An insightful and thought-provoking volume that explores the many issues raised for researchers undertaking fieldwork in China (and elsewhere) with children in tow.

While many anthropologists and other scholars relocate with their families in some way or another during fieldwork periods, this detail is often missing from their writings even though undoubtedly children can have had a major impact on their work. Recognizing that researcher-parents have many choices regarding their children’s presence during fieldwork, this volume explores the many issues of conducting fieldwork with children, generally, and with children in China, specifically. Contributors include well-established scholars who have undertaken fieldwork in China for decades as well as more junior researchers.

The book presents the voices of mothers and of fathers, with two particularly innovative pieces that are written by parent-child pairs. The collection as a whole offers a wide range of experiences that question and reflect on methodological issues related to fieldwork, including objectivity, cultural relativism, relationships in the field and positionality. The chapters also recount how unexpected ethnographic insights can arise from having children present during the fieldwork process. A final chapter alerts future fieldworking parents to particular pitfalls of accompanied fieldwork and suggests ways to avoid these.
Doing Fieldwork in China . . . with Kids!
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Doing Fieldwork in China
... with Kids!

The Dynamics of Accompanied Fieldwork in the People’s Republic

Edited by
Candice Cornet and Tami Blumenfield
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Preface

This volume originated as an invited session sponsored by the Society for East Asia Anthropology at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in San Francisco in 2012. We appreciate the support conveyed through that invitation and the enthusiasm shown during the panel presentation by Society and Association members.

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Finally, we thank our children for brightening our lives, and making them challenging, joyful and meaningful.

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Introduction

Anthropological Fieldwork and Families in China and Beyond

Candice Cornet and Tami Blumenfield
Université de Montréal / Cégep de Saint-Hyacinthe and Furman University

Immersive, ethnographic fieldwork has long been a central component of anthropological inquiry. Humanistic approaches to writing about anthropology have thankfully moved us beyond the days when any mention of the anthropologist's presence was erased or dismissed. We now expect to see statements about the anthropologist's positionality, as well as discussions of methodology that take the anthropologist's presence into account (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Rosaldo 1984; Wolf 1992).

Curiously, though, while many anthropologists relocate with their families in some configuration or another during fieldwork periods, this detail is often missing from those position statements. Many writers do not even mention the presence of their families in fieldwork in their academic articles and books (though a close reading of acknowledgements sections may offer clues). Those writers who do discuss their families usually mention their presence, yet focus mainly on their own individual positions from which data was collected and analysed, before quickly moving on to the 'meat' of their discussion: what they have gleaned from their research, along with the theories and conclusions they have drawn from this research. Exceptions remain rare. They include Anne Allison's discussion of Japanese lunchboxes as Althusserian ideological state apparatuses (Allison 1991), which incorporates a child's presence during fieldwork into the central discussion, or Ann Anagnost's treatment of childhood, which springs from an anecdote about the valuation of her own children in the eyes of the Chinese public (1997: 117).
Nevertheless, in tandem with the reflexive, humanistic turn in anthropology, several volumes devoted specifically to doing fieldwork with families in tow appeared (Butler and Turner 1987; Cassell 1987; Huntington 1987). Written in the late 1980s, these discussed fieldwork in Pacific islands, small European villages, Brazilian shanty towns (Scheper-Hughes 1987), and Himalayan villages (Hitchcock 1987), among many other places. More recently, Jenny Lunn’s edited volume (2014) includes chapters exploring fieldwork with a spouse (Lunn and Moscuzza 2014), and the ethical dilemmas associated with involving relatives in the field (Taylor 2014). Meanwhile, the impacts children have on fieldwork and the challenges involved with being accompanied in the field have also been discussed (Scheyvens 2014; Brown and Dreby 2013; Cupples and Kindon 2003; Flinn et al. 1998; Frohlick 2002; Gottlieb et al. 1998; Levey 2009; Sutton 1998; Starrs et al. 2001). These articles and books consider and problematize the fine line between work and family for field researchers. They reveal the logistics involved in bringing children to faraway, often ‘exotic’ places and discuss the impact children have on the researchers’ work as well as the impact research has on children. These works consider to different degrees the complicated decisions anthropologist-parents make and the effects of their decisions on family dynamics, practical travel logistics, relationships in the field, and their fieldwork data and analyses. The authors reflect on the limits of cultural relativism, especially related to food, health, and education. Finally, they debate whether the presence of children during fieldwork should be foregrounded or hidden in ethnographic writing.

**Bringing children to the field: considerations**

A number of intertwined aspects do indeed need to be considered when deciding whether to bring one’s child to a distant field site. First and foremost, what are the pragmatics of taking one’s children to the field? Logistically, what does it involve? In terms of security, health and education, what does it imply? Starrs et al. (2001: 75) note, ‘With family along, fieldwork is no longer just about the researcher and a cluster of cherished contacts – documents and archives, peoples and places, organizations and outlooks. Suddenly logistics become far more complex.’ Huntington (1987: 84) has rightly remarked that this is not an easy decision. An anthropologist must assess the stresses of leaving one’s children behind at home versus those involved in bringing them along. A third option exists as well: some anthropologists avoid this decision as they progress through their careers and their children grow, shifting their research topics to permit ‘fieldwork at home’ – though this decision, too, carries its own implications and challenges (Rudd et al. 2008a; Gottlieb 2012).
Second, in terms of research and in terms of the data to be collected, how will one’s own children allow or restrict access to specific information? Having a child present in the field directs many of the research decisions, affecting relationships with informants, creating or restricting social networks, altering one’s position in the field, and either facilitating or complicating access to certain data. It may, for example, provide greater access to women’s voices because of a shared sense of humanity when taking care of children, for both male and female anthropologists (Cornet 2013; Counts and Counts 1998). On the other hand, it may also be frowned upon in more formal situations, especially those involving government leaders, professional meetings, and/or late nights and alcohol (Osburg 2013; Zheng 2009). Overall, though, the presence of one’s child allows informants to better define the researcher as a person embedded in kinship networks and can help the fieldworker ‘occupy an understandable role in the community’ (Levey 2009: 313; Cupples and Kindon 2003: 214).

Third, bringing one’s child to the field engenders a reflexive process on the limits of objectivity and the impact of positionality on knowledge production. No matter how we try to bracket our assumptions, we nonetheless bring to the field specific ideas and beliefs on child rearing practices, including health, socialization and education. Compared to other aspects of an anthropologist’s own culture, these are often the most difficult for the anthropologist to put aside, challenge, or question, especially when it comes to their own children. Sutton (1998: 127), when taking his child to the field in the Greek island of Kalymnos, accordingly wondered: ‘While the Kalymnians and I had agreed to disagree over many issues and to learn from each other, when it came to our children, suddenly both they and I were convinced that we had a monopoly on truth. Why was cultural tolerance, mine and theirs, suddenly in such short supply?’ When it comes to one’s own progeny, anthropologists tend to reach the limit of cultural relativism and, like Sutton (ibid.), find themselves to be intolerant of culturally variant ways. While they are often more than willing to learn about a culture’s way of taking care of children, they may not be willing to learn from it and apply it to their own children (Cornet 2013; Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume; Glover, Chap. 4 this volume; Hansen, Chap. 1 this volume).

Fourth, bringing children to the field raises issues related to the place of anthropologists’ children in academia. Although there is an increased tendency to re-conceptualize research assistants, interpreters or local informants as co-researchers and incorporate them into publications (Middleton and Cons 2014; Bamo et al, 2007; Lassiter 1998; Swain 2011; Turner 2010), children
continue to be rarely mentioned in print. Bringing children to the field and mentioning them in publications does, indeed, imply crossing the boundary between private and public spheres. It highlights the distinction so often made in academic bureaucracies between work and family, between field site and vacation, and between the objective, cerebral researcher and the emotional, embodied parent (Brown and Dreby 2013; Frohlick 2002: 52). It also questions the masculinist imagining of fieldwork, revoking the myth of the lone ethnographer as hero (Sutton and Fernandez 1998: 111) and contributing to the reflexive turn in anthropology (Wolf 1992). What emerges is thus a more socially nuanced view of the dynamic interactions between fieldwork, sociality and knowledge production.

Fifth, are we actually violating children’s ‘rights’ by bringing them along for fieldwork and thus forcing them, by virtue of their presence in this all-encompassing ‘work’, to perform an unwitting form of labor? Children can indeed be put to the task of fieldwork, more or less deliberately. For example, Fernandez discusses charging her teenaged children with taking photographs in rural Spain and transcribing archives (1987: 214). Beyond providing typical research assistant labor, they can, intentionally or not, become a form of research strategy, an instrument to accessibility or a tool to humanize relationships in the field.3 With that in mind, can asking a child to participate in fieldwork violate the Child Labor provision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?4

States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.5

Whether helping parents with fieldwork could be construed as hazardous to a child’s physical and emotional development no doubt varies with the situation and with a particular child’s temperament. Some children perceive being included in the work of fieldwork as highly desirable. For example, Wylie (1987: 110) recalls feeling unhappy that his father did not more explicitly ask him to assist with his research in rural France. ‘I would have liked to take a more active part in my father’s research . . . I remember being disappointed that he was only sporadically interested in my observations of life at school, for example.’ (Wylie 1987: 110)

Conversely, some children find fieldwork deeply troubling. Both Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Renate Fernandez took three children with them to their re-
Anthropological Fieldwork and Families

Spective fieldsites, and each had one child whose experience was so traumatic that they required time to recover upon returning to the United States (Fernandez 1987: 201-209; Scheper-Hughes 1987: 232-234). Scheper-Hughes’ daughter wrote:

If my Mom goes to Brazil again, it would prove she doesn’t care for me or the family because she would be breaking up the family over her work. And if she made me go she’d know I would hate it. So she’d make me miserable. Anyway she has already made me miserable . . .

(1987: 234)

Scheper-Hughes postponed fieldwork. Fernandez also adjusted future fieldwork plans –her highly sensitive son spent the following fieldwork period with his father and grandmother in the United States, while his older siblings went to Spain with their mother (1987: 214). With anthropologists facing pressure back home to assure children’s safety and be responsible parents, yet wanting to provide their children with the experiences that living in a different area can offer, thinking carefully about how to modify plans along the way and for future trips may be the best strategy available.

Accompanied fieldwork has positive and negative consequences on fieldwork, as conveyed through the table below.

Table 1.1. Positive and negative consequences of doing fieldwork with children as reported in the literature (Adapted from Butler and Turner 1987: 14–15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive (Children can . . .)</th>
<th>Negative (But they also can . . .)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase rapport</td>
<td>Decrease rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attract visitors</td>
<td>Disrupt meetings, ethnohistorical research and note-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distract other children</td>
<td>Take time from research, slowing pace and delaying research work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take time from research, requiring a slower pace (providing a needed break for the anthropologist-parent)</td>
<td>Require (actually or otherwise) amenities that affect fieldwork:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase access to some information about:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Age groups</td>
<td>a) Better housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Gender groups</td>
<td>b) Urban location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Family life</td>
<td>c) Quality schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Childbearing</td>
<td>d) Water, electricity, and other infrastructure (perhaps including WiFi or network accessibility today)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Childrearing</td>
<td>e) Accessible medical care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Candice Cornet and Tami Blumenfield

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive (Children can . . .)</th>
<th>Negative (But they also can . . .)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide emotional support to parents</td>
<td>Drive parents crazy / Make parents worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Reduce parents’ loneliness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Provide a way to maintain identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Provide a refuge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Reduce worry parents would suffer if the children were left at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve children’s health, strength and humor</td>
<td>Diminish children’s health, strength and humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide useful synergy between research and mothering if research topic converges</td>
<td>‘Keep professionals who are mothers from research’ (Butler and Turner 1987: 14–15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give the researcher a higher adult status</td>
<td>Cause child’s own kin to worry about their safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide another perspective(s) on the community (village/neighborhood/etc.)</td>
<td>Limit the anthropologist’s ability to apply cultural relativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a shared interest with the parents among the hosts</td>
<td>Increase criticism of researchers by family, friends, mentors, and hosts (often this criticism is allocated differentially along gendered lines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children may learn new languages and new skills that help them become more resilient</td>
<td>Children may not learn academic or social skills appropriate to age group at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family groups may be easier to accommodate and incorporate into local life and institutions than adult researchers</td>
<td>Family groups may be more difficult to accommodate and incorporate into local life and institutions than adult researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased flexibility in research design and frequent changes in plan may open up productive new avenues of research</td>
<td>Increased flexibility in research design and frequent changes in plan may be required, thus fragmenting research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1.1 makes clear, the increased flexibility required and changes in perceptions by host communities can complicate fieldwork relationships and the ethnographic research process. Middleton and Cons have noted, ‘The time is now for a critical reappraisal of the players of contemporary ethnography’ (2014: 279). We believe children should be included in this reappraisal, like the research assistants discussed by Middleton and Cons (2014).
Accompanied fieldwork in China: a new direction

With many publications already written about taking children along for fieldwork, why is a whole volume specifically about the joys, challenges, and practical and intellectual implications of doing fieldwork with one’s child in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) necessary at this juncture? While some of the issues involved are similar across field sites and researchers, new phenomena arise with different personnel and different locations in time and space. Perennial issues, too, morph into new configurations.

First, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) offers a fertile ground for research on a wide variety of anthropological topics, and an increasing number of foreign anthropologists and other social scientists are now conducting fieldwork in China as the country slowly eases the restrictions on foreign researchers. But no edited volume or special issue to date has focused on doing fieldwork with one’s child there.

As two volumes have made clear, doing fieldwork in socialist Asian countries carries with it some special considerations (Heimer and Thøgersen 2006; Turner 2013). In China, Heimer and Thøgersen note three recurrent themes that have required coping strategies from researchers: the overriding presence of the party-state, limited access to the field, and the requirement to work with an officially designated Chinese research assistant (Heimer and Thøgersen 2006: 12). We would add that bringing one’s children into this already complicated situation requires additional considerations, particularly given the active role played by the Chinese state in monitoring and regulating fertility and births, and thus the inevitable comparisons that the presence of an anthropologist’s child may spark. Furthermore, the attention to fertility cannot be decoupled from a heightened attentiveness to gender and the perceived quality (suzhi) – good and bad – of one’s children (Tobin et al. 2009).

Second, as noted by Rudd and Homer, ‘In 2002 a 30-year upward trend in women’s graduate education culminated in the first ever cohort of U.S. doctoral recipients with a majority of women’ (2005: 36). Women now receive about 60 per cent of all anthropology doctoral degrees in the United States. Hence an increasing number of women become anthropologists and face the double challenge of undertaking PhD or early career fieldwork while having intense family demands (i.e., raising young children). As the structures of families change, anthropologists, women yet also increasingly men, face the difficult task of balancing career and family obligations (Brown and Dreby 2013: 8). This challenge is rarely discussed in methodological discussions on fieldwork. Hence, despite the recent articles on doing fieldwork with children cited above,
the complex issues related to such an endeavor have not obtained adequate attention to quench the size and variety of demand for analyses on these issues, especially in light of the growing number of anthropologists actually taking their children to the field with them.

**Strategies for accompanied fieldwork**

‘We do not shy away from deliberating over mistakes made along the way and appreciate the rewards that can come from such critical reflection.’ (Turner 2013: 1)

Navigating the practical and philosophical complications wrought by bringing children and others to a field site can be challenging. Like Turner, we believe that by sharing and analysing mistakes, detours, and fears – all the negative aspects of research we usually omit from our methodology statements for fear of presenting ourselves as ‘bad’ researchers – we may learn and grow from our experiences. Out of a commitment to making transparent the forces that have helped us along, and to fostering the explicit sharing of often implicit or hidden information, the next section of this introduction offers some recommendations for preparing for and thinking through accompanied fieldwork.

**Who goes where, when, and with whom**

Most employed academic parents are accustomed to being creative with arranging their work and family (Brown and Dreby 2013; Ghodsee and Connelly 2014; Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2012). Planning for fieldwork can be an exercise in creativity, with endless configurations depending on family resources.

Some configurations we have heard of or tried ourselves are below (Table 1.2). Many contributors to this volume have experimented with several of these options as their family and fieldwork circumstances have changed (Blumenfield, Chap. 3 this volume; Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume), and we refrain from endorsing one over another. Regardless of which option is chosen, with young children we encourage making some provision for childcare, rather than expecting an anthropologist-parent to successfully combine 24/7 parenting with fieldwork.

Thinking beyond the confines of the nuclear family holds many possibilities here. One contributor to this volume coordinated an academic leave period with several colleagues whose children were around the same age. They went together to teach on the Semester at Sea program, pooling energy and resources so that childcare and schooling could be shared. On a similar note, two (or more) anthropologists could combine forces and share childcare/
schooling and research duties. Whether or not they structure their projects as collaborative, team-based research or merely view them as separate projects undertaken in close proximity, the arrangements may offer flexibility in parenting arrangements as well as enhancements to the research itself. In yet another approach, anthropologist-parents may consider whether friends and others could open up creative solutions to the complexities of the multi-tasking parent. In the end, a number of innovative strategies exist for balancing fieldwork and families. Our experience in editing this volume has been one of admiration for the range of approaches contributors and other colleagues have adopted.

Table 1.2: Family and fieldwork configurations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Anthropologist(s) from this volume adopting this strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kids in city (Shanghai/Shenyang/Hong Kong) with caregiver (related or not), parent does fieldwork elsewhere in China</td>
<td>Cornet, Hansen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kids in field with anthropologist-parent</td>
<td>Blumenfield, Cornet, Glover, Shea, Swain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kids in field with anthropologist-parent accompanied by their partner (often the children’s non-anthropologist parent)</td>
<td>Hansen, Lozada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kids at home (home country), parent in field (kids with parent, grandparent, other); kids may visit parent, or parent may visit kids, during fieldwork</td>
<td>Blumenfield, Glover, Swain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Parent does multiple short field trips, instead of a single longer trip to the field</td>
<td>Blumenfield, Cornet, Glover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Anthropologist-parents from different families combine forces, sharing fieldwork and caretaking responsibilities that spouses may have provided in the past.</td>
<td>Cornet and Blumenfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Host families and anthropologist-families join forces, living together and helping one another with childcare, meal preparation, and other responsibilities</td>
<td>Shea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They collectively offer many approaches that may be adapted by others to suit their own needs.

In all cases, we believe that our experiences as anthropologist-parents presented in this volume can greatly benefit readers and colleagues. For if we reframe the anthropological endeavor as one whose goal is not to extract data for analysis but to learn about the human experience, we can think of few better ways to accomplish this than to show up for the project willing to interact completely in the communities where we work. Moving beyond passing photo books around for our friends to see, and actually bringing our families to be part of our work, shows a deep commitment to shared learning and interaction.

Chapters in this volume

Given the growing number of women in academia and the increasing number of men and women taking their children along with them to do fieldwork, this volume responds to the eagerness of anthropologist parents to discuss the topic of accompanied fieldwork in China and elsewhere. Accordingly, the contributors to this volume consider the role, the impact and the influence the presence of their own child has had on their research in the PRC. Some of the children brought to the field have grown up to become cultural investigators of their own right and can now add their voices to the discussion (Lozada and Lozada; Chap. 5, Swain and Swain, Chap. 6). Others who have conducted fieldwork more recently and with smaller children offer a perspective on how improved transportation and rapidly changing field sites have affected accompanied fieldwork (Blumenfield, Chap. 3; Cornet, Chap. 7; Glover, Chap. 4; Shea, Chap. 2).

Shea (Chap. 2), Blumenfield (Chap. 3), and Cornet (Chap. 7) examine how a child’s presence in other families’ homes provoked discussions about childbirth and child-rearing strategies. As they discovered, their approaches were not always considered locally appropriate, and they were made aware of that fact – particularly Shea, who lived with her daughter with three generations of a Chinese family in a Shanghai apartment and experienced grandmotherly reprobation when she did not insist her daughter finish her meals. Whereas on their own they usually conformed to local customary practices, with their children Blumenfield, Cornet and Shea were much more selective about acquiescing to local pressures. The presence of their children nonetheless generated new insights about the roles families play, contributing to broader research projects about education (Blumenfield) and aging (Shea). Blumenfield also discusses the special challenges of doing multi-sited research
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with a child when those sites require multiple dislocations within a broader dislocation (from the home country).

Glover (Chap. 4) discusses the epistemological contradictions that tugged at her when, in the midst of her study of Tibetan medicine and ethnobotany in northwest Yunnan, her young son took ill and she relied on her knowledge of germ theory to treat him. Health and wellness strategies were not only research topics for her, but also material concerns that caused her to maintain some separation from what she interviewed people about and what she did in her temporary home.

Hansen (Chap. 1) provides a perspective on how differing expectations about kinship roles and gendered divisions of labor provoked intense interest in her field site. In fact, she and her entire family, including visiting members of her extended family, became the focus of a Chinese television crew’s lens: they were profiled in a special program. Hansen discusses how the planned birth policies of the PRC were brought into relief by the very presence of her family, including her husband and children, living in offices of the Xiahe County Committee for Family Planning (jihua shengyu weiyuanhui) in Yunnan Province.

Father-son co-authors Lozada and Lozada (Chap. 5) and mother-daughter co-authors Swain and Swain (Chap. 6) discuss the contributions and complications that the now-adult children brought to their parents’ fieldwork. Like Wylie (1987), who aptly titled his chapter ‘Daddy’s Little Wedges,’ the junior Lozada provided a crucial entrée to acceptability for a father whose presence in a small village and interest in speaking to Catholic leaders were otherwise seen as suspect. The senior Swain marveled at the deluxe treatment her 12-year-old daughter’s presence brought, yet wondered why male researchers in nearby field sites frequently earned these privileges of escorted transportation, but female researchers only received such offers when accompanied by a ‘delicate flower’ of a daughter. Bringing children to the field alters our positionality, not only from our own perspective but also from the vantage points of our hosts in the field. This can result in different levels of access to information.

Cornet (Chap. 7) analyzes how her changing identities and roles as a young woman, wife, mother of one, mother of two, and finally newly single mother have affected her fieldwork and influenced her understanding of how people in her field site perceive love, relationships and parenting. She demonstrates how having multiple, changing points of entry into the field has provided her with serendipitous knowledge that contributes to a wider understanding of local culture.

We conclude this edited volume with children’s perspectives, articulated through their drawings and journals; and with practical advice to parents. Providing voices to younger accompanying children, Cornet presents, in
Chap. 8, drawings, captions and comments collected from Blumenfield’s child and her own children in the field. Blumenfield (Chap. 9) offers discussions of logistics ranging from packing and funding to travel and educational options.

Taken together, we believe these nine pieces make a strong contribution to the theorization of accompanied fieldwork in China, while maintaining a humanistic focus throughout. The chapters demonstrate that the issues we research – from religion and aging, to child-rearing and health, to representation and tourism, to family and caregiving, to ethnicity and gender, and finally to education, broadly conceived – benefit greatly from the insights our families afforded us. The presence of our family members helped open up new avenues in our thinking and our analysis, as all of the chapters illustrate, each in its own way.

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1 The authors contributed equally to this introduction and to editing this volume.

2 Among the challenges this presents are the self-imposed limits to mobility that Rudd et al. (2008a) found limited female anthropologists’ career paths while having less effect on the career paths of male anthropologists. While the study focused on career mobility – e.g., long-term relocation for a new job – limiting shorter-term relocations for international experience has also been shown to negatively affect career advancement. Also, it can, paradoxically, be more difficult to draw boundaries between work and family time when conducting fieldwork at home. See also Rudd et al. 2008b.

3 This strategy has even been explicitly written into research design and grant proposals, as was the case with Young Leslie in Tonga (1998: 48).

4 Although much criticism has been levelled at this document – it is a classist document, full of Western-European-derived so-called ‘universal’ values and not always fully relevant worldwide – we may as well appropriate a framework often used to judge other countries’ adherence to purportedly global standards to scrutinize our own practices.


7 Some options for caregivers in the field include a full-time nanny brought from home (some faculty hire college students for this purpose during the summer); a nationally hired nanny; a locally hired nanny; an accompanying parent; and part-time or casual help (paid or unpaid). See Butler and Turner (1987: 12) for a discussion of single parenting, in the field and beyond.
8 Shea found that living in a three-generation family with young children provided ‘details on the intensive contribution of the young-old to the daily care of their adult children and grandchildren, thus providing added socio-emotional insight into the complex feelings expressed by some elderly spousal caregivers she interviewed whose children could not or would not provide later-life care’ (Shea, personal communication, 2013; cf. Shea, Chap. 2 this volume).
Between Norms and Science
What Kids Bring to the Field

Mette Halskov Hansen
University of Oslo

...the presence of my son in the field led me to challenge some of my most basic assumptions about the nature of culture, the workings of cultural relativism, and the value of representing other peoples as the bearers of cultural difference.

(Sutton 1998: 127)

These are grand statements about the profound consequences of bringing kids to the field. Although I fully understand how David Sutton comes to this conclusion, I was not able to make similar claims regarding my own experiences doing fieldwork with kids and husband, in minority areas of China in the 1990s. It was only much later that I started to realize how complex, and probably also profound, was the impact of bringing my young children to the field.¹ Even when thinking back to the joyful time when my two oldest daughters had not yet reached school age and they accompanied my husband and me on several periods of long-term fieldwork in Yunnan and Gansu, it is impossible to reconstruct a memory of experiencing my role as a researcher, or my 'basic assumptions' about Chinese people or culture in more general terms, being severely challenged by their presence. Certainly, as I discuss in this paper, their company did influence a wide range of aspects concerning fieldwork. It influenced the very choice of research topic, the selection of field sites, the practical organization of data collection and therefore also some of its results and the analysis of it; and it certainly compelled me to reflect more on my interwoven roles as a mother, wife, scholar, and woman.

At the same time, the unspectacular fact is that when I was a young mother and scholar-to-be I tried my best during fieldwork to maintain some private space for myself and my family by – at
least to some extent – attempting to separate work from private life. I took it for granted that my kids accompanied us, but I did not take it for granted that they were part of my work. Anthropological fieldwork implied a constant demand – and wish – to socialize with other people, engage in their lives, and learn about their thoughts and perceptions while sharing my own with them. At the same time, raising two small children, and being confronted with a constant flow of visits, friendly invitations and well-meant attempts to help us become better parents on the part of curious local visitors, I sometimes yearned for privacy. Therefore, I tried to establish a family life during fieldwork where in practice a distinction between ‘work hours’ and ‘spare time’ was maintained. In hindsight this was doomed to fail, and fortunately so, as I shall discuss in this chapter.

The reason for failure was, first of all, the fact that my husband and I deliberately chose not to live with our kids in a secluded flat like many foreigners in urban areas. Instead we settled in small rooms in student buildings, family-owned hotels, rooms in privately owned houses, and once in two sparsely refurnished offices within a functioning township government building occupied by the local family planning bureau. Our living conditions simply prevented me from creating a work-private life distinction in practice. Instead they gave us many unexpected experiences and insights into the lives of people and the practice of politics in the areas we lived in, and I recall these distinct periods of fieldwork as some of the happiest and most joyful times as a working family with kids. I subscribe to Paul Starrs’ enthusiastic declaration that:

...working in the field together is excitement, a spice to life, the best form of wild ride. For many of our spouses or partners, including those who are amply versed in field research in their own academic disciplines, there’s nothing like hitting the road with your husband or wife or partner with children along. (Starrs et al. 2001: 76).

At the same time, my intention of creating borders between working life and family time – insisting that my children were not doing fieldwork in China just because I was – did have the result that I did not reflect much at the time on the real impact that their presence had on the fieldwork itself and the data I collected. Unlike some of the scholars described in Hilary Levey’s (2009) summary of different ways of doing fieldwork with kids, I did not plan to let my children play an active part in my fieldwork, and I did not insist that they learn Chinese. I merely wanted them to share our experience of living for longer periods of time in minority areas of China, learning from a young age that there are various ways in which you can – and sometimes must – live your life.
Consequently, there is not much (if anything) to be found about my children in the books and articles I have published based on the long-term fieldwork on which they accompanied me (e.g. Hansen 1999; 2001; 2005); and even in an article I wrote for a book specifically about doing fieldwork in China (Heimer and Thøgersen 2006) my kids were only mentioned in a few brief remarks (Hansen 2006).

Susan E. Frohlick argues that one of the most important reasons why so many scholars doing fieldwork with kids tend to leave this out of their publications is a general taboo on violating the boundaries of field sites with visible traces of personal lives and relationships (Frohlick 2002: 52). Although this taboo has been quite effectively attacked, especially by anthropologists, for quite some time now, it is still common in many social sciences where fieldwork is used as a methodology. Often readers are only provided with a minimum of objectivized information regarding field site, number of interviewees, period of doing fieldwork, etc. To include reflections on the impact of one's own personal life and the presence of kids on the fieldwork process and its results, without actually moving into the genre of auto-ethnography, is demanding because of the need to strike a balance between the personal and the general, the subjective and the objective. To put it more bluntly, while it is hardly possible, nor desirable, any longer for an ethnographer to pretend to be a value-free observer of otherness, too much of a focus on one's own kids in the fieldwork process may pose a different risk, that of producing self-absorbed (and boring!) accounts where the thickness and complexities of the encompassing terrain are diminished (Madison 2006: 321).

Yet, as I discuss in what follows, there is no doubt that doing fieldwork as a foreigner with kids in China raises a number of issues of more general interest, for instance regarding gender, socialization and education. Bringing one's child to the field inevitably demands from the mother or father a considerable amount of time and attention spent, not on the planned scientific enquiries, but on the child. Bringing a child to the field highlights in a new way the special, and at times very heavy, responsibilities one has as a parent: the child's health, emotional well-being, education, socialization, and need to spend time with attentive adults. For these reasons, the mere presence of one's children during fieldwork may create situations where personal views and practices come into serious conflict with academic ideals of remaining open to alternative views and practices, avoiding cultural, social or even political judgments in the process of exploring a certain topic. I share Sutton's (1998) and several of this volume's authors' experience of being surprised about my own degree...
of intolerance or lack of relativism when facing well-meaning and curious informants, neighbours, colleagues or friends in the field who challenged the way we tried to bring up our own children. I realized for instance, as I discuss in some detail below, that while I was more than willing to learn about Chinese education during fieldwork, I was hardly prepared to learn from it. Especially when issues of health, socialization, and education of one’s own kids are at stake, rationality and cultural relativism easily lose power (see also chapter by Glover and Cornet Chap. 7 this volume).

In the following I first give a brief introduction to where and when I have done fieldwork with kids in China. I then turn to a discussion of three key events which I would never have experienced had I not had both my children and my husband – and for a few months also my mother and stepmother – as company during fieldwork. I will examine these events and make some conclusions regarding how fieldwork with kids raises tensions between normative and scientific approaches to local cultural practices.

**European kids in rural China**

My first experience of doing fieldwork with kids in China goes back to the early 1990s when it was still rare to meet foreigners with kids outside the big metropolises of Beijing and Shanghai. In 1991, I lived together with my husband (who is also a China scholar) in Kunming and Lijiang for five months with our one-year-old daughter while I was interviewing students, teachers and intellectuals, mainly belonging to the Naxi minority. In 1994–95, we returned for ten months of fieldwork to Lijiang and Sipsong Panna in Yunnan, this time with two daughters who were four and two years old. I was doing interviews and participant observation in minority and village schools among the Tai and Naxi people, while my husband was taking care of our children and doing some fieldwork of his own in villages in Ninglang and other counties on the border between Yunnan and Sichuan. This time, although we had a shared interest in Yunnan and the topic of ethnic identity in China, my husband was on sabbatical from his job with the aim of having the main responsibility for our children while I was financially supporting the family on a PhD scholarship. This one year was the longest and most influential period of doing fieldwork with kids that I have experienced, although we also returned later to do other kinds of short-term fieldwork with several or all of our three daughters.

Between 1996 and 1999, I was working as a post-doctoral researcher doing fieldwork on Han immigrants in Sipsong Panna and Tibetan Labrang (Xiahe)
in Gansu Province. During this period I lived for three months in two offices of the Xiahe County Committee for Family Planning (jihua shengyu weiyuanhui), and my husband and our two daughters joined me for two of these months. We were all staying in offices which had been refurnished by simply adding three beds, and we shared the common office bathrooms with the employees. Later, in the early 2000s, I sometimes brought one or several kids on shorter fieldwork trips, but it was not until 2011 that we again attempted to bring a kid – this time our youngest daughter, who was 9 years old at the time – to do fieldwork for a whole year in Yunnan. Everything was planned, and our daughter enrolled in a school in Kunming, when shortly before departure we realized that, in spite of all the necessary formal invitations from the university where we were supposed to do our research, the Chinese embassy in Norway would not provide us with an answer to our visa applications. Finally we had to change plans, and we were fortunate enough to get invitations as visiting scholars at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Instead of doing a year of fieldwork with a kid in Yunnan we worked on our various projects from a base in Hong Kong, where our daughter went to school.

As these examples show, for a researcher with kids choices regarding field sites, housing conditions, schooling, when to bring kids to field sites and when to let them stay at home all require a lot of time and consideration, and they
are relevant as a background for the following discussion of three key events related to my own experiences of bringing kids into the field.

**Event No. 1. The film crew: model husband and harmonious family**

When in the spring of 1995 I was doing fieldwork in what was then the Lijiang Naxi Autonomous County, a CCTV film crew from Beijing arrived. They wanted to document the beauty of the natural environment and the customs of the Naxi and Mosuo people, who were assumed to have preserved traits of a matriarchal life style and had fascinated people in China for a long time due to their presumed liberal sexual practices, which were distinctively different from the Chinese traditionally organized marriages. After one day in Lijiang the crew got a new idea. By then they had been introduced to our ‘foreign family’, consisting at the time of six females and one man: my husband and myself, our two daughters who were two and five years old, my 62-year-old mother, my 50-year-old stepmother, and my 12-year-old half-sister. The crew followed us for almost a week and eventually broadcast a short 15 minute feature about Lijiang, presenting us as an example of a colourful, harmonious, and ‘modern Western’ family, with a dedicated ‘model husband’ (*mofang zhangfu*) who was happily cooking and taking care of the children while their mother pursued a PhD degree, and the grandmother enjoyed life by practicing *taijiquan* (a popular form of martial art) with retired Naxi people of

![Figure 1.2. Fieldwork in Lijiang 1995 with extended family.](image)
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her own age. My stepmother and her daughter were featured in the film as well, but the somewhat complicated family relations that allowed me to have both my mother and stepmother as visitors at the same time were probably a bit too complex or extreme to be explained to the audience in a brief, commercial-like, feature.

