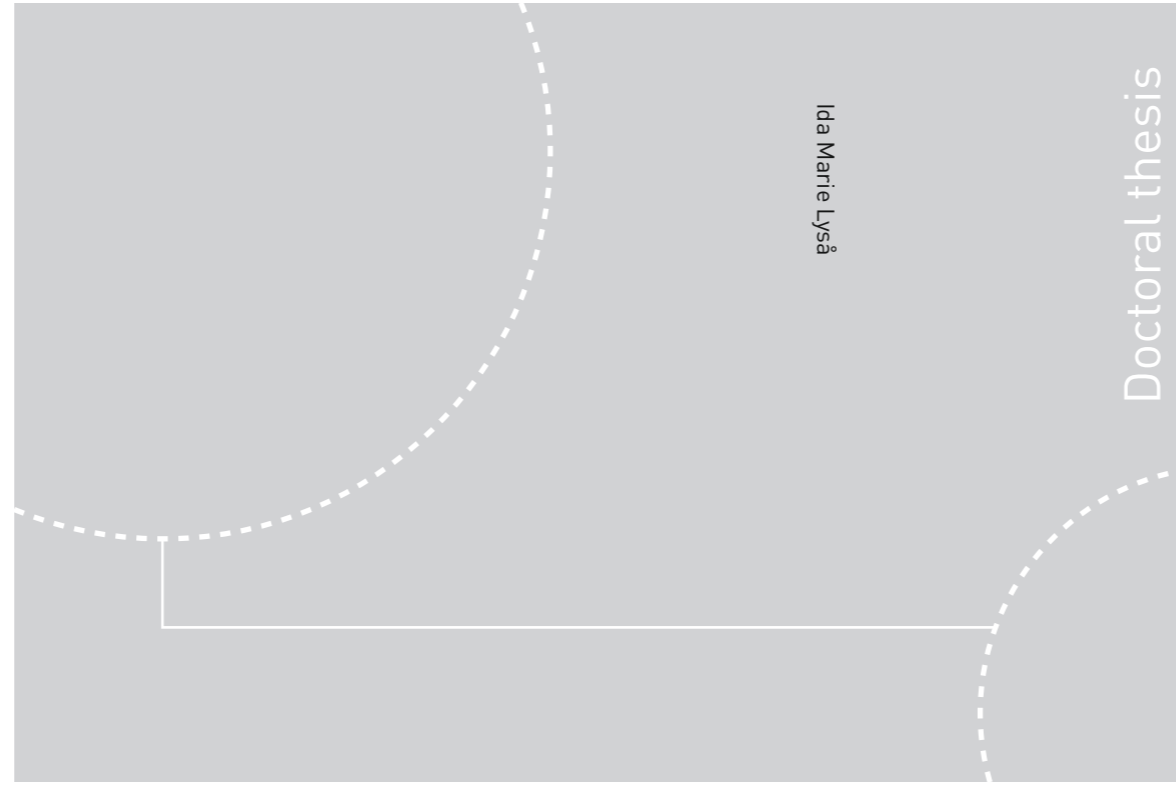


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Ida Marie Lyså

Duties and Privileges

An Ethnographic Study of Discipline as
Relational Practice in two Urban Chinese
Kindergartens

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Norwegian University of
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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic study of discipline - as relational everyday social practice - in two urban Chinese kindergartens. The study is based on 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork in two kindergarten classes in Shanghai the autumn of 2011 and the spring of 2012, using participant observation and qualitative research interviews with children and teachers in the two kindergartens. The thesis is written within the interdisciplinary research field of *Childhood studies*, emphasizing children's position as social actors and informants in research alongside adults (James and Prout 1997, James et al. 1998), and emphasizing how understandings of childhood and discipline are contextually based (Montgomery 2009).

Bourdieu's concepts *field*, *habitus* and *capital* constitute an analytical frame for capturing both the social and historical conditions of practice, as well as how agents perceive and operate such practices (Bourdieu 1977, 1992). The research questions are: 1) In which ways are disciplinarian practices present in relationships between teachers and children in the kindergartens? 2) How do the children experience, relate to and partake in such practices? And 3) How do everyday disciplinarian practices relate to contemporary views of, and future concerns with, children and childhood in the Chinese context?

Disciplinarian practices are understood as practices of control, regulation or guidance in the kindergarten everyday life, including elements of self-discipline and the forming and controlling of own habits. Discipline is explored in a wide sense: in spatial and temporal structures (layout of classrooms, wall decorations, division/use of time), in the regulation of bodies (group divisions, individual physical separation, routinized behaviours, rigorous practicing, physical punishment), and in different activities of organized play. In the thesis, attention is also directed at how discipline is expressed and communicated, and how this connects to contextually significant notions of *guan* (loving control), *guai* (ideal behaviour) and moral. Furthermore, practices of evaluation, differential treatment and comparison are explored through the notion of relationality. Values of order and control, correct behaviour, evaluation, and the public character of discipline in the kindergartens are emphasised throughout the chapters. Such practices and structures make out the social conditions of the field, and the embodiment of such practices and values are particularly emphasised (Bourdieu 1977). This part of the thesis particularly refers to adult-child relationships in the kindergartens, which is theorized using the notion of *generational ordering* as a mutually constitutive aspect of intergenerational relationships in the kindergartens (Alanen 2009, 2015).

Particular forms of field-specific embodied cultural capital (kindergarten, *guan* and *guai*) exemplifies how children *themselves* partake in disciplinarian practices. These practices are not only top-down, teacher-child ordered practices, but also significant in relations between children, both in everyday life as well as in assigned tasks involving practices of domination in the classroom, exemplified through the tasks of duty children, little teachers and team leaders. The children did however, not have equal opportunity to dominate others due to their differential endowment with and use of capital and thus their position in social space, and such variations are explored with reference to a relational understanding of agency (Burkitt, 2016). A relational (interdependent and differential) aspect is thus part of the children's *practical sense* (*habitus*) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) of discipline, along with a form of situational sensitivity and a seizing of opportunities for secrecy and play, including the challenging of field values.

A concern in literature on contemporary Chinese childhoods is that raised living standards, the opening up policy, and particularly the 'one-child policy' has led to a generation of spoiled 'little emperors' receiving too much attention from parents and grandparents ("4-2-1 family syndrome"). Chinese kindergartens are considered an appropriate place to deal with this challenge, in part through practices of control and discipline, while simultaneously securing cultural continuity and providing social change (Hsueh and Tobin, 2003). The final analytical chapter of the thesis describes how such concerns are met in one of the kindergartens through a particular form of educational approach called 'frustration education,' which aimed to balance out children's emotional state in order to enable them to cope with challenges in their contemporary and future daily lives.

The conceptual pair *duties* and *privileges* serve as a useful representation of the daily experiences with discipline of children in two urban Chinese kindergartens, as well as reflect views of children and childhood, and the individual in the Chinese context (Bakken, 1994; Xiaotong 1992; Hansen & Svarverud, 2010).

Contents

<i>PART I: INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC AND CONTEXT</i>	1
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Research objective and aim of thesis.....	5
1.2 Theoretical and conceptual clarifications	7
1.3 Interpreting cultures and childhoods	11
1.4 Childhood and kindergarten research in China	13
1.5 Outline of thesis.....	15
2 Childhoods in contemporary urban China	17
2.1 History and politics: transforming childhoods	17
2.2 Education: A right and duty of citizens	20
2.2.1 Historical developments in the kindergarten field.....	22
2.2.2 Contemporary Chinese kindergartens.....	23
2.3 Discipline and the ideal socio-political order	24
2.3.1 Confucianism: Moral perfection and governance.....	24
2.3.2 Face, shaming and discipline.....	26
2.4 Contemporary urban childhoods	31
2.5 Summary Chapter 2	34
<i>PART II: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES</i>	35
3 Theorizing childhood, agency, and discipline	37
3.1 Childhood studies	37
3.1.1 Both being and becoming	41
3.1.2 Generational order	43
3.1.3 Relational agency.....	44
3.2 Discipline and childhood: contextual understandings	48
3.3 Summary Chapter 3	51
4 Theorizing culture and everyday social life: a relational approach	53
4.1 Theoretical reflexivity and historicity	53
4.2 The concept of culture	56
4.3 A theory of practice: a sense of the game.....	58
4.3.1 A generative habitus	59
4.3.2 Field/social space.....	61
4.3.3 Capital: force, position and orientation in the game.....	63
4.3.4 A theory of symbolic power	64
4.4 Individual(ism) and society	66
4.4.1 A differential mode of association.....	66
4.4.2 Chinese individualism	69
4.5 Summary Chapter 4	71
5 Method and ethics: reflections and considerations	73
5.1 Researching children and childhood.....	74
5.1.1 Child informants and questions of method(ology)	74

5.1.2	Reflexivity in (and out of) the field	75
5.2	Long-term ethnographic fieldwork.....	78
5.2.1	Participant observation in Chinese kindergartens.....	79
5.2.2	Working with an interpreter.....	81
5.3	Roles and relationships in the field.....	85
5.3.1	Relationships with the children	85
5.3.2	The notebook as communication device.....	88
5.3.3	Relations with teachers	89
5.4	Constituting the field	91
5.4.1	Gatekeepers and doing research in an institution	91
5.4.2	Collaborating institutions and expectations from the field.....	92
5.4.3	‘Choosing’ field sites: the two kindergartens	93
5.5	Interviews: content and challenges.....	97
5.5.1	Child group interviews	98
5.5.2	Teacher interviews.....	101
5.6	Producing and interpreting data.....	102
5.6.1	Field notes and empirical material.....	102
5.6.2	Analysis and writing up	104
5.7	Challenges of ethnographic fieldwork.....	106
5.8	Ethical reflections	108
5.8.1	Child informants and ethical considerations.....	108
5.8.2	Issues of consent	110
5.8.3	Confidentiality and anonymity	114
5.9	Summary Chapter 5	114

PART III: DISCIPLINARIAN PRACTICES AND STRUCTURES..... 115

6	Disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens.....	117
6.1	Spatial and temporal aspects: order and regulation	117
6.1.1	The kindergartens and classrooms.....	118
6.1.2	Classroom walls: for instruction and on display.....	122
6.1.3	Schedule and use of time: regulation and transition	127
6.2	Corporal discipline: Controlling behaviour and movement	131
6.2.1	Group division and individual physical separation	131
6.2.2	Routinized behaviours	134
6.2.3	Rigorous practice and repetition.....	139
6.2.4	Physical punishment	145
6.3	Discipline in activities of play: regulated creativity	147
6.4	Embodiment as practical mastery.....	150
6.5	Summary Chapter 6	155
7	Disciplinarian practices: Guan (loving control) and ideal behaviour	157
7.1	<i>Guan</i> : ‘loving control’	157
7.2	Communicating discipline in the classroom.....	160
7.2.1	Emphasizing responsibility.....	161
7.2.2	“I will see who can do it”: demanding attention.....	162
7.2.3	“Use your mind”: expecting progress and <i>guai</i> (ideal behaviour)	164
7.2.4	“You are so happy”: criticism and self-control	167
7.2.5	Yelling, threats and scare tactics: underlining obedience.....	169

7.3	Moral training: self-cultivation and shaming	171
7.3.1	Children presenting moral stories	171
7.3.2	Shaming techniques and the understanding of face	173
7.4	Generational order and reciprocal obligations in the kindergarten	175
7.5	Summary Chapter 7	176
8	Disciplinarian practices: Evaluation and discipline as relational practices	177
8.1	Evaluation and public scrutiny in the kindergartens	177
8.1.1	Public evaluation and (public) self-evaluation	177
8.1.2	Comparison and being examples for others	180
8.1.3	Individual differentiation: giving and removing privileges	182
8.1.4	Trading punishment	183
8.2	Evaluation and criticism in Chinese society	184
8.3	Embodied relationality and a differential generational order	187
8.4	Summary Chapter 8	189

PART IV: THE DISCIPLINARIAN GAME 191

9	Children playing the disciplinarian game	193
9.1	Field-specific forms of embodied cultural capital	194
9.2	Tasks of domination among children in the kindergarten	197
9.2.1	Duty children: everyday social control	197
9.2.2	Little teachers: controlling others	203
9.2.3	Team leaders: hierarchy in the child group	210
9.3	Differential positioning in social space	215
9.3.1	Xiaoyan	215
9.3.2	Kang	219
9.3.3	Shanshan	221
9.3.4	Chao	223
9.3.5	Shu	224
9.4	Making sense of the disciplinarian game	226
9.5	Summary Chapter 9	230
10	Children's practical sense of disciplinarian practices	231
10.1	The fuzzy logic of disciplinarian practice	232
10.2	A relational practical sense	234
10.2.1	Differentiation and interrelational responsibility	235
10.2.2	Situational sensitivity and a pragmatic sense of limits	239
10.2.3	Playfulness: seizing opportunities and challenging values	241
10.3	(Mis)recognizing and reproducing practice	245
10.4	Summary Chapter 10	251

PART V: DISCIPLINARIAN CONCERNS 253

11	Challenging children: balancing minds	255
11.1	Pleasures and pressures of contemporary urban childhoods	255
11.2	Frustration education: Army day	259
11.2.1	Creating frustration in the army barracks	262

11.2.2	Explaining frustration education: an emotion leveller.....	266
11.2.3	Everyday frustration education.....	269
11.3	Discipline as everyday social practice	272
11.4	Summary Chapter 11	274
12	Some concluding remarks.....	275
13	References	279
14	Appendix	287
14.1	Consent form for children (Mandarin Chinese).....	287
14.2	Consent form for teachers (Mandarin Chinese).....	288
14.3	Consent form for parents (Mandarin Chinese)	290
14.4	Consent form for children (English)	292
14.5	Consent form for teachers (English).....	293
14.6	Consent form for parents (English).....	295
14.7	Research information for kindergarten (Mandarin Chinese)	297
14.8	Research information for kindergarten (English)	298
14.9	Interview guide for child interviews (kindergarten 1)	300
14.10	Interview guide for teacher interview (kindergarten 1)	302
14.11	Interview guide for child interviews (kindergarten 2)	304
14.12	Interview guide for teacher interviews (kindergarten 2).....	305

Table and picture index

Table 1: Kindergarten 1 daily schedule.....	129
Table 2: Kindergarten 2 daily schedule.....	131
Picture 1: Kindergarten 1 classroom and adjoining bathroom.....	119
Picture 2: Kindergarten 1 bathroom.....	119
Picture 3: Kindergarten 2 classroom.....	120
Picture 4: Kindergarten 2 bathroom.....	120
Picture 5: Kindergarten 1 instruction poster—how to write with pencil.....	123
Picture 6: Kindergarten 2 instruction poster—how to clean face.....	123
Picture 7: Kindergarten 2 instruction poster—how to hang jacket.....	123
Picture 8: Kindergarten 1 classroom lunch set-up.....	136
Picture 9: Kindergarten 2 canteen area.....	138
Picture 10: Duty child arm cards in the kindergartens.....	198
Picture 11: Big team leader arm card in kindergarten 1.....	211
Picture 12: Kindergarten 2 classroom decoration for army day.....	260
Picture 13: Kindergarten 2 children waiting for army day to begin.....	261
Picture 14: Kindergarten 2 trip - army school barracks.....	263

PART I: INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC AND CONTEXT

1 Introduction

It was during my ethnographic fieldwork in two urban Chinese kindergartens that my interest in and fascination with discipline and disciplinary practices began.¹ Early observations of what could be termed disciplinarian practice, such as how hundreds of children in straight lines and rows moved simultaneously during morning calisthenics, or how the children could form meticulously straight lines in the classroom, made a strong impression on me. The complex workings and intricacies of such practices intrigued me because it was difficult to understand the logic behind them and also because the children played an important role in such practices. I was for instance puzzled by the teacher's use of sarcasm when addressing the children and by the ways in which children controlled and monitored each other. How could I understand this—what did it mean? I became fascinated by the intense presence of such practices in the everyday lives of kindergarteners.

This thesis is an ethnographic study of disciplinarian practices in two urban Chinese kindergartens, based on 11 months of fieldwork in two kindergarten classes in Shanghai between the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012. I approached the field with the intention and desire to understand practice in the context where it takes place. I attempted to open up to and explore the meaning of discipline, aiming to go beyond a deductive understanding of the concept and challenge the negative connotations this concept may have in a Western context. I was aware that a potential danger in making discipline the main topic of scholarly inquiry is the development of a narrow and one-sided image of what Chinese kindergartens are, which is not what I wished to do. Rather, my aim was to develop a complex and nuanced analysis of practices that were highly significant in the everyday lives of the children I met during fieldwork.

Choosing discipline as the concept of focus in this thesis was informed by my personal and academic background, shaping the way I approach and understand things (see sections 4.1 and 5.1.2), as well as informed by emic understandings: discipline² was a concept used by the teachers when explaining practices of control and regulation in the kindergarten. In everyday interaction however, the concept of *guan* ('loving control') was more frequently used,

¹ Discipline was only briefly mentioned as a potential topic of interest in my project outline, which was quite open in its approach; i.e., to explore the everyday lives of children in two urban Chinese kindergartens.

² Discipline, *ji lu* (纪律)

accompanied by other verbs signifying particular forms of related practices (see Section 7.1). In this thesis, I approach disciplinarian practices as relational everyday practices of control, regulation or guidance in the kindergarten, including self-discipline and the forming and controlling of own habits.³

This thesis is part of an interdisciplinary kindergarten research project (see Section 1.2) and is situated in the interdisciplinary field of social studies of children and childhood (in the following referred to as childhood studies⁴) (Alanen, 2012; Allison James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Jenks, 1982; Prout & James, 1990; Qvortrup, Corsaro, & Honig, 2011a). The plurality and diversity of childhoods and an understanding of children as social agents is underlined and agency is understood as relational (Burkitt, 2016). Child-adult relationships are theorized in terms of *generational order* (Alanen, 2009a); a contextual and mutually constitutive relation that is strongly connected to disciplinarian practices in kindergartens. I approach discipline as *everyday social practices* and will particularly make use of Pierre Bourdieu theory of practice (1977, 1990b; 1992a), addressing the social and historical conditions of practice, as well as how teachers and children in the kindergartens perceive and partake in them. This thesis is thus an investigation of social life through a study of relations; following a philosophy of the *primacy of relations* (Bourdieu, 1997; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), emphasizing how individuals are always enmeshed in relations of interdependency with others, and cannot be understood, neither empirically nor theoretically, as separate from their relational contexts (Powell & Dépelteau, 2013). The contextually specific understanding of relational aspects will be explored using theory on the individual in China by Xiaotong (1992), Bakken (1994) and Hansen and Svarverud (2010). The idea of relationality is thus what binds the different theoretical approaches together. A relational aspect is also relevant for the methodical and ethical

³ The online oxford dictionary defines the verb discipline as “train (someone) to obey rules or a code of behaviour, using punishment to correct disobedience”; “punish or rebuke formally for an offence;” and to “train oneself to do something in a controlled or habitual way” <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/discipline> (Accessed 26.10.2016). In this thesis, I draw on such a definition, emphasising practices of “training” in the form of control and regulation, as well as self-control and self-regulation. I theorize such practices using Bourdieu’s theoretical approach on social life (see 4.3).

⁴ ‘Childhood studies’ is a designation used in this thesis for an interdisciplinary research tradition with many names. Childhood studies has become a popular label after more and more disciplines joined the tradition (from geographies to law) (Tisdall and Punch 2012) and is the most typical designation used in editorials in the journal *Childhood* as well as in key conceptual literature within the research field, such as *The Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies* (Qvortrup et al., 2011), *Key concepts in childhood studies* (James and James, 2008), and *Key thinkers in childhood studies* (Smith and Greene, 2014).

considerations for this study; ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, and interviews take place and are formed *in* and *through* field relationships, composed by individuals from different social, cultural and political contexts, ages, genders, and ethnicities (see section 5.3). Finally, the value of the idea of relationality in current childhood research is also voiced by several researchers in childhood studies (Ansell, 2017; Prout, 2011; Smith & Greene, 2014:26).⁵

The conceptual pair *duties* and *privileges* depicted in the title of this thesis serve as illustrative and contextually significant concepts for the phenomenon explored. These concepts are reflected in several disciplinarian practices in the two kindergartens, and are connected to a relational view of children, childhood, and the individual in the Chinese context. The significance of and relation between these concepts will be explored throughout the thesis.

1.1 Research objective and aim of thesis

The main objective of this thesis is to explore disciplinarian practices in two urban Chinese kindergartens, with particular emphasis on how the children experience such practices. I address the interplay between agents—children and teachers—and the social conditions or field they are part of in the kindergarten everyday life. Social conditions refer to practices, values, and material resources that make out the social universe with which the children and teachers—with their conduct, thoughts, feelings, and judgements—interact. Through describing and analysing a range of disciplinarian practices and structures in the two kindergartens (part III), I look at different aspects of this interplay. My research questions are:

- 1) In which ways are disciplinarian practices and routines present in relationships between teachers and children in the kindergartens?
- 2) How do the children experience, relate to, and partake in disciplinarian practices?
- 3) How do everyday disciplinarian practices relate to contemporary views of, and future concerns with, children and childhood in the Chinese context?

⁵ Smith and Greene (2014). Chapter 2 is an interview with Leena Alanen, who talks about the emerging emphasis and potential of the idea of relationality in contemporary childhood research (and many other disciplines).

The research questions are connected to different parts of this thesis (see Section 1.5); I address and analyse various forms of disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens in Part III (Chapters 6-8); explore how the children experience and partake in such practices in various ways in Part IV (Chapters 9-10); and address societal concerns with childhood and discipline in Part V (particularly in Chapter 11). The aim of this thesis is to contextualize and theorize disciplinary practices in order to explore how such practices make sense in context. This can give readers who are unfamiliar with the Chinese context an understanding of how such practices take place in (two) Chinese kindergartens. Moreover, this can contribute to the field of kindergarten research in China through presenting an outsider's view and interpretation of such practices. In such ways, this project can challenge normative understandings of children and childhood, both illustrating and reminding readers that childhoods and disciplinarian practices are not universal categories.

I will particularly explore discipline in social relations, but also in spatial and temporal structures. Disciplinarian structures in the kindergarten space include temporal, material, and spatial dimensions, for example the schedule and layout of the kindergarten (see Chapter 6). Social relational disciplinarian practices refer to both overt and routine-based practices of discipline, as well as more covert practices in unexpected or circumstantial situations. I explore these matters in the context of the children's daily lives with attention to practices, utterances, and interactions between agents, as well as of contextually and culturally relevant perspectives regarding views of children and childhood, child-adult relationships, and a relational understanding of the individual. I approach such practices in relationships between teachers and children (Part III) and in the child group (Part IV).

My study is based on 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork the autumn of 2011 and the spring of 2012. I made use of the method of participant observation (Fangen, 2011) and conducted qualitative research interviews (Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2015) with children and teachers, accompanied by an interpreter.⁶ Field sites were two urban Chinese kindergartens among "big class" children (aged 6); i.e., children attending their final year in kindergarten before starting school. The two different Shanghai kindergarten fieldwork locations have left their particular imprint on the topic studied; disciplinarian practices were expressed and

⁶ I was accompanied by an interpreter three days a week in both kindergartens (I stayed five days a week in kindergarten 1, and four days a week in kindergarten 2). For more details on choice of method and discussions on the fieldwork process, see the methods chapter (Chapter 5).

produced both differently and similarly in the two kindergartens, which were located in two different urban neighbourhoods in the city of Shanghai. Furthermore, this thesis is based on fieldwork conducted in a specific cultural setting and period in time. China is a geographically vast country with a diverse and heterogeneous population, which has gone through large-scale economic, social, and political transitions during the last decades (see Chapter 2). More empirical studies from China have been requested in order to understand better how China is changing (Heimer & Thøgersen, 2006). Making general claims about Chinese childhoods or Chinese kindergartens is not my intention; I rather explore *aspects of some* childhoods in a particular setting and moment in time.

1.2 Theoretical and conceptual clarifications

This PhD study is part of the research project *Kindergarten as an Arena for Cultural Formation* at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences⁷; an interdisciplinary research project that emphasizes conditions for children's cultural formation, children's meaning making, and educational practices in kindergartens (Kallestad & Ødegaard, 2013, 2014; Lyså, 2012; 2011a, 2011b, 2012b; Ødegaard & Krüger, 2012). Most of the sub-projects conduct kindergarten research in a Norwegian context, but there are also comparative projects between China⁸ and Norway, and there is one project on similarities and differences in science education in Chinese and Norwegian kindergartens (Hammer & He, 2014) and a PhD project, which is a comparative study focusing on ideals of cultural formation in Chinese and Norwegian kindergartens (Birkeland, 2012, 2013a, 2013b).⁹ My study is independent of and complimentary to these projects: it explores disciplinarian practices in two Chinese kindergartens, with children as main informants and long-term ethnographic fieldwork as the main method of research.

⁷ *Kindergarten as an Arena for Cultural Formation* (Barnehagen som Danningsarena, BDA) is a research group at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (previously Bergen University College), led by Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard and funded by the Norwegian Research Council. <http://www.hib.no/forskning/barnehagen-som-danningsarena/> and <http://www.hib.no/forskning/om-forskning/suf/forskning-pa-barnehage/barnehagen-som-danningsarena/>

⁸ One of the project's collaborative partners is East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai, China.

⁹ These projects have been inspired by Joseph Tobin's multivocal ethnographic approach, which was established in his 'Preschools in three cultures' project in the mid80s (Tobin et al., 2009). A video from a 'typical day' in a Chinese and a Norwegian kindergarten has been recorded and shown to kindergarten teachers in both countries, followed by interviews and discussions on particular topics from the video. This enabled kindergarten teachers to reflect on both their own practice, as well as kindergarten practices in the other county.

The main project, *Kindergarten as an Arena for Cultural Formation*, seeks to generate new empirical knowledge of the kindergarten as an institution for children (in Norway and China), as well as contribute to methodological knowledge of how to study formative processes in kindergartens. The project makes use of social epistemological theoretical approaches and kindergartens are explored as complex *social fields* or *arenas*; i.e., as “places of combat”¹⁰ (Ødegaard & Krüger, 2012:19). Processes of cultural formation are understood as historical, social, political, and cultural, and Bourdieu’s theorizations of field and habitus are considered useful for theorizing such processes (Ødegaard & Krüger, 2012:30). The kindergarten is an arena with particular conditions for cultural formation, and children are agents in this arena; forming themselves as well as formed through the myriad of experiences they have in this social field (Ødegaard & Krüger, 2012). My project is in line with this frame of understanding, exploring discipline as one aspect of formative processes.¹¹

In this thesis, disciplinarian practices are understood as *everyday* social and cultural *practices*, and they are explored on the premises of the cultural setting where they take place. I approach disciplinarian practices in kindergartens, using Bourdieu’s conceptual trio *field*, *habitus*, and *capital* (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Bourdieu’s theoretical approach opens up for insights into cultural difference and variation because it is simultaneously theoretical and empirical; his concepts are used and tested in close connection with particular empirical realities (Bourdieu, 1997:16)¹². I am interested in children’s everyday experiences with a range of disciplinarian practices and structures in kindergartens’ every day life. I also explore how the children themselves engage in practices of discipline and dominance with other children and teachers. The contextual relational aspect will be further explored using theoretical contributions on the individual and individualization in China (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010; Xiaotong et al., 1992). The cultural specificity of such concepts is significant since it has notable implications for the meaning of disciplinarian practice in context.

¹⁰ Etymological definition of arena (Ødegaard and Krüger, 2012).

¹¹ The concept *cultural formation* is a significant concept in the research group this thesis is part of (see 1.2). The concept is connected to a complex discussion in a highly contextual linguistic, disciplinarian, and historical setting; it is an English translation of the Norwegian word *danning*, related to the German concept of *Bildung*, and strongly associated with pedagogical and philosophical disciplines (Lyså, 2012, Ødegaard, 2012a). I use the concept of discipline rather than e.g., processes of cultural formation because although disciplinarian practices are undeniably parts of such larger processes, this concept enables me to have a more specific focus in the thesis, from which I can nuance the empirical material.

¹² The concepts of habitus, field and capital can be defined, but only within the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

The thesis is written within the field of childhood studies (Allison James et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1990; Qvortrup et al., 2011a; Smith & Greene, 2014), emphasizing the plurality of childhoods (see 3.1). Childhood studies was established as a research field in the 1980-90s and is an interdisciplinary research tradition involving a range of disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, history, geography etc. Childhood studies aimed to challenge developmental and future-oriented views of children and childhood, and the previous ‘mutedness’ (Hardman, 2001) of children in research was explicitly addressed. Central tenets in this research tradition are; 1) understanding childhood as a social construction that varies cross-culturally, while simultaneously forming a specific structural and cultural component in societies, 2) childhood is considered a variable in social analysis alongside class, gender, and ethnicity, 3) childhood and children were worthy of study in their own right, 4) children are seen as active constructors in their social lives and contexts, 5) ethnographic fieldwork is considered a particularly useful methodology for childhood research, and finally 6) there is an acknowledgement that this research tradition also engages and responds to processes of reconstructing childhood in society (Prout & James, 1990:8-9). Children’s agency was emphasised from the beginning, linked to a view of children as ‘beings’ rather than just future ‘becomings’ (Prout & James, 1990). In this thesis, agency is understood as relational; as something that ‘produces effects’ and takes place between agents (Burkitt, 2016). The relational aspect will also be explored in intergenerational relations between children and teachers (Alanen, 2009a), as well as in the child group, using Bourdieu’s relational theory of social life (Bourdieu, 1977).

Bourdieu’s concepts are fruitful in the study of children and childhood due to their relational approach, not only because they provide the researcher with “*relational glasses*” both in theory and method, but also because they are linked to the aim of overcoming the polarities present in sociological research such as individual-society and subjectivism-objectivism (Alanen, 2009b). In addition, his concepts can address the polarities in childhood studies such as the micro-sociologies of children emphasizing the actor perspective and macro-sociologies of childhood emphasizing childhood as a permanent structure in societies (Alanen, 2009b:309); it can grasp both child agency *and* the social institution of childhood, which exist beyond particular children (Prout & James, 1990). Researchers who use Bourdieu’s theoretical approach in their research include for example Paul Connolly (1998) and his work on racism amongst young children in

the UK. Connolly uses Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital, coupled with Foucault's concept of discourse (illustrating the formative power of racism) in order to understand children's social worlds, practice and identity development. Connolly states that individual children's lives are constrained, but they also have freedom to some extent, to act and think for themselves (1998:17). A Bourdieusian perspective is also used by Géraldine André and Mathieu Hilgers in their research on child work in the African countries the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, and Burkina Faso, with attention to the various forms of domination experienced by children working in the mining industry. The authors explore how social structures and individual dispositions relate to the diffusion of a global conception of childhood, which is seen in relation to two main components relevant for the lives of children in the local context; the seniority system and social class structuration (André & Hilgers, 2015). In yet another context, Bourdieusian theoretical concepts were used by Virginia Morrow and Uma Vennam in their research on social support networks of children in two villages in India. Through the complex intersection between economic and social capital, the authors explore the children's individual histories and attempts to exercise agency, focusing on how forms of social capital were accessed and exploited by the children (Morrow & Vennam, 2015). These studies look at the dynamic relationship between individual children's dispositions and the social space they operate within, which will also be explored in this thesis.

Several researchers in childhood studies doing research in the kindergarten context have found Bourdieu's theoretical approaches useful. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a Finnish kindergarten classroom, Mari Vuorisalo and Leena Alanen investigate everyday struggles and practices of dominance among children (and teachers) in the 'preschool game' through two particular forms of 'conversation capital' (Vuorisalo & Alanen, 2015). The authors show how different kinds of capital are available for different children, and how both children and teachers recognize and reinforce differences in children's social and cultural capital. Eva Gulløv (1998) also makes use of theorizations of Bourdieu in her anthropological study of children's meaning making (*betydningsdannelse*) in a Danish kindergarten, where meaning making is understood as forms of participation and negotiation in practices of dominance and in play. The 'child field' (*barnefeltet*) is a social field with particular structures of meaning and relations of dominance, involving competing social positions of individuals concerned with children's daily life, including the children themselves (Gulløv, 1998). Charlotte Palludan uses theorizations of Bourdieu in her research from Danish kindergartens on how children are differentiated and

segregated through vocal practices and processes (Palludan, 2007). Palludan presents two different language tones that are performed in the kindergarten; i.e., a ‘teaching tone’ between staff and ethnic minority children, and an ‘exchange tone’ between staff and ethnic majority children, ‘the Danes.’ Language patterns are explained as unequal distribution of recognition, which reproduces the socio-cultural hierarchy among the children in the kindergarten (Palludan, 2007). My study takes place in a different cultural setting than these, but as will be demonstrated, practices that reproduce hierarchical patterns also take place in two Chinese kindergarten classrooms, albeit in a more explicit way. In this thesis, I approach the social space and daily life in two Chinese kindergartens as a ‘kindergarten field’ (see Section 4.3.3). I explore the field through detailed accounts of disciplinarian practices and structures (Chapters 6-8), as well as elaborations on the children’s *habitus* or, in other words, *practical sense* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) of disciplinarian practices (Chapter 10). Furthermore, I explore the positioning of children in the kindergarten field and their movement in this social space (see Chapter 9), as well as how children’s participation in such practices is connected to the reproduction of hierarchical power structures in the child group (Chapters 9 and 10).¹³

1.3 Interpreting cultures and childhoods

The nature of conceptual and theoretical knowledge requires some attention in this project. Theories and concepts (and researchers) are created in historical, cultural and temporal contexts, which influences what and how researchers view, understand, and write about different phenomena. Theoretical historicity and reflexivity is thus essential in order to understand both the theoretical approaches used, and how this thesis is constructed. It is ‘easy’ to advocate caution towards ‘epistemocentrism’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:69); actually following through with it demands a constant cautious attitude throughout the research process and towards the concepts, theoretical approaches, and the topics that are studied. The concept of culture and childhood are topics of relevance in this regard.

¹³ In my Master’s thesis, theorizations of Bourdieu were useful in explaining how external structures both shaped and were shaped by (street) children in Buenos Aires, Argentina (Lyså, 2009). The children’s adaptation to street life provided them with valuable capital and skills in the street field, but acquired strength in this field became a considerable weakness when entering another field. ‘Street capital’ became a complicating factor in relation to leaving street life, both for the staff working at the day-centre trying to assist children out of street life, and for the children themselves.

In anthropology, few concepts have been subject to such scrutiny and discussion as the concept of culture (Eriksen, 2010). Nowadays, there is a general consensus that cultures are not homogenous, isolated, rigid, and transferable between generations without change, but rather, that cultures are heterogeneous, fluid, and changeable. Clifford Geertz (1973) advocates approaching cultural research as an *interpretive* search for meaning, exploring agents' points of view through practice, exploring what agents do and capturing behaviour through ethnographic *thick descriptions*. Complexity in expression and practice demands caution of misinterpretation, particularly if phenomena are taken out of context or only scratch on the surface. Even highly visible and concrete actions may not signal what you expect them to, let alone more complex underlying structures. My method chapter (Chapter 5) will discuss such challenges in long-term ethnographic fieldwork in a cultural setting that I had not explored prior to fieldwork. I will also elaborate on complexities in doing participant observation, the importance of language for cultural understanding and consequences of working with an interpreter. In this thesis, the notion of culture is approached through an exploration of everyday practice. Drawing on Marianne Gullestad (1989:32), I see culture as a socially oriented concept that can theoretically be used for all social action, including everyday life (*hverdagsliv*).

The view and understanding of children and childhood is another topic of concern in this thesis. A children's rights discourse and a western middle-class idea of a 'good childhood' can be said to dominate discourses of childhood on a global scale (Scheper-Hughes & Sargent, 1998). Such views are based on particular understandings of how childhoods should be lived, and originate in a specific cultural and historical-temporal setting. When such western constructions of childhoods are presented as 'global models' of childhood, explorations of cultural phenomena in diverse cultural settings may lead to misguided understanding and interpretations because such 'models' deviate sharply from the experiences of many children in the world (Ansell, 2017:16). A rights rhetoric could for example lead to a "transfer of Western values and economic practices dependent on a neoliberal conception of independent and rights-bearing "individuals" as opposed to ideas of social personhood embedded in, and subordinate to, larger social units" (Scheper-Hughes & Sargent, 1998:7). Such an approach would lay premises for research that would collide with my aim of exploring social life and practice in context, as well as place my observations in a frame of reference that could overshadow emic understanding and social contextual meanings, potentially clouding and misdirecting my vision. Researching topics such as childhood and discipline in a particular cultural and historical setting such as

China thus poses questions of theoretical and methodological reflexivity, which will be elaborated on in part II of this thesis (see e.g., 4.1). I have made a strong effort throughout the thesis to explain and present the empirical material in detail, at length, and in such a way that complexities in cultural meanings are explored.

1.4 Childhood and kindergarten research in China

Doing long-term fieldwork in China, both for foreign and Chinese researchers, has historically been a difficult endeavour, due to the politicization of the Chinese academia after 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established by Mao Zedong (Thunø, 2006). Since the 1990s however, research collaborations and long-term ethnographic fieldwork has been a possibility, even in villages (Stafford, 1995). Historically, it has been more convenient to gain access to areas such as Taiwan and Hong Kong for conducting research on childhood and family life, but some books and reports were published by foreign researchers on Chinese mainland childhood in the 1970s and early 1980s as well (Kessen, 1975; Liljeström et al., 1982; Sidel, 1974).¹⁴ In recent years, several anthropological and sociological books and dissertations on childhood and the 'only child' phenomenon have been published (Fong, 2004; Greenhalgh, 2008; Jing, 2000a; Naftali, 2007; J. Zhu, 2010).

Although the research milieu is more open than before, gaining access can still be challenging, and there can be a certain unpredictability surrounding which research topics and questions that are considered appropriate by the Chinese authorities (Heimer & Thøgersen, 2006). Similarly, parts of a research field might be off limits to foreign researchers. In the case of kindergartens, I was made aware that some types of kindergartens would be harder to gain access to and that they would not be considered an appropriate (or possible) fieldwork site for a foreign researcher. This particularly concerned some kindergartens in rural areas where the amount of children in class were said to exceed the number set by national standards, or kindergartens for children of migrant workers in urban settings, which were said to possibly be of a lower standard.

¹⁴According to William Kessen, they were the first delegation of child psychologists to visit China in one generation, when they came to learn about child rearing and child care in 1973 (Kessen, 1975).

Chinese kindergarten research¹⁵ has mainly revolved around quantitative research since such research has received more funding (Jiaxiong Zhu & Wang, 2005), but qualitative research has increased, and topics such as curriculum and kindergarten reform are particularly studied (Jiaxiong & Nianli, 2005; Jingbo & James, 2005; Liu-Yan & Feng-Xiaoxia, 2005; Liu-Yan, Yuejuan, & Hongfen, 2005; C. Yan, 2005). Other publications include ethnographic research in the educational field (primary schools) in China (Schoenhals, 1993; Wang, 2013) as well as several dissertations on Chinese kindergartens. These include research on topics such as the structural and ideological changes taking place in the Chinese kindergarten field in the 1990s (L. Gu, 2000); children's perceptions of power structures in a Taiwanese preschool classroom (Lin, 2009); teacher's perceptions and practices of children's play in Chinese kindergartens (Yang, 2013); teachers' attitudes toward parental involvement in government kindergartens in China (W. Gu, 2006); and parental involvement in early childhood education and children's readiness for school (Lau, 2011). A well-known international research study on Chinese kindergartens is the longitudinal and cross-cultural project *Preschools in Three Cultures* (China, Japan and USA) (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009b; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989), which has also been complimented with several publications in the form of books, journal articles, and videos (Che, Hayashi, & Tobin, 2007; Hsueh & Tobin, 2003; Hsueh, Tobin, & Karasawa, 2004; Tobin, 1989; Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2009a; Tobin et al., 2009b; Tobin et al., 1989).

One of the key findings in the *Preschools in Three Cultures* project from the mid80s was that preschools¹⁶ as institutions were “expected to provide cultural continuity while responding to and participating in social change” (Hsueh & Tobin, 2003:74). The Chinese kindergartens also had an additional challenge; the ‘single child policy’ led to a generation of spoiled children (see Section 2.1.1), and the kindergarten was seen as an appropriate place for dealing with the problem of failed child-rearing practices which had led to socially maladjusted children (Hsueh & Tobin, 2003:83). This thesis will explore how practices of control and discipline in two kindergartens are connected to contemporary and historical cultural and social understandings

¹⁵ I refer here to Chinese kindergarten research available in English. A limitation in this project is that only literature written in the English language has been referred to. Most of these are publications that were originally written in English, but some have also been translated into English from Chinese, for example those by Fei Xiaotong (1992). For more on challenges related to language and communication during fieldwork, see 5.2.2.

¹⁶ In the study *Preschools in Three Cultures*, the word preschool has been chosen instead of kindergarten. Although the Chinese term *you'eryuan* (also used in my study) translates to kindergarten in English, Tobin and colleagues avoid this word because “in most English-speaking countries the word “kindergarten” suggests the first year of primary school rather than a program for children three to six years old” (Tobin et al., 2009:xi).

of children and childhood, as well as elaborate on how being ‘spoiled’ connects with everyday and future concerns of contemporary urban Chinese childhoods (Chapter 11).

1.5 Outline of thesis

This thesis is divided into five parts. Part I introduces the project and thesis. The introduction explains the choice of topic and focus, and includes a brief introduction of theoretical and methodological approaches used in this study. Chapter 2 provides information on the broader empirical context—current and historically relevant aspects of Chinese childhoods and the significance of education and kindergartens in China. Particular emphasis will be given to urban childhoods, the elevated status of children, including the “problem” of the so-called ‘little emperors’ or ‘spoiled’ singletons in contemporary China. This phenomenon will reappear in Chapter 11 and is relevant for the understanding of disciplinarian practices in this thesis. Contextual notions of discipline and the notions of shame and face will also be introduced.

Part II elaborates on the theoretical and methodological approaches in this thesis, addressing questions of epistemology, the construction of knowledge and the theoretical approaches that form the basis of this thesis. Chapter 3 will deal with childhood research (childhood studies and childhood research in anthropology), with a closer look at concepts such as agency and discipline. Child-adult relationships are theoretically approached in terms of *generational order* (Alanen, 2009a). Chapter 4 includes elaborations of the historicity of theory and theoretical sensitivity, the concept of culture, as well as theoretical approaches on social life in a *relational* perspective, with particular emphasis on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977, 1990b; 1992a). Contextually relevant theoretical approaches by Fei Xiaotong (1992) and Hansen & Svarverud (2010) will also be included. Chapter 5 deals with methodology, the methods of participant observation and interviews, as well as reflections on different aspects and challenges of the fieldwork process. Ethical considerations in the project are also addressed.

The analysis starts in part III, where a range of disciplinarian practices and structures observed in the two kindergartens are explored. This section is rich in empirical examples and the analysis is empirically driven. Chapter 6 explores discipline in the kindergarten as an institutional setting. Attention is given to the presence of discipline in physical and temporal spaces, in educational activities and in situations of play. Furthermore, focus is put on the discipline of children’s bodies, which is theorized as the embodiment of practice (Bourdieu, 1977). Chapter 7 emphasises moral training and the emic concept of *guan* (loving control) and *guai* (ideal

behaviour), and such concepts are part of a *generational ordering*, i.e., child-adult relationships that are mutually produced and organized through everyday practice (Alanen, 2009a). Chapter 8 explores practices of evaluation and the notion of relationality, which are theorized as a differential embodiment of practice (Bourdieu, 1977). The notion of relationality is of particular interest for this thesis, and will reappear in later chapters.

In part IV, I analyse the ‘disciplinarian game’ (see 4.3.2 on the analogy of game) in the kindergartens. Chapter 9 will take a closer look at how field-specific values, resources, and experiences (capital) to exemplify how children *themselves* partake in disciplinarian practices in everyday settings. As will be made apparent, social disciplinarian practices are not only top-down, teacher-child ordered practices, but also significant in relations between children—in different ways, for different children—both in everyday routines as well as in situations where some children have a particular legitimization of power. Chapter 10 explores *habitus* or the children’s *practical sense of the disciplinarian game* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) through examples of how the children related to and coped with disciplinarian practices.

Part V is dedicated to the wider *concerns* of discipline, explicitly connected to contemporary and future views of and concerns regarding children and childhood. Chapter 11 addresses how ideas of contemporary urban Chinese childhoods were expressed in one of the kindergartens in a particular form of educational practice called ‘frustration education’—an educational practice aiming to create balanced individuals who could cope with current and future challenges.

2 Childhoods in contemporary urban China

A Beijing family scene:

A father brings out for breakfast a plateful of steamed cornmeal buns, known in north China as *wotou*. He is upset by his daughter's scornful look at the yellowish buns. "You must not forget your class origin," the father says accusingly and then tries to tell his daughter how lucky he felt as a child in an impoverished coal-mining community to have a cornmeal bun or any food to eat at breakfast. His lecturing is curtly interrupted. "Your class origin is cornmeal buns," the daughter says. "*Mine* is chocolate" (Chen Shujun, ed., 1989:296, in Jing, 2000b:25, italics in original).¹⁷

The large-scale political, economic and social changes that have taken place in China during the latest decades present a unique historical situation for exploring childhoods. China has undergone a transition from a planned economy¹⁸ to a market system, increased its global outreach and engagement with multi-national capitalism, and millions of people have experienced raised living standards through rapid economic growth and urbanization since the 1980s. Historical change, political campaigns, economic developments, raised living standards and the role of the Chinese state are relevant aspects in studies of children and childhood in contemporary Chinese society. As illustrated in the opening quote, childhoods across China look very different today than they did only a few decades ago. In this chapter, I address Chinese childhoods in light of historical, political, and socioeconomic transitions, including the immense focus on education, starting in kindergarten, and I also explore contextual understandings of discipline and child upbringing, with attention to the teachings of Confucianism and to face shaming practices. The elevated status of children in contemporary China, particularly in urban areas, will be discussed in the final part of this chapter. This chapter thus sketches out the wider societal context in which the fieldwork for this thesis took place.

2.1 History and politics: transforming childhoods

The revolution of 1911, when the Qing-dynasty (1644-1911) was overthrown by Han Chinese, was part of a series of events that marked the transformation of China into a modern state

¹⁷ This example is from an essay on diets and culinary arts, by the comedian-turned-playwright Huang Zhongjiang (Jing, 2000b:25).

¹⁸ In the Oxford Dictionaries, a planned economy is defined as "an economy in which production, investment, prices, and incomes are determined centrally by the government."
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/planned_economy (Accessed 07.09.2016)

(Hansen & Thøgersen, 2008). Sun Yat-Sen was the first president and founding father of the Republic of China. During the period of the Republic (1911-1949), Chinese society went through a period of reforms on several levels, with lively intellectual debates on modern science and democratic influences from Western countries. Simultaneously, internal conflicts and political struggles took place between nationalistic and communist forces. The internal conflicts continued during the Japanese invasion (1931-1945), resulting—towards the end of the 1940s—in communist victory and the escape to Taiwan for the nationalist Chiang Kai-Shek and his people (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2008).

October 1st 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China (PRC) at Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and China was now ruled by China's Communist Party (CCP). The years that followed would drastically change the social and economic landscape of China. *The Great Leap Forward* (1958-60), an economic and social campaign that initiated a period of rapid industrialization and collectivization, aimed to transform the country from an agrarian economy to a socialist society. The socialistic transformation of China involved collectivising land, industries, and trade, and ownership and resources were to lay in the hands of the collective or state. The campaign was followed by several years of famine and the deaths of millions of people (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2008). Some years later, Mao Zedong launched the *Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution* (1966-1976), which aimed to reinforce Communist ideology in society and Maoist thought in the Chinese party. Through class struggle, capitalist and traditionalist influences were to be crushed, and 'rightists' and people with higher education became targets. Political consciousness, i.e., 'being red,' was emphasised as 'the Way,' and millions of people were sent into labour camps on the Chinese countryside. Red guards formed across the country, in response to this appeal. In the years during Mao's rule, propaganda posters depicting images of labour as the most 'glorious' of actions, with images of working men, women, and children, were spread. Lei Feng was a soldier in the Communist army, who after his death was used as a role model for earnestness and service, for others to follow. Selfless and modest, he was good to others and fought for China. Values of working hard (referring to the phrase "labour is the most glorious") and the example set by Lei Feng were also stressed in the two kindergartens where I did fieldwork.

Two years after Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping became China's leader. Deng Xiaoping started the period called "reform and openness" (*gaige kaifang*) where the market had a strong role to play in the country's economic situation. Collectives and communes were dissolved,

investment from abroad was opened, and private businesses flourished. This period also saw the implementation of the so-called “one-child-policy” as part of the family planning policy in 1979, where most urban couples—particularly those of Han Chinese origin—were only allowed to have one child (*Population and Family Planning Law of the People’s Republic of China* 2001).¹⁹ This law contained exceptions, for example for particular ethnic groups, if parents themselves were only children, if the first child was sick or in some cases if the first child was a girl (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2008). As of January 2016, the law has changed, allowing couples to have two children. Historically, boys have a stronger status in China, and the combination of son preference, low fertility, technology (e.g., sex-selective abortion) and the compulsory family planning and one-child policy has led to a severe gender discrepancy and shortage of girls in contemporary China (Banister, 2004). There are, however, large differences between urban and rural areas with regards to gender; whereas in rural areas, there is still a preference for sons, residents in contemporary urban areas are less concerned with the gender of the child (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2008).

At the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the Young Pioneers of China was formed; a youth organization for children aged 6-14 run by the Communist Youth League, which is the youth division of the Chinese Communist Party. During the Cultural Revolution there was a temporary dismantlement of this organization, during which a communist child organization called Little Red Guards formed. According to Orna Naftali, the Cultural Revolution in some ways was the peak of empowerment of children, as they were encouraged to rebel against authoritarian structures, including their own parents (Naftali, 2007:120-121). As will be elaborated on in this thesis, army movement and activities were also relevant for the children in the kindergartens in everyday practice (see section 6.2) and the children in kindergarten 2 also occasionally engaged in a ceremonial activity of respect for Chairman Mao (see Section 8.1.2).

According to Fong (2004:119), ever since the 1989 Tiananmen Square student protests, military training has been introduced in junior high schools, high schools, and colleges a few weeks after enrolment. During fieldwork I was informed of young peoples’ experiences of this

¹⁹ Article 18 in *The Population and Family Planning Law* of the PRC states that “the State maintains its current policy for reproduction, encouraging late marriage and childbearing and advocating one child per couple” (2001).

weeklong military training upon starting university, in particular the straining disciplinarian exercise of standing still for prolonged periods of time in the sun. In Chapter 11, I will talk about a trip made to an army school for children in kindergarten 2. Usually such trips were only organized for primary school students, and it was rare for kindergarten children to visit army schools, but the kindergarten principal took her 'big class children' to this school and had done so for several years in a row.

The fruits of China's economic boom have not been evenly distributed, and there is a strong regional difference at play; urban areas in eastern China have been the main beneficiaries of the economic boom, as opposed to rural areas, particularly in western China. Contemporary China is a complex nation, and the difference between rich and poor is high. Modernization processes and the growth of urban Chinese centres have demanded a large workforce, and millions of Chinese have migrated from the countryside to urban centres during the last decades. Work migrants to larger cities work in factories and construction particularly, usually returning to their families in the countryside once a year, normally during Chinese New Year celebrations in January-February. The migrant population in larger cities make out a new underclass with little rights or access to services.²⁰ I was informed during fieldwork that children of migrating parents usually attended separate kindergartens in cities such as Shanghai. Some of the children in kindergarten 1 had other cities than Shanghai as their hometown, but there was little talk about this in the kindergarten. I learned about this in interviews with the children at the final stage of fieldwork.

2.2 Education: A right and duty of citizens

This section will elaborate on the strong emphasis on education in China, historical developments in the kindergarten field as well as contemporary Chinese kindergartens. The immense importance of education in building a strong Chinese society and the close link between education and politics is underlined in several national documents in the educational field (*Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China*, 1986; *Education Law of*

²⁰ The demographic composition of the Chinese countryside has also changed radically during this period, and migration patterns have resulted in a 'left-behind' population in rural China that is largely comprised of children and elders (Ye, 2011). Some children accompany their parents to urban centres, but migrating parents usually leave their children at home with grandparents, other relatives, or by themselves (Ye, 2011). Most leave during their children's kindergarten years and migrate on average for 10-15 years, usually with annual returns for Chinese New Year celebrations.

the People's Republic of China, 1995; Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China, 1993).²¹ Teachers are “charged with the duty of imparting knowledge and educating people, training builders and successors for the socialist cause and enhancing the quality of the nation” (Article 3) (*Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China, 1993*). Teachers must furthermore educate students in “patriotism, national unity and the legal system, and education in ideology, morality, culture, science and technology” (Article 8:3), and they are obliged to “concern themselves with all students, love them, respect their dignity and promote their all-round development in such aspects as morality, intelligence and physique” (Article 8:4) (*Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China, 1993*). Education is thus a nationalist project concerned with bettering the *quality* of the nation, and all “citizens of the People’s Republic of China have the *right* and *duty* to be educated” (Article 9) (*Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 1995*, my emphasis). The Ministry of Education is in charge of the overall planning, coordination and management of all forms of education on several levels, including kindergartens (Rao & Li, 2009).

According to Naftali (2007), there has been a significant change in ways of thinking about children’s education in contemporary urban China; i.e., on how to educate children so that they develop into creative and modern persons. As opposed to an ‘exam-oriented education,’ more emphasis is placed on the quality of education and on creativity in order to foster innovative and independent individuals. However, societal demands and expectations that students excel in school has led to an environment dominated by strong competition, which still prevails despite recent reforms advocating creativity and independency (Thøgersen, 2012). The college entrance exam is considered extremely important, and passing this exam determines whether you can go on to college and university or not (Schoenhals, 1993:10-11). Having success in this exam will bring glory both to parents and teachers as well as the school itself, whereas those

²¹ The Teacher Law explicitly expresses demands and requirements concerning teachers’ characteristics, as well as how teachers should be treated by the larger society. Article 1 states that: “This Law is formulated for the purpose of safeguarding teachers’ legitimate rights and interests, building up a contingent of teachers who are sound in moral character and good in professional competence, and promoting the development of socialist education.” Article 4 also explicitly states that “Teachers shall be respected in the whole society” (1993). September 10th each year is designated as Teachers’ Day (Article 6). During my fieldwork the autumn of 2011, this day was celebrated on Friday 9th (the 10th fell on a Saturday when the kindergarten was closed) in kindergarten 1. The kindergarten closed at lunch time, and several children brought personal, hand drawn, cards to the teachers as gifts.

who do not succeed, risk losing face (see Section 2.3.2) to themselves, but even more so to parents and teachers (Schoenhals, 1993:83).

2.2.1 Historical developments in the kindergarten field

The first kindergartens in China emerged at the beginning of the 20th century²² (Hsueh et al., 2004; Jiaxiong Zhu & Wang, 2005). These kindergartens were based on the Japanese kindergarten model inspired by Froebelian principles and practices, and were mostly for well-to-do Chinese families (Hsueh et al., 2004). Several public and private kindergartens appeared in the years following. In the 1920s and 1930s, educational ideas from the USA, particularly those of John Dewey, were promoted (Hsueh et al., 2004).²³ Dewey's notion that 'school is society,' 'education is life' and 'children learn by doing' were translated into a Chinese understanding where 'society is school,' 'life is education' and 'teaching, learning and doing are in unison' (Tao, 1981b referred to in, Hsueh et al., 2004:459). In the 1950s, the Chinese kindergarten field saw an implementation of a Soviet model, which has been linked to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and to a reaction to American imperialism (L. Gu, 2000; Jiaxiong Zhu & Wang, 2005). During the 10 year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), several kindergartens were forced to shut down (Jiaxiong Zhu & Wang, 2005).

Since the 1980s, following the open door policy and the changes taking place in China, several theoretical educational influences (such as theories of Dewey, Montessori, Bronfenbrenner, Bruner, Piaget, Vygotsky and Reggio Emilia) have been introduced or reintroduced in the kindergarten field in China (Jiaxiong Zhu & Wang, 2005). Such ideas have influenced the ideological basis of the *Regulations on Work in Kindergartens* published by the State Educational Committee in 1989; regulations which were implemented in all kindergartens across China. These regulations have been challenging to implement for practitioners, since some points run counter to deep-rooted cultural traditions and since the lack of practical guidelines left it hard to understand how such regulations could be carried out in practice.²⁴

²² At the turn of the 20th century there were a few Froebelian based church-run kindergartens in some cities on the coast of China. These were, however, not formally recognized by the government and thus not part of any programme or organized child care (Hsueh et al., 2004:458).

²³ This has also been interpreted as a reaction to warfare and the Japanese invasion (Zhu and Wang, 2005).

²⁴ In 2001, *Guidance for Kindergarten Education* was issued by the Ministry of Education, trying to meet these challenges.

2.2.2 Contemporary Chinese kindergartens

Key terms in the kindergarten educational field in China the last two decades have been ‘respecting children’ (connected to children’s rights), ‘active learning’ (actively partaking in their learning, exploring and discovering), ‘teaching for individual learning needs,’ ‘play-based teaching and learning’ and ‘teaching and learning through daily life’ (move away from direct teaching model or group lesson to a pedagogy that reflects children’s daily lives through play) (Liu-Yan & Feng-Xiaoxia, 2005). Although such ideas were popularized among practitioners after the educational reforms in 1989, there was a gap between pedagogical thought and kindergarten practice. Although advocating the belief that “teachers are expected to be the supporters and facilitators of young children’s active exploration and discovery,” implementing such practices in everyday settings in the kindergartens was challenging, amongst other things due to the top-down nature of the kindergarten educational reform (Liu-Yan & Feng-Xiaoxia, 2005:95-97). Other complicating factors are the low ratio of adults to children (two teachers per class of 30-35 children) and the long-established turn-shift work system (practiced in kindergarten 1 in my study) where one adult is responsible for the morning session and the other teacher for the afternoon session, along with an assistant for tidying up and care giving (Liu-Yan & Feng-Xiaoxia, 2005:98). Furthermore, expectations and societal demands regarding grades and learning further complicate the situation.

The kindergarten enrolment rate increased from 14.5 million in 1985 to 24.03 million in 1999, and more than 30 new laws and regulatory documents concerning early childhood education were issued by the Chinese government from the mid-1980s throughout the 1990s (Hsueh & Tobin, 2003:74-75). Despite this strong emphasis on early childhood education, some challenges have appeared in the kindergarten field due to the structural transformations following the transition to a market economy (Jin, 2008). Many public kindergartens were shut down, which resulted in the loss of an important educational and social institution, especially in rural areas. The gap has partly been filled by private kindergartens, but weak governmental administration on all levels has created a situation where the educational foundation of kindergartens varies immensely. In order to save money, some kindergartens employ unqualified staff, skimp on equipment and facilities, and abstain from registering or applying for approval in order to avoid governmental annual inspection fees. Furthermore, lack of

regulations have led to strong competition among kindergartens, and attendance fees range from as low as 10RMB²⁵ in rural areas, up to 1000RMB or higher in urban areas (Jin, 2008:81).²⁶

2.3 Discipline and the ideal socio-political order

This section will address perspectives of child upbringing, discipline, and the significance of loss of face and shaming, as such matters are relevant for how disciplinarian practices are understood in Chinese kindergartens. I begin with a section on Confucian thought, the most widely referenced of Chinese religions and teachings²⁷ (Adler, 2002), with particular attention to questions of moral perfection, self-cultivation, as well as rule and governance.

2.3.1 Confucianism: Moral perfection and governance

Confucianism is a system of thought and behaviour that views human beings as essentially *social* beings, and human fulfilment revolves around perfecting the moral nature of individuals and society (Adler, 2002). According to Adler,

the perfectibility of the individual and of society as a whole were reciprocal goals, for the moral perfection of the self required a morally supportive social environment, with stable and loving families, opportunities for education, and good rulers who served as models. (Adler, 2002:32)

The teachings of Confucius²⁸ are the *Lunyu* (*Analects* in English) in which *the Way* is described as an ideal socio-political order; the Way of good government and the Way of life to be followed by a morally noble person (*junzi*) (Adler, Searl, & Campochiaro, 2014:22). Confucianism has been the basis for the educational system for many centuries, and has also been part of the state orthodoxy and a religious way of life (Adler, 2002:14-15). Still today, Confucian principles are deeply rooted in Chinese society.

²⁵ RMB is the abbreviation for renminbi (the mandarin pinyin for CNY, Chinese yuan) - the currency used in China. During fieldwork, I was told that the monthly kindergarten price in urban areas could be as high as 5000RMB. At the time of fieldwork, 1 US Dollar was about 6,5 Chinese Yuan.

²⁶ As expressed in the newspaper China Daily (www.chinadaily.com.cn), people feel that the cost of raising children in contemporary urban China is too high and parents struggle to pay kindergarten fees, which may even exceed the cost of college tuition. *Young parents struggle with kindergarten fees* and *Chinese struggle with cost of raising children* (Accessed 200810).

²⁷ The four central traditions of Chinese religion and teachings are Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and popular religion. These are closely intertwined and no sharp line divides them; people rather have a pragmatic approach to such matters in everyday life (Adler, 2002).

²⁸ Confucius lived in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C.E. His given name was *Kong Qiu*, he was known as an adult as *Kong Zhongni*, but also called by the honorific name *Kongzi* (Master Kong). Confucius is a Latinized name invented by 17th century Jesuit missionaries in China, based on another honorific (but rarely used) name, *Kongfuzi* (Adler, 2002:31).

Mencius (4th century B.C.E.) is considered the first true Confucian philosopher (Adler, 2002:37). Two major interconnected themes of Mencius' teachings are *humane government* and *human nature*. Humane government implies that a ruler should act as a "father and mother to the people" (1B: 7) because leading by virtue is more effective than leading by force, and also what separates a "despot" from a "true king." Human nature speaks of the innate sources of morality (*ren, yi, li* and *zhi*), which needs to be cultivated in order to become fully-fledged virtues (of humanity, rightness, ritual propriety, and wisdom) (Adler, 2002:37-39). Humans are inherently good and moral inclinations are natural and unique to human beings.

The classic Confucian text, *Classics of Filial Piety*, has been extremely influential in Chinese society for 2000 years, and filial piety is more strongly associated with Confucianism than any other virtue (Adler, 2002:64). In this text, Confucius states that the "parent-child relationship reflects patterns in nature and in turn is the model for all social and political relations" [...]; the parents-child relationship is the first of relationships between superiors and inferiors (Adler, 2002:64). The leading interpretation is that Confucius thus teaches the necessity of *absolute obedience* to elders and superiors, when in fact, a whole section in the *Classics of Filial Piety* concerns the filial inferior son's "gentle demonstration" to a superior father who has done wrong (Adler, 2002:64).²⁹ Filial piety is also heavily stressed in the Neo-Confucian text *Elementary Learning* (Kelleher, 1989). This text contains detailed instructions and descriptions of the obligations that follow certain role relationships, particularly that of child-parent (and elders), underlining the notion of absolute obedience. The text *Elementary Learning*³⁰ is devoted to the social process of individual self-development, emphasising education as the manner of cultivating the Way and giving detailed instructions of how to fulfil one's moral obligations in Confucian role relationships (Kelleher, 1989). The "fundamental and ultimate purpose of education is moral, the transformation of the person" (Kelleher, 1989:226). Furthermore, a person fulfils her or himself in the *midst* of (not apart from) other human beings, through the five cardinal relationships that are both particular and hierarchical (Kelleher, 1989), all containing detailed instructions of role obligations. (Kelleher, 1989:229). There are no preconditions to or exemptions from demands of filial piety. Although children can try to correct their parents if they are at fault, the child can only do this in the mildest and most indirect

²⁹ See also Schoenhals (1993:58-59) for examples on Confucius' encouragement of remonstrance.

³⁰ According to Kelleher (1989:219), little has been written about this text in western languages, apart from one French translation, but it is an important part of Neo-Confucian core curriculum in China, Japan and Korea.

of ways, and if the parent “refuses to change ways, or even worse, punishes the child for criticizing, the child is not to feel any anger or resentment, even if beaten until blood flows (2:5a-b). The child can never go so far as to hate the parent” (Kelleher, 1989:235). Respecting elders and absolute obedience is thus strongly encouraged.

According to Pauline Lee (2014), Confucian views of the self, society and the cosmos are overwhelmingly important in the understanding of children and childhood in the Chinese context, and the language of Confucian ethics and Confucian self-cultivation are found everywhere in discussions of childhood in classic Confucian texts, particularly referring to role-specific duties and emphasising the self-cultivation of human nature (P. C. Lee, 2014:532).³¹

2.3.2 Face, shaming and discipline

“Face” (*lien*) defines social existence within Chinese society and explores “the fit between the individual self and the group permits us to perceive the normative moral order that embraces all the members of the group” (Saari, 1990:110). Face is a state of being, intelligible through a shared vocabulary of what constitutes decency. It is a basic quality that is emphasised primarily in its absence and commonly talked about in negative terms: as ‘loss of face’ (*tiu lien*), to ‘have no face’ (*mei yu lien*) and to ‘not to want face’ (*pu yao lien*) (Saari, 1990:110). *Having* face is simply to be a “decent human being,” to be someone with moral credibility (Saari, 1990:111). Face is a quality that everyone may and should have, regardless of financial situation and social status. Acquiring emotional sensitivity to face and the regard of others is part of learning to be Chinese. Such sensitivity is acquired by “a dual process of overt training in group ideals of loyalty and unity and by using shaming techniques” to instil moral anxiety if the norms of the groups were violated (Saari, 1990:111).

Shaming as a component of child rearing disciplinarian practices is connected to moral training (Fung, 1999). Shaming has a strong social significance in the Chinese context, which can be seen in its emphasis on face, criticism, and evaluation in relationships between people, as well as in a rich vocabulary of concepts related to shame, humiliation, embarrassment, and face (Fung, 1999:183; Li, Wang, & Fischer, 2004).³² Shame (and guilt) as concepts must be understood in context, and several cultural psychologists have problematized how these

³¹ Lee (2014) discusses two Confucian theories on children and childhood through analysing passages from the Confucian classics *Mengzi* (4B12) and *Analects* (11.25).

³² As many as 113 shame-related terms in the Chinese language was reported in one study (Li et al., 2004).

conceptualizations have been embedded in western cultural ideas and practices (including western ideas of the individual), which complicates their application in Confucian societies with interdependent and relational understandings of the individual (Bedford & Hwang, 2003; Wong & Tsai, 2007). In China the individual must be understood in a particular connection with others where selves are contextually and situationally dependent (Li et al., 2004; Wong & Tsai, 2007; Xiaotong et al., 1992). Thus, in an 'interdependent' context such as China, shame can motivate a person to improve her or himself, rather than be considered harmful, as might be the interpretation in an 'independent individual context' (such as the US) (Wong & Tsai, 2007). Shame in the Chinese context must be understood both as a (shame state) self-focus and as (reactions to shame) other-focus (Li et al., 2004).

The vast vocabulary related to the notion of shame and face losing (Li et al., 2004; Schoenhals, 1993) also indicates that there are *degrees* of shame-related situations and *levels* of face losing; you may for example not necessarily lose face merely by feeling embarrassed. According to the cultural anthropologist Martin Schoenhals who has done research on face and shame in the Chinese educational system, such matters will also depend on the audience, as social control belongs to others (1993). It is the public's recognition of a person's merits and virtues and the giving and taking of public esteem that can control an individual (Schoenhals, 1993:93). Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a Chinese middle school in 1988 and 1989, Schoenhals explains how differentiation (in terms of superiors and inferiors) has a determining role to play in face losing:

The power to make someone lose face is also balanced between inferiors and superiors. Superiors have the power to evaluate you negatively in public, but it is this public whose lessened esteem for you actually causes you to lose face. If the public consists of your inferiors, you will be much more likely to lose face than if they are your superiors, since the former case is a greater threat to your social standing and to your membership in a group. If inferiors witness your failings, they may believe that they could have succeeded at where failed, leading them to look down on you. As a result, their status temporarily rises while yours declines, leading to estrangement from your status peers (Schoenhals, 1993:94-95).

Children learn about shame and are exposed to moral training in their home environments. Many Chinese parents hold high expectations of their children and link their parenting styles to filial piety, often characterizing their socialization styles as authoritarian, strict, or even harsh

(Fung, 1999). A thorough review of Chinese socialization practices³³ revealed that despite wide variation in parenting styles, there is a tendency for Chinese parents to be highly lenient (even indulgent) towards infants and young children, up to a certain age when there is a sharp contrast in the parenting approach (Ho (1986:35) in Fung, 1999). When the children reach the ‘age of understanding’ believed to be around four to six years old,³⁴ “disciplinary techniques such as threatening, scolding, shaming, and physical punishment become acceptable and are frequently applied” (Ho (1986:16) in Fung, 1999:184; Ho, 1989). Wu (1995) refers to the concept of *dong shi* (“understanding things”) as the time when a child can ‘come to his or her senses’ and learn to reason, and thus can and should be corrected and disciplined, whereas some scholars see this as the age when a child can talk and eat by her or himself, which is typically around the age of two (1995:7). In Fung’s own study of the socialization of shame among Taiwanese middle class parents, such processes were well underway at the age of two-and-a-half, and shaming was considered necessary in order to teach children right from wrong (Fung, 1999:190). Early on, the children learn what kind of behaviour brings on shame for themselves or their parents.

According to Schoenhals (1993), Chinese children are criticised by their parents, sometimes harshly because they have little knowledge of face. Not until they reach puberty are they considered mature and possessing a sensitivity to face. During Schoenhals’ fieldwork, he experienced that parents could be highly and openly critical towards their preadolescent children; almost anything could be cause for rebuke and criticism. This was understood as teaching them to be aware of their own fallibility and would lay the foundation for a later sense of shame. Since children were not seen as having face, they were not held responsible for their behaviour. When they became adolescents however, they were no longer criticised for everyday mistakes—as they had been when they were younger and still without face—and this would encourage to develop a sense of shame and a sense of honour and self-respect (*zizunxin/lianchi*, a sense of pride and desire to display his merits to others³⁵) (Schoenhals, 1993:154-155).

According to Chao (1994), explaining Chinese child-rearing practices as harsh, intrusive and authoritative is not fruitful in order to understand what they mean in context, and Chao suggests

³³ Ho, David Y.F. (1986) Chinese Patterns of Socialization: A Critical Review. In *The Psychology of the Chinese People*. Michael H. Bond, ed. pp. 1-37. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

³⁴ David Ho (1989) later stressed that there is no general agreement among Chinese parents concerning when the ‘age of understanding’ is believed to start.

³⁵ Honour/self-respect, *not* honour/glory (*huangrong/guangcai*) (Schoenhals, 1993:154-155).

that the concepts *chiao shun* (training, teaching or educating) and *guan* (govern/care for/love) are preferable for understanding these practices. *Chiao shun* relates to the idea of training children in the appropriate or expected behaviours, and *guan*, to a sort of governing, with positive connotations (Chao, 1994:1112) (see Section 7.1). Taken together, these concepts can explain how parental care and concern are synonymous with firm control and governance of the child (Chao, 1994). Both concepts are related to Confucian teachings:

Both the notions of *chiao shun* and *guan* have evolved from the role relationships defined by Confucius. Bond and Hwang (1986) summarize the three essential aspects of Confucian thought as the following: (1) a person is defined by his or her relationships with others, (2) relationships are structured hierarchically, and (3) social order and harmony are maintained by each party honoring the requirements and responsibilities of the role relationships. Confucian tradition accords certain relationships with special significance: These are relationships between sovereign and subject, father and son, older brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend and friend, with father and son being the most important. Because these relationships are structured hierarchically, the subordinate member is required to display loyalty and respect to the senior member, who is required to responsibly and justly govern, teach, and discipline (Chao, 1994:1113, italics in original).

