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Department of Childhood and Primary Studies

**Culturally Responsive Pre-school Education: Multicultural
Malaysia on a Small Scale**

By

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ABSTRACT

Malaysian Government policy aims to meet the challenge of a culturally integrated society by 2020. As part of its approach it has established the PERPADUAN (National Unity) Pre-school. The primary aim of this study is to understand whether Malaysian pre-school education is culturally responsive to and inclusive for all cultures present in the setting by investigating positive and constructive parent-child relationships across three cultures. It is important to understand the social and cultural capital of parents and PERPADUAN pre-school's ethos effects on children's behaviour. The design and methodology in this study have been guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Theory, which investigates the contextual domains affecting children's behaviour from ethnically diverse families. The study involved 25 children from one PERPADUAN Pre-school in an urban area, and their parents and teachers. A qualitative methodology was applied in this study. Naturalistic observations of the children were conducted over 12 weeks, in classroom activities and free play, and were recorded in field notes and with a digital camera to gain understanding of the children's behaviour. The children were interviewed based on observations and photographs conducted earlier. In-depth interviews were conducted with the parents and teachers according to the child observation and interview data. This research methodology was devised to produce a perspective of social behaviour from three dimensions: researcher, parents and teachers. The first findings in this study of a multi-ethnic pre-school in Malaysia considered children's social behaviours (i.e., helping, sharing, cooperation and respect) and relationships (i.e., friendships and peer networks) between ethnic groups. I observed that children from different ethnic groups shared common objects among themselves especially during the learning period. There was obviously developed reciprocity and interrelations between them. Children relate to each other through play activities and the use of language; they learn Malay because the social relationship is being developed across language groups. The second finding shows ethnicities and religious capital help to develop children's behaviour. Norms and values are based on ethnicity and religion. There are commonalities, such as respect, within and between ethnicities. Third, PERPADUAN Pre-school has regulated acceptable behaviour across the three ethnic groups which is in line with the home, emphasising polite language and the practice of "*budi bahasa*" as a symbol of respectfulness for ethnic groups. Every child has been exposed to different cultures and has sensitivity to other ethnic groups. Finally, the most important outcome of this study is the development of the theoretical framework and methodology. Through my synthesis of evidence and framework, I have constructed *a model of an ecological study of a Malaysian multi-ethnic pre-school*, developed from the data of this study. In conclusion, the study gives a picture of the importance of contextual factors influencing child's development. The implications of these results for research in children's behaviour along with the practical implications of the findings are discussed and opportunities for future research are provided. Such longitudinal study may be needed in order to answer issues about how the level and quality of children's relationships remains consistent over the years until the end of primary and secondary school.

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DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

CDRS	Child Development Rating Scale
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
EPPE	Effective Pre-school and Primary Education
EPRD	Education Planning and Research Division
JPTP	<i>Jawatankuasa Penyelaras Tabika Perpaduan</i> (Pre-school Coordinator Committee)
JPNIN	<i>Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional</i> (Department of National Unity and Integration)
KEMAS	<i>Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat</i>
MLC	Mandarin as Language of Communication
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCDRC	National Child Development Research Centre
NPE	National Philosophy of Education
NPC	National Pre-school Curriculum
<i>P</i>	<i>Photograph</i>
<i>PMR</i>	<i>Penilaian Menengah Rendah</i>
<i>RIMUP</i>	<i>Rancangan Integrasi Murid Untuk Perpaduan</i>
<i>RT</i>	<i>Persatuan Rukun Tetangga</i> (Neighbourhood Association)
<i>SK</i>	<i>Sekolah Kebangsaan</i> (National School)
<i>SJKC</i>	<i>Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina</i> (Chinese national-type schools)
<i>SJKT</i>	<i>Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil</i> (Tamil national-type schools)
<i>SPM</i>	<i>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</i>
<i>STPM</i>	<i>Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia</i>
SES	Socio-economic status
TLC	Tamil as a language of Communication

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study is primarily concerned with the issue of cultural diversity as a major challenge in a multicultural society such as Malaysia. The study focuses on the Malaysian context and in particular the contribution of families and the PERPADUAN (national unity) pre-school in constructing multi-ethnic relationships. The first chapter reflects on four areas, including the background of the study which will explore young children and their families.

Chapter Two provides a background to Malaysia, the setting of the present study. This chapter has two main sections: the first provides a brief look at Malaysian multicultural ethnicity and religion; in this discussion statistics of the Malaysian population are given. The second section includes discussion of the Malaysian education system and how education at pre-school level and primary level promotes child interaction. It describes the role of ethnic backgrounds in affecting children's behaviour. In this chapter, basic information on Malaysia, including historical background, demography and social structure of its people, is described.

The literature review begins in Chapter Three and delves into past studies on children's social behaviour and the possible role of ethnic backgrounds in affecting this. Searches have been made through a broad base of electronic and traditional databases and libraries to ensure that the literature search process was rigorous and extensive. The literature identified three main categories of research themes: child interaction; studies of social and cultural capital; and studies of how the pre-school setting influences children's behaviours. The factors in parental social and cultural capital include norms and values of ethnicity, religion, social capital and parenting styles from the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia.

Chapter Four is a logical extension of the literature review, presenting the theoretical and conceptual framework and a model which forms the basis of the study. This chapter emphasises Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Theory in order to support the literature and research framework. The theoretical framework for this study is then introduced. The components of the conceptual model are examined using previous research in each of the areas. At the first stage three main constructs

of the model are discussed: social and cultural capital; ethnicities; and pre-school ethos. However, after data collection and analysis of the data, six main elements of the model emerged, which are religious capital, cultural capital, ethnicities, language capital, pre-school ethos and social capital.

The purpose of Chapter Five is to explain the methodological aspect of this study. In this chapter, the basic concepts and principles relating to research methodology are expounded and relevant methods of data collection used in the study are elaborated upon in detail. A qualitative method was chosen as the most appropriate data collection technique to enable the researcher to explore the types of children's behaviour and unique features of parents' cultures in the context of this study. In establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative data, the researcher discusses important elements to be considered in evaluation of the data. These include internal validity, external validity, and reliability. Research ethics when working with children are also essential, and issues related to anonymity and confidentiality are also discussed. The main data collection techniques used in the study were observation, and interview. The chapter finally discusses the process involved in the analysis of data and how this study was limited and delimited by the conditions that may have influenced the results of the study.

Chapter Six is in three sections; a profile of the participants, children's social behaviour and how children relate to each other.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss how parental cultural capital influences children's behaviour in areas such as norms and values, language capital, religious capital, and social capital between ethnic groups. The findings show ethnicities and religious capital help to develop children's behaviour.

