
by

Caiyan (Wendy) Chen

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Science
Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Caiyan (Wendy) Chen 2013

Caiyan (Wendy) Chen

Master of Science

Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences
University of Toronto

2013

Abstract

This thesis focuses on Chinese immigrant women’s experiences of household work and leisure in Canada. Socialist feminist perspective is used for an analysis of in-depth conversations with ten Chinese immigrant women with children. Results show that Chinese immigrant women experienced a significant increase of household work and a dramatic decrease on leisure pursuits after immigration and/or the birth of their children, implying that gender inequalities are reproduced and reinforced. Chinese immigrant women encounter and negotiate forms of tension resulted from the striking difference of being in China and being in Canada, their change in social status and their changed gender status. This thesis may contribute background knowledge for the practitioners in recreational programs and social works specialized in immigrant settlement services. Future research could be the motives for immigration, the actual experiences of immigration; a comparative study between Chinese immigrant women and women of other ethnicities is also suggested.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all of the women whom took part in this research for their courage in sharing their stories with me. Without your time, effort, and participation, this project would not have been possible. It is my hope that your contributions to this research can lead to a better understanding of the Chinese immigrant women’s experiences of household work and leisure in Canada.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Peter Donnelly for your support and invaluable guidance. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Margaret MacNeill, Dr. Bruce Kidd, and my external examiner, Dr. Parissa Safai. Your thought-provoking questions and feedback have challenged me to expand on my understanding of immigrant women’s lives in Canada.

I would like to show my gratitude to my colleagues Maureen Coyle, Patrick Keleher, Mark Norman, Yosuke Washiya, Chang (Fisher) Liu, Courtney Szto, Melanie Belore and Dr. Kyoung-yim Kim for their tremendous intellectual and emotional support. I would also like to thank Dr. Dena Taylor for her patient editing in my thesis.

I would like to extend my gratitude to my husband Fengyu Yang for his unconditional love and support. Also I would like to thank my daughters Emily and Alice for the happiness they give me.
Contents

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. iii
List of Tables ......................................................................................................................................... vii
List of Appendices ................................................................................................................................ viii
Chapter 1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Background to the Study ........................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Purpose of Study ...................................................................................................................... 2
  1.3 Overview of the Thesis ............................................................................................................. 4
Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theory .......................................................................................... 5
  2.1 Literature Review ....................................................................................................................... 5
    2.1.1 Constraints, Resistance and Women’s Leisure ............................................................... 5
    2.1.2 Ethnicity and Leisure Participation ............................................................................... 9
    2.1.3 Gender, Household Work and Leisure ........................................................................... 11
    2.1.4 Summary ...................................................................................................................... 17
  2.2 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................. 18
    2.2.1 General Explanations of the Division of Household Work ........................................... 18
    2.2.2 Social Reproduction, Household Work and Mothering .............................................. 20
    2.2.3 Gender Ideology on Household Work and Motherhood in China ............................ 24
    2.2.4 Summary ...................................................................................................................... 26
Chapter 3 Methodology and Method ............................................................................................... 28
  3.1 Purpose of Approach .................................................................................................................. 28
  3.2 Participants ............................................................................................................................... 29
  3.3 Data Collection ......................................................................................................................... 29
  3.4 Data Analysis ............................................................................................................................ 32
List of Tables

1. Table 1: Participants Descriptions  p.31
List of Appendices

1. Appendix A: Informed Consent (English Version) p.110

2. Appendix B: Informed Consent (Chinese Version) p.113


5. Appendix E: Definition of Terms p.119

6. Appendix F: Ethical Approval p.120
Chapter 1 Introduction

In this chapter, the background context of this study is presented first, followed by a description of the purpose of this study. The third section concerns the limitations of this study both in terms of methodology and researcher status, and the fourth part provides an overview of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the Study

This study begins with a reflection, an observation and an assumption. The reflection comes from my own identity – a new immigrant woman from the People’s Republic of China who landed in Canada in 2008 with my husband and daughter. I still remember the day I landed in Pearson International Airport and find out that I was in a world full of alphabets instead of Chinese characters. In the customs and immigration hall, immigration officials gave us some booklets to me and let me know the agencies available to support immigrants on line. I gained support from University Settlement, the YMCA for newcomers and the Immigrant Women Health Centre in Toronto. As an immigrant myself, I was interested in the literature on immigrants and their health in Canada, and I was shocked to learn that immigrants’ health may decrease after they migrate to Canada (Maio & Kemp, 2010; Setia, Lynch, Abrahaimowica, Tousignant, & Quesnel-Vallee, 2011). I was interested in the issues of female immigrants’ health and their leisure, particularly their physically active leisure, and considered it as my research interest.

Further, before I immigrated, I was a lecturer in a college. I did not have to bother about housework as my mother lived with me after my daughter was born, and I had never considered it as an issue that was closely related to women’s status in a society. After migrating to Canada, I was mainly responsible for the housework and child care work, though my husband helped me out in child care work. I still felt all right as my daughter was old enough to take care of herself then. On the one hand, I felt unequal to my husband, and wondered why this had happened to me, why I should be the person to clean the kitchen; on the other hand, I was glad to see the clean floor, bathroom and a well-organized living room and bedrooms.
Nevertheless, my life completely changed with the arrival of my second daughter. I asked for a parental leave after Alice was born, and it was my experience of this year that urged me to reflect on the relationships among leisure pursuits, household work including child care work, and women’s status in a society. I felt depressed and helpless when I was left alone at home to take care of a little baby. I felt trapped by the baby, and I did not have time and space for myself because the baby demanded 24 hours per day attention. I felt exhausted every day and sometimes I was angry with my husband’s inefficient assistance. Further, as I was at home, I felt that I should try my best to do all the housework, child care work, graduate studies and paid teaching-assistant-ships. On the one hand, I felt happy that I had another child; on the other hand, I felt that I was controlled by the baby, and I did not have time of my own, let alone time to exercise. My feelings were contradictory, and I was wondering whether other mothers had similar experiences.

The observation began with my visits to a Drop-in Center for children under six years old. I noticed that usually it was mothers who brought children to the center no matter what ethnicity the mother was, but sometimes some fathers had short visits. I shared my experiences with some mothers from Mainland China, and asked them whether they did any exercise after their baby was born. Some mothers told me that the only exercise they could do was stroller walking with the baby, which was exactly what I did.

The assumption is that immigrant women’s leisure experiences in Canada may change, partly because of immigration but also primarily with the increase of household work. The second assumption is that those women with young children may have the least time to participate in leisure, and their experiences of leisure may be more limited but complicated to some degree. Meanwhile, women may negotiate with their paid work/studies, household work and leisure pursuits by employing various strategies.

1.2 Purpose of Study

This study explores the leisure experiences of immigrant women from Mainland China, particularly of leisure time physical activity, and their perceptions of the relationship between leisure pursuits and perceptions of being a woman, wife and mother. It also explores whether household work changes after immigration, whether household work including child care and
parenting influences these women’s leisure pursuits, particularly their participation in leisure time physical activities. The second focus of this study concerns how they negotiate between paid work or full time study, household work and leisure pursuits. The goal of this study is to provide understanding of some groups of people who have been under-researched, and to study the intersection of household work, gender dynamics and leisure pursuits. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), “Gender … is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category. Gender activities emerge from and bolster claims to membership in a sex category” (p. 127).

In Canada, immigration has been traditionally the most important source of population growth; and immigrants also have played a particularly important role in maintaining the economic prosperity of host countries and they contribute culturally and politically to the host countries (Stodolska, 2002). The 2006 Canada Census reveals that Canada’s population is becoming increasingly ethno-culturally diverse, and over 1.3 million Chinese live in Canada, the second largest ‘visible minority’ in the country. Chinese women were the largest group of ‘visible minority’ women in 2006. They made up a slightly larger proportion of ‘visible minority’ women (24.3%), compared with South Asian women (24.0%); (Chui & Maheux, 2011). This highlights the need for research addressing all aspects of immigrants including their family lives, career development, economic performance and health care.

Meanwhile, increasing ethnic diversity is challenging federal, provincial and local public policies (Stodolska & Walker, 2007). Some studies show that leisure activities enable immigrants to retain a connection with their traditional way of life and help in maintaining a healthy emotional balance in adapting to a host country (Junius, 2000) and to preserve and maintain immigrants’ cultural practices and identities (Heinonen, Harvey, & Fox, 2005). Most of all, leisure pursuits appear to help immigrants to settle in a host country (Stack & Iwassaki, 2009), so a deeper understanding of immigrant’s leisure pursuits and participation changes and constraints is needed to help policy makers to adjust policies and leisure practitioners to provide effective leisure programs in Canada.

Therefore, this study explores the leisure experiences of immigrant women from Mainland China, particularly of leisure time physical activity, and those women’s perceptions of the
relationship between leisure pursuits and their gendered role as a woman, wife and mother. The following research questions are investigated:

1) Does household work change after immigration among recent immigrant women from Mainland China?

2) Does household work, including childcare and parenting, influence their leisure pursuits, such as leisure time physical activity participation and patterns after the birth of their children?

3) What strategies do they use to negotiate household work and leisure pursuits?

**1.3 Overview of the Thesis**

The subsequent chapter encompasses two sections. The first section reviews the literature that examines the constraints of women and immigrant’s participation in leisure, ethnicity and leisure participation, and the impact of household work on women’s leisure pursuits, particularly participation in physically active leisure. The second part of chapter two presents the theoretical framework of feminist political economy that focuses on gendered division of labour, motherhood and social reproduction. In this section, a general explanation of gendered division of labour is presented, followed by an explanation of household work and social reproduction, motherhood and child care work, and an overview of gender ideology on gendered division of labour in current China. Chapter three presents an outline of the methodology and method, encompassing the rationale for the approach, a description of the participants, the recruitment process, data collection and data analysis procedures. Chapter four provides the results and discussion of this study. This section presents the results of this study, including that finding that household work reinforced gender inequalities after migrating to Canada, and participants’ leisure pursuits decreased significantly because of the dramatic increase of household work and child care work. The second part presents a discussion of the results, which indicates that Chinese immigrant women’s practices of gendered division of labour reproduce gender inequalities while less play/leisure reflects gender and class inequalities in Canadian society. Chapter 5 summarizes the study and makes some recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theory

This chapter provides a review of the literature both on women’s leisure and the gendered division of labour which covers the constraints of leisure pursuits, immigrant’s participation in leisure, gendered time-use and immigrant families and the gendered division of labour. This is followed by the theoretical framework focusing on social reproduction and gender ideology, which encompasses a general explanation of the gendered division of labour, social reproduction, motherhood and the gender ideology of household work in China.

2.1 Literature Review

Two principal sources of literature assist our understanding of this study: leisure studies of women and immigrants; and the broader social science literature on household work. The literature review that follows consists of three sections. The first focuses on the conceptualization of constraints and resistance in women’s participation in leisure, particularly leisure time physical activity (LTPA). The second is an analysis of immigrant women’s and Chinese immigrants’ engagement in leisure participation. The third section discusses the relationship between gendered roles, household work, and leisure participation.

2.1.1 Constraints, Resistance and Women’s Leisure

Studies of women and leisure have emerged as a body of knowledge over the past thirty years, and studies about constraints on women’s leisure have dominated the field in the past twenty years (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007). Some of these studies are conducted from socio-psychological perspective (e.g., Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991). Regarding women’s leisure, some researchers employ symbolic interactionist theories to explore women’s leisure and constraints (e.g., Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996; Shaw, 1985; Wearing, 1992; Wimbush & Talot, 1988) while others employ poststructuralist theories to investigate women’s leisure (e.g., Shaw, 2001; Shogan, 2002; Wearing, 1990). Research on constraints has
existed since the 1980s when researchers employed Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories (e.g., Deem, 1986; Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990) to investigate leisure in capitalist societies, and class and gender division in leisure (Wearing, 1998), and it was not until the 1990s that researchers sought a deeper understanding of the meanings of constraints (Henderson & Hickerson, 2007).

From a social psychological perspective, for example, Crawford et al. (1991) proposed a model covering three categories of constraints: intra-personal constraints, inter-personal constraints, and structural constraints. According to Crawford et al., intra-personal constraints refer to the factors that affect one’s leisure preference or interest in certain leisure activities, while inter-personal constraints concern relationships with other people, such as an individual’s interaction with others, and structural constraints are factors that reduce an individual’s interest in an activity; but these factors are not related with the inter-personal ones. Further, Crawford et al. argue that these three types of constraint function hierarchically, which means that intrapersonal factors (e.g., attitudes, preference) first prevent people from participating in a leisure activity, and the interpersonal ones may further reinforce people’s intention not to participate in a leisure activity, while the structural constraints appear last. However, with regard to women’s leisure, some studies show no evidence to support the hierarchy of these three types of constraints (Allen, 1994; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993c, as cited in Henderson et al., 1996).

Leisure constraint refers to “any factor that affects leisure participation negatively, either in terms of preventing participation, reducing frequency, intensity or duration of participation, or reducing the quality of experience or satisfaction gained from the activity” (Henderson et al., 1996, p.195). Specifically in regard to women’s participation in leisure time activities, early research argues that women encounter a wide range of constraints on participation in leisure, and opportunities and support must exist for women’s participation in active lifestyles (Henderson et al., 1999). Generally, constraints involve lack of money, time, facilities and skills (Deem, 1986; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990; Jackson & Henderson, 1995).

A constraint significantly more prevalent among women is an “ethic of care”, which has been linked both conceptually and empirically to women’s lack of a sense of entitlement to leisure (Deem, 1986; Green et al., 1990; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Shaw, 1994). An ethic of care was originally proposed as an integral component of women’s moral development (Gilligan, 1993).
The ethic of care requires women to provide for others’ needs first, and it helps to explain how family commitment and structure may constrain women’s lives (Shaw, 1994). To be more general, researchers consider that gender ideologies profoundly affect women’s leisure behavior (Miller & Brown, 2005). Gender ideology refers to “the underlying concept of an individual’s level of support for a division of paid work and family responsibilities that is based on the notion of separate spheres” (Davis & Greenstein, 2009, p.88). Miller and Brown (2005) argue that ideologies regarding an ethic of care and household norms relating to gender-based time negotiation are the determinants of active leisure among women with young children, and particularly, women are unlikely to be encouraged to engage in active leisure by gender ideologies that inform women how to behave. Miller and Brown’s study uncovers family dynamics, particularly the ethic of care, that cause more constraints on women’s engagement in leisure and leisure time physical activity. Although Miller and Brown have pointed out that an ethic of care and household norms, which are part of gender ideology, are determinants preventing women from participating in leisure, it seems that these ideas are an entity that is separate from the social reality these women are in, and only if women altered these ideas can they participate more in leisure. As Fox (2009) argues, gender ideologies mean little if they are not combined with material and social reality organized around gender. Thus, they fail to analyze further in order to figure out that what lies behind the phenomena—women’s lack of entitlement to participate in leisure—is gender inequality between men and women.

Unlike the ideological findings of Miller and Brown’s research, some studies of immigrant women’s leisure participation have argued that the constraints are related to minority social status (e.g., lack of money, lack of access to transportation), and are culturally-based with regard to engagement in active recreation (Stodolska & Shinew, 2010). This study succeeded in combining women’s cultural perceptions of leisure with their social-economic statuses to analyze the constraints they encounter. For example, studies have examined Latina women’s participation in leisure time physical activity, how family influences women’s leisure participation (Tirone & Shaw, 1997), what affects Korean immigrant women’s participation in leisure time and non-leisure time physical activity (Choi, Wilbur, & Kim, 2011; Choi, Wilbur, Miller, Szalacha, & McAuley, 2008), and how religion and ethnic identity affect Muslim women’s participation in sport (Walseth, 2006, 2008). For example, low-income Latino residents in Chicago encounter environmental constraints when participating in leisure time
physical activity (Stodolska & Shinew, 2010). These environmental factors include a lack of access to natural environments suitable for leisure time physical activity, lack of well-maintained parks, lack of recreational equipment, language problems, traffic problems, and racial tension and discrimination; these factors work to limit Latinos’ engagement in leisure time physical activity. Stodolska and Shinew (2010) also argue that “environmental constraints were closely intertwined with the low socioeconomic status of Latinos and cultural factors that conditioned their participation in LTPA” (p. 328). Specifically, although Latina women’s leisure time physical activity participation was low, they had positive attitudes towards LTPA, and they believed they had a high level of social support for LTPA (Skowron, Stodolska, & Shinew, 2008). Further, the most often mentioned constraints included lack of childcare and lack of time (Skowron et al., 2008).

Although constraints shape or restrict leisure behaviour, they also enable leisure experiences (Shogan, 2002). For example, leisure can be used to challenge social expectations and structural gender relations and offer opportunities for resistance because of qualities, such as free choice and self-determination (e.g., Shaw, 1994, 2001; Wearing, 1990). Giulianotti (2005) argues that “[r]esistance is a key concept within Cultural Studies, defining how subordinate groups challenge domination through cultural practices” (p. 53). Similarly, leisure may be used to resist the traditional ideology of motherhood, for example, struggling for un-obligated time and personal space (Wearing, 1990). Moreover, the idea of resistance is an important concept for understanding leisure in individual lives as well as in society more broadly, and to challenge the structured power relations associated with class, gender, and family (Shaw, 2001). A number of subsequent studies based on Shaw’s ideas have been conducted (e.g., Foley, 2005; Gibson, Ashton-Schaeffer, Green, & Autry, 2003/2004; Irving & Giles, 2011; Noad & James, 2003; Parry, Glover, & Shinew, 2005). For example, Irving and Giles explored how single mothers experience leisure and how their children impact their participation in leisure. Although the ethic of care and lack of financial support may hinder single mothers from pursuing leisure activities, these barriers also enable other aspects of leisure, for instance, by broadening leisure experiences (Irving & Giles, 2011).

Although studies of constraints and resistance allow for better understanding of women’s participation in leisure, most of these studies have been conducted from a Western perspective
to investigate gender power relationships in families (Deem, 1986; Thompson, 1999), and ignore immigrant women and their families, because women from different ethnic groups may experience leisure constraints differently and may employ distinct strategies to negotiate the same constraints (Koca, Henderson, Asci, & Bulgu, 2009). What Koca et al. (2009) suggest is that ethnicity or cultural diversity needs to be considered as a significant social factor when conducting research on women and leisure.

Finally, lack of child care is a unique constraint in women’s leisure participation, and this constraint is related to women’s roles as wife and mother regardless of ethnic origins; the root is a gender based division of labour, and this issue is closely related to state policies. Hence, a gap exists in investigating how immigrant women experience and negotiate leisure pursuits and leisure time physical activity in a new environment, particularly Chinese immigrant communities where leisure and leisure time physical activity are traditionally devalued (Deng, Walker, & Swinnerton, 2005; Yu & Berryman, 1996).

2.1.2 Ethnicity and Leisure Participation

Researchers in leisure studies have kept pace with the demographic shifts in Canada and the U.S., and have conducted extensive research on leisure, and immigration and social adaptation. The 1990s and the 2000s witnessed a significant diversity in the topics and minority groups examined by leisure researchers (Stodolska & Walker, 2007). While most of the early studies focused on African Americans, the 1990s and 2000s underwent an expansion to include other minority groups such as Native American, Latinos, South Asians, and East Asians (Stodolska & Walker, 2007). Among these minority groups, studies of Chinese immigrants (e.g., Deng et al., 2005; Frisby, 2011; Li & Stodolska, 2006, 2007; Song, 2010; Tsai, 2005; Walker, Deng, & Chapman, 2007; Walker, Halpenny, & Deng, 2011a; Walker, Halpenny, Spiers, & Deng, 2011b) and Latinos (e.g., Burk, Shinew, & Stodolska, 2011; Sharaievska, Stodolska, Shinew, & Kim, 2010; Stodolska & Shinew, 2010) have become more common in recent years, and these studies have shown that ethnic minorities display different leisure preferences, constraints, and participation patterns. Many studies of ethnic minority leisure show that ethnic minorities encounter more constraints than the majority (Rublee & Shaw, 1991), and display various
leisure preferences and participation patterns (Burk, Shinew, & Stodolska, 2011; Skowron et al., 2008; Stodolska & Shinew, 2010).

Chinese immigrants have been in Canada for over 150 years, and they are the second largest visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2006a). As noted, a few studies of Chinese immigrants’ leisure participation patterns, satisfaction and motivation have been conducted recently (Deng et al., 2005; Frisby, 2011; Li & Stodolska, 2006, 2007; Song, 2010; Tsai, 2005; Walker, Deng, & Chapman, 2007; Walker, Halpenny, & Deng, 2011a; Walker, Halpenny, & Spiers, 2011b).

In previous research, cultural differences have been recognized as critical factors in the interpretation of leisure behaviour among different ethnic groups (Heinonen et al., 2005; Tsai, 2005; Walker & Deng, 2004). For example, Walker et al. (2011b) found that Chinese immigrants in Canada are more interested in participating in media-based activities and prefer passive activities such as spectator sports rather than active leisure activities such as sport participation. Yu and Berryman (1996) argue that Chinese immigrants are more work oriented than North Americans. In other words, leisure time physical activity is not a popular leisure choice for Chinese immigrants. Additionally, Tsai and Coleman (1999) found that Chinese immigrants in Australia encountered primarily interpersonal (e.g., partners) and socio-cultural (e.g., devalue physical activity) constraints to leisure; and Li and Stodolska (2007) argue that Asian Americans, including Chinese immigrants, have deep roots in their traditional cultural values that hinder them from achieving positive leisure experiences.

Although the researchers of the studies mentioned above consider culture and social factors to some degree, they fail to treat gender as a main variable in their research, with the exception of Frisby (2011). Her research focuses on how physical activity can be utilized to include Chinese immigrant women into their local communities. She also discusses the strategies of inclusion, including working from a broader socio-ecological framework, citizen engagement to promote mutual learning and policy/program development, improving leisure access policies, and enhancing community partnerships to facilitate cross-cultural connections.

Literature on Chinese immigrants is growing. Nevertheless, most of it focuses more on the psychological aspects, such as attitudes or satisfaction affecting leisure patterns and participation, and less is conducted from a perspective of a gendered division of labour, such as
household work and Chinese immigrant women’s constraints (e.g., lack of time, ethic of care) on leisure participation. Further, most literature views Chinese immigrants as a homogeneous population, and ignores the voices of subordinate groups (Chan, 1983) such as women and regional and linguistic sub-populations. Therefore, it is necessary for researchers to fill the gap in knowledge about Chinese immigrant women’s perceptions, experiences and negotiations of leisure, particularly leisure time physical activity.

2.1.3 Gender, Household Work and Leisure

Women encounter various constraints when participating in leisure activities, particularly lack of time, which I prefer to term ‘time constraint’, and women’s ethic of care which I term ‘role constraint’. In this section, literature on gender based time-use and household work is first reviewed to understand the reason for lack of time and gendered time-use, followed by an examination of the literature on how immigration influences gendered roles and relationships in a family.

2.1.3.1 Gendered Time-Use, Division of Household Work and Leisure

Women have increasingly been employed and enjoyed a modest decrease in their household work time in recent decades, but men’s contribution to household work has only increased slightly; thus, women are still mainly responsible for household work (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Linsay, 2008; Sayer, 2005; Stalker, 2011).

