveled to China. The book was promoted as a parenting guide from an expert whose credibility was based on her teaching position at an Ivy

League university. It was only one among many translated childrearing guides from Western experts filling bookstores in China and Taiwan, where anxious parents are hungry for the knowledge deemed essential for raising a modern child in a global world.

The figure of the "tiger mom" frequently appeared in my conversations with ethnic Chinese parents in Taiwan and the United States. Many recalled growing up with or having heard of a strict Chinese mother who placed high demands on her children. However, for many of them, "tiger mothering" was not a cultural heritage to embrace but an archaic tradition to discard. Take, for example, Janice Chan, a fortysomething Taiwanese mother living in Taipei who was a human resources manager and now is a dedicated full-time mother and an avid reader of parenting guides and magazines. With a passion for innovative ideas and educational tools, Janice is determined to jettison the traditions of rote learning and strict parenting. She considers Western education an ideal pathway for her children to attain holistic development and to secure a niche in the global creative economy.

Every other year, Janice provides her two sons with a slice of the American middle-class childhood by enrolling them in summer camp in California. They stay in the spacious two-story house of her cousin who works in Silicon Valley as an engineer. On a recent trip, Janice was surprised when the cousin's wife asked her to bring over Taiwanese textbooks on math and physics. Yet this request was not unusual among Taiwanese immigrant parents to the United States. Just as Janice took her children to the United States for enrichment, many immigrant parents to the United States send their teenaged children back to Taiwan during the summer to improve their SAT scores and Chinese language skills. Feeling concerned about the depth of knowledge in American public education, as well as the rising opportunities in the region of Greater China, they use these trips to instill the culture and learning styles of their homeland in their American children.

In fact, most immigrant parents I interviewed in the United States tried to dissociate themselves from the controlling style of Amy Chua, but they could also relate to Chua's emotional struggle. They saw the tiger mom as an immigrant's tale—though Chua is US born—immigrant parents had little choice but to adopt a regimented parenting style in order to secure their children's educational success in an environment of racial inequality. Nevertheless, they were keenly aware that Chua was no ordinary Chinese parent; her childrearing style was more indicative of class privilege than ethnic upbringing. Only a few immigrant Chinese families could afford the tutors, private lessons, and elite school that Chua's daughters had access to.

Working-class Chinese immigrants, in particular, struggle with a shortage of economic and cultural resources in the new country. Mei-li Lin is a single mother and childcare worker living in a subsidized apartment on the outskirts of Boston's Chinatown. After winning the green-card lottery, she immigrated with her only daughter to the United States to seek a brighter future and a happier childhood. Still, she is confused by the different cultural scripts of childrearing between Taiwan and the United States and frustrated by the reversal of the parent-child dynamics: "People here always ask kids how they feel. In Taiwan, you just tell your kids to listen to you. In the US, kids will correct your English and say, 'Mom, you should listen to me!'"

When Mei-li brought her daughter back to Taiwan for a visit, her sister, a high school graduate like Mei-li, criticized her lack of parental authority. The sister, like many working-class parents in Taiwan, was mostly concerned about the looming dangers associated with drugs, gangs, and other social toxins in today's teenage world. She warned Mei-li that the American parenting style would have dire consequences: "If you were raising kids this way in Taiwan, they would have beat up their parents! They have no respect and no discipline." Mei-li resorts to the American rhetoric of freedom and justifies her hands-off approach to childrearing as a form of cultural

assimilation: "We cannot control children in the US, and perhaps they would become more independent. This is the American way, isn't it?"

An increasing number of families around the globe are living their lives physically or virtually across national borders. I use the term *global family* to echo what Mike Douglas has called "global householding," which describes a dynamic process of forming and sustaining the households as a unit of social reproduction through global movements and transactions.[4] Globalization provides these families with expanded childrearing resources and cultural horizons, but it also brings new challenges and intensified anxieties. This book examines how these mothers and fathers navigate transnational mobility and negotiate cultural boundaries, through what I call *global security strategies*, to cope with uncertainties and insecurities in the changing society and globalized world.

Raising Global Families is the first book to compare parents of the same age cohort in the country of origin and in the adopted country, while also examining class variations in their parenting practices. It includes four groups of ethnic Chinese parents in Taiwan and the United States: middle- and working-class Taiwanese, and middle- and working-class Chinese immigrants in the Boston area. This research design allows for interrogating the intersection of ethnic culture and social class. It illuminates that ethnic culture is neither static nor uniform, but rather is constantly shifting across borders. Each group faced context-specific predicaments and employed class-specific strategies of cultural negotiation. The cross-Pacific comparison also demonstrates how class-based parenthood configures differently across national contexts. Parents' strategies of childrearing, which emerge from their class habitus and experience, take shape in reaction to public culture and local opportunity structure.

I propose the approach of *transnational relational analysis* to examine how parents develop strategic actions and emotional experiences of childrearing in relation to other parents. Well-resourced parents, who are inclined to "upscale" their perception of globalized risk, mobilize transnational resources and modify local norms to improve the security of their children. However, their global security strategies unwittingly magnify the insecurity of disadvantaged parents, who face increasing institutional pressure from the government and school to comply with the new cultural scripts of childrearing that privilege the middle-class nuclear family and Western-centric cultural capital.