From my years of fieldwork in China this experience with the TV crew stands out as a short but intense and eye-opening experience of having my children, my relatives and myself questioned, observed, and eventually represented. The crew was first of all interested in how we as a ‘Western family’ – implicitly rich and used to a range of commodities and modern facilities – could possibly manage to live for an extended period of time in what many urban Chinese at the time regarded as an area that was pristine and beautiful but, more importantly, economically and culturally backward (luohou), with ethnic minority inhabitants and curious eating habits. The crew was puzzled by the relationship between me and my husband, by our ways of dividing the responsibility for housework and children, and by our respective career paths and views on gender. But it was primarily the long-term presence of our children that in their view made us stand out from other foreign tourists and researchers who had spent time in Lijiang. In the mid-1990s it was even more uncommon than today that a woman in China had a higher education than her husband, and the fact that we were in Lijiang because of my career, while my husband was on an unpaid sabbatical from his job to accompany me and take the main responsibility for our kids, was the topic of several conversations with members of the TV crew.

Eventually, they chose to present both of us as PhD students in the film and we never understood whether this was due to a misunderstanding or because they wanted to ‘give face’ to my husband, whom quite a few people found to be slightly pitiful due to his responsibilities for housework and children. In the early 1990s there had been campaigns initiated by the All-China Women’s Federation to identify and select ideal modern ‘model husbands,’ and this did not go unnoticed in conversations about our family. Local people who were accustomed to a constant flow of political and ideological campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s were often cynical and ironic when referring to such campaigns, and again and again people we knew would laughingly refer to my husband as precisely such a ‘model husband.’ In the official discourse this term normally referred to a husband who willingly broke with the patriarchal traditions of the Chinese Confucian family. At this time, when birth control policies were strictly enforced and the government was facing a boom in the
numbers of abandoned female babies in rural areas, where the preference for a boy remained strong, the term was employed to promote the politically correct message that ‘a girl is equal to a boy’.

These conversations with the TV crew about model husbands and gender politics were often both interesting and joyful, resulting in a lot of joking and laughing. What was more difficult to handle, however, were the explicit requests for us to explain how we could possibly live with our two small kids in what was considered a backward part of China with no suitable options for preschool, frequent outbursts of food poisoning due to unhygienic conditions, and facilities that in no way matched what we were supposed to be used to from Northern Europe. Why did we not settle in Beijing, Shanghai or even Kunming?! We found it difficult to explain that in bringing our kids to China we had in fact found it to be easier and more pleasant to live in rural rather than urban surroundings, and (admittedly) in ethnic minority areas rather than economically more developed Han dominated cities. These facts were – and still are – difficult to formulate without sounding essentializing, and unsympathetic towards the people we met in Kunming and other cities, whom we liked and got along with very well. When staying first with one and later with two small girls in the city of Kunming in the early 1990s we had often met other parents who had only one child, and who were very eager to have

Figure 1.3. The ‘model’ husband and daughter in Beijing 1991, on our way to fieldwork in Yunnan.
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their child get to know ours. We were of course happy about that and had many interesting and pleasant talks with mothers, fathers, and grandparents about the ups and downs of raising children. However, we were also often exhausted by many parents’ undisguised attempts to physically force their own child in the direction of our daughters, insisting that their kid ‘say hello!’ (‘shuo hello!’), praising our daughters’ blond hair, pale skin and blue-green eyes, asking their own young child if he or she did not find this ‘doll’ (yang wawa) ‘exceptionally beautiful’. To the pleasure of our oldest daughter, and dismay of her little sister, adults who spotted our family would often yell out to their own child, ‘Look at the foreign kids!’ (kan xiao laowai), thus also drawing attention from large numbers of other people in the streets towards our children. As foreign researchers, who were by definition outsiders, we felt an obligation to remain polite, constantly trying to understand and tolerate the reasons why people were so focused on our children. ‘We Chinese love children – especially you foreigners’ kids’, was an explanation we often heard when, slightly embarrassed, we would try to ask other parents to consider letting our respective children get accustomed to each other at their own pace, playing next to or with each other, without adults directing or instructing them.

I cannot possibly count the number of times that people would interrupt their own child’s play in order to have his or her picture taken together with
our daughters, or to insist that their precious one hand over a beloved toy to our daughters. Being idealistic and possibly naïve anthropologists, we intended to live our lives as an ordinary family in Kunming, blending in with people as well as we could and trying to help our children adapt to local life with other kids. We had anticipated that the presence of our children would more or less automatically open doors for closer interactions with local people, and that did indeed happen very often (as Lozada and Lozada also argue in this volume). At the same time, we were less prepared for the fact that sometimes the very exact opposite would happen, primarily as a result of our own tendency to withdraw from local parents or grandparents who were, we found, too pushy with regard to our children. We experienced rather profound differences between our own perceptions of how best to let children interact and play – including letting them climb on rocks, run around, and do other things that we were often told were ‘too dangerous’ – and those of many urban Chinese parents with children of the same age with whom we interacted.

When the TV crew in Lijiang confronted us with questions about the backwardness of Lijiang and other minority areas we tried our best to explain why we actually preferred to live in more rural ethnic minority areas in the Southwest although these were undoubtedly much less economically developed than the cities. Having spent time both in Beijing and Kunming with our kids, we had been pleasantly surprised when we settled first for half a year in Jinghong in Sipsong Panna in a privately owned small hotel with several Tai boys of the same age as our daughters, and afterwards in Lijiang for half a year, where most Naxi couples also had at least two children. While the Beijing crew was surprised that we found it much easier to live with our children in these presumably ‘backward’ ethnic minority areas, we, on our part, experienced a more relaxed way of socializing children in those areas. Children were often playing freely outside, sometimes with several grandparents chatting and playing cards while keeping an eye on the smallest ones. Together with two Tai boys of their age, our daughters created what jokingly became known in our street as the ‘gang of four’ where the boys learned some words of Danish and our daughters a bit of Tai, all of them remaining largely ignorant of Mandarin Chinese, which at that time was not spoken among most Tai kids in Sipsong Panna below school age.

Most of the Tai and Naxi kids we lived among in Jinghong and Lijiang had at least one sibling and none of them went to preschool. Unlike in Kunming, nobody tried to convince us to send our children to preschool to immerse them in Chinese language and culture, and there was generally much less interference by adults in the ways children played and interacted. Consequently, in spite of
the things that made Lijiang and Jinghong backward in the eyes of our TV crew and many other urban Chinese we talked to and got to know, we found it much easier and more pleasant to live as a family with small children in Sipsong Panna, Lijiang and later Xiahe in Gannan, Gansu, than in the larger cities of Kunming and Lanzhou.

The TV crew had come from Beijing and they were amazed by the fact that we as a foreign (read ‘Western’) educated family mostly cooked by ourselves, had nobody to help in the house, took care of our children ourselves, and did not want to send them to a Chinese preschool. Due to all the things we took for granted, we became, for the TV crew who were trying to document our lives, a curious example of how a ‘modern’, ‘Western’ family would pursue education and live a ‘happy family life’ among what were regarded as exotic, friendly, but also backward ethnic minorities – people who were presumably unspoiled by modern life and lived in a ‘calm’ and ‘loving’ environment, as the TV program poetically explained. Represented in the TV program as a modern Western couple who were pursuing higher education while living ‘just like the Naxi people’ without any stress and with enough time to select our vegetables in the market and cook by ourselves, we inevitably became involved participants in the common Chinese media construction of minorities as traditional, exotic, friendly and admirable in their presumed simplicity. These forms of representation also permeated much of the school education about minorities that I was studying at the time, and they were, ironically, forms of representation that our own research in minority areas had consciously tried to expose, analyse and deconstruct.

**Event No. 2. The family planning office: gender and privilege**

Due to the strict policies of family planning initiated in 1978, both the number of our own children and their gender have been subject and cause of numerous questions and discussions during my periods of fieldwork with kids. Birth control policies have changed over the past 35 years and there have always been different local ways of implementing them, but until recently urban citizens and state employees were only allowed one child regardless of gender. The rural population’s resistance against this policy, on the other hand, resulted in early adaptations in the 1990s when gradually couples with rural household registration all over China have been allowed two children (with a certain number of years in between) if the first-born is a girl. Members of ethnic minorities have also been under strong pressure to give birth to fewer children, but have always maintained the right to have two children, and in some cases
three, such as among the Tibetan herdsmen in Gannan Prefecture where I did fieldwork in the late 1990s.5

One of the fieldwork periods where the topic of gender and the number of children really came to the forefront was when I studied Han immigrants in Xiahe in Gannan, and lived in two connected offices of the county’s family planning office.6 I had ended up in this unconventional place to live, not because I was doing research on birth control but precisely because I was not! I had tried to convince my academic hosts from Lanzhou that it was very inconvenient for me to live with two small children in an ordinary hotel for several months, and they had agreed to try to help me get permission from the local police to live in a private home while doing fieldwork in the Tibetan area. I was very concerned about this issue, not so much because of my children but because I wanted the convenient entrance to the field that staying in a private home provides as compared to a hotel. Unfortunately, the local police would not agree to have us living in a private home, but after some more persuasion they were willing to accept an offer from the local director of the family planning office that we could stay in their office building.

This turned out to be a very interesting fieldwork experience. It allowed me to get acquainted with staff in this kind of local government bureau, and every day I was able to meet Tibetan, Hui and Han women who came to the offices due to issues related to birth control and health in their own families. At the same time, I had to be careful not to become systematically engaged in the topic of birth control since my avoidance of this topic had been the main precondition for allowing me to stay there. However, when my husband arrived with our two daughters who were six and eight years old at the time, I became increasingly involved in discussions with staff and visitors to the offices about issues of gender, children and ethnic identity. The mere presence of my kids, and the fact that we lived with them in the family planning office, made the topics inevitable. Within a few days with my kids present I found that the staff in the bureau opened up and relaxed in our conversations, most likely because the topics of pregnancy, births, abortions and kids were suddenly so obviously directly related to me being a mother rather than a researcher. We were discussing these issues as human beings with common experiences, rather than in a relationship of researcher and informants.

In the mid-1990s, while I was doing this fieldwork, birth control targets were extremely important for local government officials whose personal promotion would depend on the rate of success in implementing the unpopular policies. It was therefore not surprising that my husband and I were constantly asked to
explain birth control policies in Europe, and that we were directly challenged to express our own views on the Chinese policies. In a family planning bureau where the daily talk was about how many sterilizations the staff had been able to secure, how difficult it was to make Tibetan herders, especially, comply with the policies, how to deal with angry husbands who threatened members of staff, and what the consequences might be of the next official inspection of the office’s rate of success, the arrival of our two daughters became the cause for new and more personalized discussions about these issues. There were both Han and Tibetans among the staff in the bureau, and regardless of the obvious importance of showing good working results in their sections and complying with government policies, they were also themselves parents who had their personal views and experiences regarding the regulations they were under pressure to follow.

The conversations I had with members of staff and ‘users’ of the family planning office’s services challenged me on several issues. First of all, they exposed the fact that when it came to birth control I was hardly a good role model for local women. I had come to Xiahe with my background as a privileged Northern European who takes for granted the free choice of the number of children one wants, and receives generous financial support from the state for each child born. And I had settled, with two daughters with only two years between them, in an office where the staff was constantly concerned with how to best propagate, convince, sometimes force, people to have fewer children and to wait at least 4–5 years between each birth. Therefore, the staff always strongly emphasized my foreignness when answering the flow of questions they got from local people about who we were, why we were living there, how many children we could have, if we were trying to have a boy, etc. Staff members would explain that we were ‘foreigners’ and as such ‘very lucky’ because we were from ‘a rich country with less than five million inhabitants’. They never blamed us, or expressed the opinion that we should have acted differently, but our experience of being again and again presented as rich, fortunate, privileged foreigners who could afford not to consider having only one child, also made us more aware of the fact that this was, maybe, exactly what we were. Women who came to the family planning office were told that it was for the best for the entire country that they only had one or two children. We, on the other hand, were concerned with our own personal interests and, as the officials explained, just happened to live in a country where that was affordable.

The strong wish among many Han (and not only in rural areas) to have at least one son who would continue the lineage and serve as the main provider of
security in old age was inevitably highlighted when we traveled first with one, then two, and finally three daughters. It was first of all among Han immigrants in the minority areas, and later in the 2000s in rural Han areas of Shaanxi, Fujian and Zhejiang, that my daughters triggered a stream of jokes, questions, and sometimes interesting conversations about the preferred gender of children, and reasons for individuals’ and families’ different preferences. I have to this day felt an urge to try to convince both informants and acquaintances in rural Han areas whom I know best that my husband and I did not decide to have a third child because we were hoping to have a son. Numerous people have insisted during my fieldwork that our lack of a son had to be the real reason for having yet another child, but they have, at the same time, never indicated that this would be a bad or even critique-worthy consideration of us. Again and again during fieldwork, I was told how fortunate we were that as ‘foreigners’ we could try as often as we wanted to have a son. It was just, I was told, very bad luck that we did not manage. These conversations about the pros and cons of children’s gender challenged me on a personal level, because it became so obvious that not only my Chinese conversation partners’ views, but just as much my own, had their base not merely in personal experiences or preferences but in deeper rooted notions of gender and individual habitual practices and reproductive politics in our respective societies.

I became aware that in the view of many rural people I knew in China the number of children one had indicated a great deal about that person’s level of power, wealth and privilege. The successful self-made entrepreneur who had moved to the city could afford to pay a very heavy fine for having his own son and daughter-in-law secure a male heir for the family of only granddaughters; and the well-connected doctor who wanted more than one child and lost her job at first, when she had a second child, got it back later when the second child (also a daughter) was two years old. As several of my rural neighbors jokingly explained during fieldwork in Zhejiang in 2009, the local Party secretary did not manage to have four children because he happened to be the Party secretary; rather, to the contrary, he became the Party secretary precisely because of his ability to have four children. In other words, the common local understanding was that this male Party secretary had demonstrated an exceptional level of masculine strength, initiative, wealth and connections by managing to have and raise four children when he was in fact only allowed one, and consequently he was deeply respected as a suitable political leader. At the same time, most people I have talked to about these issues over the years have paraphrased official policy when explaining that ‘ordinary people’ (laobaixing) such as themselves need to
sacrifice their wish for a son and more children for the benefit of the country’s development, thereby also helping the entire world by keeping the size of the population down. Nonetheless, I have hardly ever heard this translated into criticism of those Chinese who have had more children (and paid their fine), or foreigners like myself with an ‘excessive’ number of children. However, due to the profound impacts of the long-standing policies of birth control on social structure, kinship, and individual lives in China, the mere possibility of giving birth to three daughters and still traveling, with or without them, on a frequent basis from Europe to rural China triggered among informants and myself a heightened awareness and consideration of how unequal levels of power and privilege continue to inform not only the ways we live but the ways in which we account for and defend our choices.

Event No. 3. Fieldwork in schools and schooling of one’s own kids

In the 1990s, the looks, behaviour, and not least the eating habits of our daughters had resulted in an overwhelming amount of interest from people we met in cities as well as in rural areas. But by the 2010s most people had become much more accustomed to seeing ‘foreign children’ in real life or on TV, and the mere appearance of, for instance, blond and blue-eyed children was no longer a cause for the same level of attention. However, one topic for debate that foreigners with children in China often get involved in, and maybe even to a greater extent than 20 years ago, is education. Since a major part of my fieldwork has been focused on education, first minority education and ethnic identity in the 1990s, and then rural high school education and processes of individualization in the 2000s, the company of my kids has often helped to take fieldwork discussions about the schooling of children to a deeper and more personal level.

As a foreigner doing research on Chinese education it is not surprising that I have often been asked about my personal opinion of the Chinese education system, its content and teaching methods. Many teachers and administrators in the schools I have studied have been genuinely interested in getting advice about teaching and schooling, and I have found it very difficult to convince them that since I am an anthropologist and China scholar, and not by any means an education specialist, I feel incompetent and unable to provide them with educational or pedagogical advice that would make sense in the context they work and live in. Similarly, students in the high schools I have studied have very often asked me to give an evaluation of and even a judgment on the education they follow. They have asked for my opinion on the quality of
Chinese education and their teachers in particular, on their school’s ability to teach English as a foreign language (since I also learned English only as my second language in school), and on its general ability to transmit ‘the most important knowledge’ to Chinese youth. I have been invited by a high school’s student association to talk about ‘problems of Chinese education’, and to compare it with the high school education that my two oldest daughters have gone through in Norway, and on which I was also often (mistakenly) assumed to be an expert.

Here the relevance of bringing kids to the field comes in again. As a researcher of education as social practice, I am by definition trying to understand rather than to judge or give advice; but the fact that I brought children to the field who themselves also needed education made it quite obvious for everybody, not least myself, that in spite of my claim to researcher neutrality I was indeed biased. I had listened in on a large number of classes in Chinese schools since 1994, and I had done interviews and participant observation in schools on and off between 1994 and 2011; and yet I never used the opportunity to let one of my own three daughters attend public Chinese kindergarten or primary school. When asked by people in the field, I would explain that these choices in themselves were not necessarily reflections of my judgment on the quality of Chinese education, but were rather due to the fact that Chinese schools did not really suit my own children’s needs, or that my kids would not be able to fit into a Chinese school. However, my various attempts to explain this in cultural relativistic terms sounded (at least to myself) increasingly hollow and unconvincing. When the brother of a friend, driving me to visit an international school in Hangzhou that I was considering for my third daughter, pointed out that he was amazed that I was willing to pay so much for a school simply to avoid having my daughter going to a public Chinese school, which I was clearly even unwilling to openly criticize, I realized just how untrustworthy I probably sounded.

I was talking in ‘objective’ researcher terms about education, while rejecting having my own children attend schools similar to those I studied. As a result, I decided to become more open towards students, teachers, and administrators whose lives I was studying, and less concerned with the fear of offending them or jeopardizing my own research by criticising the ‘system’ they work within when asked directly for judgements. When I became more frank about the real reasons why I would not send my children to the Chinese schools after having studied them for such a long time, I also became involved in more difficult conversations with the teachers and administrators in the schools I studied. Many of them wanted to discuss our mutual views on the practices
of schooling, and it turned out that they were in fact often so critical of the education system they themselves managed and represented that I was the one who ended up defending it.

Formal education occupies a very prominent position in most Chinese parents’ priorities for their child regardless of their own social status, not just for pragmatic reasons but also as a result of cultural trajectories (Thøgersen 2002; Kipnis 2011; Fong 2011; Hansen 2015). Although this desire for education is probably stronger and more widespread across social classes in China than in Europe, Chinese parents are right in assuming that any foreign scholar coming from a university to do academic research will be likely to share their own interest in first of all securing a good education for their own child. Had my children stayed in Norway, I could have discussed our different education systems and practices during fieldwork without being forced to take a clear stand. By bringing my children to China and abstaining from sending them to a public kindergarten or school, I sent a clear message to the people I studied. Regardless of any feeble attempts to account for ‘cultural differences’, ‘psychological challenges’, or ‘problems of adaption’, my interviewees and informants would smile knowingly at me: ‘Our precious education system is not good enough for your children!’ By exposing my hypocrisy, people around me helped clarify my own limits to cultural relativism and we could proceed with more equal and also deeper discussions about education and the reasons why it is so highly valued, not the least by people who themselves have been denied the opportunity to take part in it and learn what it actually consists of.

Conclusion

Bringing one’s kids to the field does not in itself make the quality of fieldwork any better or worse, but it undoubtedly makes it different. After I have digested my experiences going back 25 years, I have come to the somewhat trivial conclusion that doing fieldwork with kids is just as varied, complex, challenging, annoying, joyful, and rewarding as doing it without them. It is just that when you bring kids to the field many of these worries, challenges and joys are of a different kind, and necessarily connected to your own parenthood. One might be tempted to intuitively assume that by bringing kids to the field, doors which are otherwise closed will open, children will function as natural ice-breakers, bonds with informants will become stronger due to the common experiences of parenthood, and strangers will be less suspicious when they see you as a parent rather than as a ‘mere’ researcher. However, while some doors might indeed open up, others may just as well close, and while you almost inevitably get new
insights into, for instance, views on family planning, or practices of traditional versus modern medicine when a child gets sick, these may not be the topics you would have preferred to get involved in at all, or those that interest you academically.

Therefore, in spite of my own experience of having learned new things about gender, education, cultural relativism, and, indeed, myself, due to my kids’ presence and integration into fieldwork in China, I cannot claim that kids in the field per se make you more alert or insightful as a researcher. They make you more alert and insightful as a human being simply by being your kids and placing you in the position of becoming ‘a parent in the field’. It is obviously difficult to generalize about particular difficulties or challenges when doing fieldwork in China with kids. There are, for instance, huge differences between staying in a large city or a village; between living conditions in different areas or settings; between the cultural practices of different ethnic groups. Other facts, such as age or personality of one’s children, family relations, and simply the kids’ ability to tackle changes in their lives will affect the outcome of fieldwork with kids.

However, there are also some important commonalities across China that have to do with national policies and the governing of the Chinese population. When traveling with three daughters in China (maybe with sons also?) the issue of gender is unavoidable due to the long-term family planning policy, and the widespread cultural preference for sons that continues to be a frequent topic for debate among Chinese people – especially, but not exclusively, in rural areas. Another cultural key topic is education, and educational advice where suggestions from local parents and grandparents are common. Maybe one of the most lasting conclusions I have drawn from my periods of fieldwork with my kids is that people’s normative questions – and the field researcher’s own willingness to answer and engage in them – are just as much part of the fieldwork experiences as the objectivized participant observation, interviewing, and textual analysis. When doing fieldwork with kids, people you meet will naturally identify you as a parent, and they will harbor certain expectations of what precisely that role implies – a role that is much easier for other people to intuitively understand and relate to than the role of ‘foreign researcher’. In this process of communicating with informants and other people in the field, one’s own values and educational practices as a parent will be questioned, and thereby also highlighted. The reward on the personal level is a more profound understanding of one’s own ways of raising children and being a parent, while professionally it may influence one’s ability to understand and put into a
broader perspective the practices and values of the people one relates to during fieldwork.

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Endnotes

1. My three daughters were born in 1990, 1992 and 2002.
3. At the time our visa applications were never rejected, but nor were they approved.
4. The Mosuo people in Yongning have been subjected to numerous studies since the 1950s (see for instance Yan and Song 1983; Oppitz and Hsu 1998; Shih 2010). Since the 1980s they have been featured (and often exoticised) in numerous popular articles, documentaries and TV programs. See interview with Tami Blumenfield by dGenerate Films regarding media representations of Mosuo and other

5. Regarding birth control policies up to the early 2000s, see for instance Greenhalgh 2008. Policies have been gradually eased, and since 2014 couples where just one parent is an only child may give birth to two children. Policies will almost certainly become more relaxed in the coming years.

6. The political and ethical aspects of doing fieldwork while living in this government office are discussed in Hansen 2006.

7. Having at least one son was of great concern to Han immigrants in the area, though less so for the local Tibetans and Hui.

Clean Your Plate and Don’t Be Polite

An American Mother’s Education in Early Childhood Parenting and Family Life in Shanghai, China

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In 2012 I had the opportunity to spend eight months in Shanghai through a Fulbright Senior Scholar Research Award to examine familial caregiving for the elderly in affiliation with Fudan University’s Sociology Department. Unfortunately, due to work commitments at home in the US, my husband Tim could not accompany me, but our daughter, who was a first grader, could. We knew that being apart for such a long time would be hard, but we were excited at the prospect of me having my first long stint of fieldwork since graduate school and our daughter, Linden, having her first experience of extended cultural immersion in China, a place where I had lived for three years and Tim had lived for two years in the 1980s and 1990s. A Chinese major in college, I was long fluent in Chinese, and Linden knew some basic Chinese from hearing us speak some at home since she was born and from going to Chinese school once a week since she was three. It was Linden’s second visit to China as Tim and I had brought her to Beijing for a couple weeks during the 2008 Olympics. This time, Tim would visit us briefly, once in May and once in mid-July when he would take Linden home a month before me. We knew that this would be a large fieldwork challenge for me, having never before juggled solo parenting while in the field.

Luckily, we had the good fortune to be invited to live together with a three-generation Han Chinese family household
in Shanghai. Our host family was that of a friend and fellow scholar, Ruizhi, whom I had first met five years earlier at a conference in China and had subsequently seen at other conferences in the US and China. When Ruizhi heard that I would be bringing my daughter to China for half a year without my husband, she generously invited us to live with her family in their apartment to make things easier on me as a solo parent and on Linden as an only child.

Having brought her daughter Lele to the US four years prior for a year-long dissertation writing fellowship when Lele was 4 years old, Ruizhi could not imagine how they could have managed without months-long visits from her parents and husband. Beyond that, my hosts and I were excited about the mutual opportunity for cultural exchange and language learning. Although Linden was not keen on leaving home for such a long time to go to a foreign land, living in a household with other children was a big draw for her as an only child. Ruizhi and I knew that it would not be easy, given our different cultures and the number of people in the household, but we felt that what we would learn would be worth any inconvenience.

The central question of this volume focuses on how fieldwork in China in the company of one’s children differs from fieldwork in China without kids in tow. I had done years of fieldwork on my own and with my husband before our daughter was born and many months of fieldwork alone after becoming a mother. I had lived with various two- and three-generation Chinese families before in Beijing for a week to a month at a time on my own and once for two weeks with Tim and Linden when she was 4 years old. The difference was that I had never before brought my child to China for such a long time or lived with a Chinese family for so long with a child. As noted by Cupples and Kindon (2003), having a child along gave me a kind of extended intimate access to local family life that I would not have had if I had been a researcher without a child or a researcher with both husband and child along. At the same time, Kleis (1987) has argued that parenting in the field ‘often multiplies the impact of cultural and environmental shock because a family usually has more adaptations than a single researcher or married pair’ (ibid.: 148), and there is often significant ‘tension’ between the roles of ‘socializing parent’ and ‘dispassionate observer’ (ibid.: 137). In this case, Ruizhi and I were bringing together two families, each with its own suites of adaptations and childrearing sensibilities, habits, priorities, and preferences, generating copious opportunities for cross-cultural learning as well as tensions. Rather than a simple case of a lone participant observer, our family members all became ‘socially intimate’ (Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume) ‘observant participants’ (Caldwell 2004) in each
other’s lives, with the lines between life and research, observer and observed, participation and observation, often blurred to near obliteration.

Overall, I found long-term fieldwork with an accompanying child to be much more strenuous and challenging than *sans enfant*, although extremely rewarding in terms of learning both about parenting and children’s culture in China and about myself and my daughter as cultural beings. As a researcher without a child in tow, I have long found it easy to empathize with and go with the flow of Chinese cultural habits and be perceived as culturally competent. With Linden along this time, however, I found a strong tension between our New-England American sensibilities and the desire on the part of myself and our hosts for us to admire, and to do things in, Chinese ways. Like Hansen (Chap. 1 this volume), Blumenfield (Chap. 3 this volume), and Cornet (Chap. 7 this volume), as well as Sutton (1998) before them, I was struck by how having a child along so heightened multiple strands of my identification with my own culture, while at the same time increasing my hosts’ resolve to deepen my enculturation in theirs.

As Hugh-Jones (1987) and others have noted, having a young unacculturated child along for fieldwork often presents quandaries less often confronted by acculturated non-accompanied fieldworkers, including more intensive social and cultural ‘impression management’ (Linnekin 1998) and questions of personal competence in childrearing and balancing work and family roles. While some have contended that children are much more culturally flexible than adults, children are not just blank slates (Rogoff 2006), and they do not just absorb other cultures immediately like fish in water. In talking with other American parents, it seems that, by elementary school age, children often exert a strong push, at least in the initial months in the field, to stay within their own culture and comfort zone, especially if the field site is quite different from home and their personality is more cautious. Such children need time to feel safe enough to open themselves up to new ways of thinking, doing, being, and inter-relating. In the meantime, they often have extreme difficulty considering other people’s perspectives and feelings and controlling their self-expression and behavior, no matter how much their parents and hosts wish them to be polite – or at least civil (see Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume).

In cross-cultural encounters, children’s cultural missteps are highly charged as they come embedded within social implications for progeny’s long-term socialization in home and host cultures and for guest-host relationships in the field. Since there is so much at stake in parenting and childrearing for both guest and host, the intellectual recognition of cultural difference is not enough to override strong emotional, moral and visceral feelings of something being not quite
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right for one's child and a desire for one's culture and way of childrearing to be not just different, but also right. As a result, while living together with a foreign host family with children in many ways allows for deeper immersion into each other's cultures, it also makes both guest and host more culturally, socially, and emotionally challenged. As Friedl (1998) has argued, with children along things cannot easily be kept on a superficial polite different-strokes-for-different-folks level, because of how much rides on the long-term socialization of host's and guest's children. Even if both host and guest parents desire globally-aware children competent in multiple cultures, that desire is not enough to erase the challenge of confronting cultural differences in the cultivation of one's children as culturally embodied and socially embedded beings. With descendants at stake, abstract ideals like intercultural exchange and multicultural competency confront the fleshy hot mess of deep cultural sensibilities on the part of both parents and children, hosts and guests.

As a result, as I will show, with Linden together with me in the field I found myself making behavioral compromises that hewed more closely to my own native culture than when I had been a lone fieldworker or a fieldworker with spouse along. The ethnographic practice of temporarily bracketing off one's customary views and practices in order to apprehend the emic views and everyday practices of one's cultural hosts (termed 'methodological relativism' in Kottak 2013; or 'pragmatic relativism' in McGrath 1998 as quoted in Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume) had been much easier without my child at my side. With my child along, still at an early stage of cognitive development, it was much more difficult to draw a line between short-term professional methodological practice and long-term personal family expectations.

My Chinese friend Ruizhi and I found that even though we had a lot of prior education on and contact with people of each other's cultures, we both had many areas of ignorance in the domain of childrearing and family life. Overall, through this experience, we found that although our broad childrearing goals are similar, that is, to raise kind, considerate, capable, healthy, happy, successful, socially well-adjusted children, our emphases, methods, and communication patterns are often quite distinctive. Our visions of what precisely those abstract goals looked like differed, too. In this chapter, I examine some of these cultural differences in our expectations for child behavior, our patterns of parent-child communication, and our methods of childrearing and the cultural logics behind them. In doing so, I explore how the intercultural interactions that my daughter and I had with our Chinese host family challenged many of our own contemporary middle class northeastern European-American as-
sumptions about parent-child interaction and proper childrearing, such as: ‘children should always say please and thank you,’ ‘with food, the parent provides and the child decides,’ ‘there is only so much a parent can do to influence a child’s growth,’ and ‘children need a lot of down-time and free play.’

In the examples that follow, I argue that many of the differences in our childrearing practices stemmed from contemporary cultural differences rooted in our respective generational cohorts, class positions, and regional identities. The first difference was related to the feeling in contemporary Chinese culture that elders owe the younger generation what they give to and do for them in daily life, and so no ‘please’ or ‘thank you’ is needed, as compared with the American feeling that these words are absolutely necessary to show interpersonal respect and gratitude. The second was the frequent sense in Chinese urban culture today that children are born with nearly infinite potential and caregivers are responsible for giving them the ultimate conditions possible to help the child to reach that potential, as compared with a present-day American sense that children are born with a certain limited potential related to their physical genetics and inborn personal preferences which can only be altered so much. The third was the idea in Chinese culture today that the more structured learning activities, the better for the child’s development, as compared to the current American idea that children need a lot of free time to pursue their own natural inclinations. The fourth was a greater sense in contemporary China as opposed to America that the behavior and expression of children can and should be tightly controlled by adults by the time they reach elementary school age, at which time in China, but not the US, serious competition among children begins. As Chao (1995) and Fong (2007) have stated, it is an oversimplification to say that Americans promote individualism and independence, while Chinese promote sociocentrism and interdependence in childrearing. Instead, the differences lie in how social actors of different generations and classes (Kusserow 2004) view and aim to balance various forms of individualism and conformity in everyday life (Lindholm 2009).

**Entering the field: no model rite of passage**

For Linden, it was fun boarding the plane, sampling movies and snacks, and watching the clouds go by, and it was exciting arriving in the new city and meeting the family’s kids. She was also pleased that while in China she would ‘sleep in Mommy’s bed,’ drink caffeinated tea, ‘ride a train like Harry Potter,’ and live with other children. But it was not long before the novelty wore off. In the wee hours, Linden woke up jet-lagged in the dark in our guest-room bed struck...
with the sense that she was stuck in this strange place, unable to escape. For the first time ever, she said: ‘I hate you, Mommy! I hate you!’ Crying loudly, she demanded, ‘Why did you bring me here? I miss Daddy! Let me go home!’ Thus began my rite of passage to fieldwork with children. Culture shock at the age of 7 was loud and raw. Any image of model China-hand, model mother, or model guest vanished. Fieldwork with children can be very messy indeed.

**Family or families? Family or hosts and guests?**

As Dominy (1998) has remarked, it is often expected that a visiting fieldworker will somehow fit themselves into an existing kinship structure within their host community. We were no exception. Our host family was a three-generation household with maternal grandparents living in their adult daughter and son-in-law’s apartment to assist with childcare and housework as is common in Shanghai (in contrast to north China’s paternal focus). When Linden and I arrived, we were instructed to call the grandparents by the kinship terms ‘Waipo’ and ‘Waigong’ (maternal grandmother and maternal grandfather). In addition to their 8-year-old daughter Lele, Ruizhi and her husband Chengguang had a 3-year-old son, Tony, who had been conceived and born in the legal loophole of Ruizhi’s fellowship in the US. In the presence of the children, we parents called each other by teknonyms (Rubie Watson 1986) like ‘Tony Mama’ or ‘Linden Mama’. The family also had a nanny housekeeper called Little Auntie Wu (Xiao Wu Ayi) who came six days a week to help with the housework and childcare.