Regarding men’s and women’s leisure time, men’s and women’s total working time (both paid and unpaid labour) differs only slightly, and the number of hours of primary leisure time of men and women is remarkably similar (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Sayer, 2005). Additionally, parents spend significantly more time in unpaid work and have less time compared with nonparents; furthermore, among parents, mother’s free time declines more sharply than father’s because mothers give up free time and spend more time in childcare (Sayer, 2005; Stalker, 2011). Moreover, when the characteristics of men’s and women’s leisure are considered, men have more hours of pure leisure that is more enjoyable and relaxing than women’s because it is not contaminated by combination with unpaid work, while women’s leisure is less enjoyable because it is fragmented, interrupted and contaminated by unpaid labour (Bittman & Wajcman,
In other words, although men and women have similar amount of total work time and leisure time, the quality of these leisure times is gendered, which implies that “there continues to be a gender gap in leisure” (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000, p.185).

Moreover, because of the modern parenting ideology that parents are obliged to invest their time in children’s development (Coakley & Donnelly, 2004; Roeters & Treas, 2011; Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001), family leisure is often “purposive” since parents consider it as an appropriate context for parenting and as a better way to bond family relationships (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). However, purposive family leisure places more burdens on mothers than fathers because mothers facilitate father-child leisure (Seery & Crowley, 2000; Shaw, 2008; Stalker, 2011) through a process of emotional work and other forms of labour (De Vault, 2000; Shaw, 2008; Thompson, 1999). Thus, the father-child leisure activities demand additional time and energy of the mother (De Vault, 2000; Seery & Crowley, 2000; Shaw, 2008; Thompson, 1999) through a process of emotional work and other forms of labour. Further, Thrane (2000) argues that although household labour does not contribute to overall gender differences in leisure time during weekdays, it has a gender-specific constraining effect on women’s weekday leisure participation in Scandinavian countries, and being married and the presence of young children contributes to a decrease in leisure time during weekdays more for women than for men.

By analyzing the 2000 “Juggling It All Survey”, Wallace and Young (2010) conducted research on the time Canadian professional women and men spend in paid and unpaid work, how this relates to their participation in different leisure activities and whether time in paid and unpaid work has gender-specific effects on leisure participation. They found that men spent more time in paid work and leisure while women devoted more time to housework and childcare. Additionally, Wallace and Young found that neither housework nor childcare were related to men’s leisure participation, while women’s leisure participation was not related to the time they spend in housework, which contrasts with the usual notion that housework and childcare may decrease women’s participation in leisure. Wallace and Young suggest that men have greater opportunities for leisure compared with women, and this imbalance in leisure time stems from “unanticipated relationships between men’s involvement in housework and childcare and their leisure activities” (p.41). Additionally, they agree that household work and childcare work prevent more women than men from participating in leisure, and being married and having pre-
school children affect women’s leisure participation most. Wallace and Young’s study (2010) shows that gender inequality still exists in leisure participation.

Nevertheless, Wallace and Young’s (2010) research also have some weakness. They fail to take cultural factors into account when analyzing those data, as culture can “account for differences either in leisure behavior … or other feelings about leisure among putatively different cultural groups” (Chick, 2009, p.305). For example, Ho and Card (2001) found that Chinese female immigrants focus more on leisure as a subjective experience (e.g., state of mind) rather than certain activities (as cited in Walker & Wang, 2009). Therefore, as Fraser (1997) argues, gender equity needs to be re-conceptualized as a “complex notion comprising a plurality of distinct normative principles” (p.26). One of the five key principles that she proposes as crucial to gender equity concerns the distribution of leisure time. Research on the division of household labour in racial/ethnic families and immigrant families is less than for Canadian-born residents (Coltrane, 2010), leaving an important gap in the research for pluralistic societies such as Canada.

2.1.3.2 Gendered Division of Household Work in Urban China

Traditional Chinese society was considered to be a patriarchal society for thousands of years. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, Marxist-inspired women’s liberation was formally institutionalized (Chow, Zhang, & Wang, 2004). Meanwhile, the theoretical foundation of women’s studies and the sociology of women/gender in socialist China have been grounded in the historical interplay between Marxism and feminism in the changing sociopolitical context over time (Chow et al., 2004; Xu, 2009), which implies that Western feminism surely influences Chinese scholars and their studies of Chinese women.

Women scholars and activists in China began to critically examine the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) theoretical and practical approaches to women, and they interrogated the gender-blindness of Marxism and promoted women’s identity, self-realization, and equality (Lin et al., 1998, as cited in Chow et al., 2004). According to Chow et al. (2004), Chinese feminists share similar views with their Western counterparts of socialist feminism on the following four issues. First, women’s issues are subsumed by the Marxist emphasis on economic determinism and class analysis. Second, the examination of patriarchy, both public and private, is so important
that it should be stressed. Third, while Western feminists critically analyze the state-gender relationship, Chinese feminists argue that women’s liberation under socialism has encouraged women’s dependency on the state and prevented their self-development. Fourth, both Western feminists and Chinese feminists engaged in feminist consciousness raising.

Influenced by their counterparts in Western society, studies of gender and household work in China consistently show that Chinese women face a “double burden” or a “second shift” and, as in many other societies, Chinese women are responsible for household work which is not only unpaid but also unrewarding, tedious and difficult (Luxton, 1980; Pimentel, 2006; Zuo & Bian, 2001).

In urban areas, more than 90% of married women have paid work and act as co-breadwinners in a household, and simultaneously the uneven distribution of household work still commonly exists (Zuo & Bian, 2001). In contrast, Primental (2006) finds that fewer young women with paid work do the entire burden of household work compared with the older generation; and more young men share household work in various ways, though the percentage is still small. On the issues of domestic labour, Song (2012) argued that in Mao’s era domestic work was not completely invisible in the state discourse; on the contrary, the state tried to theorize domestic work, and place it in the appropriate position within the socialist production system. It could be concluded that in Mao’s era, domestic labour was at least valued as part of the whole production system theoretically although it was not compensated properly in practice. Since the 1980s, as Song (2012) argues from a perspective of social reproduction, because the gendered division of labour was preserved and woven into the production system, the state almost completely withdrew from the private area related to reproduction and domestic labour in the market-oriented reform era (usually called Deng’s era), which was actually a turning to neo-liberalism that emphasizes the privatization of reproduction including health care, education and child care work.

Moreover, Song (2012) investigates the cause of this transformation: domestic labor changed from being visible in state discourse to being invisible. She argues that the key reason for “women-going-back-home” resides in the gradual separation of public and private spheres in the course of marketization of the Chinese economy, in which reproduction has been pushed back to the private sphere (family) and is becoming more and more invisible in the state discourse, both
of which devalue women’s labour in the public sphere. Song (2011) further points out that the debates on whether women should retreat to the private sphere or not since the 1980s in China assert that “the mainstream ideology in China has shifted from an emphasis on Marxist theory of women’s liberation to that of liberalism” (p.5), and she stresses that Chinese feminists need to respond to potential structural/institutional oppression of women arising from this shift a position shared by political economists in Canada (e.g., Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001; Braedley & Luxton, 2010).

From a perspective of gender ideology, which is different perspective from Song (2011), on the one hand, Fang (2011) investigated the same issue of “women-going-back-home” by exploring Chinese traditional ideas of a gendered division of labour. She points out that the common belief is that Chinese women retreat to the private sphere because women always do a better job than men in housework and child care work. On the other hand, she stresses that the real reason is Chinese traditional ideas of a gendered division of labour, women being good wives and loving mothers, and male dominance. While both Song and Fang have identified capitalism (e.g., marketization and neoliberalism) and patriarchy as the causes of women’s oppression in China in theory, Wang (2011) attempted to resolve the issues in practice by calculating the value domestic labour in the Chinese gross national product (cf., Thomson, 2009; Wearing, 1990). She pointed out that Western feminists’ research on domestic labour focuses on nuclear families (i.e., husband, wife and children), and most of the domestic labour in Chinese nuclear families is done by grandmothers and other female family members, which is different than Western nuclear families. The point here is that no matter who is responsible for domestic labour, it is women who are responsible for the most part of it, although Wang (2011) failed to examine that issue further.

2.1.3.3 Immigrant Families and the Gendered Division of Labour

Immigration can involve stressful and challenging processes, which strongly influence the health, well-being and quality of life of immigrants who have come to a new country with a desire for a better life. The studies of gender and immigration have established that gender relations in immigrant families are likely to be reconfigured through migration and settlement
processes (Foner, 1997; Ho, 2006; Huang, Frisby, & Thibault, 2012; Hyman et al., 2004; Roopnarine, Krishnakumar, & Xu, 2009).

Foner (1997), for example, states that “[I]mmigrants are inevitably influenced by dominant U.S. cultural beliefs and values concerning marriage, family, and kinship that are disseminated by the mass media, schools, and other institutions” (p.979). On the one hand, because there are often no close relatives to support immigrant families in the new setting, immigrant men sometimes help their wives in childcare and other household tasks (Foner, 1997). On the other hand, women can gain authority in the household and obtain more power in relations with their spouses because of their paid work and larger contribution to their families’ income (Foner, 1997). Similarly, because immigrants are exposed to new value systems that embrace egalitarianism, they are influenced by these values so that immigrants may reorganize their internal working models regarding gender roles and change their behaviours (Roopnarine et al., 2009). Thus, Roopnarine et al. argue that gender differences in household labour narrow after couples migrate from cultural communities with extreme gender differences to those countries with more equal gender relationships.

Studies of Chinese immigrant family life show that immigration often brings the loss of social support, such as support from extended family, and constraints deriving from unfamiliar social institutions and cultural practices (Dona & Ferguson, 2004; Ho, 2006; Huang et al., 2012; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Zhang, Smith, Swisher, Fu, & Fogarty, 2011). To adjust to the new culture, immigrants have to redefine their cultural values, social norms and behaviour patterns, while the change in family structure, gender roles and gender relations can lead to conflicts in every area of family life (Ho, 2006; Huang et al., 2012; Zhou, 2000). Some research on Chinese immigrants’ marital relationships and expectations in Australia and North America (Da, 2003; Ho, 2006; Huang et al., 2012; Zhou, 2000) found that immigration affected men’s and women’s marital expectations and caused the change of gender roles. For example, Da (2003) found that wives expected husbands to be more supportive and caring in the domestic sphere. From a perspective of gender ideology, Zhou (2000) found that the gender roles of Chinese middle class women in the United States changed due to immigration, while Ho (2006) argued that immigrant women often experience downward occupational mobility and a re-orientation away from paid work and towards the domestic sphere.
Although gender relationships may change in most families after immigration, to a certain extent, particularly in the areas of housework, paid work, and marital interactions, some couples stick to their old ways in a new setting (Hyman et al., 2004). For example, some men feel that their status as main household providers is threatened by their wives’ paid work (Hyman et al., 2004). Further, the notion that immigrant women enjoy more liberty, freedom, and equality than in their country of origin has been challenged (Ho, 2006; Zhou, 2000). For example, in New York, Chinese working-class women are mainly responsible for the household work which implies that no major shift exists in gender ideology and household relations among working-class families (Zhou, 2000), and even Chinese immigrant women from the middle class are shifting back to traditional gender roles (Ho, 2006) and they are disadvantaged by the “Confucian ideology of male superiority, women’s heavier household responsibility, and America’s emphasis on women’s domestic role” (Zhou, 2000, p.458).

2.1.4 Summary

The body of research has assisted us to better understand what restricts women’s participation in leisure activities, how they can resist the *status quo* through leisure, and how immigrant women encounter and negotiate specific barriers. Among those constraints, lack of time and women’s ethic of care are the most important factors that hinder women from participating in leisure activities. Additionally, immigrant women encounter more constraints than majority women, such as lack of language skills and lack of social networks, and ethnic women may be subject to culturally based constraints. Further, leisure is closely related to free time, and time-use patterns are influenced by a gendered division of labour. Finally, gendered divisions of labour may change or stay the same after immigration. Rather, little is known about how Chinese immigrant women experience leisure, and how they negotiate the constraints in a new environment, how immigration influences their participation patterns, and how the gendered division of household work changes and influences Chinese immigrant women’s leisure time after immigration. Therefore, it is necessary to fill this gap in knowledge by exploring Chinese immigrant women’s leisure, particularly their leisure time physical activities.
2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study attempts to place women’s experiences of leisure pursuits and beliefs about leisure, motherhood and the division of labour in the home within macro-social structural explanations of gender relationships based on economic and institutional power in a capitalist society. In this section, the following is discussed. First, a generalized explanation of the division of household work is presented, followed by a section on the feminist political economic approach. The third section concerns gender ideology on household work and motherhood in China.

2.2.1 General Explanations of the Division of Household Work

Sociological approaches to the gendered division of labour can be classified into two broad categories: equity theory, which is also called resource theory or exchange theory, and gender ideology, which is also called doing-gender or role theory in literature on gender and household work (Brines, 1994, 1993; Nakhaie, 2009; Lewin-Epstein & Stier, 2006; Zou & Bian, 2001). Equity theory focuses on the economic exchange value of men and women’s work including paid and unpaid, from a micro perspective, and this theory derived from the notion of fair exchange (Nakhie, 2009). It also considers that household work is distributed unequally between the husband and wife in a heterosexual family because men and women have unequal amounts of exchange value, and this theory usually is reflected in both a resource approach and a dependency approach (Zuo & Bian, 2001; Brines, 1994). The resource approach is considered to be instrumental and symbolic in that income is instrumental in the family structure, and those with greater income will obtain more bargaining power to achieve desired goals, such as doing less or no housework, which is considered to be less valued (Brines, 1994; Nakhiie, 2009). The approach also focuses on time availability and time constraints (Lewein-Epstein & Stier, 2006; Nakhiie, 2009), with time constraint being one of the barriers that prevent women from participating in leisure (Deem, 1986). However, although the resource approach can explain how men and women negotiate housework (Nakhie, 2009), this approach fails to explain why men who earn less than their wives may be less inclined to do housework (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010). Fortunately, the gender ideology approach can shed light on this dilemma of resource theory.
Hochschild (1989) contends that men’s avoiding household work, even when they have time, is a strategy used by men to demonstrate masculinity, and to dominate women. In other words, household work is not gender-neutral as assumed in equity theory; instead of a process of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987) it is the “very structure of gender, norms of domesticity, and related ideological justifications” that determine the distribution of household work (Nakhaie, 2009). The gender ideology approach emphasizes “doing gender”, and the fundamental argument is that “the principle of sexual equality or men’s and women’s gender attitudes, beliefs, or ideas, are instrumental in the division of housework” (Nakhaie, 2009, p.401); and, according to gender theorists, household work is not gender-neutral work that women perform as these women lack economic bargaining power; rather, gender ideology is integral for women and men to reproduce unequal power relations (Sayer, 2005). On the one hand, this approach implies that “the performance of daily activities in the household and the emergent division of labor reproduces gender as a social category and reinforces male and female roles, identities, and attitudes” (Lewin-Epstein & Stier, 2006, p.1149). According to the social construction of gender theory, “gender is a cognitive and symbolic construct that helps individuals develop a sense of identity that is constructed in the process of interacting with others within a given community” (Reid & Whitehead, 1992, p.2, as cited in Liu, 2010, p.38). Further, Fox (2009) contends that gender is constructed through “strengthening of gender identity and the intensification of divisions of work and responsibility based on gender” (p. 6).

Based on the gender ideology/identity approach, researchers on women’s leisure regard the ethic of care as the cause of women’s lack of entitlement to participate in leisure, and also their perceptions of being a mother (Miller & Brown, 2005). In other words, it is the role of being a woman, a mother and a wife that prevents her from participating in leisure to relax, and pushes her to shoulder most of the burden of household work; consequently, she has less free time than a man. Further, Armstrong and Armstrong (1990) argue that role theory “ha[s] demonstrated that ideas are important and that women and men think and behave in different ways” (p.45). Nevertheless, they criticize the gender ideology approach in two ways. First, it fails to explain how women’s and men’s roles develop because society is personalized as an abstract entity beyond human control and beyond people’s ability to shape their lives. Second, this approach only utilizes roles and ideas to explain how things change, so it succeeds in justifying the
current social norms and practices in gender but fails to explain why and how the reality develops.

Similar to Armstrong and Armstrong, but more focusing on household work, Nakhaie (2009) argues that the gender ideology approach relates gender alone within the context of the household, and ignores that these ideas are produced within a broader social context. Similarly, Fox (2009) asserts that gender ideology and gender identity mean little if they fail to “resonate with a material and social reality organized around gender” (p.6). Fox further asserts that the gendered division of paid and unpaid work proves that gender has been deeply rooted in a society and has produced men’s domination and women’s subordination in power and privilege. Responding to women’s leisure pursuits, it can be understood that the reason why women lack leisure time and leisure participation is beyond the ethic of care or their ideas of being a mother and wife; rather, “it is the social relations and the social context in which it is embedded that can cause a problem, in the form of power inequality and related differences in privilege, entitlement, and vulnerability to exploitation” (Arat-Koc, 2001; Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997, as cited in Fox, 2009, p.286).

Nevertheless, both gender ideology and feminist political economists have partly examined the gendered division of labour and leisure participation. On one side, as Armstrong and Armstrong (1990) argue, the gender ideology approach emphasizes the determination of ideas too much and ignores the social, economic and political reality around gender; on the other side, equity theory addresses the determinant force of social resources and material resources without taking the impact of ideas into account. In other words, an individual’s social and material resources and gender ideology influence his/her gender behaviour interactively; and both material resources and ideas should be taken into account dialectically and historically. Thus, it is necessary to dialectically examine the changes in participants’ social resources and their gender ideology after immigration and the birth of their children through the lens of social reproduction.

2.2.2 Social Reproduction, Household Work and Mothering

Feminist political economy scholarship utilizes social reproduction, especially as it relates to women’s paid and unpaid work, as a tool to analyze the sex/gender division of labour and women’s work (Fox, 2009; Luxton, 1980, 2006; Luxton & Coreman, 2001). In Fox’s work, she
considers mothering as a ‘class act’, and states that “[t]his political-economic approach assumes that the daily practices that are central to the production of gender are about social reproduction, which, in turn, is work that is both socially essential and shaped by the organization of this society, and especially the capitalist economy” (p.34). Further, this framework is particularly used to “understand the impact of neo-liberalism—promoting privatization, deregulation, and free trade—on social reproduction” (O’Reilly, 2010, p.1136). According to O’Reilly (2010), for the great number of people, household members, mainly women, have to increase their household work to fill in the gaps that have arisen as a result of the privatization of services, and this increase the gender difference and inequality between couples.

2.2.2.1 What are Social Reproduction and Household Work?

Social reproduction is about daily practices. According to Bezanson and Luxton (2006), the concept of social reproduction refers to be “the processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the laboring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis (Laslett and Brenner 1989; Clarke 2000)” (p.3). They further explain that:

Social reproduction involves the provision of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety, and health care, along with the development and transmission of knowledge, social values, and cultural practices and the construction of individual and collective identities (Elson, 1998; Picchio, 1992) (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006, p.3).

With regard to the relationships between social reproduction and gender issues, Laslett and Brenner (1989) argue that the struggles between women and men about the responsibility for social production lie behind the historical construction of the gendered division of household labour (as cited in Fox, 2009, p.33). Thus, the feminist political economic approach “puts gender at the heart of modes of production, puts biological reproduction and its social and cultural realizations at the heart of social life, and attends to the labour involved in the production” (Luxton, 2006, p.35), and this approach also consider the exploration of different cultural forms that express different gendered experiences in any society (Luxton, 2006).

Actually, social reproduction is not an absolutely new concept; rather, it “builds on and deepens debates about domestic labour and women’s economic roles in capitalist societies;” therefore, social reproduction can be utilized to explore the “interaction and balance of power of various institutions (such as the state, the market, the family/household, and the third party) so that the
work involved in daily and generational production and maintenance of people is completed” (Bezanson & Luxton, 2006, p.3). Based on feminist political economists’ definition of social reproduction, social reproduction includes the provisions of food, clothing, shelter, basic safety, health care and the socialization of the next generation, including maintaining a household and caring for people (e.g., child care work, caring for adults) that is generational reproduction. However, socialist reproduction, which is a necessary process to enable workers to show up on the job and the reproduction of next generation, involves socially necessary labour, most of which is performed as household work by women (Braedley & Luxton, 2010). Further, the demands of family responsibilities force women to work for longer hours without being paid, and sometime make them have to depend on either their partner or state support, and even make them less competitive in the labour market with those people without family responsibility or those benefit from familial support (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Stalker, 2011a). Rather, scholars such as Eichler and Albanese preferred to use the term “household work” to describe what the concept of social reproduction covers.

Eichler and Albanese (2007) state that the housework literature “take[s] the definition of housework as self-evident and operationalizes this common sense understanding through a list of activities” (p.247). Responding to the ambiguity of the concept, they argue that housework is made up of far beyond a list of physical activities; rather, housework includes “provision of emotional support”, “maintaining contact with kin and friends”, “conflict resolution”, “crisis management”, “planning, managing and organizational work” and “the spiritual dimension of housework,” which are hidden by the common sense. Therefore, Eichler and Albanese (2007) define household work as the following: “Household work consists of the sum of all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual tasks that are performed for one’s own or someone else’s household and that maintain the daily life of those one has responsibility for” (p.248).

Additionally, Eichler and Albanese (2007) agree that household work includes both cares for adults and for children, and more important it changes over the life cycle. For example, changes occur with the arrival of children, which is generally understood to bring significant changes to a household. Besides the birth of a child, migration to another country dramatically changes household work. What is more, the changes of household work are constant and some of the changes affect how the household work is performed across different groups and across people,
though people still consider the label of the activities performed to be the same as they used to regard it (Eichler & Albanese, 2007). That is to say, household work *per se* is fluid and changes constantly; moreover, the performance of household work changes accordingly. Because of the fluidity of household work *per se* and its performance, it is necessary to consider social context in understanding gender differences in household work (Fox, 2009). Therefore, given that it is all right to say that gender difference is the dynamic of performance of household work, gender inequality will be lessened or enhanced with the arrival of children and/or immigration to another country, and the gender relationships in couples vary accordingly.

Employing the concept of social reproduction, and through the reflection on women’s experiences of household work and leisure, I explore the relationship among immigrant women’s experiences of leisure pursuits and household work in order to find out how the gender relational dynamics and allocation of household work change before and after they immigrated and their children were born.

### 2.2.2.2 Motherhood, Mothering and Child Care Work

The feminist political economic approach considers that daily practices are central to the analysis of production of gender, and “the social relations of parenthood are at the heart of gender” because “gender relations are the relationships arising in and around the reproductive arena” (Fox, 2009, p.34). Because this study is particularly about women’s experiences of child care work, mothering may be more accurately utilized in this study, but the work of feminist political economist suggests that motherhood and mothering affect a woman’s life significantly (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001; Fox, 2009; Luxton, 1980; Luxton & Corman, 2001). Nonetheless, motherhood and mothering are not exactly the same things, so as O’Reilly (2004) examines:

> [T]he term ‘motherhood’ refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood which is male-defined and controlled, and is deeply oppressive to women, while the work ‘mothering’ refers to women’s experiences of mothering which are female-defined and centered, and potentially empowering to women (p.3).