Chapters Eight mainly focus on how the pre-school ethos nurtures children's development, and the relationship between parental norms and values and the pre-school ethos.

Chapter Nine of this study draws together the findings of the study and reflects on them in order to link them with past literature and the theoretical framework. The evidence from this study demonstrates that, despite different ethnic backgrounds, there exists a meeting point of parental norms and values, religion, and language.

Parents value their children's behaviour and want their children to behave well and to engage in pro-social behaviour in the context of the multi-ethnic pre-school. However, the evidence demonstrates a variation as to how different backgrounds and dispositions of parents support their children, dependent on cultural capital and educational resources. This links to the theory that success is dependent on parental cultural and educational resources.

The final Chapter draws conclusions about the main findings and discusses the implications of the development of theory and methodology, as well as identifying the limitations of the study and offering suggestions for future research endeavours.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, four main areas of interest are presented. The first section sets the context for the study. The second section discusses the rationale for the study. The aims and purposes of the study are outlined in the third section, and the final section describes the significance of the study.

1.1 Context of the Study

Malaysia is one of the fastest developing nations in South East Asia. Indeed, it has a national ambition called ‘Vision 2020’, the purpose of which is to attain developed-nation status by the year 2020. The former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1991, p. 1) stated that

By the year 2020, Malaysia can be a united nation, with a confident Malaysian society, infused by strong moral and ethical values, living in a society that is democratic, liberal and tolerant, caring, economically just and equitable, progressive and prosperous, and in full possession of an economy that is competitive, dynamic, robust and resilient.

Achieving Vision 2020 would be a big step towards Malaysia’s attainment internationally of the status of an industrialised and developed nation. In order to be a developed nation, the government has identified strategies to match the following nine challenges (Government of Malaysia, 2000):

- Establishing a united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny;
- Creating a psychologically liberated, secure and developed Malaysian society;
- Fostering a democratic society;
- Establishing a fully moral and ethical society;
- Establishing a mature, liberal and tolerant society;
- Establishing a scientific and progressive society;
- Establishing a fully caring society and caring culture;
- Ensuring an economically just society, and
- Establishing a prosperous society.

The national vision takes the form of nine challenges that Malaysia must face and resolve effectively before a developed nation status can be fully achieved. As part of

the national agenda, education is perhaps the only hope for the nation to deliver the goal that Malaysia seeks. Educational vision must therefore be in total harmony with Vision 2020 (Mohamed-Hashim, 2009). According to Wan Zahid Wan Nordin (2002, p. 15), former Director-General of the Ministry of Education, Malaysia:

Our school represents our best, if not our only hope for inculcating in our children a sense of tolerance, acceptance, and understanding to produce “a nation at peace with itself, territorially and ethnically integrated, living in harmony and full and fair partnership, made up of one *‘Bangsa Malaysia’* with political loyalty and dedication to the nation,” as enumerated in Vision 2020.

The ideals and purposes of education resonate in Vision 2020 and many of its ideals are inculcated through various school subjects and cross-curricular activities. Within Vision 2020 are embedded many positive educational values, inspiring to the citizens, parents and children who now can share in building better futures.

Contrary to Vision 2020, Malaysia is confronting increased criticism of the division of public education at the primary level into national and national-type schools. This is allegedly creating racial polarisation at an early age, as national schools are Malay-dominated and, especially in recent years, have an overwhelmingly Muslim atmosphere (Rais Yatim, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister, The Sun, 2009). This could lead to the social behaviour of the school children who seem to find it difficult to establish friendships and get along with fellow pupils from diverse backgrounds. It might eventually result in children having little respect for each other.

In light of this information, parents of these groups and the institutions where children have had their first formal contact with others have failed to instil in their children proper standards of Malaysian culture such as language and understanding of other ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, the decision to examine the role of family and institutions like kindergartens and pre-school centres responds to culturally diverse environments and immediately as well as vitally reflects socialization in the wider society. Families and pre-schools are an important context for socialization values. Both parties have been considered primary socialisation agents and are the context in which individuals develop aspirations for their future across the transition to adulthood.

1.2 The Rationale for the Study

This section describes the main point of the study, considering the important factors which affect children's behaviour. The behaviour of children differs from one to another. Based on an approach from an ecological perspective, a child's development is seen as being influenced by the social and physical environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner later introduced a bio-ecological interpretation of his theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems model represents embedded systems that have a reciprocal influence on each other. There are microsystems that comprise roles and relationships (Dunn, 1993); mesosystems (e.g. schools' relationship with parents); exosystems (e.g. parents' social capital; relationships with other parents); macrosystems, which comprise all types of system within a cultural context; and chronosystems (the concept of 'over time') (Ayers, Clarke, & Murray, 2000). The microsystem is the child's family system in which he or she lives and interacts with people who share many things together. The microsystem provides early experience for children and is basic to their development. The way parents provide their children with experience depends on family processes, parent-child interactions or, in a broader perspective, on child-rearing practices including parenting behaviour. Individual behaviour is seen as embedded in specific social and physical contexts. Problem behaviour is influenced or even generated by ecological factors in specific contexts (Ayers, et al., 2000). Bronfenbrenner's work provides the theoretical framework of my study (for further discussion see section 4.5).

This study raises a number of questions in relation to social behaviour, family background, and school. An adult who is friendly and concerned and reflects an approving manner provides an environment that aids the development of positive interactions in the child. Relationships are affected by modelling positive behaviours, reinforcing acceptable social skills, coaching children as they learn to change or modify unacceptable behaviours, and supporting friendships and warm relationships. According to Eisenberg (2006) characteristics of children that have been associated with prosocial behaviour range from age and sex to physical, emotional, cognitive,

and social dimensions. Family variables shown to have an impact on children's social development have also been extensive, ranging from family income, status, and functioning (e.g., communication and affection among family members) to parental mental health, to parenting behaviours common to all siblings.

Numerous studies have examined the factors which may put children at risk of a variety of social and behavioural problems, including a lack of learning resources and opportunities at home; parents with little education (Coie & Dodge, 1998); too much television viewing; troubled parents and child relationships (Bennett, Elliot, & Peters, 2005; McLoyd, 1990); and inappropriate parenting practices (Coie, 1996; McLoyd, 1990). These circumstances mean children with social behaviour problems often find themselves rejected by their peers, disliked, ridiculed and not invited to other children's play. These experiences wound their self-esteem and self-confidence, leaving them isolated and depressed, and deprive them of opportunities to develop and practise the social skills they desperately need (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2007). Once rejected by a group, a child will probably continue to be rejected and will have an equally hard time in joining a new group.