The concepts of *chiao shun* and *guan* are based on an important contextual Confucian framework, emphasising the individual's responsibilities that accompany her or his role for maintaining harmonious relations with others (Chao, 1994:1118). Filial piety, moral duties, and Confucian role relationships are thus connected to the significance of shame and face in Chinese culture and society. The relationship between the child and the adult is one of reciprocity: children must show loyalty to their elders, and elders must also play their part and responsibly teach, discipline, and govern children; both parties must play out their role in order to maintain social harmony (Chao, 1994:1117).

Despite considerable regional variation in Chinese socialization practices (rural-urban, ethnic-subcultural, cross-national, and historical changes), continuity with the past remains highly discernible. As captured in the popular Chinese expression "Strict father, kind mother," the mother has traditionally been characterized as affectionate, kind, and lenient, whereas the father has been characterized as the stern disciplinarian, usually not partaking in the child's life until it reaches the 'age of understanding' (Ho, 1989:155). Such patterns are not absolute and contemporary studies show indications of departure from such patterns, particularly among younger, well-educated, urban parents (Ho, 1989). Anthropologist Orna Naftali's has done

research on Chinese childhoods, citizenship, and subjectivity in schools and homes in Shanghai, using methods of participant observation and interviews with teachers and parents (2004-2005). According to Naftali's informants, the use of corporal punishment has been banned in Chinese schools since the 1990s, but still occurs some places, albeit mostly in a covert manner, such as standing up (2007:236). Naftali did herself, at several occasions, observe 'covert' physical punishment such as standing up (see also 6.2.1) or getting knocked on the head with a book or a pen, as well as teachers shouting at and pushing students. Several of her informants (mothers) reported physical punishment as a frequently used and effective disciplinary tool. According to one mother who beat her child until the age of 12:

When children are young, they don't understand things. They rely on adults to guide them. As a parent, your job is to discipline and control the child. If my daughter did something wrong and I didn't hit her, she would just repeat her mistakes in the future. (Naftali, 2007:258)

Others underlined that corporal punishment should not be carried out, but rather that children should be reasoned with (*jiang daoli*), so as to not hurt their feelings (Naftali, 2007:259). Some mothers would still hit their children if they lost their temper, even though they "knew it was wrong." After all, her informants stated that the old saying "*gunbang chu xiao zi*" ["a stick produces filial sons"] does not represent contemporary views of child-rearing in China (Naftali, 2007:260).

Orna Naftali found that concern for children's feelings when discussing the topic of discipline was especially present among middle-class mothers who read magazines and books on contemporary scientific childrearing (2007:269). Among working-class mothers, concern was more frequently directed to the danger of their children not receiving "enough criticism as youngsters" as they "may think too much of themselves;" such ideas were especially uttered in relation to boys, as they were considered in need of learning to face difficult situations from an early age to avoid becoming "too soft" (Naftali, 2007:269). Many of Naftali's informants who were mothers to young children would say (regardless of socioeconomic background) that their own parents did not *guan* children like they did. The reasons stated was the difficult life circumstances at earlier historical times, that they were hard-working parents, and that there were several children in each household, as opposed to the norm in contemporary China (Naftali, 2007:270-271). Life under the Reform era (1978-present) gave people more free time to spend with their children as well as higher living quality, whereas in the Maoist era, the "right

political consciousness” was more important than high education, and encouraging children to get education could get parents in trouble (Naftali, 2007:271-272).

2.4 Contemporary urban childhoods

Different historical periods create different conditions for childhood experiences and also affect the ways in which different generations think about children and childhood. According to Yuhua (2000), during periods with great economic difficulties and several national crises, such as the Sino-Japanese war and the Chinese civil war, consumption was about survival. The following generation experienced the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which included intense hardship such as a disastrous hunger epidemic and a huge lack of basic goods (Yuhua, 2000). This history is vastly different than the daily lives lived by many urban children in contemporary China. According to Yuhua (2000), the generation of children born in the late 1990s have huge difficulties understanding the experiences of their grandparents and parents; her informants said that when such stories are being told, the children reacted with horror and they were unable to grasp it on an emotional level (Yuhua, 2000:107). The children in the two kindergartens where I did fieldwork belong to yet another generation and they have grown up in a period of time with even higher living standards in a strongly urbanized setting. Many of these children spend a lot of time with their grandparents (particularly before they start kindergarten at the age of three, but also after), and thus interact with individuals whose childhoods were lived in the aforementioned times. In interviews, children described grandparents as close relatives with which they had frequent contact and several children were also picked up from kindergarten by their grandparents on a regular basis.

The view of children and childhood has gone through significant changes over the past decades (Jing, 2000b; Watson, 2000).³⁶ According to Watson, such transformations are particularly visible in children’s consumption and their position in the family (2000). In the 1960s, children ate what they were fed and there was no particular food for children (Watson, 2000). Since the 1980s, immense changes have taken place, including a change in children’s decisional power in the family; from being almost ignored in family gatherings where elders always took centre

³⁶ Jing, exploring this change in relation to food and consumption, points to the following five factors: there has been a drastic change in children’s diet since the 1980s; a specialized food industry focusing on children and consumers has developed; there is an increased governmental intervention in children’s development; a global culture of consumption has started to affect family relations and views on childhood; and new types of food has a close attachment to new identity-constructions with specific social values (Jing, 2000b:3-4).

stage, children now have this position (Watson, 2000). Children also influence decision-making processes outside the household; for example can children as young as six years old may be the ones who tell their grandparents what to order, how to sit, and how to behave when going to fast-food chains³⁷ (Watson, 2000). Referring to a 1995 survey, Jing addressed children's power in the family, showing that urban couples spent 40-50% of their total income on their child and that children dictated 70% of the family's total expenses (Jing, 2000b:6), which would have been unheard of in the 1950s and 60s (Watson, 2000). The immense focus on children as consumers turn the hierarchy of knowledge in the family upside-down, both regarding knowledge about products, prices, and why some things should be consumed over others (Yuhua, 2000).

There is a "science of childrearing" connected to the successful raising of children in contemporary China (Naftali, 2007:162). "Systematic, objective perspectives of biology, psychology, sociology and educational theory" provides a scientific alternative to personal experience and knowledge, and since the early 1980s, government initiated parent-training institutes have been educating parents all across China's urban areas through lectures, consultation services and courses (Naftali, 2007:162-163). According to Zhu (2010), during the last decades, the Chinese government has changed focus from "low quantity" (of one child) to "high quality"³⁸ of that one child, and the responsibility was placed on the mother who had to follow scientific guidelines and methods throughout pregnancy in order to ensure the child's best possible development. In this context, science and experts on children and upbringing can be said to have taken over the authority from grandmothers (J. Zhu, 2010), and contemporary grandparents have less definitional power and influence in their children's child-rearing practices than previous generations (Ho, 1989). However, even if parents-to-be and their mothers have differences in opinion about how to raise children, grandmothers often move in with their children and become some of the most important care takers of children under kindergarten age (i.e., under the age of three).³⁹

³⁷ This example was from Watson's study of McDonalds in the New Territories in Hong Kong in the mid-1990s (Watson, 2000:202).

³⁸ In the Population and Family Planning Law of the People's Republic of China (2001), "raising the general quality of the population" (article 11) is explicitly stressed.

³⁹ There are also nurseries where children can start at the age of two, which are more of a care institution than a pedagogical institution. Some of Binah-Pollak's informants, middle-class mothers in Beijing, would put their children into nurseries so that they would not spend time with grandparents and be influenced by them too much (Binah-Pollak, 2014:27).

Naftali (2010) also speaks of the emergence of a *privatization* of childhoods in urban China; a process that is connected to a decrease in family size, the transition to a market economy, changes in the urban landscape (e.g., new forms of accommodation such as high-rise buildings), and Confucian ideals about the importance of children's education. On the one hand, privatization is connected to a larger focus of giving children more privacy (materialistically and psychologically), and on the other, to children's increased presence (or isolation) in the home; children are kept indoors most of the time both due to safety⁴⁰ measures and education (Naftali, 2007, 2010). The growth of play centres in urban China is also part of this picture; children need spaces that are safe to play in, as well as get to know other children, since most families live in high-rise buildings, isolated from their extended families (Naftali, 2010).⁴¹

In the 1990s, the so-called "one-child policy" (family planning policy) was subject to discussion in China. Chinese early childhood educators, parents, and society at large were worried that the '4-2-1 family syndrome'⁴² had produced maladjusted and 'spoiled'⁴³ children; often referred to as 'little emperors'⁴⁴ (Hsueh & Tobin, 2003; Jing, 2000b). The '4-2-1 family syndrome' (4 grandparents, 2 parents, 1 child) refers to the adult-child ratio (a consequence of the single child policy), in which parents and two sets of grandparents focus all their attention on the one child (Jing, 2000b).⁴⁵ Parental attitudes towards giving children what they want can be seen as a

⁴⁰ Parents tend to be afraid for the child's safety because they only have one child (Naftali 2007:257). Naftali's study was conducted in Shanghai.

⁴¹ My interpreter told me about "Early Childhood Education Centre," which are activity centres (from children aged 0 to school-age) that are popular in the big cities in China. These are expensive, can be 200 CNY (31 US dollars at the time if fieldwork) an hour (some are cheaper, e.g., 150 CNY). Children do not get private tutors, but 4-5, up to 10 children are placed in each class. They learn music and arts, sports, English, social skills. One example is one centre called 'Gymboree' (from the US), popular in Shanghai, and another one is 'Kindyroo' (popular in Beijing), which is from Australia. The latter is especially good for music and PE.

⁴² Elsewhere also referred to as the 'six-pockets syndrome' or the '4-2-1 indulgence factor' (French and Crabbe, 2010:144).

⁴³ Whether the single children in China are more or less spoiled than children in other countries is subject to discussion, and research on this phenomenon has not led to consensus (Jing 2000:2). As will be seen in chapter 11, there was concern about spoiled children (particularly) in kindergarten 2, albeit with a different focus than anticipated. Later studies have been concerned with yet another perceived consequence of China's urban social and economic development, namely the problem of 'parental selfishness' leading to a *neglect* of children (Tobin et al., 2009b:38-39), where parents' workload leads to them leaving children with other caretakers.

⁴⁴ Little emperors is also a phrase, but is not as accepted as 'little emperors,' which is more commonly used in China (Jing 2000:2).

⁴⁵ Another potential consequence of the '4-2-1- syndrome' relates to how single children, when adults, will have the care and responsibility for their parents and grandparents. Instead of a 4-2-1 situation, the situation might look more like a '8-4-1,' since women more often are involved in the care of children and elders, and therefore might be given responsibility for both their own and their partners parents and grandparents (Galtung 2009:109).

symbol of the family's increased economic progress, as well as a way to show their love (according to parents themselves) (Chee, 2000).⁴⁶ Chee also links the children's increased power in the family to the single child policy and the fact that parents and grandparents have fewer children to give their attention to. Furthermore, 'overindulgence' with attention and material goods, can be explained as a form of 'compensation syndrome;' parents who went through the Cultural Revolution are now compensating and they want to give the children everything they themselves did not have when they were children (Chee, 2000:60). Wærdahl (2010) found that giving children what they needed was seen as part of a *preparation* for the future, and considered more important than protecting the children from market forces and dangers of consumption. The focus was on giving the children the best opportunities and starting point as possible, so that they would be able to compete on the work market when they became adults. As will be made apparent in Chapter 11, preparing children for the future is also highly relevant in this thesis, albeit with a different focus; here explored through an educational strategy that aims to balance out children's mental state, focusing on how everyday challenges and difficult situations will give children experiences of coping and strength for facing future challenges that are bound to come.

2.5 Summary Chapter 2

This chapter has introduced the wider context of this study; historical and political agendas and campaigns, as well as religious and ideological teachings, all considered significant for how childhoods are lived and understood in contemporary urban China. Particular emphasis has been given to the importance of education and the role and content of the institution of kindergartens, historically and in contemporary times. Emphasis has been given to notions of moral, shaming, face losing and discipline, all considered relevant contextual information for understanding what discipline may mean in context. Finally, attention was placed on contemporary urban childhood and the elevated status of children in families and society, including the 'problem' of the spoiled singletons.

⁴⁶ According to Chee (2000), although there has been done research on single children and their relationships with parents, teachers and non-singletons in China and other countries in the world, little research has been done on relationships between single children in China.

**PART II: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL
APPROACHES**

3 Theorizing childhood, agency, and discipline

In this chapter I address the theoretical influences upon which this ethnographic study is based with regards to how childhood is approached and understood; i.e., the inter-disciplinarian research tradition childhood studies. I enter this research tradition from a disciplinarian background in social anthropology. According to Alanen (2012), disciplinarianism and interdisciplinarianism should be considered as interdependent in interdisciplinary research; a strong disciplinarian belonging and identity is necessary since the purpose of interdisciplinary collaboration is to draw on disciplinary expertise, both in order to contribute to the research field of childhood studies, but also to maintain a relation to the mother discipline. The boundaries between these approaches are blurred and researchers operate in and between them; however, emphasising both will clarify the project's epistemological basis and the conceptual understanding of children and childhoods, which will also explain the further theoretical (Chapter 4) and methodological (Chapter 5) approaches chosen. Children are approached as informants in research alongside adults, and agency is understood as a relational concept (Burkitt, 2016). The asymmetrical relationship between children and teachers will be theorized in terms of *generational ordering* (Alanen, 2009a). In the final parts of this chapter, I address the complex relationship between discipline and childhood.

3.1 Childhood studies

Anthropology has made substantial contributions to childhood studies, in particular regarding the emphasis on cultural difference, the notion of cultural relativism (Montgomery, 2009), and the method of ethnographic fieldwork. In anthropological research however, as in many other disciplines, children were ignored or not considered reliable as informants until the late 1900s, despite having been included in research in explicit or implicit ways before this period of time. The anthropology of childhood can be said to follow two strands or traditions; the anthropology of childhood in USA (originating in the culture and personality school) and the British anthropology of childhood (Montgomery, 2009).

Early anthropological writings on children and childhood portray a very different (and quite prejudiced) picture of childhood compared to contemporary anthropological research. Early British anthropologists such as Edward Taylor and John Lubbock examined childhood in an evolutionary frame, seeing children as primitives or savages, where children were at the lower end of the evolutionary ladder (Montgomery, 2009:18-19). Such a frame of reference was

rejected by some anthropologists in the USA; Franz Boas and Margareth Mead for example, gave a more prominent role to children in research, rejecting racial typographies and emphasizing environmental impacts on children's development (Montgomery, 2009:21). During the latter half of the 20th century, cross-cultural studies of child-rearing conducted by US anthropologists (LeVine, 2007; 2008; Whiting, 1963), challenged the notion of universal childhoods, emphasizing that children's lives are influenced as much by culture and environment as by biology (Montgomery, 2009:34). The influence of psychology and conducting cross-cultural surveys of child rearing did not have a strong role in British anthropology. Rather, building on the legacy of Malinowski, emphasizing the importance of describing all aspects of life, childhood was conceptualized and analysed as a part of ethnographies⁴⁷ (Montgomery, 2009:35). In 1973, anthropologist Charlotte Hardman (2001)⁴⁸ published an article concerning the study of children in anthropology, seeing children as belonging to a proper culture with their own worldviews and stressing their *mutedness* as a group, in research. Along with the influential works of historian Philippe Aries (1962), economic sociologist Viviana Zelizer (1994) and others, the social, historical, and political role and position of children and childhood in research was strengthened.

Childhood studies emerged in the 1980s as a critical counter-position to the hegemonic theorizations of children and childhood of the time, particularly dominated by developmental psychology and functionalist sociology (Prout & James, 1990). Childhood studies was not the only research tradition addressing such matters at the time; researchers from many disciplines (including developmental psychology) had voiced concern of the role and place of children and childhood in research (Qvortrup, Corsaro, & Honig, 2011b). Childhood studies aimed to give children a voice in research, seeing them as subjects of study in their own right and trying to grasp children's perspectives and meaning making in and of their own and present lives. It was argued that children should no longer be seen only as appendices of their families or as future adults, valuable only in their becoming: children should be seen as social actors with agency whose perspective is valid in its own right (Prout & James, 1990). Furthermore it was stated that childhood was not a natural and universal part of human groups, but a "specific structural

⁴⁷ For example Raymond Firth's work on the Tikopia of Polynesia from 1936, or Meyer Forte's work among the Tallensi of northern Ghana from 1949 (for references, see Montgomery 2009).

⁴⁸ The article was originally published in *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* (Vol. IV, No. 2) in 1973.

and cultural component of many societies” (Prout & James, 1990:8). Childhood should be acknowledged as a variable in social analysis, placed alongside other variables such as class, gender, and ethnicity, since children have been largely marginalized within quantitative research (see e.g. Qvortrup, 1993, 2002). Prout and James also stated that the double hermeneutic of the social sciences was relevant in relation to childhood as a phenomenon, meaning that childhood studies were partaking in the process of reconstructing the image of childhood in society (1990:9).

Researchers in childhood studies were highly critical to developmental and future-oriented theorizations on children and childhood, such as the socialization concept, for being positivist, forward-centred and universalistic (Prout & James, 1990), individualistic (Qvortrup, 2002), adult-centric (Speier, 1976), ethnocentric (Jenks, 1982, 1996), androcentric (N. Lee, 2001), and for not acknowledging children’s agency and status as participants in constructing their own lives (Prout & James, 1990). The universal and individualistic critique is related to the way *the child* has been a representation of all children, excluding context, i.e., ignoring the social, historical, temporal, economic and cultural conditions that children (and all human beings) live in (Prout & James, 1990). Seeing children as the same regardless of context rejects alternative views and different constructions of childhoods and becomes an obstacle to understanding the multitude of childhoods that exist in the world, both temporally, culturally, and spatially. The adultcentric critique that has been posted against the dominant concepts of development and socialization is related to how adults’ ideas about what children are or ought to be strongly colour research in this field (Speier, 1976). Questions related to how children become adults and how societal reproduction takes place are overshadowing those related to interactional processes. Thus, due to the hegemony of the socialization theory, adults are caught in an adult ideological mind-set, which prevents important questions from being asked, and which also leads to the loss of important information. In a similar critique, Jenks (1982, 1996) addresses the issue of adultcentrism by linking the ethnocentric nature of childhood research and the relationship between adult researchers and child objects of study to the image of the early anthropologist and the ‘savage.’ Both images are based on predetermined ideas of difference based on scales of advancement and development, and both are considered interesting objects of research for this reason. Jenks’ critique is thus related to how “socialization theories present the normative structure of the adult/parent world as their independent variable” (1982:13), and

child competence is judged along this frame of reference. The adult-centric view of childhood was also coupled with an ethnocentric approach to studies of children and childhood (Jenks, 1996). Finally, androcentrism has been said to characterize social science research in general before feminist and gender research expanded in the 1970s. Before this period, one perspective had hegemony on both sides of the research setting; researchers often spoke from a male perspective of the world, and empirical material often portrayed a male experience of life. Said differently, mainstream research was rather 'malestream research' (N. Lee, 2001:51).

Alternatives to this view of childhood and socialization have been offered by researchers in childhood studies such as Qvortrup, who expresses "a critical scepticism towards socialization as a precondition for a sociological perspective of children" (2002:46). He states that the concept of socialization is only interesting if "understood as a mutual interactive process in which both children and adults change" or if seen on a "meta-level as one part of several adult apparatuses that massively contribute to shaping children's lives" (Qvortrup, 2002:47). Other researchers refer to the inescapable association of preparation and training that comes with the socialization concept, proposing the term *interpretive reproduction*: and the understanding that children do not merely imitate and internalize the world they are part of, but actively participate, interpret and make sense of the world and thus produce their own worlds and cultures (Corsaro, 2005:23-24). Speier suggests that a way to go about this "social induction problem" (1976:168) is to remove the socialization concept as an analytical tool, but keep it as a lay concept about "the appropriate methods for raising children to become adult members of the society" (1976:173). Nilsen has suggested keeping a modified version of the socialization concept, understood as a process of adaptation *and* resistance (Nilsen, 2000a, 2000b, 2009). This thesis enters such discussions with an emphasis on social life where children engage in the production of social practice, being shaped by and shaping their social worlds.

Childhood studies is a recent scholarly tradition consisting of different designations and disciplinarian belongings (Smith & Greene, 2014). Alanen (2001) sketches out the following three branches; *sociologies of children*, a *deconstructive sociology of childhood* and a *structural sociology of childhood*. Alanen presents the first branch as actor-oriented, emphasizing children's agency and often using ethnographic methods in order to grasp children's experiences in their everyday contexts; the *deconstructive sociology of childhood* as concerned with constructions of children and childhood in society and in research, and what impact such constructions have on children's lives; and *the structural sociology of childhood*, emphasizing

the structural features of childhood and the necessity of including childhood in quantitative analysis (Alanen, 2001). Whether these or other designations and divisions accurately portray strands in childhood studies is a question of interpretation and academic belonging. One concern is that childhood studies has come to a crossroads, and that the once unified approach of this research tradition must be addressed seeing that divergent and competing interests and agendas are appearing (Adrian James, 2010). According to James (2010), competing agendas (or clashes) revolve around paradigms, epistemologies and values, e.g., between those advocating the plurality of childhoods and those emphasizing the universality of childhood as a social category. Some concerns regarding the state of contemporary childhood studies is that the production of an abundance of empirical accounts of children and childhood have been accompanied by a complacent and uncritical relation to theory (Tisdall & Punch, 2012), and that questions regarding the *interdisciplinarity* of childhood studies and discussions on disciplinary boundaries need further emphasis (Alanen, 2012). Making use of theorizations of Bourdieu may be useful in bridging the gap between the polarities in childhood studies (Alanen, 2009b; Alanen, Brooker, & Mayall, 2015), and the notion of relationality has also been emphasised as one of several important focal areas or ideas for the contemporary study of children and childhood (Ansell, 2017; Prout, 2011; Smith & Greene, 2014). The idea of relationality is a binding concept in this thesis and various theoretical approaches emphasising a relational aspect will be used; first and foremost Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977; 1992a) (see Section 4.3), but also theoretical approaches on Chinese society, emphasising a relational understanding of the individual (Xiaotong et al., 1992) (see Section 4.4), as well as the concept of *generational ordering* (Alanen, 2009a) (see below) particularly when addressing the relationship between children and adults in kindergartens. In the following pages I engage with conceptual issues and theoretical discussions of relevance in childhood studies, such as views of children and childhood, the mutually constitutive relationship between children and adults, as well as the concept of (relational) agency.

3.1.1 Both being and becoming

The being-becoming debate, as well as discussions of concepts such as socialization and development has been particularly potent in childhood studies because they deal with the ontological core of this research tradition. Previous dominant theories of socialization and development aimed to describe the child's transition from a human becoming (process in progress) to a human being (completed process), clearly placing children in a state of

‘becoming’ (see e.g. Durkheim, 1982:147) and human-in-the-making. In childhood studies, ‘being’ was emphasized as a response to this view; children were not to be conceived as future adults, but as “a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences—in sum, as a social actor,” that is as “the ‘being’ child” (Allison James et al., 1998:207). Nick Lee (2001) connects the being/becoming divide to the American Fordist society of the 1960s, understood as a period in time in which childhood was created in opposition to adulthood. According to Lee, this dichotomy could easily manifest itself at this time and place, because work life and family life were considered stable and permanent parts of adult life, making adult life itself stable. However, the world has now entered an ‘age of uncertainty’ where flexibility is needed, and where neither jobs nor marriage patterns can be seen as lifelong entities, diminishing the stability of adult life. The flexibility of today’s world, the diminishing control of states over their populations and the increased mediated role of societies play a part in the lives of all human beings, both adults and children (N. Lee, 2001:117). Lee suggests including adults in the ‘becoming’ category and lose the ‘being’ category altogether (2001). According to Emma Uprichard (2008), children must be understood as both ‘being’ and ‘becoming,’ since childhood must be seen in a temporal context. “For all things in the social and physical world, time is reversible and irreversible, external and internal to the thing itself, and always and necessarily ‘being and becoming’” (Uprichard, 2008:307). Based on empirical research, Uprichard argues that children were in fact actively constructing themselves as both ‘beings and becomings’;

hence, conceptualizing children as ‘being and becomings’ is not only constructive in terms of explicitly addressing the ageing process within childhood itself, it also reflects the ways that children themselves see themselves and their changing world within which they are necessarily situated (2008:310).

This emphasis, she argues, increases children’s agency since their *future* agency is included; children are social actors who are constructing their everyday lives and the world around them, both in their present and future lives (Uprichard, 2008:311). In this thesis, children (and adults) are understood as both ‘beings’ and ‘becomings.’ Emphasis is put on everyday experiences and practices, how human beings are shaped by experience and actively partake in and construct

their own and others' experience. This understanding will be analysed using theorizations of Bourdieu on social life (see Chapter 4).⁴⁹

3.1.2 Generational order

The notion of a generational order is concerned with acknowledging that the societal formations of 'childhood' and 'adulthood' have structural attributes that are relative to each other (Alanen, 2009a). Rather than simply denoting the relationships between individuals located in different or the same life stages, i.e., as intergenerational or intragenerational, a *relational* understanding of social categories of childhood and adulthood are called for (Alanen, 2009a:160). Alanen refers to this structure as a *generational order*; i.e., a "structured network of relations between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other" (Alanen, 2009a:161-162). In this understanding, generation is considered to be a socially constructed system of relationships, where children and adults hold specific social positions that are defined in relation to each other, as well as constituting specific social and generational structures (Alanen, 2001:12). Researching generational categories in terms of *relationality* and *interdependence* implies that these categories are mutually constitutive, and that they reciprocally presume each other (Alanen, 2009a:161). Childhood and adulthood are thus produced and reproduced in interactions between members of existing generational categories, in intergenerational practices.

Referring to Mannheim, a generation is described as "a historically positioned age group whose members undergo a similar socialization process which brings about a shared frame of experience and action" (Alanen, 2009a:164). The example of the 'nuclear family' is used in order to exemplify some characteristic traits of a *generational ordering*; a system of interdependent relations in which the relations of any one holder of one position (such as parenting) is dependent on the reciprocal action of the individual holding the position of the child (Alanen, 2009a:165). Such interdependent relations, both familial generational structures (parent-child) as well as the generational structure of the teacher-student, are often not symmetrical in both directions (Alanen, 2009a:166). In such a frame, the primary focus of

⁴⁹ In a contribution to the anthology *Barnehagen som danningsarena* (Kindergarten as an arena for cultural formation), I try to make sense of the concept of *danning* (cultural formation) from the theoretical standpoint of childhood studies (Lyså, 2012). Through using the concept of socialization as an illustrative example, the processual, open-ended aspects of the concept is emphasised, leaving its content to the realm of empirical investigation, in order to stress its value as an analytical concept. Bourdieu's theory of practice and the notion of *habitus* is considered useful for capturing such processes (Lyså, 2012).

childhood research is to reveal the *structures* that can be identified as specifically generational, the interdependent *positions* that such generational structures define for generational groups, and the social and cultural *practices* of positioning—both self and other positioning—through which the generational structures are generated, maintained and sometimes transformed (Alanen, 2009a:170).

Social categories of childhood and adulthood are thus attributed particular contextual historical and cultural qualities. As explained in Chapter 2, major transitions have occurred in Chinese society during the second half of the 20th century, and traditionally there have also been strong generational differences in China. Such changes, coupled with views of children and childhood (including understandings of face and shame) and a hierarchical, relational understanding of the individual makes relevant an interdependent and reciprocal relationship between the categories of children and adults in Chinese society. In the kindergartens, *generational order* is explored through everyday disciplinarian practices, such as in how adults and children interact through practices of regulation, evaluation and monitoring, as will be explored in part III. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated, generational ordering is also *differential*; the teacher approach and discipline children differently (Chapter 8). Moreover, practices of differentiation are also visible in *intragenerational* relations; some disciplinarian practices that are characteristic of *intergenerational* (teacher-child) relations are also (re)produced among the children in the child group. In Chapter 9, relationality will be explored in terms of how the children play their part, react to, and cope with, everyday disciplinarian practices; and how they do this in different ways, connected to their position in social space (see also Chapter 10). I approach such matters using Bourdieu's theory of practice and conceptualizations of field (see Chapter 4); both adults and children in the kindergarten are part of, but differently positioned in, the same social field.

3.1.3 Relational agency

In childhood studies, agency has been defined as “the capacity of individuals to act independently” (Allison James & James, 2008:9); an understanding that is linked to seeing children as social actors in their own lives. Included in this way of thought is the belief that children are capable of expressing their views and opinions, and that they also influence the changes that take place in the wider society (Allison James & James, 2008:9). Mayall (2002)

distinguishes between actor and agent, stressing that despite the fact that both concepts share the same etymological root (the Latin verb *ago, agere, egi, actum*), they diverge in meaning.

A social *actor* does something, perhaps something arising out of a subjective wish. The term *agent* suggests a further dimension: negotiation with others, with the effect that the interaction makes a difference – to a relationship or to a decision, to the workings of a set of social assumptions or constraints. (Mayall, 2002:21, italics in original)

Some have argued that agency should be understood as something more than a question of “whether children produce change;” it is “as much accomplished in the *reproduction* of social situations, in children’s contribution to the continuous ordering of interactions [...] A notion of agency which is centred on the idea of children’s visible impact devalues this permanent contribution” (Bühler-Niederberger & Schwittek, 2014:506, italics in original). In addition to being a matter of change, opposition or resistance, agency can also be a matter of compliance, adaptation, understanding your place or acting in a ‘socially responsible’ way. Children may, for example, assume a subordinate position in society if it benefits them (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013).

In childhood studies, children are often portrayed as competent, active, meaning makers and explorers; words carrying connotations of strength, determination, and power, which fits nicely with the intention of childhood studies in terms of how children are viewed and perceived. However, there has been concern that the concept of agency has been “taken-for-granted, unproblematised or assumed inherently to be positive and desired by all children and young people” (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). This can be linked to questions of vulnerability and whether emphasising agency means that children are considered responsible for their own position or situation. However, emphasizing agency does not necessarily mean that children should be held responsible for what happens to them (nor would this be the case with adults). As Chris Jenks states,

the idea of child as social actor, the idea of child as self-determining and even the suggestion of childhood as a universal category are all analytical devices that have done and continue to do their work. These are not literal, descriptive constructs within some correspondence theory of truth; they are, rather, highly effective strategies for developing new ways of seeing the world (2004:6).

A second concern related to the strong emphasis on agency is the potential loss of focus on the importance and role of structural factors, and how these affect children and young people

(Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Tisdall and Punch also stress the need to include adults in such discussions: both children and adults are *potential* competent social actors (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Finally, focus is needed on circumstances where children's agency is perceived as negative, challenging, or problematic (Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

Recent approaches to the theorization of agency involve the emphasis on a nuancing of the concept, where structures, context, and relationships act as 'thinners' or 'thickeners' of individual's agency (Klocker, 2007), or as 'ambiguous agency,' emphasising agency, which is in stark contrast to that in established normative conceptions about moral and socially accepted behaviour (Bordonaro & Payne, 2012). Yet others suggest a stronger emphasis on structural factors, for example as 'interdependent agency' to look beyond individual autonomy and include collective concerns, where personal agency depends largely on and is regulated by family contexts, livelihood opportunities/constraints and interpersonal relationships (Abebe, 2013) or as 'negotiated interdependence,' showing how young people are constrained by various structures and cultural expectations of family responsibilities, yet also have the ability to act within and between such constraints, balancing household and individual needs (Punch, 2002). Such understandings underline how the notion of agency cannot be removed from context, furthermore suggesting that concept of agency should be *relational* in character (Hammersley, 2017).

Drawing on relational sociology, agency is understood in this thesis as relational, rather than an individual phenomenon (Burkitt, 2016). In Burkitt's understanding, individuals are interactants, rather than singular agents or actors. Furthermore, rather than speaking of structures, Burkitt speaks of "webs or networks of relations and interdependencies, both interpersonal and impersonal, in which interactants and their joint actions are embedded" (Burkitt, 2016:323). Agency is understood in a wide sense, as something that produces an effect on the world and on others, appearing among people in their relational contexts (Burkitt, 2016). Relations are fluid and ongoing, and change according to circumstances (Burkitt, 2016:330). Power imbalances emerge in such interdependencies, because some will attain greater positions of power or control of key resources, which furthermore "has implications for agency, because how we act, the powers we accrue or the constraints upon us, do not rest on our relation to structure but on the nature of our interdependence with others and how this shapes our mutual interactions" (Burkitt, 2016:331). Agency can thus not be conceptualized as an absolute power, but must be understood as a matter of degree. "In interrelation, interdependence and interactions

with others, interactants are always active and passive, powerful and yet vulnerable to various degrees, acting on others and being acted on by those others;" agency unfolds in manifold social relations that may even be contradictory, and it does so between selves that are both personal and social (Burkitt, 2016:336).

Social relationships constitute the very structure and form of agency itself; agency thus appears among people in their relational contexts and is understood in "the wider sense of action that *produces an effect* on the world and on others" (Burkitt, 2016:332, my emphasis). A similar understanding is apparent in Bourdieusian terminology:

in any social universe, [the dominated] can always *exert a certain force*, inasmuch as belonging to a field means by definition that one is capable of *producing effects* in it (if only to elicit reactions of exclusion on the part of those who occupy its dominant positions) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992b:80, my emphasis).

Agents act in the ways they do because these actions are deeply *meaningful* to them:

we are not engaged in different forms of relations and interactions purely to reproduce or elaborate structures on the basis of our own interests, but because the meaningfulness of the particular activities we engage in with others is deeply fulfilling to us (Burkitt, 2016:331).

In such an understanding, the concept of agency cannot be defined as "the *capacity* of *individuals* to act *independently*" (Allison James & James, 2008:9, my emphasis). Furthermore, as will be demonstrated on in the following chapters, a rights-based, individualistic oriented concept is problematic in a context where relationality and interpersonal duties are emphasised (see e.g., Chapters 4 and 9). A relational understanding of the concept of agency will be actualized using Bourdieu's theory of practice, emphasising the dialectical relationship between agents and structures (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). I will describe (particularly in Chapter 9) how agency has relational characteristics, emphasising interrelational dynamics. Finally, I will also show through empirical examples, how agency is not something inherently positive or even necessarily desired; it can also be problematic and limiting.

3.2 Discipline and childhood: contextual understandings

In this section I will look at the relation between discipline and childhood, demonstrating the heterogeneity of disciplinarian practices and how such practices are linked to contextual views and ideas of children and childhood.

The childhood image that has demanded a hegemonic position on a global scale is based on western constructions of childhood; a ‘neoliberal’ ideal childhood image where independence is emphasized over interdependence, which is school-based rather than work-based, and which is considered as separated from the wider world of politics, economy and society (Ansell, 2017). Such ‘models’ do not represent the everyday experiences of children across the globe and are misleading in a geographical and socio-cultural frame outside the west; but they are also wrongfully portrayed as a continuous frame of reference for western childhoods (Scheper-Hughes, 1987), both in a historical and spatial frame. The international ratification of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) in most of the world’s countries has been a strong contributor to the ways in which western middle class childhood has become a normative template for how childhoods should be lived on a global scale. The universalization of this childhood image is problematic because it was created based on a ‘western’ understanding of childhood and individuality (Kjørholt, 2013; Scheper-Hughes & Sargent, 1998). Furthermore, there has been a historical transformation of the childhood image also in European countries, closely linked to the bettering of living standards, the lowering of mortality rates, the abolishment of child labour, and the entrance of mass schooling (Scheper-Hughes, 1987). This change in living standards influenced idea(l)s of children and childhood, and whereas the child used to be considered an invaluable asset in the family work force and of strong practical importance to the family, the child is now seen to be “priceless in terms of their psychological worth” (Scheper-Hughes, 1987; Zelizer, 1994). This view of children and their “natural” and indisputable place in the family has found a strong position in societal discourses of (the good) childhood in the Western world (see e.g. Woodhead & Montgomery, 2003). Such perceptions complicate the discussing and theorizing of discipline and disciplinary action.

Different views of children and childhood affect the ways children are disciplined, and understandings of the nature of childhood can be revealed in disciplinary methods (Montgomery, 2009:156). For example, if a child is seen as having no capacity to reason, punishment may be considered pointless; if a child is seen as wicked, it may be seen as in need

of punishment, and if children are understood as naturally good, they might rarely get punished (Montgomery, 2009). The culturally specific reasons for physically punishing children are many and far exceed ideas of concrete punishment or parents ‘losing their temper.’ These practices must be understood in context, time, and place, and may include various forms of reasoning, such as; teaching children about the harshness of life or how to appropriately deal with pain; teach children about social hierarchies and socially accepted forms of treatment in relationships; or be directly connected to understandings of children’s developmental stage (Montgomery, 2009). Discipline can furthermore be understood as a positive thing; as “a form of teaching and an expression of love and concern” (Kavapalu (1993) in Montgomery, 2009:163). In a similar vein, the purpose and content of the “emotionally charged dramas” that Inuit children are exposed to, can only be understood when seen in a contextual light and with knowledge of the parental concerns for the many dangers that these children can face in their daily lives (Briggs, 1992).

As this thesis will explore, disciplinarian practices also have particular meaning and expression in two urban Chinese kindergartens in the Chinese context. Such practices must be explored with attention to the cultural context where they take place, and the *institution* of the kindergarten is also leaving its particular imprint on such practices. As touched upon in Chapters 1 and 2, discipline has a strong connection with the Chinese kindergarten and educational institutions historically, and recently also connected to the ‘problem of the spoiled singletons.’ I explore a range of disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens in part III, connecting such practices both to the wider context and to the two particular kindergartens involved in this study. I will emphasize corporal, social, and relational disciplinarian practices, and give particular attention to discipline as *guan*—a form of ‘loving control’—both an accepted and desired aspect of interrelations between people (Chapter 7).

Doing research on childhood and discipline is potentially challenging for several reasons. The focus on child innocence, child protection and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has placed phenomena that clearly deviates from this focus, for example street children, child prostitution, child soldiers or child labour, within a frame of abuse (Montgomery, 2009). This view is also connected to contemporary childhood ideals in the Western world, because “owing to power-laden political-economic and cultural relations,” such

conceptualisations have “strongly shaped development interventions and have been disseminated worldwide through diverse processes of globalisation” (Ansell, 2017:12), such as the UNCRC. Such conceptualisations or ‘global models’ of childhood are based on particular understandings of childhood where childhood is a time set apart from adulthood, where children belong in families, and emphasising that childhood should be a happy “time devoted to play and learning rather than work” (Ansell, 2017:15) Such an understanding might potentially overlook and ignore emic and contextual understandings and meanings when conducting research in different cultural contexts. Departing from such a frame however, can be highly controversial and must be talked and written about with great caution. There is also a possibility that interpretations alternating from the western childhood rights-based ideal might receive criticism for exoticising or trivializing child maltreatment. It is important to account for social and cultural understandings in order to understand what discipline means in context because problems occur when culturally specific practices are understood in the light of western contemporary preoccupations with child abuse (Montgomery, 2009:172).

One way of interpreting and talking about disciplinary practice or physical punishment is to distinguish abuse from discipline (Montgomery, 2009). Such a distinction was for example made by child informants in a study from Ghana, investigating children’s perceptions on physical punishment (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). ‘Too much’ physical punishment ‘too often’ or punishment for no good reason was classified as unjust and excessive, but the children did not see physical punishment itself as problematic; the majority of the children saw physical forms of punishment as a natural part of the socialization process and for some, as an act of love (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). Jill Korbin provides a framework that can be used for research on matters of abuse and discipline, in order to deal with the tension in interpretation. Korbin (1981) differentiates between three types of discipline and abuse; 1) beatings/treatments that seem harsh, unnecessary or abusive to outsiders, but which are understood as culturally necessary and have full approval in this context; 2) individual maltreatment that does not have legitimacy in its cultural context; and 3) social or structural abuse of children as a group (poverty, hunger, social inequality, poor health, war) - in such a view, abuse becomes relative. Furthermore, western ways of child-rearing might horrify parents in non-western cultures, e.g., the way children are isolated in their own bed/own room, the way food should be given at particular hours, or the way children might cry without being attended to immediately (Korbin,

1981). *Lack of discipline* might in fact be seen as abusive (Wu, 1981, in Montgomery, 2009:177).

3.3 Summary Chapter 3

In this chapter, attention has been directed to theoretical approaches to childhood research; childhood studies from the perspective of anthropology. I have explained how I see children as both ‘beings’ and ‘becomings,’ how children’s asymmetrical relation to adults in further chapters will be conceptualized in terms of *generational order* (Alanen, 2009a), and how agency is considered to be *relational*, something that takes place between agents (Burkitt, 2016). The latter parts of the chapter problematized the act of characterizing discipline as abuse, since this may overshadow emic understandings and misinterpret its social and cultural meaning.

4 Theorizing culture and everyday social life: a relational approach

With emphasis on Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and his theory of practice, disciplinary practices and structures will be interpreted through the conceptual trio *field*, *habitus*, and *capital*, underlining the dialectical relation between agentic action and structural conditions. This relational aspect will be further elaborated on in terms of contextual theorizations on the individual by Fei Xiaotong (1992). A rising topic of academic interest, the study of contemporary Chinese *individualism* (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010), will provide ‘a link’ between the theorizations of Bourdieu and Xiaotong, particularly in terms of understanding the relationship between the individual and society in *contemporary* urban China. The idea of relationality provides a lens of interpretation for disciplinary practices in the following chapters.

The situated aspect of empirically contextual practices as well as of analytical and theoretical understandings will also be given attention. The theories used in this thesis originate in different temporal and spatial spheres and rest on particular premises. I begin this chapter with a section on theoretical reflexivity and historicity. While acknowledging that no theoretical approach is free from historical and contextual construction, I have made an attempt towards using theoretical approaches in a reflexive way, in close connection with the empirical material.

4.1 Theoretical reflexivity and historicity

One way to address scientific reflexivity is engaging with participant objectivation, understood as “the *objectivation of the subject of objectivation*, of the analysing subject—in short, of the researcher herself” (Bourdieu, 2003:282, italics in original). Bourdieu emphasizes that he is not referring to what he calls the “narcissistic reflexivity of postmodern anthropology” (2003:281) or the “naive observation of the observer” (2003:282), but rather to a form of scientific reflexivity. For Bourdieu, participant objectivation is a ‘device’ that can be used:

to increase scientificity by turning the most objectivist tools of social science not only onto the private person of the enquirer but also, and more decisively, onto the anthropological field itself and onto the scholastic dispositions and biases it fosters and rewards in its members. ‘Participant objectivation,’ as the objectivation of the subject and operations of objectivation, and of the latter’s conditions of possibility, produces real cognitive effects as it enables the social analyst to grasp and master the pre-reflexive social and academic experiences of the social world that he tends to project unconsciously onto ordinary social agents (Bourdieu, 2003:281).

This is a daunting task and a complex topic of scientific enquiry, far exceeding the scope of this thesis. This type of reflexive practice, however, has encouraged a critical and reflexive disposition regarding the historicizing of theoretical concepts (Bourdieu, 1990a:16) and provide a necessary reminder that theories and theorizations can never be ‘neutral’ or objective. Researchers work, are influenced by, and write in different spaces and times, as do those making use of their theories. Furthermore, it has also made me reflect on the repeated insistence from colleagues that I should make use of Foucault’s theories, when I have presented my material (claiming that my empirical material “screams Foucault”). Foucault’s theorizations are closely associated with the concept of discipline, and he may be considered the most ‘obvious’ and ‘logical’ choice for analysing such a topic. My empirical material could have been analysed with a Foucauldian lens; ⁵⁰ however, such an analytical approach would not enable me to tell the story and present my material in the way that I believe serves my empirical material as I wish to portray it. I address issues of power and discipline in the frame of everyday social practice, but with emphasis on agent’s (children’s) understandings, points of view, and participation in such practices. Furthermore, the historical frame that forms the basis of Foucault’s theory of modern power, is based on historical developments in a particular (European) historical context; although this does not mean that he cannot be used in the Chinese context, it may complicate matters. I want to discuss power and domination in everyday social *practices* in a Chinese context, in a cultural sensitive manner, and Bourdieu’s theory of practice can provide a useful theoretical frame for such an approach because his theoretical concepts makes sense when connecting with an empirical context (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a).

In this thesis, I attempt to present the empirical material in a careful and analytically firm way and I have searched for theoretical approaches that are culturally sensitive, contextually relevant and empirically driven and that can work together to discuss the empirical material. I approach the topic of discipline as everyday social practice, using theoretical approaches originating from both China and the western world (UK, France, USA etc.), and some reflections regarding these choices are in order. Furthermore, as a researcher, I am ‘academically born and raised’ in a particular regional/national setting, which influences not only the theories and concepts used,

⁵⁰ Others have found Foucault useful in research on discipline and/or education in China (and Taiwan) (Bakken, 1994, Kipnis, 2011, Lin, 2009) or on the dissemination of state power in China (Yang, 1994). Foucault has also been used in research on education (see e.g., Ball 2010), in kindergarten research in a Norwegian context (see e.g., Nilsen, 2000a, Shcei 2013), and in Early Childhood Studies (see e.g., MacNaughton 2005).

but also the manner of writing and thinking (see also Section 5.1.2 on reflexivity). Various discussions could be made regarding the choice of theory made by researchers. One could question the origin of theoretical knowledge and consequences for using particular theories on particular empirical phenomena. One question is whether theories originating in the west can present a story that can be recognized by informants in a Chinese context, or whether such theories rest on different set of assumptions of how the world is connected. Another question is whether using contextually based theories from China could result in epistemological or ontological misunderstandings for the researcher. On the other side, potential misunderstandings (or interpretations) may occur when using theoretical approaches that originate in the researcher's own cultural context as well; concepts or complex theories can surely be misread and misunderstood, regardless of place and date of origin. Being eclectic in choice of theories from academic traditions originating in different cultural contexts could perhaps help 'lessen' epistemicocentrism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:69), but on the other hand, such an emphasis on difference may also potentially create artificial separation. Making use of a mix of theoretical approaches may on the other hand lead to theoretical and epistemological confusion, or potentially complement each other and lead to a nuanced understanding of the material in question. Reflexivity and a conscious attitude to how concepts and theories are chosen and used are in any case, needed.

I have tried to combine theoretical approaches from different regional, temporal, historical, and disciplinarian backgrounds. What combines these approaches is an anthropological interest in human relations and relationships, an interest in everyday practice and how such practices have contextual meaning. Efforts have been made towards finding a 'middle ground' between theoretical approaches, and the notion of relationality has been a uniting factor. From childhood studies, I emphasise the need to include children as informants in research, seeing their perspectives and opinions as valid in their own right (see 3.1), and this emphasis enables me to use theoretical approaches which were not created specifically for children. In approaching discipline as something relational, going beyond a polarized understanding of child agency on the one side and structural conditions on the other, I approach such practices through Bourdieu's theory of practice. Pierre Bourdieu's books *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) based on his early anthropological fieldwork in Algeria, *The Logic of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1990b) as well as *An Invitation to Reflexive Practice* (1992a), where his theoretical ideas and understandings of practice theory are elaborated on, have been particularly relevant for my understanding of

Bourdieu. Bourdieu's theoretical concepts are systemic, meaning that they should be used in relation to each other, whereas their content is a matter of empirical investigation. A relational approach has furthermore been called for in childhood studies (Alanen et al., 2015; Prout, 2011), and is also considered highly relevant in the Chinese context, due to contextually relevant understandings of the relation between the individual and society. Fei Xiaotong is an important Chinese sociologist/anthropologist; one of the most known for having a western audience and several of his books have been published in the English language (see 4.4.1). His theories are based on ethnographic fieldwork in the rural Chinese countryside in the early 20th century. Although tremendous change has taken place in China, particularly during the latest decades (see Chapter 2), his theorizations are considered important also for contemporary Chinese society. Contextually relevant literature (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010; Hansen & Svarverud, 2010; Xiaotong et al., 1992; Y. Yan, 2010b) provide background information on relevant understandings of the place of the individual within society, which affects how discipline in the kindergarten institution can be interpreted. Through such approaches, I attempt to emphasise how history is embodied; how disciplinarian practices and structures conditions children's everyday experiences, and how children also partake in the shaping of their everyday lives, with emphasis on practices of discipline and power dynamics.

4.2 The concept of culture

The concept of culture has been subject to debate and scrutiny, both in and outside the discipline of anthropology, for many decades. Few concepts have as many definitions as culture has.⁵¹ The word "culture" builds on the Latin word *colere*, meaning (among other things) to "grow/raise" or "cultivate." In anthropology, culture refers to aspects about the human condition that are not 'natural' but relate to the social dimension of the human condition (Eriksen, 2010:15). According to Clifford Geertz, the concept of culture should be approached as an *interpretive* search for meaning (Geertz, 1973). Formulations of people's symbol systems must be actor-oriented (Geertz, 1973:14); they must be explored from the actor's point of view and focus on what people *do*: "behaviour must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behaviour—or, more precisely, social action—that cultural forms find articulation" (Geertz, 1973:17).

⁵¹ In the 1950s, the anthropologists Kluckhohn and Kroeber counted as many as 162 different definitions of the concept of culture (Eriksen, 2010:15).

Marianne Gullestad argues that the concept of culture should not be precisely defined because it works better as a more open concept, i.e., as a 'syndrome concept' (1989:31). Gullestad emphasises the concept's characteristics, being socially oriented and theoretically to be used for all social action (1989:32), including the everyday life home environment, where Gullestad herself did research. Gullestad outlines several approaches to the study of culture: as a *sector* in society (cultural life); as life forms/*patterns of behaviour* (coastal culture, child culture, Chinese culture) or as *patterns for behaviour* (ideas, values, symbols, patterns of thought). Culture as a sector in society refers to a humanistic (and everyday) understanding of culture, often linked to cultural products such as theatre shows, concerts, or other artistic productions. This approach is sometimes understood in a twofold manner as one 'high culture' (aesthetic, elitist) part and one 'lower' cultural understanding linked to popular culture and folk culture, although such a division is problematic (Gullestad, 1989:32-33). Culture as life form or *patterns of behaviour* can be spoken of in different ways: either as a characterization of the life ways of a whole group or in a more cognitive-symbolic way as typical ways of thinking and relating to the surroundings i.e., as *patterns for behaviour* (Gullestad, 1989:33-34). Both are totalizing ways of defining a concept, but in different ways. The former sees culture as the whole sociocultural system and emphasis is put on material tools, rules and norms and systems of faith/belief; it is learned and transferred from one generation to the next (Gullestad, 1989). Culture as *patterns for behaviour*: as patterns for how we act, as the starting point for action, but still acknowledging the uniqueness of social action (Gullestad, 1989:34). This way of addressing culture does not imply a high structural integration or consistency; cultures can be characterized by fragmentation and conflict (as can individual people's cultural competencies and beliefs) and there seems to be a loose connectedness between the elements in cultures (Gullestad, 1989:35). As an example of the understanding of culture as *patterns for behaviour*, Gullestad refers to the following definition by Ward Goodenough:

A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members. Culture is not a material phenomenon: it does not consist of things, people, behaviour or emotions. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. (...) Culture ... consists of *standards* for deciding what can be, ... for deciding what one feels

about it, ... for deciding what to do about it and for deciding how to go about doing it (Goodenough 1961:522, in Gullestad, 1989:34).⁵²

According to Gullestad, Kroeber, and Kluckhohn⁵³ made the division between patterns *of* behaviour and patterns *for* behaviour, wanting anthropological work to focus on both categories, although the latter has been more in focus (Gullestad, 1989:36). In this thesis I address such matters through the use of Bourdieu's theory of practice. Instead of speaking of patterns *of* and *for* behaviour, I refer to *social fields*, particular forms of capital (important values in the field), and the concept of *habitus*, understood as *dispositions* for social action (Bourdieu, 1977:214). Through approaching the everyday lives of a group of children in a particular place at a particular moment in time, I explored their everyday lives by focusing on everyday practices, and what is considered valuable and important for those who are in this particular field (see also Ødegaard & Krüger, 2012). Habitus is social embodied—not a 'personal attribute.' If talking about culture on the individual level, as something intimately connected to the individual, culture can be described as a form of embodied cultural capital; as long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body (Bourdieu, 2011:82).

4.3 A theory of practice: a sense of the game

It is to account for the actual logic of practice—an expression in itself oxymoronic since the hallmark of practice is to be "logical," to have a logic without having logic as its principle – that I have put forth a theory of practice as the product of *practical sense*, of a socially constituted "sense of the game" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:120-121, italics in original).

Through using Bourdieu's theory on social life and practice, I will elaborate on the range and variations of disciplinarian practices in the two kindergartens, as well as how children partake in such practices in different ways and to varying degrees. In the following section, I will elaborate on Bourdieu's concepts *field*, *capital*, and *habitus*, as well as how his theoretical approach will be used in this thesis in order to explain disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten everyday life.

⁵² Goodenough, Ward H. 1961. Comment on Cultural Evolution. *Daedalus* 90:521-528.

⁵³ Kroeber, A.L. & C. Kluckhohn. 1963. *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. New York: Vintage Books.

4.3.1 A generative habitus

With the aim of understanding the practical logic of everyday action, and of moving beyond objectivist and subjectivist dichotomies, Bourdieu emphasizes the *interplay* between structures and practices in everyday life (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b). For Bourdieu, the agency–structure divide is a fictitious opposition and he aims to bridge this gap through seeing them in a complementary light, emphasising the primacy of *relations* (Wacquant, 1992:15). His theory of practice is based on “a dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality” (Bourdieu, 1977:72), meaning that agents internalize the objective structures that surround them, and through practice, they produce and reproduce such structures. This, however, does not imply that agents are ‘unconscious’ passive receivers of knowledge who are ruled by structures (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a).

According to Robbins (1998), a functionalist systemic reading of Bourdieu can lead to misconceptions of his philosophy of knowledge where structures are given too much emphasis. In fact, Bourdieu’s “analytical orientation is towards an understanding of *agents* rather than structures” (Robbins, 1998:35, emphasis in original).⁵⁴ Bourdieu himself explains how his doubts related to structuralism were about reintroducing agents, emphasizing that agents are not “automated regulated like clocks” or “puppets controlled by the strings of structure” (Bourdieu, 1990a:9). Rather, he speaks of habitus as an *open* system of dispositions that are acquired through experience. For Bourdieu, habitus brings an active, inventive intention to practice and he emphasizes the *generative capacities* of dispositions, stressing that they are acquired and socially constituted (1990a:13).

What binds agent and structure together is the notion of habitus; an unspoken set of dispositions that help the agent make sense of the world and of familiar or unfamiliar situations. Habitus is defined as “systems of durable, transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1977:72); i.e., as “the result of an organizing action [...] a way of being, a habitual state (especially of the body) and,

⁵⁴ According to Bourdieu, most questions and objections to his work is related to misapprehension or incomprehension (1990:106), often related to a reductionist (realist and substantialist, rather than relational) reading of his analyses (1990:113). Critics tend to base their criticism on one particular book, the *Distinction* (1984), as well as criticizing concepts out of their empirical context. Robbins (1998) also state how misreadings or misunderstandings of Bourdieu’s work in the English-speaking world is connected to the lack of translations, since not all his publications have been translated into English.

in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination” (Bourdieu, 1977:214). Habitus contributes to constituting the field as meaningful and endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one’s energy (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:127). Habitus follows a “*practical logic*, that of the fuzzy, more-or-less, which defines the ordinary relation to the world” (Bourdieu, 1987:96 in Wacquant, 1992:22, italics in original); a practical understanding of practice, also referred to as *practical sense*, a *sense of the game* or a *feel for the game* (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a; Maton, 2008).

To “speak of habitus is to assert that the individual, and even the personal, the subjective, is social, collective” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:126). Since habitus is socially embodied, it perceives its social surroundings immediately as endowed with meaning and interest; it is “at home” in the field it inhabits (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:128). *Interest* is what makes agents partake in the game of the field (Bourdieu, 1990a:87), and it is implied by a person’s positioning in the game, as well as with the trajectory that leads each person to this position, and will thus differ according to whether a person is in a dominant or a dominated position (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:117). Interest is the opposite of disinterestedness, gratuitousness and indifference; it means to be invested in the game, to see it as worth pursuing (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:116), and by the mere fact of playing, players agree that the game is worth pursuing (1992a:98). Interest is a historical construction and can only be investigated empirically (Bourdieu, 1990a:88; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:116-117).

Since habitus is the social embodied (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), the body itself becomes an important point of reference. Bodily *hexis* is the embodied manifestation of dispositions, i.e., “a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*” (Bourdieu, 1977:93-94, italics in original). The principles of embodiment are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, as an “implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as ‘stand up straight’ or ‘don’t hold your knife in your left hand’” (Bourdieu, 1977:94). As will be made apparent, particular ways of talking, being, and acting are implicitly and explicitly expected and emphasised in everyday life in the kindergartens (see particularly part III). In Chapter 6 particularly, I elaborate on how various values and practices are appropriated with the body.

4.3.2 Field/social space

The field is the primary focus of the research operations, and it is through knowledge of the field itself that one is best able to grasp the agent's perspectives on the world and point of view or position in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:107). Each field consists of:

a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations "deposited" within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action (Wacquant, 1992:16).

Simply put; habitus, the unspoken set of dispositions that help agents make sense of the world, can be understood as the framing for social practice, whereas fields can be seen as the arenas where social practice is performed (Wilken, 2008:38-39). Two properties are particularly relevant in order to understand the field:

First, a field is a patterned system of objective forces (much in the manner of a magnetic field), a *relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity* which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter in it." ... "A field is simultaneously a *space of conflict and competition*, the analogy here being with a battlefield, in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it (Wacquant, 1992:17, italics in original).

Talking about the field in such ways, as magnetic and as a battlefield, emphasizes different aspects of practice. The field is magnetic in the sense that particular ways of doing things 'makes sense' and 'feels right' within a particular field, and emphasizing the field as a battlefield underlines how agents are always competing for resources, experiences, and the possibilities that a particular field values; aspects that will be explored in the following chapters. In addition, the field can also be compared to a game, as explained in the following quote:

We can indeed, with caution, compare a field to a game (*jeu*) although, unlike the latter, a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified. Thus we have *stakes (enjeux)* which are for the most part the product of the competition between players. We have *an investment in the game, illusio* [...]: players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief (*doxa*) in the game and its stakes; they grant these a recognition that escapes questioning (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:98, italics in original).

I will also make use of the analogy of game in order to explore how the children partake in practices of discipline and domination in their everyday lives in the kindergartens, both in

situations where children are in tasks of domination, as well as in everyday contexts outside such situations (see Chapter 9).

Each field has its own logic and must be understood in terms of its defining content (the forms of capital of relevance within the particular field), and therefore the struggle for capital in one social field will not be equal to the struggle in another. Defining a field (or a subfield) is a complicated task; its borders are dynamic and the game of the field is fluid and complex (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:104). Furthermore, a field is a field as long as a struggle takes place: only when the dominant have crushed and annulled the resistance and reactions of the dominated and when all movement go exclusively from the top down, does the field cease to exist, because “there is history only as long as people revolt, resist, act” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:102). An analysis in terms of field will always need to be examined empirically and each historical case must be investigated separately.

A field does not have parts or components, but rather subfields, and a subfield “has its own logic, rules and regularities, and each stage in the division of a field (say the field of literary production) entails a genuine qualitative leap (as, for instance, when you move down from the level of the literary field to that of the subfield of novel or theatre)” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:104). The everyday lives in the two kindergarten classes in which I did my fieldwork will be treated as a subfield in this thesis (but dubbed a *field* in the text for the sake of readability); a “kindergarten field,” which is a subfield under the field of education and the larger field of power in contemporary China. Seeing kindergarten life as subfield or a “tiny micro-field,” using it as a focal point of analysis linked to the larger early childhood education field has been done by others, e.g., in the context of Finland (Vuorisalo & Alanen, 2015:95). In this thesis, disciplinarian practices and structures in the kindergarten classes where I did my fieldwork are the focal point. My angle of entrance thus includes and connects to social life in the kindergarten as an institution, but also to contextual understandings of discipline, child-rearing, views of children and childhood, the individual, culture, and history in a country that is going through large-scale-transitions (see Chapter 2, part III, and Chapter 11).

Bourdieu advocates a relational perspective, which is present in both the concepts of habitus and field. Furthermore, habitus and field are also relational in an additional sense; they function “only in relation to one another” (Wacquant, 1992:19). This also includes the concept of capital;

within each social field, agents are positioned and position themselves through struggles for the accumulation and possession of relevant capital.

4.3.3 Capital: force, position and orientation in the game

For Bourdieu, in empirical work when determining the field, one will simultaneously determine what species of capital are active in it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:98-99). Capital only exists and functions in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:101)—it is both “a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures” as well as “the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world” (Bourdieu, 2011:81). Capital (in its objectified or embodied form) takes time to accumulate, and tends to persist in its being (Bourdieu, 2011:81).

Forms of capital can be divided into the following categories; *economic capital* (directly convertible into money, e.g., property rights), *cultural capital* (e.g., embodied, objectified, or institutionalized—more below), and *social capital* (social obligations, ‘connections,’ e.g., title of nobility) (Bourdieu, 2011:82). In addition, there is *symbolic capital*, i.e., the knowledge of and ability to convert some forms of capital into new forms of capital (e.g., honour, reputation), accumulated through the successful use of other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1990b). Cultural capital can be divided into three types: *embodied* (long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; i.e., culture, embodiment, intimately linked to person), *objectified* (cultural goods, such as e.g., pictures, books) and *institutionalized* (e.g., academic qualifications) (Bourdieu, 2011:82-86). Different forms of *embodied cultural capital* are of particular relevance for this thesis. Embodied cultural capital “presupposes a process of *embodiment*, incorporation, which insofar as it implies a labour of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor” (Bourdieu, 2011:83, my emphasis). Based on the empirical material in part III, I will introduce three variants of embodied cultural capital relevant for the everyday disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens (Chapter 9). These forms of capital were constructed during analysis and illustrate what can be considered legitimate knowledge and important values in the field.

In line with the previously mentioned field as game analogy, the concept of capital is explained in the following way:

We can picture each player as having in front of her a pile of tokens of different colors, each color corresponding to a given species of capital she holds, so that her *relative force*

in the game, her *position* in the space of play, and also her *strategic orientation toward the game*, what we call in French her “game,” the moves that she makes, more or less risky or cautious, subversive or conservative, depend both on the total number of tokens and on the composition of the piles of tokens she retains, that is, on the volume and structure of her capital. Two individuals endowed with an equivalent overall capital can differ, in their position as well as in their stances (“position-takings”), in that one holds a lot of economic capital and little cultural capital while the other has little economic capital and large cultural assets (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:99, italics in original).

Capital amounts to the same thing as power (Bourdieu, 2011:82) because *differences* in agents’ compilation and endowment with the forms of capital that are relevant in a particular field is significant for the *possibilities* each player/agent has and uses in ‘the game.’ In Chapter 9, such dynamics are theorized with reference to differences in endowment with the species of capital that are considered particularly relevant for the children in the kindergarten.

4.3.4 A theory of symbolic power

The whole of Bourdieu’s work can be interpreted as a theory of symbolic power, concerned with the specific contribution that forms of symbolic violence makes to the reproduction and transformation of structures of domination (Wacquant, 1992:14-15). For Bourdieu, what makes a field persist, i.e., what makes the subordinate, the dominated, *stay* in their positions as subordinate or dominated, is that “symbolic violence accomplishes itself through an act of cognition and of misrecognition that lies beyond—or beneath—the controls of consciousness and will” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:171-172). Symbolic violence is the “violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity”—not in the sense that the agent “desires” it, but rather that even when social agents are subjected to forms of domination, they contribute to the continued production of practices of domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:167-168). Misrecognition is “recognizing a violence which is wielded precisely inasmuch as one does not perceive it as such” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:168). Children attending kindergarten are also children “attending” Chinese society and the demographic and social group of childhood, and their experiences with asymmetries of power, for example connected to their status as children in relation to adults, is of significance in daily life both inside and outside the kindergarten institution. As emphasised by Bourdieu, “the stabler the objective structures and the more fully they reproduce themselves in the agents’ dispositions, the greater the extent of the field of *doxa*, of that which is taken for granted” (Bourdieu, 1977:165-166). *Doxa* is thus the misrecognising of the arbitrariness on which practice is based; when there is a strong correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles

and understanding which makes the world appear as self-evident and “logical” to agents (Bourdieu, 1977:164). This notion of being and acting in a world that ‘makes sense’ will be explored in the following chapters.

Direct domination (or violence) is accompanied by symbolic (soft, misrecognized) domination or violence. The two forms of violence (direct overt and concealed symbolic) are interconnected, exist in the same social formation and sometimes in the same relationship; therefore, in order for domination to be socially recognized, it must also be misrecognized (Bourdieu, 1990b:126). Personal authority is upheld through practices and actions that strengthen this authority in a practical way through complying with the values recognized by the group (Bourdieu, 1990b:129). These actions are “disguised, transfigured, in a word, euphemized” (misrecognized) because it is the only way relations of domination can be set up, maintained or restored without revealing their true nature, and thus destroy themselves (Bourdieu, 1990b:126). In order to maintain and establish durable domination, dominant agents work “directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination which even then are never entirely certain” (Bourdieu, 1990b:129). This is because dominant agents need the respect of others, need to have created a bond with others; transform capital into symbolic capital, which presupposes a form of labour, time, money and energy (Bourdieu, 1990b:129). Dominating agents’ capital holdings need to be acknowledged, recognized, and misrecognized by others. Teachers and children occupy asymmetric positions in the kindergarten field and the teachers (adults, educated professionals, complex capital holders) have an automatic legitimate authority in the kindergarten field. However, as will be stressed, the teachers also engage in various forms of explicit practices of domination through disciplinarian practices on a daily basis (see part III). Furthermore, as will be demonstrated, the children are also engaged in the production of conditions of domination (see Chapter 9).

Symbolic power is also embedded in speech and the use of language; “linguistic relations are always relations of symbolic power through which relations of force between the speakers and their respective groups are actualized in a transfigured form” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:142). All linguistic exchanges bring into play a “complex and ramifying web of historical power relations between the speaker, endowed with a specific social authority, and an audience, which recognizes this authority to varying degrees, as well as between the groups to which they respectively belong”; and in this exchange, the totality of the structure of power relations is

present (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:142-143). This is particularly so when the linguistic exchange involves agents who occupy asymmetric positions in the distribution of relevant capital in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:145), such as in the relationships between teachers and children (see e.g., Chapter 7), as well as between the children (Chapter 9).

In the following, I turn to the relationship between the individual and society in the Chinese context as it is relevant for how discipline in two Chinese kindergartens is explored in this thesis.

4.4 Individual(ism) and society

This section will introduce the work of Fei Xiaotong; an anthropologist/sociologist doing grounded theory research in China. Using ‘Chinese’ theorizations on research in a Chinese context actualizes notions of theoretical historicity, not in the sense that western ‘imperialist theorizations’ disappear, but through offering alternative and context-specific interpretations, which can open up the empirical material of this thesis. In particular, the *relational* aspects of Fei Xiaotong (1992) concerning social organization and how the individual is connected to society, as well as more recent theorizations of individualism in China (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010; Hansen & Svarverud, 2010; Y. Yan, 2010b) will add perspective in this regard. Not only do these approaches provide a context-specific emphasis on how the *premises* for our understanding of society are contextual; they also influence what discipline can mean in Chinese kindergartens.

4.4.1 A differential mode of association

In 1948, the influential Chinese sociologist and anthropologist Fei Xiaotong published a series of essays about the nature of Chinese society. Xiaotong found that western theories did not adequately conceptualize Chinese society and he introduced a sociology of China to Chinese students based on a contextually relevant epistemology. Inspired by the sociologist Robert Park and the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, he believed that the best theories were those that emerged from an intimate, systematic knowledge of the society in question, and he conducted several ethnographic fieldwork studies of villages in rural China, on which his theories are based (Xiaotong et al., 1992). Xiaotong used two levels of comparison— the rural-urban comparison and the contrast between China and the west, in order to reveal the world his urban readers took for granted, as well as set this known reality up against other known realities (the west). Through rural-urban contrasts, he aimed to communicate that patterns in rural China

provide the foundations of Chinese society, and that urban China stand for a corruption of such patterns or an attempt to move away from them (Xiaotong et al., 1992:16).

Xiaotong's main theory concerns the principles of social organization through which Chinese society can be described and which differs from organizational principles in the West. Using the metaphor of straws collected to form a haystack as a representation of western society, Xiaotong argues that in such societies "individuals produce their society by applying an "organizational mode of association" (*tuantigeju*).

People create groups that have clear boundaries. Membership in these groups is unambiguous; everyone knows who is and who is not a member. And the rights and duties of members are clearly delineated. Such groups are organizations, and they, in turn, shape Western society's social structure. These organizations are the firms in the economy, the bureaucracies in the government, the universities in the educational system, and the clubs in local society. They are everywhere and serve as devices for framing individualism in modern Western societies (Xiaotong et al., 1992:20).

This does not mean that there are no organizations in Chinese rural society (Xiaotong et al., 1992:80-81). When using the word organization, Xiaotong refers to groups with a "continuous organizational pattern" (1992:80), which he contrasts to the Chinese society with a "differential mode of association," where such groups are rather referred to as "social circles." Although various group patterns appear in both contexts, the concepts are chosen because they refer to patterns that have gained predominance in the societies in question (Xiaotong et al., 1992:80-81).

Through using a very different metaphor, i.e., "the ripples flowing out from the splash of a rock thrown into water" (1992:20), Xiaotong argues that Chinese society can be understood through the concept of *chaxugeju*; a "differential mode of association." Through this concept, Xiaotong emphasizes that the patterning of Chinese society is based on the complex concept of *shehui guanxi*, i.e., "non-equivalent, ranked categories of social relationships" (Xiaotong et al., 1992:19). People are connected to each other in overlapping networks, and their social relationships are categorized differently. The four key features of such networks are as follows: firstly, they are discontinuous, meaning that the links are not single or systematic, but networks rather centre on the individual and are differently composed for each person. Instead of emphasising autonomy for the individual in the west, in Chinese society people must be seen

in relation to multiple linkages of self with others (Xiaotong et al., 1992:20-21). Secondly, each link in a person's network is defined in terms of a dyadic social tie, and such interpersonal ties are called *guanxi* (Xiaotong et al., 1992:21-22). Each tie is normatively defined (require prescribed "ritual" behaviour) and strictly personal; specific actions are required to maintain the link, and these are defined as personal obligations, in particular for the subordinate in the dyadic relationship such as the child to the parent, the wife to the husband etc. Thirdly, networks have no explicit boundaries (Xiaotong et al., 1992:22-23); the ties are pre-set and one cannot enter or exit close social ties, but the person must rather attempt to live up to the morality required by each specific tie. Lastly, the moral content of behaviour is situation specific, and ongoing action must be constantly evaluated in connection to the specific relations among the persons involved (Xiaotong et al., 1992:24).

Contrary to many modern interpretations, Xiaotong specifies that Chinese society is not group oriented, but rather that "Chinese society is centred on the individual and is built from networks created from relational ties linking the self with discrete categories of other individuals" (Xiaotong et al., 1992:24). Order, not law, is what rules, and for social order to be upheld, each person must uphold the moral obligations of his/her network ties (Xiaotong et al., 1992:24). Maintaining relationships is a shared responsibility between the person (self-control) and other persons (social control). Social relationships are what define a person and in principle there is no self outside roles and relationships (Xiaotong et al., 1992).