Cultural Negotiation and Global Forces

The notion of tiger parenting, despite being overexaggerated in Chua's book, is rooted in the empirical research of cross-cultural psychology. Scholars in this field have described a Chinese style of authoritarian parenting in which parents hold high expectations for their children's achievement and use a harsh regimen to propel them toward excellence. Unlike white, European American authoritarian parenting, which is associated with distance, rejection, and lack of support, Chinese authoritarian parenting is accompanied by high involvement and sacrifice. The Chinese concept of *guan*, which connotes both "controlling" and "caring," encapsulates the Confucian emphasis on parental authority accompanied by intensive intervention of children's lives.[5]

Emphasizing cross-cultural variations in childrearing, the earlier studies are nevertheless vulnerable to the flaw of reifying ethnic and cultural boundaries. They widely adopted a comparative design—for instance, between Chinese Americans and European Americans—to illustrate marked differences across cultural origins.[6] Such binary comparison tends to present

Chinese parenting values as being monolithic and static, leaving little room for "the more nuanced and contextualized portrait of Chinese mothers' parenting dilemma."[7]

Recent research efforts have challenged the tiger-mom stereotype with a more complex and dynamic portrait of Asian or Asian American parenting.[8] The practice of Chinese parenting not only varies within ethnic group and across social contexts but also transforms over time under the influence of local changes and global forces. It is more appropriate to describe the ethnic culture of childrearing as a multiplicity of cultural repertoires,[9] which can be habitual and unconscious, as being internalized and naturalized as taken-for-granted traditions and norms; yet parents also engage in *cultural negotiation* by reorganizing and revising cultural frameworks to adapt to new circumstances, especially during rapid social transformation and cross-border mobility.

East Asian countries stand as representative cases of "compressed modernity," which, according to Kyung-Sup Chang, describes "a civilizational condition in which economic, political, social and/or cultural changes occur in an extremely condensed manner in respect to both time and space." As a result, diverse cultural components (including both colonial and postcolonial components) and multiple social temporalities (e.g., traditional, modern, and postmodern temporalities) coexist and interact.[10] When raising children in such circumstances, parents feel augmented anxieties at the nexus of social change and global aspiration.

Taiwan is a strategic site to study compressed modernity and global childrearing. Its "economic miracle" turned the impoverished island nation into a "tiger" of prosperity in less than half a century.[15] Taiwan also underwent a peaceful political transition from an authoritarian military state to a robust young democracy with a vibrant civil society. The past few decades have witnessed a great transformation in fertility behavior and cultural repertoire of childrearing. Taiwan promoted an organized family planning program in the 1960s to mitigate the problem

overpopulation, but the government now perceives the plummeting birth rate, one of the lowest in the world, as a "national security threat."[16] Most families have only one or two children, and voluntary childlessness among married couples is increasing. People are hesitant to have more children, especially considering the rising costs of childrearing; meanwhile, shrinking family sizes have increased the resources available for each child and intensified parents' economic and emotional investments in both sons and daughters.[17]

For Taiwanese living in a national territory of only fourteen thousand square miles, transnational connections and mobility are critical means to economic success and cultural advancement. New technologies and cheap travel have facilitated the suppression of spatial and temporal distances—which David Harvey calls "time-space compression"[18]—and contribute to a global convergence of childhood. Joining middle-class parents around the globe, Taiwanese newly rich parents seek inspiration and guidance from Western expert knowledge on scientific childrearing and child psychology.[19] They embrace the "sacralization of childhood" that Viviana Zelizer famously identified in the West, whereby children become "economically useless and emotionally priceless."[20] Moreover, commercial cultural products like McDonald's, Disney, and *Sesame Street*, have won global popularity and homogenized how children play and desire across the world.[21]

However, globalization is not a monolithic force that operates outside the fabric of culture; Carla Freeman urges researchers to examine the mutual constitution of culture and globalization: "What is 'cultural' about globalization and how does 'the global' work in and through the stickiness and particularities of culture?"[22] *Raising Global Families* takes a subject-oriented approach to investigate the dialectical entanglement between the global and the local, between the modern and the traditional.[23] By juxtaposing Taiwanese families to their immigrant counterparts

in the United States, this book interrogates how parents reorganize and reshuffle ethnic culture in response to transnational flows of practices, knowledge, and people. Moreover, as the following sections unfold, social class shapes parents' uneven capacities to mobilize time-space compression, digest global culture, and transform local traditions. Cultural negotiation and transnational mobility become critical forums for reproducing class inequality in global times.

Immigrant Parenting and Transnationalism

Immigrant parents raising children in the new country offer illustrative cases for cultural negotiation. In particular, the academic achievement of Asian Americans stirs debates about how cultural matters in the context of immigration. American cultural pundits widely credit the "Confucian heritage cultures" that emphasize hard work, filial piety, and strong family ties.[24] These popular stereotypes neglect historical and social variations, reducing ethnic culture to the product of bounded, timeless, and unchanging "traditions."[25] To shy away from cultural essentialism, recent scholars have examined how culture interacts with *structure*, including the contexts of immigrant incorporation and the racialized structures of opportunity, to affect parents' concerns and strategies of childrearing.

The very influential theory of segmented assimilation has demonstrated a trajectory of "selective acculturation" for immigrant youth, who can achieve social mobility and yet maintain strong ties with the immigrant community.[26] Min Zhou has used the term *ethnic capital* to refer to an interplay of financial, human, and social capital in an identifiable ethnic community. The ethnic economy, which reproduces Asian-style supplementary education, helps the second generation to cope with parental constraints and attain academic success.[27] Ethnic institutions, such as Chinatown-based NGOs and Chinese-speaking Christian churches, not only deliver ethnic

cultures and family values across generations but also help immigrant parents and children to absorb new cultural resources that are useful for them to adapt to the larger American society.[28]

Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou, in their recent book, invigorate the debate by identifying the class origin of the cultural framework that shapes Asian American achievement. They argue that, because the post-1965 stream of Asian immigration is a highly selected group in terms of socioeconomic status, the emphasis on academic success is actually a class-based mind-set that these highly educated immigrants selectively imported from their home countries and re-created in the United States. Additionally, the narratives of the "model minority" reinforce public perceptions in educational terrains, creating a "stereotype promise" that facilitates the success of Asian American youth.[29]

This groundbreaking study has encountered some noteworthy criticisms. Some scholars question how generalizable these findings are beyond the Los Angeles area. Chinese immigrants in other locations, such as New York City, are less affluent and more disadvantaged. The causal effect of immigrant selectivity is dubious, considering that Asian immigrants are bimodal in terms of socioeconomic distribution.[30] Lee and Zhou are also criticized for placing too much emphasis on social-psychological orientation.[32] Instead, Van Tran calls for a more dynamic analysis about "how the cultural scripts among immigrant groups are being refreshed, expanded and diffused as they come into contact with the American mainstream."[33] To achieve this goal, we must shift the focus from the second generation to immigrant parents and investigate class heterogeneity within an immigrant group.

