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The outdoor activities of the Chinese middle class families in Shenzhen



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Colophon

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The outdoor activities of the Chinese middle class families in Shenzhen

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Foreword

This thesis is the conclusion of my master Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam.

After an intensive year of learning about cities, places, people and human activities, it was time to write my thesis. Luckily, I had the opportunity to let many of my interests come together in this thesis: new urban cities, time use, international orientation and my curiosity to understand different cultural views. The topic about urban Chinese middle class families has kept me interested until the end.

I could not have written this thesis without the help of others. First, I would like to thank my supervisor professor Arnold Reijndorp and his co-tutor MSc. Ching Wen Yang, who provided me valuable input to get back on track when I felt lost in the topic. Furthermore, I would like to thank INTI for providing us the opportunity and financial support to do research in Shenzhen. Furthermore, I am grateful to all the anonymous Chinese respondents for their cooperation. The many inspiring interviews gave me insight in the lives of these middle class families in Shenzhen. I would like to thank all the student translators, for helping me with translating and giving essential knowledge about the cultural differences.

Next, I would like to thank my parents for their support. I also would like to thank my friends for listening and support. Lastly, I would like to thank my co-students, who accompanied me in the past months at the UB, for their uplifting support and for giving me the energy to finish this project.

Abstract

The economic boom in China caused an enormous economic growth with a new emerging middle class. Shenzhen is one of the new cities that have bloomed into a successful metropolis where facilities for the middle class largely determine the image of the city. The importance of this research is to give insight in the daily-organized outdoor activities of the middle class families with young children in Shenzhen.

The free time of the families appears to be limited and is mainly spend together with the family. The chosen activities are determined by tradition, ambitions and location. The families decide activities on these educational and traditional aspects, which imply an extreme focus on the development of their child. Furthermore the families prefer activities that are located close to their residential place and are safe and child friendly. These places provide a concentration of different activities. By doing qualitative research in the form of interviews with local families and the observation of their activities, I contribute to a better understanding of the new emerging middle class families in Shenzhen and their related ambitions and motives, which can be derived from their daily outdoor activities.

Keywords: Chinese middle class, families, time use, leisure activities, place

Table of contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Problem definition | 2 |
| 1.2 Scientific and social relevance | 2 |
| 2 Theoretical Framework | 4 |
| 2.1 Middle class families | 4 |
| 2.2 Time use of middle class families | 7 |
| 2.3 Free time activities | 11 |
| 2.4 The use of space in the city | 15 |
| 2.5 Motivation for activities | 17 |
| 2.6 Conclusion theoretical framework | 20 |
| 3 Research Design | 22 |
| 3.1 Research Question | 22 |
| 3.2 Sub questions | 22 |
| 3.3 Conceptual scheme | 23 |
| 3.4 Definitions of conceptual scheme | 23 |
| 3.5 Operationalization | 24 |
| 3.6 Methods | 25 |
| 4 Data collection | 26 |
| 4.1 Interviews | 26 |
| 4.2 Observations | 28 |
| 4.3 Data analyzing | 28 |
| 4.4 Characteristics | 29 |
| 4.5 Research limitations | 31 |
| 5 Time use of middle class families in Shenzhen | 33 |
| 5.1 Daily scheduling | 34 |
| 5.2 Contracted time | 35 |
| 5.3 Committed time and the role of grandparents/support in the household | 38 |
| 5.4 Free time | 40 |
| 5.5 Synthesis | 45 |
| 6 The organized outdoor activities | 47 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 6.1 Entertainment activities..... | 47 |
| 6.2 Cultural activities | 49 |
| 6.3 Extracurricular activities | 53 |
| 6.4 Nature/sport activities | 54 |
| 6.5 Transport to the activities..... | 57 |
| 6.6 Places | 57 |
| 6.7 Synthesis | 58 |
| 7 Motivations | 60 |
| 7.1 Tradition..... | 60 |
| 7.2 Ambitions..... | 61 |
| 7.3 Location | 68 |
| 7.4 Synthesis | 70 |
| 8 Conclusion, discussion and reflection | 72 |
| Literature | 75 |
| Appendix 1 | 79 |
| Appendix 2..... | 85 |

1 Introduction

The research area of this thesis is located in Shenzhen; originally a fishing village that became an economic boomtown in the last decades. After 1978 new market policies were introduced with a focus on economic growth through a combination of exports and foreign investment. Special Economic zones were created with liberal economic regimes. Shenzhen is the most famous one: boosted by local market forces the city bloomed into a successful metropolis in twenty years. In the current situation it is a major city in the south of Southern China's Guangdong Province, located on the north of Hong Kong (Ng, 2003). The business ventures and enterprises that are located in the city, attracted a disproportional large middle class in the past two decades (Shenzhen Government Online, 2006 and Elfinck, 2011).

People pour in from all over the country, mainly for work, and often leave after just a few years with new skills and valuable experiences for their resumes. It is also a city of social transformation. Bright individuals arrive from less wealthy areas armed with tertiary degrees and leave as polished middle class sophisticates. Although many people have lived in large cities while studying at university, most have done so as poor students. Shenzhen is where career start, earning power kicks in, and upward mobility rules (Elfinck, 2011: 188).

Shenzhen is a place that has grown into an enormous city within only three decades; this makes the population relatively young and consists mostly of families with young children. This thesis will analyze the daily activities of *Chinese middle class families* in Shenzhen and will contribute to the day-to-day construction of family life. The booming economy in China and the growing middle class result in a rise of the Chinese living standard and that includes more leisure time. Families could spend this time and money on leisure related activities with children (Zhang, 2010).

The middle class in Shenzhen create the dominant image of the city of Shenzhen with the public domain that seems full of facilities for this particular group. The image of the city is characterized by facilities for the middle class such as golf courts, shopping malls, gated compounds etc.

This thesis will focus on middle class families with young children that mostly live in high-rise buildings, the dominant residential space for middle class families in Shenzhen. The high-rise buildings are often located in gated compounds can range from simple flat areas to luxurious gardens with a swimming pool, gym etc. A city like Shenzhen largely consists out of high-rise flats, which causes a high population density. Public transport could be more economically and operationally feasible, and the customers of social and commercial services like restaurants, shopping malls and gyms are more easily reachable. The apartments of these high-rise building are often small. This might result in a strong focus on leisure activities outside their houses, but this is inevitably connected to their time schedules.

1.1 Problem definition

The new emerging middle class is characterized by increased leisure time and higher consumption patterns (Jim and Chen, 2009 and Zhang, 2010). The aim of this thesis is to explore how Chinese middle class families with children do spend their free time in Shenzhen. How do these families create this free time? What are the types of activities in their free time, how are they organized and where are they taking place? These activities in combination with work and household and care for the children, require some structured planning. Middle-class parents, especially mothers, devote considerable effort and thought to such activities (DeVault, 2000).

The research will provide insight into the ways Chinese parents develop strategies allowing them to combine their dual roles as mother or father and worker. After exploring the creation of free time, there will be a strong focus on the activities that take place during that free time. The type of activities, the place and the motivation will be discussed. This thesis will try to give a better insight in the daily lives, leisure patterns and ideals of these expanding middle class families with young children. The idea of expressing these family activities calls up a particular image of family life and upbringing of their children. Moreover, an enormous city like Shenzhen with an upcoming middle class, makes this area a perfect research location.

1.2 Scientific and social relevance

The understanding of the meaning, significance, or experiential qualities of family activities and family leisure remains limited and needs further research. Although some Chinese scholars have raised the attention, research on Chinese leisure and its culture is still limited (Li, 2009: 230). The small amount of research that does consider family activities outside their homes has focussed on family member's participation in the formal organizations such as workplace and school (Lu and

Hu, 2005). Furthermore residents recreational use patterns have seldom been addressed and citizens are barely given the chance to participate in the urban planning process and their views are rarely solicited (Jim and Chen, 2009). A qualitative approach can be a valuable contribution to the knowledge of Chinese middle class families. It provides an insight into their outdoors activities, planning and ambitions.

2 Theoretical Framework

The overall aim of this research is to explore the planned organized activities of Chinese middle class families with one child or more and their related ambitions. This theoretical framework will start with giving a definition of the middle class in Chinese context that will be used for this thesis. A definition of this new emerging middle class will be quite difficult as will be discussed in the first part. The history and characteristics of the Chinese middle class will be presented as well. This will lead to the discussion about time use of the Chinese families with young children. Subsequently the focus will be on the free time and their related activities. The geographical aspect of the activities, work and residential space will be treated more detailed and the motivation for these activities will be discussed.

2.1 Middle class families

Definition of middle class families

In the context of this research it is necessary to explore the concept of the ‘middle class’ as a social designation. It seems quite difficult to define the middle class in China; therefore different views will be discussed and the perspective that is related mostly to this thesis will be highlighted. Sociologists Max Weber, Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias describe social class as an imaginary phenomenon, linking objective conditions and subjective perceptions (Li, 2010: 29). Social class is a relative concept, created by society through conceptions and aspirations in correlation between different classes. This term could be seen as a manifestation of a class instead of a defining feature thereof. This classification suggests that there is a social group between a lower and a higher or upper class. The term denotes a highly subjective definition that depends on national, cultural and economic contexts. The classification can be measured in absolute or relative terms; absolute implies measurements of annual incomes and purchasing power parity and relative implies percentiles of consumption distribution and income level as compared to median per capita income (Li, 2010: 34). Furthermore, consumption could be an important social distinction and is a way for the middle class to distinguish themselves from other groups. They pursuit a type of lifestyle that can be defined by using certain goods, places and times. The group is characterised by individuals that possess money and leisure time. There are more groupings in defining membership of the middle class, one can classify on for example family background, certain consumption patterns, employment status, education or home and car ownership (Elfick, 2011). All these different classifications make the agreement on how to define this middle class problematic. Commonly there

are four criteria used by scholars to define the Chinese middle class: the middle class is expected to have a considerably high and stable income, a professional and managerial job, have received a higher education and enjoy a relatively high standard of living with good access to quality healthcare (Li, 2010:139-140 in Lia, 2012). I will refer to the middle class based on occupation; the families belong to young middle-class 'professionals' and are distinct by job from the two traditional classes of workers and farmer (Zhou, 2008: 110 in Elfick, 2011).

History of the middle class in China

'Middle class' in China is a relative new term; in the time of Mao's leadership the government tried to avoid the social distinctions, individuals were effectively divided into new and several social categories as workers, farmers, and intellectuals. Before the mid-1980s there was no discussion about the existence of the Chinese middle class; in general the term class has been avoided since the end of the Maoist regime (Zhang, 2010:6). In the nineties a group of Chinese sociologist started to argue that this middle class became a strong characteristic of the modern Chinese society and they tried to convince Chinese policymakers that this might be a positive development. Since that period the Chinese people have experienced a wage increase of almost 168% (Lia, 2012: 1). The Chinese economy has been rapidly expanded in only thirty years and in 2009 it was considered as the second largest economy in the world. The development of a better quality of life increased and China started to build on a moderately well-off-society. The economic reform provided the opportunity to earn more money and people started to become more individualistic. Socialism lost parts of its relevancy and growing commercialisation created the opportunity for independent social interaction (Lia, 2012). This caused an emergence of a new middle class and is clearly a result of the economic liberalisation, urbanisation, better education and growth in white-collar jobs (Li, 2010:137-138). This new emerging middle class might expand more in the future; there is an expected increase of migration to China's large cities for higher-paying jobs in the next twenty years. These new working consumers will face increasing salaries and contribute to an even larger middle class (Farrel et al., 2006: 62). This makes the focus on middle class families more interesting. However, it should be noticed that this economic transformation caused not only prosperity and an expanding middle class, it also partly resulted in a larger gap between rich and poor which will possibly grow even larger in the future (Elfick, 2011: 194). Moreover, China's new middle class also forms an urban phenomenon and consist out of a relatively small and privileged segment in relation to the total population. The middle class accounts for less than 16 per cent of the total Chinese population (Zhang, 2010:6).

Characteristics of the Chinese middle class family

Today's Chinese population is often characterised as a composition of self-driven, calculating, and determined individuals who wish for a better life together with individual plans, seeking to live 'a life of one's own' (Yan 2011:10-11 in Lia, 2012). The next citation describes the current situation of the middle class in an urban environment:

A new revolution in homeownership and living is sweeping through the booming Chinese metropolises. This time the main actors on the social stage are not peasant, migrants, or working-class proletarians but middle-class professionals and entrepreneurs in search of their private paradise in a society dominated by consumerism. No longer seeking happiness and fulfilment through collective sacrifice and socialist ideals, they now hope to create a good life of material comfort and social distinction in the newly constructed gated communities (Zhang, 2010:1).

The Chinese individuals increasingly define themselves through the consumption and display of different material goods. Furthermore, a typical aspect of the Chinese middle class is the relative young age of the country's wealthiest consumers that varies from 25-44 years old. This is the age where Chinese families have young children and are expected to have achieved success in their career (Farrel et al., 2006: 65 and Hui-fen, 2012). The economic transformation of a planned economy into a market economy caused a complete different development environment for children and families. This is characterized by the sense of competition and a strong focus on investment in children's education (Xi et al., 2006:3). With the change of household expenditure, urban citizens were able to use more than half of their income on consumption of non-food items. Of the non-food items the largest expenditure of urban Chinese consumers will go to recreation and education. As incomes rise, most of Chinese consumers spend a larger proportion of their household budgets to educational expenses like tuition, tutors and textbooks; this illustrates the high value of education by Chinese families (Elfick, 2011: 192 and Farrell et al., 2006: 67). People's lives have improved and created a strong need for overall social development. The economic boom and political reforms caused a change in the supply of leisure facilities and the demand of these facilities for this emerging middle class. Without the surveillance of the state, it is now possible to make use of the new commercialised leisure spaces like nightclubs, cinemas and health clubs. This enables families to establish new identities (Wang, 1995 and Yu and Tng, 2003 in Elfick, 2011). Increasingly,

leisure is considered important to the quality of urban life, and leisure consumption has become a notable sector of China's economy. The Chinese middle class seem to have more leisure time that can be spend on outdoor activities with a higher budget (Jim and Chen, 2009). Li (2009) summarized this trend:

Due to exposure to a wider collection of cultural experiences brought in by globalization, the interest of Chinese people has turned toward the growing mass culture and entertainment. A significant proportion of the Chinese urban population has increasingly expressed interest through rising expenditure on leisure, recreation and tourism. Endowed with more discretionary income and free time, Chinese people have been eager to travel and see the outside world (p.230)

Concluding, this new emerging middle class family can be defined by occupation and is characterized by more leisure time and a larger household budget. At the same time the environment for children and families has been changed in commercial places that provide many leisure facilities.

2.2 Time use of middle class families

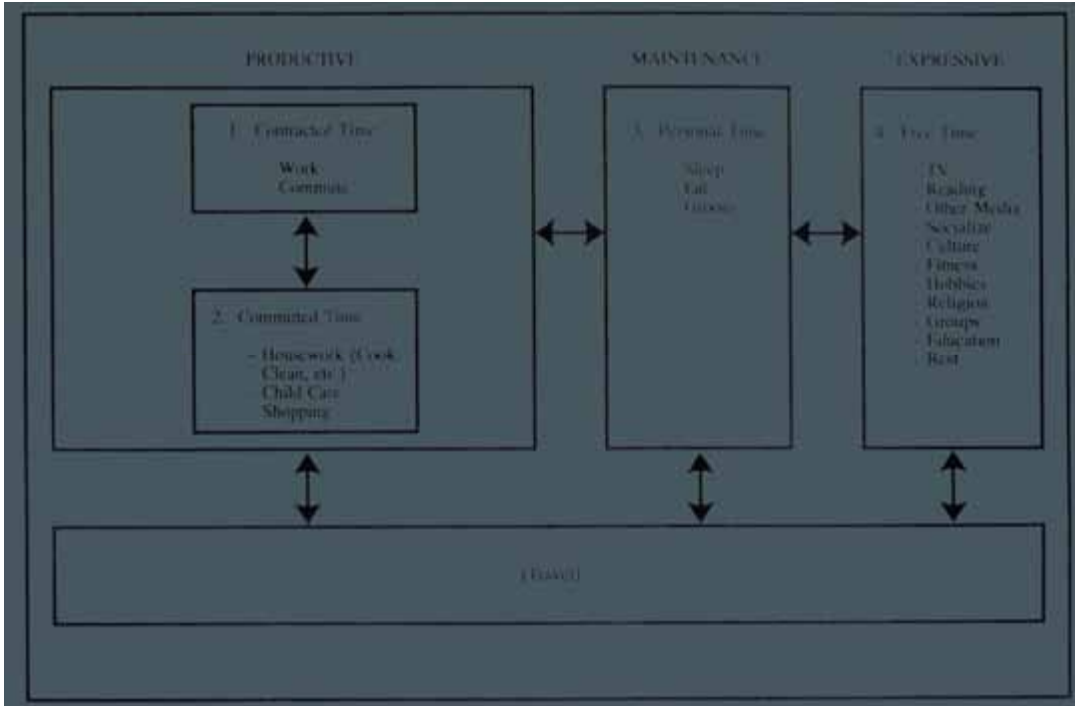
Theory time use

Time use has provided an important methodological window on nonmarket economic production, gender roles, leisure and the nature of everyday life in general (Appold and Yuen, 2005: 571).