Even though Linden and I both arrived with a cough and head cold, the family

**Figure 2.1.** Initial view from host family apartment balcony in Shanghai (photograph: Linden)
welcomed us into the home with open arms, saying that we are all one family (dou shi yi jia ren) and this is your home in China (zai zhongguo de jia).

As Kjellgren (2006) has argued, fieldworkers are neither insiders nor outsiders, but somewhere in between and very much dependent on the social actors and situation at hand. Likewise, in many ways we were like family, but in other ways we were not. We did not share the same blood or surnames, our budgets were only partially intermingled, and many of our expectations for children’s behavior and behavior management were different. As such, we were not one family, but rather ‘two families living in one household’ (yi hu, liang jia). We were similarly betwixt and between in that we were guests, but also more than guests, as a certain kind of family. As a result of this and cultural differences, it was often very confusing for all of us to figure out when one or the other was being polite. The problem is that if your Chinese hosts are being direct in their offer, and you refuse, thinking that they are just being polite, you run the risk of insulting them as stingy or implying that there is distance in your relationship. Or if they are being generous, and you think that they are being direct, and you accept something that is way too much for them to deliver, that is also a problem. Being a family-guest hybrid, and a foreigner but seasoned ‘China hand’ (zhongguo tong), it was often difficult to know when we were reading the signals correctly as to who was just being polite, and who was saying it like it was. There were also differences in when politeness was expected or not, and the forms it should take.

As a long-term family-guest hybrid, I found myself with many ambivalent feelings. We found ourselves embraced with love, care, and intimacy, but also constrained in what we could say or do. Our respective forms of caring were often not experienced in their intended fashion. As with all guests, we had to walk a fine line between intimacy and being too much under foot. We had to be polite, but not too polite. We had to avoid being too much of a presence, yet not treat our host’s home as a place to crash. While these issues exist with solo researchers, they are heightened with an unacculturated child who cannot discern the finer elements of give-and-take.

**Background and intersectionality**

No one person or family can be representative of all people or families in one culture. There are too many regional, class, and idiosyncratic variations and too many combinations of family structure, culture, and practices, or what for individuals McCall terms ‘intersectionality’ (2005). But what all persons and families within a culture do is to reflect and to cobble together some aspects
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of the often-contested *mélange* which is their culture. As a result, I am not claiming that our families were typical representatives of Chinese or American culture. Rather, we were both active cultural agents influenced by our surrounding cultures in particular ways based on our social positioning and the idiosyncrasies of our personal and family histories. I am also not claiming that this was some kind of pristine first contact untouched by prior global flows of ideas, values, and practices. Global citizens of a globalizing era, we all had prior contact with and had been influenced by each other’s cultures, and as beings with life-long plasticity, we continued to experience changes in our perspectives and practices as we interacted with each other.

In our relative socioeconomic backgrounds and trajectories, our two families were similar in many ways. Ruizhi and I and our husbands all grew up in low-income rural working-class families. All of us had gone on as first-generation college students to elite universities to become white-collar middle-income professionals. We were all somewhat transnational.

In other ways, we were different, however, beyond the obvious difference of being Chinese versus American. Tim, Linden and I lived in the bucolic state of Vermont, while our host family lived in a booming metropolis. Lele and Tony were city kids, while Linden was a country mouse still enthralled with escalators. We were also different in our relative wealth in context and our aspirations. Ruizhi and her husband were more upper middle class in status-conscious Shanghai, while we were mid-range middle class in countercultural Vermont. Our host family bought brand-name clothing in malls; we bought knock-offs in the Shanghai fakes market.

Our children, in turn, grew up with different societal emphases. For Linden, in the public elementary school that she attended in Vermont, the emphasis was that everyone was equal in value, that differences were good things, that disabilities were to be accommodated by society, and that the top goal in daily life was to be kind and be a good friend. For Lele, in the elite elementary school that she attended in Shanghai, the emphasis was that you must be better than normal to be let in, you accommodated yourself to the society and not the other way around, and that you should be striving for the top of your class in everything. A very mature, bright, and hard-working girl with a healthy level of ambition, Lele was rising to that challenge. An avid reader and enthusiastic artist, but not ambitious, Linden was still very much into pretend play. As a result, although Linden and Lele were about the same age, they did not have much in common. 3-year-old Tony, on the other hand, loved pretending and became Linden’s regular playmate. Initially, our host family found this pairing odd, but came to appreciate it in time.
Always say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’

In the Chinese family in which we lived, as is typical, I am told, in most Han Chinese families in China, the children rarely if ever said ‘please’ or ‘thank you’ to their parents or grandparents. As an American parent, each time our host family’s children asked for something and each time an adult did something for or gave something to them I felt a tug inside, like someone should step in and correct the child. But no one did.

In most families in the United States acculturated to mainstream American culture, children are supposed to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ when they ask for something and/or get something from a parent or grandparent. They are expected to do so in order to express appreciation for the fact that the other person is doing them a favor and is not obligated to serve them. Most American parents make a strenuous, continual effort to correct their children if they forget to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you,’ as they do not want them to grow up to be ungrateful and impolite. So, based on my socialization as an American, when Lele ordered a grownup to do something for her or get her something without adding a ‘please’ or a ‘thank you’ or a Chinese request participle (ne) or a question syntax (‘could you’ – neng bu neng), I felt in my gut like she was treating the adults like servants – even though I knew cognitively that this was a cultural difference.

Over the decades I have spent in China, I have learned that it is not a Chinese norm to make children say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ for ordinary everyday things and actions in a family context. Saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to family is seen as treating them as though they were distant and might deny you something that they owe you. There is a handy retort for misplaced politeness among extended family or close friends, ‘Don’t treat me like an outsider’ (bie jianwai). Saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ too much to family or friends who are like family can run the risk of showing a lack of confidence in their commitment to taking care of you. This is underlaid with a feeling that saying ‘thank you’ is too much of a superficial fix, potentially displacing the need for real substantive reciprocation at a future time of need. Although China is becoming more individualistic, there is still less of a separation between the satisfaction of individual needs and of family needs. Why say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to people whose existence is premised on the understood mutual benefit of satisfying each other’s needs and desires? In America, it might be akin to saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to your own hand.
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Despite my intellectual understanding and my efforts to restrain myself while unaccompanied, with my daughter around I found it nearly impossible to stop myself from saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to our host family or to refrain from insisting that Linden do so. Even though they knew it was part of our culture, our continued utterings of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ were often met with a good-natured protestation of ‘no need to be polite – we are all one family!’ (bie keqi, dou shi yi jia ren ne).

To try to fit in better, I tried to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ a bit less than I normally would and to insist a bit less on those American ritual gestures from Linden – but only to a point. At a visceral level, my American socialization told me that I must say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in certain situations, even if that was not the norm for my Chinese hosts – for example, at the table when I asked for something and someone passed me something. This sensibility was even stronger when it came to Linden. I felt strongly inside, no matter how clearly I knew intellectually that it was not needed in the situation, that as a mother I must keep after Linden to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. From at least the time she was one, I had gotten used to the reflex action of the American maternal duty to say, ‘What do you say?’ ‘What’s the magic word?’ ‘P-P-Pl...’ ‘What do we say?’ ‘Say please.’ ‘Say thank you.’ ‘What did you forget?’ These relentless reminders and my own pleasing and thanking were part of the American imperative to set a lifelong example for our children to be grateful for and not take interdependence and mutual aid for granted. Having Linden in China with me had the paradoxical effect of making my own familiar politeness customs often seem rather strange and obsessive to me, while at the same time deepening my resolve to follow them nonetheless.

Some cultural habits are so ingrained that it is very difficult to let go of them, and as David Sutton (1998) found with his son during fieldwork in Greece, our level of cultural compromise as fieldworkers often does not run as deep when our own children are involved. Although I know that children can distinguish different rules for different contexts and although even in the US I explicitly teach Linden that different households have different rules, the relativity only goes so far. While I was comfortable with Linden saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ less frequently, I was not comfortable with dispensing almost entirely with such American niceties in a Chinese family context. Similar to concerns expressed by Leslie (1998: 53), this was related to a common conundrum for Ruizhi and me – how to expose our children to cultural difference but not have each other’s children be a ‘bad influence’ on each other such that they would begin to act inappropriately within their own cultural context. Concerned with this, during
our first week together Ruizhi suggested that we should feel free to correct each other’s children. While this was often not practicable for hosts and even less so for guests, at times we did so. With time, it began to go beyond fear of contagion as we also began to take a partial stake in each other’s children. As a result, there were a couple times when I playfully corrected Lele when she commanded me to get something for her. While I knew that Lele was acting appropriately within her culture to me as a senior member of the household, not only didn’t I want Linden to globalize the idea that she could ‘boss grownups around,’ but I also felt that a reminder of American-style manners would be beneficial for Lele, who had attended an American preschool while abroad with her mother and for whom global citizenship was a family aspiration. So, when Lele’s parents and grandparents weren’t around, a couple times I playfully intervened. For example, one day Lele commanded me from her desk in the playroom to get her

![Figure 2.2. Linden attempting to eat an apple American-style, peel and all, in front of a Mao statue in Shanghai. A moment later, it is snatched up for peeling (photograph: Jeanne).](image)
an eraser from the nearby living-room coffee table. ‘Oh, no! Is your leg broken?’ I exclaimed, with a smile. Lele immediately caught on. Eyes twinkling, she laughed and fetched her eraser herself.

The other complexity with ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ was our status as guests who were considered to be temporary family members, but still always guests. And guests should be very polite. But family should avoid being too polite. So we were all caught between competing codes of conduct for guests and hosts versus family and for foreigners versus honorary Chinese. We often weren’t quite sure which code or which point between the codes was being or should be followed. Saying ‘don’t be polite’ or ‘there’s no need to thank me’ (bie keqi, buyong xie) can be and often is a polite gesture, overlying pleasure in and an expectation of being thanked, when it comes to guests at least. But for family, it can mean ‘don’t act so distant, as though you can’t count on me as a matter of course.’ Which were we, family or guests, foreigners with a free pass or Chinese in training? It often wasn’t clear, so we struck a compromise of not abstaining from ‘please’ and ‘thank you,’ but going on a diet of sorts. Fieldwork is about compromise between one’s research plan and what is actually feasible and between one’s own cultural ways of being and trying on local customs. I found that with children at stake, compromises made in the field often come more charged with emotional force and lean more in favor of one’s native culture.

**With food, the parent provides and the child decides**

As Allison (1991) showed in her analysis of *obentō* lunch boxes for children in Japan, food and eating are powerful ways in which cultural ideals are inscribed on mothers and their children. In China today, grandmothers come heavily into play as well, in how they leverage food to cultivate the development of the younger generations in line with their sense of China’s national development, as well as their own cultural authority within the domestic sphere as arbiters of correct approaches to food and eating. While James Watson (1997; 2005) and Jing (2000) have convincingly argued that children have more control over what they eat than they did in the past in China, I illustrate here how there can still be considerable expectation of power over children’s food and eating by older generations in Chinese households. At the same time, my account echoes Jing’s volume (2000) in reflecting the considerable anxiety that older generations often experience in questioning whether children in China today are eating in a healthy manner.

*Waipo* was anxious to ‘stuff’ (*sai*) as much diverse high-quality food as she could into her grandson Tony. She took it as her responsibility to make sure
that the children in her household grew as tall and as strong as they possibly could, and she felt that getting as much meat, fish, shrimp, eggs, milk, yogurt, and rice into a child as possible at each meal each day was absolutely critical for doing her duty and not missing any opportunity for the body to grow. Her granddaughter Lele was a good eater and tall for her age, so Waipo need not intervene much there. But Tony was different. Tony ‘did not like to eat,’ and he was only of average height and weight for children his age in Shanghai. If Tony could, Waipo said, he would play all day and forget to eat. At meals, he would eat a little and then quickly feel full and stop. So every meal, day after day, Waipo, Waigong, and Little Auntie Wu would chase Tony around the living room and play room with a bowl and spoon in hand for up to an hour, to get all of his meal into him.

Although this is quite common in well-off parts of China today, it is nearly unheard of for a healthy American 3-year-old of whatever class. American children begin feeding themselves ‘finger foods’ by or before the age of 9- to 12-months-old and are usually fully able to feed themselves bite-sized pieces, although messily, by the age of one-and-a-half to 2 years old. As Tony’s parents, Waipo, and Waigong, had lived in the US, the whole family was well aware that this was a cultural thing. It annoyed them to do it, but it was a tradeoff. Let Tony do his own thing, and they feared he would turn out short, skinny, and weak, hurting his work and marriage prospects. So they continued to spoon feed him well into his fourth year.

Likewise, Waipo also felt strongly compelled to get me to stuff more food into Linden, who was short and lightweight for her age by urban Chinese standards since the rapid somatic changes that have accompanied reform-era economic development. If Linden did not eat enough by herself, Waipo felt, then it was my responsibility, and by extension hers, to do everything possible to make Linden eat more, no matter how she protested. It was not only Waipo who put this duty on herself. Some elderly neighborhood women on the street had asked her whether she wasn’t feeding my daughter well enough, which added moral urgency by invoking the stigma of being a stingy host, and to foreign guests at that! So Waipo was desperate for me to press Linden to eat all of the food in her bowl at each meal and to try to eat more meat, fish, and white rice. Her sense of herself as a good grandmother and a gracious hostess was in part contingent on persuading me to make my daughter eat all of what she served for dinner.

The problem was that Linden did not like any kind of meat much and hated fish and shrimp, and she was tired of eating so much white rice, and these were
all foods Waipo felt were quite essential to a high quality children's diet. At the same time, Waipo did not like it when I made attempts to supplement dinner because what I gave her was invariably not seen as an appropriate dinner food (e.g., nuts were seen as snack food – *lingshi* – not dinner food), or as poorly prepared (e.g., the stir-fried broccoli I made was too hard), or as a strange and unwelcome competition with the superior food that had already been prepared (e.g., my pea soup or macaroni and cheese). Part of the problem was that Waipo wanted Linden to eat and like what the family liked and ate, but Linden was only game for certain things. She did try and love the ‘little eggs’ that Waipo cooked. I waited weeks to tell Linden that those little eggs were actually pigeon eggs, something that most Americans today would not categorize as food. By then, it didn’t matter. She was sold.

Waipo was vocal that I should make Linden eat everything in her bowl, both for her own sake, and to set a good example for Tony who was forced to clean his plate. This was what good mothers did (see also Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume). So, like me with ‘please’ and ‘thank you,’ there was a strong worry about negative cross-cultural influences, but this time in the other direction – that is, Linden’s bad influence on Waipo’s grandchildren. As Friedl (1998) and Leslie (1998) have stated, it is easy to say ‘different strokes for different folks’ in the abstract or from a distance, but when living together with children it becomes more difficult. Children of both Chinese and American cultures are quick to think, ‘hey, no fair, why is that child being treated differently when we live in the same house?’ Not only that, but Waipo was developing an emotional stake in Linden’s well-being.

Since middle-class American parents of my generation grew up with the maxim of ‘the parent provides and the child decides,’ I was loath to make Linden eat anything that she did not want to eat, beyond trying a small bit of each new food. This is because we feel that it is a parent’s duty to put an abundant and balanced diet in front of the child, but from there, eating it is mainly up to the child. This is in large part an expression of respecting the individual preferences, taste, choice and will of the child and also trusting the wisdom of their body’s natural inclinations and appetite, with the caveat that parents limit the amount of junk food available. Because both obesity and anorexia have become an epidemic in America, we are reluctant to push food on our children, both to avoid the habit of over-eating and to avoid food becoming an intergenerational battleground in which children resort to anorexic starvation.

I also had, to my mind, a more generalized way of thinking about food than Waipo. To me, the most important things were calories, protein, calcium,
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vitamins, fiber, and water. Middle-class American parents today usually work around children’s preferences to get in those elements. If a child does not like or want to eat meat, fish, or shrimp, then they can eat peanuts, peanut butter, almonds, beans, eggs, and tofu for protein. If a child hated milk and yogurt, then they could eat ice cream to get calcium, even though it was a dessert. If they didn’t eat enough at their three meals, they could add two to four healthy snacks. For example, Linden’s doctor in the US had recommended more snacks and peanut butter and ice cream for her. So, making my daughter eat all of what was offered at any given meal was not critical to me. As long as over the long term she got enough of the elements, it did not matter when or how. However, just as I found it hard to accept processed white rice as a healthy staple, my hosts considered peanuts and ice cream inferior snacks, and that the latter had a ‘cold-essence’ potential to injure the stomach.

How was what Waipo was doing different from what Linden’s American grandmothers or doctor back home did when they encouraged Linden to eat more? To me, the difference was in how it was done. Whereas Waipo saw shrimp and meat as clearly superior protein, her American counterparts saw eggs and peanuts as equally good, and they felt no certainty that eating more would make Linden grow taller. It might, but it might not. As contemporary Americans, we shared the feeling that ‘you can bring a horse to water but you can’t make it drink.’ Force-feeding or even verbal interference would violate a child’s right of bodily sovereignty and risk morphing into anorexic rebellion in later years. On this, I was taken aback when Lele’s mother warned her that she might have become a too-good eater. Although Lele was not at all fat, Ruizhi and Waipo told her that a girl is not supposed to eat too much or too quickly or she might get fat or mature too early. Not only did this reflect the very narrow window of acceptable weight for an urban Chinese girl in today’s norm-obsessed rising class, but it also illustrates the greater cultural openness in China for making explicit comments to people about their bodies. Like Glover (Chap. 4 this volume), my concern over the long-term health consequences of going native was heightened with my child involved.

Oftentimes, I found that being a good guest and getting Linden to eat more were in conflict with each other. Had I been able to supplement dinner with things she liked when we ate with the family, with some extra for Tony and Lele, she would have eaten more, but to Waipo that was like putting ketchup on fine cuisine. Had I been able to regularly give Linden dessert after dinner, that would have helped plump her up a bit, but the family did not approve of dessert except on special occasions, in contrast to the modern American
child’s belief in dessert as a constitutional right if one ate one’s vegetables. One compromise I made that I often saw Chinese fathers making with their own children was to grab time away from home to treat Linden to ice cream and other snacks at convenience stores. It felt adolescent, but it worked.

There is only so much one can do to influence a child’s growth

The family was also concerned that I did not bring my child to the hospital in Shanghai to find out why she was shorter and thinner than average for her age. One time Waipo began a conversation with me by saying, ‘Aren’t you worried that she isn’t normal’ (bu zhengchang)? Doing everything they can to make sure that their children turn out normal or better than normal is a huge concern for middle-class Chinese parents and grandparents in urban China today. Based on the historical experience of people of Waipo’s generation in which she had seen the average height and weight and muscle mass of Chinese younger people increase tremendously with economic development, she could not help but think that strenuous continued intervention in injecting an abundant superior diet into a child’s body could make a difference between being short and scrawny and taller and well-built. If Waipo and I were not able to cajole Linden to eat more, maybe a doctor could diagnose a health problem and correct it to stimulate her appetite.

It was not just Waipo and her neighbors who were concerned. Linden’s school was, too. Not long after she started kindergarten in Shanghai, I got a call from her teacher. Linden was not eating all of her lunch. Children were supposed to eat all of their cooked meat and vegetables, rice, and milk. The teacher said that Linden was not getting adequate nutrition and was setting a bad example for the other children. She was ‘too skinny.’ As a mother, I was supposed to say that I would exhort her to eat everything. But I knew from Linden that she didn’t like some things they served, such as the fish, and that she felt like they gave her too much. I explained how in America we make the children try a tiny bite of everything but then it is up to them how much they eat. We can encourage them to eat more, but we cannot force it. I contextualized that it comes from being in a society more concerned about obesity than being skinny and that her doctor back home said she is healthy. Her teacher then agreed to a compromise that she would tell the other children that Linden’s culture was different, and that she had different rules than they did, but they were still expected to eat everything up. They would give Linden a hard-boiled egg instead of fish. In turn, Linden would try to eat more of her veggies, rice, and milk. Despite this, a month or so later I got a research survey from the
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school on children with ‘failure to thrive’ syndrome. This survey was sent only
to those children perceived as below par on height and weight. As I filled it
out, I aimed at, but likely failed in, subverting their transparent hypothesis that
I was a negligent parent who provided inadequate structure, discipline and
nurturing.

Based on my own experience of living in a relatively stable developed
country over my lifetime in the US, it seemed far-fetched to think that forcing
a child to eat more than they wanted would make a difference in height. Also,
it seemed that a statistical trend in a population did not apply to an individual
child, especially one who had always had an abundant well-balanced diet
available since birth. To me, there was little that could be done about the
fact that my daughter had inherited genes for being short and slight from my
husband’s side of the family, in which small bones, lean musculature, and/or
short height were common. Someone needs to fill out that end of the bell
curve, we reasoned. As long as she is happy and healthy, we were not worried.

Far beyond America’s Lake Woebegone, there is an intense drive in mid-

class Chinese society for all children to be above average. It beats down
on Chinese parents and grandparents like a driving rain. The relentless com-
parisons and critiques from family, teachers, friends, and strangers on the street
soak in. I remember Linden sobbing one time: ‘I eat as much as I can! I really
do!’ The pressure to consume in what Waipo and her teachers saw as a correct
Chinese manner was overwhelming at times. On this I could not fully acquiesce
to the local culture. I was instead caught between respecting local authority and
cultural convictions on the proper way to raise strong, healthy children and
respecting my daughter’s sense of sovereignty over what she put into her body.
My compromise was to urge Linden to ask for and eat as much as she could of
the things she liked at meals, but not to make her clean her plate or eat things
she disliked.

Children need a lot of down-time and free play

Like many well-off urban Chinese kids today, the children in my host family
had a jam-packed schedule. In addition to school, each week there were many
hours of lessons in piano, drawing, art, English, math, and dance, and there
were regular extracurricular tests to reach the next level of accomplishment
in such subjects. For Lele, there were also one to four hours of homework per
day, almost every day, including weekends and holidays. To me this seemed
like over-scheduling, and all three generations in my host family sometimes
bemoaned the fate of Chinese children. However, they saw no choice but to

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mold most of their child’s waking hours to provide an advantage in a very competitive society in which most parents were doing the same.

From early February to late March, my daughter had a lax schedule by Chinese standards. There was kindergarten Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, and half an hour of math and English grammar homework several days a week. Everything else was free time open to whim.

Although Linden was seven years old and in first grade back home, my husband and I had decided that she had not yet matured enough to thrive in the highly strict and structured environment of Chinese first grade. In Vermont, she was used to sitting or standing around group work tables in an open classroom with lots of circle time and recess and little to no homework. Her ability to read and write in Chinese characters was limited to a few words. Yet

Figure 2.3. Self-portrait done in Shanghai (photograph: Linden).
we did not want to put her into an expat school, hoping to avoid a foreigner’s bubble and an ‘us-versus-them’ attitude. We wanted her to be immersed with local Chinese children in a Chinese language environment, but not to be so challenged that she would become frustrated and hate it.

Since Linden was very small for her age and she loved to play with younger children, we came up with the idea of sending her to a Chinese kindergarten. While it was initially difficult for my host family and the school we approached to understand why anyone would want to send their child to a school grade below the highest level they could legally enter, when they saw Linden it began to make sense. I had already cleared our unconventional plan with a China education researcher in the US and with another Chinese colleague of his working in educational administration in Shanghai. With that reassurance, my host family kindly introduced me to administrators at the school where Tony attended preschool which went up through kindergarten. While the director was initially concerned that Linden might be ‘mentally retarded’ (chidai) – because why else would anyone want to take a step backwards on the racetrack of school achievement – when Ruizhi, Linden, and I went in for a face-to-face meeting just before Spring Festival vacation, Linden’s short stature, small size, and shy demeanor helped it to make sense. She would not stand out height-wise among the Chinese children in their kindergarten. She looked their age. She was clearly not ‘mentally retarded,’ and thus not risking shaming the other children’s parents who would not want their children to be stigmatized by being placed with an ‘abnormal’ (bu zhengchang) child. I explained that a low-pressure environment in which Linden could play with Chinese children speaking Chinese language would be ideal for her to learn Chinese language and customs and make Chinese friends. The administrators were assuaged in their worries about communicating with her because she knew some Chinese and it was an English-enriched kindergarten in which the teachers and children all knew some English. So Linden was accepted into the school, one of only two Western children among 600 pupils, starting after the Spring Festival vacation.

Over the first couple months, often my Chinese host family worried that I was not managing Linden’s care and education closely enough and was letting her engage in too much unstructured play. I was sending her to kindergarten when she could have been in first or even second grade, based on her age. I was letting her just play, eat dinner, and do half an hour of math and spelling homework a few times a week, not the hours of homework that Chinese children her age were expected to do. She was not enrolled in any formal extracurricular classes with paid instructors or tutors. ‘Didn’t I care about her development?’ they wondered aloud.
From a contemporary American viewpoint, I was following my child’s individual preferences and expressed needs and giving her space to unwind, structure some of her own time, process her new cultural experiences, be creative, and feel free of the external constraints of the rest of her day. When and if she was ready, we could always add more structured activities. To me, she already had a huge amount of learning on her plate, getting used to a foreign language and culture and new family and friends. Her aural and verbal Chinese ability was expanding by leaps and bounds, mainly through the thrill of free play with Chinese-speaking children. Yet my host family often expressed their concern that I gave Linden too much choice when she was too young to know what was best for her in the long run. I countered that, ‘yes, I gave her choices on small everyday things, but I hadn’t given her a choice on a huge thing – she hadn’t wanted to come to China, and yet here she was for six-and-a-half months.’ Alas, not enough, they opined.

Linden’s favorite activity in China was free play with Tony. She loved it and longed for it. To our hosts, however, it was ‘chaotic fooling around’ (luan wan), and while a little bit was fine, I allowed too much of it for a girl her age. For me, I felt that the free play was wonderful for Linden and Tony. They were in their
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element. They were actively directing their own pretend play, and immersing themselves in each other’s languages, imaginations, and social rhythms. They toasted wooden bread and fried up plastic alligators and frogs, and ate each other’s culinary creations with relish and giggles. Emotionally, they were bonding, developing a sense of delight and comfort in each other’s presence. Linden was coming to love Chinese culture and language, despite her initial resistance, through her growing love of playing with Tony. To my host family, though, so much free play of a 3-year-old boy and a 7-year-old girl seemed like wasting a golden opportunity to teach real hard academic knowledge and skills and high culture. Linden was frittering away the hours playing house when she could be studying characters or learning piano.

To Waipo, Linden was often like an untamed animal – wild, rambunctious, undisciplined. My friend and I had decided to embark on a cultural adventure together, but Waipo was also along for the ride, and although she had agreed to take the journey together, she was far less prepared for it than we were, given that her socialization and education were from the closed-off Maoist era. Waipo also liked many aspects of America in the abstract at a distance for a short period of time, but in their full-blown buzz and bluster hours on end, they were too much.

To my host family, it often seemed that I did not take adequate care of and control over my child. Waipo and Ruizhi sometimes asked, ‘Why are you not ‘guan’-ing her?’ (ni zemen bu guan ta le). The Chinese term guan puts together ‘the English meanings of educate, care for, support, control, and love’ (Tobin et al. 2009) as well as manage, shepherd, and nurture. Yet, views and practices surrounding guan are not merely linguistic or cultural, but are also affected by generational and period effects and situational notions of tradition versus modernity. For example, Tobin writes: ‘In the 1980s, guan at Daguan [School] mostly took the form of rules, routines, firmness, and teacher-led instruction. The contemporary teachers at Daguan [in the 2000s] ... see themselves as providing guan ... [in a way that is] more responsive to children’s desires and respectful of children’s rights’ (2009: 42). Our differences were partly cultural, but also generational or historical or modern versus traditional in a complex context-dependent manner. In some ways, as in Tobin, highly-structured conformist guan is seen as more archaic. Yet, Tobin’s is not the only narrative. Some see the trend in reverse, with rigid guan being the modern trend in China, though not in the West. For instance, Waipo at times bemoaned the fate of children today. She remembered when she was young during the Mao years and was allowed to run off with neighbor children and do as she pleased after
school. But today, she said, the competition was too stiff, and China was no longer safe enough to leave young children so lightly supervised. With Chinese children in upwardly mobile urban families today, life is now an unrelenting race to the top universities and white collar professions. Take a slow boat or stop to smell the flowers, and you’ve lost the race before you take the middle school entrance exam. There are few detours if you are not highly connected, super-wealthy, and/or a powerful gatekeeper to valued resources. Second- or third-generation children of parents high up in the Communist Party, government, and business could afford to be lazy because they had shortcuts through power and patronage. Although well-to-do, my host family was not in that class.

In order to seem more like a competent parent to my host family and to have more time for work as my fieldwork on eldercare ramped up, I decided to add more structure to Linden’s days in order to strike more of a balance between the more traditional sense of *guan* and my own sense of balance between structure and free play. So once I felt Linden was adjusted and ready, her life became more structured with less time for free play at home or school. By April, I added a tutored class in piano at her kindergarten at noon, art classes at a new after-

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**Figure 2.5.** Linden (dark trousers, fourth in line) with her school classmates performing a dance for visiting parents and grandparents (photograph: Jeanne).
care program her school began to offer, and gymnastics on Saturday afternoon. Linden still cherished and grabbed the free-play time at home whenever she could, as did I. But with free-play time reduced, it became more tolerable for Waipo, which reduced the stress on me of feeling like a bad guest.

Even after these additions, Linden's schedule was lax by our host family's standards. At first, Lele felt it unfair. Why did she have to do so much homework and Linden so little when they were about the same age? Our hosts consoled their daughter with reminders that she was special. Like the title of Fong's book (2004), Lele's parents said that she was their 'only hope' (weiyi de xiwang) for the future. In time, feeling special, Lele accepted her differential burden.

Ironically, by the end of our stay, the family noted that while Tony's English-speaking ability had grown a great deal through so much hanging around with Linden, Lele's ability to speak English had not improved much at all. She had been too busy studying and hadn't had the kind of free time that Tony had to listen to Linden and me speak English. Even in hindsight, though, because of the way the Chinese educational racetrack is set up, if Lele wanted to compete in the Chinese system she could not afford to get less than top marks on her homework in order to informally learn oral English through play. Even though English was a factor in the standardized tests to get to the next level on the way to college admissions, the vast majority of the testing was based on reading and writing English, rather than listening and speaking.

In contrast to contemporary China, there are more alternative detours and catch-up ladders in American child development today. Judgment of children's abilities is less swift. Many Americans believe that there is such a thing as late bloomers. Structurally, in many parts of the US, you could get very poor grades in elementary school and even middle school, but pull yourself into the top of the class if you got your act together by the beginning of ninth grade. This is because grades before high school are not counted toward American college admissions and there is not as much of a difference in quality of education in much of the US as there is in China between selective private schools and public schools. In middle-class America today, emotional motivation cultivated through encouragement of inner enthusiasm is given far more value than discipline trained through externalized pressure and internalized fear of failure. Rogoff (2006) talks about America and China as both having a racetrack mentality to child development, but in my experience for the urban Chinese middle class in Shanghai it is more of an interconnected series of 50-yard-dashes with little margin for error, whereas in the US in places like Vermont it is more like a marathon with chances for coming up from behind in the last half
of the race. Although there is a great deal of ambivalence about stealing away children’s childhood and stifling their enthusiasm and creativity, many people in present-day China feel that in this current environment, there is no choice but to buckle down.

**Conclusion**

Doing extended fieldwork in China with my daughter in tow while living with a Chinese host family with kids of their own was some of the most challenging and rewarding fieldwork I have done. It led me to engage with Chinese family life in a very personal way that forced me to be far more reflexive about my own culture than I am on solo trips and much more deliberate in weighing which aspects of American and Chinese values and customs I would adopt and encourage, and where I would compromise and where I would not. Doing fieldwork with my daughter in a Chinese host family heightened my immersion into Chinese culture in terms of the extent, breadth, and depth of cultural and social engagement. It also made it much more difficult for me to easily go with the flow of certain aspects of Chinese culture as an apparently culturally competent visitor.

Our cultural senses of what was meant by raising a child with good life prospects and how to achieve that were more different than my friend Ruizhi and I had initially expected. While both families wanted to raise happy, healthy, motivated, socially-responsible children, we had different cultural means for attempting to get to our goals. These different means are related to varying cultural notions concerning what the older generation owes the younger generation, the extent to which parents and grandparents are believed to have control over molding their child’s destiny, and the amount of structured activity deemed suitable for young children. These three notions together put a great deal of responsibility onto the shoulders of middle-class Chinese parents and grandparents such that each mouthful and each moment is a potential lost opportunity for raising a child’s ‘quality’ or suzhi (Kipnis 2007). For American parents like me, by contrast, there is more sharing of responsibility, credit and blame for a child’s outcome among the parents, the children themselves, the child’s perceived genetic inclinations, and incalcitrant environmental factors. To me, not every moment or mouthful is crucial with regard to eating and structured learning. What matters is the big picture over the long term and the child learning to listen to their body and motivate themselves. However, at the same time, every ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ is crucial to American parents like me in that it reflects respecting the dignity of and choices made by each
individual, even parents, in deciding whether to do something for someone else. So our different cultural orientations led us to sanctify different kinds of moments as crucial in building up the long-term whole. With regard to egocentrism versus sociocentrism in American versus Chinese family cultures, it also depends on the dimension of social life on which one focuses. For example, in my version of American culture, there is more of an emphasis on children being equal parts of a social group in kindergarten and elementary school, while in today’s upwardly mobile urban China, there is a more emphasis on individual distinction. It is not that one culture has social interdependence and the other individualism, but, rather, the way interdependence is engaged is distinctive such that social interdependence is often taken for granted in China, while it requires more regular explicit expression of affirmation, recognition and gratitude in America.

It was only in living closely together for many months that my host family and I fully realized these differences in our childrearing notions and practices. While we did not convert each other to all of our respective ways of thinking and doing things, we did come to understand better the logic behind our differing childrearing habits and came to appreciate them as different systems which worked in different life environments for different families. As a field-working mother, I found that I was more cultural and more competent than I had imagined. Rather than cleanly blending in, mothering fieldworkers juggle many plates and are too engaged to be polite.