Moreover, in a patriarchal society, women who mother conforming to the institution of motherhood are regarded as “good” mothers, while women who mother beyond or against the institution of motherhood are regarded as “bad” mothers (O’Reilly, 2004).
Mothering is realized by the child care work done by mothers daily, and it is the foundation of social reproduction (Luxton, 2006). However, the practices, social relations, and the ideology of motherhood are also central to women’s subordination (Fox, 2006). For example, the birth of children limits women’s movement and participation in the broader social structure, and structural factors such as child care and financial stress discourage or encourage motherhood (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001). On the one hand, the way that motherhood impacts women’s lives depends on how gender, race, and social class interact (Fox, 2006). On the other hand, the ideology of motherhood affects women’s daily practices and the dominant ideology that reflects changing conditions in turn influences the ideology of motherhood (Fox, 2006). As Fox (2009) suggests:

> [H]ow motherhood affects a woman’s life, including the extent to which it participates in gender inequalities in her relationship, is strongly affected by the context in which couples become parents, their social class, and the constellation of resources that social class entails—especially the extent to which women have support from close family (p. 286).

With regard to women’s leisure participation, the ethic of care associated with good mothering (Wearing, 1984) is one of the main barriers to women’s gaining sufficient physical activity and leisure (Henderson & Allen, 1991). Good mothers will remain on-call, and put their own needs on hold. Wearing (1990) reveals the oppressive aspect of the main discourse on motherhood: the availability of mothers to their children at all times, and the children’s rights above the rights of mothers (as cited in Currie, 2004). Therefore, it could be assumed that mothering, the basis of social reproduction, is simultaneously affected both by the mother’s social context where mothering is experienced and by the mother’s ideas about mothering; both of them are interrelated and interact. In other words, one has to consider not only women’s ideas about mothering, but also their social resources while examining the relationships in household work and leisure participation, which reflects gender relationship and gender inequality in a household.

### 2.2.3 Gender Ideology on Household Work and Motherhood in China

The concept of ideology utilized in sociological theory was derived from Marxian thought and refers to “a legitimating mechanism which distorts the true relationship of material production
while forming a superstructure based on an infrastructure consisting of these relationships” (Wearing, 1984, p.15). The ideology itself represents the interests of the ruling class as the interests of all members of society (Eagleton, 2007; Wearing, 1984). Traditional Chinese society was considered to be a patriarchal society over thousands of years. The central feature of the patriarchal structure in the gendered division of labour is captured by one of the principles of Confucius (551-479 B.C.): “men dominate the outside, and women dominate the inside”; the statement suggests that men are in charge of the external affairs (public sphere) without being concerned about household work while women are expected to take responsible for everything within the home (private sphere) including the household work (Leung, 2003; Lu, Maume, & Bellas, 2000). This principle means that women are expected to remain inside and not allowed knowledge of the outside world, and Confucian ethics considered women’s subordination to men as natural and proper because women were unworthy or incapable of education (Leung, 2003). Because women are expected to shoulder the responsibilities of households, they are care givers in traditional Chinese society (Yu & Chau, 1997). For centuries, the female ideal had been that of ‘virtuous wife and good mother’ (xiangqi liangmu), meaning it was a woman’s duty “to create the optimal family and home environment necessary to build a harmonious state” (Nyitray, 2010, p.150).

In Mao’s era, women were expected to put production first and put the needs of their families second, and women were considered to “hold up half of the sky” (Leung, 2003; Zhou, 2000). In Mainland China, most women are employed because of the successful integration of women into social production (Liu, 2010; Pimentel, 2006). Under the State gender policy of “the same-work, same-pay”, women enjoyed high employment and were “led to believe that participation in paid work was the final solution to the ultimate liberation (Andors, 1993)” (as cited in Zuo, 2001, p.1125). Nevertheless, the most significant impact of Mao’s policies was that “women were engaged in mostly in the form of reproductive activities that were crucial to keeping down the costs of social reproduction” (Leung, 2003, p. 365).

In the post-Mao era, when the CCP initiated the process of joining global capitalism, the country has witnessed “the rapid rise of neo-liberalism, social Darwinism, capitalist consumerism in the process of privatization and class and gender polarization” (Wang & Ying, 2010, p.40). Meanwhile, because of concerns about population growth and economic
development (Pimentel, 2006), women shoulder a double burden of paid work and household work, and are denied access to certain jobs and career advancement (Leung, 2003). Furthermore, women are further considered to be suited to housework and there has been a resurgence of the traditional female “virtuous wife and good mother” (Leung, 2003; Pimentel, 2006). According to Leung (2003), men largely do not support gender equality because the large scale entry of women into the workforce has been seen as a threat to patriarchal authority, and the family is reaffirmed as the basic socio-economic unit of socialist society. Therefore, women should inherently sacrifice themselves for the family.

Regarding motherhood in Chinese culture, the term “mother” suggests sacrifices based on the Confucian code of women’s conduct in the practice of motherhood—“virtuous mother” with selfless and devoted features; the mother’s suffering from oppression was hidden by her devotion to the family and her personal feelings are ignored (Xu & Yuan, 2010). Mothers in Chinese culture usually took responsibility for nurturing, caring for, and educating children, as well as looking after such domestic affairs as cooking and cleaning; and they were also expected to be role models for their offspring (Xu & Yuan, 2010).

The traditional Chinese female role is “virtuous wife and good mother”, and household work was their main duty; further, in Mao’s era, women “[held] up half of the sky” with extra burden of household work. Currently, women still shoulder a double burden of both paid work and household work. All these studies show that gender ideologies may change in accordance with social context, and women still undergo gender inequality in gender division of labour.

2.2.4 Summary

The sociological approach to a gendered division of labour usually encompasses two broad categories: equity theory and gender ideology, both of which shed light on the understanding and examination of this topic. Equity theory shed light on the bargaining power in couples but fails to consider the impact of ideology on gender dynamics; gender ideology believes in “doing gender” and the impact of ideology on gender dynamics but fails to take the social and material context into account. A feminist political economic approach employs the concept of social reproduction to investigate the gendered division of labour, stressing the essentiality of household life, which is the base and daily practices of social reproduction, to understand the
impact of neo-liberalism on Chinese immigrant women’s life. Gender ideology also significantly impacts on women’s behaviours and practices of household work and leisure pursuits. Therefore, in this study, the exploration of Chinese immigrant women’s experiences of household work, child care work, and leisure are based on the integration of the concept of social reproduction and individuals’ gender ideology, including the ideology of motherhood.
Chapter 3 Methodology and Method

This chapter provides an overview and rationale for the methods that were used in this study. The purpose of this research was to explore Chinese immigrant women’s reported experiences of leisure time physical activity and their perceptions of the relationship between leisure pursuits and their gendered role as women, wives and mothers. A brief description of the selection process and the participants who volunteered is followed by an explanation of the interview and data analysis processes. In the final section, an outline and justification for how results are presented is given.

3.1 Purpose of Approach

The study was exploratory in nature and aimed to explore perceptions, attitudes, opinions and beliefs concerning leisure participation of immigrant women. With this intention, qualitative interviews were employed to explore recent immigrant women’s experiences of leisure, particularly their leisure time physical activity, because this method allows in-depth exploration. As Warren (2002) states, qualitative interviewing aims to understand the meaning of respondents’ experiences and life worlds. Similarly, Johnson (2002) argues that “[i]n-depth interviewing begins with a common sense understanding of some lived cultural experiences and aims to explore and uncover those meanings hidden from ordinary views and provide a more reflective understanding about the nature of that experience” (p.106). Moreover, being a recent immigrant from Mainland China, and a mother with young children myself, I share the same cultural and educational background, and similar experiences of adjusting to a new environment with the recent immigrant women from Mainland China whom I interviewed, and this supports Johnson’s (2002) point. He states that in-depth interviewing may be used to explore or check an insider’s understanding, and to see whether a researcher, who is an insider, and the respondents share similar perceptions, attitudes and experiences.

Given its features, in-depth interviewing was justified for use in this research. As an insider, I was able to provide an insider’s view on many of the issues, and relate many of their experiences to my own; being an insider allowed me to be closer to the respondents, and also
made it easier to gain trust from the respondents, and for them to be more willing to share their stories with me.

3.2 Participants

Immigrant women from Mainland China with young children were the target population. This study focused on women of this background for two major reasons. As indicated in the introduction, there are 632,310 Chinese women in Canada according to the 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2006c). Furthermore, a great deal of scholarship is concerned with Chinese women’s work in the labour market while less is known about their household work and leisure experiences, especially mothers with young children.

In total, ten participants were recruited from downtown Toronto. They were contacted by phone through my personal connection with four of them; six others were recruited through snowball sampling, which was the most appropriate because the interviews included quite personal questions, meaning that establishing rapport and trust was crucial. Based on my recruiting criteria: 1) the participants landed in Canada between 2007 to 2012, and were born in Mainland China; 2) all of them have at least one young child four years of age or younger; 3) the minimum educational qualification required for participants is a college degree. Specific information has been summarized in Table 1 (see p.31).

3.3 Data Collection

Interview questions were determined based on the research questions about whether leisure patterns and household work change after immigration and the birth of children, and the strategies women employed to negotiate household work and leisure pursuits. Because of my concern about the fluidity and subjectivity of perceptions of household work and leisure, emphasis was placed on participants’ perceptions of both household work and leisure. As indicated in the literature, traditional Chinese devalue physical activity, and thus more stress was placed on their descriptions of individual and family physical activity. Thus, the questions asked in the interviews were an attempt to explore participants’ experiences of household work and leisure pursuits to figure out the gender dynamic in the gendered division of labour.
The interview guide (Appendix D) was set up based on topics, beginning with questions on background information such as age, occupation, time in Canada and so on, followed by questions about perceptions of leisure and their experiences both in China and in Canada. The second section of the interviews focused on participants’ perceptions and daily practices of household work before and after immigration and the birth of their child. The third part of the interview focused on participants’ husband practices in leisure before and after immigration and the birth of their child. The final section of the interviews addressed the strategies they used to balance employed work/studies, household work and leisure, along with their ideas about ideal leisure patterns.
Table 1: Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name*</th>
<th>Highest Qualification Obtained in China</th>
<th>Work Status</th>
<th>Years in Canada</th>
<th>Number of Children and Age (years)</th>
<th>Husband’s Work Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>Stay-at-home-mother/un-employed</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>2 (teenager and 3)</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>Full time study</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>2 (5 and 3)</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>Full time study</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1 (18 months)</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidia</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>2 (10 and 3)</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>Master of Science</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicky</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts</td>
<td>Full time study</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1 (3)</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Part-time employed</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>3 (12, 7 and 1)</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amanda</td>
<td>Bachelor of Science</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2 (3 and 1)</td>
<td>Full-time employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Master of Sciences</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1 (3 months)</td>
<td>Full-time study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the participants.
Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were held over a period of four weeks, and four interviews were held at participants’ homes, four interviews were held on campus and two were held at my home. Questions were open-ended in order to obtain participants’ own views and voices. Questions were semi-structured and probes and follow-up questions were asked, depending on the participants’ answers. Most of the interviews lasted more than an hour, and each participant agreed to a further interview if needed. All the interviews were recorded, and I took notes throughout all the interviews to ensure active listening, avoid interrupting the participant, and maintain the flow of the conversation.

Both English and Chinese versions of detailed informed consents (Appendix A and B) were given to the participants, but all of them preferred to read the Chinese version. Before being interviewed, participants signed the informed consent (Appendix B). Two copies of the consent form were signed, one each for participants and the researcher’s records. The participants could choose to be interviewed in Mandarin or English, and all of them decided to be interviewed in Mandarin. Initial questions on background and demographic information were asked to help the participants to feel comfortable about the conversation. Although the interview guide was used, questions were not restricted. Bearing all the questions in mind, questions were asked depending on the participants’ own flow to encourage them to explore the questions in their own words while ensuring that all the topics were covered in interviews.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the interview data was done inductively. By focusing on the participants’ experiences of leisure pursuits and the allocation of household work, the purpose was to uncover immigrant women’s perceptions of leisure pursuits and household work. This was done not only through looking at the answers to specific questions, but also through analysis of participants’ feelings. All the recorded interviews were transcribed immediately following the interview in order to supplement the transcripts with noted observations of participants’ body language and facial expressions.

Following Hsiung (2009), initial open coding was carried out using descriptive categories, such as the leisure activities, the type of household work they did, and expressed attitudes towards and feelings about the leisure activities and household work after immigration and/or with the
arrival of a child. The transcripts were read through once to obtain an overall sense and general impression, and themes and patterns were obtained through open coding. Open coding is based on a grounded theory approach, and this model argues that “coding, recognizing concepts and themes, and theory development are parts of one integrated process” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.221). Further, this approach opens the possibility for gaining fresh and rich results (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Axial coding was then used to develop initial themes that reflected what the participants said about their leisure pursuits and household work. Some of these themes revolved around valuation, beliefs and responsibilities. Particular attention was given to perceptions of the differences between child care work and family leisure time.

After the interviews were systematically coded, concepts and themes were categorized and synthesized, followed by a search for patterns in the data. Lastly, the data were interpreted to gain results and findings.

3.5 Limitations of this Study

There are two main limitations in this study in terms of methodology and researcher status. First, because this study is qualitative and exploratory in nature, it was not practical to employ a large sample size. Thus, making generalizations to larger populations would be inappropriate. Additionally, the participants were recruited from a university, and most of the participants were students when the interviews were done. Furthermore, as university students, the participants were likely to have more resources than other Chinese immigrant women, and to be exposed more to the mainstream culture in mothering. Thus, their experiences may differ widely from other members of Chinese communities with different educational backgrounds and socio-economic statuses. However, in no way does this minimize the importance of their stories. Second, it is arguable that the analysis may be limited to some degree because I am a Chinese immigrant woman with young children, which makes me an “insider”. Throughout the interviews, some participants assumed that I should have known the answers and they would not elaborate on their opinions; but I encouraged them by saying, “I would really like to know what you mean in your own words” with an emphasis on “no right or wrong answer to any questions.” However, I also took advantages of being an insider. Being an insider allowed me to build a closer rapport with the participants so that rich resources were obtained through the
interviews. Furthermore, as an insider, I was able to empathize with their concerns and obtained deep and likely accurate understanding when interpreting their statements. For example, I did understand why Lisa felt guilty about her daughter’s failure in school and why she enjoyed herself while doing household work.
Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

This chapter provides the results of this study in two parts, followed by the discussion of these results. The first section examines the participants’ household work experiences including their experiences of mothering both before immigration and after immigration. The findings show that, because of the downward social mobility of immigrant women after immigrating to Canada, gender differences were reinforced and they retreated to traditional gender roles. The second part concerns their leisure experiences after the birth of their children in Canada, which shows how household work significantly influenced their leisure experiences and gender differences also were reproduced in their leisure experiences. The third section discusses the relationship of participants’ household work and leisure experiences, both of which show the inequality between men and women resulting from agendered division of labour.

4.1 Household Work: Reinforcement of Gendered Inequalities

Many of the new immigrant women from Mainland China, like other recent immigrants to Canada, experienced a sudden increase in their housework and child care responsibilities after immigrating to Canada. Half of the participants were professionals before immigration. They experienced downward social and economic mobility due to the barriers immigrants encountered in the labour market (Ng, 2007). As a consequence, many of them went back to university to obtain access to higher social and economic status. Many of the women I interviewed belonged to this category. All the participants have at least one young child under age of four. Additionally, because of the absence of social support networks that new immigrant women used to rely on for housework and childcare in their country of origin (Liu, 2010), housework and child care work increased dramatically after immigration, especially for those women with young children.

4.1.1 Household Work: Essential to Life

People have their own perceptions of things based on their own worldviews and understanding of the world. In this study, all participants told me that they were mainly responsible for housework and child care work, especially when they were on maternity leave, which confirms
the previous studies of gendered divisions of labour (Fox, 2009; Lanchance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Linsay, 2008; Sayer, 2005). Fox (2009) argues that the reason for women doing most of the housework on maternity leave is that caring for a baby entails doing some household work, because women were at home and felt pressured to cook, clean and tidy. Furthermore, all of the participants considered that housework consisted of similar kinds of repetitive instrumental activities, such as cooking, doing laundry, grocery shopping, cleaning and tidying. This finding is similar to the common assumptions about housework (Bianchi et al., 2000; Liu, 2011; Shaw, 1988), while it is different from Eichler and Albanese’s (2007) definition of household work which consists of the sum of all physical, mental, emotional and spiritual tasks. The participants’ relatively narrow definition of household work implies that they may have done much more work than they defined as household work, such as those chores hidden behind the instrumental tasks (Eichler & Albanese, 2007).

With regard to the issues of housework and child care work, nine of ten participants regarded both as a kind of work, with child care work as a part of household work, which is consistent with previous studies (Eichler & Albanese; 2007; Luxton, 1980). For example, Eichler and Albanese (2007) argue that “housework and care work are two sides of the same coin” (p.243), which involves the same work but different categories. When being emphasized as activity, it is housework, while the work is categorized as care work when the emphasis is on the relational aspects of the work. Grace, a mother of a three months old baby, considered child care work is more than housework, because taking care of children required more skills and talents than doing housework.

Compared with other participants, Bella and Lisa had a relatively profound understanding of the nature of housework and child care work as they realized the essentiality of household work in life -- daily practices that ensure daily and generational reproduction (Braedley & Luxton, 2010; Luxton, 1980, 2006). Lisa, a mother of three children, for example, believed that housework was essential to life although she did not like doing it, and she said:

I think household work is a kind of work… it is unpaid… Nobody pays for you but what you do is very important [to the family], but it is very common to perform… [Why is it important?] You have to do the household work because it is essential to our lives. (Lisa)
Bella, who was a manager before immigration, described the features of housework and child care work in detail:

Housework is certainly a kind of important job no matter either man or woman could be responsible for it. And housework and child care work is different from paid work in that first it is essential to life and you cannot avoid it, and secondly it is an absolutely full-time job, a 24 hours job, and you must ensure the quality of this job. It is absolutely true to mother with young children in the first year. (Bella)

Both Lisa and Bella accurately pointed out two unique but contradictory features of unpaid household work—unpaid but essential, which is shared by the feminist political economist’ examination of household work (e.g., Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983, 2001; Luxton, 1980; Luxton & Corman, 2001).

Regarding their feeling about household work, most of the participants said that child care work was demanding, and they felt overwhelmed by the responsibility of taking care of a baby alone at home. They also strongly felt trapped at home. For example, Bella told me that she seemed to be controlled by her baby, so she did not have any time and space of her own. She also said that even when she was sick, she had no right to ask for a leave as in a paid job, and had to take care of the baby, especially in the first year after the baby was born, as she had no help from her extended family members.

Most of the participants considered that housework was not only tedious, repetitive, boring and fragmented but also unavoidable and essential to life, which confirms the previous studies on household work (Luxton, 1980; Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001). They also felt negatively about housework. Luxton (1980) explains why women usually feel badly for performing housework, and she argues that “[T]he central task—the production of life itself—is an ongoing, endlessly recurring process” (p.21). Kate described her views on housework, and she said, “Housework includes almost those activities, and you have to do it every day… and almost the same tasks… I am very bored with doing housework.” Kate’s ideas and feelings of housework were shared by other participants, who did not obtain any support from extended family members, either. Other than the eight participants who classified both housework and child care work as work, two had a different view. Grace believed that housework could not be classified as work, because she could choose to do more or less work depending on the time she had; however, she considered
that child care work was work because it required more skills than housework. Amanda was not very sure about whether child care work could be part of housework, but she also felt negatively about housework, and she said:

I particularly hate mopping the floor, and I seldom did cleaning before my son came back from China… It is for the children that I have to mopping the floor every day to keep clean… you know… every day! I used to do cleaning once a week. (Amanda)

Although most of the participants felt negatively about housework, Amanda, Lily and Grace reported positive feelings about performing housework. Lily, for instance, obtained help from her mother in the performance of household work, and she said, “I love doing grocery shopping with family and cooking breakfast for my family…. I feel cozy when making and having breakfast with my family.” Grace, whose husband was very supportive, told me that performing housework seemed to be leisure to her to some extent as she did not have to be with the baby when doing it; rather, it was an escape from the demanding child care work.

Overall, although most of the participants disliked doing housework, they believed that it was an essential and significant part of their lives. As Lisa said, “[Household work and child care work] are life per se, but not anything else… but household work and child care work are not valued by that society… they subordinate women’s social status.” Lisa’s comments on household work and child care work coincides with Luxton (2006) argument that household work was essential to production and social reproduction.

4.1.2 Downward Life: Immigration Matters

Immigration is a stressful and challenging process. In this study, most participants experienced downward movement of social and economic status, but retained high cultural capital. Chinese immigrant women have to remodel their lives to fit into a different employment market, gender norms and welfare system (Huang, Frisby, & Thibault, 2012). For those women who decided to go to back to university in order to gain a Canadian degree that may allow them to have an opportunity to be employed in the labour market, they also had to adjust to a new academic atmosphere managing the double responsibilities of being a mature student and a mother. Most of the women I interviewed had worked as professionals and contributed to the family income. Social class has been routinely defined according to income, occupation and education.
However, the data from this project challenge this definition. On the one hand, holding on to their pre-migration middle-class status, the participants identified themselves as members of the educated middle class. On the other hand, as members of visible ethnic minority, they were uncertain and ambiguous about their social position in the host country (Wu, 2010). Immigrants lost most of the social support and social resources that they had in their country of origin, and experienced a decline of their social capital (Huang et al., 2012; Ho, 2006; Liu, 2010; Man, 1997, 2002, 2004; Wu, 2011; Zhou, 2000). After immigrating to Canada, some of them changed from career women to stay-at-home mothers (Huang et al., 2012; Wu, 2011). Moreover, in contemporary China, it is common for middle-class families to employ domestic helpers, usually women from rural areas. Additionally, Chinese families are typically close-knit following the Confucian tradition, and they live with their extended family members under the same roof or nearby (Ho, 2006). Young couples rely on their mothers or mothers-in-law to do the household work and take care of the young children (Wu, 2010). Thus, this household work arrangement allows Chinese women to continue working full-time even when they have young children. However, because of immigration and without the shared child-rearing from the extended family, the household work dramatically increases when one immigrates to another country (Eichler & Albanese, 2007; Ho, 2006; Wu, 2011), and women are left to be solely responsible for the household work (Ho, 2006).

In this study, most of the participants themselves or their husbands or both were pursuing their post-secondary education at universities when the interviews were done, though they already had post-secondary degrees before immigration. They decided to go back to school to obtain a Canadian degree and to be re-educated to increase their potential opportunities to obtain a job or to continue their careers, because their foreign degrees and work experiences were not recognized (because of employers’ requirement for “Canadian experience” in the Canadian labour market) (Man, 1997, 2004; Huang et al., 2012). Unfortunately, a Canadian degree and limited Canadian work experiences may not ensure the skilled immigrants, who “deskilled” in the host country (Man, 2004), to obtain a professional job and continue their careers in a new environment. In this sense, immigrant women’s social-economic status descended from professionals to student or housewives, from middle class to low-income status. To some extent, most of the participants could be considered to be low in social and economic capital but high in
cultural capital, which may produce contradictions in the practices of mothering and their socio-economic status (this is discussed subsequently).

Lisa, in her late 30s, was head of a department of a state-owned company before immigrating to Canada. She was an on-call nurse after graduating from a college program when the interview was done. She noted that it was easier for a male than a female to obtain a job in her field. Bella, who was a manager of a company before immigration, had been looking for a professional job after her graduation from a college program. She told me that she had sent dozens of resumés applying for jobs but did not receive even one response. Thus, she was impelled to work as a waitress in a restaurant to make the ends meet when the interview was done.  