Environmental differences between pre-school and home may put children at risk and cause difficulties adapting to the new culture and environment. The transition period might be different from one child to another (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002). This means that children are more at risk when home cultures are different from pre-school. Gonzalez-Mena (2002) points out "expected school behaviour may be quite alien to what's needed by some children at home and in the neighbourhood where they live" (p.293). Children must start again from scratch, feeling much less competent and uncomfortable. Children who find themselves in a strange environment are likely to be confused and may experience feelings of isolation, alienation and conflict. The behaviour that was perfectly acceptable at home may unfortunately be inappropriate in pre-school cultures. The transition process of children may be longer than normal and become more complex within a multi-ethnic pre-school (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002). The dangers of discontinuity of the two different cultures are greater when the discrepancy is large and long-lasting, especially if the child does not adapt easily to change.

Studies investigating parent socialization are often made in the context of Western societies. This study will be undertaken particularly in the heterogeneous collectivist culture of Malaysia, where this type of research on children's behaviour is still rare. Collectivist culture refers to the socialization pattern that emphasizes "we" consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, group harmony, and obligation (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988). This contrasts with the individualist culture that holds the "I" consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, and right to privacy. The perception of family functioning of people in a collectivist culture might be very different from that of people in a Western culture. Collectivist cultures place a strong emphasis on the nature of relationships between parents and children. Children are expected to be obedient and respectful, and to avoid behaving in a way that could bring shame to their family (Chen, DeSouza, Chen, & Wang, 2006; Chen et al., 1998; Gudiño & Lau, 2010; Triandis, et al., 1988). In Asian cultures, such as Malaysia, emotion is not displayed openly and spontaneously; emotional restraint is considered polite, smiling even if embarrassed, confused or sad. Avoiding physical contact and preferring more space is an important part of communication (Hamid, 1992; Jassem & Jassem, 1997). In addition, families transmit socialization through rituals, through activities in their daily life, and the parenting of children according to beliefs and customs. Therefore, examining the roles of parent socialization on children's pro-social behaviour in Malaysia is important. In light of this information, the decision to examine children's social behaviour at a pre-school centre, and the role of family background on socialisation within a wider society, is fundamental.

Although a number of studies conducted in several parts of the world explore the link between the parental role and children's behaviour, research on Malaysian pre-school children is still limited. There continues to be a need for Malaysian researchers to examine the ecological context of today's families in the natural setting of pre-school whilst seeking the views of parents, teachers and children. The ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) urges us to look at the child in the context of family, community, and society in order to support children's relationships and development.

1.3 The Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to understand whether Malay pre-school education is culturally responsive to and inclusive for all cultures present in the setting by investigating positive and constructive parent-child relationships across the three cultures.

This research explores multiculturalism in families with culturally diverse backgrounds and in the institution where children have their first formal contact with others. It deals firstly with children's social interaction with others at pre-school level. Secondly, it deals with the diversity of parents' social and cultural capital, i.e. the norms and values, mother tongue, religion, beliefs, and family network. Thirdly, it deals with pre-school community settings which are suited to cultural diversity, i.e. norms and values, environment and attitudes.

In addition, this study also investigates the effect of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status on the group of children. The purposes of this study are:

- to examine how children from three different ethnic groups and of different genders relate to each other in pre-school.
- to investigate the effect of the social and cultural capital of parents and PERPADUAN Pre-school on children's social behaviour.

The PERPADUAN Pre-school is mainly structured for children from all ethnic groups aged 4-6 years (for further discussion refer to Section 2.5.2).

1.4 Significance of the Study

In summary, the results of the study will benefit individuals, parents and society in general and provide a better understanding of children's social behaviour and the effectiveness of family functioning in different ethnic backgrounds. It is important to understand the three main cultures of Malaysia before setting the pre-school system curriculum to reflect the culture of each ethnicity. The researcher expects the results from this study may help the government in developing policy for pre-school reflecting the multicultural context.

In recent years the parenting issue has become strongly discussed in Malaysia. The importance of this issue from the public point of view is evidenced from the frequency of parenting programs. The government of Malaysia initiated the National Child Development Research Centre (NCDRC) with a focus on children between 0 and 5 years old with special regards to their socio-emotional behaviour. This research will contribute specifically to this centre and PERPADUAN Pre-schools, and national pre-schools in general in term of nurturing children. The results involving cross-cultural views and different perspectives from three ethnic groups may contribute to the integration of children as 'One' Malaysia. The One Malaysia or 1Malaysia concept evolves around culture of excellence, perseverance, acceptance, education, integrity, meritocracy, humility and loyalty. 1Malaysia seeks to improve the relations of all Malaysians, regardless of racial, religious or cultural backgrounds.

1.5 Summary of Chapter 1

This chapter has introduced the context for this study which is primarily concerned with the issue of cultural diversity as a major challenge in a multicultural society like Malaysia. The study focuses on the Malaysian context and in particular the contribution of families and national unity pre-schools in constructing multi-ethnic relationships. The next chapter provides a brief look at Malaysian multicultural ethnicity and religion. The second section includes discussion on the Malaysian education system and how education at pre-school and primary level promotes child's interaction.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND OF MALAYSIA: MULTICULTURALISM AND EDUCATION

2.1 Introduction

The empirical work in this thesis focuses on a case study based on one multi-ethnic pre-school that is part of preparation classes for national primary school. Tabika PERPADUAN or PERPADUAN Pre-school (National Unity Pre-school) was introduced by *Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional* or JPNIN (Department of National Unity and Integration, Malaysia) and placed under the Prime Minister's Department in 1976 (See further discussion in Section 2.5.2). This pre-school programme aims to promote national unity and integration in the country from an early age. PERPADUAN Pre-school classes have become increasingly important in recent contexts in fostering children's unity at an early stage and preparing children with an awareness of multiculturalism before going to the National Primary Schools. The National Primary Schools were introduced in 1952 by the Legislative Council of the Federation as a tool to foster unity and a sense of national identity. This chapter highlights some of the challenges faced by the Malaysian Government and society in fostering national integration within the school system and community. This chapter, therefore, will provide an overview of the main factors which have had a significant impact on shaping the multicultural society and the development of the education system. It will address two main areas: a brief look at Multicultural Malaysia, and the National System of Education.