According to Xiaotong, the different types of social organization give rise to different types of morality; i.e., certain norms of social behaviour which people belonging to a society should abide by (Xiaotong et al., 1992:71-72). In order to understand western notions of morality, Xiaotong emphasises that religious concepts from Christianity must be included. He states that God can be seen as the symbol of universal organization based on the notions that: 1) each person is equal before God, and 2) God treats everyone with equal justice. This conceptual thinking establishes the equality among individuals and as such, the relationship between individuals to an organization (such as the state). When speaking of morality in a Chinese context, Xiaotong refers to the *Analects* of Confucius. Morality in Chinese social organization is connected to ethical principles in private personal relationships: filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty and sincerity. No ethical principles transcend specific types of human relationships (as in the West) (Xiaotong et al., 1992:74). There is no universality in Chinese moral standards

(Xiaotong et al., 1992:77); specific ethical principles are rather attached to context, i.e., to the particular links in the particular social relationships between people (Xiaotong et al., 1992:78). This form of organization, i.e., a differential mode of association thus “undermined the possibility that a general rule could be applied to all people” (Xiaotong et al., 1992:106). Modern laws, Xiaotong states, pose problems because they presume individual equality (1992:106).

This theoretical approach has relevance for how disciplinarian practices are approached in the Chinese kindergartens in this study for several reasons. I will explore how such an understanding resonates because a relational aspect is important for children’s positioning in social space, and because moral understanding and obligation is related both to the betterment of the individual and the group. Finally, the role of evaluation in daily settings in order to maintain social harmony will be explored. Relationality thus connects with notions of self-control, social control, hierarchy, order and moral understanding: significant aspects of how disciplinarian practices are interpreted and understood in this thesis.

4.4.2 Chinese individualism

There has been a resurfacing of academic interest in the concept of individualism in research on China in recent years (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010). Processes of individualization are argued to occur in China as part of the modernization processes that the country is going through, and these processes are connected to changing perceptions of the individual, as well as to elevated expectations connected to individual freedom, choice and individuality (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010; Y. Yan, 2010a, 2010b).

In order to avoid ethnocentric western (European) frames of reference for the understanding of individualism, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2010) use a comparative perspective including countries outside Europe in order to explore different varieties of individualization. The authors stress that different forms of individualization arise and that this process is rooted in individualization itself; *not* as a variant of the European type, but arising of itself in different places. Modernization and individualization are understood as parallel processes, meaning that the European path of individualization is not the original, true, authentic one—but rather one among many. Modernity and individualization are seen as varieties in three dimensions:

economic production and reproduction, politics, and sociocultural integration (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010:xv-xvi).

The individualization process in China is context-specific and neither embedded in democracy or welfare state thinking, nor institutionally anchored in a system of basic rights, such as in (some) 'Western' countries (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010:xvii). The European 'universalist logic' of individualization is a historically and culturally particular form of individualization, which cannot be 'translated' into the Chinese context. In both the European and the Chinese context, there is in principle a close connection between individualization and the state, but not of the same form (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2010:xvii). In fact, individualism in China has never been understood as emancipating, but instead introduced as an instrument to save the nation and build a strong nation state (Y. Yan, 2010b:29).

According to Yan, in Chinese individualism, individual rights are understood as earned, rather than inalienable rights given at birth; identity is constructed in relation to a collectivity (albeit a *chosen* collectivity to a larger degree) and "the individual-state relationship remains the central axis in the changing structure of social relations" (Y. Yan, 2010b:31): "[...] the rising individual in rural China should be understood more as a self-protective reaction to systematic discrimination by state socialism than as a development inspired by ideas of autonomy and freedom" (Y. Yan, 2010b:34).

Sociologist Børge Bakken explores the strong connection between discipline, human improvement, social control and the educational system in China in his dissertation *The Exemplary Society* (1994). Based on fieldwork in Beijing in 1991, Bakken explored Chinese society in the midst of reform and modernization, order and stability. Using the phrase of "exemplary society" strongly linked to "exemplary norms," Bakken explains Chinese society as being both educative and disciplinary. Bakken states that in China, there is a particular way of individualizing the populace, a way that is closely connected to evaluation and differentiation (Bakken, 1994). "It is a well-established principle in China that "individualization (*getihua*) and socialization (*shehuihua*) should be in balance," and the concept of the individual "is there for improvement and disciplining" (Bakken, 1994:205). Thus, evaluation is linked to the improving of "human quality;" through linking people's behaviour closer to the exemplary

norm is to lift the individual “small self” to the level of the collective “great self” that is society (1994:195).

According to Bakken, evaluation has internal and external yardsticks; the internal yardstick (*neizai chidu*) lies in conscience (*liangxin*) and the external yardstick (*waizai chidu*) lies in social intelligence, social opinion, and objective standards of society. Self-evaluation, the internal yardstick, is considered the best and most efficient form of evaluation (Bakken, 1994:196). Evaluation is an ever-present and all-round process that can be linked to concepts of “other” and “outer,” which are of strong importance in the Chinese context (Bakken, 1994:197). Individualization and individual differentiation are thus important parts of processes of evaluation and criticism; such processes create a form of individuality within the collective (Bakken, 1994:204-205). As will be explored in the following chapters (particularly Chapter 8, but also Chapters 9 and 10), evaluation and differentiation were significant aspects of everyday disciplinarian practice in the kindergartens.

4.5 Summary Chapter 4

This chapter has discussed theoretical historicity, the concept of culture, Bourdieu’s theory of practice and contextually relevant theory on the relation between individual and society in the Chinese context. The notion of *relationality* is considered a binding link between the different theoretical approaches. Through the use of Bourdieu’s conceptual tools *field*, *habitus*, and *capital*, a relational understanding of social practice was developed. Fei Xiaotong’s theorization of ‘a differential mode of association’ underlines how individuals are connected to others through relational *differential* ties, and order, moral obligation, self-control, and social control are important aspects of such an understanding. Finally, recent research on individualism in China underlines a contextual and specific form of individualism, expressing changing perceptions of the individual, but underlining how identity is constructed in relation to the building of a strong nation state.

5 Method and ethics: reflections and considerations

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) I am sitting by one of the tables and a girl comes over to me. She stands right in front of me, stares and smiles a little. I say hello, she says hello. I try to talk to her in Chinese. I ask if she likes cats (*ni xihuan mao ma*) and she nods. I say “*Wo yao yi ge mao, ta jiao Raptus*” (I have a cat, his name is Raptus). She says nothing and just stares at me. Teacher *Huang*⁵⁵ comes over and asks her about our conversation and she says “*Ting bu dong*” (I don’t understand).⁵⁶

The unexpected nature of ethnographic fieldwork is what makes this form of qualitative research so appealing and exciting, and simultaneously so psychologically and physically demanding. Since ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation is context based, it is impossible to predict which challenges or situations you will face before entering the field (Fangen, 2011). Being flexible and open is a useful methodical starting point in order to have a good fieldwork experience, in particular when doing fieldwork in a culture and country not previously experienced, such as in this project. Fieldwork can be surprising, shocking, entertaining, tiring and challenging, and my experiences from staying in two urban Chinese kindergartens filled all these categories.

The field note excerpt above clearly illustrates some challenges connected to communication and understanding during the fieldwork process. Such matters will be dealt with in this chapter, both on methodical, methodological, and ethical levels. Advocating transparency, reflexivity, cautiousness, and patience as well as openly discussing challenging aspects of the project, are some measures made in this regard. This chapter is divided into two main parts; 1) considerations and discussions related to method and methodology and 2) ethical reflections and considerations. The first part will engage in discussions regarding the methodical approach and doing long-term ethnographic fieldwork using participant observation and interviews when researching everyday life and disciplinarian practices in kindergartens. I also address some challenges of fieldwork; challenges related to language and working with an interpreter

⁵⁵ All individuals referred to in empirical examples in this thesis are made anonymous, and names are highlighted in italics. Teachers are dubbed with the honorific title ‘teacher’ followed by their family name. In Chinese the family name is placed prior to the honorific title (X laoshi, meaning teacher or ‘old master’), whereas in this thesis, I write the honorific title first, for the sake of readability. Teachers are therefore referred to as: Teacher *Liu*, teacher *Zhou*, teacher *Wu* and teacher *Huang*. Children are referred to with pseudonyms of common Chinese given names. All names have been selected from internet sources naming the most common Chinese family names (for teachers) and given names (for children). I have conferred with my interpreter to ensure that the names are considered appropriate.

⁵⁶ I had been one week in this kindergarten when this episode took place, but I had been several months in the field.

(Borchgrevink, 2003), roles and relationships in the fieldwork setting, as well as how such matters played out in interview situations. Furthermore, I will describe the two kindergartens where I did fieldwork, discuss aspects such as field access, gatekeepers, the choice of field sites, and other issues related to the practical execution of fieldwork. A section on interpreting data will elaborate on the writing up process and the process of analysis. Finally, some uncomfortable sides of fieldwork will be in focus, i.e., situations that were difficult to observe, which leads me over to the second part of the chapter, i.e., ethical reflections. Issues of consent and a note on confidentiality and anonymity will make out the final parts of this chapter.

5.1 Researching children and childhood

The methodical approach in this thesis is connected to its overall aim, which is to explore everyday disciplinarian practices in the context where they take place, in this case two Chinese kindergartens. Furthermore, children are informants in their own right alongside adults, meaning that no particular methodical precautions have been made (Qvortrup et al., 2011b). Rather, methods such as ethnographic fieldwork with participant observation (Bernard, 2006; Fangen, 2011) and qualitative research interviews (Kvale, 1996) have been used with both children and teachers in order to explore how they make sense of and relate to disciplinarian practices. Finally, a section on reflexivity will explore the researcher's presence in the fieldwork context.

5.1.1 Child informants and questions of method(ology)

Ethnographic fieldwork has been considered an appropriate method when doing research with children, including in institutional settings such as kindergartens (Allison James, 2007a; Madsen, 2004; Nilsen, 2000a; Prout & James, 1990; Solberg, 1996). Since ethnography is a contextually based model, the research is driven by encounters between researcher and informants, and in this way it is believed to open up for 'grasping' children's perspectives on their own premises (Allison James et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1990). Seeing children as social actors in the fieldwork setting sets the ground for a potentially fruitful research encounter (without claiming that the method *assures* a good research outcome) because the child's status as an informant in principle does not differ from that of an adult. Their perspectives and opinions are taken seriously within the context in which they are expressed. Whether children's perspectives and opinions are *grasped* or *understood* by the researcher and in line with the informant's intention or understanding is a different discussion. The point made here is that the

ethnographic approach is in line with the theoretical premises on which childhood studies are based (see Chapter 3).

In childhood studies, discussions regarding what it entails to have child informants and whether particular methods should be used to capture ‘children’s voices’ have been particularly potent. Whereas some advocate the need to use participatory methods, others have questioned the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which participatory methods are based, such as the repositioning of children from subjects to participants (or researchers) in a research setting (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). The insistence of having children as co-researchers has also raised questions of the intention and purpose of research (Allison James, 2007b:262), questioning the belief that having children as informants in itself is a guarantee that what is presented are children’s perspectives and “authentic” voices (Allison James, 2007b:264). Seeing that my interest is to learn about everyday life and everyday practices, introducing participatory methods could potentially “create” new practices or structures that would contradict my goal. In addition, such methods would present a disturbance to the strongly regulated and situated daily schedule (see Chapter 6), as well as to relations of power and control. My approach to the field was rather one of adaptation and flexibility. That being said, ethnographic research depends on the presence of informants and their willingness to share their thoughts and actions (although unwillingness can also be valuable for the understanding of the empirical setting), and in such an approach, informants are most definitely participants in research (see section on the question of consent in 5.8.2). In this thesis, children are studied as people or human beings, rather than as ‘another species’ requiring particular (child-specific) methods and theories (Qvortrup et al., 2011a), and this is also reflected in the theoretical choices made (see Chapters 3 and 4). However, the power asymmetry in the research encounter and the interview situation needs emphasis, and importance lies in reflecting upon this asymmetry, trying to understand it and the influence it brings on the research situation.

5.1.2 Reflexivity in (and out of) the field

Reflexivity is a process of critical interpretation and reflection, attempting to take into consideration the range of factors that may influence the researcher’s understanding of particular research topics and settings, and such processes should take place on several levels throughout the research process. As Alvesson and Sköldböck state, reflection is about “interpreting one’s own interpretations, looking at one’s own perspective from other

perspectives, and turning a self-critical eye onto one's own authority as interpreter and author" (2000:vii). According to the authors, reflective research contains two basic characteristics: *careful interpretation* towards theoretical assumptions, the power of language and the researchers pre-understandings, and *reflection* ("interpretation of interpretation") where attention is directed towards the research person, the research community, the intellectual and cultural traditions and the problematic nature of language and representation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:5-6). I have attempted to approach such matters through discussions on theoretical reflexivity (Chapter 4), and through explaining how I approach research on children and childhood in Chapters 1 and 3 (see also 5.5.2 for a more detailed description of the process of analysis, and 5.8 on ethical reflections). In the following, I turn the attention towards my own background, seeing that this may be relevant for understanding my approach to the topic and to the field. In addition, as will be emphasised below, my appearance presented an anomaly for both children and adults in the field setting and affected everyday life in ways that would have been different, had another person been in my place.

Processes of reflexivity are necessary because researchers do not enter the field as *tabula rasa* investigators and also because their presence influences the informants and the research context. Ethnographic researchers are part of the social world they study, and they are also influenced by their socio-historical position, values, and interests this position gives them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). It is not possible to escape the social world to study it, but this is not necessary either; rather one must realize that research is an active process, acknowledge that the researcher is the main research instrument and that reflexivity is a fundamental part of such processes (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). A continuous challenging and questioning of the ideas and practices that surround researchers' own ideas and practices, as well as turning an attentive eye towards how empirical data is coloured by, and colours, these ideas and practices, is beneficial. Some would claim that such processes are particularly relevant in childhood research (perhaps especially if doing research within one's own culture) because most people have some sort of a relationship with children and opinions about childhood, whether it is their own childhood, the neighbour's children's childhood, or the childhood offered in society or in institutional settings (Gulløv & Højlund, 2006:52-53).

Being a young Norwegian woman, born and raised in a country with a relatively small population and with less economic stratification than in many of the world's countries; coming

from a society with a fairly high level of gender equality and a strong concern with a particular form of well-being of children; a society that is also firmly immersed in rights discourses, democratic values, and understandings of individual autonomy and self-determination, I entered the field from a certain point of view. Such factors partake in shaping my approach into the field, and consequently, inform my physical conduct, way of thinking, and moral and ethical stance in both conscious and ‘unconscious’ ways. Using the terminology of Bourdieu, when I enter the fieldwork setting, I also move between fields that operate in different and equally distinct ways; they have different ‘logics’ and different ‘ways of doing things.’ In some ways, the situation can be conceptualized as *hysteresis* (Bourdieu, 1977:78; Hardy, 2008); i.e., the social space of fieldwork (two distinct Chinese kindergartens daily lives) and my mental and corporal understanding and worldview (*habitus*) are not closely intertwined: I am not “a fish in water” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:127). I had never been to China or anywhere else in Asia prior to fieldwork and I had no first-hand experiences or understanding of what I should do or how I should react in different situations. This ‘mismatch’ also explains why I did not immediately make sense of what was going on and why I became curious of everyday practices that are largely taken for granted by the children and teachers in the kindergartens because they engage in such practices on a daily basis. It may also explain why I interpret what I see as discipline and disciplinarian practices, rather than something else.

My approach to the field is also coloured by my familiarity with Norwegian kindergartens, childhoods and practices of control and regulation in related Norwegian contexts. Despite not engaging in a comparative kindergarten study and emphasising on approaching the field setting with an open mind, previous experiences shaped what I saw in Chinese kindergartens. I might pay attention to particular forms of practice, such as disciplinarian practices, because they stand out in some way. Thus, the experiences I have had in my personal life, my cultural background, my academic background, experiences from previous fieldwork settings as well as from travelling or living in different countries and continents, shaped what I saw and how I interpreted what I saw. Experiences in the fieldwork setting and my understanding of how others view and understand me, also adds to such experiences.

My physical appearance was also a relevant aspect in the fieldwork setting—I looked and behaved different from everyone else (children, teachers, and interpreters). Not only was I a

young looking white student from a faraway land who could not speak Chinese with conviction; I was also a pale redhead with big eyes, being told at one point that I somewhat resembled a Japanese cartoon manga figure. When I, at the end of my stay in the second kindergarten, became pregnant, this posed another factor of excitement for the children and some of the teachers, who were curious to talk about this new Chinese dragon baby⁵⁷. The children asked questions regarding my lack of language skills and my different physical appearance both during fieldwork and in the interview setting. The following sections will elaborate on related issues: the method of long-term ethnographic fieldwork and participant observation, as well as some of the benefits and challenges of working with an interpreter, both connected to communication, cultural understanding and later also, to relationships in the field.

5.2 Long-term ethnographic fieldwork

The idea of field sites as isolated units for the anthropologist to live and work among natives in order to get a holistic view of their daily and worldly experiences is long overdue; the world consists of webs of integrated relationships, ideas, and influences, and cultural phenomena must be understood within such extended webs of meaning and practice. Adaptation, reflexivity, and openness are important ingredients in a fieldwork context. As stressed however, preconceived ideas and the researcher's cultural background are inevitable parts of the fieldwork process (see 4.1 and 5.1.2). The fieldwork setting and informants furthermore partake in shaping the process of understanding the field.

Long-term fieldwork can be quite draining, and can feel like little is happening and that one is not doing enough. Since there is no concrete 'to-do'-list (or 'recipe for success') in fieldwork, and knowing that you are in the field for a limited time and may not return after the fieldwork is done, you may feel overwhelmed. Feeling inadequate can be a part of the fieldwork experience, and in my case this was related to my lack of Chinese language skills⁵⁸ (see Section 5.2.2) and a general desire for more contextual knowledge, even if I felt that I was doing a

⁵⁷ The baby was to be born in the Chinese year of the dragon, which was considered very fortunate by my informants.

⁵⁸ Apart from reading literature on Chinese childhoods, kindergartens, history, and culture, the preparations for the fieldwork was largely about building up my language competence. I took classes in Chinese language and culture at the University of Bergen the spring of 2011. I memorized around 400 signs and carried flashcards with me everywhere I went, only to realize that you need to know at least 2500 signs in order to read a Chinese newspaper. This language course did however provide me with some basic knowledge and understanding, which was very helpful in the fieldwork context. In the initial periods of fieldwork, I tried to learn as much Mandarin Chinese as possible through cctv.com (Chinese internet and TV channel, <http://english.cntv.cn/learnchinese/>) public language courses. Had I had more money, I would have taken private classes as well.

thorough job. On a daily basis, after staying in the kindergarten, I wrote field notes. This took hours, since I wanted to be as detailed and accurate as I possibly could. The days my interpreter was with me the writing up process could be particularly long since my notes from the field were more detailed, containing large amounts of verbal quotes.

5.2.1 Participant observation in Chinese kindergartens

Participant observation is the foundation of anthropological fieldwork and revolves around participating in informants' everyday lives and everyday activities in order to understand why people act the way they do—i.e., understanding the contextual meaning behind people's actions and activities. Participant observation involves immersing yourself in a culture, as well as removing yourself every day from this immersion, with the intention to intellectualize what you have seen and heard; in such ways participant observation is a craft, something that takes time and practice (Bernard, 2006).

Participant observation is a phrase that may appear oxymoronic in that it consists of two seemingly incompatible words (participation and observation). These words should not be understood as representing two activities that are similarly and continuously emphasized: rather, the degree and emphasis may change throughout the fieldwork and context is a determining factor in this regard. One must find good ways to combine the two; i.e., finding a balance between the extreme positions of participation ('going native') and observation (Fangen, 2011). Usually participant observation does not imply that you should behave in the same way as those you are studying because as a researcher you have a particular status in fieldwork (Fangen, 2011). Rather, it is more about being part of the social interaction by communicating with the participants, being flexible and adapting to the situation without being a disturbance (Fangen, 2011).

My role in the field was that of a participating observer; an observing outsider who participated in some aspects of the children's lives in the kindergarten (Bernard, 2006:314). Children's everyday lives in the kindergarten, class routines and schedules, lessons and activities, classroom size, numbers and groups of children, were some of the factors that contributed to this outcome. It was already challenging for the teachers in kindergarten 1 to have two outsiders (my interpreter and me) in the classroom, and I did not want to complicate their lives further by disturbing their strict everyday schedule. I was present in the class every day, but I did not actively partake in most of the activities the children partook in, such as lessons, lunch, snack

etc.,⁵⁹ but rather sat on “my chair” observing. I did, however, partake in games and activities when the children had ‘free time’ or ‘individual activities’ (folding paper, math games, poem games, board games, reading etc.), as long as there were enough seats for everyone.⁶⁰

Cultural relativism is a methodological starting point aiming to understand cultural practice on ‘its own premises.’ This is an important principle in anthropological research, used in order to *avoid* an ethnocentric approach to cultural understanding; i.e., not using the researcher’s own ethnos (people/group) as a template of understanding, often leading to hierarchical comparisons of practice. The aim is rather to open up for contextual understanding, rather than classify phenomena into preconceived categories. This methodical approach must not be confused with moral relativism (Hess, 1997:38); the question of moral judgment is not at centre stage. To the contrary, the aim is for the researcher to *prevent* his or her own values from colouring his or her understanding, trying to grasp cultural phenomena the way they are understood and lived by informants. Such a methodical stance is particularly useful when entering the fieldwork setting, but also demands theoretical awareness and reflexivity throughout the research process (see Chapter 4).

The fieldwork experience and observing and (to some degree) partaking in the daily routines and everyday life of children attending these two Chinese urban kindergartens (particularly kindergarten 1) had some emotional and corporal ‘implications’ for me as well. As I will elaborate on below, some episodes and situations were difficult to observe (see 5.7). However, I also experienced other forms of embodied experiences, such as in how I would sit straight on my little chair in the kindergarten if the teachers were yelling a lot, or avoid eye contact with the teachers, particularly in situations where explicit disciplinarian action took place. Another aspect was that the fieldwork experience became so all-encompassing that emotions and

⁵⁹ Initially, I asked to eat lunch with the children in the classroom. I soon realized that this was very unpractical and inconvenient, and that it complicated the everyday routines and classroom logistics for the teachers. After some initial misunderstandings (and some days where ‘teacher’ food was brought up especially for me and my interpreter to consume in a separate room used as a locker room), we ended up having lunch with the teachers and staff in the canteen downstairs. I paid for the food for myself and my interpreter, so that my presence would not be a financial burden.

⁶⁰ During morning play in kindergarten 1, the teachers had decided that only a certain amount of children could partake in each activity, which was marked by the number of chairs around each table. If I occupied one of these chairs, that meant that children could not sit down and play there. Since the children had limited time for play each day, I tried to avoid occupying a seat if this prevented children from playing; other times I would keep playing, for example if I was in the middle of a board game and I got the sense that leaving would be negative for the others.

insights could only appear at a later time. It was for example not until I had spent some time in kindergarten 2 in the spring semester that I realized how rough the autumn semester had been for me in the first kindergarten.⁶¹

According to Bernard (2006:342), participant observation contains elements of deception and impression management. He argues that this must be acknowledged, because only then can anthropologists hope to conduct ethically sound research. When a researcher is in a fieldwork context, the researcher will be there with a particular agenda. In addition, since the researcher is reliant upon the goodwill and cooperation of informants in order to get closer to them and learn more about their lives, she will emphasize on being on good terms with informants. In this project, this could on the one side imply not expressing dismay about the way children were spoken to or disciplined, which also connected to the methodical starting point of cultural relativism and a belief that interfering would be an expression of ethnocentric normative attitudes towards how children should be treated. This would not only potentially jeopardize my presence and acceptance in the fieldwork setting, but also go against my understanding of appropriate field relations. On the other side, impression management and deception could imply something as basic as putting on an interested and friendly face, in circumstances when I was exhausted and would rather go home and sleep.

5.2.2 Working with an interpreter

Making use of interpreters is far from marginal in anthropological practice, but little attention has been directed to such practices;⁶² a lack of attention which has been explained as the need for the anthropologist to establish authority, or to the position of fieldwork in the discipline of anthropology (2006; Borchgrevink, 2003). Having good language skills is highly valuable in a research setting, since this ability opens up

⁶¹ The stresses of the initial phases of fieldwork also became visible through a series of nightmares I had in the beginning of my stay. These nightmares were often a mix between then recent images from Utøya in Norway (the disastrous event that took place on July 22nd 2011 when a man shot and killed 69 children and young people attending a youth camp for the Norwegian labour party) and episodes from Chinese kindergartens that I had read about in Chinese newspapers. Recent years had seen a series of kindergarten attacks by people suffering from mental illness, and also after my arrival, on the 28th of August 2011, an employee at a Shanghai daycare centre attacked toddlers with a knife.

⁶² Borchgrevink (2003) reviewed a selection of 20 anthropological English-language monographs (published between 1998-2002), involving research in a language setting other than the researcher's own, and found that few dealt with the topic at length, often only with mention to field assistants or language proficiency in passing.

whole new realms of information: statements that are not shaped as direct responses to the anthropologist's questions; the way some aspects are made explicit and others are taken for granted or politely passed over in silence; the use of different styles of speech to acknowledge social hierarchies; and so on (Borchgrevink, 2003:107)⁶³.

There is no doubt that my fieldwork experience would have been different and that I would probably have had a closer connection with informants, had I been proficient in the Chinese language. However, the situation was that Chinese language and culture was new ground for me before the beginning of the project, and I therefore depended on the use of an interpreter.

Working with an interpreter can have an impact on both access to information, the communication process, translation itself and effects on the anthropologist and the fieldwork process (Borchgrevink, 2003). Adding a third person to the research encounter means that information must pass through another link, and this can have several consequences; communication takes more time, language nuances may disappear, misunderstandings may appear, and there may be less direct contact between informant and researcher. On the other side, depending on the context and the participants in the research encounter (informants, interpreter and researcher), this relationship can also be valuable in terms of understanding (or correct misunderstandings), communication and in the interpretation and explanation of the cultural context and situations that appear, which otherwise might have been off-limits to the researcher. 'The interpreter effect' can thus work both ways; i.e., it can both limit and open up access to information (Borchgrevink, 2003:109). A classic article on the use of interpreters, *Behind many masks* (Berreman, 1962), underlines the strong influence an interpreter can have on access to data, on the fieldwork experience as well as the whole research process. Due to illness, Berreman was in need of a new interpreter after some time in the field, and through this change he experienced how various interpreters limited or enabled access to various social groups and settings in the highly stratified Himalayan village in which he did fieldwork. Although I did not experience such drastic differences in access with my interpreters, having a second interpreter reminded me of the contextual and subjective nature of translation, and how individuals performing this task are present in the language and interpretation themselves. Both interpreters had a Chinese background and similar academic backgrounds, but they came from different regions and had different personalities, interests, and language skills. My first interpreter was not from Shanghai and although she had lived, studied, and worked in this city

⁶³ My main interpreter also expressed to me that she wished I could hear her speak Chinese because it was such a poetic and beautiful language, enabling her to express herself in more complex ways than she could in English.

for several years, she was in some ways also an outsider. This could have affected her ability to see and understand the self-evident aspects of everyday practice, and tell me about such matters, also when I did not ask about them. Such factors influence both communication and the act of translation, both in the relation between me and the interpreter, as well as the relation between her/us and informants (teachers and children), particularly since we were communicating in English, a language which none of us held as our mother tongue.

Although I had two interpreters during my fieldwork, I am mostly referring to the first one in this thesis. She stayed with me in both kindergartens, whereas the second interpreter was only with me on a few occasions in kindergarten 2. My interpreter was of immense help for me throughout my fieldwork, and her role far exceeded direct translation work.⁶⁴ In addition to talking about the social significance of practices and situations in the fieldwork context, I would receive emails from her with more detailed information about different social and cultural phenomena we had talked about or experienced in the classroom, as well as classical texts and corrected translations. As time passed we developed a good relationship. I had an interpreter with me two days a week (out of five days) in kindergarten 1, and two days a week (out of four days) in kindergarten 2.

Both interpreters were preschool education students in their 20s, connected to the university, which enabled access to the fieldwork locations (more below). My main interpreter had been involved in different types of jobs with children. She was also curious about cultural questions and expressed that being my interpreter and translator was exciting for this reason as well. She was very helpful and friendly, and the children seemed to connect with her easily.

My interpreter followed me wherever I went in the kindergarten setting, and would sit next to me in the classroom for on-going translation. When she was with me, I emphasised getting a good understanding of dialogue and the words used by informants. Knowing that verbal communication was limited when I was there on my own, I wanted to get a good understanding of how the teachers and the children talked to and with each other. In addition, I wanted the

⁶⁴ My interpreter has translated all documents given to informants, such as three sorts of consent forms (for teachers, parents and children), research information (provided for the principal in kindergarten 2, upon request), as well as transcribing all interviews (she was the translator in these interviews), three with teachers and 18 with children. The first child interview was transcribed from audio into Chinese characters, pinyin and English. As this was severely time consuming, the remaining interviews were transcribed into Chinese characters and English.

communication with the children to not be too complicated and soon realized that constant translation between her and me and the children could destroy the interplay and flow of opinions and information, particularly since large parts of the day were organized in ways that did not allow for long conversations. Therefore, at times I would ask her to initiate a specific topic or ask a question and talk with the children and later (or if suitable, during the conversation) translate what they had talked about, to me. Also, at times the children would approach her and ask her questions about herself, me or other things, and she would sometimes respond directly and tell me afterwards. My interpreter would also share with me her thoughts on the timing or appropriateness of particular topics or questions, if she felt that they would affect the situation in notable ways. This did not necessarily mean that I would avoid asking such questions (although sometimes it did), but that I could adjust my timing for asking and also understand my informants' reactions a little better. Finally, having an interpreter might also facilitate the role of the researcher as a novice and a person unfamiliar with cultural and linguistic codes in the eyes of informants; the multitude and types of questions asked by the researcher might be more easily accepted as legitimate questions.

One challenging aspect of communication was that sometimes people would say yes to my questions without understanding what I asked. I therefore had to be extra critical to information I got and double-check information several times with different people, so that I would get a clearer understanding of the phenomenon (Borchgrevink, 2003). Since I was able to spend such a long time in the field, I had a lot of time to 'discover' potential misunderstandings. The lack of language competence sometimes made me self-conscious, in particular about the lack of control about what was said about me to the children. In the following excerpt from my field diary, this is illustrated:

I am unsure if it is a good idea to smile a lot to the children and make eye contact with them intentionally, especially when teacher *Liu* is the teacher in the afternoons and I am without an interpreter. I don't know what she is saying, and I don't want the children to think that I agree with her, if she is saying something I disagree with, or to associate me with such thoughts.

Although strongly significant, language skill is not the only factor that determines the quality of fieldwork, and communication can take place in many ways (Borchgrevink, 2003). Since I was fortunate to stay for a longer period of time in the kindergartens, the children and I had some time to get to know each other and we were able to communicate in a variety of ways.

5.3 Roles and relationships in the field

Ethnographic fieldwork contexts vary greatly and the relationships the researcher can build with informants will vary according to context (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). Some aspects of such relationships will be discussed in order to clarify the premises upon which data production took place. This section will discuss how I aimed to present myself in the field, my relationships with the children and the teachers, as well as the significance of the notebook in the fieldwork context, as it became an important medium of communication and social interaction between the children and me.

5.3.1 Relationships with the children

Hierarchy, social standing or social familiarity in Chinese society is expressed in various ways through addressing closeness and distance between people, and various labels were used in the kindergartens. The teachers would call the children by their first name, full name, their nickname, or use the general term ‘little friend’ (*xiao pengyou*)⁶⁵ which is a common way to address pre-schoolers in China. Other terms frequently used were ‘little brother’ (*didi*) and ‘little sister’ (*meimei*). According to my interpreter, addressing children as little brother and sister shows a form of friendliness, communicates that you love the child, which would be considered positive by the child’s family. Sometimes people will call children from the ages 0 to 4-5 (and even 8-9) *baobao*, meaning baby, or sweetie, sweetheart. In addition, the teachers might address the children saying ‘you,’ especially when praising or disciplining. Finally, sometimes the teachers in kindergarten 2 called the children by their number (e.g., *Number 16 to 20, go to the bathroom and drink water/have snack*).

The children call the teacher *X laoshi* (‘family name’ teacher). In kindergarten 1, both children and teachers call the assistants⁶⁶ ‘aunt’ (*ayi*) which is a common way to address an adult woman. In kindergarten 2 however, all adults working with the children in the classroom were addressed as teachers (which surprised my translator⁶⁷). Several of the children in kindergarten

⁶⁵ In kindergarten 1, the teachers would sometimes say ‘little brother friend’ or ‘little sister friend’ when addressing the children.

⁶⁶ During interviews with the children in kindergarten 1, some children talked about assistants as ‘big Mama/Mommy’ (*da mama*, 大妈妈), whereas aunts (*ayi*, 阿姨) are those cooking the meal (not entering the classroom). During interviews, a child expressed the difference between teachers and assistants the following way: “Teachers teach things, but big Mommy is old, she cannot teach us. So then, she is different from teacher.”

⁶⁷ When the principal said that we would also be called teacher, my interpreter said that she did not have to do that (this courtesy) because she had not finished her degree yet. For the principal however, this was a principle of inclusion.

I called my interpreter *sister*. The children in kindergarten 2 mostly addressed her by her English name accompanied by the designation teacher, as she and the teachers introduced her to the children using this name. The children call the guard at the gate *grandfather*.

Having a stranger sit in the classroom and stay with them day in and day out was a new experience for the children in kindergarten 1, and when that outsider in addition was a foreigner, it seemed challenging for them to find an appropriate form of classification. Although the teachers and some of the children continuously addressed me as ‘teacher Ida,’ many of the children just called me Ida. Regardless of the teachers insistence to address me as a teacher, the children seemed to think after a while that I was not a teacher, at least not the kind of teacher they knew, as I would not interfere, punish, or tell on them in situations where teacher/adult interference would be expected. This was also possibly linked to my inability to speak Chinese. In the beginning, I expressed my thoughts concerning my intended role and positioning in the kindergarten. I talked with both my interpreter and the teachers that I wanted the children to perceive me as a different kind of adult⁶⁸, as someone who was there to learn about them through being with them and talking with them. After a few weeks in the first kindergarten however, I learned that the teachers had made use of my presence for disciplinarian purposes, telling the children that I was there to make sure they behaved. This may not have been understood as contradictory by the teachers. In addition, I might have explained my intended role in an unclear way, or perhaps the particularly methodological understanding of this role was too abstract or culturally specific for its practical implementation. However, the way I was presented and included as a controller of practice became a good illustration of the importance of disciplinary action in the kindergartens. The children would in any case have time to realize that this was not the case, even if this message might have affected my relationship with the children in the beginning.

Sometimes I would get my questions across and receive answers from the children, but other times the children would have no idea what I was trying to get across, and would laugh at my

⁶⁸ I had finished a course in childhood research methodology a few months prior to departure and was a little hung up on the idea of presenting myself as an atypical adult (Corsaro 2003:8) or ‘different adult’ (*annerledes voksne*) (Nilsen 2000:111). In practice, this ‘idea’ was not necessary to push, as I was different in many aspects such as in appearance, behaviour, and dress (I usually wore unimpressive blank clothes in the field, as opposed to other teacher who dressed up on a regular basis, particularly in the first kindergarten).

effort. However, sometimes my Chinese skills were successful (as opposed to the quote introducing this chapter):

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Xiaoyan* shows me with body movement and sounds that they will eat (eating movements with mouth) and sleep (hands under head). I say that I will also eat, in Chinese (*wo ye chi fan*). *Xiaoyan* seemed to be quite surprised that I could pull off a sentence like that, because she started shouting for the teacher and when she got her attention, she told her what I had said.

At another occasion, a child approached my translator to ask if I liked drawing. When I answered her directly “Wo xihuan hen hao” (I like it very much), she shouted “I understand her!” to my translator, seemingly pleased about the situation.

My lack of verbal competence was evident, but I connected with the children in other ways; through drawing and writing in my notebook (see below), through humour and making funny faces, and through eye contact, facial expressions, and body language.⁶⁹ The children’s acceptance of me was visible in their communication with me and in the way I was included in everyday settings. The children would come over to my chair and talk, crowd around me (and my interpreter, when she was there) asking to write in my notebook, including me in their games (board games, let me borrow their collectors cards, share toys with me), or simply stroke my back a little when moving past me.

Being part of the class on an everyday basis, I was also included in some of the everyday routines. In kindergarten 2, the children would for example wait for me to exit before closing the door behind us. I had my own place and chair in kindergarten 1, sitting by the door behind one of the four lines. In kindergarten 2, I sat behind the class in the corner of the room (tables and chairs for snack-time). In both kindergartens I thus sat on a little chair, looking towards the teachers from the same angle as the children, but since the children sat in a horseshoe shape (see Section 6.1.2), I could see most of the children’s faces, reactions, and expressions. With time I became a predictable and expected element in the everyday life in the classroom, and the children would ask where we were or where we had been, if we did not come to the class.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ We would squint, make fish faces or do tricks with our hands. The children would also explain to me what they were doing; for example, when nap-time was getting closer, some children would look at me, point at themselves and make a “sleep sign”: head to the side, hands together under cheek, eyes closed.

⁷⁰ This was also underlined when some preschool education students entered kindergarten 1 for observing everyday routines. When these students came into the classroom, I became the ‘familiar’ stranger.

Sometimes, I could be the source of conflict between the children (see below, about the notebook), and at the children could also talk negatively about other children to my translator and me, such as in the following example:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Today *Kang* is talking a lot to my translator about me being a foreigner. He also told her that another boy, *Ning*, smelled bad, that he does not take a bath every night or wash his ass. *Ning* hears it and says he is lying.

Usually however, I was on friendly and good terms with the children. However, my good relationship with the children could complicate their—or my—relationship with the teachers. As will be explored in the following, the notebook was a potential conflictual element in my daily interaction with the children, in addition to being a valuable device for communication and expression.

5.3.2 The notebook as communication device

I kept a small notebook with me at all times (however not constantly writing in it), which became an important object of contact between the children and me (see also Corsaro, 2005).⁷¹ In kindergarten 1 particularly, the children showed great interest in my notebook.⁷² Children would often ask to draw in it, and sometimes they would simply take the notebook without asking, and pass it around among themselves, after agreeing (or disagreeing) who should be first, second, and third to draw in it. If this happened a lot, I would say ‘tomorrow’ [you can have it] (*mingtian*), so that the children would not direct all their attention towards the notebook for long periods of time, seeing that that this would disturb the daily routines and irritate the teachers (and I could keep writing field notes). Sometimes I would ask the children if the timing was good (*xian zai ke yi ma?*—can/may have it now?)—if they thought the teachers would approve.

Rules that usually applied in the kindergarten concerning the act of drawing, i.e., only using one piece of paper each and drawing on both sides of the paper, did not apply for my notebook. The children opened the book where they wanted and drew or wrote what they wanted on as many pages as they wanted.

⁷¹ My translator also brought a notebook with her, so that she could write down things she was unsure of in order to check them up later. The children would also draw in her notebook.

⁷² In kindergarten 2, the children were not as excited about my notebook (they were used to teachers and visiting teachers making notes in front of them), but it was used as a way of communication in this kindergarten as well.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Shanshan* comes over and I give her my notebook. She draws some girls. Then she wants to rip the drawing out of my notebook. I signal that I don't want her to do it, shaking my head lightly, but to leave it in the book. She stops, but when (she thinks that) I am not looking, she rips the drawing out and puts it in her pocket.

The notebook would also function as a concrete medium of communication, sometimes initiated by me, but mostly by the children. I would write mathematical equations and the children would write the answer; I would draw animals and objects, and the children would say the word in English (to show me they knew the word) or Chinese (to teach me the word); or we would both write Chinese characters, names and numbers and talk about them together. *Qiang* was particularly interested in our English drawing game and often wanted to play it:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Qiang* wants to play the notebook game. He says words in English and I draw as best I can. He says flower... insect... bird... I draw the bird from 'far away' (as a V) and he laughs a little. He says ink... igloo... pencil box... octopus... chalk... chalkboard... I draw them. *Qiang* says duck. Again I draw one from far away, like the bird. He laughs. *Qiang* continues, he says zero... egg... people... table... desk... piano... penguin... eraser... book... notebook. *Qiang* wants me to draw king. I draw a man with a crown... *Qiang* asked me to draw water... a watch... wolf, woman and a fox. I tried to get away from having to draw the fox by pointing at the wolf drawing, but he says "no no, that is wolf" and my interpreter says, "yes, that is clearly a wolf." I have to draw the fox. Then he starts saying words I have some trouble drawing, like xylophone and x-ray. He draws an x-ray himself, a square with a circle inside.

Sometimes, the children would ask to write in the notebook when they were supposed to be doing something else, e.g., during a lesson. The teacher would often react to this, say something, and suddenly the children would not be asking for the notebook for a day or two. Sometimes, I would give less attention to some children when they wanted contact (and the notebook), thinking that it would avoid trouble for them. This was potentially unfortunate, particularly if this led to a child feeling ignored by me.

5.3.3 Relations with teachers

The relationship with teachers⁷³ was a little more complicated, particularly in kindergarten 1. The teachers told me that they would be happy to help if I had any questions and were polite

⁷³In Naftali's fieldwork, after the initial welcome by the principal and optimism regarding the fieldwork, she was met with suspicion by teachers, who avoided answering her questions and instead recited official slogans, or who just avoided her altogether (2007:59-60). Trivial talk during lunch had to be accompanied by assurance of anonymity and explicitly expressing her reasons for being there (documentation and eliciting views and opinions, not evaluation).

and smiled when I came in the morning. However, I could also sense that it could be a little difficult to have me there.

When asking the teachers in interviews what it had been like to have me there everyday in the classroom (knowing that this question might be a too direct, but wanting to ask it anyway), they replied: “At first we felt a little restrained, then got used to it. [We] felt the kids like that, this new way [with you in the classroom]. They also went back to tell their parents, our Ida teacher blablabla, very excited. Including, after Ida left, they said, Ida teacher and X teacher [interpreter], why don’t they come? [they] miss you. Really, very pure.” Although I tried to be of as little disturbance as possible, I probably made their lives more complicated for a period of time; always paying attention to what was done and said, asking questions, and sometimes, possibly influencing the children into being more inattentive. I also asked the teachers if they think it would have been different if I was a Chinese researcher, upon which they answered: “Eh, Chinese, then maybe he will know more about the conditions today of the Chinese kindergartens, maybe Ida knows not much, and as for other respects, it is the same, the routine will go on the same way.” The teachers thus expressed that everyday routines would have been the same had another researcher been present; meaning that my long-term stay had not altered their everyday plans in notable ways, even though it surely did influence the setting, informants or everyday practices in some ways. When asking the teachers in kindergarten 2 the same question, they said: “Oh, not strange, very natural. This kindergarten is used to having visitors, so it was not strange or unnatural at all. In fact the children are very happy to have you there. The teachers also think its good because the kids are happy. Children learn to communicate with foreigners, adults that do not speak the same language, comic situations appear.”

The level of contact I had with informants would differ in relation to which kindergarten I was in, as well as depend on whether my interpreter was with me or not, and on which teacher was in the classroom (especially in kindergarten 1). None of the kindergarten teachers spoke English fluently, but one in each kindergarten spoke a little. The days I was by myself in the kindergarten, I would communicate more with this teacher, whereas when my interpreter was with me, most of the communication with teachers would go through her. Asking the two teachers who did not speak much English too many questions at once, seemed to cause them some distress and embarrassment, so I tried to be strategic about the amount of questions asked as well as the timing of asking.

5.4 Constituting the field

5.4.1 Gatekeepers and doing research in an institution

Gatekeepers are people who are in a central position in the field of interest and who can provide access to the field and to other participants in the field (Fangen, 2011), and may both enable, limit, or facilitate access. In my research project, a number of gatekeepers were present. The very first gatekeeper for Norwegian researchers doing social science research is the NSD (Norwegian Social Science Data Services), who deals with privacy protection and research ethics. My project outline along with the consent forms (in English) were handed in and approved before departure (see appendix). Second, my employer institutions' collaborative institution in Shanghai, a Chinese university, made the practical execution of the project possible; without their assistance in sending a letter of invitation for the visa application, as well as for finding kindergartens where the project could take place, the fieldwork would have been impossible to carry out.⁷⁴ Getting access on my own would have been impossible in both kindergartens, not only since I was a foreigner without contacts or a good language proficiency, but also because the kindergarten field can be a sensitive field, particularly for outside researchers.

My access to both kindergartens was made possible mainly due to personal and institutional ties and networks (*guanxi*) between the academic staff at the university and the kindergarten principals, considered an important gatekeeper. The teachers in the classes I was placed in would also be considered gatekeepers. Their actual ability to reject my access could be questioned, but they could refrain from talking with me on their own initiative or express their reluctance in other less direct ways. The last gatekeepers can be said to be the parents (see section below on consent).

Doing fieldwork in an institution such as a kindergarten carries with it structural particularities. On the one hand, many children spend large amounts of their daily life in kindergartens. The fact that many children are gathered at one place on a daily basis facilitates access to informants

⁷⁴ Entering China posed some initial difficulties. I began my visa application process a few months after the Norwegian Nobel committee had decided to give the Nobel peace prize to Liu Xiaobo, the fall of 2010. This decision complicated the official relationship between China and Norway and it also slowed down the visa application process. When I left Norway for a Hong Kong conference in July 2011, my application was still pending. A visa turned out to be a lot easier obtained from Hong Kong, and in the beginning of August 2011, I was in Shanghai.

and to long-term contact in a research setting. On the other hand, there might be certain expectations to the children's behaviour and activity which makes it more difficult for a researcher to interact and speak with them, in particular in kindergartens where classroom teaching and organized group activities are the most common activities (such as in the kindergartens where I did fieldwork). In addition, the researcher may have to relate differently to the various groups of informants present in the field setting. For my project, establishing a good relationship with the children was the most important aspect since they were my main informants, but I also had to make good relations with the teachers. I wanted them to perceive me as a curious and interested person with an intention to understand (and not to judge), and I also wanted my presence to not be a heavy burden for them. Their opinions about me could influence my relationship with the children, for example in terms of what was conveyed about me to the children (verbally or non-verbally, intentionally or unintentionally). The teachers were in a position of power in relation to the children (and parents), and my access to the children needed their 'blessing' (even if this again depended heavily on the principals order/decision). Finally, I also wanted to have a good connection to them both on a personal and on a professional level, as they were also informants in the project.

5.4.2 Collaborating institutions and expectations from the field

Having a collaborative institution in the field was, as mentioned, a necessity for the realization of the project. It enabled the project initiation in presenting an invitation for the visa application, as well as in finding kindergartens and facilitating access, and in the solving of other practical challenges. It also affected the project in the post-fieldwork period in the sense that my responsibilities to our collaborative institution brings out some reflections about what I can and should write; such reflections are connected to both the consequences that potentially can arise for the collaborative institutions in their context, as well as in the relationship between this institution and my employer institution in Norway. This being said, I do not wish to overestimate the impact this thesis will have, but such thoughts are important to take into consideration during this process. It is hard to say beforehand who the reader will be and what consequences my interpretations (or the readers' interpretations of my interpretations) may have. Furthermore, different groups of readers may have different agendas, and my interpretations can be used for purposes completely outside my control (and/or intention).⁷⁵

⁷⁵ This is a possible threat to researchers, especially those studying topics of a potentially sensitive or controversial nature; empirical material and/or arguments can be taken out of their context,

Once I was given access to the respective kindergartens, I did not have frequent contact with the university staff. Their expressed expectations from me while in the field were related to having a few presentations of my project.⁷⁶ In the kindergartens themselves, the staff showed varied interest in my project: in kindergarten 1, and few questions were asked about the project and me. In kindergarten 2, on the other hand, the principal and other employees expressed a stronger interest in me and in kindergarten practice in Norway and my experiences from and thoughts about Chinese kindergartens in general, and their kindergarten in particular. A presentation of thoughts and ‘findings’ from the fieldwork in this kindergarten was also requested before departure. The principal was interested in hearing my views on the children’s emotional well-being in the kindergarten and initiated conversations (through my interpreter) on topics of this sort from time to time throughout my stay. The children in both kindergartens generally showed interest in me and my interpreters (particularly the first one, with whom I spent the most time), and asked us many questions, both about our backgrounds, as well as questions regarding different phenomena ranging from why human beings look different and speak differently, where human beings come from, as well as quizzes on carrion beetles or mathematical equations.

5.4.3 ‘Choosing’ field sites: the two kindergartens

Chinese kindergartens typically consist of three classes (for small, middle, and big children) and the children start kindergarten at the age of three. Before this time, the children may attend nurseries for a year, but many are taken care of by their grandparents at this age. I stayed with the “big class children”⁷⁷ (5-6 years old). I chose this age group for the following reasons: the children have been coming to the kindergarten for several years and would be familiar with the kindergarten structure, routines, and language. This could be positive for my interaction with the children as well; I was a novice and in need of explanation and learning of the routines in the kindergarten. In addition, I was interested in learning what activities the children were

misunderstood/misread, used literally (instead of as an analytical concept) and/or used for political purposes that the researcher does not approve of).

⁷⁶ In the initial stages of my fieldwork, I held an invited presentation at the university about my project and on methods of anthropological fieldwork.

⁷⁷ Big class (5-6 year olds, final year in kindergarten), middle class (4-5 year olds) and small class (3-4 year olds) are the divisions in the kindergarten.

involved in during the last year of kindergarten, since they would be entering a new and unfamiliar daily life the next year (in school).

The fieldwork took place in two⁷⁸ kindergartens in two different districts of the city of Shanghai. Both kindergartens were located in residential areas with high-rise buildings and with scattered (smaller and larger) businesses and restaurants in relative close proximity to the gates. These particular field sites were chosen for reasons that were mostly outside my control. The collaborative partner (a university) of my institution helped find kindergartens and those selected were kindergartens that would accept a foreigner. These kindergartens needed to comply with a certain standard related to national laws for kindergartens and other less formalized factors. I could not get a clear understanding of which criteria they needed to comply with, but it was clear that the kindergartens were carefully selected. I was presented with a selection consisting of three kindergartens out of which I could select the kindergartens of my preference. One was already the field site of another researcher from my research group in Norway, so it was discarded. Two kindergartens were thus “chosen.”

The first kindergarten had a total of eight classes divided by three levels, housing around 300 children. Kindergarten 1 was, according to my contact person at the university who personally knew the principal and made access possible, not ‘atypical’⁷⁹ for most children attending kindergarten in Shanghai, i.e., not perceived of as odd or extreme or having an unusual pedagogical approach, but rather assessed as ‘normal practice’ within its context. The second kindergarten was a play-oriented kindergarten with a total of around 350 children and 10 classes (four small classes, three middle and three large classes). This kindergarten had more resources than kindergarten 1. They frequently received visiting teachers and were part of a training program for rural teachers.⁸⁰ In addition they conducted research in the kindergarten and several of the staff members (teachers) were involved in this.

⁷⁸ Initially, I planned to stay in three kindergartens during my fieldwork. I ended up going to two instead because I found it preferable to spend more time in each kindergarten. In addition, my contact person gave the impression that there were not so many to choose from.

⁷⁹ Like Tobin et al. (2009: 8), I avoid the word ‘representative’ or ‘normal,’ since one or two urban kindergartens cannot represent such a large country (or smaller countries, for that matter) and since such words are associated with quantitative research, rather than ethnography.

⁸⁰ Through a relationship of collaboration with a Shanghai University, this kindergarten often received groups of visiting kindergarten teachers from other provinces. These teachers entered the kindergarten as a group, visited the classrooms, observed demonstration classes and receive a lecture (on education or play) from a kindergarten

In kindergarten 1, I stayed with a class with 35 children and two teachers. This kindergarten practiced a turn-shift work system; most of the time, one teacher would take care of the class half the day, and then they switched. There were also some assistants there who did practical work like cleaning the floors and tables and preparing for snack and lunch, but they did not stay in the classroom for longer periods of time. The class in kindergarten 2 consisted of 30 children and two teachers (often divided the class in two and the teachers had one half each), as well as a classroom assistant and sometimes with one to three student teachers (sent from the university). The gender division among the children in the class was relatively equal in both kindergartens, with the same amount of boys as girls in the classes. Out of a total of four teachers, one was male (kindergarten 2) and the remaining three were female. The class teachers in both kindergartens were between 20 and 30 years old.

On my first day in kindergarten 1⁸¹ (after having met with the principal the week before), I learned that the teachers and the children in the class I was placed in⁸² did not know that I would be staying with them for one semester until that same morning. The decision to stay half days in the beginning (which I ended up doing for the rest of the stay after a few weeks⁸³) seemed particularly fitting at this point. Not staying with the class whole days from the beginning would give the children and teachers some time to get used to me. People from the outside “visiting” Chinese kindergartens are often evaluators, and I could have been understood in such terms as well, even if I underlined that I did not belong to this group. The kindergarten was not used to having foreigners from abroad (or from China) staying at the premises for longer periods of time. Entering this kindergarten was not problematic and few questions were asked regarding

(senior) teacher. Representatives from the university and the kindergarten leadership would at times also be present, and make comments at the end of the lectures.

⁸¹ I started my fieldwork in kindergarten 1 at the start of the autumn semester of 2011 (September 1st). I stayed for one semester (until Chinese New Year, January-February 2012) on a daily basis between 08:00 and 12:00 (For three weeks, I stayed the whole day from 08:00- 16:00).

⁸² I was placed in a class where one of the teachers spoke a little bit of English (for this reason).

⁸³ My initial plan was to stay whole days (08:00-16:00) in the kindergarten, which I also did the 3rd, 4th and 5th week. However, due to the following reasons I changed back to half days: I felt I had had enough time to find my place, to get to know children and staff and kindergarten a little better, as well as getting an understanding of what took place in the afternoons. Also, I realized that writing my field notes while the children were sleeping between 12:00 and 14:30, was not such a good idea; I was there watching the teachers every move every single day of the week, and when I in addition sat in the classroom (on a little chair or a mat on the floor which did not love my back) and they could see me typing away on my computer for 2,5 hours straight, this could potentially make them a little nervous. Apart from this, the frequent yelling was tiring, and I also needed some time to rest in the evenings after hours of writing up my field notes at home.

my project and me. I was not formally introduced into the classroom or asked to introduce myself for the children. Similarly, my departure was not made a point out of (during my presence) either, but we had informed the children about this ourselves, during daily conversations and during the interviews.

Entering and leaving the second kindergarten⁸⁴ was a more regulated process; the teacher informed the class before our arrival, my interpreter and I introduced ourselves to the class, we held a little speech when leaving, and the children asked several questions in plenary in the classroom. The kindergarten leadership was a lot more involved in the process, and I went through a form of 'screening process' in order to enter this kindergarten. Instead of having a short meeting with the principal and then having no more questions asked (such as in kindergarten 1), the date of entrance was postponed a few times and I had to present a research plan and answer several critical questions regarding my project, on a couple of occasions. The level of control was thus higher and more formal in this kindergarten.

The two field sites were thus different; the first one had fewer resources (although a level high enough for me to be able to enter as a foreigner) and less experience in relation to receiving outsiders and to being involved in research. The second kindergarten had an established relationship with research institutions and also did some research of its own. The degree of territorial and institutional control was also more evident in the second kindergarten, both for me as a researcher and for the parents and grandparents of the children. Parents and grandparents were not allowed on the kindergarten premises. When they came to pick up their children in the afternoon, they had to wait in the front yard. The guards would only let a certain amount of people into the yard, and the others would have to wait outside the main gate. In kindergarten 1, (grand)parents went to the classroom door to pick up their children and grandchildren. The monthly fare in kindergarten 1 was around 300-400 Yuan⁸⁵ compared to around 900 Yuan in kindergarten 2. The selection of kindergartens was thus a highly controlled process, and this has of course had an impact on the fieldwork process, my access to data and my understanding of the field. However, the amount of direct control was not as strong once I had entered the field.

⁸⁴ I began in the second kindergarten in the beginning of March (a few weeks after semester start as the principal wanted this) until the end of May 2012, daily between 08:00-12:00.

⁸⁵ On average, in the period of time in question, 100 Yuan was about 85 NOK.

5.5 Interviews: content and challenges

Towards the end of my stay in each kindergarten, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews (Kvale et al., 2015) with children and teachers. The interview process is a coproduction of meaning, where both interviewer, interpreter, and interviewees (children and teachers) partake in the production of knowledge (Kvale et al., 2015). Furthermore, qualitative interviews are conversations and relations that are asymmetrical in terms of power, where the researcher or interviewer asks the questions and steers the conversation in a particular direction (Kvale et al., 2015). In this study, the interviews also took place in a field where power hierarchy was explicitly stated, both between the children and between children and adults/their teachers. As mentioned previously (5.2.2), working with an interpreter further complicated the process, seeing that knowledge production and the exchange of meaning and perspectives occurred through a third person. However, since interviews were conducted at the end of fieldwork, I had established a relationship with the interviewees beforehand, which hopefully made the interview situation more sensitive to context and the researchers influence (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012).

The goal of the interviews was to get the children's and teacher's *perspectives* and *meaning* (Kvale et al., 2015) on everyday experiences in the kindergarten, particularly linked to the topic of discipline. The interview guides (children and adults, see appendix) were based on a few months of fieldwork experience, and my interpreter and I discussed the questions and the choice of words and topics before conducting the interviews.⁸⁶ I wanted to make sure that I would not be insensitive, rude or offensive, and that my questions would be okay to talk about with the informants. The *manner* of asking questions was also considered important, and I wanted to present such questions in a curious way, expressing that I was not there to judge or portray my opinions on such matters. We decided to try to ask questions at the 'right time,' not have too much emphasis on the same topic for too long, and not to ask too many difficult questions on a row. It was important that my interpreter was cautious with her choice of words when translating and making decisions regarding how to communicate what was being said in the interviews, just as she did in everyday observational settings. In addition, we discussed the importance of asking questions in a certain way, so that we would not put words in their mouths. If sentences were changed, I asked her to think about why she did that (it could say something

⁸⁶ I also received valuable feedback from my academic supervisors.

about cultural appropriateness) and talk with me about it, as this was important for my understanding of Chinese culture and the dynamics of the interview situations.

5.5.1 Child group interviews

I conducted interviews with most of the children in the kindergartens. The locations of the interviews were chosen for different reasons. Most of the daily schedule consist of organized activity or 'free activity' in particular settings, and the children could not move around across the premises as they pleased. Following children around (as has been emphasized as positive in interview settings with children) was therefore not an option, as this would disturb the daily routines and kindergarten rhythm. In kindergarten 1, the interview was conducted in a room they did not have other activities in, which were separate from (but not far from) their classrooms. We put a small table and several chairs in the room, where we could sit. Although the room was potentially too close to the classroom (and teachers) for the children to feel 'free to talk,' this location was the best option at the time. The children were however, observed to express themselves when the teacher was not present in person, not paying attention or busy with something (but with me in the room, see also Section 10.2.3), so this could apply to this situation as well. The interviews were conducted throughout the day with the exception of snack-time, lunchtime and nap-time. Each interview lasted around 45 minutes, longer/shorter depending on circumstance and the progress of the interview.

As mentioned above, my notebook had received a lot of interest and attention from the children throughout fieldwork, and thus provided an activity of interest, but also of familiarity in this situation, which might have been perceived as different and possibly a little intimidating. My notebook was thus used as a mediating artefact, which the children were given the possibility to draw or write in during the interviews. I brought several notebooks and pens into the interview setting. The notebooks were small with black plastic covers and they were identical to my field notebook. These were placed on the table between the children.

When the children sat down at the table, I gave a short introduction where I 'welcomed them' to the interview and explained what we would talk about and why we were having this interview (see appendix). The children were interviewed in groups of three or four and the compilation of children in each group was chosen by the teacher or by circumstance, depending on who was present that day, who had finished an activity and was free to go, and who has not been interviewed yet. In some ways, the teacher made decisions (who to be interviewed, when) that

could have compromised the children's own desires. We also asked the children if they wanted to be interviewed by us (although declining this invitation may not have felt like a possibility for the children involved). Furthermore, the children were not pushed to speak during the interviews. The reason I wanted to interview all the children was that the same group of children would often get chosen for activities outside the class (in both kindergarten), and I therefore wanted to make the interviews an activity for everyone to partake in. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed and translated by my translator/interpreter.⁸⁷

For the child interviews, I had prepared a range of questions and I decided to try them out and if necessary adjust them during the course of the interviews. The interview was designed to begin with questions related to the children's home environment (what they like best to play at home, with whom they play, if they have any after school activities, if they have any siblings), some more philosophical ('larger') questions related to friendship, the difference and similarities of children and adults, feelings of embarrassment and unfairness (in relation to Chinese culture, and the place of children and adults) and dreams. Then I asked about phenomena from the kindergarten setting, related to teachers' strategies of guidance, discipline and punishment, asking questions like 'what do you think about duty group/little teacher/etc.'⁸⁸ After the first interview, I realized that I needed to find a way of asking questions that were not too direct, worrying that we were forcing specific answers. In addition, I did not want to underestimate the teachers' authority or place the children in any uncomfortable position in relation to the teachers (as discipline and punishment could possibly be provoked by this). We could not know if the children in the initial interviews would have had different answers, but we got a feeling of how the questions were met by the children. The layout was changed and most of the questions related phenomena in the kindergarten to a dream kindergarten⁸⁹ (see appendix). Talking about a hypothetical fantasy place enabled us to talk about the kindergarten indirectly; the children got the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings of these phenomena through relating it to a non-existing place. I did not want to ask questions about the teacher, but the children did bring up the topic of the teachers themselves. At the end of the interviews, the children could ask me questions as well, if they had any. Also, if interested, we

⁸⁷ These audio tapes will be deleted at the end of the project period.

⁸⁸ The phrasing 'how about' (怎么样) was used here: a common phrase used for asking questions in the Chinese language. For more on duty children and little teachers, see chapter 11.

⁸⁹ "Kindergarten in (your) dream" 梦想中的幼儿园 (meng xiang zhong de you er yuan) in Chinese.

played a small part of the recording to the children so that they could hear themselves talk on tape. We realized that the children talked with each other about the interviews. When new children entered the interview situations, some were already familiar with some of the topics and knew that they were allowed to draw in the notebooks.

Challenges encountered in the interview situation were connected to a general interpretation of the children's words and stories, to difficult topics that were raised by the children and what (if anything) we should do about this. In addition, I was concerned with the possible unintended future consequences the interview itself and topics addressed could have for the children's everyday lives in the kindergarten. How could we make sure that the children would feel good about having partaken in the interview? Was the interview situation a new and strange situation and for this reason, a straining experience in itself? (especially for those who seldom get to do outside classroom-activities). What about the children who said something that went against the norm in the kindergarten (disagreeing with the teachers' practice)? Several ethical questions of this sort came up throughout the interview process; most of which could not be answered. Self-censorship was thus part of the interview situation. I felt that I should not ask questions on particular topics, because of the unknown consequences they might have for the children. For example if the children told the teacher what we had talked about (it would not be surprising to me if they had asked), I could not know the answers or how they were understood and interpreted by the teachers. Other challenges were related to the content of the children's answers. Sometimes, listening to the children was like 'hearing the teacher speak.' Did they perhaps think that was what I, as an adult, wanted to hear? Or, did they think that I would talk with the teachers about their replies? It could be that what was interpreted as the teachers' opinions, actually also were the children's thoughts on the matter. Or, perhaps the children were not worried about me or my interpreter telling on them, but rather that the teachers would hear their replies from other children (telling on someone was common among the children). Since the children were interviewed in groups of 3-4 children, there was a chance that what was expressed by the children in the interviews would not only be 'between us.'

The groups of children varied greatly; whereas some sat quietly, drawing and answering questions, in other groups children were eager to speak, tell me about their daily lives and had no time for drawing, or for waiting for the opportunity to speak. Others lacked interest in our questions and were eager to finish the interview. Other groups were very physically active and wanted to spend time running around and exploring the room (it was unfamiliar to them). This

type of moving around and children speaking at the same time became disturbing for the progress of the interview, as well as for the audio recording (which was important empirical data, since some of the information that was passed around was not available to me at the time). At the same time, I wanted the children to have a good time and to feel that it was different from the regulated time they had throughout the day. However, being an interview, some regulation was needed, and both my interpreter and myself would have to tell the children to calm down at times so that the interview could continue.

5.5.2 Teacher interviews

The class teachers in both kindergartens were interviewed by me and my interpreter, and the interviews were audio recorded. The two from kindergarten 1 were interviewed together in a restaurant, and the two from kindergarten 2 were interviewed separately, in a room inside the kindergarten. The locations for the interviews as well as whether we would interview the teachers together or separately, were chosen due to convenience and the teachers' preferences.

I asked the teachers questions about being a teacher, about kindergarten everyday practices and routines (e.g., duty children), about society and contemporary childhood (and the role of the kindergarten in this regard) as well as some personal questions (see appendix). The teachers were given the interview questions beforehand, so that they could prepare their answers; this way they could give more detailed and thought-through answers, although planned. In addition, this could make the interview experience less intimidating, particularly for the teachers in kindergarten 1, who seemed to think that the interview would be a little challenging. For this reason, I also prepared many 'easy' questions, so that I had options should the interview stall.⁹⁰ The teachers in kindergarten 2 seemed relaxed about the interview situation, and would answer the questions at length and in detail. These two teachers also wanted to do the interview separately in the kindergarten premises, so that it could happen during daytime while the other teacher was with the class.

During the interview in kindergarten 1, the teachers were giggling a lot (hand in front of mouth and turning face towards each other) throughout the dinner and interview. They also had a concentrated and more serious face, especially when listening to the questions. Sometimes

⁹⁰ My interpreter suggested that we called the teacher interviews for 'a talk' (in kindergarten 1. This would probably present it as something less intimidating for the teachers, who in kindergarten 1 were a little timid. In kindergarten 2, both words were used (talk, interview, informal interview) when talking about it.

when/after answering they would look at each other and say “Dui ba?” (Right? Isn’t it?) and the other would confirm her utterance with “Dui a” (Right/Correct) and nod. Sometimes, especially at the end, they would look at me when answering, but mostly they looked at my interpreter or each other, or outside (in a mall, sitting at a ‘window’ table) facing some escalators. Although the teachers in this kindergarten seemed a little uncomfortable in the beginning of the interview, it seemed like they felt more comfortable as the interview progressed.

5.6 Producing and interpreting data

The research process is understood as an active process where the researcher and informants, as well as the interpreter, contribute to the production of data. This section will elaborate on the daily recording of empirical data through field notes and observations in the kindergartens, as well as on the process of analysis and writing up. Through detailed descriptions of such processes I advocate transparency and reflexivity, sketching out the premises upon which my theoretical elaborations are based, simultaneously addressing the validity and reliability of the study.

5.6.1 Field notes and empirical material

The focal areas for my observation and attention depended on and were influenced by several factors. In the beginning I focused more on everyday activities and the kindergarten schedule in order to get familiar with the spatial and temporal routines, in addition to establishing a personal connection with the children and the teachers so that they would feel comfortable with me being there. As time passed, my focus became more particular and could be directed at individual children, activities, or phenomena, either planned or by circumstance. My attention would turn to different phenomena depending on whether I was there alone or with my interpreter, and also on what happened that day. When I was alone, I would focus more on non-verbal communication and social interaction between informants. When my interpreter was with me, speech and verbal expression was a focus, along with activities and actions informants were involved in. My interpreters (particularly the first one) have thus heavily influenced my research experience and access to data. As noted, my interpreter has had to be selective as well, choosing the sections of speech (e.g., if several people are talking at the same time) and the English words that best described what we were observing. Her choice of words would also influence what I would see. Working with an interpreter was an intense experience that required concentration.

I carried a small black notebook (see Section 5.3.3) and pen with me at all times, either in my hand or in my pocket. In the beginning I felt that some of the children were a little sceptical to the notebook, and some children asked me what I was writing down. I explained that I wanted to learn about their lives and wrote things down so that I would not forget. I would also tell them what was written down if they asked, so that they would understand my intentions and interests in daily practices. The children soon grew accustomed to the presence of me and the notebook, and as mentioned, it also became a medium through which we could play and communicate.

When returning to my home each day, with the help of daily field notes, I immediately wrote down detailed descriptions of experiences and episodes from that day on the computer. I spent several hours a day on this activity, as I wanted to have rich ethnographic field notes, thinking that it was best to get my impressions down on the computer while my memory was still fresh, so that important nuances would not be lost (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). Transferring the complexity of practice into text is a challenging endeavour (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012). I aim to grasp the daily practices in two kindergarten classrooms with more than 60 children and their teachers, paying attention to what goes on in the classrooms, among many children with a range of experiences, behaviours and expressions, over a period of several months. The myriad of practices that take place simultaneously, how different children interact with others, and the complexity in meaning is hard to reconstruct. It is easier to textually present the stringency of behaviour, than the chaotic and ‘messy,’ but both are important for the overall understanding of everyday practices. In addition, processes of selection (inclusion and exclusion) by myself and also my interpreter, as well as field-related aspects (schedule and practices) take place, not to mention choices made during the writing up process. In order to capture the messiness and complexity of practice, empirical examples are presented in some length. Removing contextual information would not only give a simplified impression of the situation, but could also give a less accurate impression of the situation and practice. Despite ending up with a lot of empirical data, this detailed material has been essential for the analysis and writing process. Not only has it provided me with a strong basis for interpretation, it has also been revisited time and time again, securing my confidence that what I am describing in the following chapters did take place in particular ways and with particular frequencies.

My empirical material consists of 700 typed pages of field notes, fieldwork diaries, and transcribed group interviews: three teacher interviews (one in kindergarten 1 and two from kindergarten 2) and 18 child group interviews (12 from kindergarten 1 and six from kindergarten 2). In addition, regulatory documents, newspaper articles, and notes from kindergarten visits in various locations in China add to the empirical material. My analytical findings and interpretations have been presented and discussed in various contexts, at both local and international seminars and conferences, consisting of both Norwegian, international and Chinese audiences.

The interviews were audio recorded, and my interpreter and I also made individual notes during the interviews. My interpreter later transcribed and translated these recordings. The translation is done word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence, meaning that the translation is a Chinese to English one. This would present the language in a more particular manner that is closer to the original oral language. If the situation or the translation (e.g., due to the Chinese-English style, or particular words) needed explanation, the text was marked in thick brackets. If the recording was inaudible (after having listened to it more than three times), it was marked as inaudible in the translation transcripts. The interviews took place with groups of children (2-4) and the different children's utterances are marked in the transcripts where they could be detected. My interpreter had a good proficiency in English and was easy to understand, and challenges with the translation mostly dealt with disturbances in the audio recordings, such as people talking at the same time.

5.6.2 Analysis and writing up

The early analytical process was largely guided by the empirical material. I had a fairly open approach to the field, but disciplinarian practices caught and kept my attention during the course of fieldwork. Alongside the daily detailed writing of ethnographic field notes, compilations of important findings were constructed while in the field. These findings formed the basis of the further analytical work. Since my topic of interest was complex, coupled with the fact that I was a novice in the field, I felt the need to compile large amounts of empirical data, so that I would have a solid base of data on which my analysis would build. For such reasons, writing a monograph was a good format, as I would have room to explain and elaborate on the empirical material. The empirical material has thus largely guided the analysis. However, I have been working with Bourdieu since I began my academic endeavours, meaning that his analytical framework is both familiar and fascinating to me. My analytic approach may thus be considered

an *abductive* approach (Kvale et al., 2015), seeing that particular theoretical approaches may have formed by approach into the field, even if subconsciously. In addition, qualitative approach with participant observation and qualitative interviews constitute a form of knowledge production where informants, the interpreter, and the researcher participate.