Aspirations of middle class living might have effect on activities and organization of the household. As said before, the leisure time is an important characteristic of the Chinese middle class family. This section will focus on the time use of middle class families, their time schedule and creation of 'free time'. The families are in a constant process of interplay between work, household activities and free time. In the family household, one can distinguish four types of time: the paid work (contracted time), the household/family care (committed time), the personal time and the free time. The first two categories of time can be considered as paid and unpaid work. The third type can be seen as the biological necessities of human existence and includes mainly sleeping, eating etc. Free time does not necessarily mean leisure; this can also be educational or religion related activities.

Figure 1 distinguishes the interrelations across the four types of time with help of the model of Robinson and Godbey (1997). Travel is an extra type of time that is added in this figure and forms the connection between the four types of time.

Figure 1. Categories of Time Use



Source: Robinson and Godbey (1997): 12

Notice that this is not a very sophisticated model and that types of time can be overlapping. In this research the main focus will be on the time spend on family and personal activities outside the family's house. The personal and contracted time is somehow already mostly determined; the time of sleeping, eating and working often does not differ that much and is stuck to scheduled times.

Holloway (1999) emphasizes that some mothers will take care of their children full time and others employ a range of strategies that enable them to undertake full or part-time employment outside the home. This was also evident for sex role differences in childcare and employment participation. The organization of work, childcare provision and social policy may make combining motherhood and employment and especially full-time employment a difficult task. In case of families with children, and especially young children, more time is spend on committed time. The younger age of the children correlates positively with the time devoted on this committed time, because the childcare

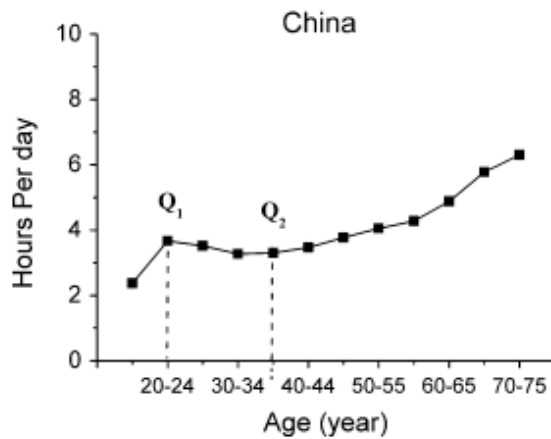
and household maintenance activities are more intensive. One may conclude that family activities are centred on the active process of raising them. This committed time is spent at the expense of the free leisure time (Appold and Yuen,2005:13-15). When making the decisions, one member in a multi-member household may coordinate with other members. As the wife in a nuclear family takes care of cooking, the husband may have to take care of the children and in this way the activities are decided. These are all collective decisions that are made and divided in the household (Holloway, 1999). The employment status of the female is important in determining household activity roles; in turn all non-work activities by the male are influenced by the female's behaviour (Cao et al., 2007). Gliebe and Koppelman (in Cao et al., 2007) found that employment commitments and childcare responsibility had significant effects on trade-offs between joint and independent activities. It was also evident for sex-role differences in childcare and employment participation. For example; the mothers tend to work fewer hours than the male when pre-school children are present. Furthermore free and committed time is partly dependent on the help received and can be expanded by hiring people or family members that can take care of children, clean, cook etc. Strom et al. (1999) made a comparison between the role of the grandparent's behaviour in the republic of China and the United States. Chinese grandparents lived more frequently together with their grandchild in comparison to American grandparents. Nowadays grandparents in China are often perceived as baby-sitters and practical help in the household because it is cheap and safe (p.294). Most of the domestic workers that are hired by Chinese families are young migrant women who are engaged in physical and affective labour through cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. Chinese families regard help in the household from domestic workers with a strong distrust and this makes the families somehow hesitant in hiring these workers (Zhang, 2010:134-135)

Empirical findings about time use Chinese families

Hui-Fen et al. (2012) used data from the Guangdong province to record daily activities and create time use patterns. Urban residents in China seem to spend more time on leisure, with about 19% and less time on labour activities with a 20% of their time in comparing to rural residents. Although in comparison to other countries as Japan, America and New-Zealand, China has relatively the lowest proportion of time that is spend leisure related activities (p.134). Furthermore, Dong and Chick (2012) did research to the leisure constraints in 6 Chinese cities, including Shenzhen. The respondents experienced 'lack of time' and 'busy with work' a major constraints (p.425).

The hours of free time are dependent on the stage of the persons' life. From the age of 15 till graduation the amount of time spend on studying is high while the amount of free time is relatively low. The turning point is around 30-40, an age where most Chinese people have young children. Around this age, men are expected to have succeeded in their careers success around this age and face the pressure of family and society. After reaching this age, the enormous work-pressure is decreased and the leisure time grows (Hui-Fen et al., 2012)

Figure 2. Hours per day spent on free time related to age in China



Source: Hui-Fen et al., 2012: 132

Also for children and students the free time is limited; the figure above shows the free time for students. It appears to be relatively low. Young children also face high education pressure although middle and high school students spend more time on studying than primary school students (Ying, 2003: 366). A percentage of 89,7 of the children have to do homework that takes an average 57.88 minutes per day and furthermore another large percentage of the children read extra-curricular books for about an 30 minutes. About 75,4 % of the Chinese children participate in extracurricular activities that require an average of 12.55 minutes per day. Urban middle and high school students spend an average of 99.37 minutes per day doing homework that is about four times as much as the 23.95 minutes per day spent playing with friends. This means that a lot of the 'free time' is spend on educational related activities. The summer and winter vacations are packed with extracurricular classes, housework, playing games, summer camp and vacation (Ying, 2003). Some teachers and parents ignore the need for leisure by putting much pressure on them with extra classes and children complain about the lack of self-decisions on what to do in their free time (Chen, 2006: 44 and Ying, 2003). This regime of organized activities is probably the big difference between middle class

children and lower class children. They often play less outside, mainly because they tend to have more activities organized and arranged for them by school and parents. In the case that these children attend private schools, it will often mean that these type of schooling offers besides the regular school hours, extra activities. This will leave very little time to play with others or outside when they return to their houses. Their social life is probably more organized than those children of the urban villages (Sutton, 2008).

2.3 Free time activities

This paragraph will focus on the free time of the families and the related activities that take place in this free time. With help of the research of Jim and Chen (2009) the activities that take place outdoors will be divided into activities that are passive and active, and the most popular activities will be highlighted. Passive activities include entertainment, cultural and entertainment activities, and active activities are sports, the use of green-space and nature and travelling. Although their research not necessarily focuses on families, they still gave an impression of the preferences and visit frequency of certain activities.

Leisure activities in transformation

As said before, the rapid economic development made the Chinese people richer and the lives began to move from having the basic necessities to relative comfort. After meeting their daily expenses, most Chinese families devoted their discretionary income to building or purchasing homes, their children's education, the expenses involved in the marriage of sons and daughters, and the purchase of durable goods. In the past leisure activities were limited in scope and poor in quality; people could not afford leisure and recreational activities (Xiao, 2003). Leisure was controlled by the state that prescribed the duration, forms and content of leisure. State-organized events such as dances, film screenings and sporting events now take place in commercialized leisure spaces such as nightclubs, cinemas and health clubs (Elfick, 2011: 199). The nationwide implementation of five working days per week in 1995 and three long holidays per year in 1999 provided the impetus for notable growth of leisure participation by urban residents (Jim and Chen, 2009: 658). Leisure time has expanded and furthermore the quality and diversity of leisure improved. Children's leisure changed and popularity of leisure with an educational aspect increased. The living standard in Chinese cities has bettered and entertainment activities are no longer regarded as taboo. A rapid development of the entertainment service industry has provided more resources and choices (Chen,

2006). Li (2009) confirms the increasing leisure demand and the facilitation by a more leisure-oriented national social policy that supports the creation of a leisure industry:

Outdoor fitness centers, gymnasiums and stadiums have been installed in urban communities in public parks, squares, schoolyards, and other convenient locations. City centres are renewed with a strong leisure orientation with leisure shopping developments, multi-screen cinemas and an ever expanding range of restaurants, bars and café houses (p.233)

This transformation in leisure facilities and time makes the focus on the type of outdoor activities particular interesting. Which places are popular and how these leisure trends will develop.

Passive activities

The research of Jim and Chen (2009) took place in Zhuhai, which is located nearby Shenzhen and has similar characteristics. Just as Shenzhen Zhuhai was established as a special economic zone and could be considered as a new town. Generally young residents with an average age group of 20-30 were asked about their leisure activities in weekdays, weekends and public holidays. Different activities were divided into extra home passive activities and are presented in table 1. It presents the activities that take place in the weekends and public holidays.

Shopping or window-shopping was relatively one of the most frequently distributed outdoor activities.

Table 1. Ranking of participation in extra-home passive leisure activities of Zhuhai residents on weekends and public holidays

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Shopping or window-shopping |
| 1 | Entertainment |
| 2 | Visiting friends |
| 3 | Visiting relatives |
| 4 | Visiting libraries or bookstores |
| 5 | Learning about hobbies |
| 6 | Going to movies, shows, or theatres |
| 7 | Visiting museum or art galleries |
| 8 | Attending concerts or arts events |

Source: Jim and Chen (2009): 662

Other relatively frequently visited activities were entertainment related activities like dining out, visiting karaoke bars and clubs. These activities are mostly popular during the weekends or holidays. The largest part of the respondents never attends a concert, arts event, art gallery or museum. Also going to movies, shows and theatres were relatively limited in frequency of attending. Visiting libraries or bookstores was one of the cultural activities that was more frequently participated activity, probably because of its easily accessible character by having no entrance fee. If people attend the latter activities then they do this approximately once or twice a month (Jim and Chen, 2009: 662). The lower attendance of cultural activities might be explained by the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. Furthermore only 15,4% of the respondents had a university or higher degree and in general the attendance of cultural activities is positively correlated with higher education. For example the likelihood of visiting a museum has to do with the income level and educational background and furthermore dependent on location. Museums are often clustered in urban areas and increase the accessibility for urban residents (Kirchberg, 1996 and Brown, 2012). Another explanation could be the shortage of facilities and activities in Zhuhai, which could have imposed a barrier or disincentive. There is even an assumed trend in China of cultural activities that are named ‘intelligent leisure consumption’. Types of leisure that belong to the ‘intelligent leisure consumption’ are cultural parks, libraries, museums, gymnasiums, galleries of art and so on (Yin, 2005: 178).

As mentioned before, there is also a lot of children's' and parents' time devoted to schooling, extra-curricular classes and hobbies. Extra-curricular classes can be interpreted as systematically planned, structured educational activities with specific objectives for students organized by schools for students outside school hours. Extracurricular activities and after-school educational programs of children play an important role in the children's leisure and increased strong popularity through the last decades. Extracurricular activities offered by primary and high schools and after-school activities are geared towards students' leisure and usually integrate with leisure activities. These activities tend to be rich in content, with diversified and flexible structure and formats, thus providing favourable conditions for children to develop their personal interests and to enrich their leisure. In after-school programs and extracurricular activities, children's interests and hobbies are highly valued. There are emphases on the cultivation of practical and innovative abilities, as well as the development of personality (Chen, 2006:44). In China, a youth and children's palace is an important venue for extracurricular activities. China has achieved great success in the construction of youth and children's palaces. Youth and children's palaces have often main buildings for activities, training classrooms, meeting rooms, multifunctional entertainment halls, video rooms, cinemas and theatres and facilities for outdoor activities (Swartz, 1989).

Active activities

Table 2 presents the most popular active outdoor activities. Almost all respondents in the research of Jim and Chen (2009) listed walking for leisure as an activity, which can be seen in table 2. More than a quarter of the respondents walked for leisure on a daily basis. Playing sports was in frequency quite divided from daily to less than ten times a year. However there is still a bias towards intra home and passive leisure and this suggests a cultural predilection to homebound leisure activities in Southern cities like Shenzhen. The subtropical weather, that is comparable to Shenzhen, did not necessarily stimulate the residents to do more outdoor activities (p.663). The increasing popularity in 'Zhuhai' of the extra-home leisure activities as visiting friends and relatives, dining out, shopping for pleasure and walking around are comparable to the Australian situation. Under the trend of globalization it seems that the current lifestyle and behaviour starts to converge to the Western ones (Darcy and Veal in Jim and Chen, 2009: 667).

Table 2. Ranking of participation in extra-home active leisure activities of Zhuhai residents on weekends and public holidays

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Walking for leisure |
| 2 | Playing sport games |
| 3 | Visiting a park |
| 4 | Visiting the promenade |
| 5 | Travel and sightseeing |
| 6 | Doing voluntary work for leisure |

Source: Jim and Chen (2009): 662

Another popular trend in Chinese leisure activities are theme parks; in the 1990's a boom in the construction of theme parks, amusement parks and other man-made attractions in China emerged. The theme park in Shenzhen (with an investment of RMB 100 million Yuan, US\$ 12 million dollar at that time) was a huge success and it became a popular investment trend (Xiao, 2003).

The improved economic situation of Chinese families gave them the opportunity to travel within and outside the country. Tourism is a good indicator of the quality of leisure and is closely related to time and money (Chen, 2006). Many Chinese travel to Hong Kong because it is seen as the shopping Mecca, offering the best selection (besides Japan) and prices (Lia, 93). Compared to other activities, travel and sightseeing demand more leisure time and requires higher spending, better planning and a strong motivation. In 2005, urban residents made 0.49 billion domestic trips and 3.1 million overseas person trips (Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia luyou ju [China National Tourism Administration] 2005 in Jim and Chen, 2009).

2.4 The use of space in the city

Besides the time aspect it is interesting to explore the role of space. What is the role of a place in choosing certain activities and where do these activities take place?

With help of the model of Lofland (1998) a distinction can be made between private, parochial and public space. Public realms are spaces that are open and accessible to everyone. Examples are parks, roads, squares, beaches and government buildings like a public library.

Hajer and Reijndorp (2001) state that different groups in the society make different use of time and space:

The public space turns out, in reality, barely to function as a public domain; rather it is a transit zone between enclaves of different variations on 'our kind of people' [...] The parochialization of public space, the appropriation by or for certain groups, is seen as one of the most important causes of the decline of the public space as meeting place (p.84-85).

This suggests a transition from public realm to parochial realm. This is mainly written from a Western perspective and not clear if this is applicable on public space in China.

The importance and the significance of the local neighbourhood facilities is emphasized by Forrest et al. (2002). Respondents that live in high-rise buildings in Hong Kong mentioned about the significance of local markets, restaurants and parks in the choice of resident location. The neighbourhood was often perceived as a larger physical space than it actually is, marked by its facilities (p.226). The middle class families that live in the densely populated neighbourhoods like high-rise buildings, face some particular advantages; the number, variety and quality of public and private services are potentially greater in terms of cultural, commercial, recreational services. Because of the higher variation all types of families can be met in their needs (Churchman, 2003). Moreover, urban cities provide more leisure facilities like cinemas, theatres, parks, museums and libraries where urban residents can spend their leisure time. There are new phenomena like nightclubs, karaoke TV, theme parks and other man-made attractions, cafeterias and bars that are typical for cities (Xiao, 2003).

Appold and Yuen (2005) did research on families in high-rise building in Singapore and their daily activities. Their aim was to describe the overall composition of activities in relation to high-rise living. The families of high-rise buildings in Singapore seem to be very dependent on transportation to arrive at work and other activities. Physical surroundings appeared to be important in the type and mix of activities performed. High-rise living in dense urban clusters could result in more activities and social contacts with neighbours and discourage the contact with family members who do not live in the same neighbourhood. On the other hand it might also result in less neighbourhood activities because of the high population density and location that provide easier access to some places (Appold and Yuen, 2005: 6).

As mentioned before, nature is highly valued by the Chinese population. It appears that residents in the Guangzhou, located near Shenzhen, prefer conveniently located and semiprivate neighbourhood gardens embedded within residential developments rather than public sites. Young residents prefer to use urban parks, where proximity is rated as key determinant for visiting green spaces (Jim and Chen, 2006)

Transport

Most non-work activities take place at home or in a close distance of their home during the week. This could be partly explained by the built environment that differs from Western countries; most of the destinations are located within walking distance of the resident's house and out-of-home non-work activities like grocery shopping are spread over the whole week instead of being concentrated in the weekend. The free time has to be planned and organized by the family and is dependent on transport in order to get there (Appold et al., 2005 and Cao et al., 2007).

One of the most critical barriers for leisure activities is probably the shortage of leisure resources in a place. Other barriers are high costs, insufficient facilities, bad management, and low quality. Factors like the accessibility, inconvenient access and inconvenient transportation are not rated as a strong barrier (Jim and Chen, 2009). This might be the same for Shenzhen with a good transportation network. Transportation behaviour could be interesting in the context of participation in activities. It focuses on sequences or patterns of activity behaviour and emphasizes the effects and constraints by economic, gender, social, transportation network and locational divisions on spatial and temporal aspects of individual movement. Individuals who travel long distances to work are less motivated to participate in out-of-home weekday activities. Auto-ownership has a large positive elasticity impact on out-of-home weekend activities and a smaller effect on out-of-home weekday activities (Bhat et al. 1999).

2.5 Motivation for activities

In the last paragraphs the creation of free time, the activities that take place and the role of space were discussed. The motivation to spend this 'free time' in the ways they do and the choice of activities will be discussed. This is interesting to get better insight what these new emerging middle class families drives and what their motivations are.