2.2 A Brief Look at Multicultural Malaysia

Malaysia has a number of ethnic groups who share common cultural traits and have the same ethnic origin. It is very important to understand the ethnic characteristics of these multi-ethnic groups in order to understand community relationships. Ethnic classification is predominantly a social construct as well as an 'official definition' in Malaysia - describing and explaining the different groups of people who have different histories, cultures, religion and languages and who adopt different positions

in relation to others. Malaysia is an ex-British colony which gained its political independence in 1957. As showed in Figure 2.1, Malaysia has a population of around 28 million with three main ethnic groups- Malay (50.4%), Chinese (23.7%) and Indian (7.1%). Other groups include *Other-Bumiputera* (10.3%), Others (7.8%) and Orang Asli (0.7%). In Malaysia, ethnicity determines the differences in the socio-cultural and religious diversity of population.

2.2.1 Malay

The Malays or the Deuteron-Malays form the predominant ethnic group in West Malaysia or Malay Peninsula but are a substantial minority in Sarawak and a smaller group in Sabah as shown in Figure 2.2. The later ethnic group of Malays are from Indonesia. Each of the ethnic Malay groups mentioned has its own dialect but all are related to the language mainly used, that is, the *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language). The quick assimilation of these groups into the Malay community is a result of common cultural traits (Asma & Pederson, 2003; Nagata, 1974).

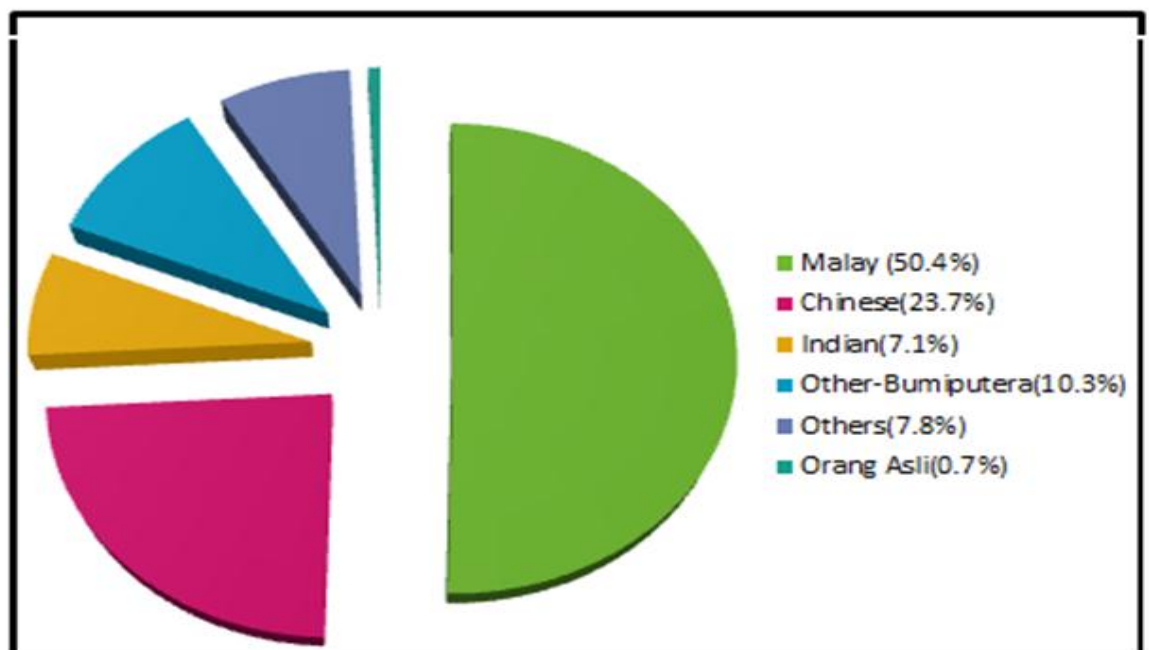


Figure 2.1: Population of Malaysia

2.2.2 Chinese

The Chinese, who represents 23.7% of all Malaysians, were derived largely from South China and include Hakka, Teochew, Fuchow and Hainanese, with the Cantonese and Hokkien forming the largest dialect groups. The Chinese first arrived in Malaysia in the 15th century, when the Ming Princess Hang Li Po and her entourage arrived in Melaka to establish a thriving community which gave rise to the Chinese-Peranakans of today (locally known as Babas and Nyonyas). But it was not until the 19th century that the Chinese had the biggest impact on the social and religious landscape of this nation, as migrants from southern China came in droves to seek their fortune in the tin mines of Perak and Selangor. Initially, the Chinese immigrants made a livelihood as labourers, but soon many ventured into trade and industry, thriving in the former Straits Settlements of Melaka, Penang and Singapore (Hirschman, 1986; Sarkissian, 1997). Today, they are mainly found in the urban centres and dominate the businesses, financial institutions and industries which are the country's main economic sectors.

2.2.3 Indian

The Indians, who generally speak Tamil, make up 7.1% of the population. When India came under British rule, Indian labourers were sent to Malaya to work on sugar cane and coffee plantations and later on the rubber and oil palm estates. Some of them also came to work on the construction of buildings, roads and bridges. They included Tamils, Pakistanis, Malayalis, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans, Punjabis, Bengalis and Gujeratis in descent. The Indians who came to Malaysia brought with them the Hindu culture, and Hindu tradition remains strong today. The Indian community of Malaysia celebrates two main festivals, Deepavali and Thaipusam, and many other smaller religious events each year. Indians in Malaysia mainly speak Tamil, Malayalam, Telegu and some Hindi. Like the Chinese, the Indians also retain their vernacular languages and dialects.

There is also the Chitty community in Malacca. Similar to the Chinese-Peranakans, Indian-Chitties are also the result of the assimilation between the Portuguese of 16th-century Malacca and the local culture. Though they remain

Christians, the *casado* (locally known as *Serani*) speak Bahasa Melayu and their women dress in sarong kebayas.

2.2.4 The *Other-Bumiputera*

The *Other-Bumiputera* consist of the Malay-related ethnic groups (of Proto-Malay descent) found in West Malaysia, the state of Sabah, and Sarawak (refer to Figure 2.2). In Sabah, there are thirty-nine ethnic groups, but the Kadazandusun, Murut and Bajaus form the majority. In Sarawak, indigenous groups now refers to collectively as Dayaks account for 44% of the state population of less than 2 million. They include the Iban (Sea Dayak), Bidayuh (Land Dayak), Orang Ulu and Melanau. The *Other-Bumiputera*, or indigenous communities, are a majority in the states of both Sabah and Sarawak.



Figure 2.2: Map of Malaysia

2.2.5 The Orang Asli

The *Orang Asli* (Aboriginal or Original People) are the indigenous minority people of Malay Peninsula (Peninsular Malaysia), numbering about 163 000, which is less than 1% of the national population. Culturally and linguistically they are distributed among nineteen distinct ethnic groups and are commonly divided into three broad groups: the nomadic Negritos; the semi-nomadic Senoi; and the Jakun, who have increasingly adopted settled farming.