Raising Global Families adopts a cross-class, cross-national comparison to enter the debate over how culture transforms in the context of immigration. This book reveals a dynamic process in which ethnic cultural scripts are fluid and negotiable in both the home country and the receiving

society. The cross-Pacific comparison allows us to better identify the nuanced differences of cultural hybridization across borders. And the cross-class comparison demonstrates a complex picture in which immigrant parents harbor class-specific insecurities and develop context-sensitive strategies of cultural negotiation.

My analysis is built on the existing literature that has examined how parents navigate multiple cultural scripts to orient their actions of childrearing as they move across borders and encounter changing circumstances. Cati Coe, in her study of Ghanaian immigrants in the United States, describes immigration as "a liminal space of human experience" that generates a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity but also leads to partial recognition and creative adaptation.[34]Immigrant parents may selectively memorize and deliberately represent their "original" culture to cope with uncertainty and maintain a sense of dignity. Filipino immigrants, for example, elevate the patriarchal ideology of Filipina chastity to control the sexuality of their daughters and to assert the moral superiority of the Filipino community over white Americans.[35] Immigrant parents may also remake ethnicity as an act of everyday resistance. For instance, Ghanaian and West Indian immigrants, who feel deprived of their authority to discipline their children in the United States, project a nostalgic imagination of their cultural past to justify the exercise of corporeal punishment.[36]

Social class has long been overlooked by many studies of Asian Americans, but a few scholars, including Vivian Louie, Jamie Lew, and Angie Chung, started to look into class divides among Asian American youth.[37] Despite their primary focus on the second generation, these studies show marked differences in educational strategies and cross-generational relations between middle- and working-class immigrant families. Zhou's concept of ethnic capital is criticized for carrying a risk to construct ethnic collectivities as homogenous and to overlook

power relations within.[38] A class-based analysis allows us to examine immigrant parents' uneven

capacities for cultural negotiation and to identify the specific components of ethnic capital that

they enact and have access to.

Ethnic Chinese immigrants (born in Taiwan or China) constitute an ideal case for

investigating class divides in immigrant parenting because the population is bifurcated by

socioeconomic status and migration trajectory. Migrant members of the professional middle class

first came to the United States for college or postgraduate degrees, whereas the less educated

mainly immigrated via family unification and they usually occupy lower-skilled jobs in the new

country.

Raising Global Families further situates the cultural negotiation of immigrant parents in the

context of transnationalism. Internet technology and cheap air travel assist bidirectional circuits of

cultural and educational resources between home and host countries. Both immigrants and their

children draw on transnational connections and practices to situate their cultural identities and

even to facilitate their adaptation in the new country.[39] Meanwhile, transnationalism can also

exacerbate emotional anxieties—a condition Diana Wolf calls "emotional transnationalism."[40]

Immigrant mothers, in particular, struggle with feelings of ambivalence, confusion, and anxiety,

because they straddle two cultural worlds in raising children and encounter multiple, sometimes

conflicting, cultural repertoires of childrearing.[41]

Transnational contexts become more prominent in immigrants' search for identity and

security in the current global climate, a historical conjuncture characterized by the prospect of

Western decline and Asian ascendency.[42] The US recession after the 2008–2009 financial crisis

rendered many professionals jobless and shattered a sense of economic security among

middle-class immigrants. The rise of China also induced Chinese immigrants to maintain

transnational ties with their home country and culture. Although affluent parents in Asia still see immigration to North America as a strategy for their children to become globally competitive, an emerging literature has exposed a recent trend of second-generation Asian Americans who pursue "return" migration to their ancestral homeland.[43]

By analyzing immigrant families in parallel with their counterparts in the home country, this book examines how the new global economy intensifies feelings of ambivalence and insecurity among immigrant parents who use class peers back home as their transnational reference groups as they arrange children's education, care, and discipline. Focusing on class difference within an immigrant group, this book explores why professional immigrants, as compared to working-class immigrants, are more likely to use educational resources back home for their American children. Childrearing becomes an everyday experience of emotional transnationalism for immigrant parents, who must navigate multiple cultural repertoires of education and childrearing in the homeland and the new country.

Parenting and Social Class

Following the seminal work of Pierre Bourdieu and Melvin Kohn, a large body of literature in sociology addresses the fact that parents' family origins and occupational cultures generate their preferences and priorities in the process of childrearing.[44] One of the most influential studies is *Unequal Childhoods*, an ethnographic study of twelve white and African American families. Annette Lareau vividly demonstrates two class-specific childrearing styles: middle-class parents engage in the style of "concerted cultivation" and cultivate a sense of entitlement with children, whereas working-class and poor families raise their children with the style of "the accomplishment of natural growth," and their children develop a sense of constraint from such upbringing. The

family life as such reproduces class privilege or disadvantage across generations, including parents' and children's capacity, or lack thereof, to negotiate with institutional authorities like teachers and coaches.[45]

Anthropologist Adrie Kusserow attends to the intersection of national culture and social class and examines how social classes digest American individualism in different ways. Upper-middle-class Americans embrace "soft individualism"—they see the world as welcoming but competitive, and caregivers should protect the child's psychologized self like a delicate flower. Working-class Americans, in contrast, believe in "hard individualism"—they see the world as potentially dangerous and believe that caregivers should prioritize discipline and hard work to build the child's resilient self like a fortress.[46]

Heavily influenced by Bourdieu's theories, both Lareau and Kusserow see childrearing as a microcosm for the reproduction of parents' class disposition and habitus, that is, their unconscious and embodied ways of thinking, feeling, and acting built through cumulative exposure to repetitive situations.[47] Despite the insightful analyses, their focus on the middle class and the working class largely as two homogeneous groups overlooks variations in values and behaviors among parents who are similarly socially situated.[48] The middle class, in particular, is a notoriously fragmented class group.[49] In addition, Bourdieu's theory has been criticized for failing to explore how people may break from the passivity of habitus and change the status quo.[50] The shortcoming is salient when applied to circumstances in which people confront "unfamiliar and problematic situations" or "discontinuities in structure, culture and life experience."[51]

Raising Global Families advances theoretical discussion in this field in three major ways: First, parents in this book offer a critical case to explore how the transnational flows of culture and people destabilize the existing cultural order and social conditions, pressuring them to qualify or

modify their ethnic and family habitus. The vocal and articulate middle class, especially, embodies the habits of self-refashioning and reflexive thinking in a time of late modernity.[54] Yet, I found that less-educated parents, albeit in a less eloquent or linear fashion, also develop a narrative of temporal sequence between the reconstructed past (their own childhood), the perceived present (their class experience), and their children's imagined future.[55] The structure of class inequality, however, constrains their capacities to justify their childrearing preferences and to put their security strategies into effect.