Popular activities

In the research of Jim and Chen (2009) shopping or visiting the shopping mall was mentioned as the most popular activity. Lia (2012) looks closer at the aspect of shopping malls and the function of the places in their class belonging. Higher income and the development of new social and recreational spaces in the last decades have popularised shopping as a social activity. In a survey of Mckinsey (2010) in China, 73% of the respondents replied that they regarded shopping as a leisure activity, 45% identified it as one of their favourite pursuits and more than half said it is the best way to spend time with their family. In these shopping malls they do not only purchase commodities but also have entertainment and recreational related activities.

A popular active activity was walking for leisure and visiting parks. Nowadays Chinese cities face a growing demand for green spaces and Jim and Chen (2006) give an explanation for this:

[..] population and urban growth, improvement in disposable income and quality of life, increase in leisure time and pursuits, and rising environmental awareness and expectation (p.82)

Taoism is another Chinese traditional philosophy that promotes people to stay in harmony with nature and live a tranquil and peaceful life. This might be an explanation for the popularity of activities in nature (Li, 2009: 231).

Cultural and educational interest

With a growing knowledge economy there is more high technology and high-culture in leisure life. This requires that consumers are knowledgeable and intelligent. Chinese people believe that they can improve their quality of life with more leisure time and specific activities (Yin, 2005). These particular leisure activities seem to focus on the middle and high class. The interest in science and the desire for scientific technological knowledge results in the construction and renovation of historical museums, scientific and technological exhibition halls, and museums of natural history in some large and middle-sized cities (Ying, 2003: 367). In the research of Wong (1996 in Li, 2009) the educational component of a theme park was considered as one of the most important elements. Chan (1963 in Li, 2009) states that this attitude comes from Confucianism that divides life into work and other responsibilities:

It is implied in these teachings that spare time should not be spent leisurely, but devoted to self-improvement through education and learning. As a result, it has been argued that Chinese people do not feel entitled to leisure, but have an underlying sense of guilt when using leisure time to satisfy their personal needs (Chan, 1963 in Li, 2009: 231).

Also an increasing popular activity as tourism can not only be considered as an economic activity, but also as a cultural activity. It can broaden people's horizons, cultivate their mind, enrich their knowledge, and extend their communications (Yin, 2005).

Furthermore overseas travel furnishes social status and is often the topic of discussion at social gatherings. One respondent in the research of Elfick (2011) mentioned: "people don't respect you in Shenzhen if you don't travel regularly for work or fun". Besides visits to cities in China and foreign countries, the middle-class professionals in Shenzhen are also traveling in rural China. They have created a taste for other forms of recreation that are deemed to be individualistic like hiking (Elfick, 2011:205-206).

The middle class families seem to be sensitive to status and they feel like they are perceived as families that do well, but lack symbolic capital. This perception of their lack of symbolic capital, drives them to extraordinary material consumption and excessive investments in developing their children's talents and abilities to prepare them to become the 'cultured elites' (Zhang, 2010 and French, 2006). French (2006) states that parents are worried for their children because they will grow up in a very competitive society where normal education is probably not enough. As mentioned before they put their children on private school programs in order to create more creative thinking. China's one-child policy makes parents extremely focussed on the development and activities of their children. The child is often regarded as a project, soft malleable and able to be developed and improved with a strong support on learning experiences. This phenomenon is especially associated with the professional middle class (Vincent, 2007). In the research of China Youth and Children Research Centre (2001) it appears that contemporary Chinese young parents in Chinese urban areas have extremely high expectations of their children in terms of educational level. Almost all parents wanted to have their children to receive at least two years of college education. They strongly believe that investment in children's education is an effective way to increase the social status of their family. Many parents let their children attend different extra-curricular classes in the weekends or evenings. The classes are often related to their school subjects like English and math but there is also interest in classes like art and physical education. Heavy school workload and

activities arranged by parents for the cultivation of special skills often limits Chinese children's independent decision for spare-time activities (Xi et al., 2006). A lot of children complained in the survey of Ying (2003) about the lack of self-decision-making. About 40,4% of the children states that their parents only care about their school achievement and only 27,3% of them said they could not do what they wanted to do. Goh (2006) did research on the concept and perceptions of the ideal child in Xiamen, another newly urbanized city. She divided this concept into smart, independence, happiness and filial piety. The parents perceive a child as smart when it excels in school and in case of a lower degree of intelligence they will push their children to be better. Independence was another factor that seemed to be important for the parents and it was explained by taking care of oneself and making choices on their own. Happiness was often mentioned in combination with health and social skills. The last quality is filial piety, which means giving back all the care received from the parents when they are old, and comes from the core values of Confucius (p.15-18). Because of the minimal spare time that children have, the total focus of the family is on these extracurricular activities.

2.6 Conclusion theoretical framework

Chinese middle class families form the determining image of the new flourishing Chinese cities. According to the cited literature the relatively 'new' Chinese middle class is characterized by consumption, higher education and more leisure time. They spend more than half of their income on recreational and educational activities. The literature suggests that this might have to do with status and ambitions. This identity, definition and characteristics of the middle class in China are generally formed by Western Academics and this class is a relative new concept that needs further exploration. One of the characteristics is the increased leisure time, but it does not become clear how much time this implies. Also, the time use and creation of it by Chinese families are underexposed. Help from the grandparent or domestic workers could extend families' free time and in this way decrease the committed time. Moreover, the time spent on contracted time determines the free time. How much time is devoted to work and what are the parents' working positions? For children, the leisure time appears to be relatively limited because of the high education pressure and the related extra-curricular activities.

The economic boom and the currently absent state surveillance have a strong influence on the increase of leisure facilities. What is the leisure demand of these new emerging middle class families with young children?

According to a research of Jim and Chen (2009), the activities in the free time are divided into active and passive activities. Shopping and entertainment are popular passive activities and walking, playing sport and visiting parks are popular active activities. Also the role of place is discussed; families benefit from living in an urban environment, because of the big supply of leisure facilities. Furthermore, the public transport and short distance of the facilities helps in accessibility. How does the families experience this high-rise living with young children? What is the role of the city, Shenzhen in this case, in choosing certain activities? Why are certain places preferred over others? The literature states that public spaces are increasingly replaced by parochial realm, but does this also apply to a new town such as Shenzhen?

With the emergence of this new middle class, goes together with some new trends like the focus on leisure activities with an educational and cultural character. This focus could be partly explained by the desire to develop themselves and the influence of Confucianism. Besides, the families live in a new environment, where status and the competitive environment are more apparent. To what extent, will they be influenced by the 'competitive society and what truly drives them in choosing for certain activities?

3 Research Design

3.1 Research Question

My main research question is: *How do middle-class families with children organize their daily outdoor activities in Shenzhen?*

3.2 Sub questions

Three sub-questions are asked:

1. *How much free time do these middle class families in Shenzhen have and how is this free time realized?*

This question is relevant to create an overlook of the families time schedules. The focus directs on the *daily organized activities*, the *household agendas* of these families and why they do this. How their practices are created not only by work hours, schedules, and pressures but also by their values and motivations. It is concerned with some of the things that parents do with the ‘family time’ they have with children but also without them. The questionnaire for this question focused on the daily schedules; the families were asked to describe an ordinary day, their working schedules, the time committed on homework and the help they received.

2. *What are the outside organized activities of the children and parents and where do they take place?*

This question is included to paint a complete picture of all the type of activities and the place of these activities. By giving maps to the respondents, the activities of the families could be easily localized and the distance and accessibility was investigated. Observations were used to create an image of these places and confirm the popularity. All this information contributes to question 3.

3. *What motivates the families to choose these outdoor activities?*

The last question will focus on the ambitions of the parents and what kind of role status has in the decision for specific activities. It gives insight into their leisure preferences, their perception on time and space use and their motives.

3.3 Conceptual scheme

These sub-questions and the literature in the theoretical framework have resulted the next conceptual scheme:

Figure 3. Conceptual scheme

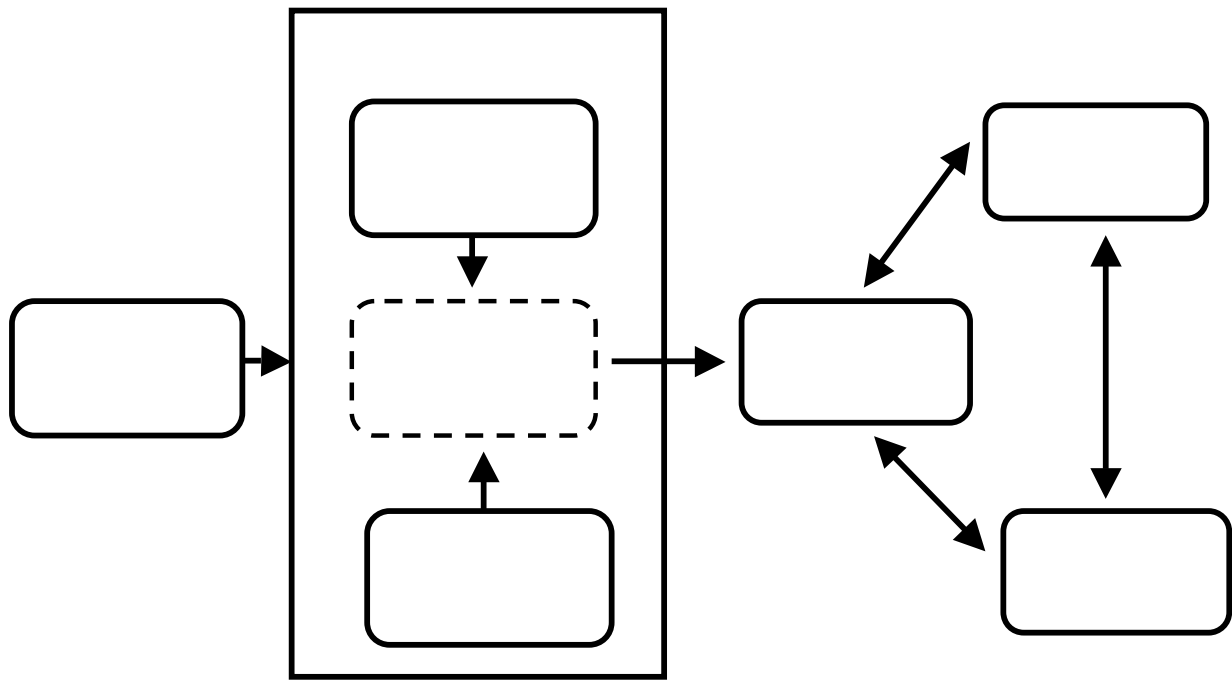


Figure 3 describes the concepts of this research. First the time use of the middle class families with young children in Shenzhen will be studied. The amount of time that is spend on committed and contracted time result in the amount of free time that will be left. The free time leads to outdoor activities of the families that are determined by place and motivation.

3.4 Definitions of conceptual scheme

- Middle class family: Families that belong to the young middle-class ‘professionals’ and are distinct by job from the two traditional classes of workers and farmer
- Time use: The time spend by families, divided into committed, contracted and free time.

- Committed time: Time related to household and family care.
- Contracted time: The time that is spend on paid work.
- Free time: The time spent on leisure and semi-leisure related activities
- Outdoor activities: Activities that take place outside the house
- Place: The geographical location of the activities, the family's house and work
- Motivation: The motivation to do the type of activities

3.5 Operationalization

The research will focus on outing of the middle class through their activities in relation to space and time. Although their identity as a middle class family is important because it is closely linked to their lifestyle, which affect their decisions. This is why the term middle class should be operationalized. The theoretical framework mentioned four criteria, used by scholars to define the Chinese middle class: the middle class is expected to have a considerably high and stable income, a professional and managerial job, have received a higher education and enjoys a relatively high standard of living with good access to quality healthcare (Li, 2010: 139-140). In order to find the right respondents for this thesis, it was difficult to achieve a combination of all four criteria. In an ideal situation, the respondents would meet all the four criteria, but in reality the term seem to be highly subjective. Besides, the division between middle and upper class was hardly to define. A middle class family can be interpreted in many ways, as already discussed in the literature. Furthermore, it appeared difficult to determine on beforehand if these families would meet all these criteria. As for example the term young professional, which indicates often a university degree but in this case a small part of the respondents did not have a university degree. The high standard of living and the access to healthcare were difficult to test and unknown for the interviewed respondents. An important criterion was that at least one of the parents was employed and had a managerial related job that can be seen as a profession that belongs to the definition I maintain. This definition is that families are separated by job from the two traditional classes of workers and farmer (Zhou, 2008: 110 in Elfick, 2011).

The free time also needs to be operationalized. The free time, is the time that is left after spending time on committed and contracted time. The free time can be extended with help in the household in order to decrease the committed time or the amount of contracted time could be increased by taking

a part-time job or quit. Those factors are dependent on money. In this (extended) free time, families are able to spend money, undertake leisure and semi leisure activities.

3.6 Methods

This thesis mainly consists out of qualitative research, by gathering an in-depth understanding of the behaviour of these families and how they make decisions. This understanding has been realized by conducting semi-structured interviews. The way in which these interviews are conducted, will be elaborated more deeply in chapter 5 of this thesis. The research partly has an ethnographic research design by exploring the cultural phenomena; time use, leisure activities and motivations (Bryman, 2008). It is a field study that reflects on the cultural group; the Chinese middle class in the urban setting of Shenzhen. An ethnographic approach often contains a long period of observations in the field. In this case 6 weeks of research was limited, although enough to name it an ethnographic research on a smaller scale (p.402-404). Although there was limited time, the interviews and observations seemed to be useful and gave me insight in the topic and provided me the chance to translate this into an academic context. The research has also a descriptive character by focussing on characteristics of the families, the type of activities and the places. The purpose was to gain more information about the middle class family behaviour and their related activities. On the basis of existing material and theories, there was tried to extend the already existing information and theories.

4 Data collection

I have conducted qualitative research by using observations, conducting in-depth interviews (N=20), short interviews (N=18) and extra interviews (N=3). All these interviews and observations supplied me with enough material to compare. I did not perform all of the interviews by myself; it was in collaboration with another student because our topics are related and complementary (Opbroek, 2013). In this way the amount of interviews conducted could be increased. Furthermore, there is data collected by participant observations and field notes.

4.1 Interviews

Translators and INTI

The UvA¹ provided in collaboration with INTI² the opportunity for students of urban planning and human geography to do fieldwork in Shenzhen. INTI is interested in the past, present and future of planned communities in an urbanizing world and this collaboration might give new information that help in improving the quality of life in new cities and in this case Shenzhen. It was INTI, which introduced us to this new town Shenzhen. On demand of INTI and the UvA, The Shenzhen University asked some English spoken students to help with translating on voluntary base. These students all possessed knowledge of the English language and were doing a master at the Shenzhen university.

In-depth interviews

The interviews were semi-structured interviews and this implies that the questions posed were prepared on beforehand. The interview list, as can be found in appendix 1, appeared to function more as a guideline and helped in reminding to cover all the topics.

The interviews were conducted as informal and open-ended interviews, with a flexibility towards the prepared questions. The follow-up questions made the interviews as fluent as possible and there was tried to have a clear interaction with the respondents. The long interviews were held at a place where the respondent felt comfortable. The in-depth interviews varied from 30 minutes to 1 hour and 25 minutes. The start was a demographic questionnaire and used to gather information about age, gender, level of education, type of work and place of birth. The rest of the interviews contained questions about their activities, ambitions and motivations. Besides, as supporting material I made

¹ University of Amsterdam

² International New Town Institute INTI is a non-profit scientific knowledge institute based in the centre of the New Town Almere. It focuses on improving the quality of global urban development;

use of a copied map of Shenzhen where the respondents could point out where their activities take place, where their house is located and where they work. In this way it is easy to see the distance between the different activities and where they take place. Sometimes the maps did not cover all the places where they go or the respondents simply didn't know where to point the place on the map. A certain part of the interviews was done in Mandarin Chinese with help from a translator; another part was done in English. The Chinese respondents who were able to speak English were interviewed in English.

The snowball strategy was used to gather some of the respondents for the in-depth interviews. The mother of one of our translators worked in the Shenzhen hospital and she arranged the opportunity to interview some of her colleagues. Most of the doctors lived in the neighbourhood located next to the hospital and have similar working schedules. A professor of the University of Amsterdam linked us to another connection. This family helped us by introducing us to other families with children that live in the same compound as she does. The respondents could afford living in this compound what clearly indicates their middle class position. Most of the other respondents that were interviewed for the in-depth interviews came from different parts of the city. They were introduced with help from different translators who knew middle class families living in Shenzhen that were willing to be interviewed. However, the total scope of informants remained relatively limited as a part of the respondents were interviewed by the snowball effect and the short interviews were conducted in only particular area.

Short interviews

The short interviews were all done with help from a translator and took approximately between 7 and 23 minutes. We choose a location where families gather together and spend some leisure time. The Shenzhen bookstore and the public square located next to the bookstore seemed to be a suitable spot. We approached mothers and fathers who were sitting there with a child that had an age between 4-12 years old. I tried to look to middle class signals by looking at their clothes and chose some well-dressed informants. The interview list was used but dependent on the time of the respondents, several topics of the interview list has been used. Some short questions about age, resident location, type of job and education were asked. Furthermore, some questions that asked about their outdoor activities and their expectations for their children.