2.2.6 The Others

The Others, 1.2% of the population, consist of much smaller communities made up of Arabs, Armenians, Filipinos, Eurasians and Europeans.

2.3 Malaysian Religious Capital

Another basic characteristic of the Malaysia society is its religious diversity. Islam is the most widely professed religion in Malaysia. About 14 million people belong to this faith, constituting 60% of the total population of 27 million. The multi-religious character of Malaysia is indicated by the fact that significant proportions of the population also follow Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Confucianism, tribal/folk religions and others.

In relation to the defining features of the Malaysian majority i.e. Malays, Chinese and Indian, each race manifests religious characteristics and cultural norms that are different and easily distinguishable from each other. According to Husin Ali (1981, p.111)

The Malays are Muslims, who are required by their religion to pray, fast, pay religious tithes and go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Their attire and food are generally influenced by their religious beliefs and cultural values. As for the Chinese, although they are often associated with Buddhism and Taoism, they do not adhere strictly to these beliefs. Their religious faiths do not seem to

permeate their everyday life as Islam does among the Malays, especially those in the villages. The Indians are quite devout Hindus and often perform their religious rituals. Each group has its own language and cultural heritage, and is proud of them.

To a larger extent, the distribution of the population by religion in Malaysia is highly correlated to its race or ethnic composition (Nagata, 1974). Among Malaysian citizens today, the *Bumiputera* population are mainly Muslim, and the *Other-Bumiputera* who live mainly in Sabah and Sarawak are Christians. The Chinese are predominantly Buddhists or practise Confucianism, Taoism or other traditional Chinese religions. Hinduism is the main religion of Indians in Malaysia, although there are those who are Christians or Muslims.

Christianity in Malaysia can be traced to the time when the Western traders first established their partners in the regions. International traders in the early times certainly played a key role in bringing Christianity to this part of the world. On the whole, Christianity never really became established in any strength in the Peninsular. However, it had a certain impact in the Eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak, particularly among indigenous tribes. Christian missionaries were instrumental in establishing schools and hospitals across the country and played quite a significant role in charity, education and some medical services

2.3.1 Malay

Perhaps the most significant influence that has served as a unifying and binding factor among the Malays is the religion of Islam (Korff, 2001). Malays are Muslims in practice and by definition. The Malaysian Constitution defines a Malay as: A person, who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay customs. Kling (1995) has suggested three basic foundations for understanding the Malay family and its ideology. The first is a traditional socio-cultural configuration which is known as “*adat*”; second, the impact and accommodation of Islamic religious principles; and lastly, the influence of British colonial legislative laws. Kling (1995) stressed that Malay families believe religion provide guidelines to address practically every aspect of individual and family life. Prominent Islamic festivals celebrated by Malays today include *Eid al Fitr* and *Adha*.

According to Kling (1995), in Malay families, parents are considered to be clear authoritative figures and are obeyed without question, unless they encourage behaviours that are against religious tenets. The family is considered the starting point for learning and internalizing the teachings of religion and culture. Spiritual growth is considered important in the development of children. Caring for one's parents is considered an honour and blessing. Behaviour is regulated by the traditional values of *budi* (etiquette) and *bahasa* (language). The term "*budi bahasa*" (politeness) sums up the kind of proper behaviour an individual should display both in private family life and in public. This is much in line with the morality (*akhlak*) enjoined by Islamic teaching (Kling, 1995). Thus, Malay values such as unity, sharing, and caring for each other continue to be emphasised.

2.3.2 Chinese

The Chinese brought with them their distinctive culture, with its amalgam of Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist elements, and various dialects, with Mandarin or Kuoyu as the language of the educated group. However, Chinese Malaysians can generally be categorized into English-speaking and Chinese-speaking individuals. The former received their formal education mainly in English and the latter in Chinese (Carlson, Kurato, Ruiz, Ng, & Yang, 2004). Festivals and special occasions that the Chinese in Malaysia celebrate include the Lantern Festival, Cheng beng, and of course Chinese New Year (Kwa & Peng, 2006).

According to Ho (1981), in the traditional Chinese family, the socialization of children is influenced by two interesting concepts: *Yang-yu* and *Chiao-yang*. *Yang-yu* refers to rearing or nurturing. *Chiao-yang* refers to parental responsibility for children's education. The first concept emphasizes the guidance of proper development of character toward morality rather than psychological orientation. Parents are more indulgent and more nurturing with younger children. Parents are blamed if they fail to bring up children properly. Parent-child interaction in Chinese families changes with age, for example parents can be strict and even harsh towards older children (D. Y. F. Ho, 1981). Shek (1998) found that there is a clear gender differentiation in the parenting of children. Families rely more on induction when

disciplining daughters than disciplining sons. With sons, families use more power assertion and love withdrawal. Boys experience more restrictive treatment and demanding teaching by fathers and stronger autocratic discipline by both parents than do girls. They are encouraged to respect their parents and elders.

2.3.3 Indian

In an Indian family, religion plays an important role. A majority of Indian-Malaysian are Hindus. According to Krishnan (2004, p. 22) elaborated on several ethical restraints in the Indian family that influence the behaviour of the family. Hinduism's ethical restraint has a defined code of conduct, relational behaviour, and socialization goals for family life. These codes of conduct are used as guidelines for relational behaviour and particularly provide deterrents, especially to delinquent behaviour. In terms of behaviour, respect for elders is to be shown in verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Children are expected to be good, respectful, and bring honour to the family through their behaviour. Children are encouraged to be patient and to control their emotions especially for girls (Jalal & Sumari, 2008). According to Sheth (1995) an Indian family structure is patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal. The father is the dominant figure in the family. The female is subordinate to the male. Her life depends first on her father, then her husband, and then on her eldest son. Parents treat their sons and daughters differently. Female children are more protected. Assertive behaviour and autonomy is not encouraged, especially in girls.

2.4 Community Relationships

The general societal pattern in Malaysia is reflected by the composition of a population made up of different multi-racial groups. The Malays, being the majority in the country, are all Muslim. The second largest group, the Chinese, are mostly Tao Buddhist. Similarly, the Indian segment of the population, originally coming from India, is mainly Hindu. Besides having its own unique culture, this country is also blending together other cultures, including the culture from the west since Malaysia is a former British colony. Islam is the dominant religion, but residents are free to

practise other religions. According to Asma & Pederson (2003), social interactions among the different races could be better and intercultural marriages are rare due to religious differences.