Coda
I began writing this chapter in May 2012 while still in the field. The first version was written for a conference on cross-cultural communication at Caijing University in Shanghai to which I was invited by a local Chinese colleague who was interested in my cross-cultural experience of living with a local family. This meant that the first writing of this piece was done for a Chinese audience, with close attention to explaining my own cultural idiosyncrasies. Later that fall I revised the article for the largely western audience that I would encounter at the American Anthropological Association conference in Tami Blumenfield and Candice Cornet’s panel on ‘Doing Fieldwork in China with Kids,’ striving to pay more close attention to the translation of Chinese views and practices.

Three years and several rounds of revision have passed in the time since Linden and I first landed in Shanghai. In the summer of 2013, I returned to Shanghai for a month of fieldwork and shared a draft of this article with Ruizhi and my host family, who gave their blessing for publication. My husband and
our extended families have also read it and given the green light. As of this writing, Linden is now 10 years old and in the fourth grade here in Vermont. At key points along the way, I have asked her if it was okay for me to write, present on, and publish this piece and the photos therein. Each time, she has affirmed that it was okay, although today while I typed the final revisions, she cautioned: ‘the stories are good, but the anthropology this, anthropology that stuff is boring.’ While undoubtedly limited in many ways, I hope that the combination of narrative and analysis provides some food for thought for both anthropologists and non-anthropologists alike.

Linden has not returned to China since 2012. My short research trips to China in the summers of 2013 and 2014 did not afford the level of funding needed or the amount of time necessary to do justice to both research commitments and Linden’s experience, a common constraint referenced by Blumenfield and Cornet (Chaps 3 and 7 this volume). In the meantime, the children have made do with virtual communication – email, snail-mail, video messages, Skype, and gifts by international Mommy courier. Ruizhi and I hope that at some point in the coming years the children have the chance to reunite in person, whether in China or the US. While our cross-cultural blended-family living experience was not always easy, it was an incredible gift of trust, intimacy, and cross-cultural exchange that we will remember the rest of our lives.

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Endnotes
1 Other than my own family’s names, all other names are pseudonyms.
2 That is, until a new city regulation in June spurred by concern for balanced lifestyles limited elementary school homework to a couple hours a day and only when school was in session.
3 See also Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume, on relative devaluing of free play for Chinese kindergarteners.
Ethnographers have long drawn on a vast methodological toolkit that starts with participant-observation, but goes well beyond that to include oral histories, household censuses, photo-elicitation, quantitative surveys, and many other field research strategies. Though we rarely discuss involving our children in our research explicitly as an ethnographic research method, making our children’s contributions to our research explicit is an important methodological and conceptual reframing, as the chapters in this volume suggest. Children’s contributions are foregrounded during a fieldwork experience, but they also extend far beyond that, as anthropologist-parents make sense of what we learn from time spent in an often-distant location. Learning cannot be circumscribed to a single location, nor can it be confined to a finite time period. This is as true for children joining parents for fieldwork as it is for their parents, particularly when smart phones and affordable data plans put constant communication within easy reach. This chapter thus argues for a broader understanding of children’s roles and for a more complicated analysis of fieldwork more generally, especially as the fieldwork process itself loses its clear endpoints in an era when social media and handheld devices have blurred boundaries between ‘home,’ ‘work,’ and ‘field.’
Studying learning: from student to parent

Archei Duma, her sister Dawah Duma, and I played house in the walled outer yard of Archei Duma’s home. The two girls were making a scrumptious meal from an empty old paint can, a discarded plastic bottle, some grass growing in the yard, twigs, and a healthy serving of dry winter dirt. I dined with delight, enjoying the meal every bit as much as the more palatable ones their mother usually cooked on the open hearth in their remi (central living room).

As a recent college graduate and Fulbright researcher studying learning in Na communities – in both formal and informal settings – I had found figuring out the right questions to ask about play and informal learning difficult. Although I had babysat and substitute-taught in the United States, I lacked parenting experience. And while I felt relatively competent at observing what happened around me, I often felt foolish trying to ask about parenting decisions and childrearing strategies. I was in that liminal stage of life: not a child, but not feeling fully grown up, either. Moments like the ones Archei Duma and Dawah Duma shared with me were welcome exceptions to my feelings of awkwardness.

Despite this uncertainty, I completed my Fulbright research on learning with what I felt was a good understanding of the learning landscape at the time: largely acceded-to pressures to enroll in state schools; robust informal education provided by extended natalocal, matrifocal families and age-mates; Buddhist religious education for boys training to be monks; and a tourist economy quickly encroaching on the villages (Blumenfield 2003). These elements co-existing in the Himalayan foothills made for a fascinating landscape, one which promised to change rapidly in subsequent years.

For my doctoral research at the University of Washington, I moved on to another topic, focusing on participatory visual research and ethnographies of media production instead of looking at learning. I planned to revisit that topic ten years after I had first explored it, but, to be honest, I always felt like something of a voyeur gazing at people’s childrearing practices, and I no longer wanted to be that anthropologist taking photos in people’s households. Critical anthropological theories had influenced my thinking by then, and I wondered whether I could justify my earlier approaches, well intentioned though they may have been. The collaborative practices of the new media project offered the possibility for shared investigation, and so I temporarily abandoned the learning project.

My son was born in 2007, and I soon faced the question of how best to combine fieldwork and my own role as a parent. I had spent at least two
months of every year in northwest Yunnan since 2001, but my frequent visits ceased after my son’s birth. It was not until the summer of 2011 that I was able to return to the Na villages. This time, not only did I have a broader perspective on parenting, derived from personal experience, but my four-year-old son also accompanied me on the trip.

Replacing abstract investigations of learning processes with the messy encounters of a daily routine made for a much more vivid experience. I quickly realized that an afternoon spent with my son in a Na household could teach me more about child-rearing philosophies than any amount of time grasping at straws to come up with questions, as I had attempted during my Fulbright research days. The most effective research method was bringing my high-energy, strong-willed child into my friends’ homes and comparing their strategies with my own. ‘He wants more candy? Fine, give it to him! Make him happy!’ smiled the wrinkled grandmother sitting at the hearth. I watched, barely able to hide my astonishment, as my friend Qidruh’s three-year-old climbed on the table (we had more or less finished the meal) with a huge grin and started to dance. He had the whole room in stitches with his comical routine, eyes twinkling. His mother’s half-hearted reprimands and commands to come down, issued between chuckles, were easily ignored. In fact, the two boys shared a mischievous streak that allowed for some excellent cross-cultural comparisons. I would have never thought to investigate them without moments like this one, repeated many times, though in different ways, in the other households we visited.

Studying how children learn, and their role within Na households and villages, was thus much easier when accompanied by my child. It did not really matter what topic I was officially there to study: this would be an encounter about learning and children, and I could learn from it or turn the other way. Appearing for fieldwork as a mother-child duo instead of a decontextualized individual fieldworker changed how I was perceived, often leading to deeper interactions when we visited households.

Sometimes these deeper interactions taught me something unexpected and led to new areas of investigation. Knowing from 2002 that most women delivered their babies at home, I never would have thought to ask anyone in 2011 how their babies were born. I was surprised when, time and again, in every village we visited, grandmothers and young mothers alike asked me how my son was born. Hearing that he came out the old-fashioned way, they expressed astonishment; the older women added accolades. Puzzled, I asked about the younger mothers’ experiences. With only one exception, they had all had Caesarean sections, in the county or prefectural hospital at least
Figures 3.1–3.3. ‘Is it appropriate to put a plastic footstool on one’s head? Perhaps it is.’ About a week after we witnessed three-year-old Guolu dancing on the table, I realized that Ethan did learn from his example. When we arrived at a family home where we were to spend a few nights, Ethan put one of their plastic footstools on his head and entertained everyone there with his antics. I was laughing too, but, concerned that his behavior was inappropriate, I did not relax until I saw the huge grins on the faces of my friends. I realized then that I need not worry. Photographs: Tami Blumenfield.
three hours’ drive from their homes. Chinese hospitals had shifted to surgical childbirths over vaginal births, and Na women had learned to do the same. I was not the only anthropologist-parent having these conversations and thus discovering a new topic to investigate in subsequent research: Cornet (Chap. 7 this volume) also discusses how her own experience bringing a young child to a village fieldsite prompted conversations about childbirth practices. Without our children’s presence, I doubt that the topic of childbirth would have been broached, or been discussed as consistently.

**Challenges and rewards: conflicting norms, farm animals, and multi-sited fieldwork**

Bringing my son to my fieldsite thus held many advantages for my research, including helping identify new research questions for my next fieldwork period and adding levity to the fieldwork encounter. Conversely, I found some aspects of doing fieldwork with a child much more challenging than I expected.

While doing ethnographic fieldwork as a recent college graduate, I had tried very hard to adjust to local practices. On this trip, I realized that adapting my behavior to the expectations of those around me would be more difficult. By this time I had developed my own set of parenting strategies, strategies that I believed were the right approaches for my son (e.g., Kurcinka 2006). I could not easily conceal my approaches (cf. Cornet, Chap. 7; Glover, Chap. 4; Shea, Chap. 2). Nor could I hide my son’s dramatic sounds and other forms of communication from the families in whose households we resided, though the naptimes and bedtimes that punctuated our day did require me to excuse myself earlier and more often than usual.

Fieldwork is still work, and anthropologist-parents need to think through how they will accomplish their goals while caring for their children. I hired a college student to help full time, taking care to engage a Na woman who knew English, a challenging task in its own right. However, without the physical distances and comforting routines of preschool and work, my son preferred to be with me at all times.

My son also wanted to enter the not-too-warm lake every day, something that concerned the cold-averse villagers and frightened the college-student caretaker. Fascinated by water and very cautious, he often insisted on wading into the water, unconcerned that anyone disproved, and getting wet up to his waist. I learned to pack a change of clothes and shoes at all times, and adjusted our routine accordingly. I was constantly doing what Linnekin (1998) calls ‘impression management’: balancing my desire to respect the villagers’
concerns by keeping him dry (and warm), and my son’s need to enter the beckoning lake. (I also began using boat rides as a special reward during my down-time.)

While their circumstances differ, other anthropologists also note challenges reconciling children’s interests and activities with local expectations for children.

Figures 3.4–3.8. Although Ethan delighted in being in the water, his delight was met with dismay from some of the villagers, who tried to coax him out of the water. He also enjoyed the sensory experience of piling warm gravel from the rough shoreline onto his legs. While Shanshan watched him, I ducked out to meet some friends and visiting dignitaries for tea at a café overlooking the lake next door. At one point Ethan floated by on an inflatable raft, in the company of an older boy whom I had known since he was a few days old. This boy had always behaved very shyly around me, but his new role as Ethan’s big brother of sorts offered a different basis for our interaction. Photographs by Tami Blumenfield.
Writing about fieldwork with her daughter in another rural Chinese village, Candice Cornet (2013) also discusses challenges balancing her own ideas about parenting protocols and those found in her village research site. In Greece, David Sutton (2008) and his son also grappled with the attractions of environments perceived to be too cold, amidst the reprobation of the villagers.

We had other material concerns, from dietary preferences (and battles) to sensitive skin reactions and itches. In the United States, we sang abstractly about Old MacDonald and his farm (Euro-American children’s songs still contain ubiquitous references to agricultural lifestyles although fewer children experience these firsthand), but sadly I had to forbid close contact with all those fun farm animals when we saw them up close in China. Their fleas were more than happy to travel to new hosts; the red spots all over my son’s body convinced me to change my plans so that we would spend less time with families outside the tourist area. The latter area, with its more sequestered livestock, did not inflame his skin in the same angry way.²

Although I took my son to the field with my eyes wide open, well aware of the environment he would enter, I underestimated the challenges of balancing research and parenting. It was hard for my son to understand that just because we were together for most of the day, every day, I still had places to go and projects to pursue. For my part, I was always aware of the days slipping by as one blurred into another, with precious little research time between mealtime, naptime, and bedtime.

Furthermore, doing multi-sited fieldwork (Falzon 2009; Marcus 1995) may be all the rage for anthropologists, but asking a young child to relocate frequently poses an extra layer of hardships. The constant readjustments proved taxing for my son. We visited two cities, five villages, and township seats in two provinces in our two months away from the United States. Figures 3.9 – 3.14, excerpted from a photo essay I composed following our return, ‘Places I Have Slept,’ provide some visual evidence of the complex journey we undertook and the necessary adjustments for my son. Fortunately, as long as I was nearby he was adept at falling asleep in new locations. Even so, I would radically curtail the number of stops and allocate time differently if I were to undertake the same trip again.

Other moments made the entire experience seem more rewarding. One of the highlights for me was a return visit to Archei Duma’s house. Now all grown up and preparing to enter college, she still remembered our backyard meals and mountain walks together. When she saw my son, she scooped him up and...
Figures 3.9–3.14. These images are part of a longer photo essay, ‘Places I Have Slept.’ We stayed in 10 different places, including three hotels (Figures 3.9 and 3.10), the urban apartments of two friends (Figure 3.11), one Lijiang courtyard home, and the homes of four village friends, over the eight weeks of our trip. Furthermore, Ethan napped in the hearth room (Figure 3.12), on an outdoor bench between bus transfers in Kunming (Figure 3.13), and on an indoor bench at a restaurant in Lijiang (Figure 3.14). (When we first arrived in China and he was still working through jet lag, Ethan even fell asleep standing next to a chair at a banquet one evening.) Photographs by Tami Blumenfield.
hugged him before he could protest (he is usually stranger-averse). It was as if the bond between us extended to the next generation.

**Evaluating and Planning Accompanied Fieldwork**

Many authors in this volume have raised one central question: Should I bring my child/children/family with me for fieldwork? As the editors of the several previous volumes about fieldwork and families (Cassell 1987; Flinn et al. 1998) have made clear, each situation, and every child, is different; thus each situation demands its own careful considerations.

**Research Designs and Relationship Considerations**

Children can provide what Joan Cassell calls an ‘emotional anchor’ (1987: 8). In an unfamiliar fieldsite, children can not only provide a speedy introduction to neighbors and help develop future research relationships (Lozada and Lozada, this volume), but they can also allay the anxieties of the anthropologist-parent by providing an excuse to keep to a familiar routine (Cassell 1987: 8). With several years’ experience working in the same fieldsites and with some of my
closest friends in the world scattered throughout Yunnan, I was not concerned about securing my own emotional health while far from home or establishing fieldwork contacts through my child. My dual desires to avoid a lengthy separation from my young child and to introduce my son to my adopted families motivated my decision to bring him along.

Anthropologists, known for their studies of complex family configurations, should appreciate that anthropologist-parents themselves configure family in a variety of ways. Some of these ways preclude extended absences from a child left in someone else’s care. Thus, for many academics their choice is not whether or not to bring a child along, but whether to go at all. One author of the book Professor Mommy describes her simple answer to those who have marveled at how she managed to bring her daughter along for conferences: ‘I don’t have a choice’ (Connelly and Ghodsee 2011: 15). Many anthropologist-parents shift to comparative projects, or fieldwork projects closer to home, if traveling to distant fieldsites becomes too complicated.

Increasingly, smartphones and data plans allow researchers to keep in contact with people across national phone service boundaries. With its asynchronous chat functions and ability to enable circles of friends to share photos and updates, the smartphone app WeChat, or WeiXin, has transformed my ability to stay connected with many of the people in my own fieldsite. Even some friends who do not read Chinese manage to send photos and voice chats, though most of my acquaintances who use the app do read Chinese. In-person fieldwork cannot be replaced by this technology, but the ease with which we can contact one another can supplement visits. Even if I have not been to China for some time, after a day at the university and dinner together at home I can tuck my son into bed and settle in for some one-on-one or group conversations with friends from Yongning, Lijiang, and elsewhere. Looking at their children’s pictures and seeing how people present themselves to their own friends has become a fascinating new way for me to understand cultural transformations and shifts in learning. At the same time, I can offer a carefully curated perspective on my life in the United States by sharing photos from my son’s school, pictures of trick-or-treating, images of forest hikes, and photos of Chinese cooking lessons undertaken by my class. The platform also gives me an opportunity to maintain my Chinese writing and reading skills, since picture posts are accompanied by written content, not spoken content.

Anthropologist-parents should also think carefully about the role of accompanied fieldwork in the context of longitudinal research projects. What role does a particular trip play in the longer-term project? What can a child’s
presence contribute? How can the goals and objectives of a particular trip be interpreted more expansively? What length of time would best suit the needs of all involved? Compromises and ‘satisficing’ – making decisions that are good enough, though perhaps not optimal (Ward and Wolf-Wendel 2012: 43) – may be necessary as these questions are considered.

**Learning through unschooling and documentation: reflective practices for cultivating mini-anthropologists**

Living in rural Yunnan provided an important learning opportunity for a boy who had, until that point, spent plenty of time playing outside and hiking in forests, but had no real grasp of what it took to grow the crops and raise the animals that nourish us. Long intrigued by the ‘unschooling’ philosophy, in which parent-educators closely monitor interests of children, then support those interests with materials and discussions (Griffith 1998; Laricchia 2012), I viewed the summer fieldwork stint as a chance to try unschooling out. In the end, our approach drew on both unschooling and on the reflexive documentation practices of the Reggio Emilia preschool program that my son attended in Oregon (Edwards et al. 2012). Thus all summer long we measured how high the corn grew by comparing it to how tall Ethan stood; we observed the potato flowers opening up; and we ate eggs hatched from the chickens that trotted along beside us on the village paths, dutifully returning home each afternoon after being shooed out the door each morning. We kept a journal that allowed Ethan to reflect on what he had experienced and also gave him the opportunity to develop authentic drawing and writing practices (which are among the ‘hundred languages’ of the Reggio Emilia program) in conjunction with his observations (Edwards et al. 2012). To draw on the language of adult learning pedagogy, we were building ‘significant learning experiences’ (Fink 2003) through experiential learning and reflection. For my part, I was learning how to implement and supervise this style of learning.

The journal was important on two levels. First, it offered us an ongoing opportunity for reflection and helped ground us, regardless of where we were at the time. Second, it facilitated our sharing about the summer once we returned to the United States in August. International educators recognize that re-entry represents a crucial point, though it is often overlooked in program coordinators’ rush to prepare for the programs and run them well. Beyond posing obstacles to re-integration, neglecting reflective practice foregoes an important opportunity to integrate what has been learnt while away with previously held knowledge. In our case, returning from China with an illustrated journal that
was soon amplified by the photographs that I printed from our trip offered my son and me a tangible record of our trip that we could use ourselves and share with others.4

Facing a similar situation of imminent return to their home community with a daughter who had spent two years in China, Jan English-Lueck and her husband created an illustrated children’s book, which they could then share with friends, family, teachers and classmates curious about their experiences.5 Whatever the format, instituting a reflective practice and considering strategies for sharing the experience after leaving the fieldwork setting are both very important. This is especially true when children encounter unsettling experiences.

For Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1987), whose three children accompanied her husband and her to do fieldwork in a Brazilian shantytown, the journal proved an important psychological tool through which her children could process the extreme poverty, illness, and child death they encountered during the fieldwork. The children also wrote school essays about their time in Brazil.

Figure 3.16. Ethan’s teacher wrote this caption for his painting, following his explanation. He was fascinated with trains and other vehicles, and I appreciate the balance of novelty – a train with bunk beds – and mundaneess – a peanut butter sandwich – that his comments reflect. Photograph: Tami Blumenfield.
Blurred Boundaries of Learning and Ethnography

that reflected varying degrees of trauma, for which the entire family and one child individually underwent counseling. These documentations may have allowed that healing process to proceed as well.

Should accompanying children learn Chinese? Considering communication

Wherever possible, strategies for communication should be anticipated and incorporated into plans for accompanied fieldwork. I found a boxed Chinese language curriculum aimed at young children very helpful for introducing the sounds of Chinese prior to our trip (Better Chinese Ltd. 2008). Chinese-language children’s DVDs from our local library and streaming videos supplemented this pre-departure curriculum. I had little expectation that two months’ stay in China would produce fluency or that I would be able to teach my four-year-old Chinese in preparation for our trip. My hope was simply that he would, unconsciously, have an aural linguistic framework prior to our arrival in China. (We had taken a shorter trip to urban areas there when he was 18 months old, and I had regularly sought out opportunities for us to interact with other Chinese speakers, so I expected he would have at least some lingering familiarity.)

By the end of our trip, Ethan could count into the hundreds and delighted in demonstrating his Chinese numeracy skills to anyone willing to listen. He received great encouragement from those who heard him. He could also understand some of what was said; for example, when I discussed with a friend (in Chinese) whether we would leave her apartment right away or leave after lunch, Ethan interjected his opinion in English. The two months of my summer break were not quite enough for him to develop significant speaking skills, and I realized that any future trip should ideally be long enough to allow him the opportunity to develop some level of fluency.

Nonetheless, though he could not communicate very well in Chinese beyond some basic phrases (guolai 过来, buyao 不要, xiexie 谢谢 ['come over here,' ‘don’t want,’ ‘thank you’]), numbers, and two children’s songs that he memorized, Ethan proved amazingly adept at involving various children we encountered in his play. He would approach them with a smile and, with varying degrees of assistance, initiate games of tag, hide-and-seek, or tickling. I also brought balloons, which he could share with the other children and which might encourage them to play with a strange child. Whether children can acquire language skills while accompanying parents on fieldwork and whether they will be able to form short-term or long-term relationships with those they meet will vary with age and situation, but anthropologist-parents should think carefully about how to manage these communication differences.
well in advance. Older children can participate in these pre-departure conversations and thus take greater ownership of their own preparations. In addition, platforms like WeChat can allow them to begin forming relationships before they leave for China; they can also help children maintain relationships following return to their home country.

Conclusion: blurring boundaries and reconceptualizing multisited fieldwork

Whether children are involved or not, doing anthropology in China demands reflexivity and openness about how research takes place. An honest accounting of the fieldwork process must include the messy, awkward moments of shared research as well as the joyful and fulfilling ones. The engaged anthropology that results from acknowledging ourselves as people with complex backgrounds and firmly held positions necessarily creates some uncomfortable situations, particularly when we involve our children in our research. We should not dismiss that discomfort but embrace its analytic potential. With that in mind, we can think through the many forms of learning that we engage with as anthropologists: we learn about our research topics, to be sure, but we also learn how to integrate our own families into our lives as researchers. We learn to be educators as well as parents. Drawing on the perspectives of a child who has participated in field research, can our own homes even be reconceptualized as spaces for ongoing, multi-sited fieldwork? As fieldwork continues at home through social media platforms and reflective practices, perhaps it is time to blur the persistent boundaries between our lives outside of China and within our fieldsites.

For me these blurred boundaries have become a necessity. Since that trip in 2011, I have not managed to take my son to China again. This was intentional at first; I decided to focus on intensive, rapid fieldwork in subsequent summers and save up time and money for a longer trip when he could join me. But now that I have carved out the time, his school policies prevent him from leaving for lengthy periods, and we are left with summers as the only realistic option. In the meantime, frequent conversations about our time together in China; time spent looking at journals, photographs, and books; and snippets of conversations held through WeChat bridge the chasm between our home and southwest China.

Author’s Note

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1 Feng et al. note that rates of Caesarean sections in China are approximately 40 per cent (2014: 59).

2 As Cornet (Chap. 7 this volume) discusses, tourism development often creates some infrastructure that makes bringing a child for fieldwork more practical. For those of us working in touristed areas, these facilities often contribute to selection of one home base over another when accompanied by a child.

3 For excerpts from this journal and from journals kept by Cornet’s children, see Cornet, Chap. 8 this volume.

4 The photographs from our 2011 fieldwork are available at www.flickr.com/photos/64985595@N06/.

5 Miriam in the Middle Kingdom, by Karl Lueck and Jan English-Lueck about their daughter’s two years in China (‘Art and Story by Karl Lueck & J.A. English-Lueck / Life by Miriam Lueck’) is available from www.sjsu.edu/faculty/jenglish/Pages/MMK/MMkTitle.html, accessed April 3, 2015.

6 I did not try very hard to teach him the locally spoken Naru language, given the limited time we would spend in areas where only Naru was spoken.
Viral Signs
Confronting Cultural Relativism with Children’s Health in the Field

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S
ome days it is hard to be a parent, while other days it is marvelous and without angst. Sometimes fieldwork can be exhilarating, at other times exhausting. When parenting and fieldwork are combined, these impressions can be heightened to an extent that we become more aware of our positionality as both researcher and parent and the challenges that these two occupations can bring, particularly when merged. My son was a year-and-a-half old when I first went to Rgyalthang (now Shangrila), in northwestern Yunnan Province, in 1999. He became ill. Not seriously, but enough that it made me consider whether I was prepared to face the possibility of dealing with a more serious illness in the future. Ironically, I was there to study medicinal plant knowledge. But I soon lost my ability to be a cultural relativist when faced with a potential health crisis in my own child. This formative experience made me examine closely my inability to detach from my own cultural convictions while at the same time studying local medicine. Here I explore what I see as the most central issues that emerge in this tension between being a cultural being oneself and being the researcher of culture on the other. In particular, I explore my own reading of signs, embedded as it is in a cultural worldview, and how my attachment to this reading is especially tenacious in my role as a parent, at once a biological, social, cultural, moral, and emotional role. This insight is important for fieldwork reflexivity, and is essential in comprehending what it is we do as anthropologists.

When my husband and I brought our young son to the heights of the Rgyalthang plain, we were initially concerned with
keeping him safe from the open sewer pits that were scattered in the area where we were living. He was of an age where an open stretch of space ahead must have looked like an airstrip of possibilities from which to launch his curious self. We were constantly running after him, much to his delight (shrieks of excitement seemed to propel him forward) until we scooped him up or diverted him to safety. But soon after we arrived (within the first month), he came down with a fever and broke out in blisters on his mouth and hands. I sought treatment for my son with practitioners of both Chinese and Tibetan medicine for this illness. First, my friend, a doctor of Chinese medicine, offered his help with diagnosis and treatment; I accepted and thought that the bitter concoction he prescribed might help and certainly would not hurt. But, as anyone who has ever taken Chinese medicine will understand, it was challenging to get my son to drink the medicine; every time he tried he gagged and spat it out. Soon he would not open his mouth. I abandoned the idea of forcing it down his throat; it hardly seemed like a wise choice. Later, when a large blister formed on his thumb, we went to the Tibetan hospital (where I ended up spending the majority of my time during fieldwork in 2001 and 2002) but I could not help my startled reaction as doctors reached for a needle sitting in an old coke can to open up the blister. I asked if the needle had been sterilized and was told ‘no problem, no problem (meiyou wenti).’ At that moment, I was torn between my conviction that the needle was likely not sterilized (at least not recently) and my role as an open-minded anthropologist accepting of local healing customs. I opted for the ‘professional’ approach: I let them open up the blister with this needle. However, I worried about the wisdom of my choice.1

I accepted these various treatments, but in my mind my son’s illness was likely caused by a virus; my cultural conviction of germ theory won out over being able to see his illness as an imbalance of humors, an excess of heat in the body, a stagnation of qi (life force) – all possible explanations from the theoretical perspectives of Tibetan and Chinese medicines – or as explainable with reference to any other set of ideas.2 Those explanations could potentially be accurate, but in general I ruled them out as not believable; in the universe of all possible explanations, I was drawn to the one that I was most comfortable and familiar with – and the one that I was most convinced by. Perhaps I had still a lot to learn about being a ‘real’ anthropologist. What would Malinowski have thought and done? Surely he would have been more accepting of local practices, wouldn’t he? But maybe he would have written otherwise in his diary. Ah, but he carried a medical kit with him, did he not? I mused. Significantly, Malinowski never had one of his own children with him in the field.3
I struggled during those first few months with many issues that new field-workers undoubtedly have; the concern with how to balance research/work with family was of course one of them. After I returned to the States that summer, I explained my dilemma to my advisors. I felt that it was difficult for most of them to understand, perhaps because the majority were men (and therefore fathers, not mothers) or perhaps because they had had their children in the field so long ago that they were too far removed from their own similar experiences (if indeed they had had any); two had done most of their significant fieldwork before having children. I was considering delaying fieldwork until my son was a year older. Several advisors worried that this was a bad idea, that I would probably not make it back to China; most thought it was probably an okay idea – neither great nor terrible.

Then one of my advisors told me that I should not take illness in the field lightly. He disclosed to me that he had lost a child to illness while doing fieldwork approximately thirty years previously. Not many people knew (or know, even now) this about him. I was in tears while he told me that his daughter had contracted a respiratory infection from which she never recovered. She died in the field. He said that he had not wanted to say anything about this before I left for my preliminary fieldwork, but that it seemed appropriate to tell me now that I was back and had worries about my son's health. He told me to trust my feelings of unease, not to doubt them. I walked away from that conversation stunned; I could not stop thinking about it. Indeed, I still think about it nearly fifteen years later. As Christine Hugh-Jones (1987) has written about her own worries before heading off for extended fieldwork in the Amazon: ‘Statistics [e.g., more likelihood of dying in a car accident than by a poisonous snake bite in the field] may help us decide things in a cool and rational fashion, but it is impossible to arrange emotions in a statistical model. Once disasters have happened, they have happened 100 per cent’ (1987: 42).

Based partly on the conversation I had with my advisor – here was a real person that I knew, not just a number in a small percentage of people who have lost children in the field – and my own experience of anxiety, I decided to wait until my son was a bit older to return for more extended fieldwork. In the end he never got very sick again, but I made sure that we departed for fieldwork having had all recommended immunizations for extended stay in the PRC, and with a supply of antibiotics, antibacterial ointment, packets of powdered electrolyte mix, Benadryl, bandages and our own syringes.

Granted, this was a formative experience in the field as a new mother – and a neophyte fieldworker. However, thirteen years and several more stints
of fieldwork (with children) later, many of my convictions remain. In May 2012, my son and my daughter (ages 14 and 7 at the time) and I returned for a brief stay for research purposes. Since my daughter had developed a cold two days before departure, I made sure to bring antibiotics with us (which we did in fact use for the apparent ear infection that ensued). When the antibiotics did not seem to be working and her fever persisted, I sought out a doctor of Western medicine to examine and treat her. He suggested continuing with the antibiotics and giving it some more time, and she eventually did get better. Why did I not ask my Tibetan doctor friends to treat her? This may have to do with my more extensive experience (compared to thirteen years previously) as a mother. Like many parents, I have become at least an advanced novice in lay diagnosis. Repeated experiences with what are labeled ‘viral’ and ‘bacterial infections’ in biomedicine provided convincing evidence that what my daughter was experiencing was one which could be described in those terms. I read the ‘signs’ in just that way. As Paul Stoller has argued, reading signs is a ‘subjective action the depth of which is shaped by our set of experiences’ (1982: 760). Having two children who had both experienced ear infections previously, I was quite confident in my own reading of the signs; since I knew that antibiotics work for the disorder of an ear infection, I went with what I knew to be effective.

David Sutton (1998) discusses the challenges of cultural relativism in relation to his son’s health during his fieldwork in Greece. Generally speaking, cultural relativism refers to the ability to understand cultural practices, behaviors, and beliefs with reference to the socio-cultural context in which they occur; this is the cornerstone of cultural anthropology, this is what all anthropologists are aiming for at a bare minimum. Cultural relativism has also been infused with a morally-charged sensibility of not judging or measuring cultural practices according to the standards set by another culture (or even ‘universal’ standards); this type of cultural relativism is much more controversial. While these two meanings of cultural relativism can stand alone as comprehensively distinct, the real difficulty comes with implementing the more extended meaning (lack of judgment) when it involves action on the part of the anthropologist, since by and large action in the world requires the use of judgment. Sutton argues that being a cultural relativist is especially difficult when it comes to issues of health (and illness):

Such [difficulties with tolerance of] child care practices were complicated by the fact that for myself and for the Kalymnians these practices often
entered the realm of medical authority, that is, they seemed to escape the category of ‘culture.’ While I would not dream of passing judgment on the Kalymnian use of protective talismans for the evil eye, it was quite another matter when the practice at hand seemed to enter the realm of health rather than belief. (Sutton 1998: 132–133)

Sutton’s simple dichotomy between a realm of ‘health’ and one of ‘belief’ can be challenged, but he touches on an important point about the way that health practices can be viewed in many ways as distinct from other cultural practices; the question is why? I will return to this point below. What I would argue first is that what is most crucial here – which Sutton himself does not seem to fully recognize – is that it is the health of his child that is so central to this challenge. Why are our own cultural convictions related to health and illness most heightened in our role as parents? For my own health, I have readily accepted – and found successful – treatment from doctors of the Tibetan and Chinese medical systems. While living in Hawai‘i as a beginning graduate student, I developed pneumonia; after three rounds of antibiotics and no success in clearing my lungs, I sought out a doctor of Chinese medicine. He prescribed snake bile, which I took for ten days and which cured me. Once, I sprained my ankle quite severely when hiking out of a small village near Khawakarpo Mountain (near Rgyalthang); when I could barely walk the next day, I sought out the treatment of a Tibetan doctor at the nearby clinic. The doctor massaged my ankle so intensely that I cried. ‘I know,’ she said, ‘it hurts. But it’s supposed to hurt and what I’m doing will make it much better.’ She then applied a mixture of herbs onto my ankle and wrapped it with gauze and plastic. The next day my ankle felt nearly normal again; I was amazed. Another time, I was under the care of Pema Tenzin, one of the doctors with whom I studied closely in Rgyalthang. Since the birth of my son, I had been experiencing occasional ‘unexplainable’ hives; I went through a variety of tests in the States to determine what was causing these hives, but my doctor could not find a cause – and there was no treatment suggested. When I was in Rgyalthang, the hives returned, so I asked Doctor Pema Tenzin if he would help treat me. His treatment, which included a slight change in diet and taking three different pills three times a day, worked. I was impressed and duly convinced by the efficacy that I experienced. More than a decade after the main part of my fieldwork, I am a fairly regular consumer of various therapeutics of Chinese medicine (acupuncture, cupping, ingestion of herbal formulas).