Bourdieu's theoretical understanding provided a frame of analysis for the material, which made sense in relation to the other theoretical approaches chosen. Bourdieu's concepts of field, capital and habitus provided me with a lens for presenting disciplinarian practices in a way which emphasised both *structural* aspects and *agentive* action, from an *empirically* driven position, with a *relational* perspective (see Chapter 4).

The complexity and volume of the empirical material presented me with a challenge in terms of how it should be presented. I have spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to best structure the empirical material in such a way that it does not 'overpower' the reader. Chapters 6-9 and 11 were written driven by the empirical material, structuring them in the way I think best serves the empirical material. Seeing that I have made use of Bourdieu's theory of practice, I actively explored *habitus* as an analytic concept in Chapter 10; this chapter was thus in some ways theoretically driven, as this concept is closely connected to other concepts of strong interest in this thesis, such as *capital* (Chapter 9) and *field* (part III and part IV). In the exploration of this concept, I also made extensive use of the detailed field notes to explore how this could be explained through observations of practice. This opened up an emphasis on play and how this related both to everyday communication and practice, as well as to disciplinarian practices particularly. The process of analysis has thus been a complex task and a recurrent interplay between the empirical material, theory and analysis because "in order to construct the field, one must identify the forms of specific capital that operate within it, and to construct the forms of specific capital one must know the specific logic of the field" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:108). My field notes (and fieldwork experience) have guided my analytical curiosity, and have been 'revisited' again and again throughout the analytical process.⁹¹

The method of participant observation is important in terms of validity and reliability in this thesis. Having been in the kindergartens for a longer period of time, observing and participating

⁹¹ I have also made use of music to bring me back to the field. The half-an-hour journey to and from each kindergarten was often made listening to music, and two albums takes me back to this journey and the buildings, traffic, smells, crowded busses and the beautiful parks, on the way to each kindergarten.

in activities, talking with children and teachers, and having an attentive and thorough interpreter by my side to explain cultural aspects and connections, has been important for the understanding of disciplinarian practices in the fieldwork setting. In addition, conducting interviews with both children and teachers, in order to talk about the phenomena that were observed, has provided nuanced elaboration, but also a verification of my observations.

5.7 Challenges of ethnographic fieldwork

Challenges in the fieldwork process were related to various aspects. Psychological strain after being intensely concentrated and focused for several hours a day, followed by hours of computer work when writing out my empirical data was characteristic of my daily endeavours, particularly in the early stages of fieldwork. Another was the feeling of inadequacy for example due to lack of language skills in the fieldwork setting. A more surprising challenge was some corporal pains connected to sitting still in a very small chair for prolonged periods of time. The biggest challenge for me in the field however, was observing some forms of disciplinarian practices, which put my cultural relativist starting point and moral stance to the test.

Especially during lunch in kindergarten 1, punishing and pushing children into finishing their meals if they were not eating fast enough was difficult to observe. At times, the teachers (in kindergarten 1) would go over to a child, place their pointing finger on the child's forehead and push so that the child's head tipped backwards. Sometimes, if the children would not eat their food fast enough, the teachers would force-feed them. The yelling could be loud and intense, and it could be quite uncomfortable to observe the teacher yell at the children (especially when it seemed to be for 'no reason'). Several times, I saw teachers making children cry (children seldom made other children cry). When my interpreter was there, and told me what was actually being said, this made it even harder. Such incidents forced me to reflect on my own role. Although I wanted to be an 'atypical adult' who had little responsibilities linked to my status as 'adult,' I sometimes felt that I was compromising my personal ideals and values. When the teachers (particularly in kindergarten 1) yelled at, spoke in a degrading way towards, or punished the children, in particular when the children had not done anything wrong that I could see or understand, I would almost feel like I had let them down by not speaking on their behalf. On one occasion, I intervened:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The children are eating chicken and potato-stew with rice. They are holding the bowl up to their face and use chopsticks to get all the food into their mouths. In front of me, four boys are sitting around the table. Teacher *Zhao*

approaches the table and asks whose meat has been put on the plate in the middle. *Lili* points to *Ning* and teacher *Zhao* takes *Ning*'s chopsticks and use them to put the meat from the middle plate back on top of his rice bowl. Then she sticks the chopsticks in his rice, standing straight up in the air. She shouts something and then moves on to another table. *Ning* puts some of the meat over into the other bowl (where the stew was) and eats some of it. *Peng* is eating with his mouth open and his head back, when he sees that I see him. Teacher *Zhao* sees that too and yells briefly at him. He turns his head down and puts his chair closer to the table.

Suddenly, at 11:35 (five minutes after lunch should be over) the teachers start yelling very loud (several children are still eating). They start force-feeding some of the children. One boy has his head back, with teacher *Liu* standing with the bowl to his mouth, and the chopsticks are forcing rice into his mouth. The boy is just sitting there with his head back and mouth open, with his arms hanging down at his side. His body looks tense. Both teachers are yelling, at several children. Then *Ning* throws up, he vomits the food back into the rice bowl. The teachers are not there right then, but go over to him (they went over earlier to make him eat) and tell him to eat. He starts eating from the other bowl, quickly. [I cannot watch them force him to eat vomit, so] I go over there and tell them that he just threw up in the other bowl. They look at me and smile carefully and seem like they feel they need to explain. *Ning* looks weak and pale and has a sweaty forehead. Teacher *Zhao* goes to get her cell-phone, says *dictionary* (in English) to me, and smiles [in what I perceive as an honest way], and shows me the screen, where it says 'intentionally.' I ask if she means he did it on purpose? She says yes, he does this now and then. And then he is very hungry in the afternoon. He has done this many times, they say.

I had been three weeks in the field when this episode took place, and I was still immersed in the initial phases of fieldwork, taking it all in. This episode shook me, and I reacted instinctively. The teacher wanted me to understand the situation and found a dictionary in order to clearly express what she wanted to say.

In kindergarten 2, I experienced another episode related to something called 'frustration education' during a kindergarten trip. It was an incident that was very challenging to observe and which took me completely by surprise. I had never heard of this educational approach before this day, and almost felt as if I stumbled upon it by chance.⁹² Just two weeks before my departure from China, the 'big class' children in kindergarten 2 went on an 'army day' to an

⁹² In kindergarten 1, the teachers preferred that I did *not* join them on trips outside the kindergarten, whereas in kindergarten 2, I joined the children and teachers on both a school trip (preparation for transition to school) and the army day (see chapter 11).

army school at the outskirts of the city of Shanghai. In addition to wearing army clothes and doing army training (marching, standing, showing respect, aiming with a gun), they were also exposed to ‘frustration education.’ This episode will be thoroughly described and explained in Chapter 11, but for now I want to say that this episode put my cultural relativist starting point to the test; not only because it was hard to understand the meaning behind this activity, which seemed straining for the children, but also because this seemingly frightening experience was orchestrated by the principal and teachers who seemed excited to observe the children’s reactions.

5.8 Ethical reflections

Conducting ethically sound research not only relates to the immediate relationship between researcher and researched and to questions of informed consent, power difference, and confidentiality, but should also be seen in a broader perspective, as integrative to the entire research process (Kjørholt, 2012). Ethical concerns and considerations will vary and take on particular meanings in diverse contexts; such matters are important to address, both in order to understand the premises upon which data generating has taken place, but also to demonstrate reflexivity and cultural sensitivity. Ethical guidelines, such as The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (2006) and publications on ethics in ethnography and childhood research (Beazley, Bessell, Ennew, & Waterson, 2009; Fosheim, 2012; Murphy & Dingwall, 2007) were used as sources of reflection for ethical issues and concerns. Such guidelines originate in particular times and spaces, reflecting a certain understanding of children, childhood, and the individual.

I start with an emphasis on the particularity of childhood research and whether this demands particular ethical measures. I then turn attention towards how some ethical aspects, such as issues of consent and confidentiality, were approached and dealt with in this project. Such forms of reflexivity, which connects to the principle of transparency, is considered important for the validity, reliability and quality of the analytical work in this thesis and the overall project.⁹³

5.8.1 Child informants and ethical considerations

What consequences does it have to see children as informants in research alongside adults? Should particular ethical considerations be made or would this undermine the position of

⁹³ The project has been reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>)

children in research? Some researchers stress the vulnerability of children and their powerlessness in society, emphasising the necessity of taking particular precautions when doing research with children. Although some will argue that it is imperative to have ethical guidelines reflecting human and child rights frameworks and that researchers should adopt a rights-based approach (Beazley et al., 2009; Bell, 2008), this is a contested field. Some have argued for example, that applying universal child rights' principles to local contexts, particularly through participatory methods, is not culturally sensitive to contextual values in intergenerational relationships and communication, thus not providing a space for grasping children's views and experiences (Twum-Danso, 2009). Context and cultural values have implications for how key ethical issues, such as power imbalance, informed consent and voluntarism, are addressed (Twum-Danso, 2009). Christensen and Prout (2002) have suggested *ethical symmetry* as a preferred starting point. Ethical symmetry can be explained as an ethical relationship between the researcher and informant, which is equal regardless of age, where no particular precautions should be made before entering the research setting. Ethical precautions can be adapted in the course of the fieldwork, but ethical symmetry avoids letting preconceived assumptions guide the research (Christensen & Prout, 2002). Such a starting point enables a flexible attitude towards the research setting.

In this thesis, I follow the understanding that there is no principle difference between adults and children as participants in research (Kjørholt, 2012; Qvortrup et al., 2011b). Ethical principles that are considered 'typical' within social research are thus relevant for child research as well. At a higher level of abstraction, there is wide agreement among researchers on the following set of ethical principles: researchers should avoid harming participants (*non-maleficence*); research on human subjects should produce some positive and identifiable benefit (*beneficence*); the values and decisions of research participants should be respected (*autonomy and self-determination*); and that people who are equal in relevant respects should be treated equally (*justice*) (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007:339). However, such ethical dimensions are not universal, but are emphasised and understood in different ways in various cultural contexts (Fossheim, 2012; Murphy & Dingwall, 2007); ethics in child research should therefore be situational and context specific (Morrow & Richards, 1996).

In the fieldwork context, the boundary between being a researcher and being a human being becomes blurred (Kjørholt, 2012). The researcher is the main research instrument in the method

of participant observation and ethnography (Bernard, 2006; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2012) and qualitative research interviews (Kvale, 1996); and during long-term research and daily contact between the researcher and informants, personal and emotional investment may become both necessary and inevitable. Although attempting to avoid personal feelings and opinions in colouring my understanding of what I see and interpret, I have no possibility of removing myself from myself. I have however, attempted to adopt a reflexive attitude and stance towards such matters. Reflexivity and transparency are considered important ethical tools in this study, in all parts of the research process; from the openness in design, to the choice of methods and ways of entering the field, to the practical execution of the fieldwork, and to the analysis, choice of theoretical approaches and the writing up process. Were my informants to read this document at some point in time, my aim is that the content and interpretations in this thesis feel familiar and make sense to them. However, there is no guarantee that informants will agree with the researchers selection of information or their accompanying interpretations (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007).

5.8.2 Issues of consent

It takes time to build up trust in the field, and just because you have been granted access to the field by persons in leading positions, does not necessarily mean that the other participants in the field agree (Fangen, 2011). Fieldwork demands a constant negotiation over access. Informed consent may not always take a formal or written shape in participant observation (Fangen, 2011). Such forms may actually be problematic when introduced into different cultural context, for example due to non-literacy or conflicting with local knowledge; the notion of danger associated with written documents (political authorities and control); the abstract and unfamiliar notion of research; the potential of creating distance and preventing access; the focus on the human being as an individual autonomous actor and the concept of freedom and choice connected to the individual (Kjørholt, 2012:37-38). The purpose and meaning behind such documents for the researcher, does not automatically accompany the document into the hands of its receiver. The question then becomes, does this matter? Or does this jeopardize the validity of the research?

In this project I asked all participants (children, parents, and teachers) to sign consent forms⁹⁴ (see appendix). I wanted to present myself as a serious researcher in the eyes of my contact

⁹⁴ The forms consisted of an introduction of me, of my project and the method used, as well as some ethical precautions I would make, such as anonymity. The forms for the parents and teachers were quite similar, but the

institution (a large and respected Chinese university), whom I might be associated with in the eyes of the principal and the teachers, so that they would not regret enabling access for the protect. I also wanted the different groups of informants to understand that they were partaking in a research project, and that they had a piece of paper with information that in a way connected them to me and the project, particularly since my method could be considered unusual and strange. In addition, such forms can provide useful reminders for both parties about the nature of their relationships (Wong (1998), in Murphy & Dingwall, 2007:342).

All the teachers signed the forms without asking any questions, and reactions to the consent forms from them were minimal. This could be related to an idea that such forms were common practice in Norway, or to the fact that their principal asked them to sign. Most parents also signed the forms with no further questions; in kindergarten 1 all the parents signed, whereas in kindergarten 2, the parents of five children did not sign. In the first kindergarten I was able to introduce myself and explain the project during a parent-teacher meeting, but was unable to have such a meeting in kindergarten 2, and I found out towards the end of my stay that there were some misconceptions regarding anonymity. Reasons for signing could have been related to the parents being taken by surprise (at the parent-teacher meeting), or possibly a reluctance to question it, seeing that the teachers asked them to in the presence of both me, my interpreter and the other parents. They might have been concerned that a reluctance to sign would lead to potential trouble for their child, affect their relationship with other parents or kindergarten staff, or perhaps they felt a need to prevent me (a researcher, asking them) from losing face. Alternatively, they could have found it interesting to be part of the research⁹⁵. When asking my interpreter about her impression of the signing process with parents in kindergarten 1, she replied: “It is weird for the parents to get the consent forms. It is not normal in China, for the parents to be given such forms, asked in such matters.”

Introducing the research, explaining the content of the consent forms and the process of signing for the children happened in different ways. The forms were signed after having spent a week in each kindergarten. In kindergarten 1, the teachers decided to sign the forms on a day when

ones for the children were shorter with a more straight forward language. The forms were translated to Chinese by my translator.

⁹⁵ Some parents added their email address on the consent forms so that they could receive a summary of the research project upon completion. Some also made short notes to me where they expressed curiosity towards the project or wishing me luck with the thesis.

my interpreter was not there, at a time that fit their schedule. To my surprise, the process of signing in kindergarten 1 (ironically) took the form of a disciplinarian practice itself. The signing took place during a class lesson, and the teacher seemed more concerned with having the children sign in the right place, rather than to convey the content of the form.⁹⁶ There was some yelling by the teachers because the children did not 'do it right.' In kindergarten 2, I was accompanied by my interpreter at the day of the signing. The teacher explained to the children what the form was about, and the children seemed to understand the content, although the process did have characteristics of being a task or assignment from the teacher in this kindergarten as well.

The question of choice is thus problematic. Structural factors are important in relation to the question of choice, because people live in and act within complex social structures. This hierarchy also becomes particularly visible in such instances as when asking for consent, since it has to be done in a particular order, and since children are at the end of the list. If parents say no, children have no choice but to 'say no.' Since I had already been given permission to stay in the kindergarten, those who did not wish to participate would still have to relate to me in some way. These children's behaviours towards different phenomena might also have unconsciously shaped my understanding of different situations, despite making a conscious effort to be attentive to this throughout fieldwork. Apart from excluding this group of children's expressions, words, and actions in my field notes, not asking for their consent and not including them in the final interviews, I did not make any other special arrangements in relation to this group of children. Regrettably, I do realize that this may have become a mechanism of exclusion for these children.⁹⁷

Whether the forms were actually understood and whether my intention and their actual experience interconnected is, however, difficult to say. A relevant question is whether *any* of the informants and/or gatekeepers did consent freely or not. Homan speaks of the 'myth of voluntariness'; just because consent has been given you cannot assume that participation is voluntary (2001). Furthermore, having given consent can be forgotten throughout the duration

⁹⁶ I made copies of the signed consent forms for the children, so that they could have something concrete to hold on to and read (or have others read for them) at a later date if they wanted to. The consent form could be a second source of information, in addition to what was explained about the research in the kindergarten. In addition, it could be positive for the parents to see the form as well; it presented the project in an accessible way, and they would see that I included their children in the research process. The parents' consent forms were designed so that they could tear off the area for their signature and then keep the letter.

⁹⁷ They were, for example, not allowed to participate in interviews at the final stages of fieldwork.

of the research (Homan, 2001:336). The consent form signing process poses some interesting questions in this context: first of all, if framing this experience in a western European understanding of the (rational, autonomous) individual, one could say that, for the children, the process was problematic because voluntariness and choice were exchanged with some degree of force. The situation is however, further complicated by the fact that children are normally not asked for consent in such a way in ‘western’ contexts either (except perhaps in some medical research), particularly not children of such a young age.⁹⁸ Having made the choice to include the children in the consent form signing process might be seen as taking a very abstract concept into a very concrete situation. The very thought that consent forms present “the simple, unmediated truth” about the research to informants is in any case a naïve assertion (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007).

The process of signing must be interpreted in context, and particularly perhaps, in light of disciplinarian practices. As such, this process became an illustrative example of what this thesis is all about: discipline. Questions of consent and participation as informants was a continuous concern at the back of my head throughout the fieldwork, both in situational contexts and during interviews (reluctance to talk was respected), thus taking an approach of processual consent as well. That being said, my general sense was that my interpreter and I were welcome and appreciated by the children in the kindergarten everyday lives. Furthermore, I want to emphasize that despite challenges with language and the consent form signing process, having been given the possibility to stay in the field on a daily basis for several months, as well as having been fortunate to have a curious and helpful interpreter throughout the process, has strengthened my confidence in the project. Including children into processes of signing consent forms was also mentioned as positive by one of the teachers in kindergarten 2. During the interview, the teacher expressed her dismay about visiting teachers who just came into the classroom, took pictures of children and of private information (the children’s folders or “growth books,” see Section 6.1.2) and then left. When talking about how we had also read those folders (but not taken pictures), the teacher said: “Yes, and she [Ida] asked the kids, there

⁹⁸ Asking 5–6 year old children to sign consent forms is not common. In the process of constructing the forms, I searched for templates and inspiration online, but I could only locate consent forms for children involved in medical research.

are the consent forms, they [the children] are willing to join in her research, to supply her the materials, that's it. They [visiting teachers] don't care about that."

5.8.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

All names of children, teachers and kindergartens are pseudonyms, attempting to give full anonymity to informants and fieldwork settings. Achieving complete anonymity for the teachers and for the kindergartens as institutions is however, potentially challenging for the following reasons: to my knowledge, few foreign researchers have done long-term ethnographic fieldwork in kindergartens in Shanghai and my presence might have been known for this reason (even if not known by name). In addition, one of the kindergartens had a pedagogical profile, which made them stand out at the time of fieldwork. Despite concealing both name and location, this institution could potentially be identified. However, making use of pseudonyms is not necessarily enough to safeguard confidentiality for the informants, and it may be difficult to assess what kind of information that can be considered confidential. I have tried my utmost to protect my informants, making an effort to leave out information that can identify individuals, family circumstances, and particular locations. However, even in situations where anonymity secures research participants' anonymity in a public sense, informants might be able to identify themselves, thus potentially leading to a private sense of shame, particularly when feeling inadequately or inappropriately portrayed or interpreted (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007). I have included some pictures in the text as empirical information and contextualization, but none of the kindergarten's exterior or outdoor environment. There are no pictures of children's faces in the text, and few pictures of children at all.

5.9 Summary Chapter 5

In this chapter, I elaborated on the methodical approach in this thesis. I explained the method of long-term ethnographic fieldwork, and how I have made use of participant observation and interviews with both children and teachers. I have elaborated on the challenges related to language and working with an interpreter, roles and relationships in the fieldwork settings, as well as how the fieldwork setting demanded flexibility and adjustment from me as researcher. The final parts of the chapter dealt with ethical questions when conducting research with child informants, issues of consent, as well as questions of confidentiality and anonymity in this project.

**PART III: DISCIPLINARIAN PRACTICES AND
STRUCTURES**

6 Disciplinary practices in the kindergartens

Chinese kindergartens are educational institutions for children that are expected both to provide cultural continuity and respond to and participate in social change (Hsueh & Tobin, 2003) through preparing children for their future lives through learning skills and instilling good habits in the children. Such knowledge and skills are also introduced through and embedded in disciplinary practices and structures. Although the size and availability of furniture in the classrooms indicated that the children were moving around in spaces constructed for them as a group, movement and behaviour within this space was highly regulated, at times in meticulously distinct routines of movement. This chapter will elaborate on some recurring traits of the kindergarten field, namely: the notion of instruction and the emphasis on the ‘correct’ way to do an activity, evaluation, an emphasis on order, and the public character of kindergarten life. Such characteristics were present both in *temporal* and *spatial* structures, as well as in *corporal* disciplinary practices. In many ways, these structures made out a relatively predictable element in the children’s everyday lives in the two kindergartens, but as will be demonstrated, unpredictability was also a characteristic feature of the kindergarten daily life.

Explicit disciplinary practices took place with a higher frequency in kindergarten 1 than in kindergarten 2. For this reason, empirical examples of disciplinary practices from the former kindergarten are stronger in numbers and more frequently referred to in the text.⁹⁹ Disciplinary practices described and elaborated on in part III (Chapters 6-8) take place in teacher-child relationships. The empirical examples will offer a brief glimpse into how children communicate, react to, and relate to disciplinary practices. Later chapters will go deeper into how children themselves partake in such practices as dominators (Chapter 9) and how disciplinary practices also are collectively embodied practices (Chapter 10). I begin to approach such matters in the latter parts of this chapter, exploring the notion of *embodiment* (Bourdieu, 1977); i.e., the ways bodies appropriate and practice certain values and practices.

6.1 Spatial and temporal aspects: order and regulation

The kindergarten is a significant institution in the children’s lives; the children spend most of their time there, five out of seven days a week, from around 08:00 to 16:00. Most of the children I met during fieldwork in the two kindergartens had attended kindergarten since the age of three

⁹⁹ See 5.4 for more information about differences between the two kindergartens.

and therefore had two years of experience in this institution when they started in the ‘big class’ and final year in kindergarten, with a stable presence of kindergarten teachers.¹⁰⁰ As the children moved classes each year, they also moved floors,¹⁰¹ and the big class children occupied classrooms on the third floor. The classroom was where most of the daily activities took place and around which the kindergarten everyday life revolved.

6.1.1 The kindergartens and classrooms

The physical borders of the kindergarten were demarcated with barbed-wired walls and uniformed guards designed to keep outsiders out and insiders in, securing people, property, and equipment. Parents and grandparents were only allowed to enter particular spaces (the front yard in kindergarten 2, and the classroom door in kindergarten 1) in the morning or afternoon, and the rest of the day, only children and kindergarten staff stayed at the premises.¹⁰² The two kindergartens were very different and had variable access to space and resources. Both classes had classrooms with child-sized tables and chairs for the children and adult- or child-sized chairs for the teachers, the amount of chairs matching the amount of people inhabiting the space. Both classrooms had a bathroom connected to it, containing child size sinks, a trough¹⁰³ (with or without partitions) and/or urinals (and two toilets in kindergarten 2). Kindergarten 1 also had a small storage room in one corner of the room, while kindergarten 2 had a little kitchen area with a sink.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ One of the teachers in kindergarten 1 started working in this class the first semester of their final year.

¹⁰¹ This was the case in the two kindergartens in question, not necessarily in other kindergartens in Shanghai.

¹⁰² With occasional visitors, and more so in kindergarten 2, particularly visiting teachers (see 5.3.3).

¹⁰³ The trough has a strong social value, both connected to social interaction between children in the kindergartens (see 10.2.3), but also historically in Chinese society. The removal of such troughs from Chinese kindergartens sparks discussions of modernity, gender sensitivity and privacy on the one hand, and the loss of communalism, socialism as well as being a question of hygiene, on the other (Tobin et al., 1989:45-49).

¹⁰⁴ The kitchen room was connected to the bathroom; a separate room, but with a 1.5 m high wall.



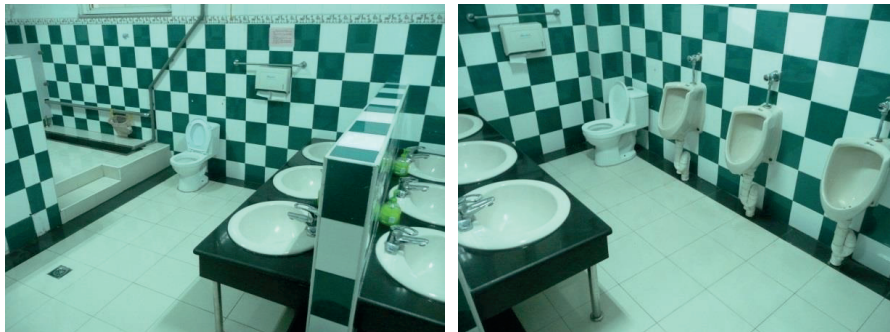
Picture 1: Kindergarten 1 classroom and adjoining bathroom.



Picture 2: Kindergarten 1 bathroom.



Picture 3: Kindergarten 2 classroom.



Picture 4: Kindergarten 2 bathroom.

Movements in and use of space differed in the two kindergartens. In kindergarten 2, the classroom was only one of several rooms used on a regular basis, although still used considerably each day. Kindergarten 2 was play-oriented¹⁰⁵ and the children were daily

¹⁰⁵ Chinese kindergartens often have an orientation towards a particular theme, such as for example play, reading or music, which guides everyday educational practices. Kindergarten 1 is reading oriented and kindergarten 2 is play oriented.

involved in a variety of play-activities requiring movement between rooms and locations. The children would build with wooden and plastic (Lego) blocks in the construction room; do sports activities outside in the morning, play after lunch in the ‘mini-society’ area¹⁰⁶; play group games in the theatre room¹⁰⁷; play on the playground equipment in the roof-top garden; and play board games and role play in the classroom. Due to the emphasis on role play, the classroom was divided into several play areas (see Section 6.3 for more on play). In kindergarten 1 on the other hand, most activities took place in the classroom; instead of having the children change location, the classroom furniture changed location.

In kindergarten 1, the chairs, tables, and shelves in the classroom were changed location several times a day. If the children needed to use the whole floor space, e.g., for dancing or calisthenics,¹⁰⁸ all shelves and chairs were placed alongside the walls. When the children had lunch or lessons, the nine tables were placed on 3x3 lines with four children around each table. For snack-time, two and two tables were placed together, and half the class have their snack while the other half watched them, after which they switched. Furthermore, each morning the tables and chairs were placed in different areas of the room, creating spaces for play; two tables by the door for drawing, one table for paper cutting, one table for board games, one for math exercises, some for hallway activities (e.g., weaving/basket making) and some other areas without tables (e.g., reading corner with mattress). During moments of transition, the room was rearranged by children and teachers; a busy ambience where the children would run across the room moving furniture to their particular location. These moments were temporary and usually quick to pass, and often seemed enjoyable for many children (see 10.2.3). If anything was moved to the wrong place or in the wrong way, the teacher would inform the children and they would move it again.

The usual chair setup was in a horseshoe position with four lines of chairs facing the teachers; two at the lower and facing the teacher and one line on each side. In kindergarten 1, the children

¹⁰⁶ The ‘mini society’ area in kindergarten 2 is located in the basement next to the canteen. This area consist of several spaces where the children can play (the teachers consider this type of play ‘pure entertainment’); computer room where the children can play computer games (Plants vs. Zombies, Angry Birds, Solitaire etc.), a theatre room where they can watch TV, a karaoke room with a TV and two microphones for singing and dancing, and an open space with different games requiring more space (cone games, fishing games etc.).

¹⁰⁷ This room contains a stage and the room is used for seminars and demonstration classes.

¹⁰⁸ Calisthenics is a morning exercise for the whole kindergarten (see 6.2.2).

spent a lot of time sitting in this formation. In kindergarten 2, the children would gather in this formation for the morning gathering, lessons or situations of instruction or transition. This organization of chairs allowed for intergroup contact (see 10.2.3 for playful interactions), in the sense that the children could see each other and the teachers from most angles. In this formation, all the children were facing the teachers from similar but different angles, emphasising a relational understanding of the child group (see e.g., Chapter 8). Space itself was thus a factor of significance to discipline.

6.1.2 Classroom walls: for instruction and on display

On the walls in kindergarten 1, different decorative items were hung up; posters on topics of China and Chinese culture (“great Chinese people,” famous tourist attractions, classical poems, medicinal plants and herbs etc.), news overviews (media paper clippings, brought by the children), a calendar, educational posters, ‘how-to-posters’ (made by teachers, see pictures below) and drawings. Some decorations with pictures of the children were also placed on the walls; a poster about fit children in the class (those with healthy bodies), a poster on how many teeth the children have ‘changed’ (lost) as well as some baby pictures of the children. Most of these items were made by the teachers, and out of those made by the children, the teachers would often select a collection of the best or prettiest exemplars. The classroom walls in kindergarten 2 were mainly decorated for the role play activity (see 6.3), but also included spaces for children’s drawings (usually all of them), ‘how-to-posters’ and posters for duty child¹⁰⁹ activities (recording the weather etc., see Section 9.2.1).

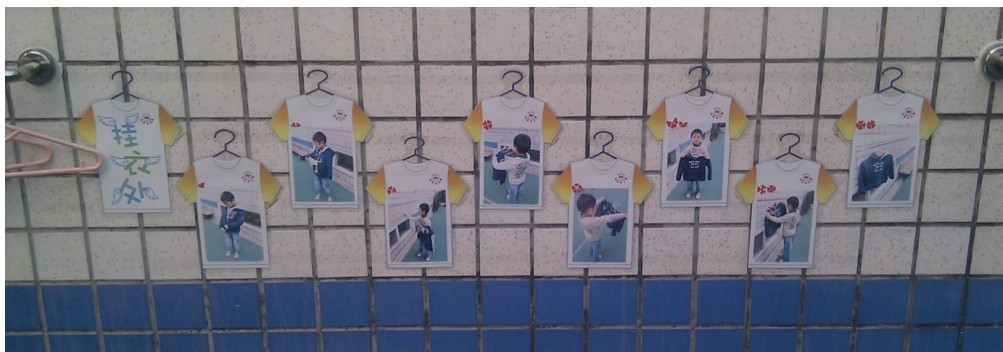
¹⁰⁹ In both kindergartens, the class is divided into five groups of duty children, one group for each day of the week. The children stay in the same duty child group throughout the year (unless the teachers decide otherwise). Duty children have daily chores and responsibilities in the classroom (see also 9.2.1).



Picture 5: Kindergarten 1 instruction poster—how to write with pencil



Picture 6: Kindergarten 2 instruction poster—how to clean face



Picture 7: Kindergarten 2 instruction poster—how to hang jacket

The items placed on the walls contain contextual meaning on topics such as views of children and childhood, ideas about what children need to learn and how they should be(have). In such ways, kindergartens walls express cultural practices and historical traditions (Birkeland, 2012). In her research on Shanghainese kindergartens, Birkeland explores how wall space was meticulously arranged with clear goals: instilling good habits, striving for perfection, and emphasising responsibility for the larger group (Birkeland, 2012). As will be elaborated on in the following chapters, such values were also emphasised among my informants, on a daily basis, both through instructional and decorative items on the classroom walls, as well as through disciplinarian *practices*. Several items on the walls give detailed descriptions of how a particular task should be performed (see pictures), such as step-by-step instructions of how to write with a pencil¹¹⁰ or how to wipe your face with a cloth and what to do with the cloth afterwards (put in container after use). Such detailed instructions show the correct way of performing an activity. Similarly, markings (pieces of coloured tape) on the classroom floors indicated where the chairs should be placed, and markings on the bathroom floor (in kindergarten 1) referring to how the children's feet should be placed, can be interpreted as detailed instructions and a form of disciplining individual bodies.

Wall space was also used in evaluative ways, with wall decorations such as charts or spaces where 'children' could be added or removed in accordance with their rightful space in the different categories. In kindergarten1, these were paced at child height, and contained categories such as; those with fit and healthy bodies (a foam air balloon image with a basket, with space for small laminated pictures of the children); those who could jump ropes well (five times, 10 times, or more than 20, kindergarten 1) or those behaving well ('star' chart with little laminated drawings of bodies with the children's photo as the head) (kindergarten 1).¹¹¹ In kindergarten 2, such notes were found on the wall at adult's height; e.g., notes of the health condition of the children in the class (previous diseases, allergies etc.), names of children whose weight was not ideal, as well as little 'notes of encouragement' regarding children who had

¹¹⁰ The poster instructions are to use three fingers to hold the pen, use two fingers to drag the pen (to write), have relaxed shoulders and sit straight.

¹¹¹ Evaluation forms were also found in Chinese preschools in 1982, by a study group of Swedish childhood researchers. They visited 15 pre-schools, and nearly all had evaluative charts on how well children live up to the four beautifying ideals: 1) beauty of the mind (usually shown in the image of Lei Feng, representing an ideal for children, sacrificed himself for others without thinking about himself, see 2.1), 2) beauty of language, 4) beauty of behaviour and 4) beauty of the environment (Liljeström et al., 1982:47).

improved in different activities. One note contained the name of a child, followed by the following statement: “This little friend in recent days during nap, lunch, sports, especially lunch, has been good. Teacher tells him to refill [have seconds] and every Friday buffet he did very well. We hope he can carry on like this.” The child in question had listened to and followed the teachers’ instructions and behaved particularly well during mealtimes, and thus awarded with a note on the wall. Such public display is another core element in disciplinarian practices. Differences in notes in the two kindergartens could be detected e.g., in the design and location; in kindergarten 1, typed on white pieces of paper and hung up on the wall adult height, together with schedules and other relevant documents, whereas decorated with colours and hung up in child height in kindergarten 1. These differences speak of variations in degree of emphasis as well as who the main receivers of these messages are, despite both being visible on the classroom walls.

Various forms of teacher-made folders and files could also be found in both kindergartens, for example connected to activities and games in the classrooms. The *recording book* was a small A5 sized laminated pamphlet in which the children should record their accomplishments. The pamphlet was made for a particular activity (with a picture on the front cover, signalling its use) and on the inside it contained paper sheets with columns where the children should record their name, date and results of the activity, for the teacher to see their accomplishments. Recording books could also be used for duty child chores (see Section 9.2.1). In kindergarten 2, the children also had a *reward book* (also called *Dolphin book*, with a picture of a dolphin on the front); these folders contained columns where the teachers would place a stamp (e.g., Mickey Mouse and cartoon reindeer stamps) if the children had done their homework¹¹² well or if they had excelled in class in any way. The children had one each, marked by their student number (see Section 5.2.3).

The teachers also made files for the individual children in both kindergartens. In kindergarten 1, the individual folder was a colourful little folder (A5 sized) with cartoon pictures of kids and parents on the front cover. The book contained stickers and a lot of blank pages where teachers or parents could put different information. The teacher explained that the book was used for teacher-parent communication. In kindergarten 2, each child had a plastic A4 document folders, called ‘growth book.’ The growth book was organized by month, starting in September (autumn

¹¹² Homework could be for example completing assignments the children had started in class during lessons.

semester) lasting one year, each month containing on average 5-6 pieces of paper. All folders contained a front cover with a picture of the child, name, birthday date, skill (parents would write something; e.g., “drawing and story telling” or “sports and play cards”), kindergarten class name, and a message from parents (e.g., Come on, try your best! And “Healthy, happy, and know how to do self-discipline”). The teachers also added pictures from events or situations in the kindergarten; information about what the children learned each month (September: e.g., songs Big China and Tiger son, math, English names of shapes—circle, square, triangle—and the song Humpty Dumpty with Chinese translation); a story that parents are asked to tell their children (September: about the moon boat), drawings made by the children; a science game about what a torch is and how to put in the batteries correctly; a pirate story reading, and letters from the teachers to the parents with advice and encouragements on topics that the parents should pay attention to.¹¹³ Finally, the folders contained a form where parents were asked to evaluate their children on a number of topics, many connected to everyday skills or children’s behaviour,¹¹⁴ as well as add little funny stories about things children did or said at home.¹¹⁵ Such an emphasis on individual children illustrate another important element in disciplinarian

¹¹³ An example of the contents of a letter to the parents from the kindergarten teaching and research group (kindergarten 2) sent in January 2012, before the end of the first semester. The letter was translated to me by my interpreter while reading it. “Every big class parent, hello. We say goodbye to the old and welcome the new time. Send an early Happy New Year. The semester ends 13/1 and the new one starts 7/2. Hope they will have a lovely, happy and peaceful Chinese traditional festival, and after the new year they will know that they are one year older. The parents are asked to: 1) Accompany the kids, try to improve their emotions, especially when watching TV. Pick what is suitable for them, like the science channel, inspire and explain to them. Control the TV time and let the children’s eyes rest after 30 minutes. 2) Help the children to contact other children by telephone or go outside to play, develop friendships and learn from others and reduce self-centred feeling, give habit of communication and collaboration and develop ability to solve problems themselves. 3) Use the opportunity to teach the children about spring festival [Chinese New Year], play with others, don’t go to crowded places, safety of children, take care of fire crackers, don’t eat and drink too much. 4) One week before the children will begin the semester in the kindergarten, help the children to change their daily routine. For example, getting up in time in the morning, at nap time and adapt to the kindergarten life. At the end of the letter is a ‘friendly tip’: one day before the opening of the kindergarten (6/2), they can bring quilts to the kindergarten, so that teachers can clean and fix the beds (so that they are ready the next day).

¹¹⁴ Through writing/placing stickers/drawing onto three categories (1) needs more work, 2) progress, 3): very good) the parents are asked to evaluate their children’s behaviour on the following topics (the month of September): polite, know *daoli* (reason or moral, see 7.3), sleep on time, tell skills learned, collect (clean up) toys, clean hands (after toilet), and eating habit (finish on time and carefully). The form for October contained the following categories (same grading, three categories): brushing teeth (daily, do it well), follow traffic rules (hold parents hand, look at the signs), hygiene (toilet, wash hands), control emotions (not get angry easily), collect their own toys (clean up), be polite guests and hosts, [...], important to say when want to use the toilet, close the sink, take out the trash, and knock carefully (on the door).

¹¹⁵ Examples of funny stories written in the children’s files (a girl): “At night, the girl practices the piano. It is very beautiful. Suddenly an unpeaceful noise is heard, *honghonghong*, her father is shaving. She stopped: Dad, do you think it is suitable to do that while I practice piano?” Another story (a boy): “He went to grandma’s home, to help her move the chairs. Grandma said: oh, well behaved today. The boy said: oh, just for some little cash.”

practices, which will be returned to below, such as premiering individual children who comply with teacher expectations, as well as evaluating and comparing children (see Chapter 8).

6.1.3 Schedule and use of time: regulation and transition

The two kindergartens had similar daily schedules; arrival and attendance, morning physical activity, snack, lesson, lunch, nap-time, afternoon snack, lesson, and leaving. Activities usually happened in accordance with the schedule. Moments of transition between activities were present in both kindergartens, but for longer periods of time in kindergarten 1. These moments were used for *daily activities* (wash hands, go to the bathroom, drink water), *preparing* (rearranging tables) or *waiting* (sitting in four lines) for the next activity. First, the daily schedules of both kindergartens are presented:

Daily schedule¹¹⁶ - kindergarten 1

Time	Location	Activity	Description of activity
08:00	Classroom	Children arriving	Arrival and playing time. Tables with chairs placed in the corners of the room for different activities and individual morning play (sometimes also in the hallway). Duty children choose daily chore.
08:25	Classroom	Transition	Children find a chair—prepare for sharing time.
08:30	Classroom	Attendance and sharing time	Children sit on 3-4 lines close together, facing the teacher. Attendance, talk about the morning play, sharing time. ¹¹⁷
08:55	Classroom/ stairway	Transition	(Duty) children ¹¹⁸ rearrange tables (two and two together), prepare for snack time. Place chairs in

¹¹⁶ The daily schedule is based on daily observations of practice in the kindergartens.

¹¹⁷ In the morning, the class would have sharing time and attendance after a period of arrival and morning play time. The children would sit together on their chairs in lines facing the teacher. The teacher would first do attendance (call out children's names, they responded saying 'Dao') and then talk about the morning play or other topics she wants to bring up - problems that had occurred in the classrooms or things that needed improvement. The teachers decide who talks.

¹¹⁸ All the children in the class were duty children; the class was divided into five groups of duty children, and each day of the week, one group of children was responsible for doing particular chores in the classroom, such as e.g., the rearranging of tables (see 9.1 for more on duty children).

			four lines. Line up by the door, walk down stairs for morning sports activity.
09:00	Outside	Morning physical activity ¹¹⁹	Class calisthenics first and set activities after. The class is divided in two for sports activities: half the class does one activity, the other half another, and then they switch. If bad weather, sports inside.
09:25	Stairway	Transition	Walk back to classroom
09:30	Classroom	Snack time	Half the class eat, half wait – then switch. Children bring chairs from their place in four lines.
09:55	Classroom	Transition	(Duty) children rearrange chairs and tables (3x3), prepare for the lesson. Children sit in their chairs in four lines until teacher tells them to sit by the table (children bring their chairs).
10:00	Classroom	Lesson	E.g., learning about signs, arrows and directions, math etc. Sometimes storytelling, either by the teacher or the children.
10:50	Classroom	Transition	Children place their chairs on four lines, waiting to have lunch. Tables in same position as during lesson time.
11:00	Classroom	Lunch	Teacher calls children up, name by name, and the children sit down to eat. When finished, teacher tells children when to take chair back to four lines.
11:45	Classroom	Transition	Wait in chairs in four lines before going to sleep. Go to the bathroom, teachers decide who and when.
12:00	Nap room	Nap time	All the children sleep (bunk beds in nap room).
14:20	Classroom	Transition	Wake up, go to classroom in a line (short walk), sit in chairs in four lines, waiting. The teachers fix the girls' hair.

¹¹⁹ Children in kindergarten should have at least two hours physical activity per day in kindergarten, according to the teachers (a state requirement).

14:30	Classroom	Snack time	Snack time (assistants have rearranged tables during nap time—children bring chairs).
15:00	Classroom (sometimes outside)	Class learning activity	Different sorts of activities; classroom teaching, storytelling, dancing or sports.
15:30	Classroom	Transition	Sit on chairs, wait to get picked up
16:00	Classroom	Children leaving	Parents/grandparents come to classroom door to pick up children.

Table 1: Kindergarten 1 daily schedule

With the exception of the morning physical activity, most activities in kindergarten 1 took place in the classroom or in areas close to the classroom (bathroom, the hallway, the nap room; all located on the same floor). When doing sports in the mornings, the children would walk in a line, down and out into the front yard of the kindergarten. Moments of transition between activities thus included movement in space, the rearranging of chairs and tables in the classroom, trips to the bathroom or to the water station, or sitting down in the four lines. Moments of transition could take less than 5 minutes, but would often last longer. The situation was different in kindergarten 2, where the children spent a lot of time in other locations than the classroom; the children spent less time sitting and waiting, and more time moving between spaces.

Daily schedule—kindergarten 2

Time	Location	Activity	Description of activity
08:00	Classroom	Children arriving	Play in the classroom. Duty students have morning meeting. Attendance.
08:30	Outside or other	Morning physical activity	Outside for calisthenics and outdoor play (3 floors down). If bad weather, the children play sea ball (pool with coloured plastic balls) or organized activities/play in theatre room (2 floors up). Sometimes play on playing equipment on the roof garden (3 floors up).

08:55	Stairway + classroom	Transition	Go to classroom. Bathroom + drink of water
09:00	Classroom	Snack	Children eat snack in classroom - tables with stools attached to it (cannot be moved around). Class divided in two, half the class have snack while the rest are waiting.
09:25	Classroom	Transition	Sit on chairs in four lines. Bathroom + drink of water.
09:30	Classroom and other	Lesson/learning activity	Class divided in two. Each teacher (there are two) take half the class to do an activity, one group in classroom and the other outside the classroom (e.g., computer room)
10:10	Stairway/ Classroom	Transition	Go to bathroom
10:15	Classroom or other	Play + analysis	Role play in classroom (three days a week), construction play in construction room (two days a week). 30 min playtime/construction and 30 min analysing and discussing play/construction
11:15	Canteen	Lunch	Lunch in the canteen. The class sit together.
11:45	Stairway/ Classroom	Transition	Wait in the classroom before going to sleep – bathroom and water. Two days a week, mini society (play area) after lunch, before nap time.
12:00	Nap room	Nap time	Nap room, 5 minute walk from classroom in an adjoining building.
14:30	Stairway	Transition	Children wake up and go outside to dance (calisthenics) and play.
14:40	Outside or other	Afternoon physical activity	Sports/dancing/play. Outside when weather permits.
14:55	Stairway	Transition	Go to canteen
15:00	Canteen	Afternoon snack	Snack in canteen downstairs.
15:10	Stairway	Transition	Go to classroom

15:15	Classroom	Afternoon lesson/learning (play)	Different sorts of activities: learn a poem or song, make something artistic, learn about seasons etc.
16:00	Classroom	Children leaving	Wait in classroom to get picked up—often sitting on four lines, sing songs (teacher might play piano)
16:10	Downstairs by the gate	Children leaving—waiting for parents	Waiting together with teacher (or other teachers) for parents/grandparents to arrive.

Table 2: Kindergarten 2 daily schedule

The daily schedule in kindergarten 2 illustrates the multitude of rooms and locations the children move between. Kindergarten 2 had additional lessons in the morning (compared to kindergarten 1) and a larger diversity of organized play throughout the week. Differences aside, the two daily schedules show similarities in the overall layout and usage of time, in addition to the placement of particular daily activities to moments of transition, such as going to the bathroom and having a drink of water. The physical and temporal layout of the kindergarten daily life illustrates regulated and predictable aspects of everyday life in the kindergarten setting. However, as will be elaborated on below, unpredictability was also a defining feature of the kindergarten field (see Section 6.4). In the following section, I turn attention to how physical bodies were managed and controlled in the kindergartens.

6.2 Corporal discipline: Controlling behaviour and movement

This section will introduce disciplinarian practices connected to the teacher's control of the children's behaviour and movement through practices of: group division or individual physical separation, routinized behaviours, rigorous practice and repetition, and physical punishment. Controlling the children's corporal movement and activities were regulative practices that could be expressed through 'general rules' of behaviour and in expectations of ways to sit or stand, or as decided by the teachers' in individual cases, through circumstantial disciplinarian practice.

6.2.1 Group division and individual physical separation

Dividing the kindergarten class into smaller groups was one way of controlling and ordering bodies in the kindergarten; children belonged to several such groups and were expected to remember what position they should stay in at particular times. In kindergarten 1, the class was

divided into five duty groups, each group responsible for doing particular chores on a particular day of the week.¹²⁰ Through their duty group, the children also belonged to a certain half part of the class. The children had to line up when they left the classroom, and their place in the line was connected to this group division. The children had a specific place to sit on the lines in the classroom, also connected to their duty group division. Their seat could change however, e.g., if two children who sit next to each other talk too much, one of them might have to change seats with another child. The children also had a specific place to sit during lunch time. This location changed throughout the year, and also on a day-to-day basis, e.g., if a child was absent one day, the teacher could change the layout in order to make ‘complete’ tables of four children. The unpredictability surrounding such changes could be confusing for the children; sometimes a child forgot where to sit, stand, or stay. This could be the cause of yelling from the teacher or of conflict between the children:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom, lunch time) Since there are fewer children in class today, there are fewer tables (six, instead of eight). The teacher starts on one end (of the four lines), counts to four and puts these four children on one table. The last table has to wait for a while. “How many times do I have to tell you, sit down and eat!” the teacher says. Teacher *Zhou* is walking around the tables, pushing the children closer to the tables, kicking their feet in order to get them under the table. Some of the children who have finished eating put their bowl in the bucket and sit down again on their place by the table.

(Later that day, Kindergarten 1, classroom, afternoon snack) The children seem to have trouble remembering where to sit [they were placed more randomly at the table today], and several go to the wrong table [other children tell them they are wrong]. *Ning* is unsure where his place is. He tries to sit next to *Cheng*, but he moves his chair and pushes him away. *Cheng* then asks the table next to them if *Ning* was sitting there, and *Ning* eventually sits there.

Changes in routines could cause confusion for the children, particularly for the children in kindergarten 1, because failing to comply with expectations of routinized behaviours could end in yelling and direct individual disciplinary action.

In kindergarten 2, the children were also divided into duty student groups, but they were in addition expected to remember what *line* they belonged to, i.e., where they sit in the classroom (four lines); both configurations would be referred to for different activities.¹²¹ Furthermore,

¹²⁰ In mandarin Chinese, weekdays are expressed saying ‘week (day) one’ (Monday = 星期一), ‘week (day) two’ (Tuesday). Duty group 1 was in charge on Monday, group 2 on Tuesday etc.

¹²¹ The children in kindergarten 1 also sat in four lines, but most activities were related to their place in the 5 groups.

the children in this kindergarten each had their own number, and sometimes when giving messages to the children, the teacher referred to the children by their number; “number 16-20, go to the bathroom and drink water/have snack.”¹²² Finally, the teachers would sometimes divide the class into groups of boys and girls, such as during singing in the classroom, or outside during sports.

Group membership and having a *sense of collectivism* was underlined as important by teachers in both kindergartens, both expressed during interviews and emphasised in numerous ways in everyday practice. Most activities were arranged for the whole class or for smaller groups of children, such as lessons, play activities and sport activities. Everyday routines, such as mealtimes, bathroom breaks, and having a drink of water were also often organized in terms of group membership. In its strongest symbolic form, group membership was expressed in synchronized activities, such as calisthenics or the act of sitting on, or marching in, straight lines. The children sit in straight lines in the classroom, move in straight lines between activities and stand in straight lines and rows during morning calisthenics.

Another way of controlling the children’s bodies was through individual separation. Such practices were explicitly visible and contained a strong symbolic meaning; being singled out and physically removed from the class sends a strong message in a context where compliance and obedience is expected and premiated. Inside the classroom, this was visible e.g., in the way a teacher could make a child sit apart from the class, either next to her (facing the class who are sitting in the four lines) or to the side of the room (away from the lines, e.g., alone by the bathroom door in kindergarten 1). The teachers could keep individual (often particular) children from activities, such as having to stand at the side and watch children playing during sports outside, not practice dancing with the others, be the last one to eat (stand up and wait until everyone else is served); or having to stand up in front of their chair while everyone else is sitting down on their chairs. As emphasised in Chapters 8 and 9, some children experienced this more often than others.

Controlling the children’s bodies through making them stand up was one of the most frequently used strategies to punish the children in the classroom. Communication between teacher and

¹²² The water container is located in the classroom by the toilet door and underneath the container is a cabinet containing cups for all the children in the class; each cup has its own place, marked with a number.

student was subtle, and children would suddenly stand or sit without me or my interpreter seeing the messages sent from teacher to child (see Section 7.1, on *guan*). Such singling out, standing while everyone else was sitting, was a very visible form of punishment, not only because the others were sitting down, but also because they were sitting in such straight lines. The ‘deviance’ from the lines and the ‘order’ of the group, thus stood out with particular visibility. As we will see in Chapter 9, standing up as punishment was also a disciplinarian strategy frequently used by the children in relations of dominance and discipline with other children. Standing up was, however, also used in other contexts; a child could be asked to stand up to receive praise from the teacher, to present stories in the classroom, when giving answers to the teacher’s questions, or as a response to the morning attendance (the teacher calling out the child’s name, and the child (sometimes) standing up, saying *Dao!* (Present!). Standing up is thus a corporal practice used both as a form of punishment or regulation, as well as for purposes of rewarding or encouraging (see also 8.1.3 on individual differentiation).

The Confucian precedence of the harmony of the larger group and the insistence on having ‘a sense of collective’ and group membership are both implicitly and explicitly expressed in the kindergarten. Since the teachers are placing such emphasis on collective membership, the practice of separation brings strong symbolic significance, e.g., standing up while everyone else are sitting down or being physically removed from the group. Making children stand up as punishment was described as a recurrent, normative practice (rather than punishment) among teachers at a Beijing primary school (Naftali, 2007). Leaving children standing, e.g., if they gave an incorrect answer to the teachers’ questions, was done to physically mark and humiliate children who did not perform well in class (Naftali, 2007:221). Standing up as punishment in order to make misbehaving students lose face, was also done in a Chinese middle school among Schoenhals’ informants (youth), and being visually separated from their classmates became a physical metaphor for losing face (Schoenhals, 1993:110) (more on the notion of face in Chapter 7).

6.2.2 Routinized behaviours

Both kindergartens had particular routinized behaviours connected to specific activities, such as lunch and snack routines or when moving between activities. Such routinized behaviours are understood as disciplinarian practices related to the control of children’s bodies and behaviour and of creating order in the child group. Such behaviours followed distinct patterns and were repeated on a daily basis. The children were expected to learn and follow these routines, and

usually, they complied with such expectations. Failing to comply could lead to punishment. One example of such routinized behaviours was the morning exercises or calisthenics, where all the children in the kindergartens would line up in straight lines and rows outside in the front yard. The children would do the same movements accompanied by music, and the following excerpt from my field notes illustrate how this took place in kindergarten 1:

(Kindergarten 1, outside in the yard) The class line up in five lines: The five children at the front of the line put their arms out to the sides to measure the appropriate distance between the children, and the children in lines behind them put their arms to the front for the same reason. The lines are straight. The music is turned on, and all the children start doing a specific movement. They put their hands to their chest and jump a little up and down, dancing. The teachers are standing in front of the lines, doing the same movements for the children to follow. The music is a pop-song with heavy beat and a high pitched woman's voice.¹²³ The children are doing a sort of fighting dance, punching, kicking, and moving around in set patterns. Many of the children seem to really like this, both girls and boys. Each time they kick to the side, they all shout 'Hey!' very loudly. When the pop song ends, another song comes on automatically. It is Chinese tai chi-like music with a man's choir, and the children start making slower movements. Arms and legs move slowly, from one side to the other, and back again, in a tai chi style dance. It looks a little difficult for the children, but they all try. Some are very focused on doing it right. They do both dances a couple of times. The children are laughing and seemingly enjoying it, even though they cannot do all the movements. The teachers turn of the music. Many of the children start making fighting-movements, playing and joking with each other as they wait to return to the classroom.

The children began measuring distance as soon as they lined up in the front yard to do the calisthenics. During the dance, the teachers stand in front of the children, as models for the children to follow. Sometimes the teachers would comment on the movements verbally, saying "interchange" (switch sides) and "out back" (with the arms). The teachers usually performed the dance with serious facial expressions. Calisthenics is a daily occurrence on all levels of the Chinese educational system, and was practiced in both kindergartens on a daily basis.

Routinized behaviours were especially visible in relation to lunch and snack time routines. The lunch routine in kindergarten 1 took place in the children's classroom. The children sat on their chairs in four lines (horseshoe position), and the tables were lined up in the middle of the room

¹²³ Using a sound-recognizing and sound-search app (SoundHound) on my cell phone, I learned that the first song was a song called 'Kissy kissy' from the album Future Girl by a Danish band called Smile. The second part of the dance was to the song 'A Laughter From The Seas' (沧海一声笑 - cang hai yi sheng xiao), sung in Cantonese. Other songs used for dancing were part of the 2nd set of the National Broadcasting Gymnastics; sports education songs for children, organized by the government for sports education in schools (e.g., one song was translated to me as "Our beautiful world").

in position for lunch. The teacher stood by the middle table, serving rice and handing out chopsticks to the children. The children were called up by their names, signalling when they were allowed to start lunch. One by one, they took their chair with them and went over to the table where they would sit (usually the same place every day) and pushed the chair under the table. Then they went over to the middle table and lined up. The children took chopsticks stacked on the middle table at the same moment as the teacher put rice in the bowl for that particular child and then went to sit down at their table. The teacher or assistant would then walk around the children's tables with a serving tray (vegetable stew or meat) and place a spoonful on top of the rice in the children's bowls. The children were expected to eat fast and quietly, without talking. This rule applied in kindergarten 2 as well, but was enforced in a stricter manner in kindergarten 1. When the children were finished eating, they usually had to wait for the teachers' approval to take their chair and go back to their chair in the four lines.



Picture 8: Kindergarten 1 classroom lunch set-up

The snack routine in kindergarten 1 was similarly detailed. Although the classroom technically has space for all the children, the class was divided in two and the groups had snack at separate times. The children could sit where they wanted to:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) We are back in the classroom after sports and the children are having milk and cookies for snack. Group 1-3 will begin, and the rest of the class are sitting on their chairs in four lines, watching them. Group 1-3 first go to the bathroom. After washing their hands they take the towel and dry their hands, find a seat, fold their towel twice into a little square and put it on the table where they want to sit. They push the towel gently down on the table with their hands, before going to the table where the crackers are located.

After carrying out this this meticulous towel-routine, the children went to get a cup and bowl, often already containing their snack (sweet crackers or, on occasion, fruit). They put their bowl on top of the towel and then sat down to eat. When they were finished, they got up, pushed the chair gently under table, brought the cup, bowl and towel to the clean-up-station (a table placed alongside the wall), holding the items (with both hands) stacked into each other. After delivering their cups and bowls, they returned to their chair at the table, fetched their chair and sat down in their position in one of the four lines. When all the children were finished eating (or nearly finished), the duty children went to the clean-up-station, take a used bowl and towel and went over to one of the tables. When cleaning the table, the duty students would hold the bowl next to the table, using the cloth to drag the left-over crumbs into the bowl.

The snack routine in kindergarten 2 also had its own particular routines. Duty students had a more visible role during snack time in this kindergarten:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) The children sit down on their chairs and the teacher tells half the class that they can go to the bathroom and then have their snack. A duty child girl is standing by the bathroom door, with a jar of cream in her hands. As the children leave the bathroom, some of them take some cream and put it on their hands and faces. The children go to a side table prepared by the assistant, to collect cups and plates. On each table (three in total), a plate with crackers has been placed.¹²⁴ The children take the crackers with tongs or a spoon (one girl has trouble using the tweezers and uses her hand to pick up a cracker, which she then puts in the tongs and then on her plate). A boy drops his plate on the floor. The assistant tells him to get another one and puts the one lost to the floor with the used ones. A duty girl is standing in the middle of the room, watching

¹²⁴ A piece of paper, indicating how many crackers each child is allowed to take is placed by the water station. The children look at it before they start taking crackers. If anyone takes more than they are allowed, other children or the teacher will correct them.

the children eat and directing children ready to eat, to available seats. A line of children with a clean plate and cup in their hands forms next to her. A girl who is finished goes to sit down on her seat in four lines. The duty student girl tells another girl that she can have her snack now (she says her name and points to the available seat). When the children have finished eating, they put their cup in the big bowl and their plates in a pile, take a piece of paper and wipe their faces and throw the paper in the trash can right next to the table and then go and sit down on their seat in four lines.

In both kindergartens, meal times thus carry with them a form of 'blueprint of behaviour'; routinized behaviours of what the children should do before, during and after eating. All the children (and particularly duty students) took care to perform such activities in the proper way. As will be explored in more detail in later chapters, self-control and social control are important parts of such routines; the children pay attention to their own and others behaviours (see Chapter 10).



Picture 9: Kindergarten 2 canteen area

In kindergarten 2, at lunchtime, the children went downstairs to the canteen where they had lunch alongside other 'big class children.' Before the children entered the canteen they washed their hands in the bathroom next to the canteen, dried their hands with paper and threw the

138

paper in the trash can. The canteen was a large room with several rows of tables with attached chairs (see picture above), and the children sat together with their classmates. The kitchen staff and teachers served a warm lunch (except Fridays, when they had a buffet), often consisting of soup, rice, and a kind of stew containing vegetables, meat, or fish. When the children were finished eating, and they had to finish all of it (the teacher would check their bowls), they went to one side of the room where different cleaning stations had been set up. All the children then went through the following routine; they left their cutlery (chopsticks for most of the children, spoons for the children who are ‘developing more slowly’ or for everyone if having soup) at the table where they were sitting and brought their bowls to the cleaning station. When arriving, they first put their bowls (all except one) in a large container. Only children from their class should use this container, the other classes had their own, marked on the side with their class number. Then they moved on to the next station (passing other classes’ containers) to a water container. They used their remaining bowl to have some water, rinse their mouth and spit out in a bucket placed on the floor. They left their bowl next to the water container and moved on to the next station where there was a large bowl containing moist washcloths. The children took one each, wiped their face and hands, and then threw the cloth in another bag. Then they could take some cream on their face if they wanted to before they either left the canteen (if they had ‘mini society’ play day, see 6.3) or went back to their seat to wait until everyone in their class was done eating, so that they could return to the classroom in a line.

6.2.3 Rigorous practice and repetition

The teachers try to teach the children to do things right through rigorously *practicing* of movements and activities. Some examples of such practicing could be walking towards the bathroom in the right way, or placing chairs under the table gently:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Hua* goes towards the bathroom, in a joking manner, high shoulders, wobbly walk. Teacher sees him and says: “Do it again.” He goes back, almost to his chair, and then back towards the bathroom again. The teacher says to him while he walks “You are in a big class now, you can’t control yourself, you still touch your shoes.¹²⁵ If you want that, go to the smaller class.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Groups 1-3¹²⁶ stand up and move their chairs to the tables, then go back to their seats (where their chairs normally stand) and stand there. Then they are asked to take the chairs back again. *Jian* and *Lili* are not paying attention, they are

¹²⁵ The shoes are dirty, they touch the ground and floor.

¹²⁶ Duty groups: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday group.

holding hands, chatting, and do not get their chairs. The teacher yells and they quickly get their chairs. Then the children put their chairs to the table one more time, this time with extra caution and care, so carefully that you can hardly hear a sound.

The children would have to repeat the same routine several times, in order to do it correctly and in order to comply with the teacher's standards and requirements. The emphasis on straightness was also particularly emphasised through different practices.

Sitting, standing, walking straight

The children also explicitly practiced sitting properly on their chairs, as illustrated in the following example:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The teacher tells the children that now they are going to practice sitting on chairs. They must sit still and behave. The teacher suddenly goes over and drags a boy up. The boy has a serious facial expression. The children should sit properly on their chairs, with a straight back and legs close together. Not move.

In addition to being a visually significant activity, the practice of sitting on chairs also had an audible component (in kindergarten 1). When the children were asked to sit nicely on their chairs in the lines, one could sometimes hear the sound of the collective action of the children's feet gathering on the floor, and their hands clapping their knees. As described in my field notes: "I can hear a little collective clasp in the air, as all the children smack their hands on their knees at the same time (sitting straight sound)." This sound accentuated the collective element and was also a source of entertainment for the children (a hard smack gave a strong sound).

The children would also practice making straight lines while sitting down on their chairs. The children would measure where their chair should be when they sit in their particular positions in the four lines, in relation to markings taped on the floor (a circle or cross of coloured tape). When a child sitting at one end of the row moved, the other children sitting close would adjust their chair to this person, making sure that their chair was put as close to the other chair as possible, and in as straight a line as possible. The children next to them then continued adjusting their chairs. If there was a gap between the children, the teacher would give notice and the children would close the gap, sitting closer together. Often, the teacher did not have to say anything; the children would fix it themselves or remind each other to do it:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Liu* goes over to *Tao*, drags him up from his chair and moves his chair half a meter to the left, closer to the shelf. The rest of the children sitting in line, take their chairs and lift them over to *Tao*'s new spot, put their chairs as close as they can get to each other, and in as straight a line as they can.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Lulu* puts her chair on the dot with her back chair leg, and the rest of the line is sitting a little behind her. She wants *Peng* to adjust his chair so that it is next to her, but he won't do it. She sticks her tongue out, and so does he. She pinches his thigh, and he pinches her back. She pushes him with her elbow and so does he. After a little while, *Lulu* puts her chair on the dot with her front chair leg. The bickering continues. Then teacher *Liu* starts talking and everybody sits quietly.

These examples illustrate the emphasis placed on straightness, through a linking of individual chairs (and children) to the larger straight line of chairs (and children). Although these examples differ (e.g., the teacher was the one who moved the chair in the first examples), both of them show how the children had an embodied understanding of such practices. Furthermore, adjusting to other children's placement is important, since it is the larger picture, the line itself, with which one must relate (see also Chapter 10).

Another activity explicitly trained on and repeated until the children could do it was standing in a straight line. The teachers would sometimes walk down the line and push the children so that they were standing straighter. In the following example, the children practiced standing in a straight line in as short a time frame as possible:

(Kindergarten 1, hallway outside the classroom) The teacher says: "Now I will count, I will count to three. And when I have counted to three, you will be standing on a straight line, and in the right place in accordance with what group you are in." All the children are standing in a line, but it is not straight enough. The children are told to go to the wall [stand there for a while]. "The line is supposed to be straight!" teacher says. The teacher gets angry. The children are not moving fast enough. A girl is following a boy (she is behind him in the line), holding her hands on his shoulders. The teacher goes over, takes away the girl's hands briskly, looks at her and shouts a little. She tells the children that they should not follow other people! They just have to remember who is standing in front of them in the line. They should try again. She will count. The next time they try, they finish on eight (she is counting), which is better than the last time, when they finished at nine. They must do it again. "We will do it again and again until the children learn." The children are told to NOT hold on to other people's clothes. "We will count to five, if we can't do it at five, we will not go upstairs again." The children are told to go to the wall and relax a little. They stand there for more than five minutes. Some children are talking a little to each other. Others are staring out into the air. Some look at me. Others are looking into one of the classrooms. The children manage to finish the line at the count of five the next time, so they go downstairs for the last part of sports outside with the other children.

The notion of straightness was explicitly emphasised through a range of different practices in the kindergartens and was important in both corporal movement as well as in a spatial sense, a value that was closely connected to acting and behaving in a correct way. Another characteristic form of movement that also connects with straightness, lines, and order, were movements and language from the military sphere.

Army style movements

Controlling the children's bodies was particularly visible through various army style movements and activities, which took place in both kindergartens. The children would often march army style when moving between activities in different locations. When the class left the classroom (kindergarten 2), the children would line up two and two next to the doorway. The teacher would go to the top of the line. The teacher would say: *Li zheng!* (Attention!¹²⁷) and the children then trampled their feet (right, left) and put their arms down the side of their body. Then the class could leave the room. The tone of voice could be strong and loud, but not necessarily:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom/stairway) The children line up in front of the door, two and two. Teacher *Wu* makes a mild 'army'-sound, and the children stand in straighter lines, and then they leave the room. Both teachers tell the children that they must not talk and walk nicely. Teacher *Wu* takes the first child by the hand and leads the class down the stairs, while teacher *Huang* (the other teacher) is the last in line. Some of the children wave at me as they walk past me on the way out. I follow them. The last girl, especially, turns around several times on her way down the stairs, looks at me and smiles carefully.

In kindergarten 1, outside, after the calisthenics, the children would sometimes march military-style from their callisthenic-positions into narrower lines, finishing the march with a firm 'legs together.' The children could then continue to their next activity, either to the classroom or outside for sports, in line. If the teacher was unhappy with the children's marching abilities, they would practice more. As the following example shows, both children and teachers could utter military phrases, as well as other forms of military movements, including marching, standing still, arms close to the body and legs together. The children in kindergarten 1 would also sing army songs as they marched.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The teacher tells the children to stand on a straight line, and the line they make satisfies her. She moves them around and tries it several times [...].

¹²⁷ 立正 to stand straight – attention! (order to troops) <http://www.yellowbridge.com/chinese/chinese-dictionary.php> (Accessed 211015)

They then begin marching “Yi yi yi er yi” (one, one, one, two, one¹²⁸). After some marching, the teacher says “Li!” (stop signal, “Attention”) and the children shout “YI ER!” (ONE, TWO!¹²⁹), and move their hands swiftly (down) to the side of their bodies. They practice this a few times.

In kindergarten 1, army marching practices were a little stricter and more yelling took place, than in kindergarten 2. This could be a reflection of the general atmosphere in the class, as the two kindergarten classes were significantly different in this regard; in kindergarten 1, there was generally more yelling and use of direct disciplinarian practices towards individual children, as well as the group as a whole. The disciplinarian practices in this kindergarten class could also be characterized as more ‘explicit’ than in kindergarten 2 (with the exception of frustration education, see Chapter 11). This kindergarten had a generally calmer atmosphere with less yelling, and the children spent less time waiting and more times moving around between spaces in the kindergarten. Both kindergartens however, had disciplinarian practices with explicit military form; both in terms of form and content of utterances such as “*Li (zheng)*” (Attention), as well as in practices of marching and standing in straight lines.

Imitation, repetition and testing

The teachers in both kindergartens put great emphasis on the importance of learning, often through memorization, repetition, and testing. Disciplinarian aspects in educational activities are connected to a particular knowledge and getting this knowledge in a particular way. According to Bakken, imitation and repetition lie at the core of thinking about education and society in China (1994:99). Such strategies were used in learning situations, where the teacher would present a topic to the children, often combined with video or music. Regardless of what the children were to learn, either presenting stories, reporting news stories or memorizing the correct order of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac calendar, emphasis was placed on doing it right and paying attention to detail. The following example from kindergarten 2 shows how repetition and memorization was used in a learning situation. Teacher *Huang* has shown the children an educational video, a little cartoon about some animals going into a shop:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) Teacher *Huang* shows the video a second time and the children repeat the title of the video. Then they repeat all the sentences in the video (teacher *Huang* stops the video after every other sentence). Then five children stand up

¹²⁸一一一 二 (yi yi yi er yi) ONE, ONE, ONE, TWO, ONE

¹²⁹一二 (YI ER) ONE TWO

and repeat the sentence correctly. Then another child has to say the sentence, but does not get up from the chair first, so teacher *Huang* says something, and the child gets up and starts over and says the sentence. Then everybody says it. Then the children repeat what the animals want from the shop, word by word. A boy has to stand up and say it on his own. He forgets the word a couple of times, and teacher *Huang* says them out loud to help him. Several of the children raise their hand when teacher *Huang* asks questions. Then he turns on the video one more time, and the children say all the words, while the video is playing. Then the children say the words accompanying the video one more time. Then they do it again, but this time with no sound from the video. All the children talk together, but they make a mistake. Teacher *Huang* corrects them. Then one boy says the whole thing by himself, from the beginning. "Good, right?" the teacher says, and the children say "Good!" Teacher *Huang* makes a short clap. While another girl is saying the sentences, teacher *Huang* goes over to a boy. He does not say anything, but adjusts his chair, putting it closer to another girl. They clap after the girl says the sentences as well. Then all the children say the story, word by word, with the video on mute, one more time.

Variations of repetition and memorization are used in order to help the children remember the text in the video. The children repeat the sentences one by one, together in smaller groups, all together, accompanied by the sound from the video, without the sound of the video, and without the video running altogether. The video is also shown in shorter extracts, piece by piece, so that the children can practice on parts of the text as well. Memorization and repetition was also used in kindergarten 1, but not in such meticulous ways.

In kindergarten two, another type of class presentation took place. The children would collect news stories from newspapers at home, and then bring the stories to the kindergarten in order to present them for the other children in the class. The children are encouraged to tell the news standing still and talking clearly, standing next to the teacher, facing the class:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) A boy stands up to tell the news. He says: "Good morning everyone, today the news are: Yesterday was the Titanic 100 year anniversary and they have made a 3D and it was on the show at midnight." The teacher says the word (Titanic) and the boy has to repeat it (sound by sound). "Ok, sit" teacher says. The boy says: "One more" and teacher *Huang* lets him say the other news too. The boy says: "yesterday there was a crash, and two died and 15 were hurt." Then the boy sits down. Teacher *Huang* says to the class: "Do you know what Titanic is? A ship, 100 years ago, in the Atlantic Ocean, 100th anniversary to memorize the accident. The film was made before you were born, but it was not 3D. Now it is 3D. If you haven't seen it, you can go with your parents." Then teacher *Huang* talks about the school bus accident the day before and asks: "how many died, how many were hurt?" *Kun* stands up to tell the news. Teacher *Huang* is holding his hands while he is talking. The boy says: "The policeman says, oh, grandpa, don't jump. The grandpa jumped. He was saved. The second news happened in America. A 97 year old grandma is still working in a bar." A boy says: "That is news from yesterday." Teacher *Wu* says to the children: "Thursday and Friday students stand up, from tomorrow, cut the newspaper and bring them here. The news

has to be from yesterday and not the day before or the week before. From tomorrow, you bring them here.”