There was also a third type of interview that was conducted. These respondents contributed to give more insight into the city Shenzhen and the ambitions of its citizens. Two of the informants are involved into the educational activities of the middle class and were able to give more insight into

motivations of the Chinese middle class. We asked them question about the lessons, what kind of families let their children attend these classes and the motivation behind it. The third was an architect that provided more information about the design of the city Shenzhen.

The conduct of the interviews

My position as a Western girl might have helped in the openness of the families. I noticed that most of the respondents were at least initially shy or nervous, but in the end their curiosity took away the emotional distance. Some of the respondents look up to Western people and wanted on the photo to show all their friends this encounter with a Western person. They experienced it as ‘something special’ and this partly could explain their shyness. After some talking, the respondents started to be more open. Although still many respondents only gave an answer on the questions asked and barely gave extra information. Topics about the motivation for certain activities like for example extra-curricular classes were quite new, they do not necessarily discuss this with their friends or other social contacts. This created a consciousness of asking the right questions and during my stay I have made some adjustments in my interview list. In the end all the respondents were friendly, helpful and satisfied to help me.

4.2 Observations

The other research method used is structured observation. The use of space, mainly public space, was observed. The indicated locations in interviews were chosen; as parks, the shore, shopping malls, a theme park etc. and even joined some activities with interviewed families. Wherever I was; I watched the behavior of the families and made some notes. I had dinner or lunch several times with different families, who invited me to join them. I also joined a family to a game centre, where children can play on computers games, gamble and do fair related activities.

4.3 Data analyzing

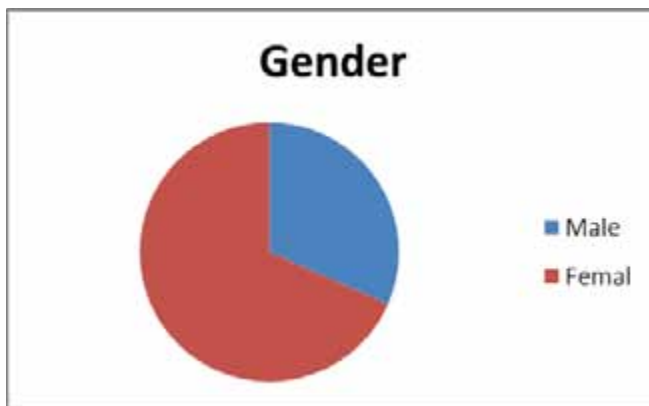
I have recorded all the interviews with my iPhone and transcribed them afterwards. All transcribed interviews were printed and thoroughly analysed. After a first reading, all interviews were coded on terms that corresponded with each other. Important quotes were highlighted and copied to the related questions. Information about age, the place where they live, education and type of job were used in excel and used to analyse the personal characteristics of the respondent. In this way I could easily make tables and figures.

4.4 Characteristics

This section will describe the different personal characteristics of the interviewed family members. A complete list of all the interviewed families, with the main characteristics, can be found in appendix 2. The characteristics that will be discussed are the amount of children, gender, age, the resident location, education and type of job. In total there were 38 respondents all with a wife and one or two children. The total amount of children is 45. Seven families had two children.

Of the 38 interviews were 12 respondents male and 26 respondents female, as can be seen in figure 4. Most of the time there was also asked about the characteristics of the husband or wife.

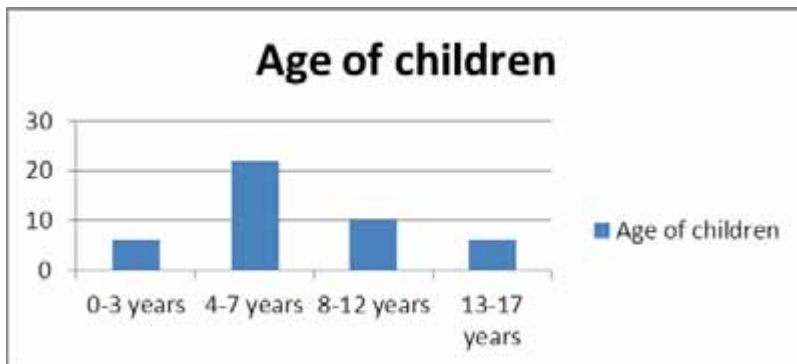
Figure. 4 : Gender of respondents



Age

The total amount of children of all the families was 45 and they the mean of their age was 6,5, the age divisions are presented in figure 5. The youngest was an half year old, the eldest 16 years. Children with an age between 4 and 7 were prevalent in the street scene of Shenzhen. This partly could be explained because the older children stay at home to do homework or are attending classes. Another explanation could be that most people that moved to Shenzhen in the last two decades, were part of a young generation that was attracted by the flourishing economy of the city.

Figure 5: Age division of the respondent's children

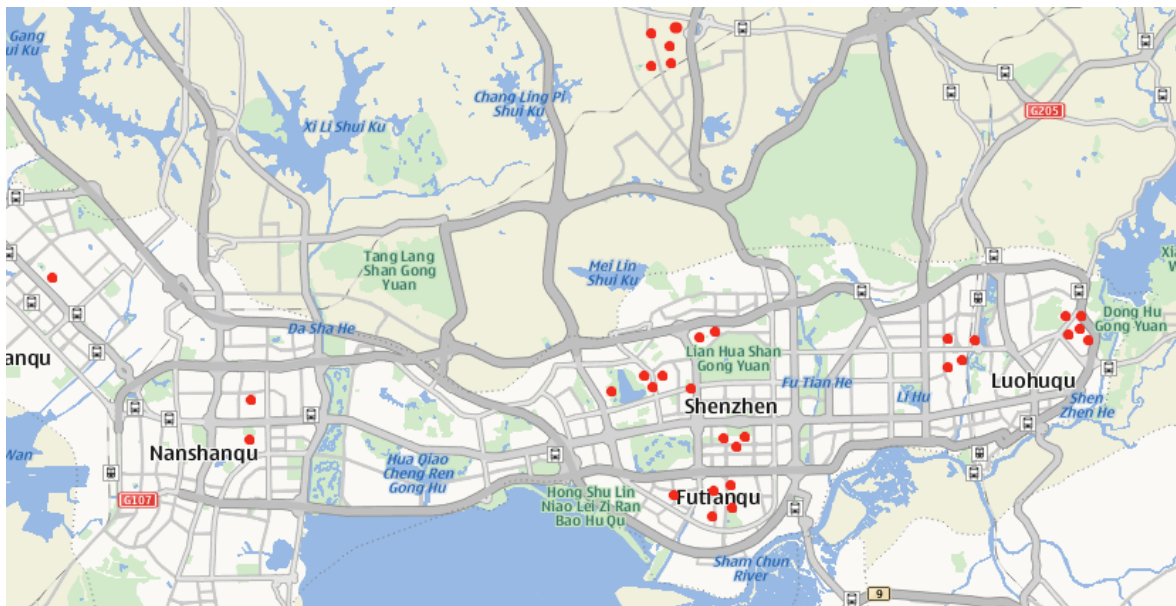


The women in the family had an average age of 36 and the fathers of 37,5 years old. This means that the families had on average their first when they were around 30 years old.

Resident location

Figure 6 presents the different residential places of the interviewed families in Shenzhen. All families that were interviewed lived within the borders of Shenzhen, and most of them in the more central located places.

Figure .6.: Map of resident locations of the respondents



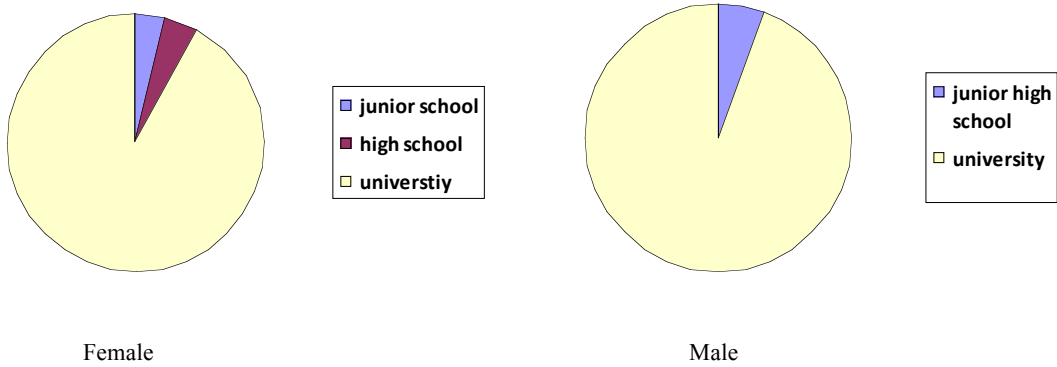
Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/world/sea-level-rise-map/index.html>

The respondents live in high-rise buildings that are located in gated compounds. Because of the snowball effect we had some respondent clustered in an compound on the west-side of Luohu. This was a luxurious gated compound with many facilities like a gym, swimming-pool, park and tennis courts located within the complex. On the other side, this type of compound is in some kind of way isolated. It might be necessary to take a car or taxi to get at the city centre, shopping malls or other activities. There were also interviewed a couple of doctors who lived near the hospital they worked. The houses around the hospital were not as expensive, although some facilities like a kindergarten, shopping malls and sport centres were located nearby.

Education and type of job

The clear majority of the respondents were higher educated, as can be seen in figure 7.

Figure 7. The education level of the respondents



The type of jobs differed between the respondents and all the fathers were employed, except for one.. Examples of most named jobs are; salesmen, doctors, teachers, managers and architects. About 40% of the mothers were voluntarily unemployed. Chapter 5 will further illustrate the employment status of the respondents.

4.5 Research limitations

In this specific research on the daily activities of the Chinese middle class families with one child, I encountered some limitations in terms of access and language. There was clearly a cultural difference, supported by a lot of literature about Chinese people and their shyness and strong value for privacy. The main research of in-depth interviews created struggle with language, since my

knowledge of Chinese is absent. The appointments and interviews were largely dependent on my 'university buddies' and their help and translations that often resulted in an obstacle to create a comfortable and smooth interview.

Zhang (2010) emphasizes the difficulty in getting access to the middle class families; there is a strong sense of distrust and desire for privacy. The personal contacts enabled him to get in contact with these families. He also mentioned that children's playgrounds offered some opportunities to meet parents and start informal conversations. With this in my mind I tried to find respondents in public places where parents with children spend some leisure time.

To make a difference between middle and upper class was in this case quite difficult; because asking about income might be a sensitive topic. The interviews always contained a question about the profession of the respondents and his or her partner but answers as 'I am a manager of a certain company' could be interpreted in many ways.

Questions about expectations and status were politically correct answered, while asking more questions it appears that answers sometimes contradict. Whether people speak the truth or not, remains a problem in qualitative research. Another limitation has to do with the question if this group was representative. According their type of housing and type of jobs, the families could be considered as an higher segment of the middle class. This statement is still rather vague and hardly to define.

Furthermore, the research was conducted in Shenzhen, a new town. The situation of emerging middle class families in Shenzhen cannot simply be compared to other cities in China.

- Work (cook
housework
clean etc.)
- Child care

- Socialize
- Entertainment
- Culture
- Nature spots
- Fitness
- Hobbies
- Education
- Rest

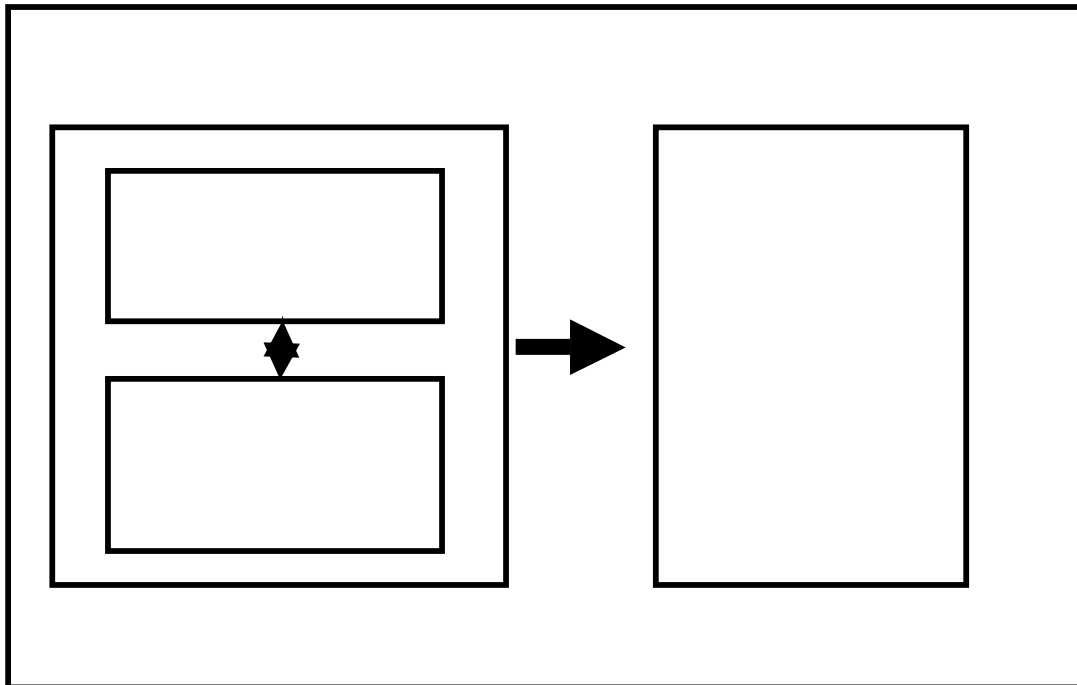
5 Time use of middle class families in Shenzhen

I think the activities that Chinese families do are very limited in comparing to Western families. People are more focused on their jobs and work, most of the Chinese families, that is how I felt when I came back (interview 2, she lived for a couple of years in New Zealand).

While the theory suggests that this new emerging middle class is characterized by increased free time, this citation claims that the free time is still relatively limited. This thesis focuses on this ‘free time’ and results in the first question: *how much free time do these middle class families in Shenzhen have and how is this free time realized?* To get on answer on this question, the family’s time use will be examined.

The time schedule of Robinson and Godbey (1997), discussed in the theoretical framework, will be used as an example to give an insight in the routine of the Chinese middle class family. I made an adapted version in figure 8 to show the time categories of the middle class.

Figure 8: Time categories of the families



Source: Adapted schedule by Lysanne ter Brugge of Robinson and Godbey (1997): 12

The next sections will discuss the contracted and committed time and how these types of time affect the family's 'free time'. The personal time that consists out of sleeping, eating etc. won't be discussed because this is often somehow already determined and less flexible. The amount of time spent on committed or contracted time will have influence on the time that is left; the free time. Families are in a constant process of interplay between work, household and free time. The last section will examine this free time and can be divided into family, social and individual time of the family members.

5.1 Daily scheduling

Most of the fathers and mothers wake up between 6.30 and 8 o'clock in the morning. They make their children ready for school and prepare breakfast for the whole family. In some cases the husband have breakfast at his work and leaves early. The children leave mostly the house before 8 o'clock to take the school-bus or are brought away by the parents or grandparents. The child could have lunch and a nap at the kindergarten/primary school or they will come back home for about two hours. School is finished around 4-5.30 in the afternoon. Some of the children have extra classes after they come back from school and one of the parents or grandparents will join them.

When the mother doesn't work, she will do some household activities or some personal activities. The mothers might do some outdoor activities like going to the park in the morning or stay at home when the children are young and not attend primary school. During the afternoon the mother will cook and after eating they do a nap that takes about 1 or 2 hours. In the late afternoon the woman starts to cook and between 6 and 7 o'clock in the evening they have dinner. After dinner the child will do some homework, takes a shower and goes to bed.

A mother (interview 2) who does not work describes a normal daily schedule:

Routine of interviewee 2 – Mother who has two daughters of 5 and 3 years old

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 7:00am-8:00am | In the morning I woke up at 7 o'clock , than the children wake up and so on and the school-bus arrives at 7.40 in front of the houses. I can go there easily without umbrella and I bring the older daughter to the school-bus. |
| 8:00-4:00pm | I stay at home with the little one and go maybe to some neighbours home because she is getting bored with her old toys so she wants new toys. Sometimes I take her |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| | to the city and have lunch over there and I return at home between 14-15 because of the older girl. She is back at 16.00. |
| 4:00pm-6:00pm | When the older girl comes back she do her homework and I will prepare dinner. |
| 6:00pm-8:00pm | We have dinner at 18.00 o'clock and 19.00 take a shower and at 20.00 they go to bed. |

A father describes the daily routine of his wife who has a part-time job at their own company. She mainly does the administrative work while her daughter attends school. After her daughter comes back from school, the time is packed with extra-curricular activities.