   Paying attention to the narratives of parenthood also allows us to examine differences *within* a social class. Diane Reay and her colleagues look into a range of choices white middle-class parents in the United Kingdom made about their children's school: some of the narratives indicated a tenacity of family habitus, but the others made counterintuitive choices to enroll their children in urban, socially diverse public schools. Their findings reveal the flexible, dynamic dimension of class identity—people may reconstruct their family habitus by making a conscious reaction to the perceived limitation of their past.[56] Along the same line, this book examines how the structural influence of social class is mediated through parents' exercise of reflexive agency, including their various narratives and perceptions of what constitutes critical opportunities and potential risks in the globalized world.

   Second, *Raising Global Families* situates parenting divides in a transnational geography of social inequality. *Unequal Childhoods,* along with many of the other studies on parenting and class reproduction, suffers from the pitfall of "methodological nationalism" by accepting the nation-state as a given unit of social analysis.[57] As critics have pointed out, Bourdieu's theory generally assumes that class distinction takes place in a relatively closed social system in which the pathways for status attainment are structurally stable.[58]

By contrast, scholars of migration and transnationalism have demonstrated various ways in which wealthy parents in the global South use spatial mobility as an educational strategy to secure their children's future. Aihwa Ong calls this "flexible capital accumulation" – resourceful parents convert financial assets into the next generation's cultural capital through the cultivation of Western degrees, foreign-language skills, and familiarity with cosmopolitan lifestyles.[59] Western education helps these children gain access to the global labor market or secure class privilege once they decide to return to Asia.[60] These educational choices often involve family separation. For example, in the "geese families" from South Korea, mothers accompany children studying overseas while fathers stay behind to earn money and fly to visit the family seasonally.[61]

Even for those parents who stay in their home countries, they imagine and aspire to a globalized future for their children. An increasing number of Asian families are choosing domestic private or charter schools with Western curricula to escape the rigidness and competitiveness of local education in Asia. At the same time, alternative schools such as Waldorf and Montessori are on the rise in Asia,[62] including in China, despite rigid state regulation of education at all levels.[63]These parents mobilize educational choices and transform childrearing styles hoping that their children can acquire "transnational cultural capital" and become cosmopolitan elites or global citizens.[64]

 Finally, this book explores the emotional politics of family life in a time of rapid change and uncertainty. Instead of viewing parents as interest maximizers who pursue childrearing as a calculative action of class reproduction, an emerging literature has looked into parenting as coping strategies to deal with uncertainty and insecurity on many fronts, including enlarged economic risks offloaded by government and corporations and declining stability in the private spheres of intimacy and marriages.[66] What I found most inspiring is Marianne Cooper's concept of the

security project, which describes the economic and emotional work done by a family to create,

maintain, and further the family's particular notion of security. Families across the class spectrum

are unevenly exposed to a multitude of risk, and they cope with insecurity in distinct ways.[67]

Building on Cooper's idea, I coin the concept of *global security strategies* to highlight the

global contexts that situate both parents' perception of risk and their strategies for mitigating

insecurities. While Cooper's analysis focuses on class inequality within a society, my concept

describes a transnational geography of social inequality, involving transnational mobility and

cultural negotiation as class-specific and location-sensitive strategies. I prefer "strategy" to

"project" to emphasize that the strategic conducts of parenting involve not only thoughtful plans

and purposive actions but also emotional struggles with conflicting responsibilities and defensive

reactions to the structural constraints they encounter.[68]

To fill the gaps in the literature and bridge the studies of social class, transnationalism, and

emotional politics, I adopt a transnational framework to examine not only between-class but also

within-class differences in their styles of childrearing. *Raising Global Families* juxtaposes fours

different groups of parents across the Pacific to demonstrate the formation of their global security

strategies in relation to one another. This book looks into how parents' concrete class experiences,

in relation to the contexts of globalization and immigration, shape their particular notions of

(in)security and direct their goals and preferences in childrearing and education.

Transnational Relational Analysis

Social classes are not separate categories but are constructed in relation to each other. Bourdieu

suggests the approach of relational thinking to identify *real*, though not always visible,

relationships in the structured social reality.[69] He uses the concept of social field, or social space

of power relations, to illustrate how differently situated people bring in a variety of dispositions and capitals into a "game," which, in this case, refers to struggle for legitimation for the goals and strategies of childrearing. Several scholars, including Beverley Skeggs, Val Gillies, and Diane Reay, have revealed the emotional politics in which people make sense of their class positions in relation to others. Working-class women, shadowed by the moral discourses of motherhood and sexuality, display feelings of frustration, helplessness, and even shame, as well as longing for recognition and respectability.[70] Similarly, children from working-class families feel overlooked and disregarded at school, feeling like "an anonymous backdrop that middle-class children can shine against."[71]

Exploring the relational nature of social class on a transnational scale, *Raising Global Families* takes the approach of what I call *transnational relational analysis* by situating the four groups of parents in a transnational geography of social inequality.[72] Regardless of whether their members ever engage in personal interaction, these groups of parents are structurally interconnected in a variety of ways.

First of all, the various groups of parents are interconnected through their uneven links to the macro process of globalization. Geographer Doreen Massey has used the metaphor of *power geometry* to describe people's differential access to and control over time-space compression as a consequence of globalization:[73]

Different social groups and different individuals are placed in very distinct ways in relation to these flows and interconnections. This point concerns not merely the issue of mobility—some move and some don't, it is also about control over this differentiated mobility. . . . Some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movements, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it.