The teachers encouraged the children to speak clearly and to bring news stories that are ‘fresh,’ from the day before. The teachers pay attention to detail, and the children have to include both the time and place of the news story, in addition to the news content. The emphasis was on the value of presentation and how the story was told; the children should be ‘reporters’ and the presentation should be short and to the point. The children were expected to memorize the content in order to present it. The teachers would correct the children if information was wrong or missing. Some of the news stories were political and global, whereas others were about incidents that happened in China, such as food scandals and people involved in accidents, getting hurt and dying.¹³⁰ Such topics were not addressed any further, and it did not seem like the teachers seemed concerned that the children talked about or learned about such details.

News telling emphasizes on learning, training, repetition, practicing, presentation techniques, and emphasizes on being controlled in front of the rest of the children in the class. The children are reminded that telling the news is not an option or a choice, but rather a responsibility that all the children have when they are duty students: “News is a part of being a duty student.” In addition, the children’s performance is evaluated by the teachers and by the other children in the class (see Chapter 8). Children who prepared well and who have presented their news stories clearly to the class, are praised by the teachers in front of the other children and also sometimes awarded with stamps.

6.2.4 Physical punishment

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the most frequent form of punishment in kindergarten 1 was standing. The children would stand up themselves after being informed to do so by the teachers (or other children, see Chapter 9) or they were physically dragged up from their chairs by the teachers. Other more overt and physical forms of punishment were also observed during fieldwork: on occasion, the teachers (in kindergarten 1) would push the children, drag them in

¹³⁰ During the initial weeks of news telling, the news TV channel would be on in the classroom in kindergarten 2. One day some of the pictures on the TV screen looked a little disturbing (to me); there was a picture of some meat (impossible to see what kind) in a freezer in a torn down house, with no electricity and in bad condition. The following screen shots were of several dead pigs lying on the ground, with insects feeding of the carcasses. One of the boys was watching, and teacher *Huang* looked at it as well from time to time. I could not see the boy’s face as he was sitting in front of me. There was no visible concern regarding such imagery from the teacher’s side.

to line/off the chair, or push their finger on the children's forehead hard enough for their heads to tilt backwards.¹³¹ This was often combined with yelling (e.g., in teaching situations), and sometimes done without sound. Physical punishment of this sort did not happen on a daily basis, but was not uncommon either (in kindergarten 1). The following examples illustrate two situations that happened in kindergarten 1:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Jian* loses something on the floor (don't know what, but it made a small sound). Teacher *Zhou* goes over to him, yells at him, drags him off his chair, pushes him away, again and again, so that in the end he is standing over by the bathroom door. She asks him something. He shakes his head carefully. She yells, he shakes his head with a little more force. Then she lets him go, and he throws the thing into the trash can before sitting down again.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Most of the children are finished eating, but a girl at one table and two boys at another table are still eating. Suddenly, teacher *Zhou* goes over to one of the boys and drags him up from the chair while she yells something. She takes the spoon and bowl out of his hands and put them on a different table. It happens quite fast, he seems a little struck by it all. She drags him up and drags him over to the table where she put the food. Then she goes to get his chair. He lifts his arms to get it, but she does not give it to him, but puts it on the floor next to him. This boy finishes eating last, and teacher *Zhou* ends up force-feeding him. She appears both annoyed and resigned, and takes the spoon and feeds him the remaining bits of food from his bowl.

These episodes took place on different occasions and on days when I was in the kindergarten without my interpreter.¹³² Such episodes would also happen more frequently in kindergarten 1 than kindergarten 2. I did not observe forms of physical punishment such as hitting or beating during my stay in the two kindergartens.¹³³ In the following section I explore how discipline was connected to activities of play.

¹³¹ I saw this sort of practice on a Chinese TV series for children, which the children in kindergarten 1 saw in the classroom. Unfortunately I do not have the reference for the show.

¹³² For this reason, there are few direct quotes in the examples.

¹³³ Episodes where teachers were severely punishing or maltreating children in kindergartens and schools were written about in the English language media in Shanghai (Shanghai Daily, newspaper, <http://www.shanghaidaily.com>), such as depicted in the following news reports: *Daycare worker attacks toddler with knife* (accessed 29.08.11); *Headmaster loses job for beating students in class* (accessed 04.01.12); *Kindergarten teacher fired* (accessed 07.03.12). Such stories were presented as horrendous and immediate action was directed at the adult involved.

6.3 Discipline in activities of play: regulated creativity

In both kindergartens, various forms of play were organized by the teachers. In kindergarten 1, the teachers organized various play activities in different areas of the classroom in the morning. The children could select an activity of their preference, or the teacher would tell them where to play, and as long as there was available space, the child could play. Some activities were for two children, other for four children—indicated by the number of chairs around the table. Several of these activities were to be recorded in a recording book or resulting in some sort of final product that the teacher could look at and for example show to the class later on. Another form of play took place between activities, while waiting for the following activity or in situations when the teacher left the room (see 10.2.3). Outdoor play, consisting of various forms of sport activities or games involving the whole class or competitions between children in the class, was also organized by the teachers. There was a large outdoor plastic playing structure, a typical equipment in urban Chinese kindergartens, on which children could climb. There was also a range of equipment such as small plastic cars, small plastic pieces on which the children could balance, often carrying large plastic bottles containing water in their hands. The teachers had also made circles with rubber threads, which the children could use for Chinese jump ropes (elastics, skipping ropes).

Kindergarten 2 was a play-oriented kindergarten and the children partook in various forms of play throughout the day. The children had some ‘free periods’ throughout the day where the teachers would give them options as to what they could play, sometimes providing materials such as paper and crayons or board games. Furthermore, the children had outside play (or sports) for 25-30 minutes, which often consisted of mixed play, where all the ‘big class children’ were outside at the same time. The children could walk around the building, climb tires or bamboo ladders, throw balls, play football, ride bikes or climb the large outdoor kindergarten equipment. Although the children were running around in all directions, some children would tell me that they should only move between activities in one direction, around the house. A couple of times a week the children had ‘mini society’ after lunch, where they could play for around 20 minutes before they went to have nap time (2,5 hours every day). The teachers referred to ‘mini society’ play as pure entertainment, and there was little involvement or direction in the play by the teachers; the children could run around and play with what they wanted. Some days a week the children had corner activity play (board games etc.) instead of lessons in the morning, and every day at 10:15-10:45, the children had a set play activity:

Thursdays and Fridays they had construction play in a separate construction room, containing different sections of construction play. Half the room was sectioned into smaller units where the children sat on chairs around tables, playing with either large Lego bricks, small Lego bricks or small wooden construction pieces. The other half of the room contained mats with large wooden blocks of different shapes, and the children would take off their shoes when playing on the mats. After half an hour play, the teachers gathered the children and talked to them in a 'show and tell' session, which lasted half an hour; the children would talk about what they had constructed that day. The remaining three days a week, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday the children had role play in the classroom in this time frame.

The role play lasted for 30 minutes, followed by a half hour session of analysis and discussion of the play. The classroom was divided into various sections, thematic areas, where play took place. The play areas were created based on the children's interests and could change throughout the year if the teacher thought they were not working as well as they should to stimulate the children's play and development. The play areas during my stay were: primary school, Chinese medicine shop (later changed to TV station), boat and tourist place (later changed to book shop and library), plant corner (later changed to children's palace: a place where children can learn certain skills such as play instruments), a theatre/show place, a car rental place, a water factory (later changed to water transportation company), fire station (removed, but not replaced), army place (a recent one), and the bank. Most of these areas were decorated for play purpose and some contained uniforms/costumes (bank teller outfit, police uniform, dresses for dance shows). The children would run to their preferred play area as soon as teacher said they could. Many areas were limited to one or two children, and those who came late had to move on to another available play area. The teachers introduced items such as money and drivers licenses into the game, in order to make it closer to reality. After playing, the children would gather around the teacher and asked to talk about their play and about the problems and challenges they had encountered during play time. The following examples is from an analysis session after role play:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) Teacher *Wu* sits in front of the class to talk about the role play. One girl gets up and stands next to teacher *Wu*. She talks about playing in the primary school. They were drawing. Teacher says: "In kindergarten they call it drawing class, but in primary school they call it art class." The girl is talking more about what happened during play time, and the teacher is talking, asking questions and listening to the children. Then they talk about a child who was playing a student going to the bank, in the role play. Teacher *Wu* says "Went to the bank? For what?" "For money" the girl

says. “For what?” teacher *Wu* asks. “Pay the bill” the girl replies. Teacher *Wu* says that she cannot go by herself to the bank, it is not good that a student goes by herself to the bank. She says she saw that another child who was playing a teacher went to the bank with her. That was good. It was progress. “If the parent is not going with the children, who will go with them then? Will the teacher do it, at home? No. Will the principal do it, at home? No. Will the parents go to the school? No. The teacher will take care of them in the kindergarten.” The teacher continues “I will praise her. Stand up please” (addressing the girl who followed the ‘student’ to the bank during play). The girl stands up. Then teacher *Wu* addresses another child, and says: “There were several teachers in the primary school [only one student]. Then she decided to be a student. That was good. She is good. She changed her role for the best of the school. She is good, right? You tell me what is best, more teachers and one child, or one teacher and more children.”

This example illustrates several forms of disciplinarian practice. The teacher corrects the children and provide the correct term used for different situations (*in kindergarten they call it drawing class but in primary school they call it art class*). We also see how the children are expected to think ‘logically’; they should think about how such situations would happen in the ‘real world’ (outside of the play) and act accordingly. In the real world, a child would not go to the bank alone, so this should not happen in the play either. The teacher praises the child who accompanied another child to the bank in the play (*that was good. It was progress*). In addition, having a sense of group membership is something the teacher emphasizes as important, and a girl who did what was best for the group in the play (*She changed her role for the best of the school*) is used as an example for the other children and praised by the teacher (*she is good*). This phrase was repeated, and the children were asked to confirm it (*she is good, right?*) as well as reflect upon the logic behind this statement in connection to the outside world (*you tell me what is best, more teacher and one child, or one teacher and more children*). The children thus had to be attentive to their role in the play (unless they change it) and behave in accordance to it. In this way, role play becomes a way of learning how the world functions (according to the teacher). As illustrated below, this not only referred to how children should act, but also the necessity of appearance, emphasizing how children should present themselves:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) Teacher *Wu* calls the guards (wearing a reflective vest, unbuttoned) and the firemen (wearing firemen jackets, buttons closed) to stand next to her. Then she asks the children in the class to guess what she wants to say. Someone says “They didn’t take the clothes off.” Teacher *Wu* says “No, I told them to keep them on. Guess.” Another girl says “Take off clothes.” “No” teacher says “I told them to keep them on.” A boy asks: “Is it a good or a bad thing?” Teacher says “Sit” to the boy. Referring to the firemen, she says: “Button well in place. See? What is the difference between well dressed and not well dressed? Why do I have to tell you this? Have you ever seen a guard who looks like this? If anyone wants to take out money, they give a

bad impression if the guard is badly dressed. If badly dressed, they will call the policeman. They do not respect the customers. It also means you do not respect yourself.” She continues: “He (the boy with the vest) is better than the primary school guard, but still.” A girl says “You can ask someone to help.” Teacher says “Yes.” Another girl says “You can look in the mirror.” Then the talk is over, and the children get ready to go down to lunch.

In this example, the teacher uses different children with play costumes to talk about the importance of dressing well and respecting yourself and others. She wants the children to realize what needs to be improved, and asks them to comment upon the situation before she elaborates on the problems. This could be interpreted as encouraging children to think of solutions, and about the importance of stress and appearance; such matters are connected to how children should act according to expectations of self-presentation.

Different forms of play in the kindergartens could be understood as ‘eduplay,’ stressing the strong link between play activities and learning (Rao & Li, 2009). The teachers expect the children to be creative, but within certain limits. This was also visible in other activities such as drawing. When the children were to make drawings of Chinese porcelain for example, they had to use only blue pens, not black or any other colour. These drawings should not be coloured in either, but only be drawings of different China porcelain patterns. After such activities, teachers would discuss them with the class, emphasizing what was good or bad about them, hanging up the good ones on the wall and asking for improvements on the bad ones. The power of the example was visible in such instances (see Chapter 8) and the emphasis on doing things right. Through asking children to analyse their own behaviours and artworks, they learn the codes of appropriateness, what counts as good and preferable behaviour and practice in the kindergartens. In the following, the different forms of disciplinarian and regulative practices described and analysed in this chapter will be theoretically approached through the notion of embodiment or habitus (Bourdieu, 1977).

6.4 Embodiment as practical mastery

In this chapter I have explored various forms of regulation in the kindergartens; of time and space, as well as an organization or orchestration of bodies in daily practices of routines, lessons, presentations and activities of play. Through such everyday organizing practices, certain values and expectations are emphasized by the teachers, particularly values of correctness, straightness and order. Spatial, temporal, and corporal organization followed such a similar logic of order and straightness—chairs are straight, and children were expected to sit,

stand and walk in straight lines. Through daily practice, repetition, and routines, such values are appropriated and embodied by the children; i.e., through memory and the practical mastery of practice (Bourdieu, 1977). According to Bourdieu, such knowledge is transmitted in its practical state:

The child imitates not “models” but other people’s actions. Body hexis speaks directly to the motor function, in the form of a pattern or posture that is both individual and systematic, because linked to a whole system of techniques involving the body and tools, and charged with a host of social meaning and values. (Bourdieu, 1977:87, italics in original)

Processes of embodiment are, as has been illustrated, also verbalized in everyday practices in the kindergartens, and the following chapter will further explore some explicitly stated expectations from the teachers regarding how the children should be(have). This section however, refers to how such values and practices are ‘remembered’ by the children’s bodies; embodied through everyday practice. Such practices are not mastered through a mechanical learning by trial and error; rather, they contain a structure that makes it unnecessary to memorize all elements (Bourdieu, 1977:88).

This practical sense can be said to revolve around some particular values in everyday practice; particularly that of doing things right (correct, instruction), evaluation, an emphasis on order, and the public character of kindergarten life. Several practices and structures of the field emphasise such values; they are present and actualized in routines and the ordering and organization of time and space such as in practices of memorization, repetition, rigorous practicing, as well as in disciplinarian practices of punishments and premiering that the children experience, either individually or as part of the child group. I have explained how routines surrounding meal times are detailed to the point of being a sort of blue-print of behaviour; how the children move between activities in straight lines and sit on straight lines with straight body postures; how children should record their accomplishments in recording books during games and competitions; how the teachers may single out individual children as either negative and positive role models; and in how different behaviours in children are disciplined, premiered, or punished (see also Chapters 7 and 8). In different ways the children experience practices and patterns of domination; teachers demand absolute obedience, also when routines have changed; children are expected to analyse themselves and their own practices, sometimes emphasising how it should be linked to the outside world; children must follow the schedule; and in the

repetitive and rigorous practice, learning that doing things right is something to strive for. There is emphasis on self-presentation, paying attention to detail, and in the standing up in the crowd in positive or negative evaluative situations.

Practical mastery was visible in how children would react to particular cues from the teacher (see also 7.1). Using music or clapping their hands, the teachers would get the children's attention (look at me), introduce transitional periods (when the children would remodel the room, as preparation for the next activity), and remind the children to sit on chairs in straight lines or to line up in queues to go somewhere. A cue frequently used when moving between spaces in both kindergartens was the phrase "Li zheng" (Attention!). When the teachers uttered this phrase, often with a particular loud voice, the children would come to the classroom door, form a straight line, and place their arms close to the side of their bodies. Oftentimes, the children would also be ready for the cue before it came:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The clock is five to nine. The teacher is standing by the CD-player for a little while before she puts on the music. The children are aware of it: they are playing, but watching her from the corner of their eyes, as if they are waiting for something to happen. When the teacher puts on the music, the children immediately start rearranging the chairs and then sit on a line¹³⁴, facing the teacher's chair. Music off. Morning gathering begins.

Experiences and familiarity with cues and particular activities in the kindergarten became apparent in such instances; often the children would know what came next and what they were expected to do. Routinized behaviours and cues of this sort become embodied knowledge and experience that the children built up on a daily basis by partaking in everyday routines and activities in the kindergarten. Using Bourdieu's theoretical tools, such forms of knowledge and experience can be understood as a particularly valued form of experience, resource or skill (embodied cultural capital, or rather *kindergarten capital*). This could for example be familiarity with the physical layout of the kindergarten, of space and time, as well as knowledge of how to carry out particular routinized activities, such as during meal times, as explained above. Through repetition, memorization, and the explicit and implicit practicing on how to do activities in the correct way, the children get a corporal sense of particular values in the

¹³⁴ During the morning gathering in kindergarten 1, the children sit in one or two lines facing the teacher, rather than the usual horse shoe position chair set-up.

kindergarten field. Chapter 9 will further elaborate on this form of capital, and how it made a difference for individual children's positioning and participation in disciplinarian practices.

Everyday life in the kindergarten was characterized by a fairly regulated and strongly predictable schedule, and generally the children had a clear understanding of what should happen at specific times of the day; the children in kindergarten 1 knew, for example, that morning calisthenics took place outside in the yard after the morning gathering, or that before nap-time they had to go to the bathroom, wash their hands and sit quietly in their chairs before leaving the classroom in a nicely formed queue. Furthermore, children in both kindergartens also had an idea of what was expected of them in terms of behaviour and personal characteristics such as being obedient, sitting straight on their chairs, and eating fast (more in Chapter 7). However, unpredictability was also something the children had to relate to on an everyday basis.

Unpredictability became visible in the way rules of behaviour could change. The children were expected to obey, regardless of the logic behind it and regardless of changes in this logic. Sometimes, for example, it would be okay to speak without raising your hand, whereas other times you had raise your hand and stand up when speaking. Differences in rules could depend on which child or which teacher who was involved in an incidence, but the same child would also have different experiences. The following example illustrates how rules regarding the movement of chairs were suddenly changed. Whereas one previously could bring the chair to the shelf area, this time it was not okay:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) A boy runs over to the shelves, carrying his chair in one hand, to get a toy to play with. Teacher *Zhou* stops him abruptly, shouts something at him, and he turns around and goes off to put his chair close to the table where he will sit, and then go back without the chair to get the toy car from the shelf. There is a lot of talking in the room. Another boy, *Peng*, brought his chair to the shelf area, and is also yelled at. He puts the chair next to a table, and when teacher *Zhou* is looking in another direction, he takes his chair to a different table.

As illustrated in this example, the way some children could react and respond to the teachers' yelling revealed a form of sensitivity to the particular situation they found themselves in. This sensitivity is connected to the children's *practical sense* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) of disciplinary practice, which will be elaborated on in Chapter 10. Other situations characterized by unpredictability and uncertainty were incidents of sudden disciplinarian action from the teacher. Such situations were often directed at individual children and could happen as the result

of seemingly minor things, such as in the following example, where the teacher suddenly directs her attention to a girl who was seldom directly yelled at:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Suddenly the teacher yells loudly at a girl sitting quietly in her chair. The girl was fiddling with two threads hanging from the top of her shirt. The girl has to come over to the teacher, who ties a ribbon with the two loose threads. The girl sits down. The teacher keeps talking to the class. The girl is looking at the teacher, she looks at me, she looks down at her ribbon. Her facial expression is slightly angry and almost a little sad.

Such sudden disciplinary action was more common in kindergarten 1, but also happened in kindergarten 2. Such unexpected disciplinary action was part of the kindergarten everyday life, and was something the children had to relate to on a daily basis.

Through emphasising “on the seemingly most insignificant details of *dress, bearing*, physical and verbal *manners*, the reason is that, treating the body as a memory, they entrust to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e., mnemonic, form the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture” (Bourdieu, 1977:94, italics in original). Through imitation and practice, the children appropriate the world, understanding the world with the body, as memory. The children do not have to memorize all the details because the world is connected in a systematic way, it has a rationale which makes sense, and which through practice become dispositions for practice. However, daily repetition and practicing practice enforces and strengthens such values and dispositions; the children embody an understanding of what is important in the world, what they should strive for, what is valued. The children get a sense of the possibilities that are present in daily practice, but also how this can change. As will be demonstrated and underlined in later chapters, such processes are furthermore differential and relational; they depend on who are involved in each situation (see Chapters 8, 9, and 10). Investigating practice thus enables an exploration of the possibilities and limitations of children’s actions.

Such embodied experience is ‘embodied history,’ i.e., *habitus* or *practical sense* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). When the children act in ways that are fit for the field, or when they feel at home in the field, is when field matches habitus. Such a form of match or familiarity was visible in particular practices, such as routines surrounding meal times and the use of cues. Such practices of embodiment take place in a setting that has clear asymmetrical relation between agents, predominantly between teachers and the children (more on the child-adult relation in 7.4), but also in the child group (see Chapters 9 and 10). In this chapter I have begun sketching

out the field. The borders of the field do not equal the physical location, but the physical location is also part of the field. I have explored the physical layout and how everyday life, movement, and behaviour is organized and regulated.

6.5 Summary Chapter 6

This chapter explores discipline in the kindergarten in terms of spatial and temporal structures, as well as corporal discipline and discipline in situations of educational activities and play, with emphasis on the teacher-child relationship. Such structures and practices frame everyday life and illustrate some particular recurrent patterns of disciplinarian structure, such as instruction, order, a public element (being on display) and evaluation—aspects that will reappear in later chapters. The kindergarten field is not a rigid or static construction, and both predictability and unpredictability are characteristic traits of the field. Finally, I have discussed the embodiment of daily practice, and how such processes are enforced and strengthened through corporal disciplinary practices such as the control of behaviour and movement, for example through practices of repetition, explicitly practicing on particular forms of movement and through routinized behaviours.

7 Disciplinary practices: Guan (loving control) and ideal behaviour

This chapter will deal with expressions of disciplinary action, particularly between teachers and children. I will explore how the contextually relevant notions of *guan*¹³⁵ (loving control) and *guai* (obedient, clever, well-behaved) were expressed in everyday situations in the kindergartens. The concept of *guan* was a commonly used term related to discipline. Guan can briefly be explained as a form of governing, with positive connotations; as ‘loving control’ (Tobin et al., 2009b:42). Everyday expectations concerning behaviour were expressed in different ways in the two kindergartens, but an emphasis on ideal behaviour was constant throughout fieldwork in both kindergartens. Different disciplinary techniques emphasised the need to strive for particular characteristics associated with ‘good children’ or ‘good students’ (*guai*: obedient, clever, well-behaved¹³⁶) such as: feeling responsibility, behaving well, quick and quiet, having self-control, and making progress. Such practices will be described and elaborated in this chapter, and will be seen in relation to contextually significant values of moral training and shaming/face losing, and views of children and childhood which connects to disciplinary practices. The notion of *guan* and *guai* are relevant for understanding disciplinary practices in the kindergartens, and will reappear in later chapters (particularly Chapter 9).

7.1 Guan: ‘loving control’

Guan was an emic term used by informants during fieldwork by children and teachers, and is also a recurrent term in literature on Chinese kindergarten and childhood (see 2.3.2). According to Tobin and colleagues, the meaning of the concept of *guan* includes a combination of the English-language meaning of the words educate, care for, support, control, and love, and the term can be translated as ‘loving control’ (2009b:42). The term has also been defined as ‘taking charge’ or ‘being in control,’ using techniques such as comparing and appraising and classifying children in dualities, such as good-bad, right-wrong, successful-failing etc. (L. Gu, 2000:110) and as ‘governing,’ ‘monitoring,’ ‘controlling’ as well as ‘to care for’ and ‘to love’ (Naftali, 2007:217n88). When talking about *guan*, my interpreter said: “Being hard is considered good, as a kind of love, maybe the teachers feel this way.” Guan may also be described in terms of

¹³⁵ An online dictionary translated the concept of *guan* (管) as: to take care (of), to control, to manage, to be in charge of, to look after. <http://www.chinese-tools.com/tools/dictionary.html>

¹³⁶ An online dictionary translated the concept of *guai* (乖) as: (of a child) obedient, well-behaved, clever. <http://www.chinese-tools.com/tools/dictionary.html>.

criticism or punishment; in one incident the nurse in kindergarten 1 entered the classroom at the start of lunch time, saying to the teachers that a boy “will not be eating, so don’t guan him.”

When asking the teachers in kindergarten 1 about their idea¹³⁷ on guan they answered that they did not use this word in interaction with the children, they “just said to them: teacher reminds you, what to do next. [...] Yes, will be a little strict, when sometimes they don’t understand or they don’t listen. But basically use reminding.” The harshness connected to guan, as expressed by some children (and which could stand out to an adult outsider, such as the researcher) is not considered a defining feature of the activity by the teachers; it is acknowledged as potentially somewhat strict, but the teachers rather refer to guan as *reminding*.

The teachers could express or do guan in subtle ways, through facial expression or with a gesture, and the children would react accordingly, for example by sitting straighter or being quieter and paying more attention. Reminding children through guan is in this way seen as part of the process of forming habits in the children. The teacher explained:

(Kindergarten 1, teacher interviews) “For example when they are very noisy, we need to be prepared for the lesson, but sometimes for example, sometimes in fact an expression in the eyes, a gesture, they can in fact feel, for example, we move our chairs forward when sitting on them, they will know: we have to sit well. This “guan,” how do you say, you speak one sentence, tell them, remind them, now we have to do what, they will self-consciously clear up the toys, move the little chairs or move the little tables, this. [...] has become a habit. [...]

During the interviews with the children in kindergarten 1, when talking about the difference between children and adults, several children said that “adults guan children.”¹³⁸ One girl replied: “If the teacher does not guan us we will be very angry. If [the teachers] guan [us], tell how to do it, we will be very happy.” One girl emphasised that “if [teachers] don’t guan us, we cannot do some things ourselves. [...] If they guan us, they can help us to do those things that we cannot do, we will be very happy,” expressing how guan could be connected to be helpful for the children, enabling them to ‘do some things themselves.’ Another child said “guan those

¹³⁷ My interpreter felt we should ask questions this way: what is your idea on... (different phenomena). This way, the topic would be introduced in a less intimidating manner. See 5.4.2.

¹³⁸ Sometimes the children would bring up the topic of *guan* themselves, either when talking about the difference between children and adults, or when talking about different tasks in the kindergartens where children were expected to control other children (see chapter 9). If they did not bring it up themselves, guan would be addressed by my interpreter and me. Sometimes we would have to clarify ‘what kind of guan’ we wanted to talk about, since the word on its own did not make sense. Some children would think about manager, controller, or pipes, as these words are similar in pronunciation. Once we connected the word to the kindergartens (did you ever hear ‘I won’t guan you’ or something similar), the children understood what we meant.

who speak” and “guan others to eat fast.” In such ways, guan was talked about as a ‘natural’ part of the relationship between adults (teachers) and children. As expressed one day in class by a boy in kindergarten 2, when a friend tried to correct him: “You can’t guan me, you are not teacher.” However, some children also linked guan to how children would dominate others when appointed particular tasks, such as little teachers and team leaders (see Chapter 9): “We are ‘guated’ by big team leaders all the time, if big team leaders out then middle team leader, if middle team leaders out then small team leaders.”

These phenomena were also related to a hypothetical dream kindergarten¹³⁹; after talking about what such a place could look like and be, questions related to duty children, little teachers, team leaders, notions of *guan*, unfairness and moral (*daoli*), phrases such as “use your mind” and other topics were discussed (see appendix). Such topics could also be initiated by the children, and followed up by my interpreter and myself. Several children replied affirmatively; they needed this, if not they would not behave. Many, however, replied that they would not want such tasks because they would guan them and they did not want that; they wanted to play and speak as they pleased. In kindergarten 2, a child responded with the following: “[it] means cannot do things you want to do. Don’t like it.” Another boy said: “Guan is harsh” to which another boy in the same interview added: “Guan can be not harsh.” When asking the children (in kindergarten 1) in interviews about what kinds of things that are guan, a child responded: “Such as do bad things. Doing bad things will be ‘guated.’ Do bad things, pick nose in class ... Do not finish the homework ... Break the books, guan. Let me see... Touching the electric fan, also guan.” There were different opinions among the children regarding guan and whether it was legitimate or reasonable, or not.

The range and variation in replies and opinions regarding the phenomenon of guan could be a reflection of the heterogeneity of the child group (e.g., in terms of experiences with guan, at home and/or in the kindergarten), as well as a consequence of the research setting; the children might be saying what they think the researcher wants to hear, calculating potential consequences of their utterances or it could be understood as complying with expectations to good behaviour. Finally, the children’s response may be related to their position in the

¹³⁹ Asking the children questions on different phenomena related to a hypothetical ‘dream kindergarten’ was a choice made in order to find a reference point from which different topics could be addressed. More on this in the methods chapter (5.4.1).

kindergarten field (Chapter 9). For the teachers, *guan* was understood as a form of reminding, used to form habits in the children. *Guan* ('loving control') can be considered a disciplinarian practice or technique, but not all disciplinarian practices (those described and elaborated on in this thesis) can be considered *guan*. *Guan* thus refers to an emic understanding of some forms of disciplinarian practices. In any case, practices of *guan* had strong significance for the possibilities of individual children's positioning in the social space of the kindergarten. Using Bourdieu's theoretical understanding, I approach knowledge of and experience with *guan* as a variant of embodied cultural capital I call *guan* capital. In Chapter 9, I explain how *guan* capital, along with *kindergarten* capital (as explained in Chapter 6) and *guai* capital (to be elaborated on below) produced strong differences among the children in the child group, with regards to their individual positioning and engagement in everyday disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens. In the following, I turn to some examples of disciplinarian techniques and expressions, which illustrate how an emphasis on *guai* or 'ideal behaviour' was expressed and emphasised by the teachers in everyday practice.

7.2 Communicating discipline in the classroom

The teachers' manner of expressing themselves and behaving (body language) towards the children presented a complex disciplinarian approach where different forms of expressive or communicative markers and techniques were used. The teachers would use different nonverbal and paralinguistic techniques (e.g., emphatic stress, angry intonation, loud voices, staring and rolling one's eyes), vocal forms (e.g., sighs and disapproving sounds), and non-vocal forms (complete silence, often in combination with staring).¹⁴⁰ The manner of speaking could also be complex, consisting of metaphoric language, irony, and sarcasm. The teachers would at times address the children with insults, scare tactics or threats, or other times, yelling and screaming. The teachers talked to the children in Putonghua¹⁴¹ most of the time, but also sometimes in the Shanghai dialect,¹⁴² especially if yelling or giving short messages, such as "use your mind." Another particularity was the way the teachers often spoke in dualisms; the children or their behaviour and actions were (sometimes) either clever or stupid, beautiful or ugly etc. As will be explored in later chapters, this 'language of discipline' along with other practices, was also

¹⁴⁰ This list of techniques is inspired by Heidi Fung's overview of communicative markers from her research on the socialization of shame among children in middle-class Taiwanese families (1999:192).

¹⁴¹ The 'official language' in Chinese kindergarten classrooms (state requirement).

¹⁴² My main interpreter understood some words of the Shanghai dialect, but she could not speak it herself. She had lived several years in Shanghai, but came from another part of China.

made use of by children in settings of domination and discipline (see particularly Chapter 9). What was communicated in such expressions were expectations of *guai* (being obedient, clever, well-behaved) or ideal behaviour, here emphasised through the emphasis on responsibility, attention, self-control, and obedience.

7.2.1 Emphasizing responsibility

Teachers expressed expectations of responsibility regarding individual and group behaviour in different ways, often through directing attention towards the children's conscience. The teacher would for example tell the children to be quiet because their noise "will make the teacher uncomfortable" so that she will stop talking. The teachers would also tell the children that they were busy and tired, and that the children had to pay attention to this and help the teachers:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The teacher looks at the children and says: "Do you think teacher is tired every day, working?" "Tired," the children reply together. Teacher continues: "Tell me, how can you show care for the teachers?" The children say: "Listen to the teacher." Teacher replies: "When you should sit well, sit well. Why? Teacher talks every day, tired. When you should stop, then stop." A child says: "When you should look, look." Teacher says: "Teacher is tired, right?" A child says: "Don't destroy the teachers' things." Teacher replies: "Yes, look at the classroom, the teachers have made everything. You should take care of it." *Jian* says: "Do things when it is time." Teacher says: "I will ask someone to repeat what you said [because he said it well]. Say it again [first]." *Jian* says: "When it is time to drink, drink. When it is time to eat, eat. When you play, be careful." [...] Then *Qiang* says something about things made by the teacher, like the recording book.¹⁴³ Teacher *Zhao* says "Okay, go and find it, we will see." *Qiang* goes to a shelf to get the book while the teacher continues talking to the class. "All the recording books are made by the teachers. It is tiring work." *Qiang* gives the book to teacher *Zhou*. Water spots have smudged the ink. "See? It was a beautiful recording book for chess, now it is like this. Teacher used time to make it. See? The first side is beautiful, the second page is not. I don't understand, why did you let a line stay empty? And here you wrote something over two lines. You will sit on three chairs, and sleep on three beds." She keeps looking in the recording book: "These have a date, but no names of who has played. You have to write your name. This recording book is destroyed. Tell me, how many recording books do we have to make for you?" The teacher then tells the children to go pee and wash their hands.

The teacher's disappointment is explained in terms of the children's lack of taking care of what she had carefully made for them. Furthermore, they did not follow the rules of recording and

¹⁴³ For a description of recording books in kindergarten 1, see 6.1.2.

they did not keep the book organized and beautiful. The children had ignored the rules of the recording book: they should put their entries one after the other, one child per line, without skipping any lines. Referring to the mistake of writing on two lines, the teacher said “you will sit on three chairs, and sleep on three beds.” By this, she meant that one child should make do with one line, just as each child only needs one chair or one bed. The teacher thus made use of quite complex language and figures of speech, such as irony and metaphorical language, when talking to the children.

The display of disappointment by the teacher would also happen if a child failed at answering a question correctly, especially if the answer has already been given in class by other children. Such situations could result in the teacher expressing her discontent through placing her hand on her forehead, take a deep sigh and roll her eyes. The disappointment could be directed at the whole class, parts of the class or individual children.

The issue of responsibility could also be raised if something happened so that time passed and the children had less time to play. The children were explicitly told that it is up to them to make sure that they have enough time for this activity:

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) The children go to sit down in their chair. With everybody sitting down, teacher says: “Already four minutes late. What does that mean? Four minutes less to play. Not because of me, you are doing it. I have to talk sad [give you sad news, about less play time]. You did it, made noise, and I had to say it.”

Similarly, the teachers in kindergarten 1 could address the children if too much time was spent on transitional periods (see Section 6.1.3), and if the children were slow to sit down. At one occasion, teacher *Zhou* said to the class that they had already wasted five minutes: “We will see next time, if the teacher will not have to go through this.” In such ways, the teachers expressed to the children that they could blame themselves for wasting the teachers and their own time. Responsibility was explicitly placed on the children; the children should have a sense of responsibility both towards the teachers, themselves, and the child group, and such messages were emphasised by the teachers in various practices activities (emphasised in previous and following chapters).

7.2.2 “I will see who can do it”: demanding attention

The phrase “I will see who can do it” was a typical way of talking to the children in both kindergartens. The phrase was also used as an encouragement, emphasising the possibility of future rewards, while simultaneously reminding the children that the teacher would be watching

them attentively. This could be related to activities such as walking down stairs (example below from kindergarten 1) or to thinking and reflecting during the analysis of role play (example from kindergarten 2):

(Kindergarten 1, stairway) On the way down the stairs, teacher *Zhou* walking in front of the line stops for a while, turns around and tells the children that when they move down the stairs they have to keep to the right. “Where is the right side” she asks, and waits to see what the children do. Most of them are standing to the right. “Can you hear me?” she says. “Right! The right side. I will see who can walk like that.”

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) The children are analysing their play together with the teacher. “Did you find any problems?” teacher *Wu* asks the children. “No, you didn’t” she says. “You did not listen as good as I did.” Then she asks: “Who found another problem? I will see who are as skilled as me.”

In the latter example, the teacher used herself as an example of good behaviour. Usually, other children or classes were used for this purpose. Through uttering this sentence “I will see who can do it,” the teachers are also implicitly emphasizing the importance of making progress. The children should constantly try to improve themselves and the teachers will be watching who does and who doesn’t; the implicit message being that those who can perform well will be praised by the teacher, and consequently, those who do not, might receive punishment.

Testing was another disciplinarian technique used by the teachers. When the children were in a teacher initiated learning situation, the teacher could ask different children the same questions, so that everyone could hear the answer, and different children were then asked to repeat the answer (try to make children remember facts and stories). The teacher could sometimes tell the children that she was going to test them, giving detailed information about what the answer would be, before telling the story. The following example shows a similar episode; a child is telling a story¹⁴⁴ to the class, and teacher stops the child several times during her storytelling to ask the other children what the child had said (the last sentence uttered):

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) It is storytelling-time and *Lulu* stands up to tell a story. She begins: “There was a little bear who played outside, and a bird said, what are you doing? I am playing, the bear said. Ok, said the bird, and then it flew to the big tree to sleep. And the bird woke up and went to play with the little bear...” “Stop!” teacher *Liu* says,

¹⁴⁴ The children would tell different sorts of stories in class. In kindergarten 1, duty children (or others) would tell four word stories (short Chinese proverbs, idiomatic expressions, always containing moral) (see 7.3). Other times, the children would tell other stories such as fairy tales, or they would make up a story there and then. In kindergarten 2, the (duty) children did news report presentations in the classroom (see 6.3.2).

and asks the children what the last sentence was. There is some yelling, and some children have to stand up [punishment] because they could not give her the correct reply [four children standing up now]. The girl continues, “The bird is outside and playing. The bear picked apples from the tree. What are you doing?” the bird said. Picking apples, the bear said. I will help you, the bird said...” “Stop!” teacher *Liu* interrupted. “What sentence did she stop at?” she asks the class. A boy said “picking apples.” Teacher *Liu* asked the girl “is that right?” *Lulu* responded “Yes.” “Continue,” teacher *Liu* said.

This sort of testing required the children to be attentive and listen closely when the other children were telling their stories. Usually, there would be some yelling and standing up (as punishment) during such storytelling session, since the children would often not be able to remember and repeat particular words, as requested.

7.2.3 “Use your mind”: expecting progress and *guai* (ideal behaviour)

Reminding the children, repeating phrases and testing to see whether the children paid attention or not, were frequently used practices in the kindergartens. Such practices could be overly explicit, instructional in character and frequently repeated. Reminding was often explicitly linked to characteristics of ideal behaviour in the children; i.e., that the children should be quiet, well behaved and fast. The teachers (particularly in kindergarten 1) would often say things like: “No sound, no voice,” “The little mouth is for eating, not for talking” and “No voice, eat faster, be quiet, you eat with your mouth, don’t talk with your mouth, sit in your seat.” The following example is another illustration of such messages:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Zhou* says: “Still somebody cannot stop, you should not have any voices. You are not using your mind. Still voices. Your mouths should be closed and your eyes should find me.”

The phrase “use your mind” was frequently heard in the kindergarten. Normally the teachers would direct this phrase to the children, but the children would also talk this way to each other in situations of disciplinarian action among children (Chapter 9). ‘Using your mind’ is connected to progress and good behaviour, which in practice meant: being *quiet* and listening to the teacher, *sitting nicely* (straight with feet soles on the floor and hands on knees) and being *quick* (at eating, working etc.). The phrase ‘hurry up’ (*kuai dian*¹⁴⁵) was a particularly frequently used phrase in both kindergartens. Direct messages between teacher and child would emphasise

¹⁴⁵ *Hurry up – kuai dian* (快点)

the value of being quick, such as when the teacher said to a girl in kindergarten 2 “you are slow, everybody is faster than you.”

At times, the teachers would expect immediate action and response from the children. If the children did not answer or act promptly, the teachers would not wait for the children to take their time. If a child did not give the correct answer soon enough, the teacher could criticize the child or ask somebody else; if the child did not write their name quick enough, the teacher could write it for them; if the child would not eat fast enough, the teacher would force-feed her or him.¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, the children’s responses could be a source of critique. On one occasion the teacher in kindergarten one asked the children if they were ready, upon which several children answered “Yes, we are ready.” She then said that if they were ready, they should not say it with their mouths, meaning that they should be quiet, that being a sign of them being ready.

When children are not using their minds and doing something the teachers consider backwards, the teachers could use the phrase “are you faint?,” meaning having a mind made of wood or being stupid, such as illustrated in the example below:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) There is a lot of talking on the other end of the room, in the reading corner. *Liang* has peed in his pants and on the floor. He is quickly led into the bathroom and the assistants are called to come and mop the floor. Teacher *Zhou* says to *Liang*: “Are you faint? Don’t you know how to pee?” They find a pair of shorts for him and teacher tells him that he will not use underwear, just the shorts (he later gets some pants).

Later that same day, the other teacher (teacher *Liu*) grabs him by the sweater as he is on his way into the bathroom, saying “What did you do this morning? Tell me, what did you do?”

Asking the children if they are faint or stupid is done as a way of making the children think about their actions. Peeing in their pants is usually not done by the children in the big class, but rather by children in younger classes. The boy is also approached later that day and confronted with his unfortunate actions by the other teacher and he has to explain himself one more time.

¹⁴⁶ This was not a frequent occurrence, but it happened at a couple of occasions in kindergarten 1. I observed such episodes myself, and also heard about it from the children (without specifically asking for this information).

Usually the children are not expected to respond to such enquiries, rather it is a way of letting the teachers express their expectations and make the children know that they are being watched.

When asking the children in kindergarten 1 in interviews what the phrase ‘use your mind’ meant, they had different responses. One child said: “I think it is letting us not speak, use your mind.” Another child said: “Eh, using your mind is a very good thing, you can do everything well if you use your mind.” Others said that in their dream kindergarten they would not have to use their mind because they would just play. Another child disagreed; they would use their mind because they had to “learn skills.”

The teacher explained the phrase ‘use your mind’ to the children in the following way:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Liu* is standing in front of the children, and they are sitting on the four lines in front of her. She says “In the morning when you found a place to play, should you change it?” The children say no, all together. She says “you only have half an hour to play. The toys have not been cleaned up. So. I said yesterday that we will try something today so that we can use our mind. Here is the game we played with yesterday [the bean box]. Still some of you are constructing buildings. That is ok. I have told you before, when you do that, use your mind, build a house. But what do you do? You build higher and higher. You try to win. You are not using your mind. If you build a brilliant house, this means that you are skilful.”

When asking teachers in kindergarten 1 in interviews what they mean when they said ‘use your mind,’ they answered something similar to the explanations in the example above:

(Kindergarten 1, teacher interview) “To broaden their thinking, sometimes when they answer the questions, we will require, that is to say, how do you say, we ask a question, there should not be just one correct answer, that is to say, enlighten them, so they will think more and speak more, that is it.”

When the teachers tell the children to use their mind, they are encouraging them to be creative (not build *higher and higher*, but *build a brilliant house, this means that you are skilful*). This message in some ways contradicts what the children experience on a daily basis, where they are told in a variety of (disciplinarian) ways, to do things properly and correctly, be it drawing, sitting, working, or dancing. Correct behaviour is not only encouraged, but also meticulously emphasised, practiced on and memorized. However, such seemingly contradicting statements and actions may not be as contradicting as they perhaps appear (to outsiders like me). As will be emphasised in later chapters, this must be seen in terms of a *relational* understanding of the individual (always understood in relation to other people) whose duties and responsibilities are

concerned with the well-being or progress of the group. Such a frame gives a particular meaning to such disciplinarian practices. ‘Using your mind’ is understood in terms of self-reflection and making progress with attention to the larger group. The teachers decide how something should be done or what something should look like, and it is within these frames that the children should be creative, think for themselves and make progress.

As shown, the emphasis on making progress, listening and being skilful was frequently stressed by the teachers. Using Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts, I call such forms of knowledge and experiences *guai* capital. I elaborate on this variant of embodied cultural capital in Chapter 9, as well as how this form of capital, along with (*guan* capital (see Section 7.1) and *kindergarten* capital (see Chapter 6) became significant aspects in the children’s varying possibilities to manoeuvre in the social space of the kindergarten everyday life.

7.2.4 “You are so happy”: criticism and self-control

The use of irony and sarcasm is a common disciplinarian technique the teachers use in order to encourage self-control in the children. This self-control is connected both to controlling the minds and the bodies of the children, such as sitting still and being quiet. If the children are not behaving correctly; e.g., being too energetic and talkative, the teachers frequently expressed their dissatisfaction through the phrase “you are so happy,” meaning something negative.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Zhou* looks over at some boys sitting at the far end of the room and says “oh, you are moving, still. You are so happy where you are sitting.”

When asking the teachers in kindergarten 1 in interviews about the meaning behind such utterances (*is it not good to be happy?*), they say: “Oh because in the class, because have to foster the sense of rules, if they just keep laughing-laughing-laughing, maybe the lessons coming will not be able to be continued. It’s discipline.” This does not mean that the teachers do not want the children to be happy. On the contrary, ‘happy’ was the most frequently mentioned phrase by all the teachers when asking them (in interviews) about what they like best about being a kindergarten teacher. The best part of their work is communicating with, staying with the children, teaching them things, being happy. A teacher in kindergarten 1 replied: “kids, their ideas [and] thinking is purer, more naiveté, happy to stay with them. Yes, [our] mentality will be forever young [if we stay with children].” A teacher in kindergarten 2 said: “The best thing is, you can meet little friends every day, they come to the kindergarten happily, and play happily,” and that another favourite thing about being a teacher was seeing

“that children are making good progress, eh, that they are very happy.” Being happy is thus contextual and situational in the kindergarten; the phrase can be used as a way of disciplining children [...] “To let them know, just let the kids know, that when you play you can be very happy, but for lesson time you have to follow the rule. It is about rule and discipline.” Demands concerning behaviour and bodily expression are thus situational, as was also emphasised in an example in 7.2.1 (*When it is time to drink, drink. When it is time to eat, eat*). Self-control and situationally appropriate behaviour was also emphasised in the following example. The class has been outside in the yard dancing, and have just returned to the classroom:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) When we come into the classroom, Teacher *Liu* says that if the children are so full of energy after they do dances like that, they will not do it again. She asks if they like it, and they say that they do! Then she says that they are not doing it powerful enough and some were not following the music. Teacher *Zhou* says that some of them cannot control themselves, and they are not smart. Those who can calm down and control themselves are smart.

The situational nature of behaviour is underlined in this example; the children are expected to be powerful and energetic *during* the dance, but to quickly calm down and be quiet *after* the dance. The ability to adapt to the situation in this way is connected to being clever or smart.

Other sentences used to express the teacher’s dissatisfaction with the children’s behaviour could be expressed through irony or sarcasm. When the children were drawing pictures during a lesson and some of the children were talking when they should be quiet, the teachers said: “Who is drawing a picture with their mouth? You are so skilful.” Similarly, a girl sitting with her legs in a folded position was suddenly yelled at by a teacher in kindergarten 1, and was told the following sentence: “You look so good when you sit like that,” and the girl quickly put her legs close together. On another occasion, when the children were to have lunch in kindergarten 1, a girl forgot to take her chopsticks when collecting her bowl of rice from the teacher standing at the middle (serving) table. As she leaves the middle table on her way to her table, the teacher says (in Shanghainese): “You don’t want it? You want to eat with your hands?” (i.e., without chopsticks). The teachers use intricate language when addressing the children in such ways. When the teacher in kindergarten 1 asks: “Who is drawing a picture with their mouth?” she is directing the question to the children who are talking too much (and possibly painting too little), indirectly asking them to be quiet while they paint. Similarly, when she asks: “Are you using

your mouths to take your jackets off?” she is indirectly saying that the children need to keep quiet while they are undressing. Such phrases are often uttered using an annoyed and strict voice, conveying to the children that such actions are considered negative and unnecessary.

The teachers would also use negative words for what they perceived as negative behaviour, such as saying that actions and behaviours were ugly, as opposed to beautiful (used about things considered positive). “Don’t sit with your legs crossed, it is so ugly” a girl was told. Similarly, *Tao* was told by the teacher, after touching his nose: “You cannot stop. Your hands are always doing so strange things. It is so ugly. Can’t you control your hand?” The following example also shows how the teacher found an opportunity to correct a child during a lesson, using this way of talking:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) During a lesson, suddenly the teacher addresses a boy. She looks over at *Bo* and says: “I see you, you are sitting there uncomfortable. Your posture is so ugly, I don’t want to see it again.” Then she keeps talking to the class.

In this example, the teacher uses both sarcasm (*I see you, you are sitting there uncomfortable*) and direct negative speech and criticism (*Your posture is so ugly*) when talking to the boy. The boy is sitting in a sloppy and relaxed way, which gives him a bad posture. The incident was sudden and did not last long, but the message was clear. Sarcasm and direct criticism were used as ways of speaking aiming to instil a sense of self-control and self-discipline in the children.

7.2.5 Yelling, threats and scare tactics: underlining obedience

Yelling is a disciplinarian technique used in both kindergartens, but with a higher frequency in kindergarten 1. In the latter kindergarten, yelling was particularly frequent during lunchtime. The teachers would send out orders and short phrases throughout the meal, asking the children to eat fast and quiet. The teachers wanted the children to finish eating at 11:30, so that they had time to go to the bathroom, wash hands, and be ready to leave the classroom for nap time at 12:00. If any of the children did not finish at an appropriate time, the teacher might start to yell. Yelling could also occur in other situations, such as during lessons:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The teacher looked over to the children and yelled at them to be quiet. After yelling followed a period of quiet staring, her eyes following each of the children (as if to demonstrate that she is serious to each and every one of them).

The sudden transition from loud yelling to complete silence with staring, underlines the seriousness and attentiveness of the teacher. Through looking into each of the children’s eyes,

each child is given the message that she is watching them. When the teachers are yelling at the children, their bodies are sometimes ‘hardened’ (angry), forward leaning. Other times, the teachers would bend down so that their faces are close to and in the same height as the children’s faces.

Teachers in kindergarten 1 would at times threaten the children, using both milder and stronger threats. An example of a milder threat was that the children had to sit nicely and quietly, or the teacher would take their toys (the children were allowed to have small private toys in their shelves). Another threat was that if the children do not behave, they will have to sit next to the teacher, away from the rest of the class, in four lines. The teachers could follow through such threats, and oftentimes some children would be sitting on their little chairs next to the teacher (sitting on her chair). In kindergarten 1, teacher *Zhou* would sometimes threaten to tell the parents or the other teacher (who was a little stricter than her) if the children were not behaving like she wanted them to (*I will tell teacher Liu*). Other strategies used were; threatening to abstain from doing arranged activities (*We will not go to the planned parent-kindergarten trip if you fall on the slippery bathroom floor*), placing the child in an uncomfortable situation (*You will eat with me*, i.e., with the teacher) or focus on negative consequences for the child’s negative behaviour (*You are not using your mind, you will go to the class with the little kids*). On another occasion, teacher *Zhao* threatened a boy with standing up punishment: “Do you want me to tell you to stand up? You are not even ashamed.” In this latter example, the teacher thus explicitly stressed the need to feel ashamed in such circumstances.

Sometimes, scaring the children was used as a disciplinarian technique. In the following example, the teacher is yelling at *Kang*, a boy who is often yelled at in kindergarten 1:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Kang* is standing by the bathroom door. He smiles at teacher *Liu*, as she walks past him. Then she says his name and something else, and he starts to cry. He says “*bu yao*” (*I didn’t do it*). Teacher *Zhou* says something to him, and he cries even more. The teacher is talking about him to the other children in the class. He is trying to stop crying, but he can’t. *Bo* [another child] is smiling. *Kang* is then left alone by the teachers.

Later, I ask teacher *Zhou* why *Kang* was crying. She says he cries a lot because he makes many mistakes. Therefore the teacher told him that he would have to stay behind and not leave the kindergarten when the others left today. Teacher *Zhou* said that they cannot do that, it is not allowed, but they just say it.

Kang was one of the boys who was frequently subject to yelling and punishment, and using techniques of scaring and threatening in order to make him compliant was presented as natural.

The teachers would not go through with such threats, but it was considered an efficient strategy for disciplinarian purposes.

The different expressions of disciplinarian practices mentioned in this section have clear disciplinarian purposes, such as expressing disappointment of the children's behaviour to evoke responsibility; reminding and testing to demand attention; express expectations of progress and ideal behaviour; use irony, sarcasm and criticism to underline self-control; and using techniques of scaring, yelling, and threatening for purposes of compliance. The following section will look at striving for ideal behaviour and its significance in the larger context of Chinese culture and society. Notions of moral training, shaming, and face losing, as well as how such practices bring a particular relevance to the role of others will be in focus.

7.3 Moral training: self-cultivation and shaming

The emphasis on ideal behaviour and making progress in the kindergarten setting can be translated to the notion of self-cultivation, an important contextual idea(l) in the Chinese context. Perfecting the moral nature of individuals and society is the highest goal of human fulfilment in Confucianism, and this is done through constant self-examination and “self-cultivation” (Adler, 2002). In the kindergarten setting, expectations related to self-progress and self-scrutiny was constantly expressed by the teachers, through phrases such as “use your mind” and “I will see who can do it.”

7.3.1 Children presenting moral stories

Moral training was also explicitly emphasised in kindergarten 1, through the practice of presenting moral stories in class.¹⁴⁷ The children, usually duty students (see 9.2.1), were often asked to perform four word stories (four-character idioms, *chengyu*) in front of the class. Such stories are short Chinese proverbs, idiomatic expressions, always containing a meaning or moral (*daoli*). Through such stories, the children learned about culture and moral, as well as about presentation, since they had to stand up in front of the class and present the stories.¹⁴⁸ The children were asked to find and practice on these stories at home. They were told to not take the stories they had already heard in the kindergarten (presented by other children), but to find new ones. When the children had finished their presentation, the teacher would ask the

¹⁴⁷ The children would also at times watch cartoons of four word stories in the classroom.

¹⁴⁸ Four word stories were part of the reading orientation profile of kindergarten 1.

class questions regarding the content of the story, as well as its meaning (*daoli*). Sometimes, the teacher would ask questions in the middle of a story as well, to see if children were paying attention:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Hua* stands up to say a four word story. *Hua* begins to say that his story is about making a big, thick iron stick into a little thread for webbing. Teacher *Zhou* tells him it is not loud enough, he must raise his voice. Teacher tells another boy to sit properly. “There is a poet, Li Bai. He was very smart, but did not study hard when he was little.” “Say it louder!” the teacher says. *Kang* is asked to repeat, but cannot. “One day he went out to play. He found a woman, she was making an iron thread. What are you doing? Making iron into a thread. How can you do it, it is so thick. If I only do it long enough, it will work.” The story is over and *Hua* then presents the *daoli*: “Use your heart, use your mind, and you can do it.” Teacher *Zhou* says: one more time, louder and slower. Teacher *Zhou* is nodding, while *Hua* repeats his presentation. When he is finished, teacher *Zhou* says: “If you are persistent to the end, you will be successful. What does the story say?” she asks *Hua*. He responds: “You do a good job, use your heart.”

When asked about the meaning behind four word story (in interviews), the teachers in kindergarten 1 says: “[It is about] connection to primary school and about ‘reading orientation.’¹⁴⁹ Helps children with passive-active relationship [from passive to active] and they can practice language expression in front of the whole class.” Presenting stories in class (in kindergarten 1) was supposed to both help the children improve their presentation skills, as well as indirectly teaching the children about culture and morals (from the Chinese idioms).

Moral training was also linked to group membership, particular to the obligations individuals have to the larger group. Moral training is thus intimately connected to disciplinarian practices, and has to do with knowing your place in the world and understanding your relation with other people. Wilson refers to several examples of moral training taking place in schools, containing messages of desirability of group solidarity, conformity, and loyalty.¹⁵⁰ Whereas loyalty might be stressed as a fundamental virtue in group behaviour throughout the educational period, there may be a difference in focus during this period; in the beginning, the child might learn that

¹⁴⁹ The kindergarten profile for this kindergarten.

¹⁵⁰ One example he gives is the following; an elementary level text book used on Taiwan contains a story of a goose who flies away from the flock (*Kuo-li Pien I Kuan* 1964). “Twice the small goose does this and twice other members of the flock fly after him to attempt to persuade the small goose to return. The third time that the small goose departs, however, a hawk spies and seizes him. The admonitions given by other members of the flock to the small goose during this story contain injunctions such as, “such wild flying is not permitted,” “you must follow the rules of the group,” “being with the group is most important,” and, of course, the tragic ending is designed to provide confirmation that departing from group rules and norms is highly undesirable and dangerous” (Wilson, 1981:123).

loyalty is an important virtue in small group settings, such as the family or classroom context, and by the time the child reaches Grade 5 or 6, loyalty also includes citizenship behaviour (loyalty to the nation) (Wilson, 1981).

7.3.2 Shaming techniques and the understanding of face

Disciplinarian techniques involving direct criticism or yelling may have been used as ‘shaming techniques’ (see Section 2.3.2), aiming to teach children about social norms and expectations in their role as kindergarten students and as children. Such concepts are related to the understanding of contemporary Chinese childhood, and consequently, what disciplinarian practices can entail and mean for those involved. Contextual views of children and childhood, such as when children are capable of ‘understanding things’ (*dong shi*) (Wu, 1995) and when they are able to ‘lose face’ (*tiu lien*) (Saari, 1990), are important to include in such discussions (see 2.3.2). The children in the kindergarten are in this understanding capable of ‘understanding things,’ and may therefore be ‘shamed’ publicly, sometimes ‘harshly’ or through humiliation. However, they are not believed to have face, a sensitivity not considered to take place before puberty or in adolescence, and such humiliation and public criticism may therefore not be considered harmful or degrading to the individual child in this context.

As exemplified, the language used in the interaction between the teachers and the children illustrate expectations of self-control and maturity; the phrase ‘use your mind’ itself indicates that the children *have* a mind to use. Simultaneously, the teachers also approach the children with sarcastic remarks, and at times yell or use threats, indicating a view of children as immature and as not ‘having face,’ seeing that this would be extremely humiliating treatment for anyone ‘with face.’ In a similar way, on the one hand children are told that it is their own fault if they have less time to play, they must assume responsibility for their own behaviours (causing lack of time for play), while on the other hand children are told that they are backwards or faint (stupid) and that they may as well leave their peers and join the younger children in the middle classes (one year younger). Furthermore, the children are treated differently both by the teachers and by the other children (more on this in Chapters 8, 9, and 10).

For the children, the symbolic significance of face is real, and several children expressed themselves in ways indicating that they had experiences of embarrassment, and that they had an understanding of the mechanisms of shame. During interviews in kindergarten 1, when asking the children about feelings of embarrassment, one child said that “both adults and

children feel embarrassment.” A child in kindergarten 2 said during an interview that “When you are criticized by teachers, when I am criticized by teachers, will feel embarrassed,” for example if he had made mistakes in his homework. During interviews in kindergarten 1, the children (four children in this interview) talked about their understanding of embarrassment in the following way:

(Kindergarten 1, child interview)

Interpreter: In your dream kindergarten, any embarrassing things? Or things [that] will make you lose face?

C: No.

C: No.

Interpreter: Or embarrassing things.

C: No, my, my kindergarten is empty, no.

Interpreter: What is empty?

C: That is nobody.

C: Nobody.

C: Yes, nobody.

Interpreter: Do you mean in your dream kindergarten, it's empty inside?

C: Yes.

Interpreter: Nobody?

C: Only toys.

Interpreter: Eh, then who else besides you?

C: Nobody.

Interpreter: Only you?

C: And my papa.

C: And my mum, and my elder brother.

The reply of this child illustrates an important point in relation to face; losing face requires other people, an audience, in order to take place (Fung, 1999; Schoenhals, 1993). An insider/outsider distinction is relevant here, as one does not lose face to close family members, at least not to the same extent as to strangers (Schoenhals, 1993). Although the children were emphasising the lack of other people in the kindergarten in the beginning, the interpreter asked the question several times, possibly influencing the children to add other people in their dream kindergarten. However, those chosen were close family members, and after some time in the interview, the dream kindergarten also included ‘other little friends.’

Disciplinarian practices directed at individual children had a very ‘public’ character and took place in presence of other children in the classroom. Children were not taken aside to receive reprimands or others forms of disciplinarian practice in absence of other children in everyday settings. Rather, such moments could be used by the teachers for purposes of discipline, using children as examples for other children to follow (more in Chapter 8). The quote above thus

illustrates that the children might understand the social mechanisms of shame and losing face, even if they might not actually lose face themselves.

Including understandings of shame and face have implications for what disciplinarian practices mean in context. Shaming can be understood as a strategy for teaching children about the significance and meaning of face, as well as for the corporal understanding (and feeling) of group harmony and group membership. In the kindergartens, we have seen how public approaches of criticism (and humiliation) had an explicitly public character, which will be further explored in the following chapter where evaluation, relationality and the role of others in relation to disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten classrooms is in focus. In the following section, I turn the attention towards theorizing disciplinarian practices using the relationship between children and adults as a frame of reference.

7.4 Generational order and reciprocal obligations in the kindergarten

Generational ordering is a system of social ordering between generational categories that are positioned in and act within necessary interrelations with each other (Alanen, 2009a). Childhood and adulthood are social categories that could be considered interdependent, internally connected and mutually constituted, and thus reciprocally presume each other (Alanen, 2009a). Through intergenerational practices and interaction taking place between members of existing categories, childhood and adulthood are produced and reproduced, and a particular social structure recurrently emerges through practice. This structure is a particular organization of social relations between generational categories—a generational order (Alanen, 2009a).

As emphasised through various disciplinarian practices and techniques, the social relationship between children and teachers in the kindergarten is an asymmetrical relation; children and adults are positioned differently in the social space of the kindergarten, and the different positions are characterized by opposing and reciprocally different ways of acting. Being a teacher in this space entails taking the role as dominator—not only for pedagogical and institutional reasons, but, as has been shown, also contains a practical side; particularly in kindergarten 1 which practices the turn-shift system, meaning that one teacher should manage the whole child group consisting of around 30 children. As emphasized by law (see Section 2.2.1), and in contextual literature on role obligations (see Section 2.3) and as stressed in various ways in everyday practice (see e.g., Section 7.2), the teacher role should automatically be

respected. Expectations of absolute obedience is manifested in practices, explicit and implicit subtle utterances and expressions; the teachers express such demands in a range of ways, although there is also a certain unpredictability involved as the teachers might not constantly enforce the same demands. The general message expressed by the teachers however, is that they have certain expectations of the children, which might involve punishing those who disturb the class harmony, or encourage in various ways how children should conform to or work for the benefit of the group. The teachers are in other words the dominator in intergenerational relations, and children should play their part as the subordinates. Being a child or student in this relation thus require living up to expectations; being a good student involves learning and making progress, acting in subordinate ways, accepting orders, and doing as the teacher asks. Such factors emphasize how both teachers and children engage in everyday practices that enforce their positions in social space.

The language and manner of expression used by teachers in the kindergarten furthermore underline the power dimension at play in this relationship. The teachers' authority is thoroughly expressed in direct and indirect speech, illustrated through the various ways of communicating discipline, such as through direct or indirect comments, critiques and reminders from the teachers to the children. As such, intergenerational linguistic relations are relations of symbolic power illustrating the asymmetrical relations between the speaker (the teachers) and the audience (the children) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:142).

7.5 Summary Chapter 7

This chapter elaborates on how discipline is communicated by the teachers in the kindergarten, expressed in both verbal and non-verbal ways. Through *guan* (loving control) and using techniques such as sarcasm, irony, criticism, yelling, and threats, as well as testing and reminding, particular values are conveyed to the children by the teachers: striving for ideal behaviour and self-progress and becoming responsible, attentive, self-controlled and obedient children. Such values are seen in light of contextually relevant notions of shaming, face losing and the role of others, as well as the notion of *generational order* (2009a); a system of ordering emphasising the reciprocal relationship and mutually constitutive categories of childhood and adulthood in the kindergarten. The emic concepts of *guan* (a form of 'loving control') and *guai* (being obedient, well-behaved, and smart) presents contextually significant frames of reference (capital forms) for understanding disciplinarian practices in Chinese kindergartens, and will reappear in later chapters.

8 Disciplinary practices: Evaluation and discipline as relational practices

Evaluation played a significant role in everyday disciplinary practices in the two kindergartens. Evaluation has both a private/self and a public/other element to it, illustrated both in the constant expectations to and encouragements of individual self-progress, as well as the evaluative practices of comparison and ranking which took place in public in front of the kindergarten class. This chapter will elaborate on evaluative disciplinary practices in the kindergartens, such as *public evaluation* and *self-evaluation, comparison, and being examples for others, individual differentiation* and the *giving or removing of privileges*. Such forms of evaluative disciplinary practices find resonance in contemporary and historical regulative practices, such as in the evaluation and regimentation of individuals (e.g., in personnel files or in evaluation files in educational institutions), as well as in the historical role of criticism in public settings, including public expectations of individual self-criticism. Practices of evaluation and discipline will be explored as relational practices, using Bourdieu's theory on social life and practice.

8.1 Evaluation and public scrutiny in the kindergartens

The children in the kindergartens were constantly subject to evaluation through a range of practices and techniques such as comparing, ranking, premiering and punishing, praise and criticism, as well as through being made examples for others, both positively and negatively. Such practices took place in the presence of others, and both individual children and the whole or parts of the group would be subject to evaluative practices. The children were also expected to be self-evaluative, as exemplified in the emphasis on individual self-progress and "using your mind" which was constantly reinforced and stressed as important by the teachers (see Chapter 7).

8.1.1 Public evaluation and (public) self-evaluation

The phenomenon of ranking was present in many settings during fieldwork.¹⁵¹ Evaluation could be directed at individual children, parts of or the whole class, and could take place both as a class activity (children asked by the teachers to evaluate other children), as well as something

¹⁵¹ The evaluating and ranking of different phenomena took place in different settings: the principal in kindergarten 2 would ask me if I thought discipline in Chinese kindergartens were better than discipline in Norwegian ones (I also got this question from Chinese academics at a conference in Norway). Another example was when my interpreter asked me I preferred boys or girls, saying that she herself preferred girls because they were cuter. My reluctance to choose one over the other in these instances was not considered a good answer.

the teacher did in front of the class. In both kindergartens, evaluation was related to individual behaviour and characteristics, as well as the grading or ranking (e.g., as good or bad) of the children's artworks and activities. In the following example, the children in kindergarten 1 are drawing cars, which they will hang on the walls of the classroom (part of a wall series on the city and the neighbourhood). The teacher has hung up some examples on the board, for the children to look at:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The teacher says: "Everybody look at me. Choose one picture." She is quiet for a little while. "One person is still not ready" [still talking]. She continues: "You can paint like these pictures [laminated pictures of drawn vehicles, taped on the wall] or you can draw in your own way. Write your name first. Only those who are sitting still can get their paper. I will only remind you once, I will not repeat it. Write on one side, and turn around the paper and then draw." Several of the children are looking at the cars hanging on the board. The teacher hears the children talking and says: "Who is drawing a picture with their mouth? You are so skilful. You can show [me] the picture when you are done. You can only draw one or two [cars], so that the drawing is not so messy. You don't have to draw the roads, just the cars. Look at him [referring to a boy], he has already drawn two." Some of the children are chatting a little by their tables. "Make sure that the cars are full of colour" the teacher says. "Can you see this picture [a girl's picture]. What kind of car is this? Make the lines more clearly so that we can see it properly. And put colour on it." The children finish their drawings and move to their places in the four lines. The teacher sits down. The assistant comes in and starts cleaning the tables. The teacher has a pile of drawings on her table. She holds up a drawing and asks: "Is it beautiful or not?" "Not good" (*bu hao*), the children shout out. The good drawings are hung on the board. Teacher says: "This car is beautiful, but it is too small. If you can draw it bigger, it will be beautiful. Draw bigger next time." About the next drawing she says: "This is not bad, but you should draw the car in the middle of the paper and not on the side like this. It is too small too." About the next one, she says: "This is beautiful." She immediately hangs up the drawing, without asking the children if it is good. "This is a very cute motorbike, but too small. Look at this one, see, you must draw bigger. You can finish it at home. I will choose some more later."

Several communicative techniques described in Chapter 7 are used in this example. The teacher uses sentences like "I will tell you only once, I will not repeat it" and "only those who are sitting still can get their paper" in order to get the children's attention and demand obedience. In addition, the teacher uses sarcastic and metaphorical language (*who is drawing a picture with their mouth? You are so skilful*), and make examples of individual children in both positive (*look at him, he has already drawn two*) and negative ways (*can you see this picture. What kind of car is this? Make the lines more clearly so that we can see it properly*). In the example the children are explicitly told that they can draw how they like, but the teacher still gives very

clear instructions as to how these drawings should look when they are finished. This sort of situation, telling the children they are allowed to draw what they want while simultaneously directing the activity into a particular direction, can also be found in other situations (e.g., the team leader election, see Section 9.2.3). When the teacher is going through all the drawings, looking at the good and bad qualities in each drawing and sharing this with the child group, she shows them how the different drawings can be improved and made better. A drawing is not necessarily finished if a child thinks so; the teacher may tell a child that s/he must fill in the blanks or make straighter lines first. This happened in both kindergartens. As exemplified (above and in Chapter 7), the teachers would use binary opposing classificatory markers such as ugly or beautiful and stupid or clever as evaluative markers when talking about the children's artwork or behaviour. This form of evaluation was also found amongst second-graders in a Beijing primary school, where children's work in the classroom were evaluated as either ugly (*bu haokan*) or pretty (*hao kan*) by the teachers (Naftali, 2007:232-233).¹⁵² Other examples of forms of evaluation in the kindergartens were evaluative posters hanging on the classroom walls where individual children were premiered or 'criticised' for characteristics or behaviours (such as 'star children,' and 'fit children') (see 6.1.2).

In addition to individual public evaluative practices, were other forms of evaluation that could be characterized as public forms of self-evaluation. In kindergarten 2, this included organized sessions of self-analysis after the role play, or how the teachers would ask duty children to stand up, while the rest of the class commented on their presentation, emphasising who was the best at 'reporting' the news. In kindergarten 1, analysing behaviour could be the topic for the morning gathering, for example if there had been a conflict during the morning play or if the teachers wanted to bring up a topic. In addition, sometimes when the teacher would yell at someone in front of the class, she might talk to the class about the misbehaving child, analysing the episode together with the children in the class after the incident.

¹⁵² According to Naftali (2007), there was a tension regarding the public ranking of children; on the one side, public ranking in class was no longer allowed on the schools she stayed at, and in online discussions, teachers and others would express their dismay with such practices. During her fieldwork, however, in both schools she stayed in, "achievement" charts and visible celebration of certain students and punishments of others (e.g., through public verbal scolding or standing at the seat), would take place (Naftali, 2007).

8.1.2 Comparison and being examples for others

The teachers constantly compare the children or the class with others; both with children in the class and with other classes (same level classes and middle/small classes). The children are particularly compared to younger class children if they behave badly. For example, the teacher in kindergarten 1 told a boy that he was “moving backwards, that it is not good. He is like the middle class children.” Similarly, in kindergarten 2, a teacher would say “we have said it before. We don’t have to say the limit [the answer—you should know], we are not in middle class.” Through comparing, the teachers would express their expectations; in this incident, that the children could behave better and more mature than their younger counterparts. The teachers could also compare the children sitting on lines of chairs in the classroom:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher says “Look at this line, they are so good. We will compare which line is best. We have four lines. It is clear that this one [line two] is the best” she says. The children in line two are sitting with their legs close together, feet on the floor, hands leaning on their knees. The other groups are not sitting straight like that.