Routine of interviewee 14 – Father who has a daughter of 10 and describes the schedule of his wife

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 6:00am-8:00am | She wakes up 1 hour earlier than me, because my daughter has to school before 7.30AM. And I'm lazy. At least one parent has to get up early to go out. Usually it's her, not me. After she goes to school, she will start her work. |
| 8:00am-4:00pm | But you know, administration, taxation, accounting, this kind of work takes a lot of time. It's a lot harder than my work. Usually, in the morning, she spends time on this. But she's also very smart, she uses her time very well. Usually when she works, she will watch a movie or show on her Ipad at the same time. In the afternoon she goes to the bank, the tax authority or a government department. |
| 4:00pm-8:00pm | At 4PM she goes to school to pick up our daughter. After that, she has music, art or English class. So, usually she will go with our daughter. |

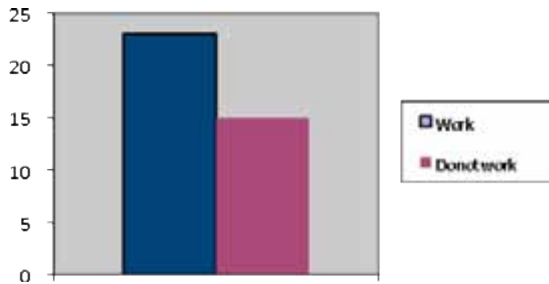
The daily schedules are tight organized and show a somewhat similar pattern in comparison to other families. The differences in schedules lay mostly in the employment status of the mother and the age of the child. Very young children that do not yet attend kindergarten need more care and attention. The weekend schedules differ, but most of the contracted and committed time takes place during the weekdays. The weekends are set aside for the free time. The next sections will take a closer look to the types of time use and the related factors.

5.2 Contracted time

The contracted time, is the type of time that is involved in paid work outdoors as well for paid work at home. The contracted time is applicable on the mother and father. The amount of work and motivations to work, especially, at the point of view of the interviewed mothers will be discussed.

Table 3 shows the ratio between working and non-working female respondents. The largest part (N=23) of the female respondents works full- or part-time, the other part (N=15) that does not work does this generally on voluntary basis. Except for one, all the fathers (N=37) of the interviewed households were employed.

Table 3: Female respondents job status



The interviewed mothers believe they have a crucial role in giving their children love and a sense of security. They feel they have an important role in helping their children developing their characters (Holloway, 1999: 446-447). A certain part of the mothers who were interviewed had this strong desire to fulfil this full time role that it ruled out paid employment outside the home. Almost all interviewed housewives received an university degree and had previous working experience, but decided to quit after giving birth of their first child. The article of Short et al. (2002) did research to maternal work and child care in China. They emphasize that the majority of the Chinese women keep joining the labour force after giving birth to their first child. This was partly true for the interviewees. The non-employed mothers belong to the higher segment of the middle class families in China. They earn enough money to support the household, what makes it less urgent for them to work. It is not necessarily the extra free time they aim, it is more the dedication to their family and child that motivate these women to quit (interview 11). This often results in more committed time as will be discussed in paragraph 5.3.

Goh (2006) states that women in China keep working because it gives them social recognition. A mother (interview 11) with a son of 10 years old mentions she works now for six days and she can proof herself and others by doing a 'good job'. Also other mothers state that working gave them some satisfaction. Furthermore, many of the non-employed female respondents emphasized they

wanted to work again when their children are old enough, what is consistent with the existing literature (Cao et al., 2007). It is mainly the care for the child that makes mothers quit.

When I was pregnant of my first child I stopped. It seemed important to stop and take care of the baby. I like to work, so my husband said I could go to work when my child could go to the kindergarten but then I got pregnant of the second one. But now the two girls go to school so I plan to go back to work (Interview 2: mother).

When the children get older they need less care but because of the competitive environment wherein the children are raised, parents have the feeling they should support their children (interview 5,12). They invest a lot of their free time in helping them with homework and join them to the extracurricular classes. A mother stated that it was really important to stay with her son and take care of him as much as she can. She expected that this might could result in a more successful career (interview 5).

This can be one of the reasons why some mothers or fathers make a change in job type or already have a part-time job that provides them the opportunity to combine their motherhood or fatherhood with working (interview 1,14,17,30). These type of jobs have more flexible hours, so they still can spend enough time with their child.

Most of the time I come here to the restaurant³ to work at 11 o'clock in the morning until 2 pm and then I go back home to take care of my kids. Around 5-6 o'clock I will come here and go home around 9-10 o'clock in the evening [...] My husband want me to be close to the kids. If there are any problems, I can go back home at any time (interview 1: mother).

It was also not uncommon for the fathers and a few mothers that worked to have overtime during working days or the weekends (interview 3,8,12,32). This makes on average the working schedules quite long. Some of the men (interview 1,11,24) work in another city than Shenzhen and come only in the weekends to Shenzhen to stay with the family. These working situations limit the free time and outdoor activities of the parents. The scarcity of this family time made it extra valuable.

³ The husband of interview 1 decided to buy a restaurant next to their house for his wife, so she could combine working with taking care of the children.

Because of their busy working schedules, both parents try to spend all their spare time with the family:

I work six days a week, only one day a week I have time to spend time with my family. I'm on duty five nights a week, so I only have two nights a week to spend time with my family and have leisure time (Interview 3: father).

The fathers spend more time on working in comparison to their wives. The free time of the fathers was limited in comparison to the mothers. When the women quit their jobs this does not necessarily result in the same amount of free time; much time of the unemployed mothers is dedicated on committed time. Committed time might be highly valued because of some traditional views. The sense of happiness comes from fulfilling the expectations of one's family, meeting one's social responsibilities, self-discipline, cooperation and friendliness. The family and social obligations should be put on the first place, instead to pursue leisure time (Ap, 2002 in Li, 2009: 230).

5.3 Committed time and the role of grandparents/support in the household

Next to the contracted 'working' time, there is the 'committed' time, that is involved in time related to household and family care. The committed time could be also considered as the unpaid work (Robinson and Godbey, 1997: 11). As already suggested; when the children are younger the committed time seem to be higher (Appold and Yuen, 2005). Furthermore the child-care of the interviewed families seem to be very dedicated and highly valued. A female respondent (interview 2) with a Dutch husband made a comparison with the Dutch organization of households, often without help of grandparent or maids. The Chinese approach towards the children seem to happen with much care and patience:

A lot of Chinese families think 2 children cause already a lot of trouble. In Holland they don't have a maid or help from grandmother or grandfather. One time I asked: How to wash the 4 children? Two by two and they wash it by the same time and use a bucket to wash their hair and then ready. For us it takes a lot more time, we are so careful, no water in the eyes (Interview 2).

The mothers, who did not work, devoted more time on household related activities. The free time together with the committed time increases. While their children attend school, the mothers take the time to clean the house thoroughly, take more time to prepare lunch/dinner and do on average more groceries than the employed mothers.

Almost everyone who was interviewed receives or received previous help in the household from the family's parents. Most of the grandparents come from other provinces and have to move in for the time being with the family or move into an apartment located near their house. The grandparents come from all over the country and stay for a couple of years or a few months per year near their grandchild. They help with cleaning, cooking and taking care of the child. Although this could relieve the mother from her committed time, they still do a lot of the household activities together. An example is while the grandmother is cooking, the mother cleans the house.

A mother states that the parents' full-time support quite often stops after the children have an age about 4 years and start attending school (interview 1). Most of the grandparents keep involved by staying a couple of months in the year with the nuclear family. None of the parents that were interviewed send their child to day-care or even state something about it. This type of support was already suggested from the literature before; grandparents are identified as the most important caregivers next to the parents, it is in comparing to other support in the household relatively cheap and safe (Strom et al, 1999: 294). Besides this the grandparents fulfil a caring role in parenting:

[..] they live with us, to take care of our daughter as well. We like this kind of situation. I think grandparents are very important for children. When she was young, she watched us and learned how we treat our parents. Then, 20 years later, she will know how to treat her own parents and her parents in-law. I think that's important and I think that the old people can take care of the children. When the children grow up, they can take care of the older people. I think now, the older people can take care of themselves very well, but you know, loneliness and boredom kill everyone. I feel that family relationships are very important. The most important is that we are together. If we are all individual, it's not good (interview 13).

In contrast there are families that decide to hire a nanny or a maid to relieve some of the domestic pressure (interview 2,5,11,13,14,17,20,27). The employment status of the interviewed women seemed not to have influence on the help of grandparents, nannies and other domestic workers. Mostly the nannies live together with the family, while the maids are hired for certain day parts. They get in contact with the maid or nanny through advertisement, searching on the Internet, a specialized company or a neighbour who introduce a nanny or maid to them (interview 16,20). In interview 11 an informant explains she did not receive help from her or her husbands' parents and decided to hire a nanny who could run the household and take partly care for her son. She and her

husband work a lot, more than 6 days, and without this help the free time would be very limited. Another informant (interview 14) told that she hired someone in the past, which could bring and pick up the child when it attends school and cooked as well, so the mother could play with the child. Although the support can be godsend, it appeared there is some mistrust for domestic help (Interview 1,16). Goh (2006) and Zhang (2010) confirm these negative opinions about domestic helpers: their respondents expressed mistrust towards the helpers or thought they were incapable of giving proper care (Goh, 2006: 13). Furthermore the interviewed parents have high standards and most of the nannies do not fulfil the parents criteria. This emphasizes the high value that is attached to raising and educating their children in the right way.

Most of the nannies are around 40 years and they are quite old-fashioned in the way they teach our children, how they play with them and how they feed them (interview 1).

5.4 Free time

In this section the free time will be discussed and this is particular interesting, because the families have more choice how to schedule this time in comparison to other types of time.

Free-time activities involve not only the things we usually think of as free time-such as using the media, socializing, culture, hobbies, and other recreation-but also the “semi-leisure” activities of adult education, religion and other organizational activity. While education and organizational activity may be “forced” on the individual by other role obligations, these are also activities that most people feel they have some choice in (Robinson and Godbey, 2007: 13).

The quotation used, illustrates that free time not only consists out of leisure time; also activities like extra-curricular classes belong to this free time. The free time not only involves outdoor activities; but for this research the time devoted on passive activities at home as watching television, reading, chatting with family or social contacts, playing games, spending time on the Internet will not be discussed in detail. Most of the home-based leisure activities take place during the week when there is limited time to do outdoor activities. This free time can take place in different social formations; with the nuclear family, social contacts or alone.

Family time

Relatively the largest part of the free time of the families takes place during weekends and holidays. Weekdays provide also some free time after the contracted time and school hours of the children, but this can easily be absorbed by committed time. A logical consequence is that most of the outdoor activities take place in the weekend. In the morning or the day before the parents discuss with their child what he or she wants to do (Interview 11,16,32,34). There can be an hierarchy in decision-making and in the end it will be the parents that make the final decision:

We plan together with the elder daughter. Many places that we think is good for the children and their eyes. We will plan that before and ask the daughter where she would like to go. If we want to go to a place near our home then the mother has the right to decide. If we want to go to places far away and we have to take the plane, the father will decide (interview 39).

The type of activity and the amount of time to spend with the family depends if the parents have to work or the child has to attend (extra-curricular) classes. The extra-curricular activities and classes of the children could be considered as an individual activity of the child, but mostly one or both of the parents join their child. When there are one or multiple classes during the weekend, parents make sure they organize other type of activities around this class.

On Saturday morning, my daughter has fencing class. I take her to class and wait for her there. After lunch, we rest for two hours. In the afternoon, my daughter has Math class. On Saturday evening, we go out to watch a movie. On Sunday morning, we go to church. On Sunday afternoon, my daughter has an hour of oral English class (Interview 15).

As discussed in the theory (Ying, 2003 and Chen, 2006) the extra-curricular classes are considered as that important that even in the weekends one family stated they sacrificed all their leisure time to join their child to these classes (interview 12). At the location of these classes are waiting rooms where parents sometimes can watch their children's' performances on a live connected screen.

The parents make sure to spend all the time with their family in the weekend because during the week the parents are busy working and the children go to school. Also when the mother does not work, the time spend with the nuclear family together is considered as extremely valuable. So the time that is left after committed and contracted time is mostly spend together with the family.

During the weekend, my major work is to play with our daughter. I take her out to the garden or some other place, for example the beach, to play with her. It's my major work. I don't see her much on working days, so I play with her (Interview 16).

Family time is very important for me, it is a way to release all the stress. In this company we are so busy so this is the balance and I have the courage to work again (interview 11).

During the longer weekends or holidays, many middle class families decide to travel in China or go abroad. The holidays are scarce but fully exploited. One of the observations was that Shenzhen seemed deserted during the holidays in the beginning of May. Many of the respondents went away for visiting their family or for recreational purpose.

Individual activities

There are also individual activities of the family members that are not in family context and take place in their free time. Some of the parents do sport related activities in their individual time (Interview 2,3,5,17,19,27). The housewives that stay at home have relatively the most time for own individual activities when their children are not home. It appears that most of their individual activities take place at home and are passive related activities like reading a book, playing piano or doing shopping on the internet (Interview 5,17, 24).

Every day I go to yoga, I have a member-card and they provide different classes. Another one provides the hot yoga and is a little bit further I go there around 12.15 and it will take one hour. Sometimes I take another class on 15.00 and I'll be finished on 16.00. The perfect time because my girls come back and I pick them up (Interview 2).

The male respondents do some sport activities like playing badminton for their free time, often organised by the company where they work (Interview 3,7,17). The fathers do these sportive activities approximately once or twice a week, alone or together with friends. For some of the respondents the time spend on own activities is very limited because of tight working schedules and the highly valued 'family time'.

I want to go out for sports but it always seems there is very little time for me (Interview 4.)

If I had time, I would like to go dancing or go to a concert, listen to music. But I can't take my child to these places. If I want to spend more time with my daughter, I don't have time to go to this place, because my time is limited (interview 7).

The individual time for the children is limited; especially when the children get older and the pressure of school and the amount of housework increases. During the week the children have tight schedules with long hours of school. When they come back they often need to do their homework and attend an extra class. Multiple classes during the weekdays and weekends require exact scheduling of the parents, who often join their children to the extra-curricular activities. In interview 12 a father admits that his 5-year-old daughter is basically more busy than he is. It seems there are a lot of children who barely have time to play or in general time for themselves (interview 8,9,11,12,14,15).

When my son comes back from school, this is mostly at 5 o'clock. He leaves the house at 6.30. He comes back at 12 to have lunch and then the nanny send him to school at 2 o'clock. He has not enough time to do what he wants to do, he only does the homework in the evening. I think he has only one hour or half hour left to do what he wants, like reading books (Interview 11).

From Monday until Friday, from about 7PM until 9PM, my daughter needs to go to a training centre to do her homework. Only on Saturday evening we will go out to watch a movie or do some kind of other entertainment (Interview 15).

The informant in interview 8 states that there is no time to go to the mountains or concert hall, like they used to do when his daughter was younger. His daughter needs to focus on her study and her free time is extremely limited. This confirms the small amount of free time for scholars (Hui-Fen et al., 2012: 132). One of the student translators told about her childhood and the activities she attended. From Monday till Friday she was staying on a boarding schools and during the weekends she attended some extra-curricular classes like mathematics, piano lessons and English to improve her education level. The rest time she needed to spend on doing homework, while the 'play time' was extremely scarce. The remaining time that was left wherein she could play, was often interrupted by her parents to let her know that she needed to go to class or do some homework. At the moment she feels satisfied that she currently has reached an age where she was able to schedule her own time.

Social time

The social time is the time spend by family members with other social contacts. Almost all friends of the interviewed families had also children. The frequency of meeting other friends, partly depends on the amount of friends and where they live.

I have three kinds of friends: my colleagues, I see them every day, my friends in the city, I see them once a month; and my friends in another city, I see them once every 4 months (Interview 7).

If some friends are colleagues or neighbours the frequency of meeting increases. They have time to communicate with each other and the neighbours who are friends share often the same characteristics as being a family and have children of the same age (Interview 7,9) One of the respondents (Interview 12) emphasizes that his social contact were more intensive before he had his wife had a child. He is still friends with his previous neighbours, but sees them less frequently.

Lot of young people moved to Shenzhen in the early 2000's, is one big generation. These people are young professionals and have some economic ability. They had at that time leisure time and were hanging together, built in 5 years, after a certain age, you want to marry and have children. A whole generation made a next step in their life. He shows a period of a generation in Shenzhen (interview 12).

This transition was according to the respondent inevitable because Chinese people focus on family 'as an unit.' There is a strong Chinese cultural ideology of putting family or social obligations at first and secondly pursue the leisure activities they really want. The sense of happiness is coming from fulfilling the expectations of their families (Ap, 2002 in Li, 2009: 230).

This is a common feeling among the families that were interviewed; a father explains a situation where a friend sent a message to do something and the respondent in this case refused:

I am very busy every day. This means that after work, I just want to spend some time with my family. I really want to spend time with my family members and my child after my work. Today, one of my friends sent a message if we could meet me and I told him that in life there is only a little time to spend with your children. This time is very important for me, I must spend this time with my child. When my son grows up, he will go away, which means that I want to spend a lot of time with them while they're young. They might study in another city, or they might study abroad, so I think now it is very important time for us to spend with my child (interview 3).

Another respondent (interview 2) states that she still has some old classmate friends living in Shenzhen, but that ‘they all have their own life’ and it was difficult to keep in contact.

A mother that did not work stated that because of her limited social contact, she would like to get back to work again:

I take almost for 6 years care for the children so I have the feeling I almost lost contact with the society. I feel like I always stay home and take care for the children and in the night sometimes I cannot sleep very well. I would like to do some work where I can meet some more people and make some friends. I have some classmates and some friends, but all people have their own life. Even if we live in the same city it is not easy to meet (Interview 2).

Some of the families have a close relation with their neighbours; especially the female respondents who did not work had a closer relation to the other female neighbours who remained at home. In case that the women don’t work they have more friends and they also see their friends more frequently. They become friends with other women that don’t work and live in the same compound. Because they don’t have to work and their children go during working days to the kindergarten or school, they have the opportunity to meet.