Raising Global Families further demonstrates that intersecting social inequalities, including class and gender, mediate the profound effects of global forces by enabling or constraining people's access to rights, resources, and mobilities. Some forms of transnational mobility and connection generate cultural capital, whereas others are considered far less productive or legitimate by those who hold power and resources.

The globalization of production and markets facilitates the hypermobility of professionals, such as engineers and financial workers, and creates a globally oriented consumer lifestyle among the "transnational middle class" in the developing world.[74] The gendered division of labor is salient in these global households: while the frequent flyers for business and work are mostly men, their wives take on most of the responsibility of raising children in line with the ideals of modern childhood and global education.

Parents on the lower spectrum of social class are trapped in the local economy, but they are not immune from the impact of global forces. Capital outflow and the inflow of migrant workers have deprived job security for the working class, especially males. Many of these men in Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea now seek foreign brides from China and Southeast Asia, organizing a different form of global family. However, as we will see in Chapter 3, the receiving societies usually do not recognize these immigrants' transnational connections as valuable or "cosmopolitan" as Western cultural capital.

Moreover, the transnational relational analysis interrogates the emotional experiences of global parenting in a relational manner, revealing visible and invisible links between those who move and those who stay behind. Recent scholarship on migration starts to investigate both mobility and immobility and to examine how different sorts of mobilities are interconnected across

different locales.[75] In communities with high exposure to transnational migration, such as the

Chinese border city in Julie Chu's study, those who are trapped and immobile actually best display

the "longing and belonging" about "inhabiting the world in a particular cosmopolitan and

future-oriented way."[76] In this book, I view the four groups of parents as parallel instances that

illustrate how the global is imagined and lived differently across socioeconomic and regional

variations.

Middle-class identity, in particular, characterizes the relational nature of class relations. They

constantly fear of "falling off the class ladder" because their status is established on educational

credentials in distinction from the hand-me-down wealth of the upper class and the shortage of

cultural capital among the working class.[79] The neoliberal global economy further pressures them

to seek transnational references—class peers around the globe—to define the benchmark for

security and to measure the aspiration for their children's future. As we will see in this book, both

the Taiwanese middle class and the immigrant middle class in the United States compare, compete,

and connect with one another, and they mobilize direct and indirect interactions across borders to

exchange ideas and circulate resources in childrearing.

The hypermobility of the transnational middle class may inflict the injury of class on those

families who cannot afford physical or cultural mobility. The state and school function as critical

nodes in the social field of power inequality, validating class-specific cultural scripts of

childrearing and stigmatizing those who lack institutionally sanctioned cultural capital and

transnational experiences. The newly rich Taiwanese seek membership in the global middle class

by consuming childrearing and educational styles they perceive as fitting a Western ideal. Their

advocacy for education and curriculum reform, however, leads to a decline of parental confidence

among the working class and immigrant mothers. In the United States, middle-class immigrants

zealously invest in children's education to prepare them for competition in the United States and from the rising Asia. The stereotype of the model minority widely associated with Asian Americans can nevertheless pressure or even punish working-class immigrants and their children who cannot afford similar cultivation or who do not meet a high bar of attainment.

Global Security Strategies

I use the concept of *global security strategy* to describe a multitude of class-specific and location-sensitive modes of childrearing in which parents navigate transnational mobility and negotiate cultural boundaries in response to particular insecurities they identify in local and transnational contexts. Given the scope of this multi-sited study, this book does not aim to provide a comprehensive view of all practices utilized by all the four groups of parents. Instead, it uses the contrasts among and within these groups to illustrate the changing circumstances and practices of childrearing in the contexts of globalization and immigration. The chapters that follow address a set of core questions for each group of parents:

First, how do parents experience class mobility in relation to the macrocontexts of globalization and immigration in different ways? What kinds of risks and insecurities do they perceive as salient in their children's future and how do they thereby define their primary goals and responsibilities in raising children?

Instead of reducing parents' orientations to given traits of class habitus, this book examines how the concrete "class process"—the lived experience of class making that is simultaneously gendered and racialized[80]—shapes parents' capacity, preference, and strategies in raising their children. For parents in shifting circumstances such as immigration and intergenerational mobility, a narrative understanding between the past, the present, and their children's future helps them to

cope with contextual discontinuity by giving life events a meaningful order. The narratives of

parenting illustrate parents' goals and priorities in childrearing, their views of potential risks and

opportunities for their children, and their perception of difficulties and challenges during

intergenerational interactions.

Second, how do parents navigate spatial and cultural mobilities to arrange education, care,

and discipline for their children? How do they negotiate ethnic culture and local institutions to

maintain and achieve their particular version of security?

Parents of class privilege are more able to mobilize their global connections and resources to

negotiate with the local regime of education. In addition to geographical mobility, I use the term

cultural mobility to describe the practice in which parents make use of time-space compression to

consume cultural goods and services across ethnic cultural realms or spatial territories.[81] Through

either physical or virtual mobility, these parents are more capable to practice what Allison Pugh

calls "pathway consumption" by purchasing *social contexts*—schools, camps, and extracurricular

activities—to shape their children's trajectories into the future.[82]

Parents at the lower end of the class spectrum navigate transnational mobilities as survival

and security strategies; they seek marriage partners, help with childcare, or even enforcement of

child discipline through time-space extension. Lacking globally recognized human capitals,

lower-class immigrants often suffer from economic entrapment and downward mobility. Because

their own pursuits of spatial and cultural mobility cannot easily convert into advantages for their

children's class mobility, these parents similarly invest a great deal in children's education despite

that their strategies of pathway consumption are worlds apart.

Finally, how does the rupture between cultural scripts and institutional structure, and the

disjuncture between the global and local, create unintended consequences in family lives? Why are

parents' global security projects magnifying insecurities among themselves and other groups of parents?