Kate, in her 40s, was an accountant in a bank and Sidia was head of a department of a state-owned publishing house, both of whom did not attend any post-secondary program after immigration. Sidia attended an ESL program to improve her English with no intention to continue her career, while Kate became a stay-at-home mother or, as she called herself—a housewife.

Apart from the downward mobility with regard to their careers, the participants also experienced a gendered downward movement of their status in the family (Huang, et al., 2012), which is reflected in a dramatic increase in the performance of the household work. Of ten new immigrant women from Mainland China I interviewed, five (Kate, Lisa, Amy, Sidia and Bella) used to be professionals, and they reported a dramatic increase in housework and child care work after immigration, while they seldom did housework before immigration because they had their mothers or mother-in-laws to help out with housework or could afford to purchase the help provided by other women. Kate, who is in her 40s, used to be an accountant in a bank and is now a housewife. She said:

I did not have to bother about any housework or household work before immigration as my mother lived with me and she took care of everything… I was just a helper. Both my

---

1 The participants sometimes felt that their inability of obtain work similar to their work in China was a result of racism; however, because I did not pursue this in the interviews or seek other evidence, it should become a suggestion for future research.
Kate told me that it was after immigration that she really began to learn how to cook and clean; and it was after immigration that she totally became a housewife, which she had never thought of before. She felt frustrated with the reality of being a housewife, but she tried her best to convince herself to accept the reality. As Zhou notes (2000), Chinese women consider a paid job as an important resource for self-identity and being independent because of the promotion of gender equality in education and the labour force in contemporary China. However, a housewife is considered to be useless and out of date in China (Ho, 2006).

Even without the help from extended families before immigration, some of the participants were able to afford to hire a house helper to do all the housework before immigration. For example, Lisa, who used to be manager of a company and is now a part time nurse, told me that she hired a nanny to take care of her son and do the housework; and what she needed to do was to arrange the tasks every day, and it was not necessary for her husband to bother about any housework. But now she said, “I do all the housework by myself because I cannot afford to hire a helper any more in Canada.” Lisa missed her paid job, her easy life, and the assistance from her mother in child care work, and the nanny’s help with housework before immigration. In many ways, new domestic arrangements in Chinese households free middle class women from performing household work and to gain more time at work and leisure, but it fails to eliminate their ultimate responsibilities for household labour (Ho, 2006; Lee, 2002). In a society influenced by Confucianism, women are usually expected to carry out or supervise domestic work.

In addition to the influence of cultural gender ideology, the downward movement of social and economic context in turn influenced the allocation and performance of household work. From a broader context, both Kate and Lisa did not have to do much housework before immigration because they gained the help from their extended family—a kind of social support and resources, and they were able to purchase help in household work. Both of these kinds of help required relatively high economic and material resources. However, because of their downward socio-economic status, especially in the initial stage after immigration, they lost the assistance and became the main care givers of their families. Before immigration they believed that gender relationships were equal both in unpaid housework and paid work because all of them had
professional jobs and were not compelled to shoulder as much household work as after immigration. In fact, the unpaid housework had been transferred to other women such as their mothers, mothers-in-law or nannies who have lower social-economic status in society.

Furthermore, Kate not only lost her social support from the extended family but also the power to negotiate with her husband, because she was not employed. She said, “Now he [her husband] is the person who earns money to support the family, so I should do all the unpaid housework and child care work.” Kate conformed with and was practicing the Chinese traditional gender ideology—man dominates the outside while woman dominates the inside, and her job is helping the husband and educating the children. As research has demonstrated, immigration to Canada often leads to the reinforcement of gender inequality (Man, 1997, 2002, 2004).

Meanwhile immigrant men, who were not accustomed to doing housework before immigration, also experienced a small percentage increase in their household duties because of their downward class mobility. Amy, for instance, lived with her parents-in-law before immigration and she did not have to do any household work, so Amy had never thought that unpaid housework could cause tension in her marriage after immigration, especially with the arrival of her son in Canada. She told me that she had to pretend to be sick to push her husband to share housework, such as dishwashing; and once she persuaded her husband to clean the toilet by showing how great a task it was and how appreciative she was for what her husband had done for her. Amy said to me, “You need to fight with wits and courage in a marriage,” Sidia, in her 40s, insisted that whether a husband did housework or not depended on whether a wife had required her husband to share the unpaid housework in the initial stage of their marriage, and she said, “It is women that spoil men and allow them not to do any homework…the first is his mother, and then his wife.” She showed her dissatisfaction with her husband’s criticism of her ways of doing housework in the interview, but she insisted on her own way of doing household work by intentionally ignoring her husband’s criticism. Although she told me that her husband helped out with cooking sometimes, she was mainly responsible for the housework and child care work, and her husband partly shared caring for his son, which he seldom did before immigration.

Finally, both Sidia and Kate were housewives and they lacked of power to negotiate with their husband about household work; Amy and Lisa were full time students, and they might have
potential power to negotiate with their husbands to some extent. Sidia and Kate not only lost their social support and material resources but also the power to bargain with their husbands, while they gained some share of housework from their husbands, which rarely happened before immigration.

Overall, both Chinese immigrant men and women experienced downward mobility in terms of household work, while women shoulder more work than men in the private sphere after immigrating to Canada, implying that immigration negatively influenced women more than men in the household and helped to reproduce gender inequality.

4.1.3 Gender Differences Reproduced: Household Work Matters

Housework and child care work not only increase dramatically after immigrating to a new country but also increase significantly with the arrival of children (Eichler & Albanese, 2007). Further, the division of household work becomes more traditional with the arrival of the children (Eichler & Albanese, 2007; Fox, 2009).

In this study, eight participants (Amanda, Sandy, Kate, Bella, Amy, Lisa, Grace and Sidia) had to take care of their children by themselves and reported a great increase in their household work after their children were born due to extra child care work. In Chinese tradition, grandmothers usually come to help out with taking care of the mothers and the infants. However, because of financial problems or visa issues, Sandy and Amy’s mothers could not come to Canada to help them with childcare work. Bella did not plan to ask her mother to take care of her and the baby at the very beginning, because she thought it was her and her husband’s responsibility to take care of their baby, and she did it the same way as her parents. Grace did not require her mother or mother-in-law to help out, because firstly she and her husband both believed that it was their duty to take care of the baby, and secondly she was afraid of not getting along well with her mother-in-law. Kate, Lisa and Sidia had been mothers before immigrating to Canada, and they believed that they had experience with taking care of another baby, and further because their mothers or mothers-in-law were not strong enough to take the long flight from China to Canada to help out.
In order to ensure their children’s well-being and making a family, mothers usually do extra household work with the arrival of their children, which makes them feel exhausted and stressed (Fox, 2006). In this study, most participants considered housework and child care work to be connected. When their babies began to crawl, they often mentioned the need to keep the floor clean. For example, Amanda, a PhD graduate student told me that before her son lived with her, she did cleaning once a week and laundry once every two weeks. After her son came back from China, she had to mop the floor every day to keep clean and wash her children’s clothes by hand in order to ensure her children’s well-being; and she had to do laundry every week. Amanda told me she hated doing cleaning or mopping the floor.

Further, being at home full time is a key source of pressure to do housework (Fox, 2009), and that is why most of the participants reported they did more housework when they were on maternity leave. Bella, in her middle 30s, said to me, “Child care work is a huge project, and it is not as simple as people assume. To me, the household work as much as tripled after my son was born.” Bella worked part time before her son was born, and her husband shared part of the housework. After the birth of her son, Bella was on her maternity leave, and she believed that she had to and ought to be responsible for the child care work and housework because she was at home. Sharing a similar point with Bella, Kate, a mother of two, said, “I should be responsible for all the housework and childcare work, because my husband earns money to support the family while I stayed at home.” Moreover, being at home full time produces a dynamic that drives women to do more housework because they need to have a sense of being productive and to avoid a feeling of owing their husbands (Fox, 2009). Bella and Kate’s sense of being productive at home full time justified their responsibilities for the housework and child care work, and they appreciated their husband’s share of those tasks.

With the alteration of social and economic context, the allocation of housework and childcare work also altered because of the scarcity of time. Immigrant fathers are pushed to share the housework and childcare work with the arrival of the children because of the downward movement of social and economic capital after immigrating to Canada (Foner, 1997; Ho, 2006). Furthermore, men usually share non-routine household work that can be generally done when it is convenient for them while women are largely responsible for the tasks that require daily attention at specific times (Wallace & Young, 2010), and men perform the domestic work as a
way to help out but do not consider it as part of their obligations (Fox, 2009; Luxton, Rosenberg, & Koc, 1990). In this study, Lisa’s husband had to share childcare work. However, he had the right to choose what he liked to do, while Lisa was expected to perform the household work that her husband avoided. Amy, who was in her early 30s, told me that because the household work doubled after her child was born, she had no time of her own and no personal space. She thought that feeding baby, changing diapers, helping baby fall asleep and more cleaning were the extra housework due to the arrival of her son. It was usually Amy who did most of the work while Amy’s husband usually played with the baby when the baby was in a good mood or when Amy had to make dinner. Further, according to Amy, her husband usually said to her that “I have helped you wash the dishes or I have helped you…” Amy’s case indicates that her husband strongly believed that doing housework and child care work was Amy’s responsibilities but not his, and Amy should appreciate what he had done for her, and few men felt responsible for the housework.

Most of the participants have their household work allocated in gendered ways because of both the scarcity of time and lack of enough social resources to support them. Their husbands shared housework and child care work that seemed to conform to their gender ideology/gender roles as men, husbands and fathers. For all of the women in this study, Chinese traditional ideologies of being a virtuous wife and a good mother that emphasize selfless giving no doubt influence the allocation of housework and child care work. They generally believed that it was more natural and normal for them to do household work.

Bella, for instance, told me that although she felt equal to her husband, in housework and child care work there was a gendered division of labour. For example, Bella was in charge of her son’s daily life such as bathing, feeding, changing diapers and so on while her husband was mainly concerned about her son’s personality development, which she regarded as important work. Thus, on weekends Bella’s husband usually took her son out to have leisure time physical activities such as hiking, running, or playing soccer while Bella did the housework, such as cleaning, tidying, cooking and doing laundry. Bella told me that it was a better way to get things done because of the scarcity of time. In addition, Bella believed that she was more attentive than her husband in child care work, suggesting that gender ideology had great impact on Bella’s perceptions of being a care giver. Vicky, in her early 30s, felt equal to her husband in terms of
household work; however, similar to other participants’ husbands, her husband seldom did any cleaning no matter how hard Vicky pushed him to. If it was her husband’s turn to cook, he asked for a delivery from a restaurant.

Although some participants reported that their husbands shared part of the housework, they usually were in charge of the tedious, boring, repetitive and dirty housework (Luxton, 1980; Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001), such as cleaning, doing laundry and those tasks that their husbands were reluctant to do. Similar to Bella’s case, Amanda sometimes stayed at home and did all the cleaning while her husband took the children to be involved in some outdoor activities. Amy, Kate, Bella and Lily reported they carried out their husbands’ plans and theories of educating children. For example, Bella prepared and organized everything for a BBQ party at weekends. It was Amy and Kate’s job to get the baby ready to go outside, while it was their husbands’ duty to check the routes of travelling and decide how to get there. Lily usually prepared everything for trips because she thought women were more attentive than men and more suitable for this kind of work. Most of the participants considered their ways of allocation of household work to be natural because they knew more about their children than their husbands did.

Of the ten participants I interviewed, nine reported that their husbands never do any cleaning of the washroom, and only one sometimes shared that work as his wife insisted strongly. Sidia told me that her husband believed that doing cleaning was dirty and it was a woman’s job. Lisa complained about her husband never doing any cleaning of the kitchen, washroom and other dirty stuff. She said that her husband preferred cooking to washing dishes and cleaning the floor. Based on the participants’ reports, the allocation of the household work is gendered, followed by enhanced gender differences with the arrival of the children (Fox, 2009).

Unlike the other eight participants reporting a considerable increase in housework and child care work, Vicky and Lily reported no significant increase in housework and childcare work because their mothers came to help them out when their children were born. Vicky told me that her mother took care of all the household work and most of the child care work while her husband helped out a little, and she was only responsible for breastfeeding the baby. However, Vicky felt that her share of the household work increased considerably after her mother went back to China even though her husband shared more household work than before. Similar to Vicky, Lily’s
mother came from China to take care of Lily and do all the housework after the birth of the baby, so Lily did not have to worry about the housework, but she usually helped her mother with childcare work. It must be noted that usually grandmothers but not grandfathers were responsible for the performance of housework and childcare work when they came to live with their sons or daughters. Although the grandmothers took pleasure in continuing to help their daughters and especially their grandchildren, there is also the potential that they feel ‘used’. In a culture influenced by Confucian thought, women are expected to carry out or supervise domestic work. Although they do not have to perform the household work by themselves with the help from their mothers and help provided by other women, they are still responsible for its overall arrangement (Ho, 2006), which reinforces the traditional gendered division of labour (Groves & Liu, 2012; Lee, 2002). Further, it is other lower class women not men, who provide the help in household work in a broad context, and this practice also reinforces the gendered and class-based division of labour and gender inequalities.

Overall, both Chinese women and men experienced an increase in doing household work because of the family’s economic downturn. However, the allocation of household work is gendered, which suggests that immigrant women shouldered most of the burden of the increased household work while immigrant men shared tasks that conformed with the traditional gender ideology. Gender differences are reproduced and even reinforced with the increase of household work after immigrating to Canada.

4.1.4 Being a Mother: Exhaustion and Achievement

As Ann Oakley (1980a) states, “it is the moment when she becomes a mother that a woman first confronts the full reality of what it means to be a woman in our society” (as cited in Fox, 2009, p.3). On one hand, motherhood and mothering profoundly change a woman’s life, her body, her relationship with her family and friends, especially her partner, and even her feelings about herself (Fox, 2009). On the other hand, motherhood is a patriarchal institution defined by males while mothering is the experiences of practices defined by females (O’Reilly, 2004). Further, mothering is realized by the child care work done by mothers daily, and it is the foundation of social reproduction (Luxton, 2006); besides, the additional childcare work greatly increases the burdens of household work (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001). Feminist researchers have
documented a series of problems that make women suffer when they become mothers, which include sleep deprivation, heavy and unpredictable demands, lack of time for themselves, and anxiety about the unknown, and these problems are common to mothers (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001; Fox, 2009; Luxton, 1980, 2006).

In this study, becoming a mother brought profoundly intense and contradictory experiences and feelings to the lives of the participants. The participants’ feelings about being mothers and practices of mothering varied substantially. The results indicate that most of the participants experienced a combination of being exhausted and feeling a sense of achievement, particularly those with children of school age. While some of them found being a mother was exciting, amazing and satisfying, most found it exhausting and anxiety-inducing, which confirms previous research (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001; Fox, 2009; Luxton, 1980; Luxton & Corman, 2001), and some found that being mothers in Canada became more difficult than in China, because they lacked both physical and emotional assistance from extended family in a new country with different social structures of parenting.

In traditional Chinese gender ideology, the ideal female role is being a virtuous wife and a good mother; and women’s main responsibility is helping their husbands in every aspect of their lives, educating their children and keeping the harmony in their families (Leung, 2003; Tsai, 2011). Regarding motherhood in Chinese culture, the term “mother” suggests sacrifices based on the Confucian code of women’s conduct in the practice of motherhood—“virtuous mother” with selfless and devoted features (Xu & Yuan, 2010). On the other hand, according to Wearing (1984), in Western society, “The word mother conjures up in our minds thoughts of propagation of life, self-sacrificing efforts in the interests of husband and children, long hours of work spent each day for which there is no monetary gain, examples of gentleness and advice freely and generously given” (p.9), which shares the core values of motherhood—sacrificing for the family and being selfless— with traditional Chinese motherhood. Furthermore, women of the younger generation have been largely influenced by a Western ideology of motherhood, such as the practices of intensive mothering from the media and their exposure to Canadian society after immigration. Both being a good mother and the practice of intensive mothering share the key point of selflessness and sacrifice. Intensive mothering, which fits within neo-liberal notions of individual responsibility for children’s development and is based on middle-class ideals, is
widely accepted as ‘proper’ mode of parenting in North America (Fox, 2009; Hays, 1996; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). In this study, participants were greatly influenced by the ‘proper’ mode of parenting in Canada and more or less practiced intensive mothering.

Many of the women spoke of their lives as having new meaning and various perceptions of motherhood and mothering. Grace and her husband were apparently influenced by the popular practice of parenting—intensive mothering. Grace, in her late 20s, was on maternity leave at the time of the interview, and she said, “I really enjoy being with my baby. Although taking care of him without help from extended family is exhausted, I still find it very interesting, and not as horrible as others described.” Her husband was very supportive and very involved in parenting, such as changing diapers, feeding the baby and interacting with the baby, and she explained, “My husband is Western-influenced in parenting. He believes that children should be taken care of by their parents.” Grace herself considered that being a mother and taking care of the baby per se was of great significance, and she said, “Being a woman, you cannot ignore the inherent responsibilities—child bearing and child rearing—no matter what occupation you are.”

Bella was more philosophical than the others, and she commented that motherhood is “cultivation”. She went on to say:

What is cultivation? Child bearing and child rearing are cultivation… although you are exhausted with taking care of the baby, actually your life as a woman have become complete and perfect because of your experiences of being a mother. (Bella)

Bella also believed that housework and child care work are much more challenging and more important than eight hours paid work, because a mother is responsible for a new life and a family, and ensures the survival of a vulnerable new life. Bella’s understanding of motherhood is typical in Chinese women in middle class, who justified their decision of being a mother and are also encouraged by this idea to practice “intensive mothering” which resonates with traditional Chinese motherhood—putting children’s rights over mothers’—of being a good mother. The intensive mothering ideology reinforces the traditional gendered division of labour (Yan, 2011). Wearing (1984) also argues that “[T]he class nature of the relations of production in advanced industrial capital societies…is an important source of women’s oppression and provides a material basis of the generation of ideologies which legitimate women’s responsibility for domestic labour and in particular for the reproduction of labour power” (p.15).
In other words, both class and gender are the bases for the generation of ideology. In Bella’s case, although she was not middle class in material terms in Canadian society, she still held up the ideology of middle class, and this ideology influenced her perceptions of motherhood and practices of mothering. The inconsistency of ideology and material resources caused contradictions and gaps in the ideal practice of mothering—intensive mothering—and the material resources needed to practice this mode of parenting, because intensive mothering is an act of class (Fox, 2009). The contradiction of ideal and reality pushed Bella into a dilemma.

Different from Grace and Bella, Amy focused more on the disadvantages of being a mother, and stated that woman’s bounden duties—child bearing and child rearing—makes a woman less able to compete equally with a man in society. Sandy complained that her well-being, figure shape and career were completely ruined by pregnancy and being a mother of two children, and she blamed her husband for all that she suffered. She said regretfully:

You know what… The best years in my life have been wasted in child bearing and child rearing… My parents hope for me to obtain a PhD degree and get a professional job, but I don’t think whether I could manage to accomplish my study. (Sandy)

Although the participants variously described their understanding of motherhood, all of them underwent exhaustion, isolation and depression because of the round-the-clock demanding needs of a baby in the first year. As Fox (2009) argues, sleep deprivation always makes new mothers exhausted. Amanda told me that she could not stand the exhaustion in the first three months after her baby was born because she had to feed her son every 15 minutes every day but still failed to calm him down. Vicky described herself as a robot because she was obligated to breast feed her baby every two or four hours. Bella reported that the lack of enough sleep gave rise to her bad temper, which resulted in tension with her husband.

The women’s lives became more housebound with the birth of their babies, so they usually had feelings of being trapped in the round-the-clock demands and needs, and of having no time and space for herself (Fox, 2009), which may cause tension in a couple’s relationship. Amy, who was in her early 30s, told me that because the household work doubled after her child was born, she had no time of her own and no personal space. She felt it was unfair for her alone to take care of the baby full time at home, and complained that her husband did not care for the development of their child.
Worries about their baby’s well-being often push women to adopt intensive-mothering practices (Fox, 2009). Mothering, especially intensive-mothering, is high-demand, low-control and stressful work, which waxes and wanes throughout the year (Fox, 2009). Bella considered that the best caregiver to a baby was his/her mother, which conformed with a conservative ideology of gender. Bearing this idea in mind, she tried her best to ensure the well-being of her son, which caused her to be always in a state of worry and stress. She told me that she almost collapsed in the first year because of being isolated by the daily child care work, and doubted her capacity for mothering. She said:

> It was a year absolutely without my own time and my own life. As I told my husband, I was just like a donkey that kept pulling the mills 24 hours, and I even did not know when I could sleep and eat. I was out of control, and the baby controlled me…When my son was born, I felt extremely useless and powerless because I even could not take good care of such a little baby… and the house was in a mess; and I could not even cook well. It seemed that suddenly I denied the value of myself. (Bella)

Furthermore, even with help from the extended family members, some mothers also experienced feeling trapped by the child care work, particularly those practicing breast-feeding, which is considered a practice of intensive mothering (Fox, 2009; Hays, 1996). Vicky was one of them.

Vicky’s mother and parents-in-law came from China subsequently to help her when her daughter was born. When I asked her to recall her experience at that time, she could not restrain her emotion, and said:

> In the first year, I was only like a robot… I fed the baby every two hours every day in the first two months, and then I tried to help her fall asleep every day... I had no time and space of my own. Taking care of a baby was repetitive and exhausted… finally I could not stand up with this kind of life any longer, so I decided to go back to school when my baby was eight months old… Then I could have some time and space of my own…You know what…I did not feel tired when studying; rather, it was leisure to me at that time because I did not have to meet the baby’s needs any more. (Vicky)

Additionally, as Vicky reported, she did not get enough help from her parents-in-law; rather, she felt more stressed and tired in trying to get along with them, and she said, “When their visa became due and they went back to China, I felt released. I did not have to not only take care of the baby, but also make my efforts to please them.” Amanda also encountered difficulties in getting along with her mother-in-law who came from China to help her out. Amanda told me that her mother-in-law was not nice to her, and her husband did not stand up for her. She said, “I
burst with furiousness, and we quarreled fiercely, and then I suffered from medium depression.” However, Lily had a different story from both Vicky and Amanda. Lily’s mother came to Canada before she had the baby, and helped Lily with taking care of the baby and the household work. Lily enjoyed and appreciated her mother’s generous assistance. Both Vicky and Amanda’s cases were contrary to the previous research such as Fox’s (2009) arguing that support from the extended family may help new mothers significantly. This case implies that support from extended family members such as mothers or mothers-in-law may be different in Chinese families because of the relationships between mothers and daughters, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are different relating to a subtle power play. Further discussion of this topic is not presented as it is beyond the topic of this study.