5.5 Synthesis

This chapter gave the answer on the question: *How much free time do these middle class families in Shenzhen have and how is this free time realized?*

Their weekdays are very well organized; they stay near the house, in their compound. The fathers and the largest part of the mothers work, while there is another part of the women that decides to stay at home and take care for the family. The non-employed mothers devote considerably more time on committed time and this results in a moderate increase of free time. Most of the families get help from their grandparent, a domestic worker or nanny to partly facilitate the committed time. This results in a decrease of committed time, although the mothers keep strongly involved in the household and childcare. The children are involved in busy school schedules; they attend kindergarten or primary school till late afternoon and the evening is planned with homework and extracurricular activities. Many extracurricular classes and loads of homework create a regime of organized activities for those children. During the week the free time for children is very scarce and manifests mostly during the weekend. The families plan all kind of activities with the nuclear

family and leave their compound. The decisions are made in the morning and if their children are old enough they are discussed with them. Individual time and time with social contacts remain limited because of the highly valued family time.

6 The organized outdoor activities

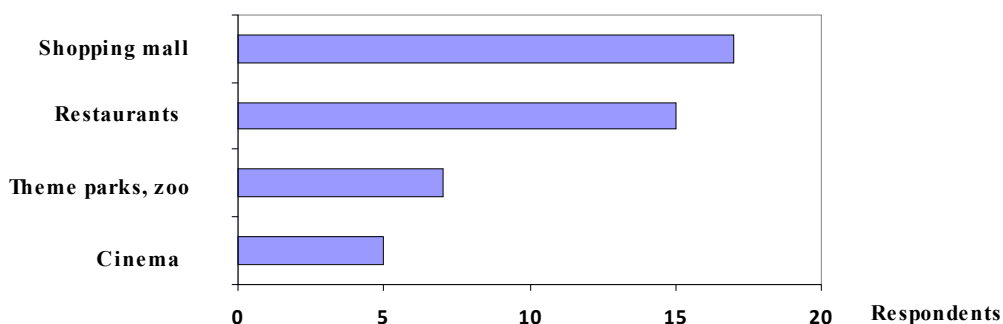
This chapter will treat the different activities that families do in the previous discussed ‘free time’. Shenzhen is a city with a relatively young population and many facilities are created and aimed for young people like families with children.

With help of maps that show the locations of the activities, it is possible to see the places where the families spend their leisure and shows the layout of the city. As mentioned before, there is a difference between the weekend and weekdays. In the weekdays most parents only leave their compound for work, do some groceries or bring their child to one of their classes. Most of the named organized activities take place during the weekend.

6.1 Entertainment activities

Middle class go to multiple places and the most named entertainment activities are summed in figure 9.

Figure. 9 : Most listed entertainment activities



The shopping mall was the most named activity and this is consistent with the research of Jim and Chen (2009). Many families that were interviewed spend at least a couple of hours per week in the shopping mall. The shopping mall seems to be a central point in many families’ lives. It looked like there was another shopping mall on every block of the street; from really small ones, to very large ones that contains cinemas, ice-skating rings, multiple restaurants etc. The strongest concentration of shopping malls might be on the eastern part of Shenzhen, located next to the border with Hong-Kong. MixC shopping mall is the largest and probably also the most expensive shopping mall in Shenzhen; it offers many facilities and play-opportunities for children. It is located in the middle of Luohu and was the most visited shopping mall by the respondents. Luohu, is an area on the east-

side of Shenzhen; known as a popular shopping area and provides furthermore various entertainment facilities. The red square of figure 10 shows the strong concentration of shopping malls in Luohu. Enormous shopping malls that supply fake products, electronica, clothes and food are concentrated in this area.



Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/world/sea-level-rise-map/index.html>

A shopping mall does not only function as a place for shopping, but it also provides different facilities as a big variety of stores, food courts, restaurants, cinema's, children training centres, interactive entertainment, social use areas, relaxation spaces and promotional areas (Terblanche, 1999 in El-Adly, 2007). These are now the major components of most malls in Shenzhen. Pictures 1 and 2 show an ice skate rink and game centre located in a shopping mall and these places are typical examples of places in a shopping mall were parents with young children will go.

Picture 1,2: Shopping mall entertainment



There exists a difference between the types of shopping malls, some of them are very exclusive with only high-end restaurants, other malls have a more accessible character by providing large fast food chain restaurants and more reasonable priced stores. From several visits to shopping malls in Shenzhen it appears that these shopping malls have at least one thing in common; they are child-friendly designed and a great part of the facilities aim on families.

Many of the restaurants visited by families in Shenzhen, are located in Shopping malls, especially the chain restaurants are often established in the shopping mall. These restaurants, which are located in the shopping mall are in general more costly in price, but the number of restaurants are relatively high in a particular surface, what increases the choice opportunities. Another popular activity that often occurs in the shopping mall is going to a cinema (interview 5,9,11,15,27).

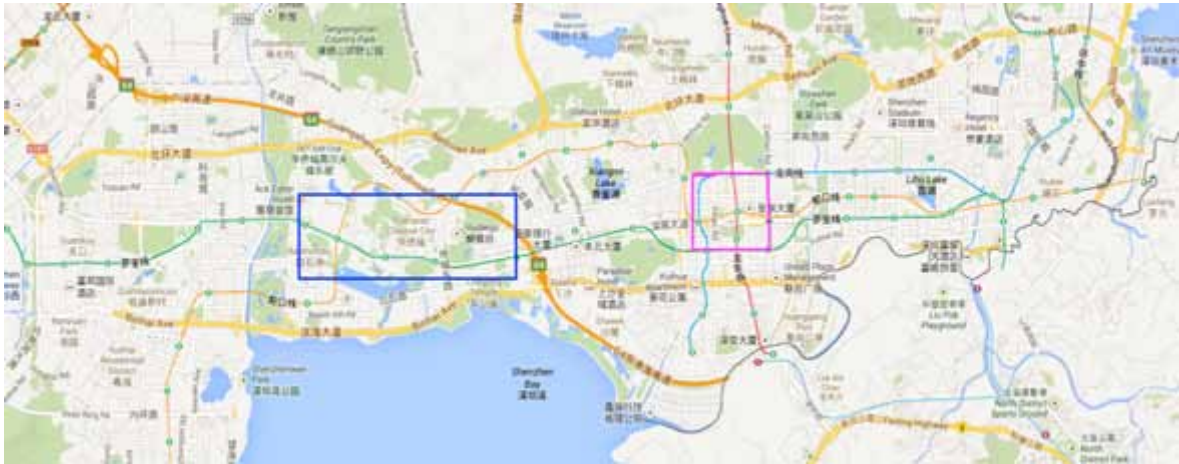
Less frequently, families visit the theme parks as Children's park and Happy Valley Shenzhen. Children's park is an enormous park in Luohu, which provides some play items such as a mini-train, bumper cars, a little train etc. and were children of various age groups can play. Happy valley in the OCT area is another enormous⁴ theme park that includes various entertainment facilities from rollercoasters to copied buildings from different civilizations.

6.2 Cultural activities

Figure 11 shows the square that is located in the middle of the city-centre of Shenzhen and probably functions as the central point for cultural activities. At the edges of this square are various cultural facilities located; a concert hall, library, bookstore, children's palace, Shenzhen Civic Center, the Shenzhen historical museum and Shenzhen art gallery. The Shenzhen library and concert hall belong to one of the architectural masterpieces of the city and the library contains over 4 million books. This concert hall is a modern and professional concert hall, specially designed and constructed for cultural performances. It is a popular cultural activity by those who like to listen to classical music (interview 8,10,14,34).

⁴ Covering an area of 350,000 square metres (86 acres), the park is composed of nine themed areas including Spanish Square, Cartoon City, Mt. Adventure, Gold Mine Town, Shangri-La Woods, Sunshine Beach, Typhoon Bay, Playa Maya Water Park and Happy Times. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy_Valley_Shenzhen

Figure 11: Cultural areas in Shenzhen



Source: maps.google.nl

The square is very accessible and well connected with two metro-lines crossing each other. On this particular square happen all kind of different activities with a special focus on children. There is a little market, children are painting, do some games, run around, kite etc. The families with children can read books, study, play with their children, relax on the benches outside, kite on the rooftop of the bookstore, free lectures, listen to music or visit a theatre play in children's palace. Pictures 3 and 4 show some activities of the young children on the square.

I meet up with my friend, near the Children's Palace. We buy books and go to the park. We go to see the paintings, because she likes painting. It has many activities for children during the weekend. There are people who tell stories, read books to children and there are children painting and can read the books. It's free. There is also a park with many activities (interview 17).

Picture 3 and 4: Activities on the cultural public square in Shenzhen.



The bookstore and library that are located on the borders of the square, are frequent visited places, popular for families with young children. Although the book centre is a bookshop, it seems most families who go there have not the intention to buy a book, they prefer to order them on internet (interview 11,24). One of the observations was that the bookstore appeared to be, especially during the weekend, crowded with families with young children. Mothers and fathers were sitting on the floor reading child books with their children.

My son likes the book-city very much because he can find the different books. He likes reading, for example a book about bears. He likes the book-city just because there are a lot of books (interview 24).

Furthermore many parents spend a lot of time with their children in Children's palace, also located within the pink square of figure 11 and can be seen in picture 5.

Picture 5: Children's palace in Shenzhen



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shenzhen_Children_Palace.jpg

This enormous building is not only a place where extra-curricular activities take place. The Children's palace in Shenzhen offers beside the extracurricular classes; exhibition halls, an auditorium for movies, interactive playground, and theatre. The huge activity centre is meant for children aged between 5 to 12 years old. The centre has a special focus on science and provides programs/exhibitions related to science and technology (Freeman, 2003). There are both paid and unpaid activities, what makes this centre accessible for a larger group of families.

Another famous cultural area in Shenzhen is the OCT loft area in Overseas Chinese Town⁵ (OCT), which can be considered as the creative centre with many restaurants, bars, a bookshop, concept stores, galleries and during the weekend's exhibitions and live music. The area is located on a central place in Shenzhen and is indicated in figure.. with the blue square. During the weekends and vacation, families who live nearby but also further away gather together in the OCT area. They simply look and walk around, visit the shops and drink something in the local bars. Picture 7 shows children who are playing on the wooden constructions that could be used to relax, read a book or slide.

The restaurants in the OCT loft area are especially during the weekends crowded with young children, who eat their little plates of noodles. When dinner is finished, they can run around and might visit one of the contemporary exhibitions. Every two weeks architects organize an exhibition for children. Families who live in the neighbourhood or visiting the area, are welcomed to enter the exhibition hall. Eight architectures create their own visions on the city and present it in an attractive way for children. They could paint and build replicas of high-rise buildings with cardboard boxes as can be seen in picture 6. This is an example of the activities that are organized for children in the OCT area to make children enthusiastic about architecture and culture.

Picture 6: Exhibition for children in OCT loft area



Picture 7: Children playing on wooden-constructions in OCT loft area



⁵ The OCT area is a scenic spot in the Nanshan District that features a creative culture park full of creative facilities (OCT Loft Area), tourist theme and culture parks and an imitated Italian village called Portofino.

Travel

The interviewed parents mentioned several times that in case they are free from work, they prefer to go on vacation and they try to visit other cities in China or go abroad. They travel to all kind of places as Mainland China, Hong Kong. South East Asia. Especially during holidays, a group of the urban residents, in particular the middle and upper class, goes on vacation. A father (interview 13) calls the Chinese New Year holiday a ‘people mountain’. Thailand is a popular place to go (interview 1,2,13) and probably the most visited place is Hong Kong. Hong Kong seems to be a popular destination what partly could be explained by its proximity, but another reason seems to be shopping facilities. One of the main reasons to visit Hong Kong is for shopping and some entertainment related activities as Disneyland or other theme parks (interview 12,13,14,30). Besides, also other cities in Mainland China are popular destinations (Wang, 2004).

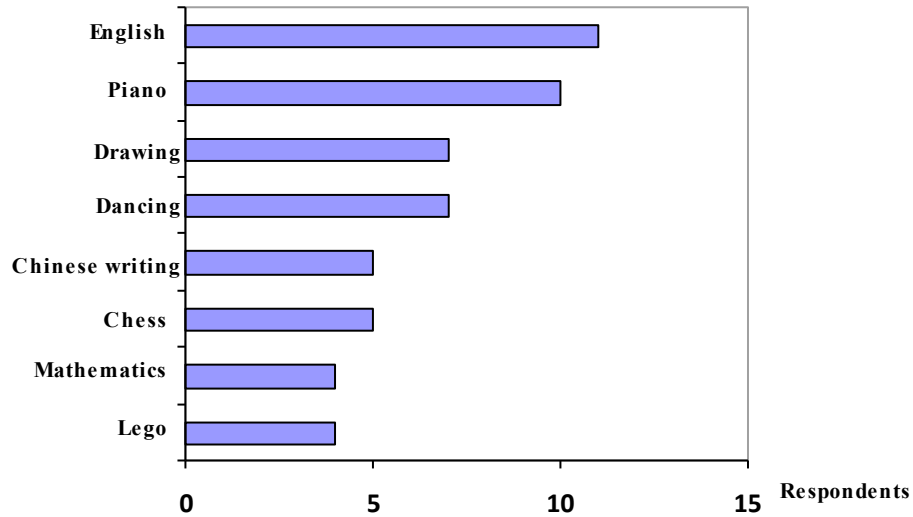
6.3 Extracurricular activities

Extracurricular activities, are those activities of children that fall outside the normal school hours. The extracurricular classes in Shenzhen can be located at children’s palace, nearby their house or simply at home. Classes like English or music instruments often take place at home where a personal teacher will come to their house to teach them. Some of the classes are also organized by the kindergarten or primary school and take place in or near the children’s school. Children’s palace is a centre that provides different extra-curricular classes. These centres are modelled after the Soviet youth places and are a combination of community arts centres, YMCA’s, private lessons, and after school programs. The quality of the programs, instruction and facilities of the children’s palace vary between different cities. In the past, before the nineties, there was relatively low priority given to these children centres (Swartz, 1989). The palaces are freely available to everyone and this means that children are not tested for entry. The parents sign a contract for a specified number of lessons which they should attend all (Freeman, 2003: 212). The extracurricular classes demand a fixed contribution for each class, although the amount varies on type of class and location, the prices are in general too high for the working class. This probably makes extracurricular classes an activity that can only be afforded by the middle and upper class families.

The type of extracurricular classes depends on the age group of the children. Some parents believe their child is too young to attend extracurricular classes, but do have plans to put them on extracurricular classes in the future (interview 1,2,5,16). In figure 12 the most named extracurricular classes are listed. Classes that can function as some kind of extension to the child’s

normal school classes like English and mathematics are favoured. Furthermore creative/cultural classes as drawing, chess, lego and piano are popular.

Figure 12: The most listed extra-curricular activities for children



6.4 Nature/sport activities

Most popular 'active' activities are going to the park, climbing in the mountains or go to the beach. The city is facing the sea and with the subtropical oceanic climate permitted the development of a garden-city landscape. There are many parks in Shenzhen and this might have to do with the well-planned character of the city. The green areas in figure 13 are parks located in the centre of Shenzhen, which makes these green spaces for people living in and around the centre easily accessible. Most families do not have to travel far to go to a park, first of all because of the convenient transport system and secondly because of the various parks in the city. A liveable and sustainable city is often characterized by ample provision of urban green spaces at strategic locations for enjoyment of residents, workers and visitors (Jim and Chen, 2006).

The parks in Shenzhen are often clean, in good condition and provide enough space for young children to play around. The families simply sit there, chat with each other, and come there with other families. The sportive activities that take place in the park are cycling or kiting. New urban cities provide strategic locations for parks, as happened in Shenzhen.

Figure. 13.: Map of centre Shenzhen with parks



Source: <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/world/sea-level-rise-map/index.html>

Another frequently attended outdoor location is the beach and coastal shore (interview 2,3,4,6,9,10,11,12,14,16,17,19,34). At the coastal side of Shenzhen is a big recreation park located, named Hongshulin Seashore Ecological park, marked orange in figure 13. It seemed like all types of families (lower and middle class) visited the coastal park, to spend some leisure time, but most of the children had an age under the 10 years old and was in company of their parents or grandparents. Pictures 8 and 9 show the Hongshulin Seashore Ecological park on a Saturday afternoon: the families are sitting in the grass or on benches, while the children are blowing bubbles, run around and eat some peanuts. The parents are alone with their child or in company of other acquainted families (observations). These type⁶ of public spaces are generally visited by a diverse public. One mother describes the people that stay on the beach as a varied public: families with children, young people that are on vacation or young migrant workers (interview 2).

⁶ Public places such as parks, beaches and mountains.

Picture 8. Children playing in the Hongshulin Seashore Ecological park



Picture 9. Children are playing at the shore of Shenzhen.



Mountains that surround Shenzhen make climbing in the mountains a popular outdoor activity (interview 1,3,4,6,9,10,14,11,12,16,17,19,30,34). In the middle of the centre of Shenzhen, located next to the bookstore and children's palace is one of Shenzhen's most famous mountains located. The pink marked place in figure 13 is Lianhuashan park where families come for recreational purpose.