When people and culture are in motion, frictions and disjuncture emerge between the global and local and between the cultural and the structural. Taiwan's new cultural scripts of childrearing, with marked influence from Western experts, are in conflict with school and workplace that still favor a collective culture. Parental education in the United States, which prioritizes a cultural model of therapeutic selfhood, alienates Chinese immigrants, especially those who struggle with economic stress. While parents encounter contradictions between their newly acquired cultural repertoires and the existing institutional reality, their value commitments and childrearing behaviors often turn into "paradoxical pathways."[83] Their global securities strategies—based on transnational and cultural mobilities—may lead to unintended consequences and magnify their parenting insecurities.

The Multisited Study

To study parenting divides that involve global processes and the increasing interconnectedness of people, I conducted a multisited ethnography, a method of data collection that brings the researcher to multiple field sites geographically and socially.[89] To capture class diversity and geographic particularities, I conducted in-depth interviews with ethnic Chinese parents across the socioeconomic spectrum in Taiwan and in the Boston area. The majority of Taiwanese parents were recruited from four public elementary schools where their children attended the second grade. The immigrant parents, recruited through snowballing referrals, had at least one child who was attending elementary school at the time of the interview. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and translated into English when quoted. In addition, I conducted observations

in some household activities, children's school activities, and parental workshops. For more details

on the research methods and sample characteristics, see Appendixes A and B.

I divide the families into two broadly construed socioeconomic class categories based on

education and occupational status. In the "middle-class" or "professional middle-class" families,

at least one parent had a four-year college or postgraduate degree and held a professional position

or a job with some managerial authority in the workplace.[90] In Taiwan, I conducted in-depth

interviews with 80 parents from 57 households, including 51 mothers and 28 fathers. About

two-thirds of my interviewees fell into the professional middle class, including 33 mothers and 19

fathers from 36 households.

About one-third of the Taiwanese households fell into the working-class category, including

18 mothers and 9 fathers from 21 households. None of the parents in this category had a college

degree. Eight mothers were immigrants from Southeast Asia and Mainland China. Using the

strategy of theoretical sampling, I deliberately included more cases of immigrant mothers to

explore the effect of cross-border marriages.

I purposively recruited Taiwanese parents with a multitude of educational choices. With the

exception of 11 parents (from 9 households) who sent their children to private schools, the

majority of Taiwanese parents sent their children to public schools. I recruited parents through four

public schools with distinct parents' socioeconomic profiles (see Appendix A for details),

including an alternative school in the countryside that has attracted a wave of middle-class parents

who emigrated from the city to escape mainstream education. When I recruited middle-class

parents through schools or personal references, most of them responded positively, indicating their

willingness to participate in interviews or household observations. Most assumed that they had

been invited to join the study because of their success as parents. Some were eager to share their enthusiasm for innovative methods of childrearing and alternative education.

My experience with working-class parents was strikingly different. Many refused to be interviewed. A typical initial response to our request was "Did my child do something wrong at school?" This indicated a prevalent anxiety among working-class families about being labeled as misbehaving students or unsuitable parents. All the participants received my business card and a letter that explained the purpose of the research, but some working-class parents did not seem to fully understand what "professor" and "research" entailed. For example, one mother who worked with her husband at construction sites mistook me for a graduate student. Even after we had met a few times, she still asked whether I had finished my thesis for graduation.

For the immigrant samples, I categorize their social class on the basis of their education and occupation in the United States. It is important to remember that immigrants and nonmigrants in the homeland do not constitute "comparable" cases in a strict sense.[91] Immigrants are usually a selective sample because migration requires a sufficient amount of economic capital, human capital, and personal determination. Professional immigrants are generally more elite and privileged than their counterparts in the homeland.[92] Many working-class immigrants enjoyed a middle-class status back home and experienced downward mobility in the United States; they are thus equipped with more material and symbolic resources than the working class in their home countries. In addition, children's education is a major reason immigrants decided to emigrate or stay in the United States; this explains why Chinese immigrants across the class spectrum place premium emphasis on the next generation's academic performance, as previous studies have unfolded.[93]

I chose Boston as the site of research for two primary reasons. First, the area has accommodated a bifurcated population of Chinese immigrants because of the chain migration of family unification and growing local employment in the sectors of science and technology. Second, the case of Boston allows us to examine how immigrant families are compelled to integrate into mainstream America. Most existing studies of Chinese immigrants were conducted in immigrant gateway metropolises such as California and New York, where the schools contain a substantial Asian population. In the Boston area, the children of middle-class Chinese immigrants attend schools in majority-white suburbs. Without living in proximity to a sizable ethnic community, these families find the strategy of segmented assimilation less plausible and the attainment of both ethnic pride and class mobility more challenging.

In Boston Areas, I conducted in-depth interviews with 56 ethnic Chinese immigrant parents (40 mothers and 16 fathers) of primary-school-aged children from 48 households. To have sufficient social class variation, the US sample included immigrants from both Taiwan and China (Taiwanese immigrants are largely concentrated in professional sectors). Compared to the sample in Taiwan, the sample of immigrant parents was much more polarized in terms of socioeconomic status, and residential segregation along class lines is more salient in the United States.

The professional immigrants I interviewed came from thirty-one households (20 from Taiwan and 11 from China). All of these families had at least one parent who had acquired a postgraduate degree, and their occupations concentrate on the fields of science, technology, and management. Most of them own single-family homes in northern suburbs in the Boston area, known for high-quality public schools.

I also interviewed working-class immigrants from seventeen families (4 from Taiwan and 13 from China); they worked in Boston mostly as restaurant workers, caretakers, and other service

workers. The majority were high school graduates except for a few who had college degrees back home. Some lived in state-subsidized rental apartments in the city, while those who were financially better off purchased more affordable housing in southern suburbs.

All the Taiwanese and Chinese immigrant parents across the class spectrum sent their children to public schools, a pattern that has been identified by previous researchers.[95] I recruited middle-class immigrants through the references of Chinese-language schools, informal social networks, and advertisements posted in online immigrant forums. As in Taiwan, middle-class parents in the Boston area were happy to participate in the research. Most people kindly offered their help to me as a co-ethnic migrant. Some parents also saw me as a source of information about American universities since I was affiliated with an Ivy League institution.