Sidia’s experience of mothering in Canada was different from those mothers taking care of their babies by themselves or together with their mothers or mothers-in-law. She sent her son to a day care center at a very young age, and she stated:

> It was not very hard for me to take care of my son because he was in a day care center when he was only one month old. His routine was good. I only had to take care of him about two or three hours every day on weekdays. I had my own time and space. (Sidia)

Amy could not stand a housebound life taking care of the baby at home full time or doing housework, which made her feel trapped in a daily routine that isolated her from society. As a result, Amy sent her son to a daycare center when he was three months old, even though her husband did not agree with her at the very beginning as he believed that his son was so young that he should be taken care of by mother, not by other people. Similar to Vicky, she went back to school to continue her studies, and she also considered that studying was more leisure to her than work. Both Amy and Sidia received a subsidy from the City of Toronto that allowed them to send their children to day care centers; however, the waiting list for child care subsidy has been becoming longer and longer while fewer and fewer eligible families receive the subsidy allowing them to send their children to the day care centers and to continue their work or study because of budget cuts in the government. Further, child care fees in Toronto are as high as eighty dollars a day, which is beyond the capacity of most families (Broadbent, 2012; Monsebraaten, 2011; Man, 2002). According to Bezanson (2010), social reproduction is concerned with producing and reproducing people in material, social and cultural ways. With the turn of neoliberalism, which stresses free markets and less political intervention, and which
blames the individual rather than the market for poverty and unemployment, this process severely affects the poor, and particularly poor women. In other words, the privatization of social reproduction such as being responsible for child care privately, pushes women, particularly immigrant women, back to the home and further reinforces gender inequalities (Huang et al., 2012; Fox, 2009; Man, 2002).

In this study, mothering for those participants with children of school age varied from those only with preschool children. They paid more attention to their children’s cognitive, physical and emotional development, and their roles varied based on their social class. According to Reay (1998), mothers usually play roles as “complementors, compensators and modifiers” in relation to their children’s primary schooling, and mothers support the school curriculum at home as complementors; middle-class mothers in general found it easy to play the role of complementor and went further to play the roles of compensators and modifiers (as cited in Wu, 2011, p.103). With regard to Chinese immigrant mothers in New Zealand, they seldom played the role of modifiers; rather, they reinforced what their children learned at school (Wu, 2011). However, this is partly consistent with the results in this study. All three participants with children of school age played roles of compensators, who pay for their children’s private tutoring to compensate for what the school could not provide for their children. For example, Kate used to register her son for swimming classes, which were not provided at school; Lisa also enrolled her son and daughter in swimming classes at weekends. Sidia was the busiest as her daughter had swimming, figure-skating, and piano private lessons on weekdays and on weekends. Sidia also helped her daughter with her Chinese and math. It was usually the mothers who took their children to the site of out-of-school classes and waited for them until their classes were over, and then took them home; sometimes fathers did so if mothers were too busy to fulfill these responsibilities. Sidia told me that it was her typical way to spend weekends.

Further, the care of school age children shifts from instrumental tasks to more demanding emotional work (Eichler & Albanese, 2007; Erickson, 2005; Seery & Crowley, 2000). “Emotion work is embedded in many household activities, such as listening to someone else’s problems or worries, giving advice or guidance, showing warmth and appreciation” (Liu, 2011, p. 24), which involves attending to both the physical and emotional needs of others; emotion work focuses on the ‘expressive’ aspect of childrearing but childcare pays more attention to the ‘instrumental’
tasks. Usually mothers provide emotional support and care for their children while fathers focus more on instrumental tasks (Liu, 2011), which is confirmed in this study and consistent with the ideology of gender. Kate told me that her son usually talked to her about his worries and happiness at school, though he had also discussed them with his father. Sidia’s daughter required Sidia to spend at least half an hour with her and listen to her talking about school every day.

Despite the hardship and exhaustion of mothering, most participants gained pleasure and felt achievement in mothering, which may in turn reinforce the gender differences in a household and justify women’s responsibilities for household work. For example, Bella was very proud of her son’s independence in life and curiosity about the world; Sandy could not help expressing her pride in her children when she showed me her children’s paintings, and she said to me, “My only hope right now is that they grow up happily and healthily.” Sandy’s pride in her children seemed to indicate that it was justified for her to be responsible for the household work and childcare work, although she complained a lot about being a mother. Sidia felt the achievement of being a mother, “I take care of my children in every aspect and they are growing and developing well, so I feel a sense of achievement.” Sidia proudly told me that her daughter had made great progress in her studies and obtained A in all subjects; she stated, “I feel achieved when my children are developing well physically and mentally.”

As middle class mothers consider their children’s success in every aspect as successful productions of mothering, their children’s failure may imply their failure in mothering and it is mothers who are to be blamed on (Luxton, 1980). Lisa felt guilty about her daughter’s failure in school, and she said, “I had no time to communicate enough with her and help her with her homework when I studied in a program. So her development was delayed. Her father was also busy with his study at that time.”

Overall, influenced by a popular mode of parenting in Canada—intensive mothering—and their original (Chinese) ideas of motherhood, Chinese immigrant women in this study experienced exhaustion but sometimes achievement in mothering. Meanwhile, their practices reinforced the gendered division of labour and justified the privatization of social reproduction, which is a reflection of the current practice of neoliberalism in Canada.
4.1.5 Conflict and Compromise: Back to Traditional Gender Roles

Immigrant women from Mainland China grew up in a socialist women’s liberation tradition, which encourages their participation in social production under the state gender policy of “the same-work, the same pay” (Huang et al., 2012; Liu, 2010; Pimentel, 2006), and the belief that “participation in paid work was the final solution to the ultimate liberation (Andors, 1993)” (as cited in Zuo, 2001, p.1125). Most of the women interviewed worked as professionals and contributed to the family income, and continued their paid work after the birth of their children. After immigration and when the interviews were done, most of them had to go back to university to gain Canadian degrees in order to continue their careers in Canada. Three of the participants changed from being career women to stay-at-home mothers, which is a process of the alteration of gender power in couples in a downward social and lifespan context. In the process of adjustment and settlement, conflicts and compromise in couples may interact until a new and relatively stable gender dynamic is established in a family.

In this study, most of the participants employed a traditional Chinese gender ideology to a certain degree—being a virtuous wife—to solve the contradiction in gender relationship and to maintain harmony in their family. While the Chinese socialist revolution has indeed increased Chinese tolerance of equal household relationships, such tolerance does not extend to relationships where females take the lead (Zhou, 2000). Amy used to be a manager and earned more than her husband before immigration. When I asked her how her husband felt about her earning more money than him, she said:

We were really equal at that time. I was much busier and earned more than him, but he [her husband] felt it was all right. Sometimes he was so proud of me that he showed off before his friends. (Amy)

After immigration, Amy got a job as cashier in a store while her husband was unemployed, but Amy felt bad about her husband’s being unemployed. They often quarreled, and Amy said:

I looked down upon my husband sometime as he was unemployed when we just arrived in Canada. When I went home after work, he was playing games online and had not cooked a dinner...I was furious at him then, and often quarreled with him. (Amy)

Amy said emotionally, “As a woman, I had to work to support the family.” Amy was angered with her husband because she strongly believed that it was a man’s responsibility to earn money
to support the family. A question arose when comparing what Amy described about the issue of gender relationship: Why did she feel acceptable when she was co-breadwinner before immigrating to Canada, while she found it unacceptable for her to be the only breadwinner after immigration and before her son was born? What is the cause of this change? Amy obtained employment as a cashier in a store (financial supporter) while her husband was unemployed (dependent), which violated the social norm of gender relationships. In other words, Amy could not accept her own role as the only breadwinner and her husband as a homemaker (although apparently not embracing that role), because this reversion conflicted with Amy’s initial gender expectations that both man and woman should be co-breadwinners, which is a popular mode in current Chinese families.

With the arrival of the child, Amy decided to slow down her career development and retreated to the family in order to keep harmony in the family; and at the same time, she tried her best to assist her husband to develop his own career in Canada. She concluded her points about establishing a new gender dynamic in a new country:

If a woman succeeds in her career or earned more than her husband, only if her husband were very willing to stayed at home and do all the household work… What is more, he had to be good temper… Only in this way the couple could get along well and keep harmony of the family; otherwise they could get divorced at last. (Amy)

In order to maintain the harmony of the family, which is part of being a virtuous wife in Chinese gender ideology, Amy chose to retreat to the family and assisted her husband to develop his career as he became more competitive in the Canadian labour market—being a virtuous wife in Canada. Amy accepted the low priority given to their lives willingly because of the deep-rooted Chinese ideology of male superiority and female subordination. This strategy is considered by some scholarship as a “survival strategy” for immigrants (Man, 1997), and their new circumstances make other choices such as being employed in vulnerable jobs even less attractive. However, this also reflects the gender inequality in the labour market. In the case of Amy, retreating back to the family may be contrary to her own expectations, but if it fits her husband’s gender beliefs and meets the practical needs brought up by the structural constraints in the new country, the wife, Amy, may still fulfill them to ensure the stability of the family. In this sense, it is notable that both the downward social mobility which is embodied in occupations and income, and her inherent gender ideology, pushed Amy to retreat to a more
traditional gender role. Further, Amy retreated to traditional role of being a good mother because she considered that her son’s development was the most important thing among other choices. To some degree, Amy employed her agency to resist against the constraints encountered in Canada.

Similar to Amy, Sidia and Kate used to earn more than their husbands before immigration because their husbands were graduate students then. Kate, who used to be an accountant in China, became a housewife to absorb the family’s downward mobility after immigrating to Canada. When I asked Kate whether she would continue her career in Canada, she hesitated for a while and answered, “Originally I had this idea…. But now it could be … it is hard to continue my career as an immigrant.” I could sense that she missed the days when she had a career and felt helpless with the reality. Kate was mainly responsible for the household work and child care work, and her husband helped her out a little bit only after the birth of their daughter. Kate said, “I should be responsible for all the housework and child care work, because my husband earns money to support the family while I stayed at home.” Chinese immigrants gain more freedom after migration, while meanwhile they lose social support and services, such as affordable childcare services, which are critical for women’s independence in China (Zhou, 2000).

Kate had to adapt to the fact that she was a housewife, but actually she did not feel comfortable about the shift from being an accountant to being a housewife. When I asked about her occupation, she answered “housewife” embarrassedly with a smile on her face. I sensed her reluctance to be a stay-at-home mother and her disapproval of this gendered position. Kate was not satisfied with her current gendered position because, in contemporary China, housewives are referred to as “women of the family” (jiántíngfūnǚ), who fail to keep pace with the times and are victims of the old gendering tradition with little knowledge about the outside world, while “women of the nation” (fūnǚ) who were the socialist labourers during Mao’s era, represent the image of liberated Chinese women (Huang, Frisby, & Thibault, 2012; Zhou, 2000). Nevertheless, Kate enjoyed staying with her daughter as she said, “Being with my daughter is my source of happiness”. Further, Kate told me that she preferred to stay at home as a housewife because her friend told her that being an accountant in Canada was quite different from and more difficult than in China. In this sense, being a housewife might be Kate resistance to the social reality after immigration.
Unlike Kate’s unhappiness with being a housewife, Sidia found her autonomy at home. Sidia began to learn to do household work after immigration, and was mainly responsible for the household work. Sidia said that she had to be responsible for the housework and child care work because of having no more help from the extended family members as was the case in China, and she could not afford to purchase any help for household work in Canada. Further, her husband was the breadwinner in Canada, and she said:

Before immigration, I was the breadwinner and dominated the outside, but my husband and I did not bother about the housework and child care work as my parents helped out. After immigration, my husband is the breadwinner while I am the homemaker. You have no choice except in this way. (Sidia)

When I asked her how she felt about her current life now, she said to me proudly, “After immigrating to Canada, I have to do everything by myself, and I can do everything by myself now. I feel satisfied with my current life.” Although Sidia felt good about her present life, sometimes, her views on educating her children and doing the housework conflicted with her husband’s. She complained about her husband’s endless nagging about the quality of housework, such as the cleanliness of the floor and the tidiness of the house, but Sidia usually ignored his comments and kept doing the household work in her own way.

Sandy, in her early 30s, a graduate student with two children, told me that she internally agreed with the idea of a virtuous wife and a good mother. She described in detail how she tried to be a virtuous wife. When her first child was born and her husband had just begun to work in a company, Sandy tried her best to avoid bothering him with the household work. She said:

Even when I was in puerperium, I took care of the baby all by myself. I never asked my husband to wake up to take care of the baby and hold the baby when the baby cried. My husband did not know anything about taking care of a baby. He did not know how to change a diaper for the baby. I became very sick not long later because of the hardship of taking care of a baby. (Sandy)

Similar to Sandy, Bella’s husband had just changed his job when her son was born. Although Bella’s husband usually helped out with housework, she was mainly responsible for housework and child care work. She said:

I was on my maternity leave, and I stayed at home and I considered housework and child care work as my job. Once I suddenly got a high fever, but I did not called my husband
as I did not want to affect his work, and did not want his boss to think that the birth of his baby affect his work performance. (Bella)

Bella would rather have suffered herself than call her husband to ask for help. Bella admitted that she was a traditional woman, but not as traditional as her mother and grandmother. Similar to Bella, although Lily defined herself as a traditional Chinese woman, she pointed out that her being traditional was different from her mother because she would not sacrifice herself for the family as her mother did; rather, she would require her husband to share the housework and child care work.

Different from Kate, Sandy and Bella, Grace was a graduate student with a baby of three months old, and on maternity leave when the interview was done. She also tried her best to do all the housework and child care work by herself, because, first, she was at home; second, she did not want her husband to be distracted by the household work but wanted to allow him to focus on his dissertation, and she said, “I will do all the household work that I could manage to do.” Lisa, a mother of three children, stated that because women were better at taking care of children and doing housework than men, women usually spent more time on housework and child care work than men. She said:

Although my husband takes care of children, I do not quite trust him in a few things. For example, he never mops the floor as he does not know how to do it; and he does not know how to get the children ready to the school or the daycare center. I have to do all of these for him. (Lisa)

In this case, on one side, Lisa believed that women were not naturally better at doing the household work than men; rather, she believed that men lacked training to do household work and child care work during their upbringing, or did not intend to learn how to do so. Thus, she considered not doing household work and child care work to be a “habit”. On the other side, Lisa limited his husband’s care for children through gate-keeping because she wished to retain control of a domain that she felt expert in; as Lisa said, she did not trust fathers to do household work and child care work to as high a standard as she did. There is a complicated knot of emotion and practice at the core of this gendered division of labour. Mothers usually have the responsibility for children and experience subjective difficulty in reducing time devoted to their child care work (Craig & Mullan, 2011). After all, this ‘inherent’ responsibility for children is the product of ideology of motherhood—being a ‘good’ mother.
These cases may be explained from two perspectives. First, from the perspective of ideology, on one hand, Bella, Sandy, Amy and Grace surrendered to the social reality—lack of social resources and material resources to purchase domestic help—and had to retreat to the Chinese traditional female ideal—being a virtuous wife. Second, from a feminist political economic view, in a nuclear family and without the support, women are supposed to rely mainly on their husbands in the first year after children were born; however, women worked hard to protect their husbands’ from the demands of taking care of the baby through prioritizing their husbands’ needs over their own, which indicates increased inequality in the couples’ relationships (Fox, 2009). In this study, the participants retreated to the domestic sphere. It seems that it was these women’s individual decisions to retreat to and dominate in the private sphere. Nonetheless, these immigrant women were pressured to stay home by the difficult social and economic reality, such as the lack of affordable child care services after immigration. What is more, conditions for immigrant women have worsened ever since the 1980s, when the Canadian government began employing neoliberal social policies which privatize, deregulate and individualize, leading to the withdrawal of state led social-support and the erosion of welfare programs (Brodie, 2002, as cited in Huang et al., 2012). As Braedley and Luxton (2010) argue, although neoliberals stress that individuals make choices, individuals make choices under conditions that are frequently shaped by a small number of people holding power. Thus, the Chinese immigrant women who were accustomed to combining full-time work with mothering had to readjust their expectations in their careers because of the more heavily structured expectations around domestic responsibilities (Ho, 2006).

4.1.6 Summary

This section discusses Chinese immigrant women’s experiences of household work after immigration and/or the birth of their children. In this study, the participants considered that household work, including child care work, should be classified as an essential part of their lives, which was tedious, repetitive, unrewarded and unrecognized by the society. Additionally, on the one hand, the participants reported that after immigration they lost the social support and material resources which they used to rely on in child rearing and performing household work because of their downward mobility in a new country. Thus, household work increased dramatically. On the other hand, they gained assistance from their husbands, who used not to be
involved much in the household work and child care work after immigration and/or the birth of their children. Nevertheless, the help from their husbands was performed in gendered ways. Immigration and parenthood pushed the participants to retreat to conservative/traditional practices of being wives and mothers. They reported the hardship of being mothers who lacked enough social and material resources in a new country, and the tremendous impact on their lives, especially their leisure pursuits. Overall, the results indicate that Chinese immigrant women performed much more household work after immigration and/or with the arrival of their children than before immigration because of the absence of social support and material resources.

4.2 Leisure: Whose leisure?

Leisure is often considered to be opposite to work (Clark & Critcher, 1985; Deem, 1986; Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990). In this study, participants’ perceptions of leisure varied, based on their background. Further, their leisure pursuits declined dramatically after immigration and/or with the arrival of their children. With the arrival of children, family leisure mostly dominated participants’ leisure pursuits while their personal leisure pursuits were curtailed considerably. Based on the lifespan context of their lives, the participants employed diverse strategies to negotiate paid work/study, household work and leisure pursuits.

4.2.1 Leisure: Free Time and Personal Space

The scholarship on leisure defines leisure in various ways (Esteve, San Martin, & Lopez, 1999; Henderson et al., 1996; Iwasaki, Mactavish, & MacKay, 2005). Leisure can be free time, recreation activity, and/or meaningful experiences (Henderson et al., 1996), while Iwasaki et al. (2005) define leisure as “a positive diversion or ‘time out’ from stress-inducing situations and thoughts, and a context for rejuvenation and renewal” (p.93). Similar to Iwasaki et al.’s understanding of leisure, feminist political economists Luxton and Corman (2001) consider leisure as free time “when the demands of employment, domestic labour, and other obligations are not pressing … when people have the greatest discretion about what they do and how involved they are with other people” (p.217), and the key is to have fun.
In this study, because participants were to a great extent homogeneous, their perceptions of leisure were almost identical. For example, some participants stressed free time, and some preferred to refer to leisure as recreation activities, while most of them underscored their subjective and qualitative view of leisure. They interpreted leisure as recreation activities undertaken in their free time, and they associated personal space with a feeling of being relaxed.

Sidia, Kate, Amy, Lily and Vicky defined leisure as disparate types of recreation activities. For instance, Sidia referred to watching TV, shopping, and chatting with friends as leisure while Kate regarded listening to music, doing exercises and hanging around parks as leisure. Amy thought chatting with friends on line, shopping, and eating out with friends were her major leisure activities and Lily viewed chatting with her husband online, and swimming as her leisure activities. Chinese immigrant women in this study participated in both passive and active leisure activities, and this finding partly coincides with the previous studies (Li & Stodolska, 2007; Walker et al., 2011b) showing that Chinese immigrants prefer to participate in passive leisure that are “restful, restorative or recuperative in nature” (Wallace & Young, 2010, p. 30) rather than active leisure that involves some degree of physical exertion.

Nevertheless, all of them reported that all these activities were leisure to them only if they had free time and personal space to conduct them, which may help them to distinguish leisure from work. Actually, their free time decreased substantially while personal space diminished obviously after immigration and/or the birth of their children because of their new responsibilities for the household work, including child care work. Moreover, their leisure activities were often interrupted or disturbed unpredictably by child care work, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Deem, 1988; Green et al., 1990; Shaw, 2008; Wallace & Young, 2010). Lisa, for example, said, “Now I feel completely relaxed chatting with you because I can concentrate on our conversation without being interrupted by children’s needs.” Lisa also stated that leisure was having time of her own to go shopping and travelling. In other words, Lisa considered that free time and personal space were the two necessary preconditions for her to clarify an activity or experience as leisure. Similar to Lisa, Amanda perceived leisure from the perspective of free time, and she declared, “I think leisure is having time of your own and can do anything you like.”
Despite the perceptions of leisure as kinds of recreation activities, and the consideration of free time and personal space as the necessary conditions to accomplish these activities, participants took their subjective and qualitative view of leisure into account when they decided whether one activity was leisure or work or in-between. This finding is relatively consistent with Ho and Card’s (2001) finding that Chinese female immigrants’ views on leisure focused more on their subjective experience and state of mind rather than on specific activities. Grace directly perceived leisure in a subjective way, and said:

To me, leisure … I think that doing things in a very relaxed mood … and without any pressure or obligation to do things… Cooking could be a leisure activity to me if I am not obligated to do it every day. (Grace)

Participants’ emphasis on an individual’s flow of being relaxed is closely related to one of the three major religions found in China—Taoism (Wang, & Stringer, 2000; Yu, & Berryman, 1996). According to Wang and Stringer (2000), Taoism is based on the writings of Lao Tzu (also Laozi), and is much more individualistic, compared with Confucianism which is primarily concerned with conduct on a societal level and attempts to regulate Chinese life and culture. Taoism emphasizes that people should focus on inner spiritual matters rather than on money, fame and power, and that people should retreat to nature to concentrate on harmony with Tao (the way or path) which is “regarded as the origin of all creation and the force that flows through all life” (p.34). For Chinese influenced by Taoism, leisure is a means of both pursuing peace of mind and appreciating the beauty of the natural world, so they prefer the quiet, solitary appreciation of natural beauty; and this perception is different from Western definition of leisure as time outside from work or responsibility, as certain types of activities. However, the definition of leisure as experience/state of mind is “more readily identifiable in the daily lives of common Chinese people through the influence of both philosophical and religious Taoism” (Wang & Stringer, 2000, p.40). The perceptions of leisure as a state of mind help to elucidate why the participants highlighted free time and personal space as the necessary elements of leisure, though they defined leisure as similar kinds of recreation activities.

Finally, one unexpected finding is that most of the participants were surprised when I asked them about the definition of leisure, and it often took them a while to think before answering this question. This finding may be interpreted in two ways. First, participants may consider leisure per se as trivial so that it was not worth studying, which confirms that Chinese culture
devalues leisure and play (Yu & Berryman, 1996). It also may be that they were too busy with other issues to consider leisure in their daily agenda even though they knew the benefits of leisure (Huang et al., 2012). Apparently, they did not think of their own leisure pursuits after immigration and/or with the arrival of their children, and it was I who reminded them of the days when they pursued their leisure. Lisa said:

I have never had a chance to have regular leisure activities, particularly leisure time physical activities, after immigration. If you had not asked me about my leisure pursuits before immigration, I would almost have forgotten those days in China. (Lisa)

Therefore, it could be concluded that in this study, most of participants defined leisure as recreation activities that were performed in their free time and personal space accompanied by a feeling of being relaxed and pleased, and sometimes leisure could be only a state of mind having nothing to do with the activities. It is notable that a sense of leisure seems to be missing in Chinese immigrant women’s lives after migrating to Canada.

4.2.2 Decrease and Increase: Changes in Leisure Experiences

In this study, in parallel with the dramatic increase in household work after immigration, the participants reported a significant decrease of leisure activities. Based on the participants’ perceptions of leisure, in this section, participants’ leisure experiences both before immigration and after immigration are examined. Most Chinese immigrant women whom I interviewed participated in physical activities before immigration. Some women participated in private fitness clubs while most of them participated in physical activities organized by their companies.