Generally, families in Malaysia provide socialization for keeping values such as cooperation, helpfulness, obedience, dependence, respect, and interpersonal relationships (Kling, 1995). In addition, Malaysian culture is also generally similar to other collectivist cultures which place a strong emphasis on the nature of the relationship between parents and children. Children are expected to be obedient and respectful, and to avoid behaving in a way that could bring shame to their family. Through socialization in families, children practise rituals, traditions, religion, and activities in their daily lives (Kwa & Peng, 2006). The Malaysian kinship system is generally bilateral, with some areas retaining a matrilineal system in patterns of post-marital residence and inheritance. In contrast, the Chinese adhere to the patrilineal kinship system from which the immigrants originated (Jalal & Sumari, 2008). In terms of family structure, the majority have formed nuclear families and the number of extended families in urban areas is decreasing. This is due to the rural-urban migration factor.

The different stereotypes which have been drawn are one of the reasons the ethnic groups often do not interact with each other. However, evidence is gradually accumulating to challenge some long-held and cherished assumptions concerning the nature of racial or ethnic identity and boundaries in Malaysia (Asma & Pederson, 2003). These efforts and studies, while providing few new insights, serve to support and verify what we do know about multicultural Malaysia. They will be discussed more fully in the appropriate places in the section which follows.

2.5 Malaysian Education System

This historical account of developments has up to now focused on the multicultural characteristics of Malaysian society. Within this context, I now examine the politics and the policy of education in Malaysia in maintaining a multicultural society. This section observes efforts and considerations to promote public education as a nation-

building tool and as a means of inculcating a sense of Malaysian-ness, patriotism and unity.

During the British Colonial government of Malaya (Malaysia), there were two categories of school: the vernacular schools (Malay, Chinese and Tamil) and the English medium schools. These were separate schools with different media of instruction, curricula, methods and standards for children of various racial and ethnic groups; that is, the Malays, Chinese, Indians and Europeans. The policy *pecah and perintah* (divide and rule) segregated schools along racial lines. Therefore, the vernacular schools (Malay, Chinese and Tamil) and the English medium schools were alienated from the other societies because of colonial government policy. Their policies, such as different schools for different races, created a divisive educational system. In the end, especially for a newly independent country, the differences between these schools proved to be very complicated and challenging when it came to the idea of unifying them.

Secondary education, according to Hirschman (1972) was only available in English and Chinese-medium schools prior to Independence with most of the enrolment in English language schools. There was only a small flow of students from primary vernacular schools to English secondary schools. However, there are some elements of the English medium that one cannot deny. The English medium schools were open to all ethnic groups and led to different ethnic groups having mutual respect for each other as persons rather than as members of particular communal groups (Bakri Musa, 2003). Close friendships were established, overriding racial barriers. What the groups had in common was a mutually shared worldview that was Western in orientation. Chinese from English medium schools, for example, had more in common with Malays and Indians from English medium school than they had with Chinese graduating from Chinese medium schools (Bakri Musa, 2003). Together, the English medium sectors for ethnic groups formed the elite of Malaysian society (Bakri Musa, 2003).

In order to realise the idea of Malaysia as a multicultural society, we need to find an answer to how to bring together the different races in Malaysia, and to what should be a fundamental and common educational policy, accepted by everybody.

Thus, the topic of unified education will be addressed in considering the school education system, starting with pre-school.

2.5.1 Pre-school

In Malaysia, pre-school education system is non-formal. Pre-school education is not part of the formal education system and is provided for children aged 4-6 by several government agencies. All pre-school centres are registered with the Ministry of Education. Pre-school education is mostly conducted in urban areas by the private sector and various government agencies. Therefore, the care of pre-school aged children comes under the responsibility of a large number of government departments and social agencies such as the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, Ministry of Rural Development; and the several state departments (Malaysia, 2008). There are a few government and non-government agencies involved in running pre-school centres in Malaysia:

1. Pre-school at National Primary School, Ministry of Education
2. *TADIKA KEMAS*, Community Development Division (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (KEMAS), Ministry of Rural Development
3. PERPADUAN Pre-school (National Unity Pre-school), Department of National Unity and Integration, Malaysia, (Ministry of National Unity and Social Development) and
4. Private Pre-schools run by the private sector, or Non-Government Organisations.

The government operated 81.6% of the pre-school programs in 1995. Of these, 61.8% were operated by the Community Development Division of the Ministry of Rural Development, 9.5% by the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, and 10.3% by the Ministry of Education. The other 18.4% were operated by the private sector. Public pre-school programmes are free to parents and are fully funded by the government. Private programmes charge fees (Malaysia, 2008).

The organisation and aims of the pre-schools are different from each other. The realisation of the importance of building up children's national identity and

personality for the future Malaysian nation has led to the government enforcing pre-school centres to implement the National Pre-school Curriculum.

The Ministry of Education of Malaysia has succeeded in completing a National Pre-school Curriculum which is based on the *Rukun Negara* (the principles which guide and govern Malaysia), the Philosophy of National Education, and the Principles of Early Childhood. The National Pre-school Curriculum, which has a minimum syllabus, has become the standardised reference which all the pre-schools are required to implement (Malaysia, 2001). The Education Act 1996 gave a most significant change to pre-school education as part of the national education system. This Act emphasises pre-school education as giving chances to children aged 4-6 years old.

To make early childhood education more effective, a universal curriculum structure that can fulfil children's needs is required. The National Pre-school Curriculum includes all the appropriate aspects, which are: Communication and Language development; Cognitive Development; morality; Socio-emotional development; Physical development; and Creativity and Aesthetics. This curriculum aims to nurture an holistic and integrated potential such as cognitive development and creativity. These nurturing values are based on religion and morals, and enhance physical and emotional stability as a preparation for community, toward formal education at primary school level.

Pre-school education is not compulsory for all children. Parents are encouraged to send their children to a pre-school, either private pre-school or government agency pre-school. The pre-school run by the government agency normally has a subsidy from the government and parents pay only a small amount of money. Attendance in a pre-school programme is not universal and generally only affluent families can afford to send their children to private, for-profit pre-schools. The private pre-schools are divided into a few categories:

1. Religious pre-schools run by the opposition political party i.e. PASTI;
2. International Networking, i.e. Montessori Syllabus or expatriate pre-school inclusive from primary until tertiary;

3. Ethnically-based pre-school, i.e. Chinese or Indian, run by individuals emphasising their mother tongue, and
4. Private pre-schools which have their own niche as their brand likes using English as a medium.

These pre-schools are expensive because parents pay running costs, but they demand a satisfactory outcome.