So, why the difference when it comes to children’s health? From my own personal experience, I entertain several possible explanations (which may or
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may not be applicable in other settings). One possible explanation – which I believe is the most likely – is that it could have to do with the nature of the disorders. Or, more importantly, the way in which I read the signs of the disorders. The sign of fever was present in my children’s illnesses, but not in my own (with the exception of pneumonia – but recall that I did not initially go to a Chinese medical doctor). From the perspective of germ-theory, fever is a sign of viral or bacterial infection. Sprained ankles are not caused by ‘germs’; and hives, rarely so. Perhaps the ‘viral sign’ of fever is a most convincing cultural orientation for me, but other signs of health disorders are not.

Another possible explanation is that the fundamental difference in my responses to health crises in my children, compared to those in myself, has more to do with power and agency, particularly as these relate to healing. First, a significant aspect of healing has to do with the power of ‘belief.’ Since my children had not been immersed in a world in which qi and humors are part of common sense and therefore part of their possible belief system, but had been more immersed in a world saturated with belief in antibiotics, I had little conviction that the treatments would be successful (let alone how this might interact with their already heightened senses of vulnerability, being so far from home). For myself, however, I am much more confident in the efficacy of these medical systems. This could relate, in part, to my own experience of healing success with pneumonia, sprained ankles and hives; or to my academic study of Tibetan and Chinese medicines, and knowledge of the longevity of these medical systems. In either case, seeing the efficacy reported and the powerful belief in such efficacy have an effect on my own convictions – to an extent. (Ah, but what about those ‘dirty’ looking needles – how much confidence did I really have in those? I will return to this point below.) Second, I was making decisions about my own body when seeking treatment for myself – not so for my children. Are we more willing to accept risk and behave in potentially ‘foolish’ or at least uncertain ways when it comes to our own bodies, compared to those of our children?8

The last possibility, of course, has to do with a potentially loaded interpretation. But it may, in fact, be the most culturally embedded one. Perhaps there is an element of truth to germ theory. Perhaps any culturally relativist stance which would lead one to reject the ‘objective reality’ of viruses and bacteria is simply wrong. Perhaps this is what Sutton meant when he said that there are two ‘realms’: one of ‘health,’ or, one could argue, biology; and the other of ‘culture.’9 This is most likely the stance that most – although not all – doctors trained in biomedicine would take. And, this may be most North Americans’ perspective as well. Undoubtedly, this view is at the heart of my conviction.
about germ theory; I am convinced that viruses and bacteria are real. We have evidence that they are real – they can in fact be seen directly, with the help of magnification. This is simply a ‘fact’ in most Euro-American cultural contexts, not a ‘belief’; we are sure. This orients me as a cultural being. Viruses may be ‘real’ or not, in some ultimate, ontological sense, but what really matters is that I have been enculturated to see them as real; this conviction influences my orientation to the world. This is relevant because, in making decisions about my health and that of my children’s, I have not only to think; I have to act.

Again, it is possible that all of these interpretations could be simultaneously accurate. The main point that I wish to emphasize here is that, in relation to any of these options, the choices that I made in terms of my children’s health were based on my cultural positionality as a parent. I expressed my ‘prejudice’ for a biomedical explanation as a cultural being – a mother. And my previous experiences as a mother led me to make particular choices. What is fascinating about kinship – and the idea that one has duties as a member of some kin group – is that it is so widespread and powerful. Michael Wesch (2007) discusses this in the context of a witch hunt in which he became embroiled during his fieldwork in Papua New Guinea. Before becoming enmeshed in life in Papua New Guinea, Wesch explains that he had an ‘open mind’ about the idea of witchcraft (and belief in witches), understanding the important ‘functions’ that belief in witchcraft provides for communities. Even while in the field, he remained a cultural relativist (in terms of witchcraft) for quite some time, until his fictive father was accused of witchcraft. It was at that moment that Wesch realized not only that he does not believe in witches, but that he had to act as a ‘good son’ and protect his father. In coming to this realization, he notes that he was now able to act as a cultural being. He states:

I discovered a freedom to express myself beyond my constrained scientific observer status precisely because I was related. My vigilance and anger could be read relationally. If I protested the idea of witchcraft beliefs or challenged the legitimacy of a court ruling, it was because I was concerned for my auntie or my father; I was not acting outside the boundaries of what was locally acceptable. On the contrary, as I stepped out from behind my recording microscope [his camera] and made such protests, I may have become acceptable for the first time since the witch hunt began. After all, what kind of son would I be if I did not protest? (Wesch 2007: 14).

While many of us worry that our cultural biases might label us as non-objective, non-scientific, or non-relativist, we can argue here that while this
may be true (yes, objectivity falls away when one expresses one’s biases), it may be equally important to express our ‘humanity’ and our concern with familial responsibilities – both to ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ of a cultural community – while conducting fieldwork. Otherwise, what kind of people are we? Our cultural biases make us fully human. And while one of the key tenets of cultural anthropology is that practices and beliefs need to be understood within a cultural context and that we should therefore usually suspend judgment on them, sometimes an exercise of judgment on our part is necessary; to deny that capacity and right to judgment is to deny our humanity. The trick is being able to discern which types of judgment we can sustain while still being legitimately engaged in the practice of understanding cultural ‘others.’

What of China in all of this? In China, the supposed ‘divisions’ that exist in medical practice and beliefs between germ-theory and other systems (such as Tibetan and Chinese medicines) are not terribly fixed, due to the inclusion of biomedical understandings in the professional and public discourses of health and illness in the PRC. Germ theory is no longer a terribly ‘foreign’ idea. In fact, both the doctors of Tibetan medicine that I worked with in Rgyalthang and others in China and the States with whom I have discussed this have explained to me that ‘germs’ (srin bu in Tibetan) are recognized by Tibetan medical theory as causative agents in illness; they are just not usually targeted directly – unlike within the biomedical approach to the use of antibiotics. My own survey research in Rgyalthang (Glover 2005; 2007) indicates that medical pluralism is alive and well; people choose treatments from among Tibetan, Chinese, and biomedicine strategically, deciding largely, although not exclusively, based on perceived efficacy. Antibiotics are used, possibly overused, throughout most of the PRC now; I was able to purchase antibiotics over the counter at a pharmacy in Rgyalthang in 2009 (although I was told by an American biomedical doctor living in the area that such antibiotics are not very high quality). Craig Janes reported in 2002 that medical pluralism was quite widespread in many of the more populated Tibetan towns and cities (Janes 2002: 268); Mei Zhan (2009) argues for much the same ‘transnational entanglement’ (as she terms it) of biomedicine and Chinese medicine in the early 2000s in the PRC as well as in the States. Thus the cultural ‘divides’ that cultural relativism assumes are partly illusory.

Again, Michael Wesch addresses this issue with his experience in Papua New Guinea. Partly through his adoption into the local community as a son, and partly through his recognition of the level of cultural complexity and intermixing that exists in the world, he notes that invoking cultural relativism is often
Figure 4.1. The author’s son, August Avantaggio, at age 3 (in 2001) in Rgyalthang. August prepared ‘medicine’ of found herbs and grasses that he picked himself for this injured sheep; the healing project was completely his own initiative. Although very young, August was able to comprehend the significance of his mother’s fieldwork, the study of medicinal plant knowledge, at least at some level. Photograph: Denise M. Glover.

Figure 4.2. August Avantaggio in 2012 on the road from Nizu to Rgyalthang. By the time he had returned to northwest Yunnan for the fifth time, August had found some interests of his own (here, photography) to pursue in the field. Photograph: Denise M. Glover.

Figure 4.3. The author’s daughter, Saveria Avantaggio, feeling better after her stint of illness in Rgyalthang, 2012. Photograph: Denise M. Glover.
not as simple as our introductory texts in cultural anthropology make it out to be. He quotes Barnes (1963:124) in saying: ‘the division between those under the microscope and those looking scientifically down the eye-piece has broken down . . . [T]he group or institution being studied is now seen to be embedded in a network of social relations of which the observer is an integral if reluctant part’ (Wesch 2007: 10). Contemplation of cultural relativism as a ‘creed’ (Cohen 1989) and the socio-political situation of medical practice in China merge to show that simple divisions are not always tenable; as Paul Farmer’s work examining the simultaneous use of both sorcery healing and biomedical medicines for tuberculosis in Haiti and Sienna Craig’s (2012: 112–145) examination of both divinatory- and materialist-based curing in Tibetan medicine demonstrate, complexity is implicit in the work of healing. In fact, in many ways I was acting just like most other mothers in Rgyalthang themselves might have acted: making the wisest choice from among many health-care options for my children, based on my responsibilities as a mother. Rgyalthang mothers likely would consider various options as well, including consultation with lamas and/or divinatory practices that rely on the expertise of other types of healers. How I read the sign of fever may be different (for me, it is a ‘viral sign’), but my decision-making process is not terribly dissimilar from theirs. In short, we are

Figure 4.4. The author and her children on the day of their departure for the field in May 2012. This photograph was taken at their home by the author’s husband / the children’s father, Glen Avantaggio, who did not accompany them to the field on this trip.
all trying to make order out of the disorder that illness brings (Stoller 2004). In this context, the ‘difference’ between us fades away; we become more human, and thus more real, to each other.

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1 My husband and I were both present for this procedure and were in agreement about this choice. Although I use first-person throughout to describe my own thoughts and reactions, as this is written from my perspective, in general many of these decisions were made by the two of us as parents (unless otherwise noted). For more than half of my fieldwork I was alone with my son as a single parent of sorts, although I regularly spoke with my husband via phone. See both Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume and Blumenfield, Chap. 3 this volume, for discussions about single-parenting in the field.

2 Both Tibetan and Chinese medicines are effective and rational systems of healing, with extensive longevity. While there are some important connections between the two systems, there are some significant differences as well. Tibetan medicine is more closely aligned to its Ayurvedic sibling with an explanatory framework of three fundamental humors in the body, the imbalance of which can cause disorder. In Chinese medicine, the flow of ‘life energy’ (qi) in the body is fundamental to good health, and disruption or dysfunction in this flow can cause ill health. Both systems use a variety of therapeutics, including external ones (acupuncture, massage, cupping, baths) as well as internal ones (ingestion of medicines, variously made with plant, animal, and mineral ingredients). In both systems, diet and behavior are seen as having significant effects on health; perhaps because of this (and other reasons), there has been a significant increase in interest within the past several decades among populations in North America and Europe in these medical systems as many of the concerns of ‘healthy lifestyles’ seem to coordinate well with concerns about diet and behavior.

3 A recent film by Malinowski’s great grandson, Zachary Stuart, confirms that Malinowski did not involve any of his family members directly in fieldwork. See *Savage Memory*, Sly Productions, 2011 (http://www.savagememory.com/).
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4 While I am not claiming that there is necessarily a biological explanation for the different experiences of parenting between males and females, there is certainly a culturally gendered difference.

5 There has long been a healthy debate in anthropology about this issue, dating perhaps as far back as post-WWII with the realization that notions of cultural relativism could easily be misconstrued if used as an ‘excuse’ for Nazi atrocities. The significant distinction which came out of this debate that I am highlighting here has also been termed ‘descriptive vs. normative relativism’ (Spiro 1986) as well as ‘cultural vs. moral relativism.’ See also Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume, and Hansen, Chap. 1 this volume, which both discuss issues of cultural relativism.

6 This experience was a formative one that started me on the path of interest in Asian medical systems and is a story that I tell often to my students; it highlights the degree to which subjective experiences can be some of the most meaningful for pointing us towards interesting and engaged anthropological inquiries.

7 Recently I asked my son if he would consider seeing a doctor of Chinese medicine to cure a persistent runny nose that he has had. Now age 17, he had some of his own ideas about health and illness and what to do to feel better when sick. At first he said ‘no thanks’ to my query, but then about a week later he seemed to change his mind and said he would be willing to consider it. In the end, he got over the cold before we could get an appointment scheduled. He has used an ‘alternative’ (more from the naturopathic tradition) mushroom-based anti-viral supplement that I also use, so he does appear to be open to non-biomedical treatments.

8 Clearly there are cultural models of parenting, embodiment, and body technologies (Palmer 2007) that could be explored here as well.

9 Such a simple dichotomy has been challenged by sociologists and anthropologists of science such as Bruno Latour (see Latour 1999, especially Chapter 5, titled ‘The Historicity of Things: Where were the microbes before Pasteur?’) but in fact I would argue that this dichotomy is the basis of the way in which we (North Americans) commonly conceptualize differences in healing practices.

10 One of my favorite quotes from the biography about Farmer, titled Mountains Beyond Mountains, is a response that Farmer received when querying a woman for believing that TB was caused both by germs and by sorcery: ‘Honey, are you incapable of complexity?’ (Kidder 2004: 35).
Opening the Door (kaimen)
Doing Fieldwork with Children in Rural China

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I first walked into the northern Guangdong Hakka village that I call Little Rome in the summer of 1993, with an American friend and a young Chinese priest whom I had just met in Meizhou City. This was our destination, years after I first read about the village in the diaries of Maryknoll priests and nuns who had worked there in the early twentieth century. After six weeks of church-hopping from Shanghai to Guangdong province, this was our last planned stop for the summer. Armed with a limited-circulation guidebook that gave addresses for churches in China (a Catholic version of the Lonely Planet) and introductory letters from Maryknoll and Hong Kong Holy Spirit Centre priests, we made our way north from Guangzhou to Meizhou by long-distance buses. At each stop, we stayed at rectories, Church hostels, or hotels recommended by local clergy. We joined the priests, sisters, and Church staff for meals, participating in their everyday activities such as daily mass, choir practice, or catechism class. In Little Rome, I stayed in the rectory (my American female friend stayed with the sisters), where we were warmly received by the villagers like many other foreign priests, nuns, or mission workers who periodically stopped by the village after political reforms allowed the formerly underground Church to be publicly recognized in the mid-1980s (see Lozada 2002). I visited this village every summer after this first visit in 1993 until I moved into Little Rome with my family in September, 1996. Needless to say, people’s attitudes to and interactions with me changed dramatically after they saw me with a wife and 7-year-old son – they all knew then that I was not a Catholic priest!
In this paper, I will explore how bringing my wife and son shaped both the data that I gathered for my professional research and the general direction of my own and my family’s personal lives. My role shifted from a formally distant ‘participant-observer’ to a more socially intimate ‘observant participant’ (Caldwell 2004) when I moved into Little Rome with my family. This shift to being an observant participant opened up the doors to my neighbor’s homes, and brought me into the many everyday conversations that people were having about the issues they faced in raising their own children within a rapidly changing Chinese society. In the book published from this fieldwork (Lozada 2002), I argued that Little Rome was transformed from a local village to a deterritorialized, transnational community, with deep cultural connections, social relations, and kinship ties that were transnational. Without being recognized as a father and husband (as well as anthropologist and photographer), it would have been difficult for me to learn about their strategies for pursuing the good life – everyday practices such as disciplining children, strategizing about educational opportunities, and even love and romance among young adults.

By being accompanied by my family, there was specificity to my transformation from a participant observer to an observant participant. Many other people also visited Little Rome during my dissertation fieldwork stay in the village, partly because the village happened to be in the process of building a new church while I was there. The new church replaced the late 19th century structure that had long served the Catholics in the wider Meizhou region. Many visiting missionaries (mostly Maryknollers, including the superior general) stopped by the village to meet with the priests, sisters, and lay leaders of the Church in Little Rome. Overseas emigrants also came through to visit relations, make donations to the community, or bring medicine and supplies to people in the village.

The idea of ‘opening the door’ (kaimen) illustrates how my becoming an observant participant shaped the anthropological knowledge that I gathered during my dissertation fieldwork in 1996–98. In Little Rome, my wife Rebecca, son Patrick, and I lived in a two-story house surrounded by a cement wall that included a small courtyard; neighbors’ houses were tightly-packed together, with people’s rice fields surrounding the village itself. At sunrise, my neighbors would kaimen, opening the main gate to their homes, signaling the beginning of the social day. Throughout the day, neighbors would drift in and out of houses to borrow things, make plans, or socialize when they were not out working in the fields or tending their animals. Even during meal times, friends would drop by to chat carrying their own filled rice bowl. In the evening after it got dark,
my farmer neighbors would prepare for an early morning and close their gates, signaling the end of the social day. This did not mean they were asleep, but that it was more personal or family time; lights could be seen in bedrooms and quieter activity could be heard. When our family first moved into the village, we did not rise at farmers’ hours, and would open the gate after we ate breakfast and started our day, perhaps after 9:00 am. After a week or so, our next-door neighbor came by and jokingly asked why we slept in every day, wondering what we did at night to get so tired. At that point, he explained what it meant in the village to open the gate, so we switched to opening the gate before eating breakfast (or at least by 8:00 am, which seemed acceptable to our neighbors).

In bringing my family to the field, I was opening my door to my neighbors, who in turn opened their doors to me and my family. As Cassell noted many years ago: ‘Our children make us as accessible to the people we study as they are to us’ (1987: 258). Other doors that we walked through later on in our lives were opening up as well. As a graduate student in 1996, my fieldwork in rural China allowed me to enter into the ranks of professional anthropologists and academia. For my family, especially my son Patrick, it was also opening up China for him as a familiar place where he could study and work in the future (see Loeffler 1998). Patrick wrote that his classmates in the United States tended to see China as an antipodean elsewhere – the farthest possible place culturally from where they were. Such is the case even for many expatriates in Shanghai. Patrick reported that they see themselves as adventurers in a strange land, whereas he sees China as relatively familiar and safe, a factor that has led him to spend most of his early, post-college life working and studying in the country.

As Hugh-Jones (1987) discusses in reflecting on her decision to bring children to the field, for me and my anthropologist wife Rebecca bringing the family to the field was an assumption – since he was born, Patrick had always been by my side. Patrick was born prior to my starting graduate school, while I was serving as a Marine Corps officer. After leaving the service, we moved to Boston, and I became the primary care provider when he was 3 months old. My ex-wife had just received her MBA and had lucrative employment as a management consultant, so it only made sense for me to stay at home with the baby. While it may be more common in the second decade of the twenty-first century to see men stay at home, more than twenty years ago it was a rarity. Shortly after entering graduate school in 1991, I became a single parent; after becoming separated and ultimately divorced, I continued to be the primary custodial parent for Patrick. When he was not at childcare or visiting his mother, Patrick went everywhere with me. When I started dating
again, Chuck E. Cheese’s, an American chain restaurant favored by children, was my preferred second date, a sort of trial-by-fire that would quickly test a potential relationship. Rebecca officially became Patrick’s step-mother when we were married in 1995, and while they had already become close while we were dating, our coming to China together solidified our relationship as a family, through our shared experience of living in rural China. As Cupples and Kindon (2003) suggest, we have reaped personal and professional long-term benefits by coming to the field as a family.

**Elder sister**

As soon as we moved into the village, Widow Ye Liling appointed herself as my wife’s teacher; she would teach Rebecca how a proper farming wife ran her household. After my wife’s orientation in setting up and using her kitchen, Liling showed her how to pick vegetables from her garden, how to buy meat from the village butcher, and how much tofu she should buy when the peddler rode through the village on his bicycle. One of our first social crises requiring Liling’s intervention was after Patrick, (then 7 years old), swung a baseball bat at an older boy who was, he thought, harassing him. Fortunately, he only hit the boy’s bicycle and did not cause any bodily harm. Liling explained to my wife (with me as translator) what Patrick had done, how he had misunderstood the older boy’s actions, and how, while no one was hurt this time, he should not be swinging his baseball bat at anyone. The next issue requiring Liling’s attention was a neighbor’s distress about Patrick chasing their chickens around. Again, she had me translate to Rebecca and Patrick that the chickens were not pets, and were peoples’ livelihoods (if not their future meal); and that neighbors got upset whenever Patrick chased them around. Her then 14-year-old daughter Liya became my son Patrick’s ‘elder sister’ (jiejie). While Patrick knew Liya’s name when we lived in the village, he remembers her today as jiejie, since that was what he regularly called her.

In the village, it was understood that we were, essentially, appended onto Widow Ye’s family; when Patrick would talk about jiejie, everyone understood that he meant Liya. During the spring festival holidays, we went back with Liling to her natal village in the mountains (as many of our neighbors would do), a couple of hours of hard driving away. If other village women wanted to explain something to Rebecca, they would go to Liling first, since somehow Liling’s Hakka-flavored Mandarin was more understandable to my Koreanist anthropologist wife. We even gave up travelling to the Bank of China in the county seat to change money. Instead, we would take the Hong Kong dollars
that I had and give them to Liling, who would arrange for someone to change them over to Chinese renminbi. When another neighbor installed an electric fence to catch rats that were gnawing on vegetables, Patrick came home with one to show Rebecca (to her dismay); it was Liling who immediately came to the Rescue, taking the rat and showing Patrick how to skin it, explaining to him that it was good for old people in the village to eat. In preparation for spring festival food exchanges, Rebecca and Patrick joined Liling’s family to make jianban, fried balls of sweetened, glutinous rice, so that we would have food to serve to people who visited us over the Lunar New Year.

In contrast to my three prior field visits to Little Rome, when I stayed in the rectory, when I arrived with Patrick and Rebecca I was instead treated like a father and householder, albeit one who did strange things like running off with three cameras to the sound of fireworks. I had met Liling during an earlier visit, and, while she was welcoming at that time, it was not until she took charge of Rebecca and Patrick that I became aware of her everyday concerns and hopes for her family. As Brandes (2008) describes based on experiences in his own fieldwork, where he avoided spending time with a widow because of his own gendered expectations as well as his interpretation of local cultural norms, I thought my own reputation in the village would be challenged by my being seen regularly visiting Liling. Without our inclusion as a part of her family and the presence of my wife and son, it would have been ‘inconvenient’ for me as a man to spend so much time with an available widow. I ended up spending a lot of time with Liling without incurring much gossip, since other villagers could clearly see the presence of Rebecca and Patrick, and their obvious need of Liling and jiejie’s supervision. Liling often told me about things that others would be hesitant to share with me. For example, Liling came over one afternoon to invite me to go with her to the execution of a prisoner, which was being held in the county seat; later that afternoon, she rescinded the invitation, since she was told that it would not be appropriate for me to attend the public execution. This follows Cupples and Kindon’s conclusion that:

> ‘When we are accompanied, the research process becomes more complex and the cross-cultural encounter between self and other takes on more facets. It demonstrates that research encounters rarely take place on a one-to-one basis but that they are mediated by other experiences.’ (2003: 223)

Without my close relationship with Liling, mediated by Rebecca and Patrick, I would not have learned about many of the things that most concerned her, especially Liya’s future.
From the intimacy established by becoming part of Liling’s household, I learned about ‘buying a seat’ (*mai zuowei*). At the time of our extended fieldwork, Liya (like many other teenagers in the village) was taking exams to enter high school, and Liling hoped that she would score well enough to get a place in the ‘key high school’ in the county seat; this would help ensure that she could later compete in the *gaokao* (the nationwide college entrance exam, which greatly impacts the prospects of Chinese youth; see Kipnis 2011), and this in turn would hopefully get her a place in university. It was one thing hearing ‘official’ explanations from people about educational strategies, especially since my work unit (*danwei*, the Chinese institution responsible for my presence) was Jiaying University in Meizhou City. A retired high school English teacher (who had been a seminarian in 1949 when the Communist Party established the People’s Republic), who taught Chinese to Rebecca and Patrick every week, would explain the ‘official’ version of how things worked in Chinese public education. Because jiejie happened to be in the midst of trying to get into the Jiaoling Key High School, I learned a lot about the different strategies that people followed. When Liya didn’t score high enough to be guaranteed a spot at the school, Liling could buy a seat for her (which she did). To fund this expense, I further learned that Liling was part of a rotating credit cooperative, which she tapped into for the extra money needed to get Liya into the right high school. By the time we left China for Rebecca’s fieldwork in Seoul, Korea, Liya was attending the key high school in Jiaoliling City.

**Teenage girls**

While Liya was a part of our everyday household, the other teenage girls in the village were not. Because of our honorary status as a village household, our doors were opened up to the other village children, and their parents would allow them (often encourage them) to come by and practice English. While Patrick was not as interested in having these young teenage girls come by the house, Rebecca often welcomed their company, and I got to know a few of them pretty well. One of them, Xiao Li, was also in Liya’s class. Xiao Li was not close friends with Liya, though, and thus brought another group of girls into our social sphere. Again, if I had been a lone, male researcher, it would have been unseemly for these young teenage girls to come by the house as often as they did. They would often see me going out to do fieldwork on a funerary ritual or some other event with my camera equipment, and since they hung around the house, I showed them how to use the various cameras and computer equipment that I had brought to the village for fieldwork.
Xiao Li, unfortunately, did not have grades as good as Liya, nor did her family have the financial resources for education beyond what was mandatory. She had little chance of getting a place in the key high school that would put her on the track to college. One day, Xiao Li came over and asked for my advice about her future. She could go to a vocational school in Meixian where she could learn how to be a secretary – that was an expensive option. She could join the novices in Meizhou City and become a Catholic sister – that was the option being pushed by the priest and sisters in the village. She could also join many of her friends and get a factory job in Shenzhen. To improve her chances of gaining local employment, Xiao Li asked if she could come over regularly and learn how to use the computer. I had brought a desktop computer from the US with me to the village, and was in the process of learning wubi (a Chinese character input system, which I myself never mastered). Once a week, I would even run a telephone line to my neighbor’s house to dial into a Hong Kong server to collect email. I agreed to teach her as much as I could whenever I was free. I also asked Xiao Li to take pictures for me; in fact, I asked her to recruit some of her friends for something that I wanted to try out.

As I have written in a previous article (Lozada 2006), I extended a methodology that Collier and Collier described as ‘interviewing with photographs’ (1986: 99–115). I asked Liya, Xiao Li, and another girl (all neighbors and classmates in the last year of middle school, but not part of the same friendship group) to take as many pictures as they wanted over the course of a week. I would then develop the film and print the pictures, as long as they let me keep the negatives. As I argued in that article, these photographs provide a cultural inventory, which was selectively chosen by these girls to highlight the family’s prosperity and modern lifestyle. Because the pictures were taken by the people in Little Rome themselves, and not by an outsider, the photographs captured a local framing of a picture. The framing of a photograph – determining the subject of a picture, locating the subject, defining the boundaries of the photograph, the perspective shown – is a cultural process that revealed their transnational dreams of modernity.

Because Xiao Li knew me well, and her parents were supportive of her spending a lot of her free time with me, I was able to gain entrance into a world that would have been otherwise alien territory for an adult man – the world of rural teenage girls in 1990s China. In exploring the gender baggage that male anthropologists bring to the field, Brandes (2008) suggests that the anthropologists’ own (mis)conceptions and expectations can restrict the interactions that male fieldworkers have with women. Brandes in particular
notes how he avoided contact with socially-available widows and teenage girls because of his gender. While female anthropologists are perceived as social hermaphrodites by a local society (2008: 146), Brandes posits that a male anthropologist can begin to transcend perceived limitations of gender ideologies by first acknowledging both the fieldworker’s own cultural baggage and the host society’s gender ideas. Along similar lines, Berliner concludes in his analysis of men conducting fieldwork on women that ‘being a man does not automatically restrict access to information about women’s issues’ (2008: 175).

For me, entering the world of teenage girls in village China was fraught with social dangers, both real and self-perceived. Even in totally innocuous circumstances, I sometimes got caught up in the drama that teenage girls create. One time, at an early-evening New Year’s celebration held in the church compound, I was asked to sing a song in a gathering attended by many of the villagers. I noticed that as people performed, others would come up and give them bouquets of artificial flowers. After I finished singing, Xiao Li’s best friend came up to me and gave me a bouquet; as a joke (a stupid one, as it turned out), I refused it and made a face, hamming it up for the crowd. She stormed away, with tears in her eyes. The following day, Xiao Li came over with her friend, and explained that what I had done had humiliated her friend in front of the entire village. I explained that I was only kidding around and profusely apologized. After a week, Xiao Li’s friend forgave me.

Even with my family accompanying me in the field, I heard from friends that people in the village had noticed that Xiao Li spent a lot of time at my place, and there was some gossip about what we were doing. One of my neighbors, a young man who was the most eligible bachelor in the county, as a water quality engineer, told me that he heard others calling her ‘my little wife’ (xiao taitai) implying that our relationship was sexual. But because I was in the village as a husband and father, and not just as a lone anthropologist, most of the people in the village understood that there was nothing funny going on with Xiao Li’s visits, and would defend me from such gossip. In the end, like me, Xiao Li did not master wubi, which would have made her a desirable secretary and secured for her good, local employment. To the disappointment of Sister Huang, the senior nun in the village, she also did not join the novices at the bishop’s residence in Meizhou City. After visiting the village in 1998 upon leaving China for Korea for Rebecca’s own dissertation fieldwork, I discovered that she had opted to go to Shenzhen to work in a factory, along with a number of other girls from Little Rome.
Outsiders and difference

While Liya jiejie was Patrick’s go-to person for answers to questions, Xiao Dan was Patrick’s best buddy in the village. Because the staff at Fudan Elementary (so named because of a historical association with the university) were hesitant about adding Patrick to their classes, Rebecca home-schooled Patrick for the year and a half that we lived in Meixian. Patrick would usually finish his schoolwork before lunch early in the day, and wait anxiously for Xiao Dan and the other kids to walk past our house on their way home from school. While adult social life was signified by the opening of doors, village children’s lives were governed by the ringing of bells. School structured the social life of most of the children. However, it was one that Patrick was excluded from because he was homeschooled by Rebecca. The difference in routines meant that Patrick’s social circle was largely self-selected and was not focused around the culture of ‘deskmates’ and class units that defines most Chinese children’s social lives.

Patrick met Xiao Dan soon after our arrival, since he was exactly the same age and lived only a few houses away. Their favorite activity was running around the village, doing what gangs of little boys do (but not chasing chickens, after Liling’s intervention). I remember one particular afternoon, when Xiao Dan came running over saying that something had happened to Patrick – we had no idea what, since Xiao Dan didn’t explain it more before Patrick arrived soaking wet, covered head to toe in what appeared to be mud (though the smell suggested otherwise). We then heard from the boys (and another adult neighbor) that they had been jumping over some boards, and Patrick broke through and fell into a latrine. Rebecca and I immediately started laughing, but Patrick did not think it was funny and started to cry.

Their other favorite pastime was playing on the GameBoy. I think this was the first Mandarin Chinese that Patrick learned: da youxiji, hao buhao? (do you want to play on the GameBoy?). Early on, a number of girls about the same age as Patrick would show up to play, but Patrick and the other boys would end up doing something physical; the girls preferred to use Patrick’s crayons and draw pictures, so after a while they stopped coming by. Xiao Dan was Patrick’s closest companion. At times, Xiao Dan would end up eating dinner with us, while at other times Patrick would end up eating dinner with Xiao Dan’s family.

Transgression was a common thread in many of the situations which brought me closer to friends and neighbors through Patrick. Besides being 7 years old, Patrick was the only non-anthropologist in the family, and as such did not have an awareness of the cultural sensitivities that anthropologists take
for granted in an ethnographic research scenario. One particular issue was the income disparity between our family and our village neighbors. As trained anthropologists and adults, Rebecca and I understood the potential problems that could develop from this issue, and we tried to avoid ostentatious displays of wealth. For example, Rebecca and I consciously decided not to buy a washing machine, since we noticed that some of our neighbors continued to do laundry in the irrigation canals.

As a child, however, for Patrick money continued to be a major source of complications in the relations between us and our neighbors. Patrick reports that there were a number of times when he used his own allowance in ways that reinforced our problematic status as relatively wealthy outsiders. For example, there was a period where Patrick would pay some of the older kids in the village to ferry him around on the backs of their bikes, until I explained how this interaction could be problematic. The most memorable cultural transgression, however, may have been during the celebration of the Chinese New Year, during which young children visit families around the village to ask for *hongbao* (small red envelopes full of money for children). Patrick’s *hongbao* were particularly generous. Liling gave him 100 yuan – quite a large sum for the village then. When Fr. Liao, the village pastor, gave him 50 yuan (still a very generous sum), he peeked into the envelope and said, ‘That’s it? Widow Ye gave me 100 yuan,’ much to the young priest’s chagrin. Even Patrick’s GameBoy was itself a reminder of difference. Video games had not made it to the village in 1996, and it was a constant source of attention for the boys in the village. Patrick has written that for some of them, it was part of why they hung out with him. By owning the GameBoy, Patrick was the arbiter of who got access to the machine. He traded in on the privilege he had as a Western child to gain social status among the kids in the village.

As Shea notes in this volume (Chap. 2), children’s cultural missteps in an unfamiliar environment remind us that intellectual recognition of difference is not enough, and that such highly charged events (as seen from the perspective of a child) come with both opportunities and liabilities. On the one hand, his actions emphasized existing social, economic, and cultural differences. The story of the young priest is only one example of a situation made more awkward by the innocence of 7-year old Patrick. On the other hand, however, these transgressive acts made me play the visible role of disciplining patriarch and father, an established role in the social order of the village. Unlike the experience discussed by Friedl (1998), where there was a marked difference between her own sense of disciplining children and those of the villagers in
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Figure 5.1. Patrick and Liya, 1996.

Figure 5.2. Patrick (middle), Xiao Dan, and his sister, 1997.

Figure 5.3. Patrick in 1996, with the village in the background.
Iran, there were marked overlaps between my own Asian-American and my wife’s German-American approaches to raising children and those of our Chinese Hakka neighbors. Unlike Friedl, I did not have to defend my methods of child-rearing (nor was I offended by my neighbors’ strategies), though one neighbor commented that using the electric oven to bake bread would make us all fat (they were probably right). Nonetheless, by acting as a child, outside the norms of adulthood and research, Patrick created interactions that would not have been possible otherwise.

Since I was introduced to people in the village through the Church, the people whom I got to know best were Church leaders and active Catholics. The family from whom we rented the house, for example, was active in the Church (but had decided to move to the more convenient and modern county seat). Widow Ye Liling was very active, singing in the choir (as well as getting involved in Fr. Liao’s business, as the women in the village always seemed to be doing). Everyone in the village seemed to be Catholic, as I could see from daily mass attendance, Christmas celebrations, and other village activities – the Church compound itself seemed to be the social center of the village.