Lisa, who was head of a department of a company before migrating to Canada, told me that she organized and participated in lots of physical activities, such as basketball, badminton, and she said with a smile on her face:

I was very active, and participated in all kinds of leisure activities such as participating in party, basketball match, volleyball match and dance…. I used to jog with my friends on weekends in the park near my house, and travelled around the country with my families… I enjoyed playing with my son at that time, and I thought being with him was leisure to me after work. (Lisa)
Lisa also told me that after jogging with friends on the weekend, she went to a farmers’ market to get some fresh groceries while chatting with her friends on her way home. She enjoyed doing it. In this sense, grocery shopping was more a leisure activity than household work to Lisa at that time. As mentioned in the section on household work, as Lisa hired a nanny to help out with household work and child care work before migrating to Canada she was not compelled to perform household work aside from arranging and supervising the tasks. Thus, Lisa had more free time and personal space to be engaged in leisure activities. Owing to her free time and personal space for her leisure pursuits, she did not consider being with her son and doing grocery shopping with friends as household and childcare work; rather, she identified them as leisure experiences, which contrasts with the same activities experienced in Canada.

Kate, who used to be an accountant, was as physically active as Lisa before immigration. She played volleyball and badminton, took walks every day in parks, and participated in tours organized by her company at least twice every year. When I asked why she was able to participate in leisure activities at that time, she answered, “My parents helped me take care of my child, so I had more time of my own than now even though I was obligated to share the taking care of my son.” Bella, who was a manager before immigration, often participated in leisure time physical activity before immigration. She played badminton and table tennis with her husband twice a week, did yoga every day, and visited friends two or three times a week. Apart from the leisure time physical activities, Bella often ate out and travelled with her husband, because they could afford the time and money to participate in leisure activities. Being a member of a fitness club, Sandy worked out at the gym every day before immigrating to Canada.

Unlike Lisa, Kate, Bella and Sandy, who were quite physically active before immigration, Vicky, Lily, Amanda and Sidia enjoyed passive leisure activities. Sidia enjoyed watching TV; Lily was fond of surfing the internet, while Amanda was keen on hanging out with friends, shopping and watching movies. Sidia told me that she preferred staying at home to having any physical activities with the exception of taking walks with her husband and daughter, because her husband delighted in having walks with the family in parks after dinner every day.

Although participants were engaged in diverse leisure activities before immigration, they shared the fact that they possessed enough social and material resources to guarantee their free time and
personal space to participate in leisure activities. Overall, before immigration, most participants did not have to bother about the household and child care work. Thus, they had free time, personal space and enough material resources to allow them to pursue leisure.

Nevertheless, after migrating to Canada, these Chinese immigrant women were compelled to spend more time on household work after immigration. All the participants reported a significant decrease in leisure pursuits, especially leisure time physical activities, which require a certain amount of time, space and money. Most of the participants in this study were professionals before immigration, and they had more social resources than the majority of people in China. Thus, they had enough social and material resources to ensure the free time and personal space for them to pursue leisure. When I asked about after immigration, Lisa was a little sad, and said, “All of this has gone… and I do not have time.” Lisa told me that her daily leisure time was one hour, which was not an hour of her own, but an hour with the whole family, and she said, “My family loves to have a walk together after dinner, and that period is my ‘leisure time’.” She missed the days when she could exercise regularly with freedom.

In addition to the negative impact of immigration on leisure pursuits, the onset of parenthood symbolized a significant shift in the form, structure, meaning and experience of leisure for women. Kate told me that she had less time of her own because she was obliged to do household work after immigration. After the birth of her daughter, she was occupied with child care work. She stated:

My ‘leisure time’ is mostly with my daughter [taking care of her daughter], including weekends… My daughter is like my shadow…I cannot change the reality, so I try my best to make myself relaxed subjectively even while taking care of the baby. (Kate)

Kate’s experiences of leisure could be explained by a Chinese idiom—enjoy oneself in adversity. Further, her main leisure time physical activity was stroller walking around parks and on campus, and she said:

It is great to have walks in the park. I can appreciate the scenery, take care of my daughter and do some physical activities at the same time. Sometimes we, those mothers or grandmothers nearby, get together at the park, and chat a lot about how to take care of children; or some grandmother may talk about the hardship living with their sons or daughters or –in-law in Canada. (Kate)
Further, Kate also made herself opportunities for leisure. She went to the library with her daughter, and she said, “I try my best to keep myself in a state of being relaxed. For Kate, on the one hand, she practiced Chinese traditional philosophy—Taoism—to acquire the peace of mind to adjust herself mentally and to negotiate the balance of leisure pursuits and childcare work. Kate’s case demonstrates that her leisure was blended with child care work, and the boundary of leisure and child care work was blurred. She often went to a community center to participate in a knitting club with her baby in summer, if the weather permitted. She said:

I am fond of participating in the knitting club, because the community center provides day care service… So I will not be interrupted by my daughter and can focus on the activity…Only in this context do I have my own time and space to have some fun. (Kate)

Kate’s case also indicated that free child care service provided by program organizers may release women from the demanding child care work to enjoy leisure of their own. Thus, free or affordable childcare services provided by the state may be a practical approach to liberate women in a nuclear family situation from the tedious, repetitive and demanding child rearing, which is the core of social reproduction—the reproduction of labour power (Luxton, 2006)—and assure them the same free time and personal space for leisure as men have.

Bella, who participated in many leisure time physical activities, reported that her leisure pursuits changed slightly after immigration. First, she ate out and travelled less than they did before immigration because their economic situation became worse. Second, she did not play badminton and volleyball, but sometimes played table tennis and did yoga every day because of the long winter and severe weather conditions in Canada. She said, “…it is very windy here, you cannot play badminton outdoors, and there were not many badminton courts indoor in Canada…” Bella’s case suggests that immigrant women encounter not only economic barriers but also environmental ones to participation in leisure time physical activities (cf., previous studies on Latinos: Burk, Shinew & Stodolska, 2011; Stodolska & Shinew, 2010). As a result, they either give up the pursuits of the physically active leisure they used to do in their country of origin, or they learn the skills of some main physically active leisure activities of the host country (Stodolska, 2002) which allowed them to make opportunity for leisure for themselves.

Bella not only encountered constraints on leisure pursuits because of her minority social status (Stodolska & Shinew, 2010), but also encountered constraints which are unique to being a
woman and a mother embedded in an ethic of care (Miller & Brown, 2005) with the arrival of her son. She said:

    My life completely changed after my son was born. My husband and I almost lost our own life, never mention the leisure pursuits in the first year with the arrival of my son… and we had to ignore and sacrifice our own needs, such as my leisure pursuits, to meet the demanding needs of the baby. (Bella)

Bella was subject to pain and frustration originating from the contradiction of the round-the-clock demands of the baby and her attempts to keep her leisure life as before, and she said:

    I was strongly eager to have one minute that could not be disturbed or interrupted by the baby… but I could not get a minute of my own….it was impossible for me lock myself in a big box and excluded my son out of my space and I could not be interrupted and could do everything I enjoyed. (Bella)

Finally, she realized that it was impossible to have time and space of her own as before, because she was a mother. In Bella’s case, her own perceptions of motherhood, which are influenced by the dominant ideology of motherhood, compelled her to put her child’s rights over her own. Confronted with this dilemma, Bella utilized her agency to resist the reality through mentally adjusting her expectations of leisure, which could be considered as an making an opportunity for leisure for herself. For instance, she abandoned seeking any time and space of her own, but combined her leisure pursuits with child care work. Bella’s case indicates that experiences of child care work and leisure were mixed with a vague borderline, which suggests that whether an experience or activity could be leisure or work to a person depends on certain time and context. In this sense, women may resist the dominant gender ideology to some extent at the cost of individual free time and space, and gain some “relative freedom” while the structures that cause gender inequality still exist (Wimbush & Talbot, 1988). Thus, the resistance may be “relative resistance”. Moreover, given that Bella possessed enough social and material resources to enable her to purchase assistance from the labour market or to sponsor her parents to help her with household work and childcare work, she could have owned more time and space to pursue leisure, particularly leisure time physical activities, which demand regular time and more money. Given that she received childcare services provided by the state, it had not been necessary for Bella to resist gender ideology and social structure.

In contrast to Bella, Kate, Lisa and Sandy, Vicky preferred to stay at home rather than do physical activities in her leisure time before immigration. With the arrival of her daughter in
Canada, Vicky said that she participated more in outdoor physical activities, such as jogging in the parks, or going to the Niagara Falls to appreciate the natural beauty with her husband and daughter in summer. She said to me:

Only in summer we had some time to have outdoor activities and they are good to the development of my daughter… When the new school year begins, neither of us have free time because we will be very busy with our study. (Vicky)

Both Vicky and her husband were students when the interview was done. Vicky considered leisure as time spent with family, which contrasts with the majority interpretation of leisure in his study as free time and space of her own, but it confirms some previous research on family leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Such, 2006). Similar to Vicky, Amanda did not think of herself as a physically active person, but she still participated in some physical activities. She said:

I do not like jogging but my husband likes it. I like dancing, so I registered some dance classes before my children were born… I prefer to attend scheduled classes for physical activities regularly… If you would like me to jog around the park, I will not. (Amanda)

After her children were born, although both of them were in a day care center, Amanda could not manage to participate in physical activity. She explained:

After my children were born, I did not attend them any longer… …Because the time schedule of dance classes or other classes I liked conflicts with my schedule. I have to pick up my children from day care center and look after them after 5 in the afternoon…I basically have no leisure pursuits after they were born. (Amanda)

Amanda’s case suggests that program organizers and designers fail to consider the unique time schedules of parents. At the time when the interview was done, Amanda told me that her family often went out together to spend the weekends, and she considered that as her new leisure form to some extent.

Overall, this study reveals that the participants’ leisure became less personally “free” with the increase in household work after immigration and/or after the birth of their children. Additionally, because of the arrival of their children, their leisure pursuits were altered from time and space for themselves to time and space for their families, in particular time for the children. Leisure pursuits with family, primarily those with children, grew substantially owing to the obligation of parenting. Meanwhile, their autonomous leisure pursuits were reduced
considerably due to their scarcity of free time and lack of social support. Possessing fewer resources, immigrant women were impelled to perform the household work by themselves, which may have directly led to a decrease in leisure pursuits. For those participants with young children, childcare work may impose continuous obligations while parents are subject to frequent interruption and unpredictability. Thus, free time of parents with young children may be fragmented and unpredictable (Luxton, 1980; Luxton & Corman, 2001). Immigrant women with young children, as demonstrated in this study, are subject to the downward mobility resulting from immigration, which consequently gives rise to the reproduction of a gendered division of labour after migrating to Canada and results in a significantly decrease in leisure pursuits, particularly physically active leisure.

4.2.3 Family Leisure: “More Like Work than Leisure to Me”

Scholarship on the sociology of leisure shows that family leisure is a central component of modern day (middle class) parenting, which is purposively used to educate and socialize children (Roeters & Treas, 2011; Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Such, 2006). Leisure is not only characterized by the loss of autonomous leisure after becoming a mother but its complexion also alters (Such, 2006). All the participants in this study reported a dramatic decrease in free time and their own and personal space. Moreover, they did not feel entitled to pursue leisure after the birth of their children. The change in life-course (i.e., becoming a mother) alters the forms, meaning and experience of leisure (Such, 2006). The boundaries between family life (e.g., childcare) and leisure become blurred for all the participants (Luxton & Corman, 2001). With the arrival of their children, leisure becomes child-centered, and the pleasure derived from family leisure is a by-product of child care work (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Such, 2006). In Luxton and Corman’s book (2001), parents give priority to their children’s activities and often combine their own apparent leisure time with childcare, in part because they really have no other leisure and in part they enjoy being together. Further, mothers may prioritize family leisure because of the high utility of leisure activities and because this is an efficient way to organize family interactions (Roeters & Treas, 2011). As Shaw and Dawson (2001) argue, family leisure is purposive, and one set of goals is to “enhance family communication and cohesion, and a strong sense of family” (p.217).
In this study, some participants reported that family leisure was more like child care work than leisure while others found it difficult to distinguish leisure from child care work because the identification depended on certain contexts and their mood at that time. Furthermore, children can be both leisure companions and act as constraints on mothers attempts to relax. Amanda said, “I enjoy grocery shopping with my husband and children though I felt tired, because there is a feeling of being a family.” Although Amanda enjoyed this activity, she considered spending time with her children was basically child care work to her, in part because she was obligated to do it, and in part those activities were not designed for adults but for children. She said:

Sometimes I enjoy playing with my children, but I still regard it as a kind of child care work… The purpose is different. Playing with children is for children to have fun, but not for me… Eating out or going shopping by myself certainly makes me have fun. [If I did this] with children, it is certainly not for me to have fun but for the children. (Amanda)

Lisa shared similar experiences with Amada, and she noted:

I like going out and playing with my children, but it is different from leisure… Playing with children, in fact, is child care work. I have to keep an eye on them, especially on the younger one, and take care of them…. There is a responsibility for you… and you will never feel relaxed. (Lisa)

Lily told me that she enjoyed being with her daughter as long as she was not very tired after work, but she felt more exhausted when participating in outdoor activities with her children. Vicky shared similar feeling to Lily, and said, “To me, being or playing with my daughter is half work and half leisure depending on the context.”

In addition, parents usually gave priority to their children’s activity and often combined their own leisure time with child care work because of time scarcity and the utility of these activities in educating and socializing their children (Luxton & Corman, 2001; Roeters & Treas, 2011). Bella, Vicky and Lily reported that family leisure could also be leisure to them. Bella told me that she and her husband arranged their leisure pursuits with the priority of her son: “Regarding leisure pursuits at the weekends, we certainly consider my son’s needs of development first… child-centered activities…such as locations that children can run or museums or science center.” Lisa told me that their family often went to High Park, Center Island, Toronto Zoo and beaches on weekends in summer, because their children liked these activities. She said, “My children often decided where to go for weekends, but sometime we go to Science Center which are good
for them.” Nevertheless, Vicky’s case is not applicable to the statement made. Her daughter was three when the interview was done, and she said, “We do not particularly go to some places like the Science Center or Museum just for the child… but we arrange some outdoor activities for the family, such as playing at a playground.” Through comparing Lisa and Vicky’s cases, it may be suggested that age of children may affect the selections of family leisure activities. For example, two of Lisa’s children were school age, a period when the needs of education and socialization were more urgent. Vicky’s daughter was three years old, and Vicky said, “My daughter is too young to understand those activities.”

Family leisure can enhance family cohesion and be a way to organize interaction (Roeters & Treas, 2011; Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Such, 2006), which was also revealed in this study, as mentioned above. Nevertheless, it can go together with stress, time pressure, and even conflicts (Kay, 2006), and this problem also happened to the participants in this study. Lily, whose daughter was three when the interview was done, told me that she would not take her daughter for a long trip until she was old enough. She explained:

We drove to the north of Toronto to appreciate the red maple leaves with my daughter in fall last year. The trip went well until my daughter cried out and refused to sit on the car seat… She cried along the way…I tried to calm her down but failed… I felt exhausted and when we reached the destination, I had no mood to appreciate the scenery any more. (Lily)

Lily, who has two children of school age, told me that she was afraid of doing grocery shopping with her children, though she enjoyed staying with her family, and she said:

My children are always attracted by candies and other toys. If my son was attracted by some toys, I could say no to him and kept on shopping. He would not persist in it. However, my daughter is another story. If she wanted to get a toy or some candies and I refused to buy them for her, she just stood in front of the shelf with long face and had no intention to go. It took me long time to make her move … she was still unhappy until we were home… and that is why sometimes I feel exhausted when family go out together. (Lisa)

Moreover, family leisure certainly resulted in a considerable amount of work for mothers, and this finding confirms previous studies (e.g., Shaw, 1992, 2008; Such, 2006; Thompson, 1999). All the participants reported that they had to organize and prepare for everything, especially children’s stuff, when the family planned to have outdoor activities and even at-home activities.
Vicky told me that it would be more enjoyable to have children play with other children at the playground while she could chat with other mothers, and she told me that she tried to arrange play dates for her daughter at weekends. Sidia, for example, told me that if she could choose, she preferred staying at home to going out with the family because she was obligated to organize and prepare for all the details of the going-away-from-home activities. As a result, she experienced being more tired than relaxed. She described an incident related to family leisure:

Once we planned to go to Toronto Zoo at weekends when my son was a little baby. I packed all the stuff my son needed including diaper, clothes and so on. We took TTC to the Zoo. When we reached the Zoo, I found out that I had forgotten to take formula milk for my son… You can imagine how disappointed my daughter was, because we had to cancel the trip and went home… and a weekend was ruined. (Sidia)

For the participants with school age children, family leisure seemed to be more like work than leisure. Mothers usually took them to participate in extra-curricular activities, such as swimming, figure-skating and playing basketball after school or at weekends, which considerably increased their amount of work and lessened their time and space for themselves. Sidia took her daughter to practice tennis every Thursday, and she said, “As long as my daughter enjoys these sport activities, it would be all right for me to do so.” Lisa had a similar story and had no time of her at weekends. Both of them considered it as part of mothering that was good for their children’s physical, emotional and mental development. Although Amanda’s children were quite young, she registered them in a music class as she enjoyed the getting-together of the family and the feeling of being a family.

Although the organization and monitoring of family leisure activities increased mothers’ workload, family leisure was also an enjoyable experience for women. Further, children drew their parents into new activities and linked them to social networks with other parents at the playground or at children’s sport game. Vicky told me that most of the people she knew were parents who often went to the drop-in center on campus, and later they became friends. Bella shared a similar story, and she told me that it was these Chinese mothers who created a social network that supported her to overcome the difficulties she encountered in the first year after her son was born. These findings suggest that people’s choices of leisure activities and companions are constrained by their gender and class, and tend to reproduce their ethnic and racialized networks (Luxton & Corman, 2001).
Overall, family leisure is clearly a responsibility of parenthood, particularly for women with young children, and all these activities focus on the needs of the child. In other words, family leisure is not leisure for parents, especially for a mother with a young child; rather, it is a part of parenting that ensures social reproduction. As Amanda said, “Being with a child is more like work than leisure to me.” Because of the current state policy not to provide universal child care, it seems unlikely to allow mothers with young children their own free time and space to pursue leisure as men do. Moreover, because of the high utility of family leisure in educating and socializing children, family leisure may be the main approach of parents’ leisure pursuits. Thus, leisure program developers should design more parent-child programs, and the government should increase investment in recreational facilities that are suitable for parent-child programs designed for various ages.

4.2.4 Strategies to Negotiate Leisure and Household Work

In this study, with the arrival of children and immigration to a new country, most of the participants reported a dramatic increase in household work and a significant decrease in leisure pursuits, which resulted from the poverty of time. Based on this reality of life, participants employed various strategies to negotiate leisure, household work and paid work/studies.

Some of them lowered their expectations for leisure. Grace, who had a baby of three months old when the interview was done, told me that she had adjusted herself mentally to meet the demands of the baby. She said:

I do not feel disappointed as before if I could not watch the movie or I will not expect to watch a movie as before… Although I know it is a great one, I will not be very eager to watch it because the baby is the center of my life now. (Grace)

In Grace’s case, she put the baby’s rights over her rights of entertainments, and she felt no entitlement to have leisure of her own. Similar to Grace, Kate mainly adapted herself mentally, and said:

I try my best to keep myself in a state of mind of being relaxed; I forced myself to consider taking care of a baby or doing housework as an enjoyable thing and tried my best to gain pleasure from it. (Kate)
Kate liked knitting, and she told me that she felt relaxed when knitting although she was also taking care of her child.

Some participants combined their child care work or housework into their leisure pursuits by adapting their leisure activities to be inclusive of children or compatible with housework. For example, Bella played table tennis with her son on the floor as her son was not tall enough to reach the table, and she also modified the movements of adult yoga to be parent-child ones. She said:

I used to try to exclude my child from my leisure, but I found it was not real. Now my leisure pursuit is never of my own, I arrange family leisure activities particularly taking account of my child’s needs of development. (Bella)

Lisa, a mother of three children, told me that she had almost no time of her own, but she still had ways to relax: “I usually listen to favorite songs and sing along while I am doing my housework, and it feels great.” Lisa employed her agency to negotiate the structural circumstances of her life and to gain some pleasure from the unpaid housework.

Although most of the participants had their own ways to negotiate their leisure pursuits and household work, Amy and Sandy were still struggling with the dilemma when the interviews were done. Sandy said, “I do not have any leisure pursuits, and the only leisure pursuits could be drawing with my children if you insist, and I have no options.” Although Amy and Sandy felt their entitlement to leisure pursuits, they could not make these pursuits come true because they were obligated to care for the children. Thus, they lacked free time and space of their own.

Overall, the participants in this study negotiated the household work and leisure pursuits through various ways and could gain some pleasure. Nevertheless, Wimbush and Talbot (1988) suggest that “the freedom provided by the sphere of leisure can result in a greater autonomy for women, but are still constrained by powerful societal structures such as patriarchy, class, age and ethnicity” (as cited in Wearing, 1998, p.49). Women manage to gain room and time of their own through their agency; but what they accomplish are “relative freedoms,” as they are constrained by gender ideology and the social structures in which they live, and are still obliged to do household work. The freedoms are the by-products of their household work. Therefore, their
resistance against the dominant structure of the gendered division of labour through their leisure pursuits may only be seen as relative.

4.2.5 Summary

This section explored Chinese immigrant women’s leisure experiences before and after immigration and/or with the arrival of their children. In this study, the participants mostly defined leisure as having free time and space for themselves with an emphasis on the subjective and qualitative experiences of leisure. Because they either possessed sufficient resources to purchase domestic help or gained assistance from extended family members who were usually mothers or mothers-in-law, they owned more leisure time. Thus, most of the participants were active in participating in leisure time physical activities before immigration. After migrating to Canada, their leisure pursuits decreased significantly because they lost the help in the household work and were compelled to be the main care giver of the families. Thus, they had no time and space of their own. Furthermore, with the arrival of the children, their family leisure time increased, which resulted in an extra burden of household work. To resist the social reality, most of the participants employed various strategies to negotiate leisure pursuits and the performance of household work, such as changing the form of their regular leisure time physical activities to be more inclusive and lowering the standard of leisure pursuits, while some still struggled with the social reality. Overall, the results indicate that the participants played less after immigration and/or with the arrival of their children because of their increased responsibility for the household work and child care work and their decrease in socio-economic status in Canada.

4.3 Discussion

This study was based on a reflection of my experiences of household work and leisure pursuits after immigration and the birth of my daughter. The first question of this study is whether the household work changed after immigration among recent immigrant women from China. The second question concerns whether household work, including childcare and parenting, influenced their leisure pursuits, especially the leisure time physical activity participation and patterns after the birth of their children. The third question concerns the strategies they employed to negotiate household work, paid work/study and leisure pursuits. All these questions were reflected in how Chinese immigrant women interpreted their experiences of the
performance of unpaid house hold work and leisure pursuits. Unlike previous studies that often either stressed the barriers women encountered in leisure pursuits per se or emphasized the individual’s attitude, preferences and behaviours of leisure pursuits, this study focused on the relationship between household work and leisure pursuits through the lens of social reproduction, including gender and class.

4.3.1 More Work: Reproduced and Reinforced Gender Inequalities

Social reproduction is a process that involves maintaining and reproducing people, especially the labouring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis (Laslett & Brenner, 1989, as cited in Bezanson & Luxton, 2006). With regard to the relationships between social reproduction and gender issues, Laslett and Brenner (1989) argue that “the struggles between women and men about the responsibility for social production lie behind the historical construction of the gendered division of household labour” (as cited in Fox, 2009, p.33).