In kindergarten 2, such a competitive relationship was found between the classes. During special Monday, the best behaving class in the kindergarten would receive a price from the principal in the form of a travelling trophy.¹⁵³

The children’s behaviour and achievements are also used as examples for other children in order to show both how something *should* and how something *should not* be done. Sometimes, the child’s skills would be the focal interest. The following example from kindergarten 1 shows how *Shu*, one of the girls in the class considered very clever, was awarded with a phone call to one of the teachers’ friends:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) All the children are sitting on their seat in the four lines. Teacher *Liu* calls somebody on her cell phone and the children are paying close attention. She talks on the phone for a short while, and then *Shu* gets to talk to the person

¹⁵³ Some Mondays, the whole kindergarten would partake in special Monday, where the children would be lined up in the front yard, according to their classes. The children would be turned toward the flag, respecting the flag while they sang the national anthem. The teachers said that the main aim was for the children to love the country, love the flag and love the national song. In addition, a teacher would talk to the children through a megaphone, asking questions to the children, and several children would raise their hands to answer. Children would be chosen to go up to her, and answer the question through the megaphone. The teacher would e.g., ask questions about education, about what the children were doing during play or sports in the morning, as well as asks the children about the rules, how to play, what they must obey and notice. Then the principal talks to the children, and the special Monday will end after the best behaving class has been given a reward, a travelling trophy which will be placed in the classroom until the next special Monday. When asking one of the girls in the class (kindergarten 2) about the trophy, she said: “It is a respect and politeness thing.” “What do you mean?” my interpreter asked her. She answered: “it is respecting Chairman Mao.”

on the phone. A mother comes to pick up her child while teacher *Liu* is letting *Shu* speak on the phone, and teacher *Liu* waves the child to the door and keeps looking at *Shu* and smiling. Then they hang up and *Shu* sits down.

Later on, I ask teacher *Liu* who *Shu* was talking to on the phone. She says “oh, that girl is very intelligent, she knows a lot, she reads book on her own about many things. She was talking about planes, and I have a friend who is a ... (showing me a plane steering wheel with her hands” “...Pilot?” I say. “Yes, a pilot, so she talked to him.”

Shu was often used as a good example for others, such as being asked to answer a lot of questions regarding topics that were considered difficult for the children (biology, anatomy, zoology etc.). She was good at science, and was premiered by the teachers for this. In addition, she was little and cute, and the teachers seemed to like her for this reason as well (see 9.3.1). She was, however, also a little clumsy and would therefore sometimes be tested by the teachers in front of the class. She could be told to stand in front of the class and show how she was *not talented* at a particular activity. The following example illustrates such an episode, where *Shu* was asked to show the other children her (lack of) skills in marching:

(Kindergarten 1, outside in courtyard) The children are standing in a circle, practicing marching. *Shu* is not doing it correctly and the teacher drags her into the circle. She has to stand there and watch the other children march for a little while. She looks uncomfortable. I make eye contact with her (I am outside the circle) several times, and it is difficult to read her expression. She does not cry, but she does not seem to be enjoying standing there as the one who cannot do it. Everybody stops marching and she has to march in front of everyone. She is hesitant, but tries. The teacher is not happy. Everybody is laughing at her effort. She is not doing it correctly, not with as much force as the other children, and not with tight movements. She laughs a little as well, when she sees the other children’s reaction. Another girl is picked out to stand in the circle and show everyone how it should be done. *Shu* joins the circle again. Then everybody has to hold their arms straight forward out into the air, while the teacher walks around the circle and inspects. The ones who are doing good, she pats on the head lightly and they can take their hands down. The children who get a pat on the head laugh and seem relieved, but pay attention to see how the other children are doing—who gets a pat and who doesn’t. Some of the children take their hands straight down to the side of their bodies, army style. Later on during other games outside, *Shu* seems happy, smiling and laughing a lot when playing.

Being made an example for others for not mastering an activity and exposed to public criticism in the form of laughter, was not uncommon. If a child could not perform well at something, others would sometimes laugh and this included both children and teachers. Laughter was also

considered a form of evaluation among Schoenhals' informants in a Beijing middle school (older students) (Schoenhals, 1993).

8.1.3 Individual differentiation: giving and removing privileges

The teachers give prizes to children for good behaviour. In kindergarten 1, if the children behave well, dance well, answer questions correctly, eat well (fast and quiet), come early to the kindergarten (before 08:10) etc., they could receive a sticker on their forehead,¹⁵⁴ hand or shirt. The children bring the stickers home and keep them there. At the end of the year, they will bring the stickers back to the kindergarten and show the teacher how many they have, and will then receive a prize. The teachers also have a little plastic bag with little plastic figures (a flute, a little car etc. bought online), which they hand out to the children as prizes now and then. In kindergarten 2, the children have a stamp book; a teacher-made leaflet with little squares where the teachers can give the children stamps.¹⁵⁵ When they get a certain amount they receive a prize from the teacher. The prizes are different items (pencils, plastic toys etc.) that have been brought by the children from home, as prizes.

“Well-behaved” children (those considered good students) also receive privileges in the form of being selected to attend other activities. When I asked the teachers how they chose who would partake in activities outside the classroom, the teacher told me that “the other” children (those not picked that day) would be picked next time. This however, did not happen often during my stay; usually the same children were selected every time for activities outside the classroom. This same group of children were also often asked to help the teacher and were selected to be little teachers (see Chapter 9).

The teachers also remove the privileges already given, for example take away stickers if they had been wrongly distributed (example below from kindergarten 1), or ‘unselect’ children for demonstration classes¹⁵⁶ (example from kindergarten 2):

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Some children are standing up [praise for those who arrived before 08:10]. These children all receive a sticker on their forehead. For some reason,

¹⁵⁴ Sticker on forehead as award after performing well in class was also done among first graders in a urban Chinese Primary school (Naftali 2007).

¹⁵⁵ This leaflet is the same style as recording books (see 6.1.2); A5 sized leaflets with plastic covers.

¹⁵⁶ This kindergarten arranges demonstration (demo) classes, and kindergarten teachers from other kindergartens (far or near) can come and observe. A relatively small group of children (around 10) are chosen to be part of the class each time, and a teacher will demonstrate a particular teaching procedure. Children from different classes would partake in demo classes each time.

teacher *Liu* also gives one to two boys who are sitting down, but she soon realizes her mistake [they did not come early] and takes the stickers away from their foreheads again.

(Kindergarten 2, classroom) The children sit in their chairs and teacher *Wu* calls the names on the children who will go to the public class. As their names are called, they stand up. At one point, she calls a boy and he stands up, but then she changes her mind and tells him to sit down again. A boy is talking, and teacher *Wu* says: “Don’t talk, if you talk I will take your duty card.”¹⁵⁷ She says to another boy: “Use your mind in public class.” And then she says: “I will see if you dance well, cute or not.”

Such distribution (and redistribution) clearly shows that certain types of behaviours are premised by the teachers, whereas others are not. This example also exemplifies (mild) threats of punishment and withdrawal of privileges (*if you talk, I will take your duty card*).

8.1.4 Trading punishment

It did happen that children could be placed into situations where they had to decide which other children that should be punished, such as in the following example:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Jian* is the one who has to wait the longest for food today. He had not behaved well so he had to stand up. Teacher *Zhou* says: “Keep watching [while the other children are eating], you can pick one [child] and then you will understand. I ask you to pick those who speak while eating. You must keep standing until you find someone who behaves bad, and then that child can replace you.”

In this example, the teacher is giving *Jian* a way out of his punishment; namely to *trade* his punishment for someone else’s. Since he is already in an unfortunate position, being punished in front of the class, the teacher will let him escape this position, by picking another child (who is talking during lunch, when the children should be quiet). The teacher is framing this activity as a learning experience for *Jian*; he will understand once he has picked another child who does not behave well. Through this, *Jian* becomes personally involved in the decision making process for other children’s punishment (see also 9.2.2). The temporary aspect is present in this situation as well; the situation resolves itself when *Jian* soon is told to sit down and eat, and the teachers directed their attention elsewhere. In this way, children become personally linked with others through disciplinarian practices.

¹⁵⁷ The children in kindergarten 2 have a duty card around their necks when they are duty student (in kindergarten 1, the children wear a band around their arms). See 9.2.1 for more on duty children.

Individual differentiation in terms of gender was particularly evident in relation to children at the lower end of the classroom hierarchy. Those generally receiving the harshest treatment and disciplinarian action from teachers and other children were boys. An incident of severe yelling at a child in a younger class in kindergarten 1, for example, surprised and shocked my interpreter; she could not believe that they would yell so much at a *girl*. Apart from that, both girls and boys would receive reprimands and direct punishment and there was generally little differential treatment in terms of gender. Both girls and boys were among the ‘best students’ and there was also a relatively even distribution of gender in the large majority of the class.

8.2 Evaluation and criticism in Chinese society

Evaluation is both a public and a private matter in Chinese society, and will in this section be exemplified through some particular societal evaluative practices; the small group analysis, the home-visit, the personnel file and evaluative tables in educational settings. Evaluation is a constant, daily, continuous, ever-present activity, and for many Chinese, a normal way of organizing things (Bakken, 1994:199). According to Schoenhals, evaluation plays a fundamental role in Chinese culture; in a set of things, some things (what, or who) are always better than others (1993:18).

A core example of such evaluative processes is the *small group (xiaozu)*, found on all levels of Chinese society (schools, factories, neighbourhoods, prisons and military camps). In the small group, groups of individuals meet on a regular basis in order to analyse their own attitudes and reconsider their values in light of the exemplar collectivity, and such groups are formed and supervised by higher authorities (Bakken, 1994:197).¹⁵⁸ As illustrated above (8.1.1), the kindergarten equivalent to such practices could be the way the children were involved in sessions of analysis, analysing own behaviour and the behaviour of others. Such practices took place in both kindergartens and involved the whole class (the class as a group); in kindergarten 2, part of the role-play discussion (analysing the role play) and in kindergarten 1, often after the morning play, when the teacher would take up problematic aspects or potential conflicts that

¹⁵⁸ Schoenhals refer to such meetings as *small group criticism*—‘study sessions’—where cadres, students (including secondary students), soldiers, ordinary workers, urban residents, and others, meet in groups consisting of no more than 15 people. The meetings are mandatory and may take place on a weekly basis. During small group sessions, people discuss and critically examine individual members’ attitudes and actions, either through discussing and commenting on political documents or through criticising each other for “attitudes or actions that are seen as contradictory to Communist policy or principle,” and members are also expected to make self-criticisms (Schoenhals, 1993:50).

appeared during the morning play. Another element of regimentation in society, which compliments the small group analysis, according to Bakken, was the gathering of knowledge about individuals in the *home-visit (jiafang)*. Such visits might go to parents of students or young workers, and was about gathering background information on students, workers, and their parents (Bakken, 1994:198). This information was then to be placed in the personnel files.

The personnel file (*renshi dang'an*) (reintroduced in the 1980s) is part of the whole work-unit system in China, including the school system; it is an individual personal file¹⁵⁹ that contains all kinds of historical documentation on the members of a unit (Bakken, 1994:231-235). The three main sections of the personnel file are: cadre files (*ganbu dang'an*), worker files (*gongren dang'an*), and student files (*xuesheng dang'an*). Information in the files include: 1) personal details (education and work experience), 2) personal CV (personal experiences, family situation, social connections), 3) appraisals, 4) exam results, proficiency assessments, 5) political history (including eventual self-criticisms), 6) membership in the Party and Youth League, 7) awards, titles and honours, 8) disciplinary actions and punishments, 9) appointments and removal from positions, wage levels, and 10) other. Such files thus contain information on all sides of an individual's life, and each file follows individuals from secondary school to the grave (Bakken, 1994:232-234). As mentioned in previous chapters, both kindergartens had folders for the children, where various forms of information would be placed, in addition to various forms of folders connected to different activities in the classroom, where the children could record their accomplishments (see 6.1.2).

Another example of evaluation in Chinese society was individual evaluations and overviews of merits and demerits encouraged in schools, sometimes in the form of evaluation tables (Bakken, 1994:232). Such tables would have detailed instruction and rules regarding advised behaviour, along with concrete consequences.¹⁶⁰ Bakken also spoke of how people have sense of where limits lie with regards to bad behaviour and potential negative consequences.

¹⁵⁹ Higher cadres will have a double file system with two files for one individual; one important and highly confidential file, and the other shorter and less confidential (Bakken, 1994:233).

¹⁶⁰ Bakken refers to an internal school document; an evaluation table from a 1987 secondary school in Harbin (Bakken, 1994:209). The table is divided into four standards; excellent, good, average and bad. The form is divided into four main areas: student's participation in social and political-ideological activities organized by the school; attitude towards school rules and discipline; attitudes towards physical labour; dress and personal style. Bakken also refers to more detailed examples point allocation where different points can be earned through receiving praise from school plenary meeting (2 points) or not being absent from class without leave, not coming late or leaving early (up to 3 points) or doing a good job as Youth League member or activist in Young pioneers (1-3 points).

These different forms of evaluative practices illustrate how evaluation is an everyday concern in Chinese society. All sorts of groups, such as students, employees, teachers, and leaders are expected to undertake self-evaluation (often written), which is primarily about “restraining oneself, and acting in accordance with the collective rules” (Bakken, 1994:198). Since self stands in the way of the exemplary norms, “self” (*ziwo*), “self-centeredness” (*zisi*) and “freedom” (*ziyou*) have connotations of something negative and something hidden, and as something going against the collective norms (Bakken, 1994:199).

Public and self-criticism¹⁶¹ also exist in Chinese schools, such as in the *public criticism* of students as well as in the *self-criticism* undertaken by students (which is also made public) (Schoenhals, 1993:25-38). Inferiors (students) could criticize superiors (teachers), usually not directly, but mild criticism could occur. Superiors (teachers) could also criticize inferiors (students), but this would usually not take place directly either (unless serious) since this would make the student lose face. A student could be criticized in front of the whole school, in front of both students, teachers and administrators, and if the offence was serious, it would be reported in the student’s file (*dang’an*, see above). Self-criticism could also be used as a disciplinarian measure in school contexts, and it is valued as a form of punishment, for example for students who have misbehaved in class. Self-criticisms are admissions of wrongdoings containing promises to not repeat such mistakes in the future. Such admissions can be written

Points can also be deducted for disturbing class order and getting criticised for it (1 point), quarrelling (2 points) or fighting (10 points) (Bakken, 1994:208-211). Some institutions will have very specific point-deduction demerits, such as e.g., skipping rope outside school or kicking the ball against the school wall (leading to a two point deduction); littering, pouring out dirty water or spitting on the floor (minus three points); or damaging flower beds and trees (minus five points) (Bakken, 1994:210).

¹⁶¹ Public and private criticism was used particularly effectively by the communist party and foreman Mao in Communist China (Schoenhals, 1993). According to Schoenhals (1993:56), the practice of criticizing others was seen as a revolutionary duty during the Cultural Revolution, and those who were reluctant to criticise others or who tried to obstruct mass criticism, would *themselves* be criticized. Students would criticise their teachers, and people were even persuaded and forced to criticise their own parents or close relatives (Schoenhals, 1993). In addition to the ‘small group criticism,’ other forms of criticism in Communist China were *public criticism*, “*big character poster*” and *press criticism* (Schoenhals, 1993:50-54). Public criticism is a public denunciation of individuals considered to be an enemy or a criminal. This form was used with a particularly high frequency during the Cultural Revolution, often with crowds numbering 100,000 people (Schoenhals, 1993:51-52). “Big character poster” consisted of the writing of big posters posted in public contexts for all to see. These posters often had political slogans or rhetoric written on them, sometimes also targeting individuals (Schoenhals, 1993:53-54). A final form of criticism was press criticism, in which individuals were targeted through the media (e.g., in the official and Red Guard press¹⁶¹), particularly in the form of articles (Schoenhals, 1993:54).

down and the student might have to read them out loud in class or hang them on public blackboards for the whole school to see (Schoenhals, 1993:35).¹⁶²

According to Schoenhals, criticism (understood as negative evaluation) in the Chinese context must be understood as a *social* leveller which complements positive evaluation (1993:26). Criticism (as negative evaluation) is a social leveller because it can 1) keep down those who unjustifiably try to rise above the crowd (through affecting their reputation), and 2) be a means of social control by institutions, authority figures, and parents, using criticism as negative sanction (Schoenhals, 1993:25-26). As we will see later on, a specific form of disciplinarian practice that took place in kindergarten 2 was designed to work like an *emotional* leveller—linked to the contemporary views on childhood and the need to balance children’s mental state (see Chapter 10).

8.3 Embodied relationality and a differential generational order

Evaluation and differential treatment, as well as making an example of individual children’s performance, either positively or negatively, are ways of teaching individual children and the child group how things should or should not be done.

A relational understanding of the individual in the Chinese context has been stressed by many scholars from different backgrounds and disciplines, using different concepts and terms. The topic has for example been explained as a differential mode of association (Xiaotong et al., 1992) or as a particular form of individualism with a distinct Chinese profile, which does not see individualism as emancipating, but rather strongly connected to the well-being and strength of the nation state (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010). Bakken talks about the connection between internal and external yardsticks, the strong importance of concepts such as ‘other’ and ‘outer’ in Chinese culture, and the binding of individuals to the exemplary norm (through evaluation)

¹⁶² Schoenhals gives an example of a self-criticism, written by a student at the Third Affiliated school, is : “Teacher X (teacher’s name). Last Friday during your class you [the student uses the polite form of “you”] called me on to answer a question. I, however, could not answer. At that time you kind-heartedly advised me that I must study diligently, yet underneath I was still reluctant, and offhandedly said some dirty words. At that time, even though you were angry, you continued class so as not to interfere with class for other students. I, however, did not understand the teacher’s [teacher X] frame of mind, and didn’t pay any attention to you. Today, after Teacher Y [the student’s class teacher] talked with me, only then did I realize that my behaviour at the time was truly excessive, truly disrespectful to the teacher, indeed the kind of behaviour that makes people mad. I hope you won’t be too angry, and I earnestly ask you to let me continue coming to your class, forgiving me this time. From now on, during your class I will earnestly pay attention, and will remedy my past disrespect toward you. Student: (Student’s name)” (Schoenhals 1993:35-36).

(Bakken, 1994). According to Bakken, “Chinese see themselves and learn about themselves only from other persons, a relational approach expressed in the Chinese concept of *talü*, which can be translated as “other-ruled” (Bakken, 1994:196, emphasis in original). Saari explains it as “not separate individuals linked together, but related persons developing individuality within the group” (Saari, 1990:112). Among cultural psychologists, this phenomenon has been referred to as an interdependent concept of self (Wong & Tsai, 2007) or as relational identity (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). The relational aspect can be linked with Confucian teachings (particularly moral training and role relationships, see Sections 2.3 and 7.3), as well as an emphasis on face and shame which functions as a form of ‘glue’ (in terms of social control and self-control) in relationships between people. Children learn about such matters from an early age in their home environments as well as through disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten.

The ‘execution of’ disciplinarian practices in the two Chinese kindergartens in question are not static; rather, they relate to factors such as *who* the actors involved are (both teachers and children), as well as to the particularity of the *situation* in which it is carried out. The children are positioned *differently* in social space and there is hierarchy in the child group. The children are bearers of different amounts and compilations of capital; i.e., that which is considered legitimate knowledge and skills in the kindergarten field (further exemplified and discussed in Chapter 9). Bourdieu’s conceptual link between *habitus*, *field*, and *capital* provide an angle from which children’s experiences with disciplinarian practices and structures in the kindergarten class can be explored, with particular attention to how children actively partake in disciplinarian practices and relationships of domination with other children.

In this thesis, I emphasise a relational approach using theorizations of social life by Bourdieu (1977, 2011; 1992a). This choice is made due to the relational aspects in Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts; agents are always seen in relation to structural surroundings, other agents, and agents’ possession and compilation of capital and position in social space or field.¹⁶³ In order to capture the double reality of the social world one needs to account for both spaces of positions and agents’ dispositions because “there exist a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world—particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields—and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to it” (Wacquant, 1992:12). This is because cumulative exposure to a certain social space or to

¹⁶³ See 4.3.3 on the relation between the concepts *field* and *subfield*. The ‘kindergarten field’ is analytically defined as a subfield, but will be referred to as field in the text for the sake of readability.

certain social conditions “instils in individuals an ensemble of durable and transposable dispositions that internalize the necessities of the extant social environment” (Wacquant, 1992:13). In other words, through daily exposure to a particular social environment, the kindergarten daily life, the children become familiar with the particularities of social life in this context, with disciplinarian practices, with ways of organizing the world, which makes sense to them because it is what they are accustomed to. This particular social life is meaningful to the children because they are familiar with it, they have been exposed to particular ways of talking and acting which makes out the world as they know it, and which makes sense to them for this reason. As elaborated on in Chapter 6, the children’s various experiences in everyday life in the kindergarten setting become *embodied* knowledge; particular forms of organizing daily practice, ways of moving (Chapter 6), ways of talking (Chapter 7), and such forms of practice and expressions of values are lived through everyday practices. What links agents with social field is a form of embodied sociality called *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:126) (more on habitus in Chapter 10).

As has been explored in this chapter, this intergenerational relation is also *differential*, in the sense that different children (or the same child) are treated differently by the teachers. Through differential treatment, public criticism, and evaluation, the children experience that no one is exempt from critique and that other children’s practices may have consequences for them. The children must relate their practices and behaviours to others, both children and adults, and in such ways the everyday production and reproduction of childhood and adulthood is relational. Such a form of individual differentiation thus becomes part of a reproduction of intergenerational structures in the kindergarten setting, and as stressed by Bakken, individual differentiation and evaluation is also a relevant frame of reference for how the individual is understood within the collective in the Chinese context (Bakken, 1994:204-205). As will be further explored in the following chapter, this form of differentiation is also of relevance when addressing the child group.

8.4 Summary Chapter 8

This chapter has explored disciplinarian practices connected to evaluation in the kindergarten, and they are: *public* and *self-evaluation*, *comparison* and *making examples* of children for others (positively or negatively) and *individual differentiation* and *giving/removing privileges*. Such evaluative disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten have been illuminated by, and linked to,

historical and contemporary societal and cultural aspects. The concrete practices taking place in the kindergarten setting find resonance in larger societal structures, such as in practices of regulation and control (e.g., home visit, personnel file) and public and private (self) criticism (e.g., small group criticism, public criticism, big poster criticism, press criticism). Using Bourdieu, the notion of relationality has been further theorized: His theoretical tools on social life provide a framework for understanding relational aspects of disciplinarian practices and power dynamics in two Chinese kindergartens (further explored in part IV).

PART IV: THE DISCIPLINARIAN GAME

9 Children playing the disciplinarian game

In part III (Chapters 6-8), I described and analysed a range of disciplinarian practices that I observed in the two kindergartens. Such practices were analysed in an *intergenerational* frame of reference (Alanen, 2009a), as practices that took place between teachers and children in the kindergartens (see Sections 7.4 and 3.1.2). This chapter will focus on power dynamics in the *intragenerational* child group through addressing how children participated in disciplinarian practices, with particular emphasis on *differences* in individual children's involvement with such practices. Through approaching the social universe of the children as a 'battlefield' (Wacquant, 1992:17), I explore how children play the disciplinarian game; i.e., how they negotiate and struggle for social positions in the child group through the use of different experiences, knowledge and resources, in relations of dominance with other children in the class.¹⁶⁴ The game is exemplified through three assigned tasks¹⁶⁵ where children act as dominators: *duty children*, *little teachers*, and *team leaders*. Through emphasis on how the children use particular variants of embodied cultural field-specific capital (*kindergarten*, *guai* and *guan* capital) in the execution of such tasks, as well as how different forms of capital influence *access* to such tasks, we will see how different experiences, resources, and knowledge (forms and compilations of capital) is significant for children's possibilities to manoeuvre in the kindergarten social space. In the final parts of this chapter, I explore how such an analytical approach can exemplify how agency is *relational* (Burkitt, 2016). The three variants of field-specific embodied cultural capital, based on the empirical material from part III, are considered important values and legitimate knowledge in the field. I use the emic terms *guai* ('ideal behaviour,' make progress) and *guan* ('loving control'), rather than their English translations because these concepts better describe and capture the contextual meaning of this form of experience or knowledge (see Chapter 7). *Kindergarten* capital was first introduced in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.4).

The two chapters in part IV (this and the following chapter) relate to the two first research questions outlined in the introduction (see 1.1), with particular emphasis on intragenerational

¹⁶⁴ Understanding everyday practices in terms of the analogy of *game* is done in order to conceptually and analytically frame and explain social action and everyday practice. I am not emphasising differences in individual children's biological, mental or corporal capacities or backgrounds, but rather analytically approaching some particular social practices in the classroom, attempting to draw attention to some patterns of action that may explain the dynamics at play and how children had different possibilities to participate in them.

¹⁶⁵ The term 'task' accentuates that the children were obliged to perform as expected, regardless of personal opinions.

relations, i.e., between the children in the child group. With this frame of reference, I address research question number one, exploring how disciplinarian practices are present in relations between the children, and research question number two, exploring how the children experience, relate to and partake in such practices. Building on Chapter 8, I stress how the children engage with and partake in such practices in *different* ways, emphasising the notion of *relationality*. This chapter lays the basis for exploring the children's *practical sense* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) of discipline, which is the content of the following chapter.

Phenomena such as little teachers and team leaders serve to introduce several topics that are relevant in the everyday lives of the kindergarten children I met during fieldwork, such as social control, self-control, hierarchy, and relationality. For this reason, this chapter has been dedicated to such topics, even though the practice of little teachers and team leaders was only formally present in kindergarten 1. As demonstrated in Chapter 8, in both kindergartens particular children (often the same ones) were selected for particular activities, and children were frequently subject to public scrutiny, praise, and criticism.¹⁶⁶ In the following section, I elaborate on three forms of capital—experiences, knowledge, and resources—that are relevant for the exploration of power difference in the kindergartens.

9.1 Field-specific forms of embodied cultural capital

A capital only exists in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), and is thus determined by context. Three interconnected field-specific forms of embodied cultural capital have been constructed based on the empirical material (disciplinarian practices in part III, particularly Chapters 6 and 7) due to their significance in terms of producing the most relevant differences in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:101). The following variants of embodied cultural capital are considered legitimate knowledge and important values in the kindergarten and they are: *kindergarten* capital (knowledge of routines, movement in space, timetable), *guai* capital (knowledge of ideal behaviour, making progress, bettering themselves), and *guan* capital (knowledge of disciplinarian practices and expressions of discipline). Forms of capital are considered both a weapon and a stake of struggle (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:98-99) and must therefore be understood in two ways: 1) as knowledge and skills the children use in their relations and struggles with other children in the kindergarten context, as well as 2) the product of the competition between players (here: the children), i.e., what the game is all about. *Guan*,

¹⁶⁶ According to informants, designating children into particular positions is a common practice on all levels in the Chinese educational system, and is as such not an alien thought in Chinese kindergartens.

for example, was not only something the teacher (and children) would do for disciplinarian purposes—it was also used as motivation, presented as a prize, something you could get to do if you behave well. As one teacher said: “If [you] want to guan others, [you have to] do well yourself.” Similarly, making progress and bettering yourself (*guai* capital), as well as knowing how to execute kindergarten routines (*kindergarten* capital) was something everyone should strive for, and was generally acknowledged as valuable, meaningful, and important, both by children and teachers. Children strong in these three variants of field-specific capital had *symbolic* capital (Bourdieu, 1990b); their capital endowment was acknowledged by both children and teachers, consequently giving them a dominant position in the kindergarten social space.

Experience and knowledge of kindergarten spaces, schedules, and routines is a form of embodied field-specific cultural capital relating to *kindergarten* routines and practices (see e.g., 6.4). This form of capital is valuable for the children in the kindergarten; it can give them confidence in the classroom setting, knowledge of what the teacher expects of everyday routines, and therefore knowledge of one way of (potentially) avoiding individual or group disciplinarian practices. The children obtain this form of capital through exposure to and experience with the kindergarten setting, i.e., being present in the kindergarten’s daily life and participating in the activities and routines that take place there. This includes familiarity with the physical layout of the kindergarten or knowing what happens at different times during the day, as well as how to carry out particular routinized activities, such as the lunch and snack routine (see 6.2.2). In the kindergarten’s everyday context, there is a strong emphasis on doing activities (e.g., drawing, presenting stories, marching, and sitting) ‘correctly,’ which is underlined by methods such as repetition and memorization (see 6.3). As will be demonstrated, being a duty child (which includes the whole child group) requires kindergarten capital. However, as will be explained, the execution of this task is strongly determined by the endowment of the other two forms of embodied cultural capital as well.

The second variant of embodied cultural capital I identified is the ability to be attentive, make progress, and behave well, i.e., *guai* capital (see e.g., 7.2.3). In the kindergarten setting, this is connected to the teachers’ expectations and demands, as expressed in the phrase “use your mind” and the constant reminding of eating fast, being quiet (*no voice*) and sitting well (see Chapter 7). Good behaviour is about making progress and exercise self-control, and such

behaviours were encouraged and premiered by the teachers (Chapter 8). Premiering could take the form of praise, of making an example of such behaviours for the other children, as well as assigning children the tasks as little teachers or team leaders (see below). Children strong in *guai* capital were those considered to constantly make progress and better themselves.

Different disciplinarian practices are repeated frequently and occur on a daily basis, and they are part of disciplinarian structures in the kindergarten field. Knowledge of and experience with such practices—when they occur, what they contain, how to conduct them—make out another form of capital, which I call *guan* capital (see Section 7.2). This form of capital can be knowledge of how to physically control others, how to evaluate others, how to use a particular language and vocabulary, and how to express one’s self in particular ways (body posture, sound pitch etc.) (see Chapter 7). This type of knowledge enables children to discipline others, as well as how to deal with or avoid disciplinarian practices themselves. However, as will be exemplified, being endowed with *guan* capital can also have negative consequences for individual children, particularly for those lacking in the other two forms of capital.

Although presented as separate categories, these forms of capital overlap, connect with, and depend on each other. Furthermore, although the whole child group is exposed to such forms of capital in the kindergarten setting, they have a differing possibility to make use of them because their overall capital holdings differ. It is the *composition* and *volume* of capital, as well as its *evolution over time* that defines the ‘game’ of a player (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), i.e., the possibilities and opportunities children engage with in everyday practice, including disciplinarian practices. Forms of capital, experiences, or resources must be seen in relation to each other in order to explain why different children have different chances and perspectives as ‘players in the disciplinarian game.’ Addressing power difference in terms of capital endowment is not done in order to “quantify” experiences or knowledge; rather, it is an analytical measure made in order to understand how children are positioned differently in social space because particular forms of knowledge and experiences are valued over others in the field. A *relational* aspect is in this way visible through children’s differential approach to the game. I return to this discussion below; first, I exemplify different approaches to capital use through three examples of situations where children were explicitly involved in practices of domination in the kindergarten.

9.2 Tasks of domination among children in the kindergarten

As explained in previous chapters, the mutually constitutive *intergenerational* relationship between children and teachers in the kindergarten is one of asymmetry (Alanen, 2009a); the teachers are the ‘obvious’ dominating group in the kindergarten class, and their expectations in terms of how the children should be(have) are expressed through a variety of disciplinarian practices (see part III). Furthermore, these practices are complex, somewhat unpredictable (e.g., regarding *when* and *how* rules apply) and play out in different ways for the different children in the class. As will be elaborated on in the following, the relation between the *dominating* and the *dominated* in the classroom is additionally complex because the children also take part in power dynamics and relations of hierarchy in the child group, in intricate ways and to varying degrees. The following section will introduce three emic terms illustrating temporary tasks the children were appointed by the teachers, which specifically involved controlling or disciplining other children: namely *duty children*, *little teachers*, and *team leaders*.

9.2.1 Duty children: everyday social control

All the children in the class were appointed the task of duty child or duty student (*zhi risheng*)¹⁶⁷ and this phenomenon was observed in both kindergartens. In kindergarten 1 it started when the children were in middle class (involving other chores), whereas in kindergarten 2 it began in the big class, i.e., the third and final year of kindergarten. The children in the class were divided into five groups with around six children in each group, and each day of the week one group of children was particularly responsible for doing different daily activities and chores in the classroom. The chores could be divided into two broader categories: i.e., *daily life activities* and *observing/controlling activities*.

Daily life activities included chores such as moving tables and shelves for different activities, recording the weather, presenting stories to the class, turning off the light when leaving the classroom, or chores connected to meal times (in kindergarten 1, e.g., cleaning tables).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Duty students, *zhi rishēng* (值日生)

¹⁶⁸ Duty children, and sometimes children who were not on duty, would present four word stories in kindergarten 1 (see Section 7.3) and news stories in kindergarten 2 (see Section 6.3.2). In kindergarten 1, the children also had a ‘plant and animal chore’: placed in the hallway was a shelf with different plants in glasses of water, as well as goldfish and a baby turtle. The children were to water, feed, and care for the plants and animals. This chore also involved drawing the plants in a recording book the teacher had made for them; each week the children should make a new drawing, in order to record changes in growth (see footnote in 7.2.1, on recording books). The recording book was an A5 sized light green folder with white paper inside and Chinese characters written on the outside with pen. Duty children were also expected to come before 08:00 in the morning.

Observing/controlling activities were activities related to the control and monitoring of the other children in the class, particularly in routinized activities such as snack time, which involved the orchestration of children in lines and directing them towards available seats, as well as making sure the tables were emptied (kindergarten 2) (see also 6.2.2), or in how children would remind other children to hurry up (*kuai dian*)¹⁶⁹ and eat fast during lunch (kindergarten 1). Another controlling activity was having bathroom duty, which involved standing by the door to the bathroom room (for pictures, see 6.1.1) and observe that routines were going according to plan; the children should not play, joke around, or waste time, but rather go to the bathroom, wash hands, and re-enter the classroom in a calm and quiet way (kindergarten 1). The teacher and the other children would remind the duty children of their chores if they forgot. If routines were not going according to plan, the children would tell the teachers or discipline children themselves, particularly through ordering them to stand up (see Section 6.2.1). This could for example occur if a child did not put down her or his used plate in the bucket in a gentle manner after snack time, or if a child did not wash the hands after going to the bathroom.



Picture 10: Duty child arm cards in the kindergartens

Duty children wore duty cards. In kindergarten 1, each child had a duty child card wrapped around his or her arm, showing the chore this child was responsible for (picture above to the

¹⁶⁹ Hurry up, *kuai dian* (快点). See also Section 7.2 for additional forms of verbal reminders from the teachers to the children.

left). In kindergarten 2, duty children had a lanyard around their necks; a laminated card decorated with figures of children, animals, and a heart (picture above to the right). In kindergarten 1, the teacher or the child would select which chore each child should be in charge of. In kindergarten 2, the duty group had a meeting in the morning, where the children decided amongst themselves who would be in charge of which chore. The teachers decided who would be duty group leader, and each child stayed in this position for two weeks.¹⁷⁰ There was thus also a level of hierarchy within the duty group in kindergarten 2. The teacher told me that in the beginning the children voted for the group leader themselves, but the children with the best abilities were always chosen. The teachers therefore changed the rules so that everyone could be a leader.

All the children in the class were duty students, but the task did not play out the same for all the children. First of all, the children could not always control which chore they were responsible for; children who arrived earlier in the morning could have selected it, decisions may have been made by other duty children, or children would take or trade duty chores during the course of the day. In addition, children would receive different feedback from other children when engaging in observing/controlling activities. Sometimes, for example, children would not accept the orders from another duty child, such as in the following example:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Zhou* tells the children to pee. *Kang* does not go to the bathroom. *Ying* (a girl on duty) tells him he must pee. He says “I don’t have pee.” *Ying* tells him to stand by the door. He does not respond. Teacher *Zhou* then takes his arm and drags him to the door. She tells him to go there and “pee everything.” All should be gone before they go to sleep.

In this example, the little teacher’s orders were not accepted by *Kang*, and teacher *Zhou* intervened, physically dragging him towards the bathroom door, ordering him to go to the toilet before nap time. *Ying*’s lack of authority in the duty child task was thus underlined.

When asking the teachers in kindergarten 2 about the idea behind duty children, the teachers said it was connected to several aspects, namely: self-discipline, to help guan others, self daily care ability, and connection to school. The teachers explained: “If [you] want to guan others, [you have to] do well yourself. Learn to be little helper for the teacher, not bring trouble.” Being

¹⁷⁰ This means that the leader is in this position for two days, since the children are duty children only one day a week. The teachers pick the leader in accordance with the children's student number.

duty child thus contained elements of both self-control and social control. The significance of *guan* for duty children is explicitly addressed by the teachers: on the one side the children are involved in such practices in order to help the teacher, which will give the children a sense of responsibility due to engaging in practices of social control. On the other side, engaging in practices of *guan* is a possibility for the children to control others, which is presented as a prize or motivation for good behaviour and self-control. The teacher also stressed that being duty student will prepare the children for school, where such behaviour is demanded and where there is no space for negotiation. When the children enter primary school, they will be expected to help out in the classrooms and do chores for the teacher. Finally, through being duty students, the children will learn everyday life skills.

The teachers in kindergarten 1 also emphasised how being duty child would help the children feel good about themselves, as well as build up a feeling of group membership. On the one hand, duty children: “can help others, and on the other hand, the sense of rule: *this day it's my turn to be duty student, I have to make sure what things to do, have a sense of service.*”¹⁷¹ One of the teachers furthermore stressed that “There is also duty student in primary school, to foster a sense of rule, and that is to do your own things yourself, a sense of collectivism.” The link and relationship between the individual child and group belonging is thus explicitly stressed by the teachers; being duty children fosters a *sense* of rule, a *sense* of service and a *sense* of collectivism or group belonging. Through different chores, the children should build up a feeling or sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, the teachers also explicitly emphasised the intrinsic value of chores, in terms of the work they entailed:

(Kindergarten 1, teacher interview) Because, sometimes, let kids do these things, is to let them feel... Labour. Labour is the most glorious, as the saying goes.¹⁷² Yes, then they this day, [when it is] their turn to be the duty student, they will be very excited, knowing that “*I am duty student, I have to arrive earlier, will arrive earlier than ordinary days, will actively go to clean the tables after the meal, help others to clean the tables*”¹⁷³ and for example, in washroom [toilet], he will watch others kids when they dry their hands, remind them to clean the hands, wash the hands, walk slowly. These things are for duty students.

¹⁷¹ Sentence in italics: the teacher is speaking from the perspective of a fictitious duty child.

¹⁷² This phrase may refer to a well-known children song named “Be proud of working hard” 劳动最光荣 (Láodòng Zui Guāngróng). The emphasis on ‘glorious labour’ has an historical reference, to the nationalist project under Mao.

¹⁷³ Sentence in italics: the teacher is speaking from the perspective of a fictitious duty child.

Being duty children is thus seen as positive for the well-being of individual children, in particular in relation to group belonging, as well as contributing to the group through labour. The emphasis on labour has strong historical connotations (see 2.1) and was often emphasised as an important value by the teachers. Maintaining social control and progress in the child group and reminding other children to do things properly (such as wash hands and walk slowly) are considered aspects of this task. In addition, the teachers underlined an element of pride in the task of duty students, as something that would give the children a positive experience. One teacher said that: “the duty student today is paid close attention to by all the class [...] Being paid attention to they will feel, yes, very proud.” Teachers in kindergarten 2 underlined how child guan(ing) others was also about having the *power to serve*. To guan others was considered positive because it involved having “more power to, to serve others. That feels like, “*today [I] have to behave better especially because if I am the duty student today, I have to guan everything in the class*”¹⁷⁴ this feeling.” Guan is thus thought to connect both aspects of pride and responsibility to the task of duty students.

Being a duty student demands that the children carry themselves well; it is not only about doing the chores, but also about *manner* of execution. As one teacher in kindergarten 1 said: duty children “should have the feature of duty student [behave like one], not just run around” Failing to comply with such expectations had consequences, and duty students were also evaluated and criticised. Duty cards could for example be withdrawn as punishment for children who misbehaved (see example 8.1.3). The teacher might also evaluate or analyse duty children’s performance in front of the other children in the class, such as in the following example, where the children are sitting in their chair in the four lines after the duty students wiped tables and reorganized the tables and shelves:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Zhou* is sitting on her chair, facing the children sitting. She says to the children: “Today they [the duty students] used more than five minutes to clear the tables. The duty children made a mess of it, they don’t know what to do. He [addressing a particular boy] did not use his head.” The teacher faces the boy and says: “I want to ask you to come here and talk—you can be the teacher. You are moving tables that have already been moved. ... Tell us how you want to move them. ... You have to move them like this.” Teacher *Zhou* shows them how to move the table. She continues, addressing the class “This shelf has not been moved correctly, but some of you sat on your chair and did nothing. Listen, no matter what, two of you have to

¹⁷⁴ Sentence in italics: the teacher is speaking from the perspective of a fictitious duty child.

move it together. I saw one [duty child] stand alone and no one came to help him. I will repeat this once: two of you should be together when you move the tables.”

In this example, the teacher is addressing the lack of skills and organized behaviour of an individual boy, as well as the lack of contribution from other duty students. Through addressing such matters in the child group, using the children as examples for others (see 8.1.1), the teachers emphasised expectations connected to being duty students, such as following through with activities in the proper way (*this shelf has not been moved correctly*), not doing unnecessary things (*you are moving tables that have already been moved*) and helping others (*some of you sat in your chair and did nothing*). Sometimes, the teacher would also express that the class should be involved in the evaluation of duty children’s performance:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Zhou* asks “Who are the children on duty?” Group five raises their hands. She tells them that when they wash tables they use a cloth and a bowl, and that they should use both hands when washing the tables. “What is the bowl for? This is the last time I tell you this. I told you in middle class. Students on duty—stand up! Take what you need to wash the table. The others will watch and tell you who is doing the best job and why.”

Although expressing an expectation that other children should observe and evaluate duty children’s behaviour, this was often not followed up in practice. However, reminding the children of the attentive presence of the other children was done in order to make duty children perform as expected.

The children spoke about the topic of duty students in different ways during interviews. Some emphasised the value in learning skills through giving descriptions of which chores duty children did. One boy explained in detail the procedure of cleaning up after lunch in kindergarten 1: “Duty students everyday, wipe the rice and food on the tables after we little friend¹⁷⁵ finished [eating], we will have a plate there, with a towel under it, we take the towels everyday, take the plate, put those things and rice on it” (see 6.2.2, routinized behaviour). Other children said that in their dream kindergarten¹⁷⁶ they would not have duty students, because they would guan or discipline other children. One child emphasised the value of labour (as did the teacher), explaining: “Eh, duty students are very busy, but this is the fruit of your labour. Only if you work, you ... You see the adults work, you are not happy at all, you always want to try to work yourself. So our teacher us duty students, we labour everyday. There is a song

¹⁷⁵ A common way to address pre-schoolers in China (see 5.3.1).

¹⁷⁶ The topic of ‘dream kindergarten’ was introduced as a way of discussing different phenomena during interviews (see 5.4.1).

named ‘Labour is the most Glorious.’” Another child emphasised the aspect of responsibility (see also 7.2.1) and the need to help the teachers in the class: “Because, without duty students, let teachers to take, let teachers to take the responsibility ... Teachers are very tired.” This message was also expressed by a child in kindergarten 2. In a dream kindergarten there would be duty students because “That is, we need duty students, so teachers will feel a little easier. And do it by turn, or, if the same duty students keep doing it, they will be tired to death.¹⁷⁷ And, duty students, they work ... when teachers are too busy, and there are some other things, duty students can help teachers.” As expressed by the children’s answers, there was a clear sense of responsibility and duty connected to this task, both in helping the teachers and in contributing to the child group, and this task involved all the children in the class.

Through being duty children, the children build up their experiences with and knowledge of different forms of field-specific capital; the children are actively involved in everyday routines (*kindergarten* capital), having the character of duty student is stressed (*guai* capital), and the children are participants in processes of disciplinarian practices through observing and controlling other children (*guan* capital). All the children in the class are duty children, but as has been illustrated, the children do not have equal possibilities to carry out the different chores attached to this task, particularly chores connected to controlling other children. This is connected to their social position and the configuration of relevant field-specific capital, as will be discussed below. In the following section, I will elaborate on another task in the kindergarten called *little teacher*. As will be demonstrated, this was a task that only selected children would be appointed.

9.2.2 Little teachers: controlling others

Whereas duty children included all the children in the class, the task as little teachers (*xiao laoshi*)¹⁷⁸ was only for selected children (in kindergarten 1). Little teachers¹⁷⁹ would be selected by the teachers and their task was to watch and control the class, and give feedback of misbehaving children or unwanted episodes to the teachers. The teacher would either tell

¹⁷⁷ This manner of speaking (“tired to death,” “scared to death,” “hot to death”) was uttered by children in both kindergartens, as a way of emphasizing an emotion.

¹⁷⁸ Little teacher, *xiao laoshi* (小老师).

¹⁷⁹ See An-Chi Lin (2009) for an example of the phenomenon of *little teacher* in a Taiwanese preschool classroom. As in kindergarten 1 in my project, the little teacher in this context were selected to maintain order in the classroom. However, in Lin’s study, this task could be assigned to all the children, as long as they were well-behaved on that particular day.

children to be little teacher, or simply say “watch for me.” The word *guan* was frequently mentioned by the children when addressing the topic of little teachers. The teachers appointed a little teacher for short periods of time (except in a few cases when the children ‘passed on’ the task) and this occurred if the teacher had to leave the classroom for a while, but also when the teacher was in the classroom, for example if the class was being too noisy. The child would stand in the middle of the room, sit on the teacher’s chair (a little higher than the children’s chairs) or move around in the room, in front of the children who were sitting on little chairs in straight lines, observing them. The little teacher would correct the children’s behaviour, either through telling or ordering them to behave, physically moving their arms or feet into the correct position, or make them stand up (see 6.2). At the end of the little teacher period, the teacher would ask for names of misbehaving children or the child would give names without being asked, knowing they were expected to. At times, the little teachers would report on children who had not done anything (particularly one boy, who was often in trouble). This could have been done because the children *had to* give a name to the teachers, regardless of if they wanted to, and in such cases children who were at the lower end of the ‘hierarchical ladder’ would often be chosen.

The term *little teacher* contains strong symbolic value. It has a direct connection to the teacher profession, considered an important profession and status in China where education is strongly valued (see 2.2). Furthermore, it touches upon the relationship teacher-parent, where parents are seen as the child’s first teachers. *Guan* is considered to be an important part of both these relationships, *guan* being a role obligation or requirement of both parents and teachers (Chao, 1994). The teacher-student relationship is furthermore a relationship connected to the Confucian role relationships (see 2.3.1); a relation between superiors and inferiors, where children are at the subordinate end (Kelleher, 1989). Being appointed or awarded the task as little teacher means that you are a good student, with a high sense of morality, and the title itself underline the respect others should give you (even by law, see 2.2).

The teachers would talk about the task of little teacher as something the children should strive for. If the children behaved and made progress, i.e., eat faster, sleep well during nap time, not talk too much and do what the teacher asks, they might be chosen for such tasks. The teacher would encourage children through telling them what they need to change, how they can improve, and what it takes to be little teacher:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Liu* walks around the classroom. She stops in front of *Hua* and says to him: “I told you yesterday, if you want to be little teacher, you have to do everything well. You are good at almost everything, but when you eat or sleep you are slow.”

Being chosen as a little teacher could be understood as being awarded a privilege; a privilege and a legitimization of the act of controlling and disciplining other children. Presenting such practices as a prize and a privilege for selected children is a means to value them. It is not something everyone gets to do, but rather a position for few individuals and therefore a valuable position to be in. The stamp of approval from the teacher adds value to this task, and consequently to the act of dominating other children.

The task as little teacher is acted out differently by different children. Some of the children would sit on the teacher chair, keep a low profile, and not speak much with the teachers during the period or afterwards. This would typically be children who were not appointed little teachers very often, and children who more seldom than others were praised or criticised. *Xiaoyan*, on the other hand, was one of the girls frequently asked to be little teacher, and she had a strong presence in the classroom while doing this task. She would often be little teacher during moments of transition (see Section 6.1.3), such as after lunch when children who had finished their meal sat in their chairs and waited for the other children to finish eating. *Xiaoyan* would be supervising the other children, at times carrying pieces of coloured paper, which the children could use for folding in order to entertain themselves while waiting. She would walk around the classroom in front of the children, tempting them with the paper. Most of the children would sit correctly, both feet on the floor, close together, straight back, hands on thighs, waiting for her to give them one. At times, she would give a paper to a child, only to take it back again shortly after. Demanding absolute obedience in this way would annoy some of the children, but most of them would let her do it and patiently wait for another piece of paper. *Xiaoyan* had confidence as little teacher, as illustrated in the following example:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Xiaoyan* is little teacher. She walks around the classroom looking at the children, calling out their names now and then. She stands in front of a boy and tells him to behave. A couple of times she says “what are you looking at” to the children. Some laugh and some just wait for the teacher to come back, it seems. She stands in front of a boy, putting her hands on her hips, staring at him, before she leaves. She is smiling to herself when she walks around.

Classroom dynamics and particular children's position in class, both amongst other children and in the eyes of the teachers, became visible in such episodes. *Xiaoyan* was usually very confident when dominating others, and other children would generally follow through with her orders.

Qiang was a boy who was also frequently asked to do chores and favours for the teacher, and was often asked to be little teacher. He took the task seriously, as illustrated in the example below. The children are sitting in the horseshoe position (see picture in Section 6.1) in the classroom:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The children are talking (making noise) so teacher *Zhou* asks *Qiang* to be little teacher. He goes straight over to *Kang*, tramples on the floor in front of him, says something in a determined way (almost screaming) and drags *Kang* up by the vest. *Kang* stands up in front of his seat. Then he goes over two other boys and orders them to stand. *Hua*, another boy, wants to tell *Qiang* something and waves him over. *Qiang* is reluctant at first, but then goes over and drags *Hua* up by the collar. *Hua* is angry (that was not what he wanted) and complains to the boy sitting next to him. *Qiang* goes over to the teacher chair and starts reading in a teaching book lying on a table. The other children are watching him. Teacher *Zhou* is standing by the shelf, reading some papers. *Qiang* orders three other boys to stand up. *Qiang* goes over to the teacher and says something, but teacher *Zhou* is talking to someone in the hallway and is not listening to him. He goes back to the teacher chair. Suddenly he runs over to *Tao*. *Tao* refuses to get up, and several other children run over to help *Qiang* drag *Tao* up from his chair. *Qiang* sends them off, one by one, and drags *Tao* up himself. Seven children are standing up now. A boy asks *Qiang* something, and *Qiang* says "bu keyi" ("you can't"). *Qiang* goes over to a girl. He says something to her with a low voice, and she gets up from her seat. He points at her and says something like: "remember that next time." Nine children are standing up. The clock is 10:15. *Qiang* goes over to the teacher one more time and talks to her. She listens and answers briefly "oh, okay." *Qiang* goes straight over to *Jian*, who gets up immediately, looking to the side and not in *Qiang's* eyes. Then *Qiang* goes over and talks with *Liang*, who has to stand, and then *Tingting*. Eleven children are standing now. *Shu* has to stand. And *Xia*. *Lee* is yelling at *Xia*, she is getting up too slowly. Now 13 children are standing. *Qiang* is walking around the class with his arms crossed. *Peng* has to stand. 14 children are standing up now. *Hua* is allowed to sit. It is now 10:20.

Qiang is often asked to be little teacher. He made use of several disciplinarian practices in his execution of the task, such as paying close attention to the children's every move, ordering children to sit in particular ways, and making children stand up as punishment. *Qiang* also made sure to inform the teacher on the process. The teacher would not necessarily react to all the

information the little teacher would give her; this would depend on who the little teacher was (some children were listened to more than others) and whether the teachers were busy or not, as illustrated above.

At times, the teachers would ask children to be little teacher outside the classroom as well. In the following example, a girl is asked to watch some children outside the classroom door in the hallway. The children were waiting to enter the classroom to have their snack, while the other half of the class had their snack first (usually they would wait inside the classroom, sitting on their chairs).

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Some children are standing outside in the hallway waiting to enter the classroom to have their snack. *Xuan* has been given the task as little teacher. She is standing by the classroom door next to the water station, being very strict with the other children. She puts them in a line and whatever little sound anyone makes, she immediately stares at them, with an angry strict look, closing her eyes slowly as she turns her face towards the classroom again (the door is open). She says the names of children who she wants to correct; *Tingting* for making noise with her feet, *Xinyi* and *Ni* for not standing in line, *Guo* for moving around too much. *Dong*, another boy standing in line, drags *Guo* back in line. The line gets shorter as the teacher tells them, one by one, to go inside and have their snack.

As illustrated in this example, expressions of disciplinarian practices that the teachers used when disciplining children, such as staring, yelling, or scrutinizing (see Chapter 7), and controlling children's corporal movement (see Section 6.2) was also used by some of the children when they were little teachers. A little teacher could for example stand and stare at the other children for longer periods of time, both from a distance and right in front of their eyes. Some of the children also had a strict expression on their faces and would yell at the other children who did not behave as they wanted.

Although little teachers were expected to tell on others and watch for bad behaviour, not all the children did that:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Shu* is asked by teacher *Liu* to be little teacher. She stands in the middle of the room. [...] The children don't seem to care about *Shu* being little teacher and very few of the children are being quiet. After a while, teacher *Liu* asks *Shu* for names. *Shu* looks unsure, but then she says *Chao* [one of the good children]. *Chao* looks a little annoyed and says something to teacher *Liu* (to defend himself). Nothing happens. *Shu* keeps walking around the classroom, looking as much at the teachers and the floor as to the other children. With peculiar facial expressions, she walks around,

back and forth, jumping a little now and then. Again *Shu* is asked to speak. It seems like she thinks it is difficult, but then she doesn't have to answer after all, since other things happen. [...] *Shu* is told to sit down, and *Ying* is the next little teacher.

Few of the children in the class paid any attention to *Shu* when she was little teacher, and she did not attempt to discipline or control anyone either. When asked by the teacher to name misbehaving children, *Shu* chose the name of a boy considered one of the 'good children,' which was a surprising choice. Her choice could have been made coincidentally, simply picking a name from the crowd. It could also have been made because she thought he would not receive punishment, being one of the "good children." As we will see in later parts of this chapter, *Shu* was endowed with a peculiar compilation of capital, which could also help explain her unconventional choice of names to report to the teacher. *Shu* did not interact much with the children while she was little teacher. Sometimes, however, children would use the opportunity for playful and joking situations with others. In the following example, the usual emphasis on sitting correctly is played upon in a humorous way between a little teacher and another child:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Little teacher *Lian* is walking around the class, amongst the children. She goes over to *Xuan* and brings her feet together. *Xuan* then spreads them immediately, and smiles. Then *Lian* put them back together, and *Xuan* separates them again. *Lian* walks away with a little smile on her face (she does not tell teacher *Liu*).

This example illustrates that humour and play could also be embedded in child-child interactions related to practices of discipline. *Lian* approached the disciplinarian situation in a playful way. She made use of similar techniques as other little teachers, physically ordering another child to sit in the correct position, but rather than enforcing a strict attitude when the other girl did not follow her orders, she accepted the girl's response as an invitation for play, creating a humorous encounter. The ways in which children seized or created moments and spaces for play will also be dealt with in the following chapter, as parts of the children's *practical sense* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) of disciplinarian practices.

Sometimes, children who were rarely appointed little teacher were asked to do it. In the example below, *Lulu* was asked to be little teacher (for the first time while I was there). Although she seemed excited to be little teacher and made use of several disciplinarian practices, her lack of authority made the other children ignore her attempts of disciplining them:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Liu* asks *Lulu* to sit on the teacher's chair (be little teacher), and she seems very excited about this. She sits on the chair, and now and then she goes down to some children to correct their sitting position. She stands in front of

the children and puts her hands on her waist and looks at them (*Jian, Bo* and *Tao*). She is seemingly enjoying having this task, but the other children are not being as quiet as they usually are when e.g., *Xiaoyan* is little teacher. The children are talking with each other, moving around on their chairs, and some are annoyed when *Lulu* comes over to correct them. They don't seem to accept her attempts of correcting them. Teacher *Liu* tells *Lulu* to sit on the teacher's chair again, rather than walk around the room. *Peng* shows *Lulu* that the balloon with the "fit children" has fallen down from the wall.¹⁸⁰ *Qiang* sees it as well, and runs over when *Lulu* is about to pick it up, and take it over to the teacher himself. *Lulu* goes over to *Tingting*, corrects her position, and then makes her stand. *Tingting* stands up after some resistance. Then *Lulu* makes *Hua* stand up; he gets up unwillingly, but soon sits down again (without permission from *Lulu*). Then *Lulu* is not little teacher anymore; she jumps onto her chair with a big smile on her face.

Lulu expressed enjoyment about being little teacher, but few of the other children took her seriously. Many of the children did not pay attention to her, but rather talked with each other and joked around. Some reacted with annoyance when she tried to correct them, others did as she asked, but then ignored her order shortly after. *Lulu* was one of the children who was considered well behaving, but she had little authority as little teacher. In addition, the teacher also interfered with her way of performing the task, telling her to sit down at the chair. This lack of authority will be further elaborated on below, in the discussion on the 'disciplinarian game,' positioning in social space, and variations in amounts and compilations of capital (see 9.3).

When asking the children in kindergarten 1 in the interviews, if they would have little teachers in their dream kindergarten¹⁸¹, both affirmative and negative answers were given. Some children spoke of it as an inevitable part of the kindergarten class dynamic, whereas others said they would not have little teachers in their dream kindergarten because then they could play as they pleased, without being controlled by the little teacher. Some children answered by explaining the tasks involved: "Eh, little teacher, when the teacher is not there, there is a little teacher to watch and guan us, or we will talk." Others emphasised what little teachers had power to do: "Tell them to stop speaking, those [who] speak should stand up, if the one stand up still speak, then stand by the bathroom door," or accentuated that not everyone could be awarded

¹⁸⁰ See Section 6.1.2 for more about this and other classroom wall decorations.

¹⁸¹ See 5.4.1 about how the topic of a 'dream kindergarten' was used in interviews with children.

position as little teacher: “Because, only those little friends who are not scolded can be little teachers, such as for example big team leaders” (more on team leaders below).

Since the task of little teachers is to control others, the children who are appointed little teachers get first-hand knowledge of how to discipline other children (*guan* capital). Often, children strong in all forms of capital (*guai*, *guan*, and *kindergarten* capital) are awarded such positions. These are the children who can be selected as team leaders as well, as will be elaborated on in the following section. Sometimes children with *kindergarten* capital (but less of the other two) are awarded the position of little teacher, but oftentimes, other children would not acknowledge their position as legitimate. Authority and confidence are connected to the children’s position in the child group, as well as children’s amount and compilation of different forms of capital. The following section will describe the final example of assigned task of domination in the kindergartens: the team leader election process in kindergarten 1, where competition for titles in the team leader hierarchy was on the agenda.

9.2.3 Team leaders: hierarchy in the child group

Whereas the position of little teachers was decided by the teachers, the decision making process regarding team leader positions included the child group. The election process for team leaders took place in the classroom in kindergarten 1, and was orchestrated by the teachers. The elected children would have the team leader titles for a few weeks. Team leaders were uniformed with a plastic folder to place around their arm with a rubber band, containing pieces of paper with lines marking their team leader title; one line for small team leader, two for middle, and three lines for big team leader (see picture below). The big, middle, and small team leader designations are the same as the words (Chinese characters) used by the Young Pioneers of China (see 2.1).¹⁸² The team leader designations in the kindergarten class thus have explicit associations to (national) leadership and the Communist Party, as well as to a particular form of hierarchical division. Although I saw few incidents in daily settings where the children acted

¹⁸² The words used for big team leader are 大队长 (da dui zhang), for middle team leader 中队长 (zhong dui zhang) and for small team leader 小队长 (xiao dui zhang) were translated to me as big, middle and small team leader; their official translations are captain, commander and team leader. These titles are used in the Young Pioneers of China as well as in the student union in primary and middle school in China (not in class). Children who are members of The Young Pioneers of China (中国少年先锋队 zhong guo shao nian xian feng dui) wear red scarves as their uniform, and are therefore also referred to as “Red Scarves.”

as team leaders,¹⁸³ the election process illustrates hierarchy and power division in an explicit and concrete way, and has therefore been given emphasis here. In addition, in interviews the children spoke about the execution of such practices in a way indicating that team leaders were somewhat active in everyday life.



Picture 11: Big team leader arm card in kindergarten 1.

The election process was constructed as a class activity, in which the children were asked to decide who were to become team leaders on different levels through a process of nomination, discussion and election. In the following example, the children were sitting in the four lines (see pictures in 6.1), and the teacher was explaining the process of election, including stating which children were up for election:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Zhou* says: “those with bands [arm cards, see picture 11] on the arm, take them off and put them on the table. It is over a week since we decided last time. Usually we will do this two times a month. If you don’t continue to be team leader, it does not mean that you are not good. Those who made progress can have it [can be team leaders]. Like *Chao*, who is good the whole time. If he does not get the band today, it does not mean that he is not good. Don’t choose those you have a good relationship with. I will ask you why [must explain your choice]. If you don’t have a reason, your vote will not count. Those who don’t eat well or sleep well cannot be chosen. Last time it was *Chao* [elected big team leader]. He was behaving very well. The teacher agrees, when he was big team leader he often listened to the teacher. For example *Shu* cannot be the big team leader because she does not eat quickly. But, if she

¹⁸³ The last few months of fieldwork, I stayed in the kindergarten from 08:00-12:00. The reason I had not heard about team leader activities could be for this reason (may have taken place at the end of the day). The election process referred to in this section was the first time I heard about or saw anything related to such practices.

makes progress, she can be big team leader. All the children have a chance. You will see who you will choose between” (the children can choose between *Xiaoyan*, *Lian* and *Chao*).

The children were also expected to explain their choices in the election, as well as base their choices on the children’s behaviours, rather than choosing their friends. The teachers were actively advocating such qualities as well as individual children thought to possess them. The qualities needed for becoming team leaders are connected to being good, behaving well and listening to the teacher—characteristics of *guai* capital. *Chao* was a child who had such characteristics, and he was therefore praised by the teacher as well as awarded the task of big team leader in the previous election.

The team leader election process provides an explicit illustration of how children are positioned differently in the kindergarten social space. Through the election process, four levels of hierarchy were manifested; big team leader (one child), middle team leaders (two children), and small team leaders (five children), in addition to an unnamed group of children who were not chosen or considered eligible as team leader at any level. Although children in this category could not be elected team leaders, they were expected to vote. As will be illustrated, several disciplinarian practices were used in the election process, such as for example public scrutiny, evaluation and comparing the children to each other (see e.g., Chapter 8). In the following example, the election process continues with the election of five small team leaders (one-liners), one from each (duty) group. As we will see, *Shu*, who could not be *big* team leader due to eating too slowly, still had a chance at continuing being *small* team leader:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) “It is time for the one-liners. We only have four [bands] on the table, but there should be five.” A boy goes to get the last one. Teacher *Zhou* says to the class: “Do you think *Shu* should continue to have one line?” Some children say yes, but many say no. A child says: “Because she cannot sleep and she eats slowly.” Teacher *Zhou* says: “But I told you, if you make progress, it will be okay. Look at this group [duty group one stands up], are there anyone there who can be small team leader?” Teacher *Zhou* says: “It is okay if something happens and the teacher criticizes her. She did not sleep well one time, and the teacher criticized her. Did it happen again?” The children say no. Teacher *Zhou* says: “Can she continue?” “Yes” the children reply. “Do you agree?” teacher asks. “Yes” the children say affirmatively. The teachers smile at each other. “Then *Shu* from group one. Agree? If anyone disagrees, say it.” No one says anything.

Teacher *Zhou* moves on to group two. “Group two, who was team leader?” “It was *Qiang*” the children say. Teacher says: “He is middle team leader no—someone else.”

Teacher *Liu* starts praising one of the children in that group. She says “When *Guo* met another boy, *Guo* let the other child go first. We should let others go first. Is that good?” she asks. “Yes” the children say. “Yes, this is a good thing. So, has he got the chance to be little team leader?” *Hua* suggests another boy’s name. Teacher says: “Do you think he is okay? He is criticized by me all the time. Next time if he behaves [then he can have the chance]. Do you agree?” Then *Guo* gets to be little team leader. Everybody claps. In group three, everybody agrees on *Lian* (this happened very quickly, other children in that group were not considered). “Give her love and encouragement” teacher says and everybody claps.

Then group four. Teacher *Zhou* says: “Give us two names. Others will choose.” A boy says: “*Xuan*.” “Someone else?” teacher asks. Someone says “*Shanshan*.” “Only two?” teacher asks. “Ok, two [without waiting a response]. We will vote on your behaviour” Teacher *Zhou* asks the children for their opinions. Someone says “Behaving in class, no speaking.” *Qiang* says: “Jump and fall down” [considered negative]. Someone says: “Both draw a lot, but *Shanshan* draws the most.” Teacher *Zhou* says: “What do you think? I saw *Xuan* fall down many times. Those who want to vote for *Shanshan*, have to stand up.” 17 children stand up. Teacher says: “She got 17 and we are 30 totally. How many did *Xuan* get?” *Qiang* says “13.” “Who will be small team leader?” The children say *Shanshan*. *Xuan* starts to cry. Holding her arm on *Xuan*’s shoulder, teacher *Zhou* says: “Don’t cry.” She says to the children: “Those who are in the same group as *Xuan*, stand up.” The children in *Xuan*’s duty group stand up. The teacher turns to *Xuan* and says: “It is the best who has the right to be small team leader. See, their words are the same [they agree]. See, just behave better next time,” still holding her shoulder. Teacher *Zhou* turns her attention back to the class. “We will see next time if *Xuan* has the same problems. Then *Xuan* can get it [if she makes progress]. Everybody will see.” She turns to *Xuan* and says: “Only if *Shanshan* makes a mistake can you have it [before the next election]. Do you agree?” *Xuan* nods, and goes to sit down.

The teacher is strongly present in the election and decision making process, emphasising certain children and whether they deserve to be team leaders or not. Public scrutiny characterizes the election process; the children and teachers actively evaluate and compare the children in order to decide who has done good and who has done bad, and who deserves to be team leader. The teachers use the opportunity to tell children to behave and what they must improve in order to better themselves so that they can obtain a better position next time. The teachers explicitly state that everyone has a chance to become a team leader, but they must work hard and improve in order to comply with these requirements. However, as we will see in the discussion below, certain experiences of disciplinarian practice might hinder children in this regard.

When the children were asked in interviews if they wanted to have team leaders in their dream kindergarten (see Section 5.4.1), they gave different replies; some said yes, whereas others said no, also among children in the same interview group. Although there was some confusion among the children as to the actual tasks of team leaders in everyday settings, they had a clear understanding of the hierarchical relation between the three levels of team leaders. One child said: “Because, small team leaders guan/manage groups, middle team leaders guan duty students to clean the tables, big team leader guan all people, big team leader can enjoy the highest...like the teachers' words.” Upon being asked whether this means that they had similar influence as the teachers, the child replied laughingly: “No, little friends, big team leader has to listen to teacher’s words because we are kids, we cannot stand against them [teachers]” Despite having power, big team leaders are not more powerful than teachers. Another child said: “We are ‘guated’ by big team leaders all the time. If big team leader is out then middle team leaders [will guan us], if middle team leaders are out then small team leaders...” illustrating a clear hierarchical chain of command.

The different team leaders could also guan each other: “Middle team leader guan small team leader, big team leader guan middle team leader.” The children had clear ideas of who could be elected team leaders, particularly big team leaders, and during interviews, individual (potential) children’s names would come up. The significance of being watched was also explicitly stated by many children regarding all three tasks outlined above; both duty children, little teachers and team leaders could guan or watch other children. The emphasis of control involved thus also involve being watched, observed, emphasising the visibility of the individual for the public. Finally, the teachers would also let children in such tasks know that they were also being watched: “I will see, classroom officials. Are you behaving like leaders? If not I will remove your bands” (teacher *Zhou*, kindergarten 1).

Children who are chosen for the position of team leader generally have a higher amount of *guai* capital. In addition, through being team leaders, they are expected to guan others (on different levels) and thus need *guan* capital. The children have a clear understanding of the different levels and relations of power included in the team leader distinctions, and acknowledge that the big team leader title holds a higher form of power (although not surpassing the teacher). The three classifications *duty children*, *little teachers*, and *team leaders* illustrate the complexity of power dynamics among the children in a kindergarten classroom, and the following section will

go deeper into such dynamics; the social space of discipline, domination, hierarchy and social positioning in the kindergartens.

9.3 Differential positioning in social space

Through approaching everyday disciplinarian practices as a field or game where agents partake in power struggles over relevant field-specific capital and in this way negotiate and compete for power in everyday settings (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), this section will discuss issues of hierarchy and positioning in social space among the children in the kindergarten class. Not only are teachers and children endowed with different forms and amounts of resources, experiences, and knowledge (capital); there is also an uneven distribution of capital within the child group. Therefore, although the tasks elaborated on in this chapter are temporary, containing particular requirements, which all the children are aware of and can expect, regardless of who is doing them, the execution of domination *vary* according to *which* children are doing these tasks; i.e., children have varying possibilities as players in the (disciplinarian) game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). These differences are explored through how children communicate with other children (and adults), how they challenge power structures or avoid conflict, and how they act in dominant or subordinate ways towards other children. Based on extracts from field note observations, as well as transcripts from both child and teacher interviews, I will explore how five children—*Xiaoyan*, *Kang*, *Shanshan*, *Chao*, and *Shu*—were involved in everyday practices of domination, each with different experiences and resources. Using Bourdieu's analogy of game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), I analyse how these children had different approaches to and possibilities in the disciplinarian game; their approach depending on their position (in the field) and their possession (of capital). Different positioning in social space was observed in both kindergartens, albeit in a particular explicit form in kindergarten 1 through the tasks of little teachers and team leaders. Presenting the field as a game, and agents as players in this game, underlines how the children act within a particular frame of reference; in this case, a field where particular variants of embodied cultural capital (*guan*, *guai* and *kindergarten* capital) are considered valuable, producing different possibilities for individual children.

9.3.1 Xiaoyan

Xiaoyan was a girl in kindergarten 1 who had a strong position in the class. She had knowledge of how to make use of and behave in different spaces at different times in the kindergarten; i.e.,

she was well endowed with *kindergarten* capital. She mostly behaved in compliance with the teachers' expectations of good behaviour and good character, making progress and being attentive (*guai* capital) and her capital possession was not questioned by the teachers or the other children. During interviews with the teachers in kindergarten 1, the teachers said that *Xiaoyan* was their "best kid because she develops very well and evenly."¹⁸⁴ On another occasion, one of the teachers spontaneously told my translator and me that *Xiaoyan* was "good at self-control." The teachers also told us in the interview that everyone in the class likes *Xiaoyan* very much; particularly *Qiang* (considered a good student) and "even *Kang* said so" (not considered one of the good students). *Xiaoyan* was seldom reprimanded for individual reasons and thus received little individual punishment; she was rather premiered with the task as little teacher or team leader, as well as asked to do chores or tasks for the teachers (such as rearranging tables and chairs), including on days when she was not on duty. Such frequent premiering strengthened her position in the child group. Through experience with kindergarten structures and class disciplinarian practices (e.g., group division, 'reminders' from teachers, being duty child) and observing disciplinarian practices directed at other children, as well as frequently being appointed little teacher, she was also endowed with *guan* capital. Such capital could for example be knowledge of how to address others for disciplinarian purposes, such as using particular types of language or paralinguistic techniques, giving orders/reminders, yelling, evaluating, scrutinizing, or physically making other children stand up as punishment. *Xiaoyan's* endowment with *guan* capital was visible in how she would act as little teacher; walking confidently among the children sitting on four lines, hands on waist, pointing her fingers at different children, saying "what are you looking at," often with a clever smile on her face. Her confidence as little teacher was also illustrated in a previous example, where *Xiaoyan* as little teacher decided who could receive papers for folding, and for how long the other children could hold on to this paper (see Section 9.2.2). *Xiaoyan* talked about being little teacher in the interviews in the following way:

(Kindergarten 1, child interviews, *Xiaoyan*) "Eh, I have been a little teacher for several times. When the teacher is leaving, the class became so noisy, it will interrupt somebody, to keep them from learning skills. The teacher will criticize us because of this. But each time she [the teacher] leaves, she will pick somebody to be a little teacher, then we won't interrupt the class. Those whose names are called by the little teacher cannot be big team

¹⁸⁴ After saying this, the teachers asked my interpreter who her favourite child was, and they were very surprised to hear her answer. My translator said she really liked a boy who reminded her of her brother (cousin) (see 5.2.3). Her atypical choice made the teachers think they heard the wrong name, asking her if she meant another boy ("Did you say X's name?"). The teachers said that the boy she named was naughty.

leader. Everyone in our class wanna be middle team leaders, but those who don't use their mind always spoke, so they cannot be a big team leader."