I made contacts with working-class immigrants by attending community-based programs and activities held by a nongovernmental organization in Chinatown. I also made requests for interviews when I used services in ethnic business. It was harder to study working-class immigrants because they tended to work long hours and were unfamiliar with the research. Yet I also represented a possible source of access to social capital from the co-ethnic middle class. Thus, one working-class father addressed me respectfully as Professor Lan and used the interview as a precious opportunity to receive expert opinions on childrearing in the United States. He asked me for a reading list and even requested a copy of my interview questions. "So I can check if there is something that I've failed to do," he said earnestly.

Mapping the Book

The book is composed of five chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 1 overviews the transpacific movement of ideas and resources that facilitated the spatial and cultural mobilities of

Taiwanese and immigrant parents across historical periods. Transnationalism from both above and below alters the family lives of those who move overseas and of those who stay in the country of origin. The changes in the repertoires of childrearing, however, reach parents unevenly across the class spectrum.

Chapters 2 and 3 describe the growing divergence in parenting styles between middle-class and working-class parents in Taiwan. Taiwan's participation in globalized production has offered the professional middle class a ticket to intergenerational mobility in their lifetimes and opportunities to transnational mobility and career. By contrast, the working class, especially men, encounter stagnant mobility in the globalized economy; many seek foreign wives to escape their disadvantaged status in the local marriage market.

Chapter 2 describes the global security strategies of middle-class parents. To safeguard their children's happiness and creativeness, these privileged parents mobilize their economic and cultural capital to exit the local education system or to advocate for reform. Some seek transnational mobility to help their children to get ahead in the arms race of global education. Others turn to alternative and home education under Western influence to orchestrate their children's "natural growth."

Chapter 3 turns to the security strategies of working-class parents, who emphasize discipline and hard work to avoid the risks of children's going stray or stagnant mobility. With the new middle-class ideals of parental competency promoted by Taiwan's government and school, working-class parents, including immigrant mothers, suffer from a decline in parental legitimacy. Some parents reinforce harsh discipline to claim legitimacy while the others outsource education to improve their children's opportunities for class mobility.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore how immigrant parents across the class spectrum negotiate cultural differences and manage insecurities in the new country. People in Taiwan and China generally view US immigration as a pathway to social mobility, but many immigrants experience otherwise once they cross the borders. Those who lack English skills, local ties, and US-recognized degrees usually suffer from some degree of downward mobility. Even highly educated professionals, men in particular, may encounter racial discrimination and blocked mobility at American workplaces.

Chapter 4 describes the parenting styles of highly educated immigrants who share a narrative of declining cultural confidence. Their security strategies center on how to protect or achieve a sense of confidence among second-generation youth in a context of racial inequality. Some parents arrange "Americanized" extracurricular activities to orchestrate children's holistic development, while others mobilize their homeland culture and transnational educational resources to cultivate ethnic cultural capital for the second generation.

Chapter 5 turns to working-class Chinese immigrants, whose narratives of parenting insecurity center on a decline in their parental authority, especially because corporal punishment is not recognized as a legitimate tool of child discipline in many parts of the United States. Some try to project an "American" outlook on their family lives by either interpreting the reversed dynamics of parent-child relations as an indicator of cultural assimilation or attending parenting seminars to learn about American knowledge and techniques of childrearing. The others seek resources from immigrant communities or transnational kin networks to sustain the ethnic practices of education, care, and discipline.

The conclusion compares the global security strategies among Taiwanese and immigrant parents across the class spectrum and identifies visible and invisible social connections between these four groups of parents. I end by discussing the theoretical and practical lessons we can learn

from this research: why and how the global security strategies of childrearing unwittingly magnify parental insecurities and class injustice.

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[1] Chua 2011a.

[2] Chua 2011b; Murphy Paul 2011.

[3] *Wo zai meiguo zuo mama: Yelu faxueyuan jiaoshou de yurrjing* 我在美国做妈妈：耶鲁法学院教授的育儿经 (Chua 2011c).

[4] Douglas 2006: 423.

[5] Chao 1994; Chao and Sue 1996; Wu 1996.

[6] Lin and Fu 1990.

[7] Way et al. 2013: 69.

[8] A special issue of *Asian American Journal of Psychology* is dedicated to deconstructing the myth of the tiger mother using several empirical studies of Asian heritage families (Juang, Baolin Qin, and Park 2013). Also see Kang and Shih (2016) for a comprehensive review of the literature on Asian American parenting.

[9] Here I follow Ann Swidler (1986) in using the term *cultural repertoire* to describe culture as a multiplicity of cultural resources and frameworks that people apply to particular situations to generate meanings and direct their actions

[10] Chang 2010: 446.

[15] The gross domestic product (GDP) rose rapidly from 1,630 TWD in 1951 and 5,977 TWD in 1961 to 15,730 TWD in 1970 and 85,851 TWD in 1980. ROC Statistics Website, http://ebas1.ebas.gov.tw/pxweb/Dialog/NI.asp, accessed April 16, 2016.

[16] The total fertility rate dropped to 0.895 in 2010, the lowest in the world, and the rate in 2016 was 1.17. ROC Ministry of the Interior, http://www.ris.gov.tw/346, accessed November 22, 2017.

[17] The traditional Chinese family invests more educational resources in sons to secure future returns for parents, but intrafamily gender inequality in schooling disappeared with shrinking family sizes in Taiwan (Yu and Su 2006).

[18] Harvey 1989.

[19] Hoffman and Zhao (2008) reveal a similar situation in China.

[20] Zelizer 1985.

[21] Buckingham 2007; Kincheloe 2002.

[22] Freeman 2010: 578.

[23] Roland Robertson's (1992) famous concept glocalization describes the simultaneity or co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies. I have also raised the concept of glocal entanglement to describe the global-local entanglements in the changing discourses of parenting in Taiwan (Lan 2014).

[24] See Chung 2016 and Wu 2014 for a review of these narratives.