People’s negotiation of their new responsibility and the practices that they develop to handle it are established in the conditions of their daily lives—their material and social resources, in particular their social relationships (Fox, 2009). Furthermore, an individual’s daily practices are socially essential to the work of social reproduction and also central to the production of gender, which is shaped by the organization of a society (Fox, 2009). These daily practices may be considered as daily household work, while child rearing is the core of social reproduction. Mothering is realized by the child care work done by mothers daily, and it is the foundation of social reproduction (Luxton, 2006). The extent and nature of household work varies directly with the number and ages of children at home, while it is mainly women’s work which is altered by the arrival of the children (Armstrong & Armstrong, 2001; Fox, 2009) and migration to another country (Eichler & Albanese, 2007).

Most of the participants indicated that household work and child care work was essential to life, although they were tedious, repetitive, unrewarded and unrecognized by society. They also reported a dramatic increase in the performance of household work and child care work after migrating to Canada, which is consistent with the previous studies of Chinese immigrant women (e.g. Huang et al., 2012; Liu, 2010; Man, 1997, 2004; Wu, 2010; Zhou, 2000). Further, Chinese immigrant women, particularly those with high education and professional background,
experience a significant decline in social capital and economic capital, which causes both Chinese immigrant women and men to undertake more household work after migrating to Canada. In this study, Chinese immigrant women were still mainly responsible for the household work, though their husbands shared that work and child care work. Loss of help from extended family members, mainly mothers or mothers-in-law, which they used to rely on for child rearing and household work (Liu, 2010; Zhang et al., 2011), partly explains the significant increase in household work and child care work. In addition, they were not able to afford to purchase domestic help as they did in China because of the decline in social and economic status, which shows that an individual’s social and material resources have a significant influence on gender inequalities.

The participants also reported that their husbands began to share household work and child care work, although interviews with husbands were not conducted in this study. Nonetheless, although their husbands shared household work, they still had the right to choose those tasks that conformed to their gender expectations, while the participants were obliged to perform those routine, tedious and dirty tasks, a finding consistent with the previous research (Bianchi et al., 2000; Sayer, 2005; Wallace & Young, 2010). These differences imply that gender differences and gender inequalities are reproduced in the allocation of household work per se. What is more, the shared tasks were often related to recreational activities rather than routine physical and logistical tasks, and much more of father’s care is done when the mother is also present, which is also consistent with previous studies (Shaw, 2008). For example, Lisa’s husband insisted she should go to the parks with him and the children. Amy told me that when her husband had stroller walks with the baby, she was required to be present, which indicates that fathers are not substituting for mothers’ time, so mothers are not freed for other pursuits such as leisure (Craig & Mullan, 2011). These findings demonstrate that the allocation of household work and childcare work is gendered.

To understand Chinese immigrant women retreating to traditional gender roles requires that gendered division of labour be put in the context of dominant discourses on gender and motherhood and in the social and material context, because it is not household work per se that causes problems in gender inequalities but the social relations and social context (Fox, 2009; Luxton, 1980). In this study of Chinese immigrant families, the broader socio-historical context
may refer to the nature of Canadian institutions and how they constrain possibilities for gender role fulfillment. Specifically, structural constraints (e.g., downward social-economic status) and limited cultural resources (e.g., limited family support network) may inform Chinese immigrant couples’ gendered activities, such as the gendered division of labour, and modify their gender roles in order to maintain material stability (Yan, 2011).

First, in the context of the discourse of gender and motherhood, Chinese traditional gender ideology considers that men dominate the outside while women dominate the inside—private sphere. Thus, women are obligated to shoulder the household work and child care work.

In current Chinese gender ideology, because of the beliefs that social production liberates women from oppression and encourages women to be part of the social production, 90% women are employed in China (Zhang et al., 2011). Meanwhile, owing to the state withdrawing from the private sphere through marketization after the 1980s—a form of neoliberalism (Song, 2011, 2012)—Chinese women have been shouldering a “double shift” (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Pimentel, 2006) of both paid work and household work. Although men of the younger generation increasingly share household work, the percentage is still small (Pimental, 2006). Moreover, with the arrival of children, women are mainly responsible for their children’s education and socialization, even though they could obtain help from extended family members or be able to purchase domestic help. To some degree, contemporary Chinese women encounter a similar contradiction to Western women in terms of paid work and household work (Craig & Mullan, 2011).

Responding to the cases of this study, pre-migration the participants were middle-class and had more social and economic resources, which enabled them to purchase domestic help provided by other women of lower class or to obtain assistance from extended family members (usually female members); (Wu, 2010; Zhou, 2000). Although they were not compelled to perform household work by themselves, the gendered division labour still existed. What is more, it is still the wife who supervised the domestic helpers’ household work. Purchased household services fail to fundamentally liberate women from the responsibility of household work and child care work; rather, the purchased domestic assistance reinforces the gendered division of labour (Groves & Liu, 2012).
Second, a conjunction of Chinese traditional gender ideology and the prevailing neoliberal reduction of the role of the state in providing services may push Chinese immigrant women to retreat to traditional gender roles in order to absorb the economic and social downward turn after migration. In addition, because of the absence of affordable child care services and wages that may be sufficient to pay for the day care service, many Chinese women may be impelled to stay at home to take care of their children (Man, 1997, 2004). In this study, some of the participants obtained a child care subsidy before the budget cuts, while some were compelled to stay at home or ask for help from the extended family to fulfill the collective responsibility of social reproduction (Luxton, 2010). They retreated to the traditional gender roles as virtuous wives and good mothers—shouldering the extra burden of household work. Therefore, the gendered division of labour and gender inequalities are reproduced and reinforced. Their practices occurred in articulation with the neoliberal gender order, which is partly characterized by the re-privatization of social reproduction, the decline of the family wage model and the increasing polarization of women (Bakker, 2003, as cited in LeBaron, 2010).

Despite of the potential constraints of gender ideology, participants employed their agency to negotiate gender inequalities by changing some practices of the gendered division of labour, although the women are still do far more of the traditional ‘women’s work’ than their husbands. For example, in order to obtain her autonomy, Sidia intentionally ignored her husband’s criticism of her ways of performing household work. Vicky and Bella achieved a more equal and fair allocation of household work and child care work through negotiating with their husbands. Although Amy said she planned to be a virtuous wife and a good mother, she countered the structure and gender ideology by sending her son to a day care center. Sandy resisted the gendered division of labour through doing less housework and focusing more on child care work. Kate combated the obligation of the household work by lowering the quality of work and reducing the amount of work to an acceptable minimum. With women’s continuous resistance, gender differences in the gendered division of labour are having a tendency to converge according to some studies (Fox, 2009; Stalker, 2011).

Nevertheless, their resistance was relative to some extent, even though these participants resisted and achieved some relative equality to their husbands in the allocation of the household work. The resistance is relative because this human agency is of a “structured” nature (Gruneau,
That is to say, they are constrained by the current social structures of a capitalist society, which reinforce the gendered division of labour that hindered them from being equal to men both in the public and private sphere (LeBaron, 2010; Luxton, 2010).

Overall, Chinese immigrant women do more household work and child care work than before migrating to Canada, which resulted from the combined consequences of the influences of the Confucian gender ideology which stresses being a virtuous wife and a good mother—supporting their husbands and educating and socializing their children—and their decline in social and economic capital after migrating to Canada. What is more, the prevailing neoliberal gender order characterized by the privatization of social reproduction in Canada further reinforces the gendered division of labour and gender inequalities in both public and private spheres.

4.3.2 Less Play: Reflection of Gender and Class Inequality

Leisure is usually considered to be the opposite of work (Clark, & Critcher, 1985; Deem, 1988; Spracklen, 2009). Many of the participants indicated that their leisure pursuits, particularly physically active leisure which requires regular time and sometimes a certain amount of money, decreased significantly after migration to Canada and/or with the arrival of their children. These participants mainly encountered barriers, such as the lack of free time and personal space, and the absence of social support (e.g., close friends), lack of equipment and space and lack of suitable programs designed for mothers with young children, a situation similar to other immigrants (Choi et al., 2008; Stodolska, 2002, 2005; Stodolska & Shinew, 2010), to participate in leisure, particularly physically active leisure.

To understand why Chinese immigrant women, particularly those with young children, who severely lacked of time and space of their own, the impact of social and material resources, ideology of motherhood and mothering, and cultural circumstances needs to be examined.

First, the ability to participate in leisure is the product of both access to leisure goods and services, and a sufficient quantity of leisure time. Meanwhile, consumption of leisure goods and services is powerfully determined by income, so low-income individuals may be excluded from leisure participation (Bittman, 2002). As members of the dominant middle-class before migrating to Canada, most of the participants reported that they participated in many leisure
goods and services, such as tourism, watching movies, working out in gyms in private clubs, eating out with friends and so on. As mentioned above, their downward social and economic status pushed them to shoulder the responsibility of the household work. Further, newcomers to a society have to deal with a number of complex issues, and leisure is usually beyond their consideration (Huang et al., 2012). Thus, low-income immigrant women with young children are mostly excluded from participation in leisure pursuits (Bittman, 2002; Bittman & Wacjman, 2000) because of their parental obligations and the lack of universal and affordable child care services, which may result from current neoliberal practice in Canada. In this study, some of the participants were lucky enough to receive a child care subsidy, which allowed them to work outside the home or continue their studies. However, with the ongoing cutting of social services, including child care subsidy, and the growing waiting list for funding, it is becoming more and more difficult for families to obtain child care subsidy.

Second, Chinese immigrant women might not only be constrained by the lack of money, which is closely related to their social class, but also by the lack of time, a by-product of influences from the popular mode of parenting—the approach of intensive mothering—and that of their original ideology of motherhood. Scholars argue that the expectations of mothers, in particular, have intensified with the ideology of intensive mothering in which childrearing is “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive and financially expensive” (Hays, 1998, p.54). In this study, most of the participants considered themselves to be traditional Chinese women, who put husbands and children first. For example, most of them practiced breast feeding, which may be one of the features of being an intensive mother (Fox, 2009). Although they may not completely practice the approach of intensive mothering, they may partly practice it because it is regarded as the ideal mode of parenting. With the arrival of their children, the ethic of care pushed them further to put their children’s rights over their own, which might allow them to feel a lack of entitlement to leisure pursuits, because mothering is a 24-hour-job which is demanding and challenging. Thus, Chinese immigrant women with young children in this study experienced “leisure-time poverty” of their own (Bittman, 2002).

Moreover, based on the dominant gender ideology, women are supposed to take the main responsibility for household work and child care work (Fox, 2009; Luxton, 1980). This ideology is also applicable to Chinese immigrant women. Chinese immigrant women with children
cannot afford to have “pure leisure” of their own like their husbands; rather, they experience “contaminated leisure time” (Bittman & Wacjman, 2000) or “work-like leisure” (Such, 2006) with their families. Consistent with the previous studies (Bittman & Wacjman, 2000; Shaw, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Such, 2006), Chinese immigrant women in this study reported a considerable extra burden of household work in family leisure, because they were supposed to organize those activities and do cleaning afterwards. If men’s care consists mainly of recreational activities performed alongside their spouses, it means that child care is a more intensive activity for women, and that it is more of a family leisure experience for fathers (Shaw, 2008). This also means that fathers are not substituting for mother’s time, so mothers are not freed up for other pursuits, including leisure (Craig & Mullan, 2011). Thus, some of them preferred not to have family leisure because it was more like work than leisure, and pleasure gained from it was the by-product of parenting (Such, 2006).

Fourth, participants’ choices of leisure activities reflected Chinese immigrant women’s original cultural influence on leisure pursuits. In this study, few participants initially discussed their participation in physically active leisure unless I asked them about it. They talked more about passive leisure such as watching TV, chatting online, listening to music, reading books, and just lying in bed without thinking about anything, which is partly consistent with the previous studies. For example, Yu and Berryman (1996) argue that Chinese immigrants are more work oriented than North Americans. In other words, leisure time physical activity is not a popular leisure choice for Chinese immigrants. Additionally, Tsai and Coleman (1999) found that Chinese immigrants in Australia encountered primarily interpersonal (e.g., partners) and socio-cultural(e.g., devalue physical activity) constraints to leisure; and Li and Stodolska (2007) argue that Asian Americans, including Chinese immigrants, have deep roots in their traditional cultural values that hinder them from achieving positive leisure experiences. However, most of the participants reported that they often took walks around parks with families after dinner, which could be explained by an examination of the cultural factors that affect leisure diversities (Stalker, 2011b). Regarding this issue, Tsai and Coleman (1999) consider that socio-cultural ideas (e.g., devalue physical activity) constrain Chinese immigrants from participating in physically active leisure. This result could be interpreted from the perspective of perception of leisure, which is greatly impacted by the Chinese traditional ideology of Taoism. According to Wang and Stringer (2000), Taoism stresses the whole and harmony with nature and encourages
an individual to seek peace of mind and harmony with nature as the goal of leisure. Bearing this in mind, an individual would choose quiet and solitary activity rather than physical activities to achieve the peace of mind. For example, having walks around parks or campus not only allows an individual to have some physical activity but also enables him/her to appreciate the scenery, which may lead to peace of mind and harmony with nature.

Apart from the cultural perception of leisure, the participants’ lower social economic status partly explains their practices. Participants chose some passive leisure activities rather than physically active ones because passive leisure may be more accessible to the participants. As Grace told me, she would like to travel at least twice a year if she could afford it. Sidia told me that she did exercise at the YMCA when it provided free child care service, but she had to quit exercising when the child care service was charged for. Thus, despite the impact of Taoism on their perceptions of leisure, their social and economic status may mostly determine their choice of passive leisure instead of physically active leisure after immigrating to Canada. This suggests that, as with women and men in all countries, social and economic status may significantly impact Chinese immigrant women’s practices and experiences of leisure, particularly physically active leisure.

Overall, Chinese immigrant women experienced a significant decrease in leisure, particularly physically active leisure, after migrating to Canada and/or with the arrival of their children because of their downward social-economic status and gender roles. This result demonstrates that leisure reflects gender and class inequalities in society.

4.3.3 Tension and Choice

According to the results of this study, Chinese immigrant women encountered and negotiated several forms of tension. The first results from the comparison between being in China and being in Canada. The differences are quite striking, and they were certainly more profound for the women than the men. The second results from their change in social status. While their cultural capital changed marginally, their social and material capital declined quite significantly. The third tension results from their changed gender status. They moved from relative equity as “half of the sky” in China to a more ‘traditional’ gendered relationship in Canada, and they are in a situation that is exacerbated by the fact that they have moved to a country with a strong
reputation for gender equity. Many immigrants experienced a declining social status (Gong, Xu, & Takeuchi, 2012; Nicklett & Burgard, 2009); and for most immigrant women, having children creates more household work and limits their leisure pursuits (Choi et al., 2008; Meares, 2010), and these experiences are shared by Chinese immigrant women in this study.

Literature on gender and immigration shows that immigrant women gain more personal autonomy and life satisfaction, experience more freedom and a sense of liberation from patriarchal and collectivistic pressures when they move from more traditional to post-modern social systems (Jibeen & Hynie, 2012; Shirpak, Maticka-Tyndale, & Chinichian, 2011; Yoon, Lee, Koo, & Yoo, 2010). Nevertheless, Chinese immigrant women’s changed gender status—from “the half of the sky” to be “feminization” and “re-domestication”—makes them different from other immigrant women. Immigrant women from Mainland China grew up in a socialist women’s liberation tradition, which encourages their participation in social production under the state gender policy of “the same-work, the same pay” (Huang et al., 2012; Liu, 2010; Pimentel, 2006), and the belief that “participation in paid work was the final solution to the ultimate liberation (Andors, 1993)” (as cited in Zuo, 2001, p.1125). Contrasting with other immigrant women from a more traditional society, Chinese immigrant women in this study felt stronger about the downward change of gender status. Meanwhile, the influence of Chinese traditional gender ideology provides them a base to adjust the change of gender relationship so that they could be “re-domesticated” in Canada.

Because of the downward social status and gender status after immigrating to Canada, some participants told me that sometimes they felt regretted to have immigrated to Canada and would like to move back to China. For example, Lisa told me that she missed her easy life in China. Sidia’s husband was in China now but she still stayed in Canada. However, there are positive aspects of Canada that help to keep the women here. On the one hand, they appreciate democracy and better environment both for children and themselves in Canada than in China. On the other hand, the alternative (returning to China) is often less attractive because of two factors. First, it is because of the citizenship. Some of the participants’ children were born in Canada; they could not obtain a Chinese citizenship because they were born in Canada and their parents were permanent residents of Canada (Consulate-General of the People’s Republic of China in Toronto, 2013). If they move back to China, their children will be officially treated as
foreigners. Second, to those school age children who were born in China, they do not have the issue of citizenship, but they may encounter the difficulties in getting used to a difference educational practice because Chinese education is more examination-oriented while Canadian one is more interest-oriented. For example, Sidia’s husband moved back to work in China, but she told me that she would not move back to China as her daughter and son can speak little Chinese. If they moved back to China, they might have to attend an international school, which they could not afford to attend. The above factors made Chinese immigrant women decide to keep staying in Canada.

4.4 Summary

The primary finding of this study is that the amount of household work is inversely related to women’s leisure time and leisure pursuits. In other words, when the amount of household work increased, participants’ leisure time and pursuits decreased accordingly. Responding to the research questions of this study, the findings indicate that household work increased after immigration among recent immigrant women from Mainland China, and the increased household work, especially child care work, significantly influenced their leisure time physical activity participation and patterns. Based on the social reality, the participants usually lowered their standard of leisure to them, adjusted their attitude to meet the overwhelming responsibility of taking care of a baby, and modified their original patterns of leisure to meet the needs of their children’s development. On the one hand, their personal time and space for leisure decreased because of the increased household work; on the other hand, the family leisure replaced leisure of their own, which was essentially part of parenting and considerably increased participants’ household work.

The results also indicate that gender and class have a great impact on Chinese immigrant women’s experiences of the gendered division of labour and leisure pursuits. The decreased social and economic resources after immigration influenced the allocation of the household work and child care work, which gave rise to the decrease of gender status in a family. In order to absorb the downward mobility of material resources and to survive in a new environment, Chinese immigrant women retreated to the traditional gender role—being a virtuous wife and
good mother. In this sense, immigration revived Chinese traditional gender ideology and reproduced gender inequalities in a Western society.

Moreover, the practices of intensive mothering reinforced the gendered division of labour in a conjunction with Chinese traditional gender ideology and motherhood, which pushed Chinese immigrant mothers into a dilemma caused by the contradiction between their low social-economic class and high expectation for mothering. In turn, Chinese immigrant women with young children felt compelled to sacrifice their leisure time to child care work, which complies with the gender ideology and motherhood. For Chinese immigrant women, their responsibility for the household work and child care work increased because they either lost the help from the extended family members or the capacity to purchase domestic services from the market after migrating to Canada. Thus, their leisure, particularly physically active leisure, decreased significantly when they become mothers, which may be a reflection of gender inequalities.

Meanwhile, from a broader social context, household work and child care work are essential to production and social reproduction. Further, they are the practices of social reproduction, which ensure the reproduction of labour power and human beings per se (Luxton, 1980). However, with a turn from welfare state to the practice of neoliberalism, the state reduces social services such as child care work, and pushes them back to the private sphere since neoliberal theory considers it an individual’s responsibility to care for children (Bezanson, 2010; Luxton, 2010). Nevertheless, the nature of social reproduction demonstrates that it should at least be a shared responsibility for the state and individuals (Bezanson, 2010; Luxton, 2010). In this study, Chinese immigrant women’s dramatic increase of household and child care work, along with the significant decrease of leisure pursuits, may result from an acute contradiction of the privatization of social reproduction and an individual’s pursuits of self-development and freedom both in the public sphere and leisure pursuits. This contradiction not only reproduces Chinese immigrant women’s subordination but also reinforces the gender-based division of labour.

Finally, from the dimension of the ideology of motherhood, although Chinese immigrant women grew up in a socialist revolution which emphasized that social production liberated women from the oppression, this promotion of liberation was sponsored by the state but not women themselves (Yan, 2011). They had to retreat to the traditional gender roles when they lost the
support from the state to keep the stability of their families, which is consistent with the results of this study.

Overall, Chinese immigrant women experienced and negotiated three forms of tensions—being in China and in Canada, social status, and gender status. Because of various factors, they chose to stay in Canada rather than returning to China.
Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter presents an overview of the study in the first section, followed by a summary of the results. In the conclusion of this study, some recommendations are presented.

5.1 Introduction

This study was based on a reflection of my own experiences that caused me to ponder Chinese immigrant women’s experiences both of household work and leisure after migration to Canada. In my family, I assumed responsibility for household work and child care work, and found that those responsibilities limit women’s time for leisure. Also, I assumed that immigration may significantly alter and have a great impact on both the gendered division of labour and leisure pursuits. Being a mother of two children, I profoundly felt the hardship of being a mother and a graduate student in a new country, and I always found myself short of time, and my attention and energy was divided in various ways. I really felt the burden of double shifts—household work and my studies. Thus, I assumed that Chinese immigrant women’s leisure pursuits would decrease considerably with the arrival of their children. Moreover, I also assumed that women might employ some strategies to negotiate the responsibility for the household work, child care work and leisure pursuits. What I intended to achieve is an understanding of how Chinese immigrant’s experiences of household work, child care work and leisure pursuits reproduce and reinforce gender differences, and how the practices of household work and leisure pursuits are affected by their social-economic status and the broader social context through the lens of social reproduction, gender ideology and ideology of motherhood.

The first research question addressed in this study was whether household work changed after immigration among recent immigrant women from Mainland China, and with the arrival of their children. Consistent with my initial assumption, the results illustrate that Chinese immigrant women with young children encountered a dramatic increase in household work after migrating to Canada, particularly after the birth of their children. Their husbands also experienced a slight increase, but husbands were not interviewed for this study. The second question concerned whether household work, including childcare work and parenting influenced their leisure pursuits, particularly physically active leisure. The results demonstrate that the household work
and child care had greatly impacted their leisure pursuits. All of the participants reported a significant decrease in leisure particularly with the arrival of their children, implying that child care work or parenting gave rise to the decrease of time and space of their own, and consequently a decrease of leisure pursuits. The third question concerned what strategies they utilized to negotiate household work, child care work and their leisure pursuits. Participants in this study utilized various ways to solve the contradiction between the obligation of household work and their desire for leisure pursuits; but they were still the main care giver of the family, and the situation became worse with the arrival of their children.