Xiao Dan and his family were not, it turns out, active Catholics; in fact, they were considered ‘outsiders’ (though one of the women in the household had connections to the village). Patrick’s interactions with him underlined the conclusion reached by Fernandez: that ‘children move us beyond the local community’ (1987: 198). For Fernandez in rural Spain, having children in the field meant encountering the health-care bureaucracy for a sick child and learning about regional differences in fiesta speeches because of children’s social activities, which extended beyond her village. While Xiao Dan and his family spatially lived within the political boundaries of the village, socially they were outside the village’s cultural center of gravity. If not for the coincidence of the boys being the same age, I would have had very little opportunity to interact with this family. Most of the people in this family did not attend mass, and they did not have much social interaction with the people whom I knew; in fact, Widow Ye made a number of disparaging comments about that family (though she largely refrained, because of Patrick’s friendship with Xiao Dan). Without Patrick, there would have been little chance of my interacting with people who were less active in the Church, the dominant institution in organizing the social life of the village.

Many studies of anthropological methodology have emphasized the power of the anthropologist in the fieldwork encounter, emphasizing the need for understanding positionality and reflexivity. Patrick’s friendship with Xiao Dan,
however, suggests one way in which informants also have power in structuring the experiences of the participant observant. In fact, I have found my own experiences in doing fieldwork in China not to be congruous with the idea of the fieldworker as dominant because of race, class, or other identity markers, as these studies have suggested. Conducting fieldwork in the People’s Republic of China, especially in the 1990s, meant navigating the hazardous channels of Chinese governmental bureaucracy (also see Heimer and Thøgersen 2006). Those of us who do work in China are strongly dependent on the largess of cadres for that all-important ‘invitation letter’ (yaoqinghan), the necessary requirement for obtaining an F visa to do extended fieldwork (see also Solinger 2006). Much preliminary fieldwork in China is directed towards obtaining permission to do research and gaining an invitation letter. As a graduate student, my PhD advisor had the senior, post-fieldwork, graduate students conduct a workshop for the more junior, pre-fieldwork graduate students, to prepare them for such practicalities. Thus my classmate, the Chinese anthropologist Yan Yunxiang, delivered a useful talk one afternoon focused on how to get permission to do fieldwork – the necessity of meeting and banqueting with cadres from the provincial level down to the township or village level, developing personal relations (renqing) with cadres, and navigating through university bureaucracies.

In fact, while I had written my research statement emphasizing my fieldwork with Chinese Catholics, my university host Prof. Fang Xuejia asked me to
modify the statement to emphasize ‘Hakka cultural research’ in my letter to the provincial higher education bureau because he knew that it would be less politically sensitive (mingan). The purpose of my first summer of preliminary fieldwork was to go through the Catholic hierarchy (when I carried letters of introduction from priests and bishops); in my second summer of preliminary fieldwork, I went through the university and political hierarchy (with letters of introduction from my university), even visiting the village accompanied by county cadres (who graciously ignored the fact that villagers already recognized me). As fieldworkers, we are also dependent on the informants we meet, and the social networks we enter into through the people we first meet in the field. Having Patrick and Rebecca accompany me to the field added complexity to my own network of informants as their networks mingled with my own.

**Opening doors**

In addition to being a kid, Patrick also served as my research assistant, helping me to videotape or take pictures with my then state-of-the-art 640x480 Kodak DC50 digital camera. While little of this material would be usable for an ethnographic film, he was able to help me document details such as the order of procession in a funerary ritual. More importantly, his presence gave people access to me. As with the relationships between outside researchers and research assistants discussed by Turner, Patrick was able to elicit revealing emotions among villagers through the visible performances of our father-son relationship (Turner 2010: 215). When he inevitably got into trouble for one thing or another, they would see me scold him; when we played catch behind our house, people would come by to see what we were doing and chat about life in Little Rome and America.

Having a family meant abiding by the social rules of the village, such as keeping our front gate open during the day. While this enforced sociality was good most of the time, it also meant that we had to put up with another neighbor who would come over to check out our stuff. She had a toddler who would sometimes take Patrick’s toys (which was usually not a big deal for Patrick, since he never touched his GameBoy), and she would often make comments about how good a particular item was, hinting that she wouldn’t mind getting it when we moved out of the village. She was also the village Amway lady, and we felt compelled to buy cleaning products from her that we didn’t really need.

But she also joined in when, as a parting gift to the village, we chipped in to build a cement road on our side of the village. Sometime after the rice had been transplanted for the first crop, the head of the production team came
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over with my neighbor (the father of the most eligible bachelor in the county) to see if I would fund a cement road that they wanted to build. I had been looking for some way to express my thanks to my neighbors for allowing me to intrude in their everyday life and answering all those dumb questions I asked, and especially for welcoming my son and wife to their families. Everyone contributed some money (though I paid for the bulk of the supplies) or added their labor. I worked with the Amway lady and other neighbors digging up stones and leveling the ground, which she did while wearing heels and a pink jacket. We did hire three laborers who did most of the skilled work (setting up the foundation and pouring the cement), but we all worked together for a couple of days doing much of the preparatory work.°

If I had not had my family with me, I doubt I would have had the same access to everyday life in the Little Rome community. For starters, I could not have justified having our own house in the village. In the past, I had stayed in the rectory, where there was plenty of room to house single men, even after a young seminarian moved into the village to help Fr. Liao. The priest had a cook who would feed the priest, the three sisters who lived in the village (even though one of them actually slept in her family home), and the two catechists who worked for the church. Without Patrick and Rebecca, I doubt that I could have spent as much time with Widow Ye or Xiao Li, since the social pressure and gossip would have been too much to overcome. Because Patrick and Xiao Dan were buddies, I was also able to meet people who would not have been in my social network, which centered around the church. Having a family meant opening the door – giving me more intimate access to people’s everyday lives, while also exposing me and my family to the observations of villagers in Little Rome.

In coming with me to do fieldwork, my wife and son made me more human to people in Little Rome. This conclusion has already been reached by others, including many of the contributors to the Cassell 1987 volume and Cupples and Kindon (2003). The difference that I would like to emphasize here, however, is that my family caused me to be seen specifically as a father and husband, and not just a visiting foreigner. Much of the literature on accompanied fieldwork is written by women (see Cassell 1987) and comments on the ‘double burden’ placed on women fieldworkers, who are under social pressure to be both good professional anthropologists and good mothers (cf. Sutton 1998; Starrs et al 2001). Tripp makes this contrast explicitly when she asserts that while academic competition makes life difficult for fathers, it is even more so for fieldworking mothers. Tripp writes: “Good” mothers are not supposed to wrench their children from their safe family environment and

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predictable routines and take them to parts unknown for months at a time away from their father’ (2002: 802). But what about good fathers? I did not feel that I was taking my son away from a safe environment and putting him at physical risk in the field (the second category of ‘macho’ fieldworking parent, according to Cassell (1987: 262), though I understand that living in relatively technologically-advanced China (even in the countryside) in the 1990s is very different from Hugh-Jones’ experience in the Amazon in the 1970s (Hugh-Jones 1987). I also had the immense benefit of having an anthropologist spouse who assumed much of the household and childcare burden; this was reciprocated after we moved to Seoul for her fieldwork a year later, at which point I became the primary care provider.

As a fieldworking father with my anthropologist wife and child, we did not have any domestic helpers, and as a result did not have any social or ideological conflicts over hiring domestic labor (Fluehr-Lobban and Lobban 1987; Cupples and Kindon 2003). Perhaps because of my Asian-American upbringing by parents who had just emigrated to the US and Rebecca’s training as an East Asianist, we also did not experience a challenge of cultural relativism when it came to child-rearing (Friedl 1998; Sutton 1998). Nonetheless, as a fieldworking father, I did share many of the other reported experiences, especially the ability to gain access to greater cultural intimacy, broader fieldsite networks, and deeper incorporation into everyday village life. In contrasting my experiences with those of fieldworking mothers, I feel that I had an easier transition to living in the field with my family because of the specifics of doing research in China; but more importantly, I did not have the Western cultural burden of motherhood weighing me down, since less is expected of fathers in terms of raising children. Frohlick (2002) makes this distinction most clear in her critique of masculinist, disembodied models of fieldwork, which meant that she has had to overcome both professional expectations and personal disapproval of her decision to bring her children to a high-altitude basecamp in the Himalayas. Frohlick asserts that women as professional researchers in the field continue to be more anomalous than footloose men because of wider continuing gendered conceptions of work and family. Fieldworking fathers do not have this kind of double burden. If anything, as a male anthropologist, I receive approval from professional colleagues and local informants for displaying a commitment to family relations, since, for work reasons, many Chinese fathers and mothers live far apart from their children (who stay home in the villages cared for by grandparents). Like Patrick on his return to China as a working adult, I get ‘street credibility’ as a professional male researcher bringing his family to the field. This situation in the field runs
parallel to the dynamics in academic workplaces. Female professors are more hesitant to bring a child to work because of unexpected situations like school closures because of possible disapproval of bringing home into work; male colleagues who do this are lauded for their involvement in childcare. Women’s double-burden is alive and well. Over twenty-five years after the publication of Cassell’s volume (1987), and close to fifteen years after the special issue in *Anthropology and Humanism* on the implications of bringing children to the field, our gendered expectations of parenthood and professionalism continue to inflect our experiences in the field and the knowledge produced from fieldwork.

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1 Although this paper was written by both of us, we found it difficult to integrate our two voices in a way that was readable. Since the village fieldwork was primarily conducted by the father, we decided to write it from the father-anthropologist’s perspective, with Patrick writing in the third person. Much of the third-person perspective on Patrick was actually written by Patrick in the first person, then edited by him, to preserve his voice.

2 Maryknoll is a short name for the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, founded in 1911. China was their first mission site. For more information, see Wiest 1997, Lozada 2001.

3 This is the subject of a previous article (Lozada 2006), where I talk about how my acceptance as a photographer was more readily understood by my neighbors than my being an anthropological fieldworker.

4 This was our official status as well, since when we moved into the village we had to fill out paperwork for a temporary household registration in the village at the local police station.

5 In fact, I helped with the home-schooling of an American teenager (the only other American family within a hundred miles) in high school chemistry (I was a chemistry and physics major in college, and his parents asked for my help); he commuted the 40 kilometers from Meizhou City to meet with me every other week.

6 The decision to homeschool was not made by us, but by the village school whose staff thought it would be disruptive to have a second-grader who did not speak fluent Chinese; because of their rural setting, they did not have the capacity for a foreign child to join them. This situation contrasts with our recent 2012 experience in urban Shanghai, where my youngest son Michael was able to attend an elementary school affiliated with Fudan University.

7 At the time of my dissertation fieldwork, Fr. Liao was a recently ordained priest, the first ordained since the diocese came back above ground in the 1980s. He has since become the bishop of the Meizhou diocese and moved to his diocesan seat in Meizhou City.

8 The village was still divided into production teams (the official political structure of rural villages in the 1990s), but they did little other than organizing clean-up of the irrigation canals and other infrastructural projects. Production team cadres did intervene in other mundane incidents, such as when one couple was on the verge of getting divorced, but discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper.

9 They did allow me to take off one afternoon when we heard the sound of fireworks; I left our work early one day to photograph the prayer meetings and the wake of a recently deceased person from the village.

10 Note that political scientist Tripp was herself the child of two anthropologists, whose parents took her on fieldwork research trips in Tanzania. She specifically reflects on her own experiences where she went to the field as a single mother, with her husband remaining in the United States. See also Shea, Chap. 2 this volume.
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Mother-Daughter Reflections as Situated Co-Researchers in Southwest China

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As mother and daughter in the field, we crossed many boundaries including those of self, public and private spheres, with changing power dynamics. We are Peg (Margaret), who was pursuing long-term ethnographic research in Southwest China, and Melissa, who accompanied her mother in the field in 1992–93 and again in 2000. More than a decade later, we revisit these times, thinking about what we can learn about being situated co-researchers. While in China together, we engaged in three-way negotiations of Han Chinese, Sani Yi, and Euro-American cultures. Over the years, infrastructure and living conditions in China have changed dramatically due to internal and external factors, while bureaucratic constraints continue. Our story starts when Yunnan Province had just opened up and globalization was starting to make a big impact.

Being in China shaped our experiences, as well as the embodied complicities of age, gender, nationality, culture, class, race/ethnicity, and personality in our relationships as mother and daughter in the field. Feminist theory informed Peg’s research at the time, and is now central to both of us as academics. In this chapter, we draw from a cumulative genealogy of ideas about feminist ethnography that were percolating in academic circles by 1993 (Rofel 1993) and are still current today. The term/construct of ‘co-researcher’ (Lane et al. 2012), which was a later outgrowth of these and other theories, refers to participants involved directly in decision-making during a research project (Lane et al 2012). The approach we take here as co-researchers reflects feminist sensibilities about reflexivity, positionality, situ-
ated knowledges, and a desire to challenge the ethics and equity of silencing collaborators, family members (Aarsand 2012), assistants, and ‘subjects’ in field research analysis and reports. Our analysis considers an ethnographer’s child, multiple government-assigned research assistants, and a community participant or ‘informant’ as kinds of situated co-researchers, seeking to discriminate and acknowledge a multiplicity and diversity of co-researchers within varied power fields.

Using the term ‘informant’ to name a supplier of information may elide the lenses or the positionality of the person informing. Likewise, feminist discomfort around power positions in research calls for nuanced understandings of the production of knowledge. ‘Situated co-researchers’ is not synonymous with ‘co-ethnographers’. Rather, we acknowledge that the ethnographer controls how knowledge is interpreted and analyzed for academic and policy consumption. This power is shared only when, as in this chapter (see also Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume), analysis is likewise shared among co-researchers/co-authors. Following a chronological dialogue about our experiences in 1993 and 2000, we will return to these issues in our discussion and conclusions.

PEG: We ask what does it mean to name accompanying kids, or not, as co-researchers in fieldwork? Many of the family issues we encountered are explored in a small, mainly Euro-American-centric literature on kids and families in the field (Cassell 1987; Flinn 1998; Frohlick 2002; Tripp 2002; chapters in this volume). Like these folks, we experienced the effects of fieldwork on kids and the kids’ effects on fieldwork that enhance or delay research relationships, and challenge parenting philosophies. I maintain that we did not encounter extreme conditions, as, for example, those experienced by Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ children, who were active research participants and often miserable (1987). Misery and joy are relative concepts coloring our words as we boldly go forth with this experimental recollecting.

MELISSA: I have joked that writing this chapter is ‘cheaper than therapy,’ but how did our co-researching negotiate our own hierarchies? How did this knowledge production mark the two of us? Critically, it was never just a dialogue, we were never really on our own. Rather, we worked hard to make our communities, and always functioned in a social network.

We will explore some of these dynamics in several locations and times: arriving and living in Kunming; visiting Sani communities in Shilin; and traveling to Panzhihua during 1992–93. In 2000 we revisited our roles with a brief trip to the original field site, prompting us to ask how our interpersonal
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and intercultural dynamics as situated co-researchers had shifted and what appeared unchanged.

PEG: Initial plans for my yearlong project on ethnicity and gender interactions in Sani communities had called for eight months of fieldwork in the countryside. This was immediately compromised by controversy over women’s reproductive health research being carried out by the Ford Foundation in Yunnan. My funding agency, the Committee on Scholarly Communication with China (CSCC), negotiated with provincial officials to allow four months of field research accompanied by paid research assistants (peitong) from my work unit, the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (YASS). The topic was narrowed to tourism development of Sani communities in Shilin (Stone Forest) National Park district, just a few hours away from Kunming. I could, however, unofficially travel and conduct urban fieldwork. That, combined with stretching my official time by breaking it into small increments, became a good work-around of a very restricted situation, allowing me to bring you, a kid, along.

The CSCC’s guidelines for Research Scholars included the following:

Chinese authorities strongly discourage foreign researchers from bringing children with them to China. This policy is based on a variety of considerations. There is no free housing market in China; housing is arranged through your host institution. This housing is often hotel space for which you pay the going daily rate. Rates begin at about $30 per day . . . Health conditions in China are poorer than in the US, as are facilities to treat sick children. Knowing this the Chinese feel that bringing children to China adds to the burdens you, and perhaps more to the point, your host institution will have to bear. However, there have been previous grantees who have brought their children.

These warnings did not weigh heavily on me because I had already formed good relationships with YASS colleagues. My hope was that all of our family members would visit on their vacations. What finally worked out was that you, Melissa, could come with me at the beginning, and stay for four months. Life was made all the more interesting by the fact that you were in transition, from girl to teenager. The plan was to divide our time between the city and several communities in the countryside where I had previously made contacts. If we got sick there was our supply of antibiotics and contingency plans to fly out to Hong Kong. You would be homeschooled and could move around with me. Your Dad, Walt, and I thought this would be good for you and were sorry it had not worked out for your sister Heather, too. When your Dad came to
retrieve you in April, he was in the midst of single-parenting for the whole year, other than those few days in China and another brief mid-year break in the US. Our year of living dangerously had profound effects on all of us.

**In the field**

Once we settled in Yunnan, a rhythm evolved around daily tasks of schooling for Melissa; participant observation, interviewing and writing for Peg; eating and cleaning; and socializing. We were not always together. Sometimes Melissa visited or stayed with friends, took Chinese lessons, or spent time on her own while Peg was out. During these times, Peg was often with Sani women vendors in Kunming or on quick trips to Shilin. Other times, especially in the countryside, we were inseparable (Figure 6.1). While Melissa’s direct impact on data collection varied, she was always a factor.

**Arriving and living in Kunming**

**MELISSA:** I have very strong memories of our flight to China on my 13th birthday, during which we made clothing for a doll you had given me. Once in Kunming, some events, like picking out ingredients to be cooked at a local...
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restaurant, have stayed with me. The next-door Muslim bakery provided a familiar sensory experience, as did French bread from a Vietnamese café. I couldn’t go with you to the café because it was a trek across town, and we hadn’t yet mastered the art of me sitting sideways on the back of the bike. Food often features in these memories – both comforting and traumatizing (see: squashed pigs’ heads at New Year’s; eating dog in the country; and dining at the student’s cafeteria on campus). My time in China as a child has a lot to do with why, as an adult, I choose not to eat meat.

I remember being viscerally scared, and therefore feeling very young, one time when we went to a restaurant where there was a jar of pickled lizards near the front door. I was afraid to walk past them, let alone eat anything at the restaurant. I didn’t feel bullied by you, but felt that I should be interested like you were. Instead, I felt angry and overwhelmed. I also have really good, communal memories of eating, such as cooking with my local Chinese friend Lucy in the hallway kitchen outside her family’s apartment.

PEG: We lived in the Pink Palace, the Yunnan University (YunDa) Chinese Language Center Guest House, in a two-room suite with a clear view of the ‘foreigners’ street below. Our daily rent was intensely negotiated with the Center and set at $6 US cash. International students, including families who were obviously missionaries, surrounded us. While they voiced our potential for damnation, their group had successfully lobbied for satellite TV, providing access to BBC and MTV Asia. With a bathroom, an illegal hotplate, and occasional hot running water, we were much better off than most local friends. When we arrived, it was wintertime. Thankfully I had brought duct tape to seal drafty windows. Little did we know that come ‘spring’ in early March, the room attendants would confiscate our blankets, leaving us unprepared to deal with the lingering cold.

Communication, both locally and with the outside world, was often problematic, due to cultural expectations, language differences and functioning in an era before cell phones or email. We just had funky landlines, faxes and written mail.

I soon started a research project with a small group of Sani women who gathered most days across from the Pink Palace, readily monitored by both of us from our windows. There they sold handicrafts, and changed money on the black market. I sat with them, sewing, and ultimately collaborated in the creation of new tourism souvenirs for my Sani companions to sell – little representations of Sani bodies: dressed cloth dolls (Swain 2004: 114) (Figure 6.2).

MELISSA: In later years, I got a lot of mileage out of telling scandalized friends how you announced my first period to the entire building, and the
various reactions of our neighbors: the missionaries shying away, the German Anthropology students congratulating me on becoming a woman. Sometimes when you were away in Shilin, our American friend Alysha stayed with me in our apartment (Figure 6.3).

Mostly, I think I was glad that I didn’t always have to make the journey, and could stay at home to watch TV with my two parakeets. When we did go to
Shilin, I felt unsafe on the country roads, but knew that everything would be OK. If the chickens on the bus could make it, so could I.

**Sani-land**

**PEG:** Out in the countryside we encountered the ‘heroic’ phases of fieldwork, when our day-to-day lives were similar to our least fortunate friends in Kunming, like migrants and university staff. Sanitation, water and electricity could be dicey and walking was often the best mode of transportation. Our
first time out to Shilin was on a YunDa Magazine-organized photo-shoot. We just bummed along on this road trip, made possible because so few Language Center students went and they needed bodies (Figure 6.4).

While we were in Shilin, my old friend (since 1987) Bi found us. Bi dismissed you to go join the rest of the tour group, while she and I went to hang out with her mother to talk about our returning for lunar New Year as well as making a Sani dress for you. In late January we took the tourist bus out to Shilin and joined in the festivities with Bi’s extended family for several days. My budget for that trip of less than $50 included bus fares, horse cart rides, two nights’ lodging, snacks and a token payment of fifty RMB (about $6.25) for your Sani outfit, the same amount as one night in the local guesthouse. We ate most of our meals with the family. My first allotment of official field time was for ten days in February with a young woman handler and assistant (peitong) from YASS, whom you nicknamed ‘Fuzzy.’

MELISSA: I think it was our first night out in Shilin together when we stayed in a hotel/guesthouse in the park. I remember it being so cold and that the linens were visibly dirty. Soon we started staying at that guesthouse on the edge of the village, past the lake and across from an open market, with public trench toilets on the floor below ours. Still, it was a step up from the official lodgings we had first encountered. There were lots of loud, holidaying tourists, who would leave the place littered with beer cans. Fuzzy stayed with us, too,

![Figure 6.5. Melissa and Fuzzy working, February 1993. Photograph by Margaret Swain.](image)
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and part of my job was to distract Fuzzy while you did your actual work. I was happy to have the job (Figure 6.5).

Bi’s mom was omnipresent in the village and park. She seemed to have her fingers in everything. It was frustrating that I couldn’t understand her well, but her bossiness transcended linguistics, so things tended to work out. I have strong memories of the animals there – it was never entirely clear to me which were for eating, and which were meant as pets. The human relationships were much easier to map, probably because you were leading the way. When visiting Bi at her home, she cooked a dish for us of yellow squash, meat (dog?) and potatoes with little green onions – she cooked everything in pig fat, so it tasted extra delicious. We visited some other villages during that time, as well, where the men sat around smoking out of giant bongs, and the women were usually working. In one place the family still had oxen living in the ground floor of their house. This must have been really far out in the country, because I remember having my hair touched by strangers more often there and having to pee in the woods. All of these memories are intensely corporeal.

Panzhihua

PEG: In March we took the train north from Kunming to Panzhihua, to visit our friend Steve Harrell. Our Chinese hosts, Steve’s colleagues, were appalled that such a delicate flower, which is what they literally called you, should travel that way. Although I was a predictably unruly Westerner, this child needed care from our hosts’ point of view. Perhaps they did have a point about your care. I have come to question some of my decisions on this trip, which now seems way more dangerous than the country buses we took back and forth between Kunming and Shilin. While Steve showed us around various sites, including a French Catholic Church in the countryside, his friends finagled a work-unit Jeep and driver for our return trip. This eleven-hour drive, of just us with Driver Wang, made it clear how different and cared for we were.

It was appalling how many resources were used to get us ‘safely’ back to Kunming, yet we had no choice but to be grateful. I believe if it had just been me, I would have been sent back home on the train.

MELISSA: On our way to Panzhihua, I remember getting to the train station and feeling really excited that we were going someplace different. The seats on the train were flat and hard, but I had a stick of sugarcane to chew on and spit out the window, so I was a happy camper. Once we got there, I cannot recall if I was sick or if the men there (I only remember men) simply treated me as
if I were. At any rate, they tempted me with chicken soup, head and all, and other delicacies. At one meal, I became much more aware of the social guanxi (network) of drivers, being seated with the driver’s teen nephew/son, who displayed his long sharp fingernails to mark his elite status. It was also my one time on a motorcycle, when you and I took a ‘cab’ through the city at night. In my memory, the concrete cityscape resembles something like an early twentieth-century futurist playground, all sharp edges and grey walls speeding past. Out in the country, we went with Steve to track down a miraculous Madonna statue and walked along the Yangtze, where I wanted to see fresh water dolphins, but saw instead some nuclear power plants. I knew that our chauffeured trip back to Kunming was a big deal, despite the fact that it was even longer and more uncomfortable than the train-ride there (Figure 6.6). I am sure I vocalized my fear that it was never going to end, and don’t know how you put up with me.

2000 conference, Shilin

PEG: Seven years later, we returned to Yunnan for a Yi Studies Conference in Shilin, and were able to visit several of our field sites in Sani Yi communities. You had morphed from adolescent kid to university student videographer, while I felt little changed myself. I was focused on hanging out with two Sani families: my old friends the Bis and the highly educated Catholic Qis. The Bis inadvertently
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Figure 6.7. Bi dressing Peg for the CCTV photographers, August 2000. Photograph by Melissa Swain.

Figure 6.8. Foreign faux-ethnics at Bi’s home, August 2000. Photograph by Bi Xiuzhi.
became involved in conference promotion when organizers managed to co-opt our visit to their small farmhouse. We were filmed by a CCTV crew for a program portraying foreign conference attendees, who just happened to be us and Uncle Steve, meeting local ethnic minorities (Figure 6.7 and Figure 6.8).

**MELISSA:** Our arrival back in China coincided dramatically with a tropical storm and a reunion in Shanghai with our friend Alysha. I had recently had major surgery, and was pretty grumpy – it was a rough first few days for the both of us. Once we made it back to Shilin, things that felt somewhat familiar, but also completely new, overwhelmed me. The old village was unrecognizable, and Bi lived somewhere different with her new husband and youngest daughter. I felt different, too, being a more ‘official’ part of your anthropological endeavor, and became increasingly uncomfortable recording people. I did not like what I
understood to be my positionality within a hierarchical transaction, which was not a terribly nuanced understanding of the situation or of your work. My recurring headaches and stomachaches during that time came from not feeling comfortable with what I thought was a process of objectifying people (Figure 6.9).

Discussion

Our analysis of these times together touches on some aspects of feminist theory that engage fieldwork and ethnography, and in particular the question of co-researchers in knowledge production. Discomfort with questions of power has been a basic dilemma in feminist fieldwork since its early days. We can trace a genealogy of feminist ethnography by, about and for women (Enslin 1994: 558) from the 1970s’ global women’s movement. Gender analysis of cultural ideas differentiating women and men in a given society moved beyond a previous focus on sex roles describing what women and men do. During the next few decades, ‘the paradigm shifted from “making women’s work visible” to the politics of representation’ (Panagakos 2011).

Core concepts of reflexivity and positionality grew from questions about identity politics. At first, reflexive feminist ethnographers were mainly concerned with how their individual identities influence results, rather than how such identities intersect with a researcher’s positionality or social standing relative to the people she is researching (Nagar and Geiger 2007: 2). Feminist standpoint theory, one approach to positionality developed from the 1970s to 1990s, emphasized that one’s position, as a woman, was fundamental to understanding women (Wolf 1996: 12). With the rise of post-colonial analysis, standpoint theory was challenged by elaborations of positionality and an awareness that that even if a researcher shared various positions (of gender, class, race, and other indicators of difference and diversity) with researched individuals or communities, this did not ‘necessarily lead to common understandings’ (ibid.: 1996: 13).

Donna Haraway (1988), in her seminal work on ‘situated knowledges’, offered a way forward from difficulties raised by standpoint theory. She added another factor to the mix, location (place/nation, time/history, and generation), thus situating the researchers’ position in knowledge production. Positionality then becomes relational, not fixed, allowing for multiple, partial viewpoints. This alternative approach reveals, in her words, ‘partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining ... webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology’ (Haraway 1988: 584). Operationalizing this perspective in feminist fieldwork involves being situated,
engaged, and accountable in the unequal power relations connecting various research locations.

Lisa Rofel (1993: 35–36), writing about her research as a Western woman amongst women in China from a self-reflexive location that insists all knowledge is situated, calls for ‘ethnographers – and their readers – to heed the postcolonial insistence that one account for the shifting terrain of power and meaning upon which the ethnographer and her various interlocutors – often known as “informants” on the one side and “theorists” on the other – strain to understand one another.’ Making informed decisions about if, when, and how to act, in the context of local, national, and international relations, allows researchers to put ‘our power differentials to productive use’ (Enslin 1994: 555–556). The ethnographer is accountable for how the ‘web’, the inter-connectedness of our personal positions and locations with other participants in the research process, comes to be interpreted.

Questions of power were central in Diane Wolf’s edited collection Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork (1996), which continues to be a primary text several decades on. Wolf focused in on three issues: power differences that stem from the positionality of the researcher and the researched (class, race, gender, nationality, etc.); power exerted ‘during the research process, such as defining the research relationship, unequal exchange, and exploitation’; and power in the politics of representation and writing during the post-fieldwork period within academia (ibid.: 2). By the early 1990s some scholars were questioning if there could even be a feminist ethnography, given the potential that empathy, intimacy, or friendship developing between a ‘feminist researcher and her subject could end up being more manipulative than traditional positivist methods,’ and never be equal (Wolf 1996: 20).

Dilemmas around power differentials and exploitation in research relationships continue to be significant issues for feminist ethnographers trained to think in terms of reflexivity, positionality, situated knowledges, praxis, and the desire to challenge the ethics and equity of silencing collaborators, family, assistants and ‘subjects’ in field research analysis and reports. Haraway’s perspective, fresh and exciting for Peg as she went off to do fieldwork for a year in China, helped her navigate the need for accountability and informed decision making in ethnographic research. In their reflections above, Melissa and Peg have described how fieldwork in China with a kid situated them in multiple locations, including with Sani women in Kunming city streets, Stone Forest tourist sites, and four rural villages; with Chinese friends and academic colleagues in their workplaces, communities, and homes; and in expat Western life in public and
private spaces. Sometimes these locations combined unpredictably, as in the 1993 visit to Panzhihua or the 2000 CCTV filming in Bi’s home. In each location and with each instance, Melissa’s and Peg’s positionalites of gender, race, age, nationality, abilities, and so on played out distinctly, while the relationship as mother/daughter endured.

Tamara Jacka, a self-described White Western feminist ethnographer working with rural Chinese women during the 1990s, combined reflexivity and positionality with an acute sense of location and of potential ‘situated solidarities’ (Nagar and Geiger 2007). She critically analyzed multidimensional struggles in her fieldwork across borders (China and the West) within the contexts of global capitalism and patriarchal socialism, attempting to synthesize a ‘shifting dialectic between Chinese and Western approaches’ (Jacka 1994: 665). From an urban Chinese research location, with a positionality and a time period similar to those of Jacka, Lisa Rofel (1993: 47) contended that those who write as Western feminists ‘must open up to a new textual geography of situated feminism, by having dialogues that move in diverse, and sometimes conflicting, directions.’ When working as a White Western researcher within an internal postcolonial racialized context of ethnic minorities in China (Kleisath 2013), such as in Peg’s project with Sani women, analysis moves into a triangulation of Han Chinese, Chinese ethnic minority, and Euro-American cultural identities and political values (Swain 2004). Acknowledging co-researchers and working to present their voices is complementary to a situated knowledges approach.

A co-researcher model of participants involved directly in research decisions (Lane et al. 2012) implies equality or shared power, although this may not be the case in terms of knowledge production. Peg thought of Bi as her equal, although Bi often had power over Peg’s access to information and understanding during fieldwork. Likewise, Bi may have sometimes seen herself as having power over Peg or as being her equal (both were moms, for example), while at other times Peg had power over Bi, as a foreigner with connections (guanxi) and funds. Configurations of power depended on their intersecting identities, positionality, reflexivity, and situatedness at a given moment and location. When it came to writing up fieldwork results, and interpreting their situated knowledge, the power was all Peg’s.

Of Peg’s five Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences (YASS) field assistants over the year, four were trainees, while one, He Zhonghua, was a senior colleague, friend, and co-researcher who shared power with Peg as well as having power over her. He published several local journal articles on her experience of working with US feminist anthropologists, including Peg (He 1993). None
of us, except He, directly addressed the issue of research language. No one was completely conversant in all three native languages being used: Sani, Chinese, English. In fact, no one at YASS spoke Sani, and all had to rely on Chinese to get by. Two of the YASS assistants, including He, were ethnic minority women, which did help in rapport with Sani people. In China as elsewhere in socialist Asia, the state mainly propels ethnic minorities toward a vision of economic progress, with little concern for or heed of minority outlooks. This approach engenders attitudes of superiority on the part of state-trained and state-employed research assistants towards “backward” minorities (Schein 2000). The situatedness in terms of both positionality and personality (Moser 2008) of Peg’s YASS assistants, as well as that of Peg herself, Melissa, Bi, and many other people with whom we interacted, profoundly affected our fieldwork (Turner 2010: 210–211). We were situated co-researchers, a distinction that discriminates and acknowledges a project’s multiplicity and diversity of co-researchers within varied power fields.

Shifting situations shaped Melissa’s co-researcher relationship with Peg. When returning to the field in 2000 Melissa’s consciousness had shifted, from kid to adult. Melissa’s discomforts during her later fieldwork involvement, and Peg’s desire to anthropologize, are key to understanding if they were co-researchers. Frohlick (2002: 53) posits a series of questions that resonate with their experiences. She asks of researchers, ’How does the presence of our family members impact the grounds on which we insert ourselves into the field and construct knowledge about it? . . . Where do the boundaries of embodiness start and stop? . . . Whose bodies count?’ She notes that it is ‘not always possible nor desirable to interpolate our bodies/selves into the communities we seek to know’ (ibid.), including those who accompany us.