The sport activities can be individual, with friends or with the family, but it seems that the sport activities are in general more individual and are undertaken by parents (interview 2,3,5,7,8,11,12,15,16,20,25,17,19,24,25,27,28). Some of the mothers go the gym to do some exercise or do yoga. This gym or a sport centre that facilitates yoga lessons is often located in or next to the compound (interview 2,5,11,17,27,28). Golf is another typical middle class sport and the multiple golf courses are a strong characteristic in the image⁷ of the city. The golf courts can vary in different types and sizes:

This golf place is more to do just the exercise and is not a really formal one. Every two month they play golf in a very formal way in another golf place. Formal one means with a real lake and real mountain. For the formal they spend 4 hours or maybe a half day (interview 19)

⁷ Shenzhen has the largest golf facility with an 18-hole course golf resort called Mission Hills Golf Club.

Some sportive activities like badminton or golf are organized by their work and they do these activities together with other colleagues (interview 8,12). The place of the sport activities are most often located near the residents' house. The sport activities of children differed; badminton, ice-skating, football, kung-fu and skating.

6.5 Transport to the activities

Transportation determines the accessibility of the activities. The transportation use differs, but at least almost every family possesses a car and make use of it. In case of traffic hours they sometimes try to avoid taking a car and make use of public transport. Public transportation is well-organized and most of the time easily accessible. One family didn't make use of a car and experienced this not necessarily as a problem because of the convenient public transportation system. Most of the facilities and activities are close to their residential space because of the high population density. Most of the respondents live in high-rise compounds and this means a strong concentration of population in one place, which often results in a large supply of facilities in this area. This implies that many of the activities take place near the resident's place. If the parents leave the house (not for working), they will always take their children with them. If the people live nearby their work they choose to walk there every day (interview 1,6).

6.6 Places

The role of public realm is very important because most of the activities take place in this public realm. Places like a shopping mall are between private and public space, while parks, mountains and squares are clear examples of public space. These public spaces could provide some interaction with other persons, but it appeared that most families do not talk with others when they visit one of these places. They are very closed, focused on the nuclear family and do not feel the need to socialize with strangers. The parents do not care what type of people visits these public places (interview 29,30,31).

A parochial realm, as in the theoretical framework discussed, does not really exist for these middle classes. This term implies a public space, characterised by a strong sense of commonality between people and this might prevent others to enter this domain (Hayer & Reijndorp, 2001). The interviewed middle class families seemed to have little to do with this phenomenon 'parochial realm'. The parents do not have a strong sense of belonging to their neighbourhood; they barely know their own neighbours. Shenzhen is a new town, characterised by different migrant groups.

The largest part of the population has just settled and it appears to be difficult in creating a sense of belonging with this strong floating population.

There are many people in the city but their backgrounds vary a lot. It is not a piece of cake to find a sense of belonging (interview 14).

A certain sense of belonging is essential for parochial realm. Globalizing cities as Shenzhen are filled up with immense, architect-designed places that counteract the feeling of place-making (Friedman, 2007: 277). The city is characterized by immense buildings, squares and roads. The size of the city, the limited sense of belonging and their closed attitude might contribute to this anonymity. In a metropolis like Shenzhen, with places that can be enormous, it appear to be difficult to run into someone familiar:

The shopping malls are very big. Even in the same shopping mall people might not meet each other because it's too big (interview 20).

The interviewed families visit places where a variety of people come and most activities cannot be necessarily named as activities, which are specially undertaken by the middle class.

6.7 Synthesis

This chapter gave an answer on the sub question: *What are the outside organized activities of the children and parents and where do they take place?* The diversity of types of activities appears to be varied. Visiting a shopping mall was the most listed activity of the family members. In Shenzhen there are a large number of shopping malls, that in general provide several activities. The families mostly go there for entertainment related activities as a cinema or restaurant, which are designed for families with children.

From the interviews there clearly emerged two frequently mentioned central cultural places: one is located in the middle of the centre and provides various cultural facilities, the other is the OCT loft area and could be considered as the creative area. The cultural areas are consciously planned and anticipated on the cultural favour of the residents in Shenzhen. As already appeared from the time use, a lot of time is devoted on extracurricular classes. The largest part of the children attended at

least one or two classes in the week and most of these classes are educational or cultural/creative related. Traveling in China and abroad was another cultural activity that was frequently mentioned. Furthermore, the parents have in general a strong preference of going into the nature and combine this with physical exercises. Shenzhen provides many parks, a coastal side and mountains, where the families can spend their free time.

Most of the activities are easily reachable because of the well-connected transportation system and because of high-rise living most of the facilities/activities are not that far away. Public spaces are mostly preferred and places as the parochial realm are not applicable for the middle class families in Shenzhen because of the strong sense of anonymity and the design of the city.

7 Motivations

The different activities that take place in the family's free time were discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter the motivation behind choosing these activities will be examined. There can be multiple motivations for choosing outdoor activities. This is divided into tradition, ambitions and location. These themes are in some way overlapping but create a clear understanding of what these middle class motivates for doing activities and choosing this place.

7.1 Tradition

Family orientation

Activities that can be done with the nuclear family are considered as very important. Being together as a family is one of the main priorities. Parks, shopping malls, beaches and restaurants are accessible for the whole family and these are places where each family member is amused. The families spent this free time very intensively together and preferably at a location outdoors.

Nature

Next to the city life, the families preferred to go into the nature, to have some fresh air and experience a good view (interview 9,11,31,33). According the literature (Li, 2009: 231) this could be partly explained because of Taoism, a traditional philosophy in China. This philosophy promotes to stay in harmony with the nature.

Contemplation of nature can lead to individual peace, tranquillity, and an understanding of the meaning of life. Taoism, therefore, encourages people to work on the improvement of their bodies, minds, and spirits by visiting the mountains, standing by the sea, walking among the trees in a park, hearing the sounds of birds, or merely smelling the flowers (Gong 1998 in Li, 2009: 231)

The beach and the shore are probably most favoured places but the travel distance and the weather are barriers in visiting. At the shore, the families can relax, have some physical exercises and enjoy the view. Thereby they easily could meet up with other social contacts, although the families emphasize the anonymity of these places.

Physical exercise

Climbing and kiting in the mountains are experienced as beneficial physical exercises for children and the parent. The sport activities for the parents can be popular because they can release the daily stress (interview 2,11,16). Physical exercise in general is considered as an important issue in the education of the child. The physical condition of the children was closely watched and none of the families' children had overweight. A father mentions it is important that his daughters dances, because it is really good for his daughter's body and she could become more elegant (interview 12). The next quotations show some parent's perceptions on why sport could be beneficial for their children:

I go to the beach, the park and go there by bike to have some exercise. It is a boy so I want him to have a healthy life and have the habit to do some sport (interview 19).

With dance lessons she can 'develop and express herself' (interview 6)

Hobbies as karate are chosen by the parents, so the children can protect themselves in unsafe situations (interview 2,13,17,26). An architect, who was interviewed, provides an possible explanation for the experienced feeling of fear by parents in Shenzhen:

It's dangerous. There are too many criminals, they sell children. So they take children. Even six year olds are ok to sell. They also kidnap children. Even children who are 10 years old because they found out that there are many rich people in Shenzhen (interview 41).

7.2 Ambitions

Status

The literature from the theoretical framework suggested that this new emerging middle class would distinct themselves through consumption and display of different items (Farrel et al., 2006: 65). From the interviews it appears that most respondents do not care much what others could think of them; they are internally focused on their family. The interviewed families did not identify themselves with upscale places like expensive restaurants and stores. One of the student translators stated that expensive restaurants are not necessarily favoured. The middle class goes there for business meetings and chooses these restaurants not by taste but by atmosphere and cost. The food

might be healthier and the preparation is more hygienic, but the amount of food was considerably low and the taste is often not as spicy as in other average restaurants. In these business-meetings they don't want to appear as economical and prefer a more upscale setting, but in a family setting they might prefer restaurants that serve 'tasty food' and these are not necessarily expensive. This observation corresponds with the findings in the research.

The high-end stores in luxurious shopping malls like MixC and Holiday Plaza⁸ were experienced as too expensive. The respondents that visit these shopping malls come there basically to walk around, drink some coffee and do some activities instead of shopping. While passing these expensive stores, the observation was that most of these high-end stores looked empty, without customers.

There are some examples where consciousness of status was revealed. One example is choosing a certain type of sport. One mother mentions about the status and social hierarchy of certain sportive activities:

[..] One of her colleagues plays golf and is the senior manager of the bank and they have the culture to play golf. So if they play golf they have the common topic to talk about and this is one of the reasons. But in the end I think she also really likes golf. Another company that is very big, that boss, the CEO, likes adventure and he climbs very high mountains. So the colleagues in this company start to have this culture to climb mountains. So the CEO likes this and the CEO is very good at this and then the senior-manager starts to like this and then most of the people start to like this. It is easy to have the common topic and good communication and good opportunity (interview 19).

Another example is of a father who told about his passion for classical music and he used to visit these performances with his daughter, a place he aspired to share with others. He described going to a as something 'elegant' and good to get in touch with such a place (interview 8).

These might be examples in how they distinct themselves from the lower class, but it seems that in most cases the family's focus is very internal and their choice for activities not necessarily depends on status. Still there can be said that certain activities are typical for the middle class because of their larger budget and spending patterns. Families can spend much money on educational activities and travelling. The literature stated that the large investments in education could come from the sense of a lack of symbolic capital perceived by others (Zhang, 2010 and French, 2006). But it appears that investing in the education of the child is not a show-off to other people. This can be

⁸ Located in the OCT area.

seen as an investment in the personal development of the child that not necessarily should be shared with others.

Cultural interest

From the interviews it emerges that many families had a strong focus on activities with a cultural aspect. Cultural activities are considered as something ‘important’, especially in the education of their child. A father tells about his motivation for sending his daughter to piano lessons, in order to let her get in contact with the Western culture:

My daughter also plays piano because it is a way to understand the Western culture. This is a gateway to the Western world. Mathematics and arts she can also learn at a later stage of her life [...] I don't think it is very important that she only get to know about the Western culture. I already told my daughter a lot about Chinese history, but I think in today's world it is not enough to know only about one certain culture, it is better to have a bigger exposure to all kind of culture in the modern world (interview 12).

The interviewed parents who go to the library and bookshops, emphasize the importance of reading books. They hope to stimulate the children's habit of reading. It seems that visiting the bookstore or library was mostly done to promote reading to their children, while the parents did not necessarily look for themselves. Children's palace is located next to the bookstore. As already mentioned before; the children's palace does not function only as a centre for extracurricular classes and other private lessons. It is a place where children can have ‘fun’ with a learning aspect, that is partly free accessible. Parents can see some theatre plays with their children and experience this as responsible leisure time with a cultural aspect. The families demand for culture probably explains the popularity of the children's palace and its supply of various cultural activities.

Parents who visited museums hoped their children would develop a stronger cultural consciousness:

At the museum there are some things related to Chinese history and Shenzhen history, I think that is very valuable. Not everyone can go see this every time they want, just a couple of times a year. For example ancient people's words, drawing or calligraphy (interview 29).

The OCT area was the second popular cultural area. Especially the parents that send their children to creative classes and educate them with culture were likely to visit the OCT area. They would like to be associated with the creative environment and appreciated the architecture.

We like to go to OCT as well, because there are so many things to do and many exhibitions. I think that's the overall atmosphere in Shenzhen, that it's becoming more open to artists and designers. OCT Loft is a very successful example. There is a very nice bookshop, Old Heaven (interview 13).

Travelling is another activity that arises from a cultural interest. As the literature already suggested, the families have high expectations of the effects of travelling on their children (Yin, 2005 and Elfick, 2011). Parents expect that travelling will broaden their children's horizon and that they are able to explore the world. The children are expected to open their eyes and it is considered as an important part of the children's education. The parents want their children get in touch with other cultures, meet different type of people and have new impressions (interview 3,8,14,15).

There is an old saying in Chinese that means, go to many places is very important, more important than reading many books (interview 34).

Some parents try to maintain some Chinese tradition by going back to their parents at Chinese New Year or celebrate some traditional Chinese festivals in the country side, although the connection to the Chinese tradition is not that strong anymore.

He likes it very much [...] I am also self a travelling person. I hope he will like travelling when he is older. I hope he will make plans to travel by himself when he is older. I maybe can go with him (interview 24).

Educational interest

There is a saying in China which is: to win from the beginning. They believe that when children learn something at an early age they can learn more and learn better (interview 40⁹)

This quotation partly explains why such a large amount of the children's free time that is devoted on extracurricular activities and education. Parents believe it is worth investing as much as you can in your child. Some of them consider it as a real investment and one family spent one-third to an half of the total budget, on their child (interview 12). Some of the extracurricular classes are meant

⁹ Employee Arts Centre for Children Bai Si Zhou

as a kind of extension of the child's regular education. Examples of these type of educational classes are English, mathematics and Chinese writing.

Most of the parents emphasize that their children choose most of the classes by themselves, although it appeared that most parents helped them in making this decision. According the parents most of the children like to go to these classes (interview 3,4,6,9,10,11,12).

I think everyone has the right to decide who they want to be. Our style is exactly like that. Before, we didn't think about violin, but she told us, hey, I want to play the violin. Still now, we very much respect her will and her opinion, what she wants. We will support her. We think that as parents, our role is to support her, so she can do what she likes to do. We provide the right conditions, find a teacher for her, prepare the material for her and get a space, things like that. I believe all children are genius – don't kill them. Let them develop, they know how to grow (interview 13).

So far, the expectations from their children seem to be less ambitious than expected from the literature (China Youth and Children Research Centre, 2001). Initially, many parents stated that they simply want their child to be 'happy' and healthy (interview 1,2,3,8,10,13). Happiness and health are perceived as the highest attainable goals in life. One of the parents told us they only send their child to classes in case she likes it, but underneath there still seem to be certain expectations:

In high school and university they also have English lessons, so if they learn early, it will be easier for them in the future... She likes English. You know, in English class, the teacher will make a score for them and every class my daughter is number one or number two so she is very happy (interview 4).

There are also parents that do have certain expectations. A mother tells about her daughter, who goes to five extra classes: piano, Chinese writing, skating, dancing and English. According the mother she likes these classes; it challenges her, the children around her also attend these classes. Besides she would like to see her child successful. In the future she might send her to some extracurricular classes that are complementary to the regular school classes so she will have higher grades (interview 9).

It is very important to tell her why mummy has chosen for 5 types of different classes, "you have to learn". All these things will help you in the future, so the important things are tell her the reasons.

After that class she has the capability to help other classmates. If she learns better, she can help classmates and if you learn more, you can help the country (interview 9).

The children are raised in a so-called ‘competitive environment’. One of the respondents states that his daughter attends an extra-curricular class as English because of the highly competitive society and other peers also attend these extra classes. Two mothers try to explain the expectations of Chinese parents in the competitive Chinese society:

Up to now we have the traditional concept, you should go to university and after university you should go overseas to the famous universities in America or England and then we can call it a success. In fact most students are dependent on the parents and cannot live for themselves. The parents want the children to go to good university and have a good study. At the same time they forget the independence, communication skills and personal skills. Most parents don't feel like it is their responsibility to build these skills just focussed on study. We know there are some problems but Chinese people don't like to change it. They are maybe afraid to change it (interview 11).

Property prices are really high in China and everything is quite expensive in comparing to their salaries, so they have really high pressure to earn enough money and this results in pushing their children (interview 1).

Although the parents keep sending their children to the extracurricular classes, they are also worried about this competitive society and pressure on their children. Some parents said there is a change in Chinese thinking; they don't want to put this enormous pressure on their children. Because China becomes more modern and they experienced by themselves that this pressure and expectations were too high. It appeared that the government has warned people several times for the negative effects of these extreme pressure and expectations.

In the news in China we found a lot about the bad things of pressure that is too high. This is also one of the reasons I want to move to Canada. Happy is one of the most important things (interview 11).

Creative thinking

As already mentioned before; extracurricular classes of the children take a large part of the families free time. Besides the educational aspect of the extracurricular activities that affects the school performances, there is also a strong focus on the development of ‘creative thinking’

(3,7,13,20,21,23). This development might occur because the parents are partly motivated to become cultured elites. Furthermore, the Chinese competitive society not only requires high grades but also the capability of being creative. The families try to stimulate children's creative thinking with classes like LEGO¹⁰, chess and painting.

The thing is, here in China, if you want to go to a better school you need to get a high score and you need to be really good at the exam. If you want to make things easier, you have to have some special skill, like a sport or art, that kind of thing. When you are really at this, some school will accept you, even if your scores are not so high. That's why people want their children to have some special skills (interview 20).

[...] my son really likes to play with Lego and also because he will learn to be creative (interview 3).

A mother at an Architecture workshop for children emphasizes the importance of playing an instrument and getting in contact with culture and art:

Architecture lessons combines function and arts together. So does music. Both is important because they combine the function and the arts together (interview 21)

Another mother who sends her son to the extracurricular activities emphasizes that she wanted that her son will develop another perspective on the city and that they make hand-made products what can be interesting and useful. They designed and some chairs and community equipment's for the community.

These cultural classes will influence my daughter her entire life, but academic classes will just influence my daughter in the short run. Cultural classes will influence her mind. Like music or drawing will influence her mind, she will know beautiful things. It will influence her way of thinking and the way she expresses herself. But academic classes will just influence her for a short period of time (interview 7).