The medium of instruction is Malay for government pre-schools, Mandarin and simplified Chinese characters writing for *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* (SJKC) or private pre-school, and Tamil for pre-school run by *Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil* (SJKT). Malay and English are compulsory subjects in all pre-schools. The National Pre-school Curriculum emphasises language and communication in order to increase children's language, literacy and social skills, and to develop self-confidence in facing global challenges. Enjoyable learning at the level of pre-school education is a meaningful experience for children in early school (Malaysia, 2001). An effective school experience gives children an advantage and positive attitude to move to the next step towards formal academic school at primary level.

The existence of vernacular schools has implications of concern that children are not interacting well enough with other races. Instead of sharing common experiences, there is polarisation of the races and no shared experience, because there are Chinese schools and Tamil schools as well as *Sekolah Kebangsaan* (SK) or National Primary School. *Sekolah Kebangsaan* (SK) today is not what was envisaged long ago as a place for children to learn and to grow up together.

In response to this concern, Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said that the seating arrangements of students, especially in primary schools, would be planned to allow for maximum interaction among the races. He also stated that the Education Department is looking at introducing National Integration as a subject in the school syllabus (NST, 6 October 2004).

2.5.2 PERPADUAN Pre-school (National Unity Pre-school)

PERPADUAN Pre-school was introduced by the Department of National Unity in 1976. The dawn of a new era for national unity and integration in this country started on 27 March 2004, when the Department of National Unity was renamed Department of National Unity and Integration, Malaysia (*Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional or JPNIN*) and placed under the Prime Minister's Department. This move repositioned the significance and importance of JPNIN in promoting national unity and integration in the country. The PERPADUAN Pre-school programme is mainly structured for children from all ethnic groups aged 4-6 years. PERPADUAN Pre-schools were set up in housing estates and suburban areas with multi-ethnic communities and neighbourhoods. The teachers and their assistants are trained in a diversified approach to provide stimulating activities through a context based on the National Pre-school Curriculum. The number of participants in this programme has increased every year, with 1 446 centres and 37 804 children in 2007. The main objective of the programme is to nurture children with Malaysian values and build up understandings of norms and cross-cultural customs. The ratio of adults to children is 1: 8.

Fully-trained teachers who have completed a training course are in charge of the nursery schools and classes. Along with the teacher, each class has one or two nursery assistants, usually qualified under the JPNIN. PERPADUAN Pre-schools have an international reputation for excellence and have been an influential model in the development of pre-schools which are formatted for national unity and free of charge. Their philosophy is distinctive and is based on the creation of a well-endowed, carefully planned environment in urban and suburban areas where each child is given knowledge of each of the ethnicities.

The general objectives of PERPADUAN Pre-schools are:

- To nurture and foster the spirit of harmony, neighbourliness, unity and nationality among children from different races.
- To inculcate positive spiritual and moral values in the children's everyday lives, thus creating perfect personalities and characters to become good and valuable family members.

- To encourage the comprehensive, integrated and balanced development of children aged 5 and 6 years via informal learning processes – “learning through play”.
- To strengthen relations and cultivate unity among parents and the community on the whole, through the PERPADUAN Pre-school Coordinating Committee and co-curriculum activities (Malaysia, 2008).

The PERPADUAN Pre-school goal is not only to cultivate children's potential in all aspects of development, teach mastery of basic skills, and foster positive attitudes as preparation for entry into school, as stated in the National Pre-school Curriculum, but also to develop children's personal qualities, character and positive self-concept to become patriotic citizens. For example, in this case the children were exposed to a daily routine like *Rukun Negara* (Malaysia Principle) and *Negaraku* (Malaysian National Anthem). The priority of PERPADUAN Pre-school is to promote positive feeling among children, and a feeling of unity, acceptance and tolerance among children from different ethnic backgrounds. The government agency under the Department of National Unity and Integration has a big responsibility to ensure national integration among Malaysians. According to Majzub (2006):

Being very aware of the multi-racial nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, religion and language, the PERPADUAN Pre-school aspires to unite the three major ethnic groups from the early childhood stage. In order to ensure the national integration that agency has setting up the PERPADUAN Pre-schools popularly known as *TABIKA PERPADUAN NEGARA*, to inculcate integration values and ideals. The belief is that social cognition, social skills and respect for other races begin at a tender young age before formal schooling occurs (p.88).

At the same time PERPADUAN Pre-school mixes children from different ethnic backgrounds so they have the opportunity to understand and develop the social values of the three ethnic groups and the practices of commonality based on Malaysian culture. These are the criteria of PERPADUAN Pre-school, taken from the circulation letter from the Department of National Unity and Integration:

1. Classes can be opened in the Neighbourhood area (*Kawasan Rukun Tetangga*) only.
2. Children to be aged 4 to 6 years.
3. Recruitment of not less than 20 and not more than 35 children, if possible from multi-ethnic backgrounds
4. Suitable premises to serve as Class Tabika Unity must be available.

5. Regions that have a *TABIKA (Pre-school)* class within 3 km are not eligible unless circumstances / an urgent need require (J. Malaysia, 1 July 2007).

The policy of the PERPADUAN Pre-school is to ensure as far as possible the composition of the pre-school entrants, consists of a mix of Chinese, Malays and Indians, who form the three dominant ethnic groups in Malaysia. This is the requirement for opening a pre-school as stated in the circular letter, unless circumstances or urgent need require otherwise. At the same time, the PERPADUAN Pre-school also “caters to the needs of those from the lower income strata at the suburbs or fringes of the city” (Majzub, 2006). PERPADUAN Pre-school can play an important role as pre-school education is significant for early child development.

2.5.3 Primary and Secondary school

There are two main types of public primary schools in Malaysia: national (*Sekolah Kebangsaan* in Malay, abbreviated as SK) and national-type (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan*, abbreviated as SJK). National-type schools are further divided into Chinese national-type schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* (SJKC) and Tamil national-type schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Tamil* (SJKT). National primary education emerged from consensus among the various ethnic communities and is designed to promote national unity,

The education policy ... with the intention of making Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of peoples other than Malays living in the country (Education Ordinance 1957, S.3).

The medium of instruction is Malay for SK, Mandarin and simplified Chinese Character writing for SJKC, and Tamil for SJKT. Malay and English are compulsory subjects in all schools. All schools use the same syllabus for non-language subjects regardless of the medium of instruction.

Nowadays the Malaysian government’s policies on multicultural education can be seen in formal education in Malaysia. The major goals of the national education policy and primary schools in Malaysia is to “inculcate and nurture national consciousness through fostering common ideals, values, aspiration and

loyalties in order to mould national unity and national identity in a multi-ethnic society” (Malaysia 1990, p.5).

The Cabinet Committee Report 1979 formulated the National Philosophy of Education (NPE) which is a government educational policy focusing on developing the potential of individuals in an holistic and integrated manner, so they become *bangsa Malaya* (literally, Malaysia nation) who in the future are able to contribute to family, society and the nation at large.