Xiaoyan's utterances indicate an understanding of the power structures in the class, as well as of her place in the classroom hierarchy. In addition, she expressed an awareness of her power; that her actions have consequences for other children; through *calling names* she could prevent other children from being appointed tasks such as team leaders. Since she mentioned the phrase "use your mind," my interpreter asked her to explain what it meant, upon which she responded:

(Kindergarten 1, child interviews, *Xiaoyan*) "Eh, using your mind is a very good thing, you can do everything well if you use your mind. Also, if you use your mind, which makes your classmates feel that you behave very well, he will elect you as the big team leader. It's a very happy thing to be big team leader, very royal, and will be praised by parents."

The phrase "use your mind" is constantly repeated by the teachers (see 7.2.3), and as expressed by *Xiaoyan*, "using your mind" will enable you to "do everything well," leading to a preferable position both in relation to teachers, other children, as well as parents. Receiving star stickers was one way the children would be awarded by the teachers for positive behaviour (see 8.1.3). *Xiaoyan* also talked about how gaining stars was positive for her future relation to teachers in primary school: "I like star, because the teachers of primary school will see that you get so many stars and will definitely praise you. They will think you are a very clever child." *Xiaoyan* took care of the stickers she received from the teachers at home: "I put mine on the paper and saved them, I won't let my (elder) brother find them, he stick mine onto his, it's not good, it's me who gained them." Gaining stars were her accomplishment, and were not to be stolen by anyone.

Xiaoyan's strong endowment with all three forms of embodied cultural capital was recognized by both teachers and other children. This did not mean that she was exempt from critique or other forms of disciplinarian practice, but she experienced it less than others. Her high level of confidence was visible in relations and communication with both teachers and other children on a general basis. *Xiaoyan* also had a powerful influence on everyday interaction in the child group, including when she was *not* in tasks as dominator. She would for example make decisions on behalf of others in play activities in the classroom. In the following example, we see how two girls, *Xiaoyan* and *Cai*, are involved in power struggles including the teacher and a third girl in the class:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) My interpreter and I sit down at a table where *Xiaoyan* and *Xuan* are sitting, cutting paper in order to make the Chinese flag¹⁸⁵. They have a red piece of paper for the background, and cut stars from yellow paper to tape on the red paper. *Xiaoyan* says to teacher *Zhou* (teacher in charge this morning¹⁸⁶) that according to her research she has found that they have no more yellow paper, they need more to make the stars. Teacher *Zhou* comes over with some more yellow paper. *Xiaoyan* tells Teacher *Zhou* to look at what *Xuan* has done. She glued five little yellow stars (in addition to a big one) on the flag, that is one too many. Teacher *Zhou* asks *Xuan* why she put five stars, there are only four in the flag.

A girl is walking around the table, looking at what the two girls are doing. My translator and I get up from our chairs (we are occupying two out of four chairs, and *Xiaoyan* and *Xuan* are sitting on the other two). We ask her if she wants to sit? *Xuan* then says with a loud voice: “ta bu yao” (she does not want/have to). She says it several times and pushes the girl away from the table. Teacher *Zhou* comes over, leads the girl to the chair and tells her to sit down, before she leaves again. When the girl sits down, my interpreter asks if she wants to do something. *Xiaoyan* says that she is not going to do something, just watch. My interpreter asks *Xiaoyan* if she is sure? *Xiaoyan* calls the teacher and she comes over. She says to teacher *Zhou* that the girl is not going to do something, just look, and maybe help put the stars on the map with tape. Only two people are supposed to sit at the table and make stars. Teacher *Zhou* does not respond, and leaves shortly after.

Xiaoyan's strong position in relation to the teacher and to other children is clear in the example above. Her *symbolic* capital is evident in the way she speaks to others in an authoritative way, as well as in how other people respond to her utterances. *Xiaoyan* directs the teacher's attention towards the faults of *Xuan*'s flag making, and (together with *Xuan*) makes decisions on behalf of a third girl who shows interest in what they are doing. The decision to exclude the girl from the activity is expressed verbally (indirectly, as she addresses me and my translator) and physically (pushing her away), not only to the girl herself, but also in front of the teacher. The teacher ignores *Xuan*'s utterance to exclude the girl from the activity through physically taking the girl over to the chair, but the teacher's lack of response to *Xiaoyan*'s utterance could be interpreted as a silent agreement to this decision, further underlining the validity of *Xiaoyan*'s statement. Agents in the game play to increase or conserve capital, and to maintain or transform the rules of the game through valorising own and discredit other agents' capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Thus, through making decisions on behalf of other children and experiencing that other children and adults accepted such actions, *Xiaoyan* strengthened her position as a dominant player in the game. Due to being strong in all forms of capital, *Xiaoyan*

¹⁸⁵ One of the play activities in the morning, see 6.1.3.

¹⁸⁶ In kindergarten 1, the teachers practiced the *shift system*; one teacher would stay with the children in the class before lunch and the other after lunch (see method chapter).

was highly successful in the disciplinarian game, and her *symbolic* capital ensured her a good position, a solid reputation, confidence and authority in the group, both among teachers and other children – *both* in situations of explicit domination such as when being little teacher, as well as in everyday interaction outside such tasks.

9.3.2 Kang

Kang was a boy who had a weaker position in the social space of the kindergarten; both among other children and the teachers. He received more yelling and punishment from the teachers, and more negative treatment from both teachers and children. His name would very often come up when little teachers were to give names of misbehaving children to the teacher, and he would often be told to stand in front of his chair by little teachers and by the teachers. He would also sometimes be the last one to sit down to eat lunch (waiting for the teachers to tell him to sit), or be told to stand away from other children playing during sport outside in the yard, not being allowed to partake. In the following example, *Kang* and some other children were asked to stand in the middle of the room to practice on a dance (one of the dances from the calisthenics outside in the morning) while the rest of the class were watching. The chairs had been moved to the sides of the wall, so that there was a lot of floor space for dancing.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) The teacher is calling several names of children who have to come to the floor and line up. *Kang, Ning, Lulu, Liang, Lili* and four other boys have to practice the dance while the other children are sitting on their chairs, watching them. Several of the children in the group are boys who often get into trouble with the teachers. The children are struggling to remember all the moves, and there is a lot of yelling from the teachers. They are standing one behind the other in lines, trying to look at each other when dancing to see what to do next. While dancing, however, the teachers place them so that they face each other, in two lines, and they have to continue dancing like that (making it more difficult to synchronize movements, since their counterparts use opposite arm and leg movements when dancing). The children have to practice for around 15 minutes. *Kang* is particularly getting a lot of yelling. The teacher pushes him a little when he can't remember the moves. At one point, teacher *Liu* puts her pointing finger on his forehead, so that he steps back one step (cannot hold his balance). Teacher *Liu* also removes the sticker¹⁸⁷ he received this morning from his forehead. *Lili*, and two of the boys are also yelled at more than the other children. All the children have a serious expression on their faces while dancing. Then they move on to another dance, and the rest of the children join them.

¹⁸⁷ See 8.1.3 for how stickers were used as premiering good behaviour in the kindergarten.

Kang was often yelled at by the teachers, and more frequently than other children. At one occasion, the teachers said that *Kang* “cries a lot because he makes many mistakes” (example Section 7.2.5). *Kang* was not considered eligible as little teacher or team leader, and was rarely (if ever) in a position to observe or control others as duty student. During interviews, the teachers said that he was the boy most frequently mentioned by other children when they complained to the teachers. Although he would listen when criticized by teachers, he would often forget what they said in the next moment. They said it seemed like he did not care about things too much, he would hit other children and be criticized for it. However, they also said that they should praise him more and be better to him. Some children also expressed in interviews that they did not want *Kang* to come to their dream kindergarten, because he hits other children (one also said he spat on his face). *Kang*’s position in class is illustrated in the following example, where he is being prevented from doing what the teacher asks by other children, thus finding himself in a ‘locked’ position. The class is sitting in four lines:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) One by one, teacher *Liu* calls the children’s names. When hearing their names, the children bring their chair to the lunch table, go to the bathroom and then return to their seat at the table to eat. The remaining boys who are waiting to hear their names called are *Dong* and *Kang*. Suddenly *Kang* starts crying and says something to teacher *Liu*. Teacher *Liu* says something to him about not being fast (*bu kuai*). After a little while, she lets him sit and eat as well. He wipes his tears, brings his chair over to his seat at the table, where three other boys are already sitting. He tries to push his chair in under the table (everybody has to do this) before going to the bathroom, but the boys are not moving their feet. He asks them to, but they are not reacting at all to his words (but they can hear him, they are looking at him). Teacher *Liu* sees him standing up and holding his chair, but not moving, and she yells at him to go to the bathroom.

Despite *Kang* wanting to comply with the teacher’s demands, he was prevented by other children. They did not let him place his chair under the table, which provoked additional yelling on his part (and not on the two boys preventing *Kang* to place his chair under the table).

Kang would at a few occasions present stories for the class (although I rarely saw this when I was there):

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Kang* is told to come up (he raised his hand). He seems a little surprised at this. He is standing and shaking one of his feet while talking in front of the class. When he is finished, teacher *Liu* pats him on the head, and he looks satisfied when he sits down.

In the interview, *Kang* explained that he would like to have little teachers in his dream kindergarten, that big team leaders and middle team leaders should help the teacher to “watch

the kids” as well as do some work in the classroom, such as moving chairs and tables. Furthermore, he wanted to have four word stories (see Section 7.3) in his dream kindergarten, and he also presented a four word story for me and my interpreter during the interview (I did not see him perform one in class, but he may have done that when I was not there). In his dream kindergarten he would play all day long. *Kang* also expressed in the interview that he did not like that he had to stand so often in class. *Kang* had a high degree of first-hand experience with disciplinarian practices (*guan* capital). This embodied experience, however, did not translate into something he could use in disciplinarian contexts as dominator. First of all, such experiences may prevent him from obtaining other forms of capital such as *guai* capital and *kindergarten* capital. Not only was he at times physically separated from the rest of the child group (e.g., punishment of physical separation, see Section 6.2.1), and in this way prevented to some degree from entering and partaking in the game. His endowment with *guan* capital was not considered valuable capital on its own or in such amounts, reducing his chances in the playing field. In addition, frequent yelling and individual physical separation from the class, made it difficult to be associated with positive characteristics (*guai* capital). Being particularly endowed with *guan* capital, and lacking in the other two forms of capital, made it a larger challenge playing the game, since his capital holdings was not recognized as valuable among other children or the teachers.

9.3.3 Shanshan

In some ways, *Shanshan* was more ‘invisible’ in relation to everyday disciplinarian practices and received less individual praise and less individual punishment, but generally more praise than punishment. For this reason was appointed little teacher on occasion, which happened once during fieldwork (while I was present). As illustrated in the following example, *Shanshan* was a thorough and gentle little teacher who corrected children’s sitting position, but not in a strict manner:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Shanshan* is little teacher. She is almost running from one child to another, approaching children who are sitting in a “sloppy” manner. She stands in front of the children and looks at them, and the children react by sitting up straight for a little while. She is very thorough; when stopping in front of individual children, she takes their feet and straightens them, and fixes their arms. One boy asks little teacher if he is allowed to go to the bathroom, and she lets him. She tries to close the legs of a boy two times, but he would not sit with them close together, he just took them back out right after she closed them. She leaves. *Xuan* asks to go to the bathroom, and she is also given

permission. *Peng* is sitting with a piece of string between his teeth, flossing. Little teacher wants him to stop this behaviour, and he throws away the thread.

The other children seemed to acknowledge the power the position of little teacher entailed when *Shanshan* was little teacher: several children would correct their behaviour, even if only for a short amount of time. *Shanshan* did not scream or yell while being little teacher, but rather adjusted the children's sitting position. *Shanshan* generally behaved well and followed rules and regulations in the kindergarten, and thus had a fair amount of *guai* capital and *kindergarten* capital, and was seldom individually disciplined. She was also elected small team leader (see 9.2.3) due to her good behaviour. In the interview, *Shanshan* said laughingly that she would want little teachers in her dream kindergarten because if they did not have that "little friends will play in a mess, in a mess, in a complete mess." The children in this interview then began talking about what that meant that with a lot of mess and toys everywhere some toys would eventually fall into the toilet, which made both children and interpreter laugh for a good while. If this happened "then cannot sit, then cannot do some games" but "if little friends keep cleaning, it will become clean" (and better for playing). She also said that "duty students help us work, so we like duty students." In addition, having good behaviour was emphasised, also in a dream kindergarten, "because if you behave well, the teachers will stick you" (give you stickers, see Section 8.1.3). When talking about a dream kindergarten, *Shanshan* said that "My dream kindergarten is the kindergarten we are living in now" because "the things teacher asked us to bring are really so pretty" (decorative items, such as "colourful lights, all very beautiful"). While discussing what kind of toys children could bring to their dream kindergarten, another boy said they will only bring toys the teachers agree with, upon which *Shanshan* added "Yes, if you construct the things don't exist, that is also useful"—a statement that may relate to how the children were encouraged to use their mind to create things that were inventive and new (rather than just build tall things, see 7.2.3 on "use your mind"). *Shanshan* was sometimes in the position as dominator, being elected small team leader and on rare occasions little teacher; she had knowledge of how to correct other children's behaviour, but she was not a strict enforcer of such corrections. She was well endowed with *kindergarten* capital, which made it possible to cope well in everyday settings without disciplining others (*guan* capital) or being good at 'making progress' (*guai* capital). In such ways, *Shanshan* contributed to the continuation of the disciplinarian game.

9.3.4 Chao

Chao was a boy in kindergarten 1 who was considered by teachers and children one of the ‘good children’ (see Section 9.2.3). *Chao* was well equipped with *kindergarten* capital and *guai* capital; he paid attention to what the teachers said, and always did what was expected of him, both in terms of behaviour and activities in the classroom. For such reasons, he was one of the selected few appointed as big team leader, and several times appointed the task of little teacher, particularly while he was in position as big team leader. During interviews however, he expressed that in his dream kindergarten, he would not want little teachers or team leaders because “you have to guan” and “cannot play whatever we want to play.” In addition, he would not want to present four word stories (something duty children had to do), because “very tired to prepare everyday.” When talking about the difference between adults and children, *Chao* said that “adults’ ideas is, let little friends study” whereas when asked what ‘children’s idea’ was, he answered “play.” *Chao* was a quiet student and usually did not expose himself a lot in daily life. When he was little teacher, he would sit in the teacher’s chair most of the time, and walk around the children sitting, as illustrated in the following example:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Chao* is little teacher. He is sitting in the teacher's chair, and now and then he walks down to the children. He does not speak, but walks slowly past the children, staring at them. His face looks serious. After a while, the teacher asks *Chao* to give her names. He says *Guo*, *Dong*, and *Kang* (unsure of his reasons, I did not see them do anything). The three boys have to stand.

When *Chao* was little teacher he would move around slowly, without talking to other children or trying to discipline them, often with a serious facial expression. Mostly, he would not make use of verbal disciplinarian techniques, such as yelling, or ordering children to stand in front of their chairs. He could ask children who were talking to stand, but if they resisted, he would not insist, but rather retreat to the teacher’s chair. If asked for names of misbehaving children by the teacher, he would usually give names of those with lower positions in the class, such as *Kang*, even though they had not done anything at that moment (that I could see or understand). As *Shanshan*, *Chao* was not a very strict enforcer of disciplinary action. Since he was well equipped with *kindergarten* capital and *guai* capital, however, he was frequently selected for such tasks by the teachers. Therefore, although he expressed a dislike for team leader or little teachers in interviews when talking about his dream kindergarten, he performed as expected. He continued to play the game because of his understanding of the game, and was consequently repeatedly premiered with tasks as dominator in the child group.

9.3.5 Shu

Shu is another example with a capital possession that complicated her way of playing the game. The teachers liked her, and presented her to me as an out-of-the-ordinary child with special skills; she was academically smart and also considered to be very cute. The teachers did not speak about any of the other children in this way, and *Shu* was one of the few children who would occasionally sit on the teacher's lap or kiss their cheek. In the interview, the teachers said "she reads a lot, on electricity, on dinosaur. Her mother tells us stories every morning, one or two things each day. One day her mother said to her "*I am too old, I have a bad memory*" upon which *Shu* had replied: "*You are not too old, it's because when you grow up, your brain stem becomes...*" The teachers also emphasised that she even knew about menstruation. On one occasion her mother told the teachers about an episode when her family watched TV together, a program about a male frog and a female frog, and suddenly *Shu* had said "*Mum, I know they are going to do the copulation.*" The teachers were sceptical to how *Shu* was allowed to read everything saying "*Those kinds of book should not be touched by kids.*" They said that *Shu* has a good memory, and that when she was younger and could not read herself, she could remember the book after her mother had read it to her once. She had been known for her skills since she started kindergarten. Due to her academic skills, *Shu* was often asked to answer the teacher's difficult questions or explain different phenomena to the other children in the class. In such ways, the teachers frequently made an example of her to the class, and she was often given privileges, i.e., stickers or prizes, and on a few occasions appointed as little teacher. The following example illustrates how she would sometimes be asked by teachers to construct questions for the other children to answer:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Shu* is asked to talk about what she did during the holiday. She said she went to the nature museum. Teacher *Liu* asks her what she saw, and that she should come over to her and talk about it. *Shu* goes up to teacher *Liu* and stands next to her, facing the class. She says: "I saw dinosaur. And egg." Teacher *Liu* says, "Ok—test them [the other children]. See if they can answer." *Shu* asks: "How big is the egg?" A boy says: "Very very big." "Is that true?" teacher asks. *Shu* nods. "Any other questions?" teacher *Liu* asks *Shu*. *Shu* asks: "What did people who lived many many years ago, look like?" Teacher *Liu* says to the class: "Old people, do you think they looked like us?" The children say no. Teacher says: "So, what did they look like?" *Shu* says: "His face looks like monkey. His hands look like gorilla." Teacher *Liu* says: "Yes, and with a lot of body hair. Step by step, they become like we look now."

In such ways, *Shu* was frequently asked to explain different phenomena to the class, ask questions and test the other children, or talk about news or other things she had read about.

Shu was very tuned in with the teachers in everyday life, would often stare and look at them for long periods of time, while they were doing other things, smiling when they laughed, sometimes not doing what she was supposed to do because of this. Often, she would also sit on her chair with her body turned in other directions, either looking at other children, me and my translator, or at decorations on the classroom walls. The teachers would sometimes remind her to turn around and pay attention, but she was often let alone. In the interview, the teachers said that *Shu* was very intelligent, but only in a certain field, her self-help skills for example, was not that good. This was for example expressed in the small team leader election (see 9.2.3) where the teachers said to the class that *Shu* did not eat fast or sleep well during nap time. At times, the teachers would also test her, such as the example of her failing at marching (see 8.1.1). At occasions when activities demanded academic skills or knowledge however, she would always be included. Her academic strengths or cuteness did however, not serve her in the disciplinarian game. She was endowed with *kindergarten* capital, but because she was clumsy and had a drifting attention, she would not always sit straight or pay attention to what was happening around her. *Shu* was thus not particularly strong in *guai* capital; although she was academically smart, she did not always pay attention, listen to the teachers, or act in the way the teachers demanded. She was not strong in *guan* capital either; when she was little teacher, she did not try to discipline others, and as illustrated, other children did not acknowledge her authority in this task (see 9.2.2). In some ways, she became an ‘outsider’ in the class; a weak position that could be explained through her lack of capital holdings considered *relevant* for the field of discipline in the kindergartens. However, since she was endowed with academic knowledge (a form of institutional cultural capital with strong value in the larger field of power in China), the teachers premiered her. Her atypical capital endowment also led to premiering in ‘atypical’ ways, such as when she was premiered with a phone call about airplanes to the teacher’s friend who was a pilot (see example in 8.1.2).

As illustrated, these five children play the game in different ways due to their social trajectories, varied composition of the three forms of field-specific cultural capital, and consequently, differential positioning in social space. In the following section, I further explore how children’s differential participation in disciplinarian practices could be interpreted as forms of relational agency, partaking in the reinforcing and (re)producing of hierarchical and differential power differences in the child group.

9.4 Making sense of the disciplinarian game

In the previous section, I explained how five different children made use of various forms of capital considered relevant and valuable in the field, illustrating how different children had different approaches to and possibilities in engaging as “players” in the (disciplinarian) “game” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Explaining social practice in this way underline power difference and patterns of domination, actuating an understanding of agency that is deeply relational. It is in social relationships that the notion of agency emerges; children (and teachers) act in dominant or dominated ways *in relations with* others. In the following I further explore the analogy of game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) and the notion of relational agency (Burkitt, 2016). In the quest to make sense of the disciplinarian game, I advocate an understanding where agents act the way they do because it *makes sense to them*; i.e., because it is meaningful, familiar, and recognizable from their position in the field and in their relationships with others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a; Burkitt, 2016). Whereas this final section thus revolves around the differential and more individual aspects of the children’s experience of everyday disciplinarian practices, the next chapter approaches such matters with emphasis on the child group, emphasizing habitus as the collective embodiment of history in agents (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), in our case, with respect to disciplinarian practices in Chinese kindergartens.

The analogy of *game* illustrates that different fields or social worlds are characterized by conflict and competition among players; i.e., battlefields where agents compete for capital, resources and power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). The field-specific forms of cultural capital previously emphasized are the principles for and stakes in the game; important and legitimate values, knowledge or resources, becoming embodied experiences for individual children. However, since different children have different endowments with and compilations of capital, they are positioned differently in social space. This also implies the children have different stakes and investment in the game; agents’ interest “differentiates itself according to the position occupied in the game (dominant vs. dominated [...]) and with the trajectory that leads each participant to this position” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:117). As explained in the previous section, the everyday experiences of domination for *Xiaoyan*, *Kang*, *Shanshan*, *Chao* and *Shu*, are significantly different; these children also act with varied levels of confidence, as well as reflect on and talk about disciplinarian practices in different ways. *Xiaoyan* for example, has a strong position in the kindergarten, and her authority and confidence as dominator is

particularly visible in the way children and teachers acknowledged and recognized her authority, for example as little teacher. Not only could she discipline and control other children as little teacher or duty student, she also maintained her strong position and decisional power in everyday situations outside such tasks. Furthermore, her actions could directly affect other children's possibilities for participating in activities, as illustrated in the paper cutting activity that *Xuan* and *Xiaoyan* participated in (see 9.3.1). First, *Xiaoyan* exposed *Xuan*'s mistake of placing one star too many on the Chinese map she made, devaluing her competence in front of the teacher. Then, she acknowledged and included *Xuan* through excluding a third girl from the activity. Although *Xuan* had already tried to prevent the third girl from joining the activity, it was not until *Xiaoyan* entered this discussion that the final decision regarding her participation was made. *Xiaoyan* explained to the teacher how things were to unfold, the teacher silently agreed with her, and the girl had to watch the activity instead of partaking. *Xiaoyan* had a strong position in the kindergarten and she was considered to be conscientious, well-behaved, attentive, and good at dominating others. She was able to dominate others because her compilation of relevant embodied cultural capital and symbolic capital was *acknowledged* and *recognized* as legitimate and valuable by other children and teachers. This enabled her to strengthen her own position, as well as simultaneously weaken and strengthen other children's possibilities, but this did not mean that she was exempt from critique or domination. Individual children were not *always* in strong or powerful positions, or *always* suppressed or dominated; situations and other agents practice and position could also change. "In interrelation, interdependence and interactions with others, interactants¹⁸⁸ are always active and passive, powerful and yet vulnerable to various degrees, acting on others and being acted on by those others" (Burkitt, 2016:336).

As we have seen in this chapter, when children who are unlikely to be in dominant positions are appointed the task as little teacher, their new-won power and authority in this task was not necessarily acknowledged as such by the other children. As Bourdieu notes, capital takes time to accumulate and tend to persist in its being and in its embodied form it is closely connected to its beholder (Bourdieu, 2011:81), i.e., individual children. Being little teacher is a task for one child at the time, typically in regulated situations or transitional periods such as when

¹⁸⁸ Since agents are always located in manifold social relations, Burkitt sees agents as interactants; who are "interdependent, vulnerable, intermittently reflexive, possessors of capacities that can only be practiced in joint actions, and capable of sensitive responses to others and to the situations of interaction" (Burkitt, 2016:322).

children are sitting in four lines waiting for the following activity. Since the little teacher is the dominator in this situation, lack of *guan* capital as well as authority and confidence (*symbolic* capital) becomes very visible, such as in *Shu's* case (see 9.2.2). On the other hand, children who were continuously awarded with tasks as dominators or premiered in other ways such as *Xiaoyan*, did not have this problem because her capital endowment was acknowledged as legitimate by the child group. The children have different experiences, knowledge and resources, which are valued differently in the social space the children move around in. This means that children such as *Xiaoyan* are not only in a dominant position when being little teacher, but also in settings outside of such tasks, in everyday interaction with other children. Kindergarten routines (*kindergarten* capital), being attentive and using your mind (*guai* capital), as well as disciplining others (*guan* capital), are values, which, in different ways, are advocated and stressed in everyday practice. Differential endowments with these variants of embodied cultural capital therefore makes for a game where some are successful, and others are not.

As has been elaborated on, *Kang* was a child who was not as successful in the disciplinarian game. Frequently named by little teachers as misbehaving (to the teacher), repeatedly being individually separated from the class, and often yelled at by the teacher in front of the other children. *Kang* had little space for manoeuvring in the kindergarten, often dominated by both teachers and children. However, he also challenged other children's attempts of domination, such as refusing to accept *Ying's* orders (as duty child, in a previous example). He also continued to raise his hands in class to present stories even though he was seldom chosen to perform (example above). Such forms of practice can be understood as acts of resistance, which are always part of, implied by and activated through relations of domination (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). "The dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force, inasmuch as belonging to a field means by definition that one is capable of *producing effects* in it" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:80, my emphasis), regardless of the content of the effects or what they may lead to for the individual agent. Such an understanding, where agency is understood as "producing effects" in a field, on the world and others (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a; Burkitt, 2016), suggests an understanding which is both relational and differential.

Agency unfolds in manifold social relations that may be contradictory, and agents are both personal and social selves (Burkitt, 2016:336). In the relational and hierarchical power dynamics among the children in the kindergarten class, agency is thus visible in relationships

through practices such as compliance, resilience, submission, opposition or domination; i.e., through various ways of playing the game. In this understanding, practice need not be rational, a choice or something that produces change or lead to a preferable situation or position for individual agents. Rather, relational agency is about how agents interact and act, connected to their embodied presence in and sense of the world, in their relationships with others (see also Chapter 10). For Bourdieu (1992a) and Burkitt (2016), seeing agency as *producing effects* is connected to an understanding where agents act the way they do because it is deeply meaningful to them, in the sense that it is familiar and recognizable. In such a scenario, your actions *make sense* because there is a “logical” connection between own practice and the way “the game” tend to happen. In other words, there is a correspondence between habitus and field, or between “social structures and mental structures” (Wacquant, 1992:12).

What drives the game forward is the game itself; through the actions of agents, the game continues (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Only when people do not care or have no interest (disinterest) in the game, will it disappear. Although we have seen that the children express variable interest in being team leader or little teacher, they still perform in practices of domination and play a part in the disciplinarian game. Through everyday practice and in situations of child domination, teachers and children recognize and thus reinforce different children’s embodied cultural capital, consequently negotiating their place in the classroom hierarchy. Obviously, relationships in the kindergarten were not static, but changed over time. The patterns of power difference and power struggles described in this thesis are based on several months of fieldwork in each kindergarten, and children’s position in social space also changed throughout this time; *Chao* for example, was more frequently little teacher when he was being big team leader, and he was less visible in practices of domination before this time. Similarly, changes in children’s positioning may also have changed after I left the kindergarten. However, regardless of changes for individual children’s positioning, for the children in the kindergarten, disciplinarian practices were everyday common knowledge. After two years in the kindergarten, the children were familiar with everyday routines, disciplinarian practices and power asymmetries. Through prolonged experiences in the field, such practices and values became part of the children’s embodied understanding; i.e., habitus or *practical sense* of discipline (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) (see Section 6.4 and more in Chapter 10).

9.5 Summary Chapter 9

Using theorizations of Bourdieu, this chapter has looked at the disciplinarian game and how the children use their differential compilation of capital in situations and relations of dominance with other children. Three forms of field-specific embodied cultural capital (*kindergarten*, *guai* and *guan* capital) are approached as relevant experiences, values, knowledge and resources for the disciplinarian game in the kindergartens. This chapter has shown how the children use forms and compilations of capital in engagement with others, particularly in tasks as *duty child*, *little teaches* or *team leader*, but also in everyday practice outside such tasks. As has been demonstrated, particular forms of capital are what gets the children into tasks as dominators (little teachers or team leaders) in the first place, in addition to being highly relevant for how such tasks can be executed. Finally, I explored how such an analytic approach could underline a relational understanding of the concept of agency; as something that take place between people in their relationships, and as something that can be both rewarding and problematic, strongly affecting children's positioning in social space.

10 Children's *practical sense* of disciplinarian practices

Previous chapters have elaborated on the range of disciplinarian practices observed in two urban Chinese kindergartens (Chapters 6-8), as well as how children participate in such practices in different ways (Chapter 9). In this chapter, I will further explore how children relate to discipline and domination through exploring the children's habitus or *practical sense*.¹⁸⁹ This does not imply that the children would always think and act the same way when faced with disciplinarian action. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, children are positioned differently in social space, and react and act according to their social position and individually embodied experiences, values and resources. Rather than referring to rules of behaviour for individual agents, habitus refers to *regularities* of behaviour in the child group; *dispositions* that help agents cope with predictable and unpredictable situations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Habitus is closely linked to the historical and social conditions that the children move around in and are part of; in other words, practical sense or habitus is embodied history (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). In Chapter 6, I introduced the notion of embodiment as a corporal understanding and appropriation of practice, and in this chapter I further explore such matters. In this chapter, I address research question number 2: exploring how the children experience, relate to and partake in disciplinarian practices, through an exploration of the notion of habitus, or practical sense (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a).

A *relational* form of thinking is embedded in several disciplinarian practices in the two kindergartens (see Sections 8.4 and 9.4), and is also considered to be an essential element in the children's habitus. In this chapter, I further analyse the notion of relationality through an emphasis on practices of *differentiation* and *interrelational responsibility*. Furthermore, I explore how the children expressed, approached or negotiated discipline and domination through a form of situational and pragmatic *sensitivity*, as well as through a *playful* approach to different situations. This playful approach was not only emphasised in children's relationships - including relationships of domination and control - but also considered here as a way to relate to and potentially challenge daily regulative practices in the kindergarten. I explore these features as parts of the children's *practical sense*. Furthermore, the children engaged with everyday practices of discipline, thus contributing to the reproduction of disciplinarian and hierarchical structures in the kindergarten social space. I begin with a section on the "fuzzy

¹⁸⁹ Habitus follows a *practical sense* (see 4.3); habitus and practical sense refer to the same phenomenon in Bourdieusian terminology (Wacquant, 1992: 20-22).

logic” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) of disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens. Drawing on previous chapters, I identify some recurring patterns, intending to clarify and provide a reminder of what this field consist of, and consequently, to which social and structural conditions the children’s *practical sense* relate.

10.1 The fuzzy logic of disciplinarian practice

A social field is a complex social universe which could be understood both as a ‘battlefield’ and social space of struggle (as in Chapter 9) and as a ‘magnetic’ field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). In the following pages, I explore the ‘magnetic’ aspect, emphasising how the field exerts a forceful influence on the behaviour for those who enter it (Wacquant, 1992:17). Through observations of disciplinarian expressions, practices, and structures (part III) I analysed ways of conveying and acting out certain values, ideologies, and beliefs. I addressed how discipline is a *significant* presence in everyday life, which is part of the social and historical structural conditions that children operate in, and thus connects to *regularities* of behaviour in the child group. Differences in practice between the two kindergartens underline the specificity of practice; discipline did not happen in identical ways in both kindergartens, but was a significant phenomenon in both of them. Similar disciplinarian practices and techniques existed in both kindergartens and differences were particularly one of degree. As such the disciplinarian practices in the two kindergartens can be said to produce similar *and* different forms of (disciplinarian) “magnetism.” Some characteristic features of disciplinarian practices that were similar in the two kindergartens were: *order* and *control* (e.g., the emphasis on straight lines), a *correct way* to perform and act (e.g., the emphasis on models), *evaluation*, and the *public* character of discipline (i.e., the role of ‘others’ and the emphasis on being on display). These features help explain how discipline in the two Chinese kindergartens can be understood, and consequently, make up the conditions with which children’s habitus—or *practical sense*—relate. The field is a space of play with its own logic (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a); through identifying and exploring different aspects of the field, in space, time, and social relationships, I attempted to identify some aspects of this “logic.”

On a daily basis, the children had to relate to a range of disciplinarian practices and expectations regarding movement and behaviour that can be characterized as both *explicit* and *implicit*, *circumstantial* and *constant*. Disciplinarian practices can thus be divided into two sorts of embodied experience; one routine and the other unplanned, but both part of recurring practices in the kindergarten and thus of the conditions of the field. Routine-based, everyday

disciplinarian practices include daily practices such as following the kindergarten schedule and everyday routines during meal times (6.2.2), being duty children (9.2.1), and marching army style in lines when moving between spaces and activities (6.2.3). The other sort of disciplinarian practice is one led by circumstance and opportunity, where situations that appear are made useful for disciplinarian purposes (examples in Chapters 7 and 8).

Spatial and temporal structures also contain elements of discipline (6.1), which are relevant for how disciplinarian *practices* were carried out in the kindergartens. The dimension of time influenced all parts of everyday practice, regulating everyday routines and affecting children's movements and behaviour. Time also structured play and interaction between children, but as will be elaborated on below, the children would also themselves seize spaces and opportunities for play and secrecy. Disciplinarian practices that could be characterized as constant or routine (e.g., marching) were included into the everyday schedule, whereas circumstantial disciplinarian practices were not; they would rather take on a swift and temporary form. Sometimes they would consist of a few sentences, only a word or a look, as a reminder to the children of appropriate behaviour (see Section 7.1 on *guan*). Disciplinarian action could thus take place in a very short timespan before the class would resume to the scheduled activity. Other times the teachers could take individual children 'out of the schedule,' i.e., remove them from activities or make them stand up for a period of time (6.2.1).

Disciplinarian practices were many and complex. For example, although the field was a highly regulated space characterized by order and control, it was also characterized by unpredictability. Clear expectations of how children should sit, stand and walk, were accompanied by sometimes sudden changes in rules and expectations from the teachers (6.1.4). Furthermore, children were expected to behave in certain ways, as mature and responsible, but were simultaneously openly criticised, sometimes in potentially humiliating manners (7.2). At times such variations in treatment seemed to be confusing for the children, but they could also have a form of sensitivity towards such circumstances (more below). Explicit instructions regarding behaviour and movement were frequently conveyed in speech and displayed on the classroom walls (the *correct* way to behave, see Chapters 6 and 7), but the children were also encouraged to think for themselves, be creative and "use their mind" (see Section 7.2.3). In addition, having a *sense of collective*, a *sense of rule*, and a *sense of service* was underlined by the teachers (e.g., in the duty child task), but the kindergarten was simultaneously characterized by hierarchical

structures, underlined by evaluative disciplinarian practices in which particular children would repeatedly be selected for various forms of activities, e.g., as *models* for other children to follow (e.g., Chapter 8). From the perspective of an outsider (such as the researcher) with a different frame of understanding (i.e., familiar with a different *fuzzy logic* of practice), such practices may appear contradictory or paradoxical. However, as has been emphasised in previous chapters and will be elaborated on in the following, such practices *make sense* in context. In Chapters 6-8 I elaborated on disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens and explored them in terms of contextual and culturally relevant topics such as guan, moral training, shaming and face losing, as well as historical and contemporary examples of public criticism and regulation—understanding such practises in a relational frame. The following section will further explore how the children themselves related to the complex and *fuzzy logic* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) of disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens, through an exploration of the children’s embodied *practical sense* of such practices.

10.2 A relational practical sense

Habitus or practical sense are understood as regularities in the children’s behaviour; patterns or *dispositions* of behaviour that could help explain how children approached and related to discipline in the kindergartens (see Section 4.3). Through regular engagement with disciplinarian practice, children internalize and embody such practices, and themselves engage in disciplinarian practices in their social relationships through the workings of a practical sense. It is an active form of internalizing and a generative form of habitus, which means that it is not passively receiving and reproducing structures. Rather, habitus is understood as an *open* system of dispositions, a particular *sense* of how to relate to and make sense of both familiar and unfamiliar situations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). In other words, when faced with ‘new’ or ‘surprising’ situations or practices of discipline, the children have an idea of how to act and respond. Practice follows a fuzzy practical logic or sense which is challenging to grasp, both for outsiders and also often ‘unknown’ to those operating in the field; practice often belongs to the field of the undisputed, *doxa*, based on taken-for-granted ‘truths’ (Bourdieu, 1977:164). Practical mastery thus entails to “feel at home in the field”—a practical understanding of the field that implies a match between habitus and field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a).

In the following, I explore the children’s practical sense of discipline and domination as relational, emphasising the notion of differentiation and interrelational responsibility. As emphasised in different ways in part III, relational thinking—i.e., relating own experience and

action to the group and to the actions of other children—was constantly emphasised and reinforced through everyday practice, often in evaluative manners (see e.g., Section 8.1.). The children had to relate to both a generalized other (e.g., other classes) and to particular others (individual children in the class, as well as teachers), and explicit references to the presence and significance of others were stressed through both speech and action. As shown in Chapter 9, differentiation was an integral part of such relationships; the children thus engaged with disciplinarian practices from different points of view in social space. The children did however, have a shared responsibility to contribute to order in the classroom, explored here through a focus on social control and self-control. Finally, I look at how disciplinarian practices were approached, practiced, and challenged, through a situational and pragmatic form of *sensitivity*, as well as through an interconnected *playful* engagement with everyday regulative relationships, practices, and structures.

10.2.1 Differentiation and interrelational responsibility

The importance of differentiation for the understanding of social organization is stressed by Fei Xiaotong in his theory on the “differential mode of association” (Xiaotong et al., 1992) (see Section 4.4.1). According to Xiaotong (1992), Chinese society is not group oriented; it is rather centred on the individual and the ties each individual have with others, and how each person fulfils the obligations connected to these ties (Xiaotong et al., 1992). Ethical obligations circle around the principles of filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty, and sincerity (Xiaotong et al., 1992); principles that emphasise both individual and group cultivation, because it is a shared responsibility to maintain order and harmony in the group. In a previous example, we saw how a girl changed her role during role play, so that her role in the play would benefit the play itself (kindergarten 2, see 6.3.3). The children were playing teachers and students in a school. Suddenly, the school had too many teachers and too few students, and the girl then decided to be a student instead of a teacher. Her choice was praised by the teacher during the play analysis when the class discussed the role play session. This example illustrates the importance of, and positive value attached to, relational thinking and sense of responsibility for self and the larger group.

Practices of differentiation were not only evident in how the teachers approached the child group (see e.g., 8.1), but also in how the children approached each other (Chapter 9). On a daily basis, teachers and children recognized and reinforced children’s differential positioning in

social space. Such positions were connected to differences in compilation and amount of field-specific embodied cultural capital; i.e., different embodied knowledge, resources and experiences (*guan, guai* and *kindergarten* capital, see Section 9.1). Children strong in all forms of capital had *symbolic* capital. Often chosen as little teachers, and (higher) team leader positions, these children had more opportunities to make decisions that could affect other children, particularly those with weaker social positions in the class. When asked for names of misbehaving children from the teachers, these children's utterances could directly affect other children, often leading to individual punishment.

The children partook in practices of differentiation in the child group under the teachers' supervision (e.g., as exemplified in the team leader election, see Section 9.2.3), but patterns of differentiation were also expressed in interviews and in everyday practice, in less explicit evaluative situations. I have explained how individual children's behaviours were analysed in everyday group evaluation, discussing who were 'good' and why, emphasising what different children needed to improve to become 'better.' In kindergarten 2 particularly, group analysis was an everyday occurrence; after their daily 30 minute play session (role play, construction play or playing with board games in the classroom) the class would discuss how they had approached different activities and whether they had performed them well or not. Discussions of who could and who could not be team leaders on different levels were frequent among the children (see Sections 9.2.2 and 9.2.3), and such discussions were often linked to the various forms of embodied capital, as elaborated on in Section 9.1. Such discussions further augmented the value of the above mentioned forms of cultural capital, furthermore reinforcing "truths" regarding the positioning of different children. These values become unquestioned and taken-for-granted truths, shaping the way one understands practice, and are reinforced and reproduced through practice itself (more below).

In this context, mutual and reciprocal aspects of social responsibility—interrelational responsibility—gained importance. Self-control and social control in the differentiated child group was evident in everyday practice. On a general note, most of the children would try to live up to the expected behaviours related to kindergarten routines and adapt to the group and to other children, through finding their place in the group and trying to improve. When organized into groups, most children would be attentive to their own behaviour and the behaviour of others, respect hierarchy (particularly of children with stronger positions) and group obligations (duty students, everyday routines, routinized behaviours). The children would

pay attention to each other's behaviour and actions, sometimes reminding each other of proper behaviour and conduct. An example of such reminding from kindergarten 2 was when a boy returned to his seat after having had a cup of water at the water station. Another boy said to him "you didn't close it," and the boy then returned to the cabinet containing all the cups to close the cabinet doors. The children could also remind, encourage, or praise each other for doing an activity in a good way. For example, as the teachers asked some children to change seats, one of the boys said to the other "[you] move well" (kindergarten 2). At times, some children would also approach individual children who had been yelled at to comfort them after the teacher had left.

Social control could also involve the practice of informing the teacher of children's behaviours that did not comply with the important values in the classroom, such as in the example below:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Liang* is duty child today. He is cleaning the tables and putting away the chopsticks, bowls, and cups. He rearranges the chopsticks in the big steel bucket, trying to organize them. He lifts the box of biscuits, but it falls to the floor and some biscuits fall out. He starts to pick them up. None of the teachers are around; Teacher *Zhou* is outside the classroom and teacher *Liu* is hanging something up on the wall in the reading corner. Suddenly some children start calling her saying "teacher, teacher," pointing at *Liang*. Teacher *Liu* comes over, sees what he is doing, and yells at him.

In this example, several children called the teacher over for her to see what *Liang* was doing, and consequently yell at him. Informing the teacher about other children who did not behave well was expected by children doing tasks including domination (e.g., as little teachers or the duty child), but was also done by children who were not 'on duty.'¹⁹⁰ When my interpreter was a student they called it *gào zhuàng*¹⁹¹; a word used in a court in ancient China, meaning to bring a law against somebody.¹⁹² The most common Chinese phrase used now, however, is *jiē fā*,¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Sometimes the assistants would also inform the teachers of children who were not behaving well.

¹⁹¹ *gào zhuàng* (告状)

¹⁹² <http://www.mdbg.net/chindict/chindict.php?page=worddict&wdrst=0&wdqb=%E5%91%8A%E7%8A%B6>
To complain, to sue, to bring a lawsuit (Accessed 26.10.2015). Sometimes they would call people who did this whistle-blowers.

¹⁹³ *jiē fā* (揭发)

which translates as ‘to expose, to bring to light, to disclose or revelation.’¹⁹⁴ Both phrases indicate that a person is doing something unlawful or wrong, and that others are in their right to ‘reveal’ the truth about the matter. In the classroom, the consequences of ‘informing’ would also depend on *who* the children informing on others were. For example, if *Qiang* (belonging to the group of ‘good students’) told the teacher about another child who was misbehaving, the teacher would normally go over to that child and yell at him or her (also depending on what the child supposedly did). However, if *Kang* (who is often yelled at) told on others, few disciplinarian measures would be taken, and the teachers might just shush him off.

Thus, although the children were encouraged to behave well and work towards placing themselves in a good position, they could not control the consequences of their efforts because *other* people’s actions and behaviours (both teachers and children) also had consequences for *them*. Similarly, *their* actions had consequences for *others*. This adds weight to the importance of maintaining social control. First of all, social control could be preferable for the group as a whole, and children took pride in the group’s achievements and abilities, for example in comparison to other groups of children, and particularly younger children in lower classes. In both kindergartens, competition or comparison between classes was explicitly addressed; in kindergarten 1, often in relation to disciplinary action (“you are not in middle class anymore”) or in kindergarten 2, in how the best behaving class would receive a prize (travelling trophy) from the principal on special Monday (see Section 8.1.2). Secondly, social control could relate to individual children’s desire to control their own position, *both* through preventing other children’s negative behaviour in affecting them *and* in placing themselves in a favourable position. However, as previously exemplified, the children’s earned privileges could also depend on the potential future faults of others, as illustrated in the small team leader election (see Section 9.2.3), where *Xuan* lost the small team leader task to *Shanshan*, after the class had voted. “Only if *Shanshan* makes a mistake can you have it [be small team leader],” the teacher told *Xuan*. Finally, as demonstrated, being able to control others was most of all considered positive, even a privilege that could be earned (see Section 7.2).

The notion of face is also relevant in discussions on self- and social control, due to its significance for social interaction in Chinese society (see Section 2.3.2 and Chapter 7).

¹⁹⁴ <http://www.mdbg.net/chindict/chindict.php?page=worddict&wdrst=0&wdqb=%E6%8F%AD%E5%8F%91> (Accessed 261015)

Behaving in certain ways in order to ‘keep face’ (or not lose face), as well as having an interest in maintaining moral obligations towards others and towards the group, is also of some relevance in the kindergarten context. The teachers in the kindergartens expressed an understanding of children as *not* having face (yet), which means that disciplinarian practices take on a different significance, than they would had the children had face. However, as has been demonstrated, the children were becoming familiar with and learning the social significance of face through everyday disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten, in the presence of both children and adults. This includes for example verbal disciplinarian practices of humiliation, which were connected to their position and membership in the child group (see Chapter 7 and Section 6.2.1 on the practice of standing).

Subtle and direct utterances from the teachers underlined that the children had to take responsibility for both *individual* and *group* behaviour. In addition to encouraging self-progress in individual children, the teachers emphasised that the children were one amongst many and that they play their part in the group and in everyday life as members of the kindergarten class (see Chapter 8). Self- and social control were thus part of daily practices, and as demonstrated in previous chapters, such practices are reflected in practices outside the kindergarten as well, adding legitimization to their value.

10.2.2 Situational sensitivity and a pragmatic sense of limits

The relational aspect, coupled with the unpredictable aspects of everyday disciplinarian practice (see Sections 6.4 and 10.1), was also visible in how the children had a situational sensitivity and a pragmatic sense of limits. Many children were sensitive to their surroundings and to the possibilities, rules and regulations that existed in different situations. Through experience, the children had an understanding of types of behaviour, bodily and facial expression that were more suitable or clever to use in different situations of disciplinary action. Examples of sensitivity could be observed in situations where the teacher yelled at the class. If the teacher was yelling to the class with a lot of screaming, the children would generally sit quietly, carefully observing the situation, with limited joking and communication between them. If the teacher was yelling a little, some of the children would joke and talk to each other, stretching the limits for appropriate behaviour in front of the teacher. In kindergarten 1, this would not only depend on who the children involved were (his or her social position in the class), but also on which of the two teachers was present (one was generally stricter than the other) or to the

sometimes unpredictable and irregular patterns of the teachers' strictness. When the teacher yelled at *individual* children, a common reaction was to stand still and look at the floor. Unless the teacher demanded an answer, the child would not speak, and just express him or herself with careful bodily movement, such as e.g., shaking their head carefully while looking down at the floor. In other situations, the child would stare directly into the teachers' eyes when getting yelled at. If the yelling was less intense or if the child was used to getting yelled at, he or she would do what the teacher asked, and then do something else as soon as the teacher turned her attention elsewhere.

As demonstrated, some children were punished harder or more frequently target of critique or rebuke than others, and some children could more easily get away with things. *Jian* was not considered one of the 'good students,' thus not well endowed with *guai* capital, but rather one of those who occasionally got yelled at. In the following example however, although the teacher was quite firm in her utterance, *Jian* disobeyed and still got away with it.

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Jian* is showing teacher *Zhou* a piece of glass. The teacher says: "Did I give you permission to come here?" The boy walks towards the trash bin, and teacher *Zhou* says "You are coming back here, we will talk about it after class," and the boy says "But I want to throw it" and teacher *Zhou* says "After class!" But *Jian* goes over to the bin anyway and throws it. The teacher does not say anything more about this.

The actions of the boy are understood as expressions of his *practical sense*; a sensitivity to the situation he was in, an understanding of how he might behave in that situation which would enable him to do as he pleased, without leading to additional punishment from the teacher (at this very moment, at least). A situational sensitivity could in such ways be a subtle understanding of where the 'line' was drawn in relation to disciplinarian practices. The children know from experience and an understanding of the field, which consequences an action may give, depending on the child's social position in the kindergarten.

When asking the children in interviews if they had any methods of avoiding *guan*, the children had different replies. Several children suggested that escaping from view would be a clever approach, and one child said: "we can whisper" and "we can listen to teacher." Being attentive and compliant (listening), or avoiding the teachers attention (escaping or whispering) were thus considered methods for ways of avoiding or preventing domination. The act of listening and whispering particularly, could be understood as expressions of *guai* capital or kindergarten capital (see 9.1). Action is connected to the children's understanding of the situation, to which

forms of behaviour are expected, and to potential consequences various acts of behaviour could lead to. The examples in this section illustrate a form of sensitivity which enables the children to ‘read’ different situations of disciplinarian practice, and to ‘adjust’ their reactions to the situation: the children know when to comply with rules, or when to bend rules, in order to avoid disciplinarian practice. The following section will look at another element of the children’s practical sense, namely the notion of playfulness, and how the children could see the potential in moments and spaces for play and communication with other children, as well as challenge regulative practices or structures.

10.2.3 Playfulness: seizing opportunities and challenging values

In Chapter 6, I explained how various forms of structured play was organized and monitored in the intergenerational relation between teachers and children. The children were engaged in a range of play activities (role play, construction play, board games etc.) in various spaces in the kindergarten (outside, inside, various play locations in the classroom). Such forms of play were orchestrated by the teachers; they often had a particular purpose (analyse behaviour, produce/create something, learn something) and happened within a particular timeframe as scheduled activity or as a transitional activity (waiting for other activities to begin). In both kindergartens the children would also play without teacher direction, such as during ‘mini society’ in kindergarten 2, considered by the teachers to be ‘pure entertainment’ (see 6.3.3), or playing with the toys they brought from home which was usually placed in their shelves in the classroom (kindergarten 1). In this section I talk about play in a different way; as a significant aspect of everyday practice strongly valued in the *intragenerational* child group, particularly visible when the teacher was out of sight or reach. Furthermore, in addition to being explicitly emphasised among the children during interviews and in everyday life - various forms of playful expressions could also challenge expectations of correct behaviour, as well as teachers’ and children’s authority.

Expressions of playful behaviour among the children was often expressed with reference to popular cartoon figures and stories. Particularly popular cartoon shows included the Chinese television series *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf*¹⁹⁵ and the 2011 animated comedy film *Moon*

¹⁹⁵ “Pleasant Goat and Grey Big Wolf,” *Xi Yang Yang yu Huī Tài Láng* (喜羊羊与灰太狼)

*castle: the space adventures*¹⁹⁶ based on the same characters. Other popular cartoons and toys included American science fiction action figures Transformers (Transformation King Kong) and the Japanese cartoon characters Ultraman and Astro Boy. Finally, computer games such as Feeding Frenzy, Grand Theft Auto and Plants vs. zombies¹⁹⁷ were frequently talked about and enacted in everyday conversation and interaction among the children. Other frequent forms of play took the shape of movements of mock martial arts combat, as well as Kong Fu and tai chi movements.¹⁹⁸ A notion of playfulness was also strongly present during interviews, and in addition to enacting characters (from series such as transformers or Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf) and making up stories, several children explicitly brought up the topic of play in interviews, particularly when talking about the ‘dream kindergarten’ (see Section 5.5.1). We saw in 9.3.4 how Chao expressed that “Adults idea is to let little kids study” whereas kid’s idea was to play. Other children also stated that when they grew up they wanted to become a teacher, but not “teach knowledge, teach how to play.” Many of the children stated that they would “play all day long in dream kindergarten,” and furthermore “don’t want guan, want to play freely.” The topic of play was in such ways explicitly emphasised by the children, considered to be important in itself.

Spaces for play and secrecy

A feature of the children’s *practical sense* or feel for the disciplinarian game was seizing the opportunity and taking advantage of spaces and times for secrecy and play; laughing, pretending things, whispering things to each other, joking, talking or play-fighting with each other. Such windows of opportunity were situational; e.g., when the teachers were out of sight or directed their attention elsewhere, particularly during moments of transition (see Section 6.1.3). One notable characterization of such spaces and times of play was the abruptness in their beginning and end, regardless of the length of such periods of playful interaction:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Teacher *Liu* goes to the bathroom to wash her hands. As she walks through the door, a few boys (*Tao*, *Chao* and another boy) tell each other something funny, and smile and laugh cleverly. As soon as teacher *Liu* enters the room again, the children turn serious. *Chao* looks like he has trouble holding the laughter in, but manages.

¹⁹⁶ “Pleasant Goat and Grey Wolf’s Excellent Year of the Rabbit,” *Xī Yáng Yáng yǔ Huī Tài Láng zhī tùnián dǐngguāguā* (喜羊羊与灰太狼之兔年顶呱呱)

¹⁹⁷ These were toys and toy concepts such as collector cards the children brought from home. Also in kindergarten 2, children were allowed to play computer games such as Feeding Frenzy, Plants versus Zombies and Solitaire’ during ‘mini society.’

¹⁹⁸ Such movements were also performed in one of the calisthenics dances during morning sports (see 6.2.2).

Moments of secrecy and play would particularly coincide with moments of transition, when the children were moving between spaces or between activities, for example during the morning calisthenics. The children often did two or three dances and between each dance, while the teachers changed the music, there would be a short transitional period of time, which could be used for interacting with others, often trying to avoid the teachers seeing it. Such moments could also take place between activities inside the classroom, for example during trips to the bathroom (more below). The extent of this 'other sphere' would also depend on the general mood in the classroom and on which teacher was with the children at that time.

Children actively constructed spaces for secrecy and play, and temporary play relationships could be made between children in smaller groups or with particular others. Such divisions were not rigid and the children would gather into play relationships with different children, but would often involve children sitting next to each other in the four lines. This situational closeness was also expressed through a particularly physically intimate way of crowding together; the children would bring their chair and sit as close to each other as physically possible, leaving little space for the feet, and play and talk with each other (at times, this temporary closeness would include me as well, see 5.2.3). This would often take place when the children were waiting for activities to begin, parents to pick them up, or when allowed to play with toys they brought from home.

The bathroom was a space of significance for secret interaction. It was located as an adjoining room to the classrooms (see pictures, 6.1.1), and the room contained a long trough divided into four cubicles with partitions (in kindergarten 1). While going to the bathroom, usually one child in each cubicle, the children would talk with each other at the side, over or under the bathroom partitions, chatting, giggling and making fun remarks. The murmurs and giggling from the bathroom could often be heard in the classrooms. Such interaction would usually stop if the teachers entered the bathroom, or if other (duty) children were standing by the door to observe that the children were doing what they should (see 9.1).

Playing with rules and regulations

A playful approach towards regulative measures was also visible in everyday practice. One way of challenging the rules and regulations of kindergarten practice was through the use of play equipment. The following example shows how the children used a puzzle magnet game in alternative ways and for other purposes than what it was meant for:

(Kindergarten 1, classroom) Three boys are sitting around a table during morning play, playing a puzzle magnet game. The puzzle is decorated with fish and there is a magnet stuck to each piece. The children have red plastic strings with a magnet at the end, with which they can “fish” the puzzle pieces. *Tao* is holding one such piece with two long thin sticks resembling chopsticks, and pretends to be eating the puzzle piece. “I bought chopsticks” the boy says. The children are talking about the different parts and characters of the Plants and Zombies (cards collecting). They say that the zombies have different names, and that they can eat different things. *Chao* bows his hand saying “Good morning, zombie.” The children are imitating cartoon-like characters, laughing and joking. The children also talk and play with the children sitting on the table next to them.

Shanshan sitting at the other table has made a plastic block construction. She takes the construction up to her face and moves it around her face and hair for a while, saying that she is washing her face clean. “Now I am clean” she says. The fish-puzzle boys are fencing with the “chopsticks.” *Tao* holds the red plastic string in his hands, and at the bottom of it hangs a piece of puzzle, spinning around. “This is a fan” he says. “Ten yuan, a pair of chopsticks” a boy says. *Shanshan* gives him a blue block piece and says “This piece is ten yuan.” Another boy is also “selling” a fan to the table I am sitting closer to now. A boy puts three sticks on his face, one from his cheek and two below (resembling a long beard) and says “I am a little man.”

Usually, the children were expected to play with the playing equipment in the way they were meant to be played, and the teachers would pay attention to the children during the activity, making sure they did. The teachers in kindergarten 1 had made several recording books in which the children were expected to record different information; the date they played the game, the names of participants, and the result—who won—by drawing one star after the name each time they won (see 6.3.3). Oftentimes, the teacher would also initiate a sharing session in the class where individual children were asked to talk about their accomplishments. The form of creativity and play the children engaged with in the example above was therefore an approach to the situation which was not considered the ‘correct’ way to perform; thus potentially a way of challenging rules and regulations through a particular form of playful practice.

Similarly, the following example shows how some children made creative use of the washing cloth in the duty student chore of washing tables after lunch. In this example, while the rest of the class sat down in the four lines (see Section 6.1), duty children *Xuan* and *Shanshan*, plays with regulations and expectations:

Kindergarten 1, classroom) *Xuan* and some other children on duty are cleaning the tables with a cloth and a tray. The trays are full of chicken wing bones, and the boys are pretending that the tray is a plane, flying around the room between the tables. The duty children are walking around the tables, washing the same tables again and again. *Xuan* starts washing one of the chicken wing bones, smiling to herself as she does it. The teachers are standing and talking, looking at the children, sitting on their seats.

Shanshan, another duty student, puts the tray on top of the cloth, and cleans the tables this way, while looking at another child and laughing.

As previously emphasized, particular duty child chores involved detailed expectations for execution (see Section 9.2.1). The chore of washing tables was usually done in the following way: the children would fetch a used bowl, hold it by the side of the table while pushing the table crumbs into the bowl with the washing cloth. Not only do the children in this example challenge this detailed blueprint of execution, washing tables more than once and including chicken wing bones into their washing routine—they also transform the trays into imaginary planes, taking the chicken wing bones for a plane ride across the room. This approach to the task contradicts the usual emphasis on finishing the task fast and getting ready for the next activity.

The practical sense of disciplinarian practices I have elaborated on in this section is an attempt to understand how children cope with and approach disciplinarian practices in their daily lives. Being an embodiment of social conditions, habitus or practical sense can not be separated from context. The features emphasized above include ways of relating to others and the larger group, ways of *meeting* or approaching disciplinarian practices with a sensitivity to practice, and ways of *challenging* such practices through seizing moments and spaces for play. As stressed in this section and in Chapter 9, partaking in the game does not necessarily mean that one agrees with such practices, or that resistance or discontent with disciplinarian practice is not expressed; how the game continues, despite differences and variations in approaches, is the focus in the final part of this chapter.

10.3 (Mis)recognizing and reproducing practice

In this final section of Chapter 10, I turn attention towards how children (and teachers) partake in the continuation of the disciplinarian game through a reproduction of embodied (disciplinarian) practices and values. This reproduction takes place through the daily recognition and misrecognition of practice, consequently reinforcing the values in the field and the structures of domination. Said differently, I explore why the *fuzzy logic* of practice appears logical to agents in the field, thus contributing to the reproduction of practice.

As demonstrated, there is a significant presence of verbal and physical domination in the kindergarten classroom on a daily basis. Such practices of domination take place both in intergenerational relationships (see e.g., Section 7.4), as well as among children in the child

group (see Chapter 9). Through the children's active engagement in the field, valuable and legitimate experiences and knowledge become embodied practices, part of the memory of the body, thus becoming a familiar and meaningful corporal understanding of the world. The recurring and routine repetition, as well as rigorous practicing of different activities furthermore strengthen such processes, including the social position of the individuals executing such practices. As stressed by Bourdieu, dominant agents have to "work directly, daily, personally, to produce and reproduce conditions of domination" in order to ensure durable domination (Bourdieu, 1990b:129), and the significance and frequency of disciplinarian practice in the kindergartens support this understanding, expressed through techniques such as repetition, memorization, constant rigorous practicing, regulation, reminding, and routinized behaviours (see e.g., Chapter 6).

In Chapter 9, I identified three variants of embodied cultural capital that were considered particularly valuable in the kindergartens, explicitly and implicitly expressed, emphasised and expected both by teachers and children. *Guan*, *guai* and *kindergarten* capital are understood as both knowledge, values and stakes in the game, as well as the result of the competition and negotiation between the children—what the game was all about. In Chapter 9, we saw how children strong in such forms of embodied cultural capital also had symbolic capital; i.e., authority in their role as dominator. Maintaining personal authority is done through "actions that reassert it practically through their compliance with the values recognized by the group" (Bourdieu, 1990b:129); the group as a whole thus legitimize and recognize the authority of individual children because they are endowed with values and experience which is valued in the field in question. For Bourdieu, this social recognition is a set of fundamental prereflexive assumptions that social agents engage through taking the world for granted (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Disciplinarian practices are part of children's (and teachers) embodied presence in the field, where such practices and values are considered legitimate, "natural"—i.e., *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977:165-166).

What makes the game persist, and why the dominated stay in the position of dominated is through *symbolic violence*; i.e., when social agents are subjected to forms of domination, they partake in their own domination, not because they "desire" it, but because it is perceived as legitimate and "natural," the "way things are" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:168). Symbolic violence happens through recognition and misrecognition; i.e., the social recognition of the arbitrariness of practice—arbitrariness being, in our case, the contextuality of practice, namely

the emphasis on relationality, differentiation, and interrelational responsibility. As has been emphasised, this recognition is closely connected to agents' embodied experience and corporal understanding of the social world. Recognizing the legitimacy of particular values and practices does in turn contribute to the reproduction of conditions of domination. Through both direct and subtle symbolic forms of domination, dominant groups—teachers in particular, but also children with symbolic capital—keep holding a dominant position. Everyday practice is taken-for-granted, and asymmetries in social life and practice are *misrecognized*, thus reproducing the asymmetries in the field; and they do so also through the ones at the lower end of the hierarchical relationship, i.e., the dominated.

Acts of misrecognition could be illustrated through everyday practice, as well as addressed and underlined by the children in the interviews. Through matter-of-fact utterances such as “I will not be chosen [as team leader or little teacher], because ...” and through acting in submissive ways to other children and teachers, some children would acknowledge and reinforce practices of domination, and thus contribute to the reproduction of asymmetrical power relations. As we saw in the team leader election (9.2.3), although there was some space of negotiation regarding obtaining access to the different levels of team leaders, the election process contained few surprises in terms of who could or who could not become team leaders. As such, the election process became a manifestation of the recognized social hierarchy in kindergarten 1. We also saw in the previous chapter, how children who were dominant agents in relationships with other children could also express some dismay connected to disciplinarian practices, but who would still engage in them.

In order to get a grasp of the children's feelings and opinions connected to questions of discipline and domination, we engaged with these topics in the child interviews. Different children had different responses to such matters, and practices of discipline were both supported and disputed by the children. Some said that they would not want teachers in their dream kindergarten, because they wanted to play as they wished, not experience *guan* or be watched. Some said that the teachers, particularly one of them, were harsh. On the other hand, some children emphasised the need for teachers because they would protect them from dangerous men who could come and take them. In addition, there was also a lot of work to be done, which they needed teachers to do. One boy had a hard time picturing a kindergarten without teachers; although expressing a desire to not have teachers in his dream kindergarten, they “just showed

up,” even in his envisioned dream kindergarten. The children also had different opinions regarding the presence of children as dominators (duty students, little teachers or team leaders) in the dream kindergarten. Some children would rather not have such tasks, because they would just guan them; if they did not have a little teacher or team leaders they could speak and play as they wanted. One child said they did not need them; only the school needed such tasks. Some expressed a desire to be appointed such tasks themselves, whereas others again would differentiate between different levels of team leader; considering the task as little team leader, but not big team leader because it entailed too much work and would be troublesome and tiring. Similarly, children who had a weaker position in class could express a desire to have a stronger position in class, e.g., as team leader, whereas children who had a strong position in class (such as big team leaders) would express a desire *not* to. Even though the children’s opinions on such matters differed, the children had an *investment* in the game. Rather than being indifferent to disciplinarian practices, the children saw it as familiar and meaningful; as practice that made sense because they understood the “logic” it was based on. Therefore, despite such varying understandings when discussing the dream kindergarten, in daily practice the children participated in disciplinarian practices in different ways, thus partaking in the continuation of the game. According to Bourdieu, “[...] obedience consists in large part in belief, and belief is what the body (*corps*) concedes even when the mind (*l’esprit*) says no. (One could, in this logic, ponder the notion of discipline)” (Bourdieu, 1988:161, italics in original). Thus, since practice becomes embodied understanding, agents get a corporal familiarity of practice and may act in ways that correspond with this corporal understanding, even if they might not agree with or be positive towards such forms of practice. In “obtaining from the body a form of consent that the mind could refuse”[...] bodily discipline becomes “the instrument par excellence of all forms of “domestication”” (Bourdieu, 1988:161) - or discipline. The role and significance of the body—the embodied appropriation of the social world—thus opens up for an approach to practice where familiarity and experience with a particular field help explain why people act the way they do. This does not necessarily mean that the dominated accept everything dominant agents do.

Through asking children questions about unfairness¹⁹⁹ related to their dream kindergarten, I hoped to explore nuances in their perceptions and experiences of power difference in everyday

¹⁹⁹ All questions were discussed with my interpreter before the interviews, so that potential discrepancies in meaning or usage could be dealt with (see 5.5).

practice. One child said that in the dream kindergarten, nothing was unfair because they had no teachers there. Things considered unfair were often related to particular situations where the outcome of a situation was something other than what had been promised. Relating his answer to his actual kindergarten (not a dream kindergarten), *Chao* said that: “The teachers said those didn’t sleep will have to run. I was not the one [who] slept badly. I had to run too, this is unfair.” Although *Chao* had acted the way the teachers had told him to, i.e., sleeping during nap-time, he was still told to run. Another child said that “the teachers said you can bring two toys, but I can only take one, this is unfair,” expressing differential treatment from the teachers among children in the classroom. Another child said “one unfair thing is, one talked you pulled him out, another one talked you didn’t pull him out, this is also unfair,” referring to how the teachers would single out children who was talking in class when they should not be talking, but how this was done selectively. Such utterances expressed an understanding of unfairness, which challenged a relational and differential understanding of practice, as well as the emphasis on interrelational responsibility. Such utterances could also be interpreted as stressing a notion of equal treatment for equal (wrong)doings, simultaneously emphasizing that individual children should not take responsibility for other children’s negative behaviour. Such opinions were seldom heard in the classroom, but shared in the interviews.

Relationality is about fulfilling your duties as part of a group and being part of a collective. The kindergarten class is no exception. Direct involvement with such practices strengthens the children’s corporal familiarity with such practices, which connects with embodied responsibility in the form of social control and self-control through practices of discipline. As stressed by Xiaotong, individuals are closely tied with others through social and personal ties characterized by personal obligation (particularly those at the subordinate end), and one cannot exit such ties, but rather attempt to live up to the moral obligations (Xiaotong et al., 1992). Bakken further explained how evaluation was a fundamental aspect of the link between individual and society; constant evaluation was necessary to maintain social order, to tie the smaller self to the larger self, and to bind individuals to the exemplary norm (Bakken, 1994).

Habitus is a product of history; “an *open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures”—however, that being said: “there is a probability, inscribed in the social destiny associated with definite social conditions, that experiences will confirm habitus,

because most people are statistically bound to encounter circumstances that tend to agree with those that originally fashioned their habitus” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a:133, italics in original). Disciplinary structures in the kindergarten are reproduced through agent’s practices, because such practices *make sense* to agents (see 9.4). As emphasised in the previous chapter, through playing the game, the children produce effects in relationships with others; relational agency thus connect to how agents interact with others which is linked with their embodied presence in and sense of the world. Actions are meaningful, familiar and *make sense* when there is a correspondence between the children’s own practices and presence in the social world (habitus) and the way “the game” tends to happen (in the field). This then leads to a *tendency* in which children confirm to the structures that helped fashion their habitus. Having been part of the kindergarten daily life for two-three years, the children have a prolonged relation to the field, although the field has also changed in some ways throughout this time, such as changes in teachers (one of the teachers in kindergarten 1), changes in pedagogical content, as well as for example the presence of my interpreter and myself. However, throughout this time, the children had a practical mastery of their everyday lives in the kindergarten; a *practical sense* of how to approach and relate to discipline and domination. As demonstrated, this does not imply that the children were equally in favour of or against such practices.

Disciplinary practices are (re)constructed in children’s relationships on a daily basis, and recognized as part of everyday life in the kindergartens. As has been explained, social control, hierarchy and disciplinary practices are parts of Chinese society and the entire school system. Children contribute to the reproduction of discipline and hierarchy in the child group through their engagement with disciplinary practices. Faced with disciplinary practices and structures, children are considered agentic actors who are compliant, strategic, inventive and sensitive; in different ways children play the disciplinary game (Chapter 9), and through an everyday *practical sense* of disciplinary practices, children contribute to the reproduction of disciplinary structures, both in *intergenerational* and *intragenerational* relations. The correspondence of the social and mental structures are not only instruments of knowledge, but also instruments of domination—promoting an arbitrary order—a particular way of organizing the social world (Wacquant, 1992:13). Furthermore, various forms of symbolic violence contribute to the reproduction and transformation of structures of domination (Wacquant, 1992:14-15).

10.4 Summary Chapter 10

The practical sense of the disciplinarian game can be described as the children's way of relating to and coping with disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten. I have suggested that some characteristic features of such a relational practical sense is *differentiation* and *interrelational responsibility*, as well as a *sensitive* and *playful* approach to different situations. Such notions are relevant for discussing the children's *practical sense* of disciplinarian practices in the kindergarten, understood as general *tendencies* or dispositions for action in the child group. Through habitus, a practical embodiment of the field, the children partake in the continuation of the game and the reproduction of discipline in the kindergartens, both in *intergenerational* (teacher-child) and *intragenerational* (child-child) relations.