5.2 Summary of Results

In this study, as the participants were fairly homogenous in ethnicity, social class and sexual-orientation, the results seem to be more consistent than deviant. All the participants regarded household work as essential to their lives, although it was unrewarded and devalued in society. Most of them reported that they experienced a severe increase in household work, particularly after their children were born in Canada. They also reported that their husbands also experienced a slight increase in household work, particularly with the arrival of their children and after immigrating to Canada. In this sense, they assumed that they were equal to their husbands to some degree. Immigration and parenting also give rise to the reconstruction of more traditional gender relations for a couple. Because of the decrease in socio-economic status, most of the participants retreated to the private sphere and the onset of parenting reinforced the gendered division of labour. For most participants, mothering pushed them to be more conservative in gender relations, which gave rise to their feelings of exhaustion and achievement. Meanwhile, the decrease of leisure pursuits was accompanied by the increased responsibilities for household work due to the lack of free time and personal space. Furthermore, their leisure pursuits changed from leisure of their own to leisure of the family--family leisure, which most of the participants considered as work or work-like leisure. Because of having more work, they had less play. However, most of the participants utilized their agency to negotiate this social reality and to solve the contradiction between work and leisure in many ways, such as lowering their standard of leisure or lowering the standard of household work in order to seek for “relative freedom.”
5.3 Household Work, Mothering, Leisure, and State

This study explored Chinese immigrant women’s experiences of household work, child care work and leisure pursuits after they migrated to Canada and/or with the arrival of their children. Meanwhile, the gender dynamic underlying these changes in status has also been examined through the lens of social reproduction in order to consider the interaction of gender ideology including motherhood and social-economic status.

Chinese immigrant women, particularly those with young children, encountered a dramatic increase of household work and a significant decrease of leisure pursuits after immigration because of their decreased socio-economic status, which exposes a contradiction of the privatization of social reproduction and woman’s rights of self-development through leisure pursuits. For example, these Chinese immigrant women seldom participated in physically active leisure, in part because they did not have free time and space for themselves, and in part because they put their children’s rights over their own.

There may be two underlying causes for the findings. First, women’s lack of time results from the dominant gender ideology that women should be responsible for household work. Further, the domestic obligations give rise to gender inequalities in the private sphere and the women had less time of their own to participate in leisure pursuits. Second, immigrant women encounter structural constraints in terms of employment that help to cause decreased socio-economic status which, in turn, leads to a lack of money to participate in leisure pursuits. Therefore, both gender ideology and low social-economic status interactively pushed Chinese immigrant women back to the private sphere and into leisure poverty. Through the lens of social reproduction, Chinese immigrant women’s more work and less play are also closely related to the state. As Luxton (1980) argues, “women’s work at home is one of the most important and necessary labour processes of industrial capitalist society” (p.13). The current practices of neoliberalism which emphasize the privatization of social services, such as universal child care services, may push Chinese immigrant women further back to the private sphere. Therefore, gender differences and gender inequalities are reproduced and reinforced in a neoliberal social context.

In conclusion, both material resources and gender ideology interactively give rise to Chinese immigrant women’s dramatic increase in household work and significant decrease in leisure
pursuits. They reflect the reproduction of gender inequalities in the gendered division of labour through the process of immigration and the privatization of social reproduction.

5.4 Recommendation

Based on the results and the conclusion, some recommendations are given in this section. First, affordable and accessible day-care, along with generous parental leaves for both fathers and mothers, may liberate women from the “double-burden,” and may decrease the oppression associated with being a woman and a mother. As Stalker (2011) argues, social policy affects a society’s allocation of time. I would add that state policy affects a woman’s experiences of being a mother and an individual. This recommendation is given in the state context, which may, to some extent, be impractical.

The second recommendation is based on the social reality of the women. At present, women do not have much time of their own because of responsibility for household work and child care work. Thus, recreational program developers and designers should take mothers’ needs into account, and provide more parent-children recreational programs, particularly physically active ones at a community level. These parent-children programs may successfully combine mothers’ needs to take care of their children and their own needs to pursue leisure. For example, an ideal leisure program for Chinese immigrant women with children may have the following features. First, free or affordable child care services are provided to free mothers with pre-school children up. Second, it should be appropriately scheduled. If the program is only designed for mothers, it would be appropriate to be scheduled before 3 pm at weekdays, because usually they are supposed to pick up their children after school. Third, in terms of activities, those leisure time physical activities that Chinese immigrant women are familiar with such as basketball, badminton, volleyball, table-tennis and so on should be included in the program. Meanwhile, some Canadian leisure time physical activities such as ice skating, roller skating and hockey, and some board games should be introduced to them. Fourth, it would be more ideal if a program designed for both parents and children to learn new leisure time physical activities such as figure skating together. Chinese immigrant mothers can learn how to skate on ice while their children are learning meanwhile. Parents do not just sit there and waiting for their children. Thus, a future research topic concerns how to make recreational programs, particular physically
active programs, more inclusive for parents and children, recent immigrants and established citizens. However, the implementation of this recommendation runs the potential risk of reproducing and reinforcing the gendered division of labour.

Another suggestion for future research would be the motives for immigration, and the experiences of actual process of immigration. Furthermore, more leisure opportunities should be provided to Chinese immigrant women because they could gain and improve their social skills and language skills through their participating in leisure activities, thus they could rebuild their social networks in Canada. In this sense, they would be more included but not isolated in Canada.

One limitation of this study is that all of the participants were highly educated women with young children, women who were in a low socio-economic status (following immigration) but had high cultural capital when the interviews were done. Additionally, the sample is small, which may limit the generalizability of this study. Future research could explore the experiences of household work and leisure of Chinese immigrant women with lower cultural capital in Canada, compared with those with high cultural capital. Another comparison could be carried out between Chinese immigrant women’s perceptions and practice of household work and leisure and women of other ethnicities (e.g., South Asia or Eastern Europe) so that other cultures and gender ideologies could be examined.

Finally, another limitation of this study is that husbands’ perceptions and practices were understood only through how they were perceived and interpreted by the participants. Certainly, the husbands also experienced great impact from household work and child care work in the process of immigration and parenting. Moreover, interviewing husbands would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how gender relations are constructed and reconstructed in the process of immigration. Thus, it would also be interesting to research men’s perspectives on their gender roles, their experiences of household work, parenting and leisure.

5.5 Contribution

The now considerable scholarship on immigrant women’s leisure has tended to focus on their experiences in post-immigration and seldom explore immigrant women’s experiences of
household work and mothering. In this thesis, I have instead examined the gendered transition experiences of professional women from China to Canada, comparing their experiences of household work and leisure pre- and pro-migration. An understanding of the gendered impacts of international migration on their household work (e.g. child care work) and leisure pursuits of Chinese immigrant women with children allows for an important first step in the development of gender sensitive settlement policies and recreational programs that better facilitate immigrant women’s transition into new communities.

In addition, this study contribute to broader gender migration scholarship in two ways. Firstly, it increases our understanding of the particular experiences of skilled Chinese immigrant women in Canada. Secondly, and most importantly, this study has contributed to the small body of literature that has theorized the fluid gender dynamic in gendered division of labour in the transition of migration and birth of children, and this gender dynamic consequently greatly impacts on immigrant women’s leisure pursuits.

Last but not least, this study contributes to the practical services in a few ways. First, related institutions such as school, university, community center and public health may find this study helpful in providing appropriate and effective services to Chinese community in Canada. For example, knowing Chinese mother’s perceptions of their motherhood, teachers in schools could provide more suitable resources and communicate more effectively with them about children’s education and development in schools. Program designers and providers may employ the results of this study to provide appropriate recreational programs to Chinese immigrant mothers and their children. Social workers who specialized in family issues may obtain useful background knowledge of Chinese immigrant family and gender relationships from this thesis.

Second, this research particularly contributes to the practice of settlement service. Settlement centers/workers may combine recreational programs with settlement services, and help new immigrant get used to the new environment through leisure activities, particular leisure time physical activities.
References


Consulate-General of the People’s Republic of China in Toronto (January 2, 2013) [http://toronto.china-consulate.org](http://toronto.china-consulate.org)


Nakamura (Eds.). *Race and Sport in Canada: Intersecting Inequalities* (pp.139-164).
Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.


Stalker, G. J. (2011a). A widen parental leisure gap: the family as a site for late modern
differentiation and convergence in leisure time within Canada, the United Kingdom and the

(2), 81-102.


from http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/DEMO50A-eng.htm

Statistics Canada. (2006c) Table 1 visible minority groups, Canada, 2006. Retrieved from


discriminatory behavior for discrimination in leisure settings. Leisure Sciences, 27 (1), 59-
74.

Stodolska, M., & Shinew, K. J. (2010). Environmental constraints on leisure time physical
activity among Latino urban residents. Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise, 2(3),
313-335.

Stodolska, M., & Walker, G. J. (2007). Ethnicity and leisure: Historical development, current


Tao, Y. (2011). Intergenerational reciprocal care or welfare default? Gender and
intergenerational exchange of care in domestic labor in dual-earners families (Daiji huhui
haishi fuli buzhu? – chengshi shuanzhigong jiating jiawulaodong zhong de daiji jiaohuan yu
shehui xingbie), Collection of Women’s Studies, 4, 13-19.

Development, 17 (2), 281-293.


 Appendices

Appendix A Informed Consent (English Version)

**Only work, no play: Power, household work and leisure experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Canada**

My name is Caiyan Wendy Chen, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Exercise Sciences in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto. As part of my Master’s thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Peter Donnelly in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. I am inviting you to participate in my study entitled: “Only work, no play: Power, household work and leisure experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Canada.”

**The Research Project:** Although some research has been conducted on Chinese immigrant’s experiences of leisure and leisure time physical activities, little is still known about those experiences of immigrant women from Mainland China, whether their experiences have changed after immigration, and whether household work affects their participation in leisure time physical activities. This information will be important and useful in designing good leisure programs and leisure time physical activity programs for immigrant women to assist them to be engaged in Canadian society and enhance their quality of life.

**Details of Your Participation:** The study involves interviews with new immigrant women from Mainland China in the Greater Toronto Areas. If you agree to participate, the one-on-one interview will be arranged at a time and place most convenient to you and will be completed within one hour. The interview questions have been designed to gather information related to whether the burden of household work changes after immigration among immigrant women from Mainland-China, whether household work, including childcare, affects immigrant women’s leisure time physical activity participation pattern after the birth of their children, and what strategies they use to negotiate unpaid domestic work, paid work, and leisure time physical activity pursuits.

All information obtained in this research will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Your interview will be recorded with your permission. Please note that you may choose not to have the interview audio-recorded, but continue to participate in the research (written records will be secured – see below). Even if you consent to having your interview audio-recorded, you are free to request that the recorder be turned off at any point in the interview or to request that certain recorded information be removed. At any time, you may decline to answer any question. Any information you disclose during the interview will not be reported on an individual basis to anyone, including your superiors and other study participants. However, if the information you disclose is related to child abuse and/or neglect, it is my responsibility to inform CAS.

It is important to note that although there are no anticipated risks associated with this research, you might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed with some questions I will ask; and you need not answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with, and/or you may stop the interview
at any time without consequence to yourself. Please note that your participation is completely voluntary. Your choice to either agree or decline to participate in this study will be respected and kept confidential. Your role and relationship with the researcher will not be affected in any way through your participation in this study, or by your decision to not participate, also without penalty to yourself.

**Privacy & Confidentiality:** Unless otherwise indicated by you, all information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Raw data from interview transcriptions will be saved in a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used to identify interview notes and/or audiotapes of the interviews. One list that matches pseudonyms with the names of participants will be kept in a locked security cabinet in 40 Sussex Avenue, the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical education, the University of Toronto. I, Caiyan Wendy Chen, will remain the sole key-holder to this box, and will be the only person with access to the raw material and numerical participant codes. Also, no personally identifying information will be used in the written work or presentation of this material.

**The Products:** The data from this research will provide the basis for an analysis of immigrant women’s leisure experiences in Toronto. You will be consulted throughout the research process for feedback on matters pertaining to the analysis and representation of data generated through our talks, and will be provided with both a summary of the research finding and a copy of the final thesis upon completion. Other possible research products might include academic conference presentations and scholarly articles.

Please read the consent form carefully. If you agree to participate, please sign on the following page. Should you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the ethics Review Office at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or 416-946-3272.
I understand that any involvement in the interview will last no more than one hour at a time and take place on a date convenient to me. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time, without fear of penalty. If I do withdraw, transcripts of my interview will be destroyed, and my decision to withdraw will be kept confidential, and the information obtained will not be used. I have retained a copy of this letter for my files.

I understand that all information collected in this research will be used for research reasons only and that interview audio-files will only be available to Caiyan Wendy Chen. I understand that my privacy and real name will be protected at all times during the research by using my pseudonym on audio-recording labels, in all research reports and in presentations if I am quoted or discussed. I understand that if the information I disclose is related to child abuse and/or neglect, the researcher has a duty to inform CAS.

I understand raw data from interview transcriptions will be kept confidential and saved in a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick, and hard copies documents will be kept in a locked cabinet in Room 102, 40 Sussex Ave, the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education.

I, _____________________________, agree to participate in an interview for the project on “Only work, no play: power, household work and leisure experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Canada.”

Signature: ____________________
Date: ________________________

For more information, please contact:

Caiyan Wendy Chen
Principle Investigator
40 Sussex Ave.
Toronto, ON. M5S 1J7
416-648-9756
caiyan.chen@utoronto.ca

Dr. Peter Donnelly,
Research Supervisor.
Department of Exercise Sciences,
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education,
40 Sussex Ave.
Toronto, ON. M5S 1J7
416-946-5071
peter.donnelly@utoronto.ca
题目：只有工作，没有休闲：权力，无偿家务劳动与加拿大中国女性移民的休闲经历
我是陈彩燕，是加拿大多伦多大学运动学与体育学院运动科学研究院的硕士研究生。作为硕士论文的一部分，我在我的导师 Peter Donnelly 博士的指导下，正在进行题为“只有工作，没有休闲：权力，无偿家务劳动与加拿大中国女性移民的休闲经历”的研究。现邀请您参与该研究。

研究计划：尽管已经有许多学者研究中国移民的休闲经历和休闲体育运动，但是对于以下几点的研究还是不足的：如专门针对来自中国大陆女性移民的研究；这些女性移民的休闲经历和锻炼模式是否因为移民而产生改变；无偿家务劳动是否影响她们参与休闲体育和锻炼。所有这些信息都非常重要和有用，因为这些信息将有助于相关部门制定相宜政策和提供优质的休闲项目以提高女性移民在加拿大的生活质量。

参与详情：该研究将以大多地区来自中国大陆的女性移民为研究对象。如果您同意参与该研究，您将参加一对一约为一小时的访谈，且访谈的时间和地点以您的方便为宜。该访谈主要收集中国大陆女性移民加拿大后家务劳动模式是否发生变化，移民是否影响她们运动休闲模式，以及她们采取哪些策略和方法平衡家务劳动、工作和休闲的关系等相关的信息。本人将严格保密所收集的信息。在获得您的同意后，我将会对访谈过程进行录音。请注意您可以要求访谈过程中不能录音，但是可以继续参与这个研究。如果您同意对访谈进行录音，但是可以要求停止录音，或者销毁所有已录制的信息。此外，在访谈过程中，您可以拒绝回答任何问题。您在访谈中提供的任何信息都不会向任何个人泄露，包括您的上司及其他参与该研究的人员。根据加拿大法律，如果您所提供的信息有虐待和/或忽视儿童的情况，我，作为研究者，有向 CAS 举报的责任。虽然本研究没有任何预期风险，但是在访谈过程中，你可能会对我所提的一些问题感到不安或者尴尬。若是这样的话，您可以在任何时候拒绝回答这些问题或者终止访谈而不会有任何的惩罚。请注意您是自愿参与本研究。此外，我将保密和尊重您是否同意或拒绝参与本研究的选择。不论您如何决定，您与研究员的关系不会有任何的改变，也不会受到任何惩罚。

隐私与保密：除非得到您的同意，所有信息将严格受到保密。访谈的原始材料将保存在有密码装置的计算机和加密的记忆棒里，每位参与者都将使用假名作为访谈记录标示，与参与者假名配对的表格将被放置在一个上锁的箱子。我，陈彩燕，将是唯一持有该箱子钥匙的人，也是唯一能接触原始材料和参与者的人。最后，任何可能辨识参与者身份的信息将不会在书面或口头材料中被使用。

成果：该研究所取得的数据将会是分析中国大陆移民女性休闲经历的基础。在研究过程中，我将会向您咨询与数据分析相关的反馈；同时研究完成后，您将会收到研究的结果和论文，其他研究成果可能是在学术会议上的表述和学术论文。
敬请认真阅读该同意书。如果您同意参加本研究，请在下一页处签名。如果您有任何与您权力相关的疑问，请致电审核办公室 416-946-3272 或发电子邮件到 ethics.review@utoronto.ca 查询。
我清楚知道每次访谈不会超过一小时，而且访谈的时间和地点由我决定。我清楚我是自愿参与的，而且可以随时退出，不会受到任何惩罚。如果我退出参与本研究，访谈脚本将会被销毁，而且将对我的决定保密。我已获得此同意书的副本。

我清楚知道本研究所收集的任何信息将只用于该研究，而且只有研究员陈彩燕拥有这些信息。我知道在研究过程中，我的隐私和真名任何时候都受到保密；在所有的研究报告或讨论和引用中将用假名代替。我清楚如果我提供的信息涉及虐待和/或忽视儿童，研究员有责任向儿童福利署（CAS）举报。

我清楚知道所有原始访谈脚本将会保存在设有密码的电脑里和加密的记忆棒里，所有资料文本将保存在多伦多大学运动学和体育学院 Sussex 大街 40 号 102 号一个上锁的箱子里。

我，___________________________，同意参与题为“只有工作，没有休闲：权力，无偿家务劳动与加拿大中国女性移民的休闲经历”的研究。

签名: ____________________
日期: ____________________

如果您需要更多了解与之相关的信息，请联系:

Caiyan Wendy Chen
Principle Investigator
40 Sussex Ave. Toronto, ON. M5S 1J7
416-648-9756
caiyan.chen@utoronto.ca

Dr. Peter Donnelly,
Research Supervisor.
Department of Exercise Sciences,
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education,
40 Sussex Ave.
Toronto, ON. M5S 1J7
416-946-5071
peter.donnelly@utoronto.ca
Appendix C Interview Guide (English Version)

Only work, No play: Power, Household work and leisure experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Canada

The interview will cover the following areas:

1. Background information of the participants.
   e.g., Tell me a little bit about yourself (e.g., age, length of staying in Canada, education, age of their child/children, work status etc.)

2. Participants’ perceptions of leisure time, physical activity, leisure time physical activity and exercise.
   e.g., How do you define leisure time, physical activity, leisure time physical activity and exercise?

3. Participants’ patterns of spending leisure time before immigration.
   e.g., What did you usually do in your leisure time before immigration?

4. Participants’ patterns of spending leisure time after immigration.
   e.g., What do you usually do in your leisure time after immigration?
   Do you think there are any differences before and after immigration? If any, what are they? How do you account for the differences?
   How often do you participate in leisure time physical activity each week? What activities do you usually do?

5. Participants’ perceptions of domestic labour.
   e.g., How do you define domestic labour? What do you think of child care?
   Do you do it by yourself or with someone else?
   Do you enjoy taking care of children?
   Is there any difference between your involvement domestic labour in Canada and in China?

6. Involvement in domestic labour before and after immigration.
   e.g., Does your husband share the domestic labour? Does he do it willingly or do you ask him to help out?
   What does he usually do? What does he prefer to do about domestic labour?

7. Involvement in domestic labour after child was born.
   e.g., How did your husband/partner get involved in domestic labour after child was born?

8. Participants’ partners’ involvement in domestic labour before and after immigration and child was born.
   e.g., Is there any difference between his involvement in domestic labour in Canada and in China? If any, how do you account for these differences?
9. Partners’ involvement of leisure time physical activity before and after immigration and child was born.
   e.g., Is your husband usually involved in leisure time physical activity? How often?
   What do you think about your husband/partner’s participation in leisure time physical activity?
   e.g., What does your family usually do in leisure time?
   Does your domestic/household work facilitate father-children leisure/play activities?
只有工作，没有休闲：权力，无偿家务劳动与加拿大中国女性移民的休闲经历
访谈将包括以下几个领域：
1. 参与者的背景信息。
   请谈谈您自己（如：年龄，在加拿大的时间有多久，教育程度，孩子的年龄与数量，工作状态等）。
2. 参与者对休闲时间，身体活动，休闲身体活动和锻炼的认识。
   如：请问您如何定义休闲时间，身体活动，休闲身体活动和锻炼？
3. 参与者移民加拿大前的休闲模式。
   如：请问移民加拿大前您一般怎样进行休闲？
4. 参与者移民加拿大后的休闲模式。
   如：移民加拿大后您一般怎样进行休闲？与移民前相比，休闲模式有变化吗？如果有，变化是什么？您如何解释这些变化？每周您有几次参加休闲身体活动？您经常做哪些活动？
5. 参与者对家务劳动的认识。
   如：您如何界定家务劳动？您如何理解照顾孩子？您是自己做家务还是别人做家务？您喜欢照顾小孩吗？与在中国相比，移民加拿大后做家务的情况有改变吗？
6. 参与者移民加拿大前后对家务劳动的参与情况。
   如：您先生/伴侣与您分担家务劳动吗？他是乐意参与家务劳动还是您要求他帮忙您分担家务？他经常做哪些家务？他经常更喜欢做哪些家务？
7. 小孩出生后参与者对家务劳动的参与情况。
   如：小孩出生后，您的先生/伴侣如何参与家务劳动？
8. 小孩出生后及移民前后配偶对家务劳动的参与情况。
   如：与在中国相比，您先生/伴侣参与家务劳动的情况有变化吗？如果有，您怎样理解这些变化？
9. 小孩出生后及移民前后配偶对休闲互动的参与情况。
   如：您先生经常进行休闲身体活动吗？频率是什么？您对他参加休闲身体活动有什么看法？您们家在闲暇的时候一般做些什么休闲活动？您是否经常组织这些父亲-孩子休闲活动？
Appendix E Definition of Terms

Operational definitions of terms used in this study are the following:

1. Immigrant: Immigrants are those born outside of Canada who are, or have been, landed immigrants. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Some immigrants have lived in Canada for many years while others are recent arrivals. In this study, new immigrants are considered to be those who landed in Canada between 2006 and 2011.

2. Leisure: “leisure generally refers to free time, recreation activity, and/or meaningful experiences. [Free] time refers to discretionary periods in one’s life that are available to do whatever one wishes; activity refers to recreation pursuits done during free time; experience reflects a subjective, qualitative view of leisure” (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996, p.19).

3. Household work: “[h]ousehold work consists of the sum of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual tasks that are performed for one’s own or for someone else’s household and that maintain the daily life of those one has responsibility for” (Either, & Albanese, 2007, p.248). This study is informed and guided by this definition of household work in researching on those who perform unpaid domestic labour for their own families.

4. Gender ideology: “the underlying concept of an individual’s level of support for a division of paid work and family responsibilities that is based on the notion of separate spheres” (Davis & Greenstein, 2009, p.88).

5. Social production: “the processes involved in maintaining and reproducing people, specifically the laboring population, and their labour power on a daily and generational basis (Laslett and Brenner 1989; Clarke 2000, as cited in Bezanson & Luxton, 2006, p.3)
Appendix F  Ethical Approval

PROTOCOL REFERENCE #: 27679

June 14, 2012

Dr. Peter Donnelly

FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Ms. Caiyan (Wendy) Chen
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Dear Dr. Donnelly and Ms. Caiyan (Wendy) Chen,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Only work, no play: Power, unpaid household work and leisure experiences of Chinese immigrant women in Canada"

ETHICS APPROVAL Original Approval Date: June 14, 2012
Expiry Date: June 13, 2013
Continuing Review Level: 1

We are writing to advise you that the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,
Judith Friedland, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Daniel Gyewu
REB Manager