Collaborative fieldwork acknowledges partners in knowledge production for a given space and time. Such acknowledgement may involve crafting a better preface or acknowledgement footnote to our writings, or it may occur through a profound shift in writing ourselves into our work. Melissa and Peg had an organic collaboration, not one of formal research design, as you might find in activist anthropology, or as might exist with children co-researchers in education projects (Marr and Malone 2007). Within that literature, there has been an epistemological shift from seeing kids as ‘incompetent and unknowledgeable’ subjects who have research done on them, to an understanding of research with children, who are construed as ‘knowledge brokers and active social agents’ (ibid.: 23–24). Children become partners in knowledge production and thus are potentially co-researchers. Adult dominance in research design and
theorizing can be addressed with flexibility that allows children ‘to negotiate the level and type of participation throughout the life of the project’ (ibid.). In 1993, Peg and Melissa did not know what part Melissa would play in Peg’s research until they were in the midst of it. In 2000, roles were more defined, as Melissa was older, had formed her own ideas about positionality, and was able to assume more responsibility in the project. Melissa was part of the mix for Peg, but always partial, in fieldwork that was not child-centered. Furthermore, Melissa has not participated in shaping analysis of the research, until now.

Melissa marked Peg’s position in research communities as a mom, which opened some doors, especially with other women. While there were some perceived issues around Peg’s mothering skills, as we have seen, she also kept the after-glow of motherhood once Melissa had left Yunnan. Distinct Chinese and Sani views of children, not always parallel, contrasted with American points of view, creating layers of ethical and power issues. In terms of attitudes toward parenting and child behavior, Chinese expectations were that parents would protect children, while children should be filial (see Shea, Chap. 2 this volume). This translated into perceptions that Peg’s ideas about how to care for Melissa might not be suitable, and that Melissa ought to do what her mother wanted her to do. Sani expectations were more that children should participate in family life and take initiative. Melissa, then, should want to be involved in what her mother was doing, and she should be encouraged to think for herself. Tensions among these sometimes conflicting parent/child constructs disrupted expected power dynamics, so that gatekeeping of field experiences by the researcher, field assistants, or research host was complicated by Melissa as co-researcher, creating opportunity for new understandings. Sometimes, the child showed the way. Peg and Melissa functioned as partial, situated co-researchers, but not as equals.

Conclusions

Mom’s mea culpa

PEG: My recognition of co-researcher input from Melissa is belated. Lane et al. (2012) have noted that ‘women academics often struggle to cope with tensions between their public and private lives.’ Perhaps my mom-ness, one of my most private and feminized identities, was simply not for public viewing. That and the struggle of being taken seriously in the highly masculinized world of academia shaped my choices, even while I identified as a feminist. I have published autobiographical pieces (Swain 2007; Swain and Hall 2007) about doing feminist anthropological research on tourism that mention my daughters only in passing. In my essay on embodied research and power dynamics (Swain
2004), I did not even mention my mom identity, while expounding on how my identity as a woman intersects with my many other identities to shape my understandings and people’s reactions to me. In a recent article (Swain 2011) I discuss Bi at length as my co-researcher, yet never mention the bond between us over our daughters or Melissa’s presence during part of the life history I recount. I erased my daughter’s presence, even while writing in the first person and promoting feminist analysis.

Motherhood in the field is an example of positionality often elided in academic writing, even while the researcher may reflexively analyze her other identities (Mose Brown and de Casanova 2009: 44). The only other mother-daughter dialogue that we have located about being in the field together, a set of articles by Agnes Loeffler (1998) and her mother Erika Friedl (1998), documents what we would call situated co-research, although that type of analysis is not their focus. Their reflexive description is unusual in an academic culture where ‘there is often no place for discussing how motherhood and fieldwork combine and coexist or for describing the mistakes and miss-steps that sometimes push the researcher into needed new directions’ (Mose Brown and de Casanova 2009: 55–56). We need ‘new conversations about balancing reflexivity with rigor’ (ibid.) in ethnography that include the realities of accompanied fieldwork and co-researcher dynamics. Lane et al. (2012) have noted that traditional boundaries of knowledge production and consumption are challenged by co-researcher partnerships and reflexivity. Feminist ethnographers are ethically challenged to interrogate the incorporation of accompanying children as co-researchers in the production of knowledge, and to include their voices when they choose.

Many of the decisions I made in the field were intimately shaped at the time with my daughter. When Melissa was still a child, there were issues of protection and keeping private the private sector of our lives. Now, years later, we are in the analysis phase. How do I think Melissa affected me in the field, in research design, and in outcome? My situated knowledges of Sani women have been profoundly affected by her interventions. Was my leaving out my mom status or mention of my daughter in past writing denial or reinterpretation? I think rather it was convention, which I am glad to leave behind. Now, from conversations with Melissa and reading my old fieldnotes, I acknowledge that not only Bi, but Melissa and all of my research assistants shaped what I understood, and ultimately have written, as perceived academic knowledge. It was easier to leave them out, which is especially ironic in long-term fieldwork that involves entwined lives, personal stories, and family.
Perhaps, besides her own experiences and education, Melissa in 2000 was also picking up on my own ambivalence about positionality and power in my research. We are teasing out distinctions between collaborative and accompanied fieldwork, a grey area of blurred boundaries shot through with power dynamics, leading to partial, situated, co-researchers. In current feminist ethnography, there is a range of terminology for the researched: subjects, informants, assistants, associates, participants, co-researchers – a power brigade of names. Likewise there is a potential path from accompanying family members, including kids, to field assistant, to research collaborator, to co-researcher, with varying power relative to the researcher. Our reflections on Melissa’s and my

Figure 6.10. Hemp in Bi’s front yard, August 2000. Photograph by Margaret Swain.
time together in the field have led to an understanding that sometimes the people who interact with a researcher are active co-researchers by choice, or by their location – their situatedness – in power relations. Building from a situated knowledges perspective, feminist researchers can push the boundaries of our thinking to acknowledge our personal locations vis-à-vis those of other research participants in a co-researching process.

Melissa was a willing co-researcher when she kept Fuzzy the peitong occupied, encouraging us all to function together well. Even naming Melissa as a co-researcher raises ethical issues about exploitation of child labor or my choices as a parent to bring her into my research world. As I have learned from our conversations and her writing, Melissa was fearful and brave as a child in the field; critical and engaged in her return to Shilin as a young adult; and always with a sense of humor.

Figure 6.11. Bi dressing Melissa for conference events, August 2000. Photograph by Margaret Swain.
and an open perspective (Figure 6.10). Mimi, I am so fortunate to have had you as my co-researcher, whether you or others accept that title or not.

**MELISSA:** I have no doubt that my time in China with my mom, and more broadly my parents’ joint championing of cosmopolitanism, shaped my self-image as an active and critical thinker/participant. As Jonathan Wiley has observed, episodes of transition often provide the most memories for kids in the field (1987: 120). The literature on field researchers’ parenting (Tripp 2002: 797; Cassell 1987: 263; Flinn et al 1998: 3) notes philosophies ranging from protective to adventuresome. Many parents, like mine, fall somewhere in-between – providing a home, routine, and familiar pleasures, while also encouraging cultural immersion. In my case, I think that advantages such as language acquisition and heightened engagement with the world outside far outweighed the costs.

I do not stake a claim one way or the other about naming myself as co-researcher. I still think that is your job, Mom, which is perhaps telling. I am not particularly bothered either way. Perhaps this is because I am not an anthropologist, and my culture was not the focus of the study. However, as you have written here, my presence in the field inadvertently shaped how and what we saw, as well as the experience of those around us. I certainly do not feel ‘exploited’ in my capacity as kid co-researcher; rather, I feel privileged to have shared that time and place with you, your colleagues, our friends, and, briefly, my Dad. In many respects, the experience has shaped who I am today, a self-identified feminist scholar with wide-ranging interests and points of reference. My ‘junior status’ as child and then young adult in the field necessarily positioned me somewhat outside the top-down research hierarchy, as we both, I think, understood it at the time. That said, I always felt included in the research process, and, as a child especially, experienced it as an organic extension of life experience.

The current project of processing and repositioning that collective experience has helped solidify my self-perception as ‘participant minor’ in the field. With that, I imagine that writing us – all of us – into your initial research narrative would have constituted a substantial risk, possibly jeopardizing your academic integrity and credibility. It might not have even presented itself to you at the time. You are hardly the first to take children into the field, but your work here is part of something new in cultural anthropology that is starting to recognize, question, and work with an inherent gap in the discipline’s theory and practice. Our dialogue on inter-generational participant observation and the necessity for embodied ethnography has pushed our boundaries, as well. Reflecting on
mother-daughter relationships in the field has been fun at times, but it has not been easy. We have had to address fundamental issues including hierarchies of power and how our very beings shape the knowledge we construct (Figure 6.12).

And while we have not (and cannot) provide any definitive conclusions, we have demonstrated how bringing the voices of collaborating children into the polyphony of field research (Bamo et al. 2007) crosses boundaries within and outside ourselves, and pushes us to learn more in the process.

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Long-term Investment in Research
Juggling Family and Fieldwork over the Years in the People’s Republic of China

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I have been conducting fieldwork in the village of Zhaoxing, situated in southeastern Guizhou province in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), for more than ten years. I first visited my field site as a young and single graduate student, then as a pregnant woman, as a mother of a baby girl, as a mother of a toddler and finally as a single mother of two school-aged children. Similarly to Swain (Swain and Swain, Chap. 6 this volume), my research was composed of multiple visits and evolved with time, as did my personal, professional and family situation. These changing aspects of my identity intermingled in the different decisions involved in ethnographic fieldwork during the preparation phase, the actual fieldwork, and the writing phase. In addition to pragmatic considerations involved in doing accompanied fieldwork that are often centered around issues of health, nutrition, security and education (including child rearing practices and schooling), having children in tow meant different entry points into the community under study. It impacted my research in both positive and negative ways revealing the ‘importance of gender and family participation as integral aspects of how the fieldworker understands the lives of the people she (or he) has come to study and how she (or he) in turn is understood’ (Sinclair 1998: 110).

In previous publications (Cornet 2010a, 2013) I have discussed the impact the presence of my daughter had on my field research. Following on from this, I wish here to highlight the influence my fieldwork has had on my notions of family and gender, and on my conception of bringing up children, as I was confronted by various Chinese ways. In other words, I will focus
here on the serendipitous knowledge I acquired and the way it deepened my understanding of Chinese society. Although my research did not specifically consider these issues and focused instead on the development of ethnic tourism as a modernization tool among the Dong minority nationality of Guizhou (Cornet 2008, 2009, 2010b, 2015), they are intrinsic to any research pertaining to China. Concurrently, I also wish to detail the logistics behind juggling family and fieldwork over a number of years, to demystify the ‘sacredness’ of fieldwork and to highlight the blending of the professional and domestic spheres inherent to our discipline.

As noted by Butler and Turner (1987: 18),

The nature of anthropological values and practices makes the separation of work from family life extremely difficult, even undesirable, during fieldwork. Our work, fortunately or unfortunately, involves us in relationships with people who muddle the divisions we seek to maintain [...] The blurring of domains that occurs when we take our children with us into the field and carry on our professional labors with, around, and through them is to be expected.

Acknowledging and writing about the detours, blunders and negotiations necessary to meet research goals lifts the veil off the dialectical process of fieldwork and the particularity of doing research in the People’s Republic of China. As Heimer and Thøgersen (2006) and Turner (2013) have shown for China and for upland socialist Asia respectively, critical reflections on the dynamics of fieldwork – without shying away from acknowledging and sharing mistakes, positionality and limits – demystify the researcher/informant encounter. Through different stages of my personal life, I have shared some of local women's experiences as they also transited through different periods of their lives. Long-term fieldwork indeed offers opportunities to follow members of a community in a diachronic manner (Taggart and Sandstrom 2011) and this meant, for me, sharing common life experiences with other women. Having family along, presenting oneself as enmeshed in relationships and as sharing common worries about children's education, health and nutrition indeed provides a link of 'humanity' with our informants (Counts and Counts 1998: 151).

Juggling family and fieldwork

Each fieldwork moment required different sets of arrangements that were dependent on my personal situation. My first visit to my case study area was part of an exploratory trip throughout the PRC. Being alone with no schedule, I could hop off the bus or the train whenever I saw something interesting.
After visiting Beijing, Shandong Province and Xian, I headed to the remote province of Guizhou. At the time, in 2000, transportation infrastructure in the southeastern part of the province (Qiandongnan Prefecture) was underdeveloped, with unpaved roads, frequent landslides and unreliable bus routes. In fact, up until 2006, with the opening of an airport in the county town of Liping, it would take me an average of two days to reach my field site from Guiyang, the main city of Guizhou Province. Such lack of comfort was not an issue for me, and contributed to the remoteness and exoticism of the region (cf. Oakes 1998).

I returned in the summer of 2004, at which point my situation had changed: I had obtained a master’s degree (McGill, 2002) and was pursuing a PhD for which I was trying to organize future fieldwork. I was able to affiliate with the Guizhou University Southwest Minority Language and Culture Research Institute and I travelled with local scholars to different Dong1 villages of southeast Guizhou. At the time, I was in a stable relationship and I was trying to get pregnant. I remember talking about my desire to have children to local women and their recommendations that I consult a doctor of traditional medicine. Being alone, following what my qualitative methods courses had taught me, I attempted to immerse myself as much as possible in the culture I wished to study. Out of curiosity, I took the traditional medicine and got pregnant six months later. Similarly to Glover (Chap. 4 this volume), I readily found successful treatment from doctors of Chinese medical systems. As I was to later find out, I was much less willing to accept and apply unknown and different ways of healing to my children.

**Pregnancy in the field**

In 2005, I returned on a Chinese Government Scholarship (Quebec-China Scholarship) and planned to undertake my first ‘official’ fieldwork. The scholarship had affiliated me with Renmin University in Beijing and I was three weeks pregnant. I travelled south to Guizhou, where local women were quick to point out the effectiveness of the traditional medicine I had taken the summer before. However, as I have mentioned elsewhere (Cornet 2013: 9–10), being pregnant in the field made me much more careful with my health; it was the first time I refused certain foods or refused to take part in daily activities for fear of endangering my child-to-be. The insecurities associated with a first pregnancy made me follow my doctor’s instructions rigorously and made me unwilling to adhere to local customs concerning pregnant women. I felt I had reached the limit of cultural relativism as I trusted only my own views regard-
ing nutrition and general health care during pregnancy, considering them to be ‘western scientific knowledge.’ The instructions on how to care for myself while pregnant had come from a ‘specialist,’ not from my mother, an aunt or another family member. Discussions generated by my pregnancy made me realize, however, that pregnancy in rural China is also subject to medical knowledge, yet in different ways.

Ever since the establishment of Communist Party rule in 1949, and even before that under the Nationalist Party rule, the PRC has repositioned reproduction within the realm of the State rather than within local networks (Goldstein 1998). There has been in recent years, with the modernising project of the State, ‘the shift of birth from the private to the public domain, the rise of the medical profession, the medicalisation of birth and the increasing use of technology’ (Harris et al. 2009: 203). Nevertheless, in the remote village I was studying at the time of this first official fieldwork, government expenditure to assure public health had greatly decreased, resulting in a privatised and largely unregulated health-care system. As noted by Harris, ‘Many basic health services remain beyond the financial reach of farmers’ (2009: 206). As a result, most women in the village could only afford to see a doctor at the time of delivery.²

What is more, repetitive campaigns in the Maoist era and beyond to promote new methods of childbirth and discredit the old midwife methods as unscientific and dangerous meant that in Zhaoxing, although women used to give birth in their husbands’ homes (Geary et al 2003: 175), almost all women in the village now give birth in hospitals through Caesarean section.³ Caesarean delivery is perceived as safer and better for the baby as well as less painful for the mother. It is furthermore hypothesised that the increase in Caesarean deliveries is partly linked to incentives from doctors to choose more costly procedures, in order to increase their own revenues (Bogg et al 2010: 1547).

Women in the village are well aware of different medical ways,⁴ some of which they consider ‘modern’, yet local cultural beliefs and practices are still strong, especially regarding proscribed and prohibited foods and activities. For example, it is prescribed to eat a lot of pork fat in order to make one’s child strong and heighten the chances of getting a boy. I felt, however, that I was physically unable to eat any; I would get nauseous seeing the juicy piece of pork fat in my bowl. What I had once considered exotic and fascinating had become highly troublesome; I felt some of the local ways were not reconcilable with my pregnancy. I, for the first time, had to refuse certain food offerings, accepting the risk of offending my hosts. Similarly to what Cassell (1987) and Sutton (1998) have written, as much as I was willing to risk my own health, I could
not and would not take any risk for my child-to-be. I felt that being pregnant limited my adaptability; I was no longer doing fieldwork alone. Hence, I felt I could no longer completely surrender to my fieldwork. As a result, I left the field early, with the sentiment that being a mother was irreconcilable with being an anthropologist.

Fieldwork with a baby

Fortunately, in May 2006, I was able to return to the PRC to resume fieldwork accompanied by my eight-month-old daughter. Arrangements to accommodate my family (for whom no funds were allotted; cf. Blumenfield, Chap. 9 this volume) had been quite complex. Fieldwork only became possible because my husband, an engineer, had found work in Shanghai. We were thus based in the heart of the city, and I would travel every two months for two to three weeks to the field. Most times I would leave my daughter in the care of a nanny, although that implied repeated heartbreaking separations. I had adhered to the urban Chinese belief that a remote village in Guizhou was no place for children, even less for babies. Indeed, Guizhou province has a reputation of being backward, poor and dangerous (cf. amongst others Herman 2007; Lombard-Salmon 1972; Oakes 1997; Schein 2000).

On one occasion, when my husband had to go overseas for his work and could not take care of our daughter in the evenings, I had to decide whether to postpone my next scheduled period in the field or take my daughter with me. I did not hesitate long. First, I did not want to divert from my research schedule (which I felt was already limited due to family obligations). Second, villagers had asked me to take Maïté with me and I too wanted to introduce my daughter to them. Third, and most of all, looking back, I wanted to show villagers that I too was enmeshed in a web of relationships and was not appearing out of nowhere asking questions, participating in daily life and taking pictures. I needed to demonstrate that I was ‘normal’ according to local social norms and, similarly to other women my age, was married and had a child. As noted by Levey, ‘Simply by “being there” children can help establish a fieldworker’s identity, mainly by helping the adult occupy an understandable role in a community’ (2009: 313). As members of the community had begun sharing aspects of their lives with me, I wanted to share aspects of mine with them.

Taking Maïté to the field, who was then 11 months old and who could not yet walk, involved some logistics. I had purchased an expensive baby carrier at a French sports store. I also carried a playpen, as well as expensive (and heavy) cans of American powdered milk, diapers, Canadian organic baby food,
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plenty of medication and clothes for all occasions. I was, as I had been in 2004, accompanied by a research assistant, Chloe, with whom I met up in Guiyang (cf. Cornet 2010a; Turner 2010). We then traveled the long route to the southeastern Dong region of Guizhou. We spent two days on buses on winding roads to reach the village. Chloe had motion sickness, so I ended up caring for both my baby and my assistant. When we arrived at the village neighboring the field site, I realized we had to hire two motorcycles to get to Zhaoxing; there was no bus to ride the route. Although my daughter greatly enjoyed the windy ride in her baby carrier, I questioned my sense of responsibility, knowing my family would probably not approve of her riding a motorcycle in this way. I clearly remember reaching the field completely exhausted.

I found that caring for a Canadian baby in a remote rural village offered many challenges. First, there was only one refrigerator in the village at the time. Hence, if I had prepared milk or opened baby food jars that required refrigeration, I would have to store it there. I remember running across the village in my pajamas very early in the morning to get the milk bottle. Second, if I wanted to get some work done, I had to find someone to look after my daughter while I did interviews. I had tried to schedule interviews during her nap (which was at fixed times), but most of the time she would not sleep unless she was in my arms. This made taking notes quite difficult. Furthermore, although my daughter’s presence tended to humanize interactions with local villagers, for my interviews with government officials it conferred on me a lower status: that of a mother rather than that of a researcher. In other words, as Flinn notes, in certain situations, ‘accompanied fieldwork unmasks a researcher and hinders impression management’ (1998: 15).

Having someone taking care of my daughter forced me to engage in interactions that required a great deal of trust on my part – not just, as it is often the case in research, on the research participant’s side. The main problems I encountered were my divergent views from local women on childrearing practices, particularly on nutrition and sleep. For example, I had been careful to introduce different ingredients to Maïté according to a guide given to all new mothers in Quebec. I had learnt that, at 11 months old, a baby needs milk and a well-balanced diet. Before two years old, it was not recommended to feed babies eggs, as the white may cause allergies. Discussions came up when I would feed Maïté, having to explain why she could not eat this or had to eat that. In addition, conflicts arose when I left my daughter in the care of a local woman while I was doing interviews. Often I would find that Maïté had eaten not only eggs but lots of candies, her favorite being candied kiwis.
Another difference related to sleep. I had a schedule of naps to be taken in the playpen at fixed times (Figure 7.1). By contrast, Dong mothers would carry their child around while they were working in beautiful baby carriers so that naps would happen throughout the day as women tended their store or worked in the fields (cf. Yen 2007: 64). Maïté, not being accustomed to sleeping on someone else’s back, would refuse to sleep and would scream instead. At night, local children, especially girls (ibid.: 59) would sleep with their parents or grandparents almost up until adolescence. These differing attitudes toward childrearing and my own encouragement of autonomy in my daughter confirm the differing parenting behaviours observed by Liu et al. (2005) between Canadian and Chinese mothers.

**Fieldwork with a toddler**

When I returned to Shanghai three weeks later, Maïté was sick. She had lost weight, had digestion problems and had caught a cold. As a result, I was hesitant to take her back. It was only toward the end of fieldwork, when transportation to the village had improved (with the opening of an airport nearby) and tourism development had brought a number of goods (such as fresh milk and yogurt) that I decided to take her back. Villagers had asked for her on every
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visit I had made and I felt that I had clearly changed my status among villagers. I was no longer a scholar, but had become Maité's mother. Indeed, in Dong villages, once a woman bears a child, she loses her name and is henceforth referred to as: child name + de mama. Thus, I was no longer called Kang Boshi (Dr. Cornet) but became Meidi de mama (mother of Maité). This is the case in both Mandarin and in Kam, the language spoken by the Dong. That time, my daughter was 20 months old. She could walk and she could understand a lot of Mandarin. I had been coming to the village periodically for almost a year and was much more accustomed to and comfortable with local ways. Yet it still remained a challenge to be accompanied by a toddler.

In 2007, there were outbreaks of Avian Influenza (H5N1) in the PRC. By May 2007, 25 cases had been confirmed, 15 of them being fatal (World Health Organization WHO 2007). Although none had occurred in Guizhou, I was worried every time Maité would chase chickens and ducks, something she enjoyed very much. My second worry was the presence of fish ponds throughout the village. Indeed, as later observed by Geary et al, each village ‘has a fish-pond jointly owned by families of the whole village or of the same clan’ (2003: 123). Zhaoxing, composed of five clans (Cheng 2002), has numerous ponds into which Maité could throw little stones and watch the water ripple (Figure 7.2). But I was constantly afraid she would fall in the ponds.

Figure 7.2. Maité throwing rocks into fish ponds, April 2007. Photograph: Candice Cornet.
Finally, I observed that despite the relative lack of autonomy given to babies, toddlers were freely roaming around the village with other, older children. ‘When both parents go out to work in the fields, the eldest son or daughter takes on the job of looking after his or her younger siblings’ (Geary et al 2003: 99). Every morning, children of the village would come and ask if Maïté could go play with them. She would then disappear for hours. In contrast to Western countries, yet similar to communities in the West African rainforest explored by Gottlieb, Graham and Gottlieb-Graham (1998: 122), Dong parents generally have no idea where their children are playing and are not concerned for their safety. As a community, parents are sure there is always an adult close by or at least an older child to look after the younger ones. Letting Maïté go play required a great deal of trust on my part toward the community as a whole. Despite my worries, she always returned safe and sound as well as extremely happy and excited (Figure 7.3).

Overall, I felt that compared with bringing a baby, bringing a toddler to the field was much easier. I found I had more time to conduct interviews as Maïté played with other children. Yet it was not only Maïté’s age that helped, but also my knowledge of the field, the increased accessibility and economic develop-
ment of the village through tourism, and my greater trust and acceptance of Dong childrearing customs.

**Back in the PRC with two school-aged children**

In February 2013, I returned to the PRC to continue research, this time as a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Washington in Seattle. Again, my husband had found work that could facilitate my research agenda, this time in Liaoning province (in Shenyang, northeast China). I was accompanied by my seven-year-old daughter (Maïté) and her five-year-old brother (Benjamin). Similarly to our time in Shanghai, I was to travel back and forth to Guizhou while the kids would remain in Shenyang where they would attend school and kindergarten. Having the kids tag along this time raised two main issues, similar yet somewhat different from our previous times in the PRC: health and education.

**Health Issues**

Shenyang is an industrial city with endemic high pollution rates that are comparable to those in Beijing. The average pollution level is around 150 on the Air Quality Index (AQI), whereas in Montreal, our hometown in Canada, the level rarely reaches 50 (Figure 7.4). On one occasion while I was there, the level reached 360 AQI. At the French school our children went to, when levels reached 200 physical activities as well as going outside were prohibited. Every morning, my husband and I would verify pollution levels before stepping out and deciding whether to allow our kids to play outside or not.

![Figure 7.4. Comparing pollution levels in Shenyang, Liaoning with those of Brossard, on the south shore of Montreal, Quebec, June 2013. Photograph: Candice Cornet.](image-url)
In August 2013, the New York Times published an article: ‘Life in a Toxic Country’ by Edward Wong, a correspondent living in Beijing with his nine-month-old daughter. Wong noted that people in China’s booming cities, as well as its rural population, increasingly question ‘the safety of the air they breathe, the water they drink and the food they eat.’ He furthermore adds, ‘It is as if they were living in the Chinese equivalent of the Chernobyl or Fukushima nuclear disaster areas.’ In terms of air quality, he reveals statistics from the Ministry of Environmental Protection, ‘air quality in Beijing was deemed unsafe for more than 60% of the days in the first half of 2013’ (Wong 2013). With similar air quality in Shenyang and other large cities across the PRC, pollution has become a major issue in deciding to bring children along or not when living or working in urban settings.

Food safety represents another key concern for those living in the PRC. As noted by Wu and Chen (2013), ‘In contrast with the different major food safety issues in developed countries, China is dealing with recurrent instances of foodborne diseases, not due to micro-organisms or environmental pollutants, but due to the illegal use of pesticides and veterinary drugs as well as adulterated materials.’ Indeed, scandals such as melamine-tainted milk in 2008 have brought the issue of food safety to the forefront of China’s social challenges. As noted by Calvin et al. (2006: 18), one of the main obstacles to implementing a food safety system is that it is extremely difficult to ‘standardize and monitor production practices in a sector composed of 200 million farm households who typically have 1–2 acres of land divided into 4–6 non-contiguous plots.’ In his research, Bian (2004: 2) clearly notes the ineffectiveness of government organs to control and assure food safety, stating that consumers are victims of profit-seeking producers.

Indeed, in the PRC poultry, livestock and aquaculture products are frequently given antibiotics to control diseases (Calvin et al. 2006: 18). Fruit and vegetables are grown with above-average amounts of chemical fertilizers and treated with high levels of pesticides (according to international standards), and the increasing presence of genetically modified organisms (GMO) also represents known and unknown dangers to public health (Bian 2004: 7). In Shenyang, a local woman once warned me not to buy lamb meat as there were rumors that donkey meat or rat meat were being sold as lamb. Overall, we had little trust in the quality of food we purchased. Compared to air pollution, which is less of a concern while in the countryside, food safety is an issue all across the country: I have witnessed farmers fertilizing their fields
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with chemicals or using untreated human or animal waste (which raises the risk of microbial contamination).

**Education**

Doing fieldwork in the PRC with school-aged children poses the challenge of deciding how and where they should be schooled (see Shea, Chap. 2 this volume, and Hansen, Chap. 1 this volume). In order to avoid additional stress on our children, my husband and I had decided to enroll them in a French School, as it is the only language our children could speak. Our son, however, was too young and ended up attending a Chinese Kindergarten which was affiliated with the French School. As we were to find out, this kindergarten was the most prestigious in Liaoning Province. Parents throughout the province hoped for their toddler to have the chance to attend this kindergarten and the waiting list was very long. The affiliation with the French School assured French children could be enrolled (hence bypassing Chinese families on the waiting list) and children benefited from the presence of an extra teacher provided by the French School, a French woman called Juliette.

Interestingly, both the French School and the Chinese Kindergarten required an equal adjustment on our part. Fortunately, our differing views toward education from the French were much less marked in kindergarten, in part because of Juliette’s personality and cosmopolitanism. Juliette was there to translate instructions to children and to assure that French ways and Chinese ways were effectively bridged. One way of doing this was that Juliette would retrieve children from the Chinese class to allow them to have more free and unstructured play. This was important in the context of the fact, noted by Vong (2012: 35), that ‘Free play or unstructured play as understood in the West and adopted by kindergarten teachers who believe in play as a crucial medium of learning is not necessarily an important concept or part of the kindergarten curriculum [in China].’

While observing the children playing in the kindergarten outdoor playground, I did notice that only foreign children would run around screaming, chasing each other and trying out the available play structures. Other children tended to remain close to their teacher and seemed impressively calm. When I asked Juliette about this, she explained that children were discouraged by teachers from running around. Teachers feared parents’ reactions if their child came home with a bruise from having fallen down or if his or her clothes were dirty. As observed by Fong (2004) in Dalian, the one-child policy has resulted in heavy investments in education on the part of parents and thus heavy
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expectations from children. From what I observed and as was confirmed by Juliette, this resulted in performance rather than playing being expected from children, as early as kindergarten.

This relative passiveness toward play was also observable inside the classroom (Figure 7.5). Indeed, as noted by Vong (2012), Chinese parents are inclined to value knowledge acquisition over play, and in order ‘to enter elementary schools, especially some reputable ones, Chinese children have to get high evaluations. Academic subjects count a great deal in this regard’ (Cang and Song 2012). The Chinese educational system is indeed, as noted by Shea (Chap. 2 this volume), highly competitive. As a result, teachers feel an immense pressure to provide children with the knowledge to enter the province’s best elementary schools and

Figure 7.5. Kindergarten in Shenyang, April 2013. Benjamin is third from the right. Photograph: Candice Cornet.
tend to promote passive learning and the idea that ‘practice makes perfect.’ Juliette was there to ensure that subject-based learning activities were well balanced with playtime, giving me the feeling that my son was in a Chinese kindergarten, yet not entirely. As she stated in an interview that I carried out with her, ‘I am trying to take the best of both worlds for our kids’ [my translation, 2013].

In the field with two kids and no husband

Finally, having school-aged children while trying to do fieldwork meant, again, long separations where I would be in the field and they would be in school in an urban center. Nevertheless, the summer vacation provided a great opportunity to leave the polluted northeast for the less polluted southwest. And so I did. During the summer of 2013, I brought both kids to the field in Guizhou. Unfortunately, the strain of my research had contributed to the end of my marriage,17 and it was as a recently single mother that I did my last fieldwork.18

Before leaving for the field, I packed a complete first aid kit, snacks, clothes for all kinds of weather, sun cream, insect repellent, some toys and books. We flew from Shenyang to Kunming where we met up with Tami Blumenfield and other scholars, then went on to Guiyang. As in my previous periods in the field, I found nutrition and health to be a challenge, as well as explaining my different child-rearing methods (particularly, again, regarding food and sleep). This time however, I also had to explain my separation from my husband, generating conversations that opened up yet another door to local women’s reality.

Nutrition

In Guizhou, food is commonly spicy and it was a challenge to find non-spicy food. Every time, I would ask the cook (whether in a restaurant or in someone’s house) not to add spices, stating that my children were not used to eating spicy food. When the meal was served, my children were always unable to eat it. I had been raised to finish my plate, especially when invited somewhere, so I always felt very bad toward our hosts when my kids refused to eat (see also Shea on this topic, Chap. 2 this volume). Most times Maïté and Benjamin resorted to eating a bowl of rice into which they would pour soya sauce. Although eating lots of rice had the advantage of reducing the risk of diarrhea, I was worried that they were not eating enough vegetables and I always tried to find fruit to compensate.

With the development of tourism in the village, candies as well as popsicles are common (this is increasingly the case across the PRC; cf. Jing 2000), and villagers would readily spoil my children so they were not so hungry when dinner came.
Foreign food, such as pizza and pancakes, had also become available and, although my children wanted to eat it every day, I had to balance invitations to people’s homes and finding ways to feed my children. On one occasion, I remember doing both: feeding my kids pizza before going to eat at someone’s house. Because dinner is generally served quite late (around 8 or 9 pm; cf. Geary 2003: 125), I remember telling my hosts that my kids had already eaten, explaining that we in Canada usually eat around 5 or 6 pm. As a mother, I felt that their diet, on the road to and from the field as well as in the field, was highly unhealthy.

**Health**

Before leaving, I had made sure that all the appropriate immunizations had been given to Maïté and Benjamin. Traveling in the summer, I had not realized that the main hindrance I would encounter were insect bites. Both Maïté and Benjamin were covered in bites and would scratch themselves during the night. At one point, Benjamin had large local inflammatory reactions. I thus sought antihistamine tablets or something similar that I could give him. In the local pharmacy, I was given medication but it was only after I had done a thorough search on the Internet that I accepted the treatment for my son. I was definitely not very open to cultural immersion when it came to my children’s health (on this topic, see also Glover, Chap. 4 this volume).

Nevertheless, I tried to be more lenient than usual with my children while in the field. For example, one very hot and humid day the children asked permission to play in the river. I allowed them to put only their feet in the water. I knew the water in the river was unclean due to the general lack of a proper sewage system in the village. The presence of floating rubbish attested to it. There are no adequate facilities to treat sewage in the village and this waste is generally released untreated into the river or dumped onto surrounding farmlands. As noted by Worldwatch Institute, “The shortage of high-quality water has become a serious issue in many localities, and water pollution continues to threaten both public health and living standards.” As my children were running around splashing each other, a group of young boys arrived, got naked and jumped in the water (see Figure 7.6). My kids wanted to do the same and I could not resist their imploring eyes. However, when Maïté came to tell me she saw one of the boys defecate in the river, I called it off and we went back ‘home’ to shower.