PART V: DISCIPLINARIAN CONCERNS

11 Challenging children: balancing minds

This chapter will revolve around the concerns of contemporary urban Chinese childhoods, where children are positioned in a crossfire of parental and societal pressures, demands, and opportunities (see Chapter 2). On the one side, these children are part of the Chinese middle class, with more resources and possibilities in life than prior generations. On the other side, these children experience growing pressure to excel academically and secure a good future for themselves and their families. The ‘single child phenomenon’ was, particularly in kindergarten 2, mentioned as something that needed to be included when speaking of childhoods in contemporary Shanghai. The subject came up in an unexpected setting, which will be elaborated on below (the army day) in relation to something called ‘frustration education.’ This educational approach was connected to seeing contemporary childhood in a pleasure-pressure frame (Chee, 2000), albeit with less attention directed towards the ‘pressures’ of childhood; rather, the pleasures of childhood was of concern and the practice of frustration education was its potential remedy, presented as an emotional leveller aiming to balance out children’s emotional state. This strategy will be approached within a present day scenario of ‘(emotionally) spoiled children’ and a concern for a future scenario where children are unable to cope with challenges that appear. This chapter thus relate to the third research question outlined in the introduction (see 1.1).

11.1 Pleasures and pressures of contemporary urban childhoods

The large-scale economic and social changes that have taken place in Chinese society the last decades have affected the status and view of children and childhood in contemporary urban China. The elevated economic and social status of the urban middle class has led to a stronger role and status of children in their families, for example connected to household expenditure and decisional power (Jing, 2000b; Watson, 2000). As mentioned earlier (see 2.2), a perceived unfortunate consequence of the so-called ‘one-child policy’ in China was that the ‘4-2-1 family syndrome’ (4 grandparents, 2 parents, 1 child) had led to a generation of spoiled children, sometimes referred to as ‘little emperors’ (Hsueh & Tobin, 2003; Jing, 2000a). The fear was that extensive attention and pampering by six adults on one child had led to spoiled children (Jing, 2000b); which is connected to a fear that parents were ‘drowning their children with love’ (*ni ai*) (Fung, 1999; Wu, 1995).²⁰⁰ For Fung’s informants (middle class parents in Taiwan)

²⁰⁰ David Wu refer to classical Chinese literature as the source of the phrase *ni-ai* or ‘drowning your child with love’; the poet and scholar of the North Song Dynasty, Lin Pu (AD. 967-1028) wrote an essay which says:

there was a distinction between *ai* (love) and *niai* (spoiling); the former meaning love with discipline, and the latter, too much love with too little discipline (Fung, 1999:189).

The changes that have taken place in the Chinese society the last decades have also led to significant changes in lifestyle for ‘ordinary citizens,’ particularly for the urban middle class. In comparison to the hardships that the current grandparent generation went through, contemporary childhoods are considered to be full of ‘pleasures,’ for example in terms of excesses of resources (food, sweets) and opportunities in life (education and work). However, the young generation must work hard to obtain the pleasures that modern life can offer.

Raised living standards have led to a more isolated and privatized lifestyle (Naftali, 2010) and children have busy schedules with little time for play and leisure. When asking children in kindergarten 2 (in interviews) who they played with when they were not in the kindergarten, many of the children referred to close family (mother, father, or grandparents) and to indoor activities such as watching TV, playing computer games, or playing board games (e.g., chess). Few children referred to other children as playmates, and those who did, spoke of another family member, a child from the kindergarten (when living close by) or a child of their parents’ colleagues.

Education is seen as the road to success and finding the right educational facilities is of great importance. When each family only has one child, emphasis is placed on the success of that individual child—the whole family’s future is placed in the child’s hands. The child has a *duty* to provide for their parents (and grandparents), and partake in the progress for the whole family (“the Chinese dream”) (Hansen & Thøgersen, 2008). Parents spend large amounts of money on kindergartens. Children are expected to not only excel academically, but also in other fields, and extra-curricular activities begin in kindergarten (this is true for my informants as well). Academic training is seen as overwhelmingly important for children’s future success (Tobin et al., 2009b), impacting people’s everyday lives. In addition to having long days in the kindergarten, several children attend organized activities in afternoons and/or weekends. Most of the children in the two kindergartens where I did fieldwork attended such organized activities, many as much as 4-5 different activities. During an interview with children in kindergarten 2, one child told me that she was “not free from Monday to Saturday,” meaning

“Fathers and older brothers should be blamed for drowning their sons and younger brothers with love and deserve to suffer from the consequences of their (youngsters’ bad) conduct” (1995:6).

that she attended interest classes almost every afternoon of the week, Saturday being her busiest day with two lessons. The most frequently cited classes were English, piano, pinyin²⁰¹ and story narration. Some children also had classes in calligraphy, swimming, origami, writing, drawing, mathematics, pottery, Japanese or Korean languages, dancing, and mental abacus.²⁰² For Naftali's informants, such activities were not understood as optional but as a necessity (2007:256), and several informants (mothers of Shanghai children) reported a busy schedule where children (in Grade 4) spent their entire day doing schoolwork, both at school and at home, until nine in the evening, sometimes even having to get up early next morning to finish it (2007:277) as well as having after-school activities, filling up the entire weekend (2007:283). One of the teachers in kindergarten 2 also emphasise how the children were under pressure since they need to learn a lot. This teacher thinks the children don't feel stressed about this, just tired perhaps.

Children's education in China has been subject to a lot of discussion the latest decades and ambivalence towards the century old system of memorization and learning through rote has been expressed. On the one side, there is a fear that children will be damaged by such an educational approach. The psychological pressure connected to school work has already taken its victims in Shanghai and recently there have been several incidents in this city of children committing suicide due to academic pressures.²⁰³ Among the teachers in the kindergartens there was also talk of minimizing the pressure on the children, for example through avoiding English classes or postpone learning to write Chinese characters until the children started school.²⁰⁴ Another worry expressed in Chinese media is that this educational approach does not foster creative entrepreneurs,²⁰⁵ which is seen as a necessity in the contemporary global competitive

²⁰¹ Pinyin is the official phonetic system of transcribing the Mandarin pronunciation of Chinese characters into the Roman alphabet.

²⁰² An abacus is a counting-frame, a device for calculating. It consists of a frame with rows of steel wires, on which beads can be moved.

²⁰³ Shanghai Daily: *Suicide 'the leading cause of death' for young Chinese* (Accessed 090911), *Student plunges to death at school* (Accessed 121011), *Student jumps to her death after punishment* (Accessed 221111), *Girl leaps to death just ahead of school* (Accessed 010911), *Boy, 11, falls to death at apartment* (Accessed 101011).

²⁰⁴ During the parent-child meeting in kindergarten 1, the parents were discouraged to teach their children how to write Chinese characters; both to minimize pressure, and so that the children would not learn it 'the wrong way' (so that the children would not have to 'un-learn' what parents had taught them).

²⁰⁵ No *science* Nobel Prize winners are researchers from the Chinese mainland. Mo Yan won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2012 and Liu Xiaobo the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010. In addition, there have been several prize winners born in China or of Chinese decent in the fields of physics, chemistry and literature, but none of these

system. Despite arguments for minimizing the academic pressure on Chinese children however, parents often show reluctance towards changing the system, seeing that this could affect their child's chances in the future. Media coverage of the importance of education has shown that academic achievement among preschool children in Hong Kong is of such importance that children spend time learning interview skills in kindergarten in order to have a better opportunity to enter a good primary school.²⁰⁶

The importance of being outstanding was stressed by Birkelands informants, kindergarten teachers in an urban Chinese kindergarten:

We have a large population and many children. If your child wants to be outstanding you must add a lot of things she has to learn. There are different ways of being outstanding. In China, the way of being outstanding is to get high score in examination. To be good in climbing trees have no value (Birkeland, 2013a:47).

As will be emphasised, however, climbing ladders was thought to have some value in kindergarten 2, as expressed by one of the teachers. This kindergarten was particularly emphasising children's emotional and social well-being, and play activities were one approach to such measures. As will be emphasised in the following section, creating frustration was another.

When asking the teachers in kindergarten 1 in the interview, about differences between the kindergarten now and when they were young, they said the following:

(Kindergarten 1, teacher interview) "I think when we were little, first we didn't feel so pressured like the kids today, yes [we] didn't have to learn this and learn that, not interest classes in kindergartens either, no. [...] ...And also [we] may say, at that time the teachers were not so pressured, she didn't have to complete a teaching plan, what she had to do was just to teach us to sing and dance, not like now, as for us, our curriculum has to centre on the guideline, every week, we have to balance, for example mathematics, eh on arithmetic, on language, have to reflect, have to balance."

reside on mainland China. <http://www.shanghaidaily.com/Opinion/chinese-perspectives/Why-China-hasnt-produced-Nobel-Prize-winners-in-science/shdaily.shtml> (Accessed 180915)

²⁰⁶ See e.g., <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/hongkong/11626382/Hong-Kong-children-under-three-are-being-trained-for-kindergarten-interviews.html>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32040752>; <http://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/family-education/article/1554109/kindergarten-interviews-can-be-stressful-parents-children> (Accessed 081215) I did not hear about this practice in the two kindergartens where I did fieldwork.

The teachers in both kindergartens acknowledge the pressures that both children and teachers are going through. However, as we will see in the following, it was the ‘pleasures’ of childhood which was emphasised as problematic and which needed attention in kindergarten 2. The following section will look at how this kindergarten dealt with challenges related to the above mentioned emotionally ‘spoiled children’ through an episode of ‘frustration education,’ which took place during a kindergarten trip to an army school. Frustration education had not been mentioned by any of the teachers before this point; but after this episode, I learned that it had become a popular pedagogical approach during recent years in China. This educational approach was connected to the problem of the ‘single child-policy’ and the emotional spoiling of children with attention, leaving them unable to meet daily life challenges.²⁰⁷

11.2 Frustration education: Army day

I first learned about frustration education during an excursion to an army school for children, only two weeks before my return to Norway (after almost 11 months in the field). The army school was usually for primary school students, but the principal in kindergarten 2 had arranged excursions to this school 11 years in a row for the older children in her kindergarten. The principal saw the trip in connection to the kindergarten’s play curriculum, the children’s transition to primary school, and emphasised that this experience would teach the children responsibility and self-discipline. The children had prepared for this day for several weeks; marching, standing in straight lines, respecting the flag, learning several army songs, making red flowers (see picture below of soldiers wearing red flowers) and filling in forms when arriving every morning on a large board placed by the classroom door.²⁰⁸ The board had

²⁰⁷ The Chinese characters for ‘frustration/setback education’ are 挫折教育 (*cuo zhe jiao yu*). I have found a few papers on the topic of frustration or setback education in the English language; a paper and a paper presentation on frustration education among students in Chinese colleges and universities, and the only child and his/her study life and career, emphasising the cultivation of good psychological quality, improving mental health and of cultivating happiness quality. (<http://www.seiofbluemountain.com/upload/product/201107/2011jyhy203a6.pdf>) and (<http://cstm.cnki.net/stmt/TitleBrowse/KnowledgeNet/ZNXX201005007060?db=STMI8515>) (both accessed 23.10.2016). Chinese internet sources found on the topic include a book publication (<http://www.amazon.com/Setback-education-excellent-children-adversity/dp/7505421093>), as well as several internet resources, many of which are online parental help pages: (<http://tag.eduu.com/t/T-B4-EC-D5-DB-BD-CC-D3-FD.html>), (<http://www.youjiao.com/e/20130304/51347fb9202f4.shtml>), (<http://www.pcbaby.com.cn/qzbd/zqjy/1007/941564.html>), (<http://www.chinababy365.com/portal.php?mod=topic&topicid=33>), (<http://baby.sina.com.cn/cuoze/>), and (<http://baike.baidu.com/subview/1077364/5121240.htm>). (Accessed 17.05.12, still operative 23.10.2016).

²⁰⁸ Some of these activities were not only related to the army day, but could rather be considered elements of everyday disciplinarian practices, such as for example marching, standing straight and respecting the flag.

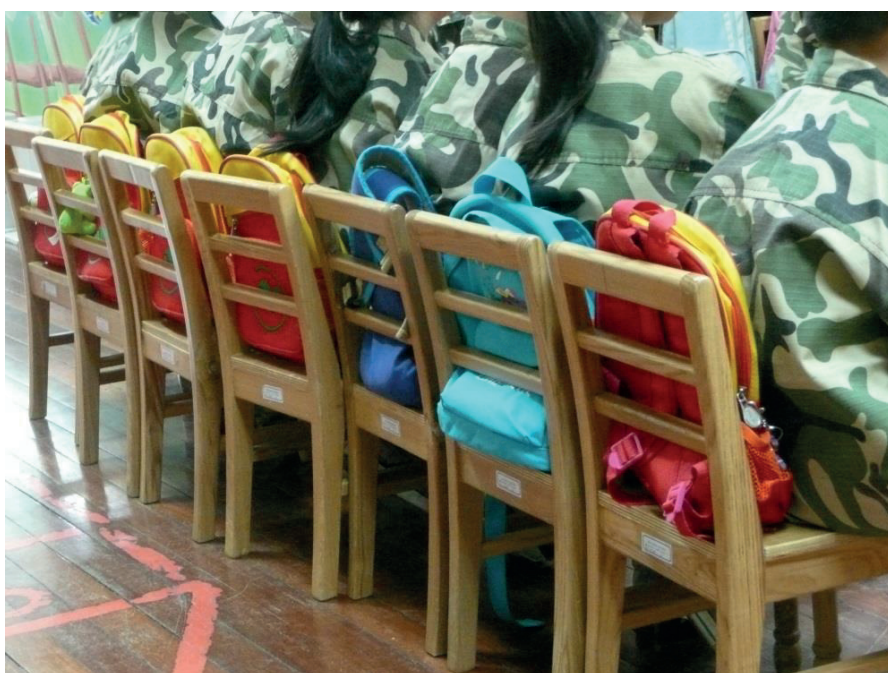
several A4 sized papers taped on it, and there was one piece of paper per child. Each paper contained the title 'Let's go to the army together,' the child's name, the class name, the height of the child, the weight of the child, and some categories the children had to fill out. The categories were: 'I know how to sing army songs,' 'I can make big red flowers,' 'I can eat food well,' and 'I can come to the kindergarten on time' (before 8:15, before 8:30, after 8:30). The children would daily evaluate their own behaviour in terms of these categories, through colouring one of the three smiley faces in each category: a regular smiley (good), a flat smiley (okay), or a sad smiley (not good). The veranda outside the classroom was also as an army school during role play the last few weeks before the trip, and the wall had been decorated with pictures portraying positive sentiments of nationalism, beauty, and victory.



Picture 12: Kindergarten 2 classroom decoration for army day

The morning of the army day, the children came to the kindergarten earlier than usual (at 07:00) and they went into the classroom while their parents and grandparents waited outside. In the classroom, the children sat in four lines of chairs with their bags behind their backs. The teacher did attendance and everybody sang an army song (part of the song lyrics went like this: "Happy song flying in the air, fly to Beijing, now chairman Mao is very happy to hear it"). The children were wearing camouflage army uniforms (trousers, jacket, hat) and a large red flower on their chest, which they had made in class. The teachers, principal, and the doctor/nurses were also dressed in camouflage army uniforms (in short, everyone except me and my interpreter). When

it was time to leave, the parents stood in the kindergarten yard with cameras in hand. Some of the parents were banging on large drums, which the principal had arranged for the occasion. The children walked out of their classrooms class by class, moving through the crowd of people on their way to the street where the buses were waiting, and the parents and grandparents were eager to wave and take pictures of their respective (grand)children. The general atmosphere was one of joy, pride, anticipation, and excitement, both among the children and their parents and grandparents who were cheering them on from the side of the street.



Picture 13: Kindergarten 2 children waiting for army day to begin

The army school was located at the outskirts of Shanghai. Upon arrival, we were met by army instructors, men dressed in military uniforms, who guided the class through the different activities of the day. The instructors called themselves uncles, and addressed the children as *little warrior*, saying sentences like *you are little warriors now*. During moments of instruction, when the children were lined up in the open outdoor area, practicing standing straight and marching, the instructors used military phrases and orders such as: *army looks/appearance, attention, halt, stand at ease, army pose, present arms, order arms, chin up and chest out and eyes front*. Encouraging phrases connected to the children's character and expression was also uttered, through phrases such as: *unity, alertness, conscientiousness, liveliness* (words by

Chairman Mao). The instructors also encouraged the children to answer in a particular way; with *vigour, be overwhelming*.²⁰⁹ During the army day, the children also sang army songs, one of which had the following lyrics: “I am a soldier, I come from common people, (we) defeated Japan the doggy robber and annihilated Chiang’s bandit troops, come from common people, come from common people...”

The army day lasted from around 09:00 in the morning until around 15:00 in the afternoon and included a range of military activities, such as climbing walls, shooting (or rather, aiming) with a gun,²¹⁰ having lunch in the army canteen, observing a mini rocket launch, practicing standing well and doing military movements. It was during the morning hours of the army day while the children were practicing their army poses in an open space outdoors, that I heard about frustration education for the first time, and that it would take place in the dormitories a few hours later (a teacher told my interpreter about it without further details).

11.2.1 Creating frustration in the army barracks

The frustration education took place in the barracks for the soldiers. The barracks were empty, apart from the children and teachers from the kindergarten, as well as some army instructors who had been accompanying the children throughout the day. The rooms were plainly furnished, containing six adult sized bunk beds, three lined up after another at each side of the room, and a long slim table between the beds. The beds were scarcely prepared with a thin mattress and a pillow with green-grey army coloured sheets. The light was not switched on, so the rooms were only lit up by natural light coming through the window at the far end of the room.

²⁰⁹ Instructors (*jiao guan*, 教官); little warrior (*xiao zhan shi*, 小战士); army looks/appearance (*jun yi*, 军仪); attention (*li zheng*, 立正); halt (*li ding*, 立定); stand at ease (*shao xi*, 稍息); army pose (*zhan jun zi*, 站军姿); present arms (*jing li*, 敬礼); order arms (*li bi*, 礼毕); chin up and chest out (*tai tou ting xiong*, 抬头挺胸); eyes front (*xiang qian kan qi*, 向前看齐); unity, alertness, conscientiousness, liveliness (*tuánjié jǐnzhāng yánsù huópo*, 团结紧张严肃活泼); vigor, be overwhelming (*qi shi*, 气势).

²¹⁰ In the interviews, several children discussed whether the gun was real or not. To my knowledge, it was a real gun, however, not loaded.



Picture 14: Kindergarten 2 trip - army school barracks

The children were told to sit down on the bunk beds, and the class was spread between several rooms. The following extract from my field notes describe the ‘frustration education’ taking place in the barracks at the army school:

(Kindergarten 2—army school barracks) After lunch, we go over to the barracks where the ‘frustration education’ will happen. The children are placed in different rooms. Each room contains six bunk beds, and the children sit two and two on the lower bed, around 8-12 children in each room. The teachers start saying: “Bye bye, goodbye.” Teacher *Wu* says: “I will take some pictures to show to the parents for you. Choose what bed you want, upper or lower bed.” A child says “What about the bags?” Teacher *Wu* says “You can’t have them, the coaches took them away. The female bathroom is on the second floor, the male bathroom is on the first floor.” Then they walk around and say bye bye. Some teachers standing in the hall are smiling and have an excited look in their faces. One girl from my class is crying. Teacher *Wu* says: “Don’t cry, calm down, we will go home.” Then she says: “You will stay seven days. Discuss. Everyday one person will go home, you discuss who. You are here to join the army.” Then they say that only one child per week can go home. “Those who cry will go home last.” *Dandan* and *Mei* (two girls) are also crying now. The instructor comes and says: “It is rest time, no voice.” He continues: “It’s fine, be brave, listen.” A girl says: “Only one night?” Teacher *Wu* is in the doorway again, she says: “No, who said that?” The instructor says: “I said, it is not important, just be brave, you are army people. No voice.” The man looks at *Mei* and says: “Are you good army people?” She nods. “Don’t cry then,” he says. She nods, still crying. The children start crying louder and louder in the different rooms. A boy says: “It is all my fault. I have to behave well in training, so that we can go.” The children are crying and a teacher is taking pictures of them. The doors to the rooms are continuously being opened and closed by the teachers.

Then the teachers leave the building, and the instructors are inside with the children alone. After around five minutes, the teachers come back in. Someone says to the children: “We are here to rescue you.” The instructor in one room (several boys) says: “Pretty good, but you can behave better, right?” The children say yes. Some children are allowed to go out (another class). The teacher asks the children sitting in one room (boys from the class): “Anyone cried?” The boys say no. A boy says: “We behaved very well.” Teacher says: “Ok, I will leave you and go and see who cried.” Teacher *Wu* enters the room next door with a lot of girls from the class. She says: “I will take the cry-girls out, they miss their parents. The rest of you will stay. The boys are crying, they will go with us. Goodbye! Any words for your parents? I will tell them.” She leaves the girls, and shortly after, teacher *Huang* puts his head in the door. He says nothing first, just looks at the girls. Then he asks them something with a low voice (my interpreter could not hear it). Soon another girl in the room starts crying.

Teacher *Wu* checks the room with the girls, then leaves. Then teacher *Huang* does the same thing. In the girls’ room: now *Hong* is also crying and she is allowed to go out. Soon, the rest (seven remaining?) are all crying. Teacher says “Bye!” Soon the door opens again, and the instructor rushes out with *Xiaoyu* who has thrown up in the room. The teachers rush over and start giving her water and wash vomit off her pants. The girl looks confused and tired. Several children are sobbing. I ask another teacher standing

next to us how the parents feel about this. She says: “Our teacher loves them, they will not let them stay here. The parents don’t like it.” Another teachers says: “When we go back, we talk with parents, we put the pictures on the Internet. Most parents will think it is good for the children’s development.” The teacher is smiling at the children who are crying. She asks the children: “Do you want to go back with the teachers or stay here?” The children, crying, say they want to go home. Some children (boys) line up in the hallway. Teacher *Huang* is pushing one of the boys in line (he is not standing straight enough). The teacher is laughing and goes over to the child and hold around his shoulders. “Don’t cry” she says.

At one point (towards the end, after the throwing up), a teacher runs into the girl’s room, holding her cell phone in her hand, showing it to the girls. Five minutes later, my interpreter tells me that the teacher told the children that she had received a message from someone about the children, so they came back to the dormitory (she showed them the text message). She said: “Remember, teacher love you, we will take care of you.” As I walk out (I am the last one to leave the building), I see that the floor is wet in several of the rooms.

Standing outside, one of the teachers says to some children: “It’s okay now. I will hug you, one by one.” The children are still crying, wiping their tears. “Anybody else—who needs a hug?” she asks. The children don’t react to it. A teacher says to a child: “You behave like a man (he was not crying). How about you stay with the coach?” The child says: “No, want to go home. Some grownups live home. We love them.”

This episode of ‘frustration education’ contained several of the disciplinarian practices that have been elaborated on in detail in previous chapters. The teachers controlled the children’s bodies, through dividing them into smaller groups and telling them to sit down in the rooms. An additional disciplinarian method (not previously observed in the kindergarten) was to leave the children alone with the instructors, physically removing themselves from the building and locking the door to the rooms. The teachers scared the children (leaving them and telling them they had to stay there alone) and put the children up against each other (telling them they had to discuss and choose who should go home first among themselves). In addition, the children were ‘evaluated’ in terms of how they coped with the whole experience, particularly with emphasis on whether they cried or not. Finally, the principal explicitly underlined that this episode was about self-discipline (self-control—don’t cry, stay calm).

The children received mixed messages from the teachers during the period of time spent in the dormitories, concerning both the duration of the stay in the dormitories and the consequences

of crying (which meant that they would either stay or leave). In the beginning, teacher *Wu* said: “Don’t cry, calm down, we will go home” immediately followed by: “You will stay seven days. Discuss. Every day one person will go home, you discuss who. You are here to join the army.” Shortly after they were told that only one person *per week* could go home. Furthermore, the teacher told the children that it was up to them, the child group, to discuss *which* child who would get to go home as the days passed, leaving them in charge of the selection process, and to fend for themselves. In addition, the children were also told that *those who cry will go home last*. Not crying was connected to being a *good army guy* (as one instructor told a girl) and the children were encouraged by the instructors to be quiet and not cry, signalling that they were *brave army people*. At one point, the teacher entered the room, asking the children if anyone had cried, to which a child replied no, that they *behaved very well*. Soon, however, those who cried were the ones who were allowed to leave. The teacher said: “I will take the cry-girls out, they miss their parents. The rest of you will stay.”

11.2.2 Explaining frustration education: an emotion leveller

The episode of frustration education was challenging to understand for an outsider. The fact that it took place in kindergarten 2, which was surpassed by kindergarten 1 in terms of more explicit everyday disciplinarian practices, made it additionally puzzling for me. The following section will deal with the “logic” behind ‘frustration education’ as explained by the principal and teachers in kindergarten 2, followed by a section on how this educational strategy was actualized in everyday life in kindergarten 2, and how this connects to contemporary ideas and future concerns of urban Chinese childhoods. In the following example, the principal talks about the need for ‘frustration education’:

(Kindergarten 2, army school, talk with principal) When asking the principal about the frustration education episode, she says: “It is good to cry, to have tears.” When asking why, the principal answered: “They need to release themselves.” When asking further about the potential presence of frustration in the children’s daily lives, the principal replied that: “Some have, but not everybody. They have 4-6 people to take care of them. They don’t have this frustration.”

The principal in kindergarten 2 refers to the ‘pleasures’ of urban Chinese childhoods and the problem of the ‘4-2-1 family syndrome’ as the reason for the necessity of frustration education. Being emotionally pampered by parents and grandparents, these children are lacking frustration

and need *release* in their everyday lives.²¹¹ The principal further explained that frustration education was about putting the child in a position where they face something new and unexpected, and see how they cope. This was the second time the children had gone on a kindergarten trip away from their parents (one school trip the previous semester), and the teachers were curious to see how the children would react to this situation. The principal said that the children were both nervous and happy, furthermore expressing four words connected to Chairman Mao: “collective nervous serious active.”

Frustration education is spoken of in relation to a wider concern for contemporary childhoods, with particular emphasis on how children need to learn how to help themselves in life, and how this best can be done in the kindergarten.

(Kindergarten 2, army school, talk with principal) “Before our kindergarten focus too much on talking. For example, moral education, talk about love and collective concepts, but I think we should educate kids in context, called natural education. Now, we are training teachers to leave space for kids, to let them do it. Protect, let them feel free, self-help.”

The principal continues to talk about the need to strengthen the children’s abilities to help themselves in everyday contexts. However, in addition to strengthening the children’s personal emotional ability, the principal underlines the role of collective sentiments and belonging, since this emphasis is considered particularly important for single children. Besides “free play and that kind of activities” the principal emphasizes the importance of “collective interaction and collective feeling. Not just personality space, but also to feel the collective grace. Our educational ideas don’t just meet the personality need, but also supply space for collective emotion.” She continues: “You must emphasize the single family [family with a single child]. A lot of them are single children.²¹² So, emotional ability is important for them [to develop]. Partner relation is important. Collective interaction is important.” Emotional ability is therefore

²¹¹ ‘Frustration education’ as explained by the principal and teachers in kindergarten 2 may resemble what is known as the ‘Strange Situation’ in psychological research on children and childhood. This research concerns children’s emotional attachment or emotional security through inflicting distress; placing the child in a ‘strange situation’ where their caregivers were temporarily removed to explore children’s reactions to the situation, with attention to the children’s level of distress (Woodhead and Faulkner, 2000:18-20). However, I do not know which psychological theoretical understanding ‘frustration education’ was based on, so this reference is merely based on my understanding and interpretation of the principals’ explanations and elaborations.

²¹² According to the principal, around 3-5% of the children in kindergarten 2 have siblings.

not only about self-expression and important for individual selves, but also in relation to learning how to relate emotionally to other children, to be a part of the group.

The children's reactions during the frustration education were analysed in order to find out about their psychological state. Attention was particularly directed at whether the children cried or not. The principal says:

“The children used to say “blood, sweat and no tears”²¹³ but in context they cried. They cried because they are nervous. [If] Not cry [it is] because they are mature. Maybe some think it is acceptable, to live here one night. [If so] It is normal, good that they cried. They are nervous; they have a sense of being nervous. Those who have a sense of [finishing a] task, that's worse.

The principal said there are three reasons for why the children would *not* cry. One is because they are mature, and that they think that the whole scenario may not be real. The second reason is that they think of it as a task and that they for this reason can accept it. Finally, the third reason is that they don't know how to release their emotions; this is the worst situation and the teachers must pay attention to these children.

Both the principal and the vice principal had hesitated before they decided to do the ‘frustration education,’ but after a lot of discussion they decided to go through with it. The vice principal says: “We did not think: what is the goal—to make them cry? To play tricks? No, we did not mean that.” She continues: “In the beginning I disagreed to do the frustration in the dormitory, then I realized it was frustration education. The army life is that way, army men have to leave far away from their parents, and kids will know that army life is not easy for the men. This is simulation²¹⁴.” Frustration education in the army barracks was, in the same way as role play (Section see 6.3), based on an experience that might happen in the outside world, the real world, as simulated through play.

When asking the children (in interviews) about the army day, they had different responses; many thought it was really exciting to play with a gun and to watch the rocket launch. Others talked enthusiastically about the army training and the climbing exercise, but said that the food was not so great, that the soup ‘tasted like something from the river.’ The dormitory episode, on the other hand, they did not enjoy and some of the children did not want to talk in detail

²¹³ Prior to the army day, the children had been practicing on different aspects of the army life, including phrases such as ‘*blood, sweat, and no tears.*’

²¹⁴ *simulation* (mónǐ, 模拟)

about it. There was also some discussion among the children concerning who had cried or not. One child explicitly said that the children would be unhappy if they had to stay there, even for one night, because: “Cannot see mum, cannot sleep on the big bed, cannot drink yoghurt in the evening, cannot watch TV, and cannot have meals with your family.” Most of the children said they would not like to go back to the army school.

In the following section, the role of frustration education in everyday settings in kindergarten 2 will be in focus. As explained by the teachers, everyday frustration education was important in relation to the problem of ‘emotionally spoiled’ children and their lack of skills and abilities in dealing with everyday situations and challenges.

11.2.3 Everyday frustration education

During interviews with teachers in kindergarten 2, a less ‘extreme’ idea of frustration education was discussed, i.e., how to implement frustration education in the classroom in terms of making a game a little more difficult or exposing the children to challenging situations in order for them to learn how to cope with setbacks. When asking about frustration education, one of the teachers in kindergarten 2 responded the following way:

(Kindergarten 2, teacher interview, teacher *Huang*) “We will see, this thing, when something happens to kids, for example, some emotional, or some social setbacks, or some sudden setbacks, how will he adjust himself to them, to psychologically elude it, so he can emotional elude the feelings of frustration. In the frustration, the condition of frustration, we will observe him, to see his, how is his ability, will he cry, or will he face bravely.”

Just as in the frustration education in the army school, everyday frustration education is concerned with placing children in challenging situations in order to see how they react and understand their position in relation to frustration. This teacher was, for similar reasons, also concerned with outdoor activities. He advocated the belief that children would greatly benefit from physical challenges and mastering things like climbing ladders. Although the children were not required to learn this, the teacher wanted them to learn and let them train climbing during sports time as he believes that mastering such challenges will translate to other situations and strengthen the child’s skills and abilities.

(Kindergarten 2, teacher interview, teacher *Huang*) “Sometimes when kids, ah, in fact he have already finished the thing, but teachers might intentionally respond to him obstructively, or intentionally cause him some trouble, it’s not that teachers are being

unkind to him, we just want to know how will he behave facing problems and overcome them. That is, under an aggrieved condition, how will he overcome it. It's like vaccinating. I will stimulate him a little today and see, ah, how will he react, what's his feedback mechanism, an elusion mechanism, so when a bigger setback comes, he can deal with it naturally. The teacher connects this situation to future struggles: Because in China, in this environment, when you grow up, there will be many many similar things, many many unreasonable troubles, or some obsession "although I've done it well, I am not accepted"—this might happen a lot, so, if you stay in a easeful environment too long, you might encounter this problem in primary school, then he might never get over it."

The other teacher talked a lot about learning to become a good loser, in the context of everyday frustration education. She said:

(Kindergarten 2, teacher interview, teacher *Wu*) "generally in the play, about the frustration, that is to say, there are not too many things similar to the army day, so generally we educate them to be a good loser, like this. Because we have lots of play in kindergarten, generally they won't have big setbacks, but something on lose or win, including rope skipping, for example, we have two boys, they were poor losers when in middle class, each time in a team competition game they cried when they lost. I think in kindergarten we spent quite some time on resisting-frustration education, (kids) don't have enough setbacks. Because in nowadays for kids, everything is too smooth. But since big class, I think X (one of the children mentioned above) is already much better."

When asking the teachers in kindergarten 2 about the notion of spoiled children, explaining that I had read about the phenomenon in books on Chinese childhoods, they answered:

(Kindergarten 2, teacher interview, teacher *Huang*) "From kids behaviours, you can see, more self-centred, stronger self-centeredness, or that in sports, lack of autonomous capability, and also when they eat, lack of motor coordination, all because parents spoil them, they don't have enough chances to take exercise (experience/training). This is why they consider frustration education. Yes, so, when you encounter the problem, you should go (deal with it) yourself, even if without parent's help."

(Kindergarten 2, teacher interview, teacher *Wu*) "Yes. Because now that is to say, eh, maybe China is different from foreign countries, they can have many kids, in China, generally it's one (kid), and also, kids stay with grandparents and parents, eh, with grandparents and maternal grandparents a lot, surely the third generation is doted on more, so, it just happens (there is little we can do about it). That is to say, now the parents are busy with their jobs, if there are no old men [grandparents] at home, kids are left to ayi,²¹⁵ ayi won't require them too much, just, just to ensure that you leave a kid to me [a four-word²¹⁶ meaning safely], and I give you a kid back [same four-word meaning safely], that's all. That is to say, because, many, many are, parents just, maybe because we are kindergarten teachers ourselves, so we set strict demands on our kids, because we know

²¹⁵ Means aunt, relates to aunt in terms of kinship, but can also refer to any female adult (e.g., assistants in kindergarten 1). See 5.4.3.

²¹⁶ Chinese idiomatic expressions. See 6.2.4.

what they will experience in kindergarten, so maybe (we) spoil them less, or have them be more independent. But generally (they) are too much spoiled”

The idea behind frustration education, as explained by the principal and teachers, was thus to function as a sort of emotional leveller. There was a belief that the children experience little frustration in their everyday lives since they are ‘spoiled with attention’ from parents and grandparents. When talking about spoiled children, the teachers emphasised on children being deprived of everyday experiences which makes them stronger as human beings, better capable of fending for themselves and coping with setbacks.

Being ‘spoiled’ thus relate to a sort of ‘mindless loving’ (love without discipline), leading to children ending up in an unfortunate position where they lack the skills and tools for coping with setbacks. This becomes the opposite of *guan* (a regimented sort of love, see Section 7.1), where love is complimented by training and firmer control. Love with discipline (*guan, ai*) makes children more independent and more capable of coping with setbacks in life. Frustration education is however, considered as the explicit training and regulation of children’s bodies, and teaching them who is control, but also of how to behave, relate to the group, and emphasise self-improvement. As mentioned, the principal also explicitly stated that it was about responsibility and self-discipline.

According to Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa, the problem of spoiled children “turned out to be a bit like a storm that was forecast but never materialized” (2009b:38). The authors stress that although the term is still used by educators, it is used less than in the 1980s, and ‘spoiled children’ is no longer considered to be a threat of any significance to China’s social and emotional health (Tobin et al., 2009b). As we have seen, the principal and teachers in kindergarten 2 (which can be considered a modern urban Chinese kindergarten) have strong opinions about the challenges with the phenomenon of spoiled children, and consider it an important point of reference when talking about urban Chinese childhoods. The principal and teachers refer to the ‘lack of frustration’ in everyday settings and that children lack the skills or the ability to master difficult (and everyday) situations. Frustration education thus becomes a way to help children to become more balanced human beings, through exposing them to potentially difficult situations, in order for them to learn how to cope with unforeseen situations and with negative setbacks.

Knowing that competition (is and) will be strong for these children in their future, both regarding access to good schools and university, and obtaining good jobs, parents and teachers (and children) focus strongly on working towards future success. An underlying fear is that the children may not have what it takes, and that they may be unable to compete in the field of education and finance (etc.); they may lack the skills and knowledge required in order to compete for a good position. Emphasis on working against such possible future dystopic ends begins in kindergarten, and this is partly why the children in both kindergartens are told how to behave in certain ways, to strive for certain things, and to be in control of themselves and others. Frustration education and disciplinary action must be understood in light of such concerns.

11.3 Discipline as everyday social practice

According to Naftali's informants (teachers in Beijing primary school), since children in contemporary China have access to so much information and at times, know more than their teachers do, have less respect for their parents and teachers than former generations of children and adding this to the large numbers of people, control is a necessity (2007:248-249). Discipline is understood as a positive thing and as something that can help prevent children in China from becoming like their unruly peers in the western world with too much 'personal freedom and individuality' (Naftali, 2007:249). The teachers in the two kindergartens where I did fieldwork (among younger children than those referred to in Naftali's example) did not explicitly express such concerns (although this need not mean that they did not have such concerns). Discipline was rather connected to current challenges (control behaviour/group, encourage hard work) as well as future challenges (deal with setbacks, be successful). Furthermore, the meaning behind disciplinarian practices goes beyond keeping order and control. The children are also learning to be Chinese, through such processes. The children are taught how to always pay attention to the collective through exposure to and involvement in disciplinarian practices, such as controlling bodies (being part of various groups), individual separation (the feeling of temporarily being taken out of the group), and by being a duty child (having a duty to contribute to the collective through chores and social control). The children also learn about feelings of shame and losing face through disciplinarian practices.

Chinese kindergarten teachers in Birkeland's study stress the need for preparing the children for society. Due to individual pressures, the teachers see it as their duty to prepare each child as much as possible "in order to manage the demands of the society and to adjust to these

demands;” and emphasis is placed on knowledge and the need for the children to develop “their own ability to think, analyse and to make hypothesis” (Birkeland, 2013a:50).

Kindergarten research using theorizations of Bourdieu in the north European context has emphasised how ‘underlying’ power dynamics are revealed through practices and uses of language that produce inequality in settings that in fact emphasise equality. This is not a paradox in my study; i.e., inequality (asymmetry) is reproduced, but not under the ‘illusion’ of egalitarianism. In the case of China and Chinese kindergartens, equality is not a promoted value. The Confucian ethics is both relational and duty-based (as opposed to the rights-based ethics of western individualism); proper behaviour depends on circumstance and on the relationships to those involved, meaning that right and wrong are socially defined; no absolute moral principles can be objectively used to define behaviour (Bedford & Hwang, 2003:132-133). Maintaining harmony in social relationships is done through fulfilling one’s moral duties, and shame is in this context an effective form of social control (Bedford & Hwang, 2003). This point is important because it underlines that the individual is not at the centre of importance, rather *relationships* are at the centre; emphasis is on what each person can do for the better of the collective, be it the country, the family or the kindergarten class.

The notion of relationality can be linked to Confucian teachings and ethics (Chao, 1994), to a particular understanding of the individual in terms of social relationships (Xiaotong et al., 1992), and to a Chinese contextual form of individualism (Hansen & Svarverud, 2010). These various approaches all underline an emphasis on the primacy of the group and networks of social relationships, and how the individual should strive towards and contribute to maintaining group harmony. A collective orientation does not imply an egalitarian view of individuals; differentiation is rather at the basis of human relationships, and each person should orient their efforts towards fulfilling their duty in relations with others. The notion of differentiation is also strongly present and important in the kindergarten setting (see e.g., Chapter 8). The social categorizations of duty children, little teachers and team leaders can also be understood as manifestations or illustrations of such hierarchical relations (Chapter 9). As we have seen, however, ascribed status into such categories is not automatically accepted by the children in the child group. Children are positioned differently in the child group, and treated differently by both teachers and other children. Patterns of differentiation and issues of domination and subordination are present in the child group.

11.4 Summary Chapter 11

In this chapter, I have elaborated on a particular educational approach in kindergarten 2 called ‘frustration education,’ and explained how this connects with contemporary and future concerns of Chinese childhoods, with particular emphasis on the problem of ‘spoiled’ children. This spoiling was of a particular kind: an *emotional* spoiling resulting from too much attention. The lack of familiarity with frustration and related emotions, was considered to leave children unable to cope with setbacks. Frustration education, i.e., placing children in situations considered challenging for them, was thus done in order to balance out their mental state so that they would learn how to master and cope with contemporary and future challenges.

12 Some concluding remarks

Disciplinarian practices must be explored and understood in context: only then can we understand their particular meaning and content. Exploring such practices may potentially be challenging in childhood research because dominant discourses in research and civil society—particularly in the Western world—connect notions such as children’s well-being, children’s rights, and a particular form of childhood experience. When doing explorative ethnographic field research, the aim is to understand how people live and experience their daily lives; the aim is to understand “what goes on.” This demands a reflexive and open approach into the field, particularly when exploring topics such as disciplinarian practices, because if ideas of the ‘priceless child’ (Zelizer, 1994) blurs researchers’ ‘sociological gaze’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a), one might only see authoritarian and unnecessarily harsh disciplinarian practices.

This thesis is based on fieldwork in two kindergarten classes with a total number of around 60 children and four teachers as informants—in a city with four times the amount of inhabitants as in Norway. As such, this project is an empirical micro-study: an in-depth exploration of practices in two particular locations at a particular point in time. Although large-scale transitions the latest decades in China have created a range of different historical, political and economic conditions for childhood experiences, some contextually relevant aspects can help explain why disciplinarian practices take place the way they do in a different manner than they would have done e.g., in the context of Norway. In order to explore such conditions, I have emphasized the notion of *relationality*.

The idea of relationality has been used as an analytical approach aiming to explore the interlinked relations between agents and their social surroundings, through focus on the children’s habitus or *practical sense* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a) (Chapter 10). I have also addressed the differential *relationships* between adults and children (part III) and between the children themselves (part IV), in order to emphasize contextually important notions of self-control and social control in a differentially organized social space where children’s possibilities and positioning is strongly connected to the possibilities and positioning of other agents in the social space. The idea of relationality brings together different theorizations on the relation between individuals and society in China (Bakken, 1994; Hansen & Svarverud, 2010; Xiaotong et al., 1992), and analytical concepts theorizing the mutually constitutive relation of childhood and adulthood through the concept of *generational order* (Alanen, 2009a);

both of which have been explored with an emphasis on the practices of differentiation they imply in the kindergarten context. Thus, practices of differentiation and interrelational responsibility, as well as approaching disciplinarian measures in pragmatic and sensitive ways, have been considered significant aspects of the children's practical sense of "the disciplinarian game" (see Chapter 10).

Disciplinarian practices were everyday common practices in the kindergartens. In order to describe, portray, and theorize the 'everyday-ness' of such practices, I approached these as everyday social practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a). Identifying important values in the field, here conceptualized as variants of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2011), was done in order to see which forms of practice and knowledge that was considered important, valuable and legitimate among children and teachers in the kindergartens. Such an emphasis was relevant in order to understand and 'sketch out' the field, as well as how agents in that field operate, in different ways and to varying degrees. The thesis has in such ways addressed the research questions, exploring in which ways disciplinarian practices were present and significant in relationships between teachers and children in the kindergartens, *as well as* between the children. The children were actively involved in disciplinarian practices, which in many ways were considered both a duty (e.g., in the task as duty child, Chapter 9) and a privilege (well-behaved children being awarded the task of little teachers, Chapter 9).

In Chapter 4, Fei Xiaotong's metaphor of the relation between the individual and Chinese society was expressed as ripples in the water after a rock has been thrown in (4.4.1). In line with this metaphor, I consider the conceptual pair *duties* and *privileges* as illustrative conceptual droplets trickling down in this thesis. These concepts are significant because they touch upon contextually important aspects of inter and intragenerational relationships, what it means to be a child in the kindergarten classroom, as well as a child and an individual in Chinese society at large. The children have duties in their social relationships; in the classroom (e.g., as duty students and in relationships between adults and children, see Chapters 9 and 7), in the educational system (all citizens have both a duty and a right to be educated, see Section 2.2) and in everyday life (e.g., in relation to parents or elders, both morally and legally, see Section 2.3). In some ways, children also have a duty—or at least are certainly expected—to do well academically and artistically, knowing that they must work hard in order to succeed in life. The notion of privilege is connected to how living a privileged life can lead to emotional spoiling

(Chapter 11), but also to how behaving well and working hard will lead to you being rewarded and live a privileged life, both in kindergarten (e.g., see 8.1.3) and in the future.

An emphasis on concepts such as duties and privileges furthermore underline how children are positioned as social agents in the Chinese kindergartens—not only do they have duties, obligations and responsibilities in their social relationships; they are also considered able to partake in the forming of their own lives. Such matters are for example expressed in phrases such as “use your mind” (see 7.2.3) which, although being an order or an expression of disciplinary action from teacher to child, also does indicate a view that the children *have* a mind to use. This conceptual frame—duties and privileges—thus provide a perspective that recognizes and reinforces children’s relational agency and emphasizes the importance of responsibility in relationships between children (and adults) in the kindergartens.

Agency has been explored as something that produces effects in relationships between agents in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992a; Burkitt, 2016). These effects are not necessarily considered positive or wanted, but can also be problematic for the agents involved, on both sides of domination. I have also shown how the everyday ‘reproduction’ of values and practices are not automatic structural productions; the children are not robots programmed to act in certain ways, internalizing information, which controls their every move. Rather, I have explored how the children act in the ways they do, which is varied and manifold because that is what makes sense—it is what is meaningful and familiar in their daily lives (Chapter 9).

Knowledge of Chinese kindergarten disciplinarian practices can have relevance for understanding childhood and disciplinarian practices elsewhere, e.g., to how children are disciplined in Norwegian kindergartens. Exploring and understanding practices as they occur in a particular context, perhaps unfamiliar to most Norwegian readers, can illustrate how such practices are closely connected to historical, cultural, political, economic, and social circumstances. An in-depth study of a Chinese kindergarten can not only provide an empirical case for future comparative studies with kindergartens in China or elsewhere—it can also stimulate new questions and reflections on the pedagogical basis of early childhood education and care in different locations in the world. It may challenge the unspoken and taken-for-granted truths that form the way one thinks about and theorize childhood and kindergartens in

various contexts. Knowledge of differences and variations in views of children, childhoods (and disciplinarian practices) in different contexts may also help expand on the understanding of the myriad of practices that exist in a country such as Norway.

For the Chinese reader, it may be interesting to see how an outsider understands and approaches practices in the Chinese kindergarten field. The form and shape of the monograph allows for an elaboration on many aspects of the research process as well as of the empirical material, which may both clarify and problematize the premises on which data production is based. My experience when presenting my material in different context for a Chinese audience has been that discipline has not necessarily been very problematic to address. Rather, curiosity regarding the research process, choice of method and findings, as well as comparisons between Norwegian and Chinese kindergartens, has been emphasised. My goal has been to present and interpret the empirical material in a way that I hope would be recognizable and familiar to my informants. That another researcher might have approached and interpreted such forms of practice in other ways, is furthermore a useful reminder that my interpretations and understandings are my own (see also Section 5.1.2), and that my interpretations are, in the end, just that.

In this thesis I have looked at discipline as practice, which makes sense in and relates to, a wider social and cultural setting. In the kindergarten, societal expectations, values and concerns may be actualized in various forms of practice. Chinese and Norwegian kindergartens may have similar aims for their everyday practices, such as helping children cope with daily and future challenges, even though they organize their daily lives and engage in practices in different ways. As such, the kindergarten can be seen as an arena of cultural formation (Ødegaard, 2012a); i.e., as a field where children learn about and embody experiences, values, and knowledge that are considered legitimate and important in context. Such in-depth explorations of why people act the way they do can contribute to cultural understanding, as well as open up for self-reflection of taken for granted practices and assumptions, and I hope this thesis can be useful for such purposes.

13 References

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14 Appendix

14.1 Consent form for children (Mandarin Chinese)

研究知情同意书

亲爱的孩子：

你好！

我叫伊达·玛利亚·丽莎，来自挪威卑尔根大学学院。

我邀请你加入我的一个研究，这个研究想要弄清一个问题：对一个孩子来说，生活在上海是什么样的，而在幼儿园的每一天又是什么样的。我认为关于这一点，除了和大人们交谈，也应该问问孩子们的想法。

如果你愿意加入这个研究，那么你要做的就是在我迷惑不解的时候，帮助我理解幼儿园里每天发生的不同的事。比如说，你可以告诉我你在幼儿园里喜欢做些什么以及为什么，又比如说，你可以给我解释一些我不明白的词语或游戏。

我问过你的父母是否可以让你参与研究，他们同意了。但是，如果你不愿意参与，那么你可以选择拒绝。另外，如果你在同意参与研究后，又改变了主意，那么你随时可以退出。

关于这个研究，如果你有任何问题，欢迎向我提问。

如果你愿意参与研究，请在下面写上你的名字。你和你的父母会拿到这份知情同意书的复印件，请保管好它。

孩子所在幼儿园/日期

孩子姓名

孩子签名

14.2 Consent form for teachers (Mandarin Chinese)

研究知情同意书

亲爱的老师：

您好！

我叫伊达·玛利亚·丽莎（*Ida Marie Lyså*），是挪威科技大学儿童研究中心的尼尔森教授（*R. D. Nilsen*）和挪威卑尔根大学学院教育学系的艾琳·埃里克森·奥德加德（*E. E. Ødegaard*）副教授的博士生。在此我恳请您参与我的一个研究，研究结果将作为我的博士论文发表，研究主题是《中国幼儿园里的文化生成》。

我的研究是挪威研究委员会资助的一个大项目的子项目，这个大项目的主题是《幼儿园作为文化生成的场所》，艾琳·埃里克森·奥德加德副教授和托洛尔夫·克拉格（*Thorolf Krüger*）教授是项目带头人。这个项目包含了一些和幼儿园研究有关的子项目，以探究挪威和中国的幼儿园实践。我的研究开始于2010年八月并将持续四年，我会在上海停留一年并分别于上下学期各在两所不同的幼儿园进行田野研究，这两所幼儿园由卑尔根大学学院的研究伙伴华东师范大学选定。

这个研究基于参与式观察，这种人类学研究方法要求研究者长期而深入地参与被研究者的每日生活，以更好地了解被研究者的行为、习惯和文化。这一方法因其对儿童视角的关注而在国际上被公认为适用于以儿童为中心的研究。在本研究中，我希望能与老师和孩子们相处，而以孩子作为主要被研究者，孩子在自己及其家长都同意的前提下参与本研究。为了深入体悟孩子和老师的视角，我希望能与研究后期与孩子和老师进行非正式的访谈或对话。除了每天的田野研究日记，我会在访谈对话时使用录音机。所有文字和语音资料予以保密，在研究报告以及任何文字或口头陈述中，孩子和幼儿园的名字会用化名表示，以确保孩子的信息不外传。我将恪守科研伦理原则，并对孩子的信息保护予以特别关注。这个研究已向挪威社会科学资料服务中心申报(<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>)并获批准，该中心致力于规范研究伦理和隐私保护。

一旦幼儿园及孩子加入研究，所有信息将以化名方式保存。研究报告将以英文专题论文的形式体现，并且我将为对研究报告感兴趣的老师提供一份中文版的摘要，请需要的老师在此同意书结尾处提供邮寄地址，我将在大约三年后寄出报告摘要。

为使研究顺利进行，我向各位老师提供这份知情同意书，并希望您能签署同意。但是，在是否参加研究这一点上，您是完全自愿的，并且，您有权在任何时候退出研究。

关于这个研究，如果你有任何问题或希望获得更多信息，请发送邮件到我的邮箱。请将本同意书的结尾处裁下并交给我。我的邮箱是 ida.lysa@gmail.com。

您诚挚的，

伊达·玛利亚·丽莎

卑尔根大学学院博士生

请从此处裁下

我已阅读此知情同意书并同意参与由伊达·玛利亚·丽莎主持的研究《中国幼儿园里的文化生成》。

教师姓名

所在幼儿园

教师签名

14.3 Consent form for parents (Mandarin Chinese)

研究知情同意书

亲爱的家长：

您好！

我叫伊达·玛利亚·丽莎（Ida Marie Lyså），是挪威科技大学儿童研究中心的兰迪·第比利尔森教授（Professor Randi Dyblie Nilsen）和挪威卑尔根大学学院教育学系的艾琳·埃里克森·奥德加德副教授（Associate Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard）的博士生。在此我恳请您同意您的孩子参与我的一个研究，研究结果将作为我的博士论文发表，研究主题是《中国幼儿园里的文化生成》。

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一旦孩子加入研究，其个人信息将全部以化名方式保存。研究报告将以英文专题论文的形式体现，并且我将为对研究报告感兴趣的家长提供一份中文版的摘要，请需要的家长在此同意书结尾处提供邮寄地址，我将在大约三年后寄出报告摘要。

为使研究顺利进行，我向各位家长提供这份知情同意书，并希望家长能签署同意。但是，在是否让孩子参加研究这一点上，家长是完全自愿的，并且，家长有权在任何时候让孩子退出研究。同时，我会向孩子解释这一研究，并且在孩子也愿意的情况下才让其参与研究。

关于这个研究，如果你有任何问题或希望获得更多信息，请发送邮件到我的邮箱。请将本同意书的结尾处裁下并交给幼儿园。我的邮箱是 ida.lysa@gmail.com。

您诚挚的，

伊达·玛利亚·丽莎

卑尔根大学学院博士生

请从此处裁下

我已阅读此知情同意书并同意让我的孩子参与由伊达·玛利亚·丽莎主持的研究《中国幼儿园里的文化生成》。

孩子所在幼儿园/日期

孩子姓名

家长签名

14.4 Consent form for children (English)

Agreement to be part of this research

Being a child in a kindergarten

My name is Ida Marie Lyså. I come from a school called Bergen University College which is in Norway.

I am asking you to take part in a research because I am trying to learn more about what it is like to be a child in Shanghai today and also what it is like to go to kindergarten. I think that we should not only ask the adults about this, but also ask the children themselves.

If you agree to be in this study, what you have to do is help me understand different things that happen in the kindergarten during the day, if I don't understand them myself. This can be for example if there is something particular you like to do when you are in the kindergarten and why you prefer this, or explain some words or games that I don't know about.

I have asked your parents if you can be in the research, and they said yes. But even though they said yes, you can decide not to be in it if you want. Also, you can say yes now and if you change your mind later and want to not be part of it, that is ok.

You can ask me any question you want about the study.

If you write your name at the bottom of the paper, that means that you agree to be in the study. You and your parents will also be given a copy of this paper to take home.

Place/date

The child's name

Signature of Child

14.5 Consent form for teachers (English)

Dear kindergarten staff,

Request to Participate in Research Project

My name is Ida Marie Lyså, and I am a doctoral student of Professor Randi Dyblie Nilsen from NOSEB (Norwegian Centre for Child Research) at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Associate Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard from the Educational Department of Bergen University College (BUC) in Norway. With this letter, I request you to participate in a research study which will be used for my doctoral dissertation. The project's working title is *Cultural formation in Chinese kindergartens*.

My study is part of a larger project financed by the Norwegian Research Council, called *Kindergarten as an arena for cultural formation*, and Associate Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard and Professor Thorolf Krüger are the project leaders. The project consists of several sub-projects related to kindergarten research, and the aim is to explore kindergarten practices both in Norway and China. My project began in august 2010 and will last four years. I will stay one year in Shanghai and during this time I will conduct fieldwork in two different kindergartens and spend one semester in each of them. Both kindergartens have been selected by East China Normal University in Shanghai, a collaborative institution to Bergen University College.

The study is based on participant observation, an anthropological research method involving long term participation in informant's everyday lives in order to gain a greater understanding of the children's actions, customs and culture. This method has been considered appropriate internationally when conducting child-centered research due to the possibility for the children to present their voice and take part in the research on their own terms. I wish to spend time with both staff and children who are connected to the kindergarten, but with the children as my main informants. The children will participate only if they are willing to do so and with the consent of their parents or guardians. In order to deepen my understanding of the children and staff's perspectives, as time passes I wish to conduct informal interviews/conversations with both the children and the staff. Next to field notes, which will be written each day, I might make use of a tape recorder in these instances. Both written and audio information will be handled with great care and confidentiality. Both names of children, staff and kindergartens will be replaced by fictitious names in the written result and in any written or oral presentations so that no individuals can be identified. I will follow scientific standards of ethical responsibility and take specific caution in relation to the children. The project has been reported to and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services

(<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>), whose task it is to attend to privacy protection and research ethics.

Only I will have access to information from the fieldwork. At the conclusion of the study, the results will take form of a monograph in English. A summary can be provided to all interested in Chinese. Please indicate at the end of this consent form whether you wish to have these results. If so, please provide your mailing address. The results should be available in approximately 3 years.

In order to go through with this research, I depend on the written consent of informants, and I therefore hope that you are positive to my request and are willing to sign the form below. I wish to emphasize that participation in this study is voluntary, and that you have the right to withdraw from the project at any time.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please email me at ida.lysa@gmail.com. Please return the part below to me.

Sincerely,

Ida Marie Lyså

Doctoral Candidate - Bergen University College

Please cut here

I have received information and am willing to participate in the study *Cultural Formation in Chinese kindergartens*, led by Ida Marie Lyså (doctoral candidate)

Name:

Kindergarten:

Signature:

14.6 Consent form for parents (English)

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Request to Participate in Research Project

My name is Ida Marie Lyså, and I am a doctoral student of Professor Randi Dyblie Nilsen from NOSEB (Norwegian Centre for Child Research) at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Associate Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard from the Educational Department of Bergen University College (BUC) in Norway. With this letter, I request permission for your child to participate in a research study which will be used for my doctoral dissertation. The project's working title is *Cultural formation in Chinese kindergartens*.

My study is part of a larger project financed by the Norwegian Research Council, called *Kindergarten as an arena for cultural formation*, and Associate Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard and Professor Thorolf Krüger are the project leaders. The project consists of several sub-projects related to kindergarten research, and the aim is to explore kindergarten practices both in Norway and China. My project began in august 2010 and will last four years. I will stay one year in Shanghai and during this time I will conduct fieldwork in two different kindergartens and spend one semester in each of them. Both kindergartens have been selected by East China Normal University in Shanghai, a collaborative institution to Bergen University College.

The study is based on participant observation, an anthropological research method involving long term participation in informant's everyday lives in order to gain a greater understanding of the children's actions, customs and culture. I will not be involved with the educational work of the kindergarten teachers. In order to deepen my understanding of the children and staff's perspectives, as time passes I wish to conduct informal interviews/conversations with both the children and the staff. Next to field notes, which will be written each day, I might make use of a tape recorder in these instances. Both written and audio information will be handled with great care and confidentiality. Both names of children and kindergartens will be replaced by fictitious ones in the written result and in any written or oral presentations so that no children can be identified. I will follow scientific standards of ethical responsibility and take specific caution in relation to the children. The project has been reported to and approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>), whose task it is to attend to privacy protection and research ethics.

Only I will have access to information from your child, and all information will be recorded anonymously. At the conclusion of the study, the results will take form of a monograph in English. A summary can be provided to all interested parents in Chinese. Please indicate at the end of this consent form whether you wish to have these results. If so, please provide your mailing address. The results should be available in approximately 3 years.

In order to go through with this research, I depend on the written consent of parents/guardians, and I therefore hope that you are positive to my request and are willing to sign the form below. I wish to emphasize that participation in this study is voluntary, and that you have the right to withdraw your child from the project at any time. The project will be explained to your child in terms that he or she can understand, and your child will participate only if he or she is willing to do so.

Should you have any questions or desire further information, please email me at ida.lysa@gmail.com. Please return the part below to the kindergarten.

Sincerely,

Ida Marie Lyså

Doctoral Candidate - Bergen University College

Please cut here

I have received information and give permission for my child to participate in the study *Cultural formation in Chinese kindergartens*, led by doctoral candidate Ida Marie Lyså.

Kindergarten/date

The child's name

Signature of Parent/Guardian

14.7 Research information for kindergarten (Mandarin Chinese)

研究项目介绍

亲爱的老师：

您好！

我叫伊达·玛利亚·丽莎（*Ida Marie Lyså*），是华东师范大学的合作学校挪威卑尔根大学学院(BUC)的博士生。我的学术导师是挪威卑尔根大学学院教育学系的艾琳·埃里克森·奥德加德（*E. E. Ødegaard*）副教授和挪威科技大学 (NTNU)儿童研究中心(NOSEB)的尼尔森教授（*R. D. Nilsen*）。我的研究项目主题是《中国幼儿园里的文化生成》。

我将于2011年秋至2012年春在上海进行我的研究。我会于2011年九月至2012年一月和2012年二月至该学期末分别在两个不同的幼儿园进行研究，每个学期我有三次休假，每次休假时间大约一周。在研究期间，我会于周一至周五每天去幼儿园（有可能是每次去半天）。由于我的中文不好，某些时候我会有翻译陪同。

我的研究试图理解一个问题：对一个孩子来说，生活在上海的幼儿园里是什么样的。这个研究基于参与式观察，这种人类学研究方法要求研究者长期而深入地参与被研究者的每日生活，以更好地了解被研究者的行为、习惯和文化。这一方法因其对儿童视角的关注而在国际上被公认为适用于以儿童为中心的研究。在本研究中，我希望能与老师及孩子相处，而以孩子为主要被研究者，我想和孩子及老师交谈，以了解中国的文化和幼儿园日常生活。如果可能，我会在研究后期对孩子及老师进行访谈，在访谈时，我会使用录音机。我会向幼儿园老师、家长和孩子发放《研究知情同意书》，同意加入研究则需要同意书上签名，由于规范研究的国际指导标准的要求，在本研究中必须采用知情同意书。所有拟参与对象可以自愿决定是否参加本研究。在研究报告以及任何文字或口头陈述中，孩子、老师和幼儿园的名字会用化名表示，以确保相关信息不外传。我将恪守科研伦理原则，并对孩子的信息保护予以特别关注。这个研究已向挪威社会科学资料服务中心申报(<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>)并获批准，该中心致力于规范研究伦理和隐私保护。

Shanghai, 2011-11-12, *Ida Marie Lyså*

伊达·玛利亚·丽莎

上海，2011-11-12

14.8 Research information for kindergarten (English)

Research Project Information

My name is Ida Marie Lyså and I am a PhD. student at Bergen University College (BUC) in Norway, which is a collaborative institution to East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai, China. My academic supervisors are Associate Professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard from the Educational Department of Bergen University College (BUC) and Professor Randi Dyblie Nilsen from the Norwegian Centre of Child Research (NOSEB) at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). The title of my project is *Cultural formation in Chinese kindergartens*.

I will conduct the fieldwork for my PhD. project the autumn of 2011 and the spring of 2012 in Shanghai, China. My plan is to stay in two different kindergartens, one semester in each (one from September to January, and the other from February to the end of the semester). I will have week-long breaks from the field three times a semester. I would like to stay in the kindergarten on a daily basis (e.g. half days). Since my Chinese is poor, I will bring a translator part of the time.

My aim is to understand what it is like to be a child in a kindergarten in Shanghai. I have based my study on participant observation, which is an anthropological research method involving long term participation in informant's everyday lives in order to gain a greater understanding of the informants' actions, customs and culture. This method has been considered appropriate internationally when conducting child-centered research due to the possibility for the children to present their voice and take part in the research on their own terms. I wish to spend time with both staff and children who are connected to the kindergarten, but the children will be my main informants. I hope to talk with the children and staff and learn about Chinese culture and about the routines in the kindergarten. If possible, after some time, I would like to conduct some interviews/more organized conversations with both children and staff. I will make use of a tape recorder in these instances. I will hand out consent forms to both kindergarten staff, parents and children, for them to sign (agree to partake in the study). Informed consent is a requirement in the research, and I follow international guidelines for proper research. It is voluntary to take part in the research. Both

names of children, staff and kindergartens will be replaced by fictitious names in the written result and in any written or oral presentations so that no individuals can be identified. I will follow scientific standards of ethical responsibility and take specific caution in relation to children. The project has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (<http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/index.html>), whose task it is to attend to privacy protection and research ethics.

Shanghai, 2011-11-12, Ida Marie Lyså

14.9 Interview guide for child interviews (kindergarten 1)

Introduction:

First I tell the children that I am very glad that they are having this interview with me. I tell them that I will ask many questions and that X (my translator) will translate everything for us. I think it is important to ask children and not just the adults about their lives, in research (some of the children have at times joked about doing research of their own, so this word has sparked some interest). I have stayed with them for a long time now, but since it is difficult for me to speak Chinese, it is important to have the interviews so that I can ask questions directly and understand even better. The information will be used to write a book, so that people will know what it is like to stay in a kindergarten in Shanghai. I am very happy to have stayed with them and to have this interview, and I hope they will like it too. If there are some questions they don't want to answer, that's ok, they don't have to. They can draw or write in the notebooks if they want (they have shown great interest in this). Also, after the interview, they can ask me any question they want. Finally, I will record the interview so that I will not forget their answers, and if they want to we can listen a little to the recording when we are finished.

The questions below were asked to the children during interviews in kindergarten 1. Questions in parenthesis were only asked during some interviews (where possible).

Childhood²¹⁷

- What you like best to play at home?
- Do you go to after-school activities?
- Do you have any siblings?
- Do you live far from the kindergarten? How do you get to the kindergarten (bus, car, bike, walk)?
- (Do you talk about kindergarten at home? What do you talk about?)
- (Who do you play with at home - kindergarten friends or other friends?)
- What do you think is the difference between adults and children?

²¹⁷ This category of questions was created because I wanted to start the interview with some general questions regarding the children's everyday lives, with some questions that were seemingly easy to respond to. In addition, I was curious about the children's family situation, friendships and everyday activities. I also added a more philosophical question (difference between children and adults) because I was interested in hearing what the children would respond to such a question. Questions in parenthesis were asked if the children were talkative (interviews differed in this regard). The interview questions were discussed with my interpreter before the interviews.

Kindergarten²¹⁸

- How is your dream kindergarten (what is it like, what do you do there)?
 - Do you have duty children in your dream kindergarten?
 - Do you have little teacher in your dream kindergarten?
 - Do you have big/middle/small team leader in your dream kindergarten?
 - Do you have four word stories in your dream kindergarten?
 - Is anything unfair in your dream kindergarten?
 - Do you have guan in your dream kindergarten?
 - Do you have to use your mind in your dream kindergarten?
-
- What is the most fun thing in the kindergarten?

Any questions for me? Anything you want to add?

²¹⁸ The initial interview guide contained slightly different questions in this section. The dream kindergarten was introduced early on, because it worked really well in the interview context. Not only did it open a space for the children to talk about a dream or fantasy kindergarten, but it also worked well as a conceptual hypothetical frame for discussing different disciplinarian practices in the kindergartens.

14.10 Interview guide for teacher interview (kindergarten 1)

Introduction:

I tell the teachers that I appreciate that they have agreed to partake in this interview, and that I hope it will be a good experience for them. It has been very interesting for me to stay in the classroom with them these months and I have learned a lot. In addition to this observation, I would also like to ask them their opinions about different things. I will ask questions in English and they can decide if they want to answer in English or Chinese. My translator (whom they know –she was with me two days a week in the kindergarten) will translate/explain the questions they don't understand. It is voluntary, so if they don't want to answer something, that is ok. Also, their names will not be in any text written about this fieldwork, anonymity is demanded in the ethical guidelines for my research. I hope it is ok that I record the interview – that way I will remember their answers better. This audio file will be deleted when my project is over.

Professional

- What is your educational background and experience?
- What do you see as the goal/task of kindergarten teachers?
- Do you know teachers in other kindergartens (do you meet them, discuss challenges)?
- Were you surprised when entering work life? Was it like you thought it would be?
- What is the best thing about being a teacher?
- What is the worst thing about being a teacher?
- Biggest challenges for teachers? (e.g. stressful aspects/workload?)

Kindergarten organization

- What do you focus on the last year of kindergarten? (how is big class different from small and middle class?)
- What is your favorite time of day in the kindergarten?
- Can you talk about your dream kindergarten – what would it be like?
- What do you think about/what is idea behind - the morning calisthenics?
- What do you think about/what is idea behind - duty children?
- What do you think about/what is the idea behind - little teacher?
- What do you think about/what is the idea behind - 4 word story
- What do you think about/what is idea behind - the stickers?
- Say to children, you are so happy. Happy not good?
- Why is it important for the children to be quick (and quiet)?
- What do you mean when you say 'use your mind'?
- Why do the children wear uniforms?

- What is your idea on guan? What method can you use to guan children. Is it like tough love? Is discipline important – why?

Personal

- Did you go to kindergarten? How was different/similar?
- Why did you want to be a kindergarten teacher?
- What like to do in your spare time? (if have spare time)
- If had another job, what would it be?

Other things

- My presence- effect on the children and on you as teachers (difficult?)
- If I was Chinese researcher - different?

Any questions for me? Anything you want to add?

14.11 Interview guide for child interviews (kindergarten 2)

Introduction – same as in interviews with children in kindergarten 1. Questions in parenthesis – asked only during some interviews.

Childhood

- What do you like to do at home (afternoon and/or the weekend)?
- Do you go to after-school activities? (which ones)
- (Who do you play with at home - kindergarten friends or other friends?)
- What is the difference between adults and children?
- (What is friendship?)
- (Do you play differently home and in the kindergarten?)
- (Do you talk a lot about kindergarten at home? What do you talk about?)

Kindergarten

- How is your dream kindergarten? (what is it like, who comes, what do you do)
- Do you have duty students in your dream kindergarten?
- Do you have news telling in your dream kindergarten?
- Do you have stamp book in your dream kindergarten?
- Do you have guan in your dream kindergarten?
- Is anything unfair in the dream kindergarten?

- (Do you sometimes feel embarrassed? When or why?)
- (What is the most fun thing in the kindergarten?)
- (What makes you happy - in the kindergarten or outside?)
- (What makes you angry - in the kindergarten or outside?)
- (Can you tell me about the **army day**²¹⁹?)

Any questions for me? Anything you want to add?

²¹⁹ A week before conducting the interviews, this kindergarten went to an army school (see Chapter 11). I wanted to talk to the children about their experiences at the army day.

14.12 Interview guide for teacher interviews (kindergarten 2)

Introduction – same as used with the teachers in kindergarten 1.

Professional

- What is your educational background and experience? How many years did you go to school?
- What do you see as the goal/task of kindergarten teachers? (professional identity)
- Were you surprised when entering work life? Learn what need at school? Was it similar being a teacher to the way you thought it would be? What is different?
- What is the best thing about being a teacher?
- What is the worst thing about being a teacher? Biggest challenges?

Kindergarten/daily life

- What do you focus on the last year of kindergarten? (how is it different from small and middle class?)
- What do you think about/what is idea behind - duty children?
- What do you think about/what is idea behind - news telling?
- What do you think about/what is idea behind – public class?
- What do you think about/what is idea behind – visiting teachers in the classrooms?
- Frustration education – can you explain a little more about this? How does it relate to everyday life? (Is it related to guan?)
- How is your dream kindergarten?
- What is your favorite time of day in the kindergarten?

General society/childhood (now and then)

- What changes, if any, have you seen the last decades (about children or childhood, living in the city).
- Challenges/ dangers/ bad influences for children?
- Do you think the children are spoiled?
- How is your relationship with parents?

Personal

- Did you go to kindergarten? How was it different/similar?

- Why did you want to be a kindergarten teacher?
- What like to do in your spare time? (if have spare time)
- If had another job, what would it be?

Other things

- The children who were not allowed to partake in the research, do you know why?
Why do you think the parents would not sign?
- What has it been like to have me in the class for this period?

- Any questions for me? Anything you want to add?