An employee of a children's art centre was interviewed to tell about the expectations of the middle class parents in Shenzhen. In these lessons children of 2-7 years learn to develop their imagination

¹⁰ There are different LEGO education centers in Shenzhen, where children learn to be creative with LEGO blocks.

by painting, writing and reading. The employee mentions that parents are more focused on the development of children's logical thinking and their imagination. Since the economic situation has bettered and people had more money to spend; the interest in these 'creative' classes increased and she expects in the future an even stronger increase.

Furthermore there was interviewed an organizer of architecture classes for children (interview 39). In these classes, children learn about the history of the buildings. They make the children conscious of all kind of buildings, from villages to modern cities. The organizer emphasized that the main reason that parents send their children to these types of classes, had to do with the competition between Chinese children. The parents believe that their children can gain some new knowledge, especially because they are the only organization who organizes these type of architecture classes for young children.

7.3 Location

Proximity

The location of an activity largely determines the motivation of choosing a certain activities. The main criteria for the families of choosing an activity are: proximity, the safety, child friendliness and the concentration of multiple activities in one area/place. Proximity of the activities in relation to the residential space is probably one of the most important criteria of visiting. Moreover, the location of the shopping mall has an important effect on the popularity of a shopping mall (Ibrahim, 2002 in El-Adly, 2007). The location of the shopping largely determines whether it is visited or not; if it is located nearby the residents' house it is most often preferred over another shopping mall. This also applies for visiting a certain park, which is often chosen because of their proximity to their residential space. Sometimes the park is considered as 'not really special' but still visited because of the proximity of the location (interview 9,10). The convenient transportation system and the well-connected roads contribute to the accessibility of an array of amenities. For the more special and less frequently occurring places, families are willing to travel longer. An example is children's palace, a place that is not for all families nearby, but well-connected and considered worth traveling (interview 9,14).

Variety

A variety of activities was listed when there was asked about the families outdoor activities that can be carried out during their free time. Parents desire to combine several activities in one day and this

results in a preference for areas that provide multiple and diverse activities. An important reason why parents seem to visit shopping malls, is because of the provision and concentration of diverse activities; they can eat, shop or to find entertainment. Bloch et al. (1994) and El-Adly (2007) observed the effect of malls' physical environment on consumers' emotional states and found that malls were viewed by consumers as a place not only for shopping, but also for other activities, such as entertainment. The shopping mall is not only a centre for shopping, but also a community centre for social and recreational activities. The consumers are more likely to attend malls that are more attractive and have a wide variety of stores and merchandise that match their preferences (Ng, 2003 in El-Adly, 2007).

I prefer the other place because it has more restaurant choice and also a cinema. This place is very big over 10 buildings and they build a bridge to link the buildings. At the ground floor they organize singing, dance, people play piano and we can choose (interview 11).

We have a lot of friends and we do different activities with different friends in different places. It's very diverse. We don't like to do the same thing every day (interview 13).

Important motivations are the multiple facilities for children, the type and variety of restaurants and the atmosphere. Some parents mention they basically do not shop in shopping malls, but simply look around and come there for entertainment and eating. For 'real shopping' they will look on the Internet, what spares time (interview 4,5,9,11,19). The limited free time causes pressure on the time use and this might explain a family preference of going to places that provide a wide variety of activities.

Another example of a strong concentration of a wide variety of activities is the cultural square in the centre of Shenzhen. Parents like the place because of the atmosphere, the trees and the multiple facilities. They can read books, study, play with their children, relax on the benches outside, kite on the rooftop of the bookstore, listen to music or visit a theatre play in children's palace. The variety of facilities in one place makes this square attractive for families, who easily can merge the different type of activities in one time.

Child-friendliness and safety

Families with children have another precondition for doing an activity on a certain place; the child-friendliness and safety (interview 7,10). A child-friendly place can be for example kite and climb in the mountain, a playground or a park. Public spaces as parks and squares were often monitored by

guards of the municipality in order to guarantee safety. One of the fathers state that Shenzhen is in general not a suitable place for children:

The scale of the city is not that friendly for children. Of course there are children's park and playgrounds that is good for children but in general the scale is too big and it is not very safe for children. Because of the urbanization a lot of the people are migrating and moving. You got the feeling of insecurity because of all those strangers. The other reason is the one child policy. So the kid is the only kid, everyone is taking care of the child and the feeling of insecurity increases (interview 12).

There is also another type of fear; the quality of food in restaurant. The families prefer to eat in a shopping mall because of the greater confidence in the quality of the food in the restaurants of the shopping mall. They can feel insecure when they are eating outdoors (interview 2,16,35):

You should know, there is a food security problem in China now, so we prefer to stay at home. Some people worry about that [...] if they are located in the big shopping mall we can trust them (interview 16).

Restaurant choice depends on the preference of the children's taste and the family mostly decide on the child-friendliness of the restaurant. This means if their children like the food that is served and the taste is not too spicy. Another selection criteria can be the origin of the food; families prefer to have the taste of their hometown/province (interview 14,15,17). The spiciness of the food in restaurant was something that was particular much appreciated by most parents, although avoided with young children (interview 4,6).

The zoo and theme parks as Children's Park, Happy Valley and others, are selected on at least on important criterion; if the equipment is suitable and safe (interview 6,7,8). Furthermore the families go to theme parks because they are child-friendly, there is a variety of play-equipment for children of all ages and it is affordable.

7.4 Synthesis

This chapter provided the answer on the sub question: *What motivates the families to choose these outdoor activities?*

The main priority is spending time with the family together. Places that are entertaining and accessible for every family member are preferred. From a tradition also physical exercise and nature are highly valued. Physical exercise is beneficial for releasing stress and to stay in a good physical condition.

Another motive for these families is ambition, which can be divided into status, culture, education and creative thinking. The interviewed families didn't seem to be conscious of their middle class identity in choosing their activities. The lack of this consciousness can be illustrated by the fact that they don't show any interest in how they are perceived by others. Maybe the most distinctive acting is the extreme focus on education for their child. Although the respondents often emphasize that they don't have any expectations, except for happiness and health. It appears that the interviewed parents do feel the pressure of the Chinese competitive society. This implies that these families invest a lot of their free time and money in these children to make sure that their children will not trail behind their peers. Furthermore it is considered important to get in contact with cultural activities and encouraged to think creatively. The parents try to stimulate the children in all kind of ways, in order to create a broad development of the child.

The location of an activity might determine whether it is visited or not. If the activity is located nearby the residential location, it is easily preferred over another location. This applies for popular places like shopping malls, restaurants and parks. These places are present in a multitude. The families are willing to travel longer for places that are more exclusive or special. Variety in the food was considered as something important; they like to go to different kind of restaurants. In general the families prefer a large variety of activities in one area, so they can easily combine the different activities. Furthermore conditions as safety and child friendliness of a place are highly valued. Some interviewed parents perceived some places as unsafe, which can imply that the fundamental feeling of safety like safe food and safe neighbourhood.

8 Conclusion, discussion and reflection

The results of the empirical research have been presented in the previous chapters and they will be connected to the research questions and theory. The main research question that I've discussed in this thesis is: *How do middle-class families with children organize their daily outdoor activities in Shenzhen?*

The outdoor activities of the middle class families in Shenzhen take place in the so-called free time. This free time is determined by two types of time: the committed time which involves taking care of the child or household activities and the contracted time which implies paid work. The literature suggests that the new Chinese emerging middle class is characterized by increased leisure time but most of the interviewed parents have long working schedules with overtime on weekdays and in the weekend (Jim and Chen, 2009 and Li, 2009). A part of the unemployed mothers decided to quit their job after giving birth to their first child and they felt their role as a mother should be committed fulltime. Parenting is something highly valued by the interviewed families and this implies a strong devotion on taking care of the child. The interviewed mothers take this committed time, including the household activities, very seriously. Young children demand more care, while the somewhat older children demand more support with their homework and educational activities. All the parents did receive help in taking care of the children and/or support in the household. The help in the household comes mostly from the grandparents of the children, but some of the parents hire a domestic worker or nanny. Although these types of help causes a decrease in committed time, the mothers still devote much time to household activities and care of the children. Not only the parents have limited leisure time, the children's leisure time is also limited. The children often face long schooldays, loads of homework and multiple extracurricular activities. These long working schedules, school hours and strong devotion on committed time implied limited free time for the family together and resulted in a concentration of activities during the weekend. Because of the highly appreciated family time, there is little time left for individual activities or activities together with other social contacts. In general, the families have a strong internal focus on the nuclear family.

The internal focus on the family is also expressed when the parents with children visit public spaces; they are reluctant to get in contact with others. These places don't serve as social meeting points and the chance to run into someone familiar seldom happens. The families show a lack of interest in

the people who come to the same places as they do. Therefore, the term parochial realm as suggested by Hajer and Reijndorp (2001), is not applicable for these middle class families in Shenzhen. This could partly be explained because of the anonymity and design of the city. Furthermore, the families are not very concerned with status, sense of belonging or a middle class identity. This was illustrated by the fact that the interviewed families were window-shopping in luxurious malls instead of actually buying expensive goods or food.

The interest of the parents is more focused on the nuclear family and the development of their child. This results in going to cultural activities together and sending their children to extracurricular classes. The city and through its facilities has greatly anticipated the needs of the Chinese families in regard to cultural activities and provision of extracurricular classes. The cultural sites that were visited by the interviewed families were centrally located and these areas provide a high concentration of various cultural activities. Cultural activities and extracurricular classes are considered as important for the development and upbringing of the child. The interviewed parents state that they try to have moderate expectations towards their child. Happiness and health are perceived as the highest goals in life for the children. But according to these parents, the Chinese competitive society creates an enormous pressure on their children. This results in a focus that lies not only on performances at school; the children are also expected to develop their creative thinking. A lot of time is devoted on activities and classes to stimulate this creative thinking.

Besides the educational activities, families spend a lot of time in shopping malls. Shenzhen is characterized by a large number of shopping malls that provide a wide range of facilities. The activities that the families attend are well connected by roads and public transport. The families prefer places like shopping malls with a wide variety of facilities or squares that are located next to other popular facilities. Safety and child-friendliness are other preconditions, which can imply that the fundamental feeling of safety like safe food and safe neighbourhood.

Most families like to go into nature sites in Shenzhen because of the fresh air and a good view. The mountains are nearby, there are a number of parks and the beach offers many recreational activities. Furthermore sport related activities are very appreciated because of the importance of exercise and to release the daily stress. Sport is considered by the parents as essential in the physical development of the child.

Discussion

Shenzhen is not representative for other Chinese cities because of its extremely well planned and new town character. Nonetheless, the insights that can be derived from the results of this research, could serve as a starting point to further explore Chinese middle class family's time use, leisure demand and motivations. The role of the government in the provision of leisure and its role as promoter of certain leisure activities could be further investigated. Research conducted in this way in other Chinese cities combined with this research can even shed a light on Chinese middle class families in the whole of China and their future.

Reflection

The results should be generalized with caution because the number of interviewed families was limited. There was only six weeks of fieldwork, which was obviously quite short to conduct this research. Time use diaries would have been contributed to the first sub-question, but this was not achievable because of the limited time. The closed attitude of the respondents, their shyness and short answers made it sometimes difficult to gather the right information. Furthermore there was sometimes some mistrust in asking certain questions or it was interpreted with an underlying opinion of me as a researcher. This was illustrated in one particular interview:

I: What does your wife do during the day while you are at work?

R: [Laughs]. Do you think it's strange? Do you wonder why she's not doing something?

(interview 16)

In some cases I would have liked to have asked more questions about the exact motives of doing certain activities. Furthermore topics like income and spending behaviour could have contributed to this research, but the sensitivity of this information posed an obstacle in many of the interviews. In general the interviews provided enough information to give insight into the middle class families in Shenzhen. The topic was quite large which implies that certain points were underexposed. Since the scope of this research was focused on the Chinese middle class families in Shenzhen, I chose to leave out other topics. Examples of topics that I have excluded from my research are time spend on activities at home and the ratio between outdoor activities versus the time spend at home.

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Appendix 1

Topic list

a. Introduction for volunteers

Topic

Middle-class family life in Shenzhen: daily activities and identity in a rapidly changing urban environment.

- What do you and your family do in your daily lives, how do you organize your life in Shenzhen?
- In a rapidly growing city with such a large, new population, how do you view and express yourselves?

I am researching middle-class families and family life in high-rise neighbourhoods in Shenzhen. I focus on children's use of public space and the social context and identity of the middle-class family in Shenzhen. What I would like to do is have an interview with parents of about half an hour about the daily activities of their children, the places they go in the city and their parents' motivations and reasons for these activities. This way, I hope to learn more about the views, expectations and goals parents have for their children. I would also like to know more about what their daily life looks like, how they experience living in Shenzhen and why they decided to move here. I am also interested in the people that they meet when they go to places with their children and I would also like to know more about their friends (job, education, where they live, interests, etc.). This way, I hope to learn more about how they live and develop as an urban family in a big and new city like Shenzhen and in a changing Chinese society.

Keywords

Important concepts for my research are: parenting, public space, identity

Important concepts for Lysanne's research are: time use, activities, space

Topic list for Interview

Topics discussed during the interview:

- family background: hometown, education, employment and moving to Shenzhen
- residence: neighbourhood, location choice, neighbours

- education of children
- extra-curricular (out-of-school) activities of children: sports, music, creative lessons, language lessons, tutoring, reasons for choosing these activities
- activities in public space: park, beach, playground, shopping mall, 'children's palace', interaction with other people in such places
- social circle: friends and neighbours (how well do you know them, how often do you see them, similarities and differences between parents and friends)
- ideas about raising children: most important values, most important skills, expectations and goals
- future expectations: how long will you live in Shenzhen, what will you and your children be doing

b. Topic list and Interview guide

Interview sections

- Family background
- Residential choices
- Employment
- Daily schedule
- Childcare
- Education children
- Extracurricular activities children
- Public places
- Parenting
- Social circle of parents and children
- Future perspectives

Personal characteristics and family background

- Age
- Hometown
- Education
- Job and education grandparents

Motivation for location choice

- When did you move to Shenzhen? Why?
- When did you move to current home? Why? (Motivations)
- How did you find out about this project/garden/neighbourhood?
- How well do you know your neighbors?
- How would you describe the people that live in this compound?
- Do you view yourself as one of them? Why or why not?
- How important were the facilities available in the compound in your decision to move here?
- Did you look at public space suitable for children in the neighbourhood?
- Do your children like living in this neighbourhood?

Employment

- Job, position
- Work schedule
- Job location
- Transportation
- Job and position spouse

Day-to-day weekly schedule

- Can you describe your daily schedule in a week?
- How do you organize/plan your activities?
- Hobbies/leisure time/ cultural activities
- The time and place
- Transport
- Constraints

Childcare

- Who takes care of your children when you are at work?
- Is there anyone else who is helping you with your children or housekeeping?
- How often, when, what do they do?
- Do you grandparents take care of your children? Why or why not?
- Do you have a nanny? Why or why not?

Education Children

- Where do your children go to school?
- Why there? Or why not somewhere else?
- How did you find out about this school?
- Do your children like going to this school?

- Would you rather send them to a different school? Why or why not?

Extra-curricular activities

- What kind of extra-curricular activities, such as sports, music lessons or tutoring, do your children participate in ?
- Why?
- How did you find out about these lessons?
- How did you find out about this education, sport, arts centre?
- Are there any other activities that you would like your children to participate in in the future? Why?
- In your opinion, is it normal for children in Shenzhen to participate in these kind of extracurricular activities and lessons? Why or why not?

Use of public space

- Could you describe the public places mentioned in earlier sections of the interview?
- When, with whom and how often do you go?
- Why do your children go here, why do you take your children here?
- How often do other families join you?
- How often do you meet up with other people?
- How often do you see or know a lot of people that are there as well?
- What kind of activities do your children do?
- How would you describe the atmosphere, image, and ambience of the public places where you take your children?
- How often do your children play with other children? Whom do they play with?
- Are there places that your children prefer over others? Why?
- Are there places that you prefer over others? Why?
- Do you meet with other people or other parents? Whom do you meet?
- How would you describe the target audience or main audience of the places that you go to with your children?
- Do you feel like you belong to this group? Are they similar to you?
- Are the people that come to this location one of the contributing factors that you come here?
- How do you know about this place?
- Do you talk to other parents about these places?

Parenting

- What are the most important values and lessons that you would like to teach your children, or that you would like your children to learn in life?
- What are the most important skills that you would like your children to develop?
- How do the activities that your children take part in contribute to this?

- How would you describe the influence that their friends and other people they meet might have on your children's values, ideas and skills?
- Do your friends and family have similar ideas about raising their children? How would you describe the similarities and differences?
- Do you ever discuss the upbringing or education of your children?
- Is your children's life, lifestyle and upbringing different from that of your own childhood?
- How would you describe the similarities and differences?
- Is the way you raise your children different from the way your parents raised you? How and why?

Social circle

- Do you have many friends in the city?
- How would you describe them (job, education, children, interests)?
- How many friends do you have with the same education as you?
- Do you have many friends with little or no education?
- Would you be friends with people who have little or no education?
- Where do they live?
- Where do they go? What kind of activities and places?
- Do you also participate in these kinds of activities? Would you like to? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the differences and similarities between you and your friends?
- Do you ever discuss your children and the way you raise them?

Future

- How long do you intend to stay here in this neighbourhood and in Shenzhen?
- What kind of life do you expect to have in 10 or 20 years?
- What kind of life do you expect your children to have in 10 or 20 years?