**Childrearing practices**

As noted by Geary et al (2003: 99–100), ‘By the age of five, girls carry bamboo baskets on their shoulders, and babies on their backs, feed the pigs, and go
around with their mothers helping as and when they can. By the age of seven, Kam [Dong] boys are used to chopping wood and cutting grass. Children are given much more responsibility and autonomy in this rural village than they generally are in Quebec, Canada. Hence, once my children became familiar with the village, I allowed them to walk around without me. My older child would run errands for me, going to buy bottles of water and taking care of her younger brother (Figure 7.7). By doing this, I felt I somewhat adopted local ways. In terms of food and sleep, however, I held on to my ways and beliefs, making sure they were eating the four food groups according to Canada’s
Food Guide\textsuperscript{20} and sleeping at least 10 hours per night. I had told my children upon leaving for the field that we would travel as a democratic group with each person having a voice. I warned them, however, that in terms of food and sleep, I was the sole authoritarian leader. Local villagers found I was strict on rules. When eating, my children had to remain seated at the table; they could not leave the table without asking. My daughter and my son quickly learned to say in Mandarin: \textit{wo chi bao le, nimen man man chi} (‘I am full; take your time finishing’) loud and clear, to ask me if they could leave the table. They knew I could not be as strict as usual because of the social environment we were in. By contrast, local children would grab food from the table, walk away to play a little, eat a little, then play again. Basically, children of the same age as

\textbf{Figure 7.7.} Maïté as assistant, fetching cold water bottles by herself in the village, July 2013. Photograph: Candice Cornet.
mine would eat when they were hungry and go to sleep when they were tired. Meanwhile, I attempted to hold on to my own educational values and would, in the evening, try to put my children to bed around 8 pm whether they were tired or not.

On many occasions, the presence of my children in the field forced me to question and to reconsider my rules and values. Although I felt that I had been very open to questioning myself and my culture in previous unaccompanied periods in the field, I realized then that my relativism was a ‘practical relativism; ... a set of attitudes informing practices’ (McGrath 1998: 66), rather than a true commitment to accepting differing moral principles. Having children in tow highlighted cultural differences, some of which I had to accept, explain and maintain.

**Divorce and marriage**

This last period in the field brought up another issue due to a new positionality I had not had in the past: that of a single mother. Because my husband had never accompanied me in the field, he was, to my informants, an invisible man and a father living far away. When I returned to the field with my two children and announced that my husband and I were separating, it engendered very interesting conversations about marriage, about the concept of family, and about the more abstract concepts of love and of individuality.

Guo and Huang (2005: 22) remark that divorce rate have been increasing in the PRC, observing that:

> The growing number of marriage dissolutions appears to indicate a drastic shift in Chinese people’s long-established conception about marriage and family. That is, married couples begin to care more about the marital quality from the perspective of spousal relationships than they do from the perspective of the family as a whole.

Their research, however, analyses a sample from Shanghai and Tianjin. Reactions I observed in the village in Guizhou do not seem to corroborate Guo and Huang’s research findings. The first questions I was asked as to why my marriage was ending were: Does your husband hit you? Does he treat the kids badly? Does he hit the kids? Does he have a job? Does he drink? Does he play money games? Because I respectively answered no, no, no, yes, not much and no, the villagers were puzzled. When I explained that I was, as an individual, unhappy, despite being treated well and despite my husband being a good father, I was told: ‘Women here don’t think that way.’
Divorce, in rural Guizhou, is still uncommon, yet my situation led two women to admit being divorced and remarried, a social status I had not encountered up to that point in the field. They had clearly neglected to tell me about this in previous discussions or interviews. Indeed, as noted by Chan, Chan and Lou (2002: 558), ‘divorce is regarded as a highly undesirable social and moral option even when women experience severe difficulties in marriage.’ This may in part explain why these women had not mentioned their divorce to me. Nevertheless, this time these two informants shared details of their separation and explained the difficulties and the social pressure Dong women encounter (cf. Yen 2007). Both had left their husbands because they were individually unsatisfied with their marriage, considering their own happiness to be equally important to their family’s well-being as a whole.

Hence, my personal situation, as well as my long-term investment in a field site, opened the door to certain data. Had I not lived this emotionally charged moment in my personal life and had I not shared it with local women, I most probably would not have known about the situation of these two women, one educated and the other an entrepreneur (a restaurant owner), both rural pioneers of the urban shift observed by Guo and Huang (2005) in Shanghai and Tianjin. Indeed, I was able to observe that, as my field site develops economically through tourism and as mobility for villagers increases, a number of related changes seem to be taking place, including the empowerment of women and changing views about marriage.21

Discussion

Fieldwork is not only about the period in the field; it is not about one location or about one period of time. Fieldwork is constituted of a series of time/spaces in and out of the field. Before leaving for the field, the pragmatics of organising family life abroad are overwhelming. The administrative burden and complexity of doing research in the PRC increase when accompanied by children. One must ponder which residency option to choose for the welfare of the children, of one’s partner and of the field research, considering constraints and opportunities Chinese society offers along the way. Each option, whether one decides to carry children along, to leave them in a city, or to leave them back home, carries a number of advantages and disadvantages and these may change as one’s family situation evolves. Huntington rightly remarked, ‘The anthropologist mother can do little more than assess the disadvantages both to her research and to her offspring of leaving the child or children at home against the stresses of bringing the children’ (1987: 84).
In the field, whether in the city or in the countryside, the PRC offers a number of challenges regarding health, including air pollution, food quality and water pollution. As I have discussed here, having children tag along requires many more adjustments, as we tend to be less flexible on issues of health, nutrition and sleep when it comes to our children (cf. Sutton 1998). My fieldwork arrangements meant that I experienced being a mother in both urban and rural settings. The divide had always been clear: Guizhou is the second poorest province of the country whereas the cities of Shanghai and Shenyang are in coastal regions that have developed their economies faster. The different impacts this had on the pragmatics surrounding my research are undeniable. Balance between an urban center and a rural field site became a necessity for my research to be completed and successful.

Upon return from the field, reflecting on my data and on my varying positionalities, I found that the presence of my children had blurred my personal and professional selves. As a result, I found that the data I had collected was wide ranging, engaging and rich. I had, although in a much more extended period of time than planned, collected responses to my research questions in addition to acquiring valuable serendipitous knowledge. Moreover, I can now share memories with my children and can discuss some of my field notes, which sometimes provides me with different interpretations and point of views (see Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume; Swain and Swain, Chap. 6 this volume).

**Conclusion**

Integrating my children into my research process caused me to question the limit of my adaptability. It is required by our discipline that we acquire ‘hands-on’ knowledge, immersing ourselves in the culture we study. The presence of children adds to the challenge, forcing us to accept, adjust, and negotiate the cultural norms of those we study compared to our own values. By being genuinely in contradiction with my informants on issues of child-rearing and even on issues of love and marriage, I presented myself as a cultural being. We are entangled in our own ways in relation to something which I believe is culturally fundamental: the enculturation process implied in raising children. However, contrary to what I had believed and learned in methodology classes, a good researcher is one who can maintain a consciousness and respect for his or her cultural identity as well as that of his or her hosts (Wax, 1971). As stated by Maclntyre (1993),

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The understanding of others is indeed an understanding of difference and that the acknowledgement of moral difference, by a refusal to qualify or by a commitment to our own moral principles, is the right starting-point not only for understanding the moral life of others, but also for learning from those others about their good, our own good and the good.

Reaching the limit of our cultural adaptability, doing embodied fieldwork over different periods of our lives while all the while constructing knowledge about another culture is, for me, what anthropology is all about. By exposing the crossing of boundaries between domestic and professional spheres while in the field, this chapter, as well as others in this edited volume, has revealed and exposed the delicate balance required by ethnographic fieldwork. This is a balance that contributes to genuine and constructive exchanges and understandings of other ways of life.

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Endnotes

1 The Dong is the official name given to the Kam people during the Ethnic Classification Project (*minzu shibie*). Because my research studies the development of tourism along official ethnic lines (ethnic tourism), I have maintained the official exonym.

2 According to Bogg et al. (2010: 1546), ‘The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Maternal and Infant Health Care requires all deliveries to take place in hospital’, although a strong link between home delivery and lack of health insurance has been demonstrated (Bogg, 2002).

3 I did not specifically collect data on the issue, but informally I found that all women with whom I talked about childbirth had had a Caesarean. Investigating the issue further, I did find a growing incidence of Caesarean deliveries in the PRC (cf. Bogg et al, 2010; Lee et al, 2001; Lei et al, 2003; Guo et al, 2007; Tang et al, 2006).

4 There is in Zhaoxing, as elsewhere in China (see Glover, Chap. 4 this volume), a prevalence of medical pluralism which sometimes bridged my views and local women’s views on pregnancy and child delivery.

5 My PhD research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) as well as the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture* (FRQSC).

6 See the introduction of this volume for a table of different possible fieldwork arrangements, revealing different degrees to which individual anthropologists integrate children into their field experience (Table 1.2).

7 It has been noted repeatedly that children delay fieldwork schedules (Butler and Turner, 1987: 14). Anthropologist Donna Goldstein noted during a panel at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting that ‘There’s a mathematical equation you need to do with fieldwork with children: six weeks with children is equal to three weeks alone and use a multiplier for how many children you have’ (quoted in Redden 2008).

8 Dominy (1998: 205) raises the opposite question: ‘What are the implications of being marked by *not* having “family” in the field or perhaps at home?’ In doing so, she questions the lone ethnographer model that prevailed in the discipline for years.

9 For a comparative analysis of different rural national minorities’ child-rearing behaviors in Yunnan, see Li et al. (2000).

10 Doré and Le Hénaff (2005).

11 This post-doctoral research was funded by a fellowship from *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture* (FRQSC) and was undertaken under the supervision of Professor Stevan Harrell.

12 My husband was convinced that the city was a better place for our children than the countryside. Hence we did not consider the possibility of me and the
children living in Guizhou and him travelling back and forth. In addition, being on an expatriate contract in Shenyang, my husband’s expenses (and thus our entire family’s) were all covered including lodging, food and transport.

13 The pollution issue had also been considered while we were in Shanghai, and we feared Maité would develop asthma if we stayed too long. However, it really became a major concern this time in Shenyang as levels were much higher and were seriously impacting our daily lives. For an overview of recent research studies on the pollution levels in Shenyang and elsewhere in the PRC, see Kan et al. 2012.

14 I was surprised to find out that the school had a dormitory for children whose parents lived far away. Some children, as young as two years old, would only go home on weekends. This reveals different views toward child-rearing and the importance urban parents give to providing their only child with the best possible education in a very competitive society.

15 In order to preserve her anonymity, this is a pseudonym. This French teacher had been in Shenyang for over three years, having previously taught for two years in a kindergarten in Thailand and for three years in Shanghai. Out of curiosity and because of my son’s presence, I interviewed her on her role in the kindergarten and her views on the Chinese educational system. Much of the information specific to the school Benjamin attended comes from this interview (held on May 29, 2013). This is certainly an example of serendipitous knowledge acquired due to the presence of my children; this is knowledge I would not have gained otherwise.

16 Because of the shared language between French Canadians and the French we had wrongly expected that it would be easier for our daughter. The cultural shock due to the difference between our views on education and that of the French was comparable to the one that existed between us and the Chinese. Because this chapter is about the PRC, I will not dwell on the cultural and educational differences between French Canadians and the French and will focus instead on our encounter with the Chinese educational system.

17 I am writing here about taking children to the field; yet I am aware that there continues to be a lot of shyness in revealing the role (both positive or negative) which an anthropologist’s partner plays in research. Recently, Lunn’s edited volume (2014) considers the question of bringing a spouse to the field (Lunn and Moscuzza, 2014); nevertheless, the impact our research has on our relationships remains rarely discussed (although see Flinn, 1998: 106, who briefly mentions her divorce). Fuji Lozada (Chap. 5 this volume) is the only contributor to this volume who mentions the difficulty of combining a ‘healthy relationship’ with academic research. Hansen (Chap. 1 this volume) also briefly mentions her partner and the help he provided while in the field. As Cupples demonstrates in her research in Nicaragua (2002), sexuality and the erotic subjectivity of the researcher has an impact on the research process and paying attention to these questions can lead to greater self-reflexivity (see also Kulick and Willson, 1995).
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18 For the results of my research, including this last fieldwork, see Cornet 2015.
21 Likewise, Fang-Tzu Yen’s research in a Dong village of southeast Guizhou notes that many Dong (Kam) ‘couples had divorced and remarried several times’ (2007: 62).
The following pages include the drawings and captions of Maïté, Benjamin and Ethan, respectively seven, five and four as they travelled throughout Southwest China, accompanying their mother-fieldworker. They were too young to co-author academic articles with their parents, like Patrick Lozada (Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume) or Melissa Swain (Swain and Swain, Chap. 6 this volume). But their voices, like those of any young children, can still be expressed through the medium of drawing and amplified with the assistance of adult transcriptionists.

Maïté and Benjamin

Maïté and Benjamin accompanied me to the field during the summer of 2013 in the province of Guizhou. We first travelled to Kunming, Yunnan, to meet with Tami Blumenfield; then we took a night train to Guiyang where I met local scholars. We then flew to the county town of Liping and hired a car to reach the southeastern border of Guizhou where the village I study is located (Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume).

The children drew throughout the trip; this was a good way to keep children occupied in railway stations (Figure 8.1), at bus stops or while meeting officials or scholars. Upon our return to Canada, I explained to my children my intention to publish some of their drawings and I asked them to choose which ones they wished to present. I then sat with each of them and asked them to tell me what the selected drawings represent. I transcribed and translated into English what they said as captions; see endnotes for the untranslated French captions.
Maïté (7 years old) in Guizhou

Figure 8.1. Waiting for the night train from Kunming, Yunnan to Guiyang, Guizhou (July 2013). Photograph: Candice Cornet.

Figure 8.2. Maïté – I went on a plane to go to the south of China and we had McDonald’s. [Note from Candice: on a stop-over in Chongqing].

Figure 8.3. Maïté – We went apple picking and had a competition between us and animals to see who had the highest mountain and we won! [Note from Candice: We did not actually go apple picking in Southwest China but it is something we often do in Quebec, Canada.)

Figure 8.4. Cities in China: There are many cities in China: Kunming, Guiyang, Shenyang.

Figure 8.5. Food. There are different foods: there are fajitas, sausages, pizzas.
Figure 8.3. Maïté – We went apple picking and had a competition between us and animals to see who had the highest mountain and we won! [Note from Candice: We did not actually go apple picking in Southwest China but it is something we often do in Quebec, Canada.]

Figure 8.4. Maïté – Cities in China: There are many cities in China: Kunming, Guiyang, Shenyang.

Figure 8.5. Maïté – Food. There are different foods: there are fajitas, sausages, pizzas.
Benjamin (5 years old) in Guizhou

Figure 8.6. Benjamin – Pizza!

Figure 8.7. Benjamin – This is the entire city. There is a volcano, there is a big sun. I did this drawing with mummy in the apartment in China with Tami. [Tami and I met in Kunming on this fieldwork trip.]

Figure 8.8. Benjamin – I did this drawing with my sister Maïté. This is me, this is my mother and my sister, who is afraid of bees. There are dragonflies.
Voices and Images of Accompanying Children

Ethan

Ethan accompanied Tami to the field in the summer 2011, primarily in Yunnan Province (see Blumenfield, Chap. 3 this volume). They traveled to two cities, five villages, and township seats in two provinces. ‘Teacher Jim’ (James Brunsmann) from the Woodside Early Childhood Center presented Ethan with a gift at the end of the school year: a journal made from a blank book. Teacher Jim asked Ethan to record each day what he experienced in China, pasting picture prompts in the inside cover to help Ethan structure his responses. Each evening during their travels, Tami would use these prompts to encourage Ethan to reflect on his day, asking him to draw something and writing down his explanations of his impressions. A selection of these journal entries is presented here.

Ethan (4 years old) in Yunnan

\[\text{Figure 8.9. Journal entry}\]

Tami: This journal page reveals how four-year-old Ethan narrated his day and shows how I recorded what he said. The conversations and drawings offered me a window into Ethan’s perspective on our days. Ethan’s explanation for the drawing on the right is ‘That’s a boat, and those are the seats, and those are the people.’
Conclusions

Children reveal an astounding flexibility in adapting to new cultural environments. In the field, they adjust and adapt, looking to their parent-anthropologist to guide them and offer them some sort of cultural stability in the wake of surrounding strangeness. Drawing or keeping a journal may offer ways to express emotions, to share perspectives with their parent(s) or accompanying adults, and to recount their adventure after returning ‘home’ (see Blumenfield, Chaps 3 and 9, this volume). The drawings and text may not be especially profound or aesthetically pleasing, particularly for the youngest children, but the reflection and sharing enabled by the process of creating drawings and journals is extremely important.

Every day in the field, as accompanying children balance between the comfort of their imaginary worlds and new and challenging experiences, their outlook on the world widens. Upon returning from the field and reintegrating into their home culture, I found that Maïté and, to a lesser extent, Benjamin were much more sensitive and curious of cultural differences. I found that their experience in the PRC had expanded the cultural frame of reference within which they encounter the world. Blumenfield noted a similar change in Ethan. His favorite point of reference upon return was the warm ocean water of Hong
Voices and Images of Accompanying Children

Kong and the warm rain there compared with the cooler precipitation of the Pacific Northwest. When the family moved a year later to South Carolina, Ethan retained that point of comparison: ‘The rain here is warm, but not as warm as in Hong Kong! That’s the warmest rain in the world!’

Beyond this wider frame of reference that the children acquired, as Maïté is quick to point out: having spent time in China also provides them with a glow of exoticism in front of other kids!

Endnotes

1 Tami Blumenfield contributed to this chapter by generously providing insights into her own fieldwork and her son’s perspectives, drawings and journal entries.
2 En attendant le train de nuit de Kunming au Yunnan à Guiyang au Guizhou.
3 J’ai pris l’avion pour aller dans le sud de la Chine et on a mangé du McDo.
4 On est allé cueillir des pommes et on a fait une compétition contre les animaux pour voir qui avait la plus haute montagne et on a gagné!
6 La nourriture. Il y a pleins de sortes de nourriture, les fajitas, les saucisses, les pizzas
7 C’est une ville entière. Il y a un volcan, un gros soleil. J’ai dessiné cela avec maman dans l’appartement en Chine avec Tami.
8 J’ai fait ce dessin avec ma sœur Maïté. Ça c’est moi, ça c’est ma mère et ma sœur qui a peur des abeilles. Il y a des libellules.
9 The prompts were ‘Today I _____’; ‘I felt _____’; and ‘My favorite part [was] _____’.
Special Considerations for Accompanied Fieldwork in China

Tami Blumenfield
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Embarking on fieldwork with children in China can be a daunting prospect but need not be an insurmountable one. As the Lonely Planet guide *Travel with Children* underscores: ‘Good preparation and planning is the key to travelling with children . . . With children in tow you constantly need to think ahead and anticipate everyone’s needs.’ (Barta et al. 2009: 18) Careful consideration to pre-departure preparations, health, costs, childcare, education, language, special needs and varied personalities, and other issues discussed below may alleviate some anxiety.

Packing and preparations

Children appreciate having familiar things in unfamiliar settings. Rachel Connelly, one of the authors of *Professor Mommy* and an economist who frequently took her four children to Beijing for extended research periods, traveled with the children’s musical instruments and with some of their bedding, including a favorite down comforter (Connelly and Ghodsee 2011: 151–154). According to her, a French horn, a violin, and ‘four very full backpacks made quite a scene in the airport’, but this was well worth the peace of mind and convenience of having exactly the right items (Connelly and Ghodsee 2011: 153–154). Connelly and Ghodsee further advise:

The hardest thing about travel is actually getting there. Our advice here is to use a stroller for much longer than you think you should. Strollers are great luggage carts. You can also send books ahead if you are staying long enough. Buy cheap toys where you are and leave them there when you leave. Kindles and iPads have made the how-to-bring-enough-books-for-the-kids problem a lot easier.

(Connelly and Ghodsee 2011: 153)
Although the authors also recommend purchasing clothing in China, parents of very young children should be aware that most pants sold for babies and toddlers are *kaidangku* (开裆裤), with a split down the middle of the rear to accommodate the child’s toileting. Taking books on Kindle is a reasonable approach, but buying those locally can also become opportunities to delve into a different literary world, as I discovered when I traveled with my four-year-old.3

![Figure 9.1](image)

**Figure 9.1.** Nearly there: Blumenfield hauling home a summer’s worth of gear, research materials, clothes and gifts – along with a child who had not slept for about 20 hours – in the Vancouver airport, the last stop in a Kunming-Hong Kong-Vancouver-Seattle journey. (The length of time between the two international flights required that all luggage be retrieved and then checked in again for the connecting flight.) Photograph: Tang Zhiyong.

I hauled an enormous amount of gear with me: a life vest and rain boots for my son; a full medical kit (cf. Cornet, Chap 7 this volume; Glover, Chap. 4 this volume); a small quantity of snacks; research materials and equipment, including copies of my dissertation; and gifts for people in my fieldsites. Since our time in southwest China coincided with the rainy season, and clothes dryers were unavailable outside of the provincial capital, Kunming, I brought several pieces of rapid-dry clothing from REI that could air dry without sunshine. Being loaded down made train travel difficult but helped me feel more prepared for parenting in rural Yunnan. I made arrangements for friends to meet us at airports and escort us on our way. I also paid for assistance with carrying luggage wherever possible, including at airport baggage claims and train platforms, and I was generally shameless about asking for help (and then thanking our helpers profusely).
Health considerations

Preparations for fieldwork with children should include discussions with a travel medicine specialist about necessary vaccinations and preventive medical care. Large metropolises like Beijing, Shanghai and other eastern cities have clinics that provide ‘Western’ biomedical treatment delivered in English-speaking, Western-style medical settings. Most smaller cities farther west, though, offer less comprehensive Western-style medical care, and those heading to do fieldwork away from the big centers should be cognizant of that fact. (Quality of available health care may vary, but translation in healthcare settings where Chinese is the only language spoken is increasingly facilitated by smartphone apps like Pleco Chinese Dictionary.)

I recommend emergency medical evacuation insurance, such as that provided by MedEx or SOS International. Some universities provide blanket coverage for their employees, but coverage levels should be scrutinized before departure. Having these policies has always reassured me that in the worst-case scenario, I could rely on assistance to receive emergency care or even repatriation. They also offer phone-based consultations with a physician at no extra charge, something I have used many times. Discounts for educational purposes may be available.
Pollution is a growing concern in many parts of China, posing particular challenges to children affected by asthma (cf. Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume). With smoking widespread in public and private spaces, second-hand smoke also causes families concern. Masks and air filters may help families feel better, but everyone should keep in mind that air pollution at the extreme levels seen in China's cities in the early 2010s carries long-term health effects.

Frequently aired exposés about food safety problems ranging from melamine in milk to cooking oil laced with chemicals can make eating frightening. Many Chinese families that previously enjoyed dining in restaurants are choosing to cook more of their meals at home. Organic produce and dairy foods are now available in many larger cities, including Kunming, Chengdu, Beijing and Shanghai. Those doing fieldwork in rural areas may be able to procure food directly from those who have grown it, though this practice does not necessarily lessen the likelihood of pesticide exposure.

**Childcare and costs**

Who will care for the child, and when? In what settings can children become part of the fieldwork? Caregivers in the field can take many forms, including a full-time nanny brought from another country; a locally hired nanny; a nationally hired nanny; an accompanying parent; or part-time, casual paid or unpaid help. Some faculty engage former students as full-time caregivers who travel with the family in exchange for a plane ticket and paid expenses. As for children’s presence during fieldwork work, whether children’s presence and disruptions will offend people in certain situations should be carefully considered. For example, children will often be welcomed during visits to others’ homes and at restaurant meals but frowned upon during official government interviews. As a researcher in southwest China, I have found the relaxed moments of a visit to a noisy KTV or the alcohol-fuelled socializing following a bonfire party invaluable to deeper understandings of local networks and perspectives. However, according to the parenting philosophy to which I subscribe (cf. Shea, Chap. 2 this volume), these environments are wholly unsuited to a young, sheltered child accustomed to an early bedtime. Anthropologist-parents must find creative strategies for fitting in these often-important encounters.

When I took my son to China, I asked friends to help me find someone, likely an English-speaking college student, from the community where I do my research, who could work as a short-term nanny. I reasoned that this person could both care for my child and offer some insights and translation help, like a research assistant. I expected the person to be able to plan activities...
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and anticipate my son’s needs. Instead, I found myself with the equivalent of a mother’s helper and could not confidently leave the young woman alone with my son for very long. Without delving too far into the details, let me just say that my son locked her out of the lakeside hotel room where we were staying. While I appreciated the help she was ultimately able to provide with laundry and running errands in the village, in the future I would likely sacrifice the idea of finding someone from the community in favor of ensuring the person would be a good caregiver for my son. Employing one of my US-based students in that capacity seems like another good option to explore, though the financial aspects of this option seem daunting.

Few grants explicitly provide funding for family members during international fieldwork (as far as I am aware, only Fulbright and U.S. National Science Foundation grants do so, and only in some situations). The costs involved in bringing families along are often prohibitive, especially for doctoral students earning stipends too low to support their families under normal circumstances, let alone pay for one or more international plane tickets. In many cases, extended family support or spousal subsidization of the fieldwork may be necessary; this support opens up a separate set of issues and obligations, implicit or otherwise. (That these options may not exist for everyone points to an inequality of opportunity for those who would like to be able to embark on accompanied fieldwork, but cannot afford to do so.)

Carefully considering long-term research plans, and deciding when a trip will be most feasible with an accompanying child, is a worthwhile strategy. I have mixed periods of fieldwork conducted with my son with shorter unaccompanied visits. Anticipating a future trip with him, I made sure to tackle the most intensive, exhausting phases of my research when he did not accompany me. Different research topics and phases of long-term research will benefit from these strategic assessments.

Language and educational options

Some children accompanying their parents to China have grown up speaking Chinese and listening to it, but most children arrive in China without fluency in Chinese. This creates challenges in determining appropriate and effective educational placements, though language barriers are not responsible for all the challenges. Teaching children Chinese before they leave their homes is not always practical, but it can accelerate integration into Chinese school settings and promote social relationships (see Blumenfield, Chap. 3 this volume, for further discussion of language learning).
Some contributors to this volume have enrolled children in Chinese schools. Often this requires certain accommodations, such as enrolling them in a different grade level or having children attend partial days. These accommodations usually require negotiations with school officials that may be facilitated by activating *guanxi* networks; see Shea, Chap. 2 this volume. In some cities, universities with attached primary schools are hospitable environments for foreign visitors. Other contributors to this volume have enrolled children, only to withdraw them after too many tearful days in a local school. International schools are a very expensive option, ranging between $20,000 and $35,000 per year at the time of this writing. Tuition is often out of reach for the anthropologist-family unless funding provides for dependent expenses, or unless another source of income is available (cf. Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume).

Some anthropologists have homeschooled their children (Swain and Swain, Chap. 6 this volume; Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume), while still others have decided that their children are learning enough through their experiences and thus consider their time in China a form of unschooling (Blumenfield, Chap. 3 this volume). Options and strategies vary with children’s ages, personalities, and geographical locations within China.

**Special needs and sensitivities**

We have noticed that many anthropologists’ children have special needs of one sort or another, from diagnosed syndromes and disorders to sensitivities and intellectual abilities. These demand extra attention from their parents in any setting. In China, where a family from overseas draws scrutiny without intending to, judgment may come swiftly and be voiced openly. As Linnekin (1998) has made clear in a chapter in the book *Fieldwork and Families*, any advantages of bringing children along may very well be negated by the (locally) inappropriate behaviors they exhibit. Controlling how others view their parent may then be impossible (cf. Lozada and Lozada, Chap. 5 this volume).

In China, a visiting family will be on display. As the authors of the Moon Guide to Living Abroad in China write, ‘If you’ve ever wondered what it’s like to be famous, just take a blond baby to a small Chinese town’ (Strother and Strother 2013: 83). Regardless of physical appearance, people may be interested in photographing an accompanying child and being photographed with the child (cf. Shea, Chap. 2 this volume, Cornet, Chap. 7 this volume). Some children may have more difficulty with this than others: some children may love the attention while others will crave anonymity. Parents should consider the personalities of their children when planning their time. Travelling with a
child who did not always appreciate others’ attentions, I tried my best to protect bedtime and thus spent more time in our room than I had ever done on previous trips, when I would have tried to maximize time spent with the family hosting me. Other anthropologist-parents have found it necessary to shift to a different setting (e.g., from a smaller city to a larger one, or from a remote village to a tourist center) to minimize unwanted attention.

Strategies to help children adjust to the challenges of living away from home include creating visual schedules and helping children preview upcoming days, weeks and months (Kurcinka 2006). Children can also prepare by exploring age-appropriate books and films. Libraries may carry a number of books about China for children, but these are often filled with cultural clichés and are light on details of contemporary Chinese life. Three books are particularly helpful for children embarking on an adventure in the country: Welcome to China (Jenner 2008), targeted at seven-year-old to nine-year-old readers; People’s Republic of China: Enchantment of the World (Mara 2011), aimed at ages ten and older; and Not-for-Parents China: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know (Forbes 2012), a colorful and engaging guidebook alternative geared toward ages eight through twelve. Books that go into minute detail about airports and air travel may also help very young children learn what to expect (e.g., Goldsack and Smith 2005). Finally, developing reflective practices (Blumenfield, Chap. 3 this volume; Cornet, Chap. 8 this volume) and taking steps to support a child’s emotional resilience (Siemens 2011) will help children of all ages process their experiences and navigate challenges.

In conclusion

Of course, it isn’t always easy travelling with children. Schlepping the luggage while trying to hurry along someone who wants to dawdle every step of the way can be stressful to say the least. But there’s a lot you can do up front to minimise aggravation and difficulties. Getting the pace right is vital, and planning and taking the right bits and pieces with you, including the right mental attitude, are key. Starting out in a positive frame of mind and aiming to stay that way will help to deflect tensions. Remaining flexible will save you when your carefully laid plans go off the rails. If you approach the journey with a spirit of adventure, and involve your children in the planning and problem solving, you’ll have a better chance of converting setbacks into opportunities. (Barta et al. 2009: 7)

The Lonely Planet authors are right to counsel a flexible approach and a balanced pace. Most researchers with experience living and working in China have
Tami Blumenfield

already developed the patience and flexibility necessary to conduct fieldwork in a heavily bureaucratic, often authoritarian country. A researcher venturing to live in China for the first time and accompanied by children would face a greater challenge in managing their own adjustment and dealing with their children's culture shock, but with some careful preparations, it should be possible. Involving children in the planning where feasible, and encouraging them to embark on their own explorations of the country by engaging with the books mentioned above will help launch what will certainly be a fascinating adventure – though it may not be completely smooth sailing.

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**Special Considerations for Accompanied Fieldwork in China**

Mara, Wil

Rudd, Elizabeth, Emory Morrison, Joseph Picciano, and Maresi Nerad

Siemens, Julia

Strother, Barbara and Stuart Strother

Zippel, Kathrin

**Endnotes**

1 The special considerations discussed here are not intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of every aspect of living and traveling in China with children. Three recently published guidebooks cover many of these areas. The China edition of the *Lonely Planet* travel guide (Harper et al. 2013) offers excellent practical advice for visitors to China, going into greater depth on some of the topics discussed here. Healthy travel tips, suggestions for those with disabilities, and logistical information about transportation are particularly useful sections for researchers traveling with families. The *Lonely Planet* publication *Travel with Children* (Barta et al. 2009) is another helpful resource, with sections on traveling as a ‘one-parent family’ (ibid.: 2009: 84), long-term travel (ibid.: 2009: 110–115), and travel to China (ibid.: 2009: 217–220). The Moon guide *Living Abroad in China* is similarly helpful: Strother and Strother offer suggestions specific to relocating to China with children of various ages (Strother and Strother 2013: 81–84) and provide detailed appendices with educational information for many different regions of China.

2 ‘Expect to buy some cheap T-shirts and cheap kids’ clothes where you are going. Use the extra room you have saved in the suitcase for the beloved blanket or stuffed animal that will make any bed feel like home. Rachel’s son Louis took his down blanket and pillow back and forth to Beijing twice a year for ten years, which seemed silly to some, but was necessary for his sense of well being’ (Connelly and Ghodsee 2011: 153).
I had packed several picture books and kept up our bedtime routine of reading two stories before bed. After over a month reading the same rotation (including a non-fiction book about frogs and a too-long-for-bedtime Magic School Bus story), I asked our college student-nanny to purchase some Chinese language children's books for us on her trip to the city to help with her sister's engagement feast. She brought back a book of fairy tales. Little did we suspect that the seemingly innocuous volume contained a fairy tale where the villain was a greedy, evil foreigner (laowai 老外) out to extort money and trick kind, innocent villagers out of their rightful treasure. I am sure this would prove fruitful for cultural analyses, and I am not one to shy away from discussions of historical enmity and racial consciousness – but I was not prepared to have these discussions unwittingly while reading my four-year-old a bedtime story. Fortunately I scan pages more quickly than I read aloud, even when translating on the fly from the printed Chinese into spoken English (the pinyin transliterations below were helpful in that regard), and I made up an alternate storyline to avoid having that conversation prematurely.

Along with the standard first-aid kit items, important components of the over-stuffed medical kit include antibiotics, rehydration salts, and both over-the-counter and prescription diarrhea remedies. Some people pack a syringe kit as well. I usually pack Dramamine in case of carsickness on northwest Yunnan's winding mountain roads.

Furthermore, as Kathrin Zippel has pointed out, existing policies generally 'privilege the normative disembodied male worker who is independent, flexible, and without local ties or care responsibilities' (Zippel 2011: 2). The implications of these policies and the resulting impact on career trajectories cannot be ignored. See also Rudd et al. 2008.
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bold=extended discussion or term highlighted in text
f=figure; n=note; t=table
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