The division of public education at the primary level into national and national-type schools has been criticised for allegedly creating racial polarisation at an early age, due to said schools being Malay-dominated and, especially in recent years, having an overwhelmingly Muslim atmosphere (Yusop, 2005). This is referred to in the opposition political agenda to raise a racial issue. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE) 5,761 schools (75.8%) were national schools (SK) compared to the whole population of primary schools including the national type Chinese schools (SJKC) and the national type Tamil school (SJKT). Figures from Ministry of Education (MOE) show that Chinese students’ enrolment is only 6% in national school and 45% for the Indian students. Student enrolments in term of location, type of schools and races show that in the national schools (SK), the percentage of the *Bumiputera* was almost the same in rural and urban areas, 50.2% for urban and 49.8% for rural areas. For the national-type such as SJK Chinese and SJK Tamil, percentages for *non-Bumiputera* were higher in urban areas, 75.6% and 59.3% respectively.

In order to strengthen the national primary schools to become the school for Malaysians to promote national unity, MOE introduced Language of Communication programmes in national schools, Mandarin as Language of Communication (MLC) as a subject to 14 289 pupils in 153 national schools and Tamil as a language of Communication (TLC) to 6 973 pupils in 76 national schools (Malaysia 2006a, p.80). In future, the real challenges for MOE is to expand Mandarin and Tamil language subjects in national primary schools, especially in areas where the population is multiracial and there is high demand for these mother tongue languages.

2.5.4 Student Integration for Unity Plan (*Rancangan Integrasi Murid Untuk Perpaduan-RIMUP*)

On July 12th 2005, the Prime Minister launched the Student Integration for Unity Plan (RIMUP38) at the primary level, emphasising integration programmes through co-curricular activities, particularly in sports among neighbouring schools, and at the district level on an annual basis. The philosophy behind RIMUP is to create a safe space for the exchange and sharing of ideas, facilities, equipment, expertise and personnel between the different school communities, including teachers and parents.

The RIMUP programme groups together the two main vernacular streams in the country, the SJK Chinese and SJK Tamil schools, with national schools (SK). This is for schools that are located near each other. Each group of schools under the RIMUP program will then conduct joint co-curricular and academic-related activities. For a start, three primary schools of mainly one ethnic group students were involved in the pilot programme in 2005; two from national-type schools, the SJK Chinese Chung Hua and SJK Tamil Cairo estate, and one from the national school, the SK Mantin. In relation to that, the New Straits Times on Sunday, 7th August 2005 reported that RIMUP was receiving a “hot reception”, with 150 vernacular and national schools expected to participate by the year’s end. According to Abdul Razak Ahmad (2005), if the RIMUP program is successful in fostering integration among the three main ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese and Indian) at the school level, the impact could be enormous, considering the fact that there are 5 756 national primary schools (predominantly Malay), 1287 Chinese primary schools, and 525 Tamil primary schools spread nationwide with a combined enrolment of 3 045 975 pupils. With mounting concern that Malaysians of different races are not mixing enough, the report says, the RIMUP program offers tangible benefits (Abdul Razak & Schier, 2005). The hope is that if children mix and get to know each other’s cultures, future generations of Malaysians will be able to understand each other better. This effort is in line with the PERPADUAN Pre-school goal, curriculum and planning established more than three decades ago. The PERPADUAN Pre-school aims to expose children to multiple cultural identities, thus encouraging children to understand other’s cultures. Therefore, enhancing and expanding PERPADUAN Pre-school is important

for future generations of Malaysians and is a major strategy for the government to achieve its main target.

2.6 Summary of Chapter 2

Malaysia is a culturally diverse and complex society. There are three distinct cultural groups: Malay; Chinese; and Indian. This is accepted and officially recognised both by the government and society. However, there is a strong sense of tension and conflict between them. These conflicts are predictable because each of these cultural groups is inclined to identify with and treasure its own language, culture and religion. This is a challenge for the government of Malaysia to promote national unity and integration in the country through education from pre-school level. The government has a diversified program for school communities, including teachers and parents, in order to inculcate good social behaviour, such as the spirit of teamwork and helping each other, and to create a harmonious environment among children from different ethnic backgrounds. The next chapter is the literature review. The literature is divided into the following sections: children's social behaviour; parental cultural capital; social capital; parenting style; ethnicity and gender. Past research is discussed thoroughly in these sections to identify the factors that affect the social behaviour of children from different ethnic backgrounds.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to understand whether Malay pre-school education is culturally responsive to and inclusive for all cultures present in the setting by investigating positive and constructive parent-child relationships across the three cultures. Therefore, a review of previous researches related to the aim of this study, such as children's social behaviour and parental and pre-school norms and values, is important. The literature review in this chapter examines previous researches on the effect of parents' cultural capital of different ethnic backgrounds on parenting practice and the socialisation of children. Differences and similarities of parental and pre-school norms and values are discussed in order to understand the effect of these factors on children's behaviour.

3.2 Children's Social Behaviour

Social behaviour among children occurs whenever two or more children interact in cooperation or competition (Johnston & House, 2009, p. 211), such as friendliness, cooperativeness, independence (Baumrind, 1978, p. 329); or any verbal or nonverbal behaviour by a target child directed toward an individual or group (Leiter, 1977, p. 1290) which is related to a child's initiation and response. According to the statements above, I have concluded that the domain of social behaviour includes prosocial behaviour (e.g. being caring and helpful), friendliness, sociability, cooperativeness, and respect. These social behaviours are expected to increase as a result of the quality of interactions with others (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989). For example, longitudinal assessments in California, United States of a group of 55 children seen at intervals between 1 and 9 years of age indicated that the quality of interactions with others as toddlers were more prosocial in pre-school settings and led to less withdrawn behaviour as 9 year olds (Howes & Phillipsen, 1998).

There are three concepts needed to be understood in term of peer relations: interactions, relationships, and friendships. An interaction refers to a social exchange of some duration between two individuals, and a relationship refers to the meanings, expectations, and emotions that derive from a succession of interactions between two individuals known to each other (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006, p. 576). During the pre-school years children increase in: cooperation with others; social competences in dealing with their peers (Hay, Payne, & Chadwick, 2004); cooperative interaction (Warneken, Chen, & Tomasello, 2006) and prosocial behaviour (helpfulness, sharing and empathy) towards others (Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006). The interactions of children vary in form and function in response to social situations, such as the partner's characteristics. For example, longer relationships are influenced by the history of interactions in earlier relationships (Rubin, et al., 2006). The degree of closeness of a relationship is determined