[25] Espiritu 2010.

[26] Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou and Kim 2006.

[27] Zhou 2009; Zhou and Bankston 1998.

[28] Chen 2006, 2008; Yang 1999.

[29] Lee and Zhou 2015.

[30] Kasinitz 2016; Tran 2016. Also see Appendix C in this book.

[32] Kasinitz 2016.

[33] Tran 2016: 2402.

[34] Coe 2014: 21–25.

[35] Espiritu 2001.

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[36] Coe 2014; Waters and Sykes 2009.

[37] Vivian Louie (2004) interviewed Chinese Americans who grew up in middle-class suburbs and in urban enclaves in New York City. Jamie Lew (2006) compares Korean Americans at an elite magnet high school in New York with those who dropped out of high school. Angie Chung (2016) interviewed second-generation Korean, Chinese, and Taiwanese Americans across the social class spectrum.

[38] Shah, Dwyer and Modood 2010.

[39] Levitt and Waters 2002; V. Louie 2006.

[40] Wolf (1997) uses this term to describe second-generation youths who battle with multiple understandings of cultural identities, including cultural expectations from their parents and even grandparents.

[41] Chien-Juh Gu (2010) applies the concept of "emotional transnationalism" to examine the emotional struggles of Taiwanese immigrant mothers.

[42] Hoang 2015.

[43] Lee 2018; L. Wang 2016; Yamashiro 2017. See Chapter 1 for more details.

[44] Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Kohn 1959, 1963. Also see Friedman 2013; Smith and Sun 2016; Streib 2015; Weis, Cipollone, and Jenkins 2014.

[45] Lareau 2011. For the class-specific ways of interacting with school, also see Lareau 1989; Calarco 2014.

[46] Kusserow 2004.

[47] Bourdieu 1977, 1984.

[48] See the criticism of Irwin and Elley 2011; Vincent and Ball 2007; Reay 1998.

[49] The middle class is divided along lines such as assets (organizational assets for managers or cultural capital for professionals), fields of production (material or symbolic) and sectors of employment (public or private sectors) (Power 2000).

[50] See Lo 2015 for a review of the critique.

[51] Archer 2007: 39, 47.

[54] Sweetman (2003) calls this "reflexive habitus" or "habitual reflexivity."

[55] Nelson 2010; Sandelowski 1991.

[56] Reay, Crozier, and James 2011.

[57] Wimmer and Schiller 2002.

[58] Hall 1992; Lamont 1992.

[59] Ong 1999.

[60] Johanna Waters (2005) found that graduates who returned from Canada to Hong Kong gained advantages in the local job market that allowed them to reproduce their privileged lifestyles and social status, leaving behind the less mobile children of the lower class.

[61] Lee and Koo 2006.

[62] In 2016, in addition to the many kindergartens, there are forty-seven Waldorf (Steiner) elementary and secondary schools in Asia, including ten in South Korea, nine in Japan, and seven in China and India. Waldorf Worldwide, https://www.freunde-waldorf.de/en/waldorf-worldwide/waldorf-education/waldorf-world-list/, accessed Nov 17, 2016.

[63] Gao 2015; Johnson 2014.

[64] Carlson, Gerhards, and Hans 2017; Weenink 2008.

[66] Cooper 2014; Pugh 2015; Villalobos 2014.

[67] Cooper (2014) found that the working-class and poor families were "downscaling" insecurities in their family lives or "holding on" as coping strategies, whereas affluent families were "upscaling" their anxieties about family finance and children's future despite their wealth and concerted cultivation. Ana Villalobos (2014: 9) coins a similar concept, security strategy, albeit with a more specific focus on mother-child bonding; she defines it as "an ideologically driven set of mothering practice intended to maximize the security derived from the mother-child relationship."

[68] Although the term *strategy* connotes a certain degree of rationality and choice, recent sociological literature has expanded the concept to refer to modes of actions in which people negotiate structural constraints in the constitution of dynamic social relations; strategic conducts may involve practical consciousness and often produce unintended consequences (Giddens 1984).

[69] Following the paradigm of critical realism, Bourdieu proposes the relational method in opposition to positivism and methodological individualism (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

[70] Gillies 2007; Skeggs 1997.

[71] Reay 2017: loc. 2421 of 4452, Kindle.

[72] Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004) have used the concept of the transnational social field to describe that transnational exchanges of ideas, practices, and resources facilitate the simultaneity of family lives and kin networks lived across national borders. To avoid confusion, I instead use the term *transnational geography* to emphasize power relations and symbolic struggle among parents across geographic and class divides.

[73] Massey 1994: 149.

[74] Derné 2005; Koo 2016.

[75] Silvey, Olson, and Truelove 2007.

[76] Julie Chu (2010:4: 12) conducted an ethnography in Fuzhou, a Chinese border city that sends a large outflow of illicit migration to the United States.

[79] Ehrenreich 1989.

[80] Reay 1998.

[81] Previous scholars have used this term with different meanings. Paul DiMaggio (1982) has proposed *cultural mobility theory* to describe that the participation in status culture (art, music, or literature) can help high school students, especially socially disadvantaged ones, to improve school success and prospect of class mobility. Michael Emmison (2003) also utilized this concept to describe individuals' omnivore tastes and capacities to consume cultural goods and services across divergent cultural fields. My definition of *cultural mobility* refers to the capacity to navigate multiple ethnic cultural realms. And, unlike Emmison, who views cultural consumers as "freely choosing subjects," I emphasize the structural constraints and power inequalities embedded in the practice of cultural mobility.

[82] Pugh 2009.

[83] Weininger and Lareau 2009.

[89] Marcus 1995.

[90] I follow Margaret Nelson's (2010: 5) definition of "the professional middle class" as "people with educational credentials beyond a bachelor's degree and, when employed, as people holding professional occupations."

[91] I thank Ken Sun for this reminder.

[92] The post-1965 waves of Chinese immigration in the United States, in particular, demonstrates a feature of "hyperselectivity" (Lee and Zhou 2015).

[93] Gu 2006; Louie, V. 2004.

[95] Kasinitz et al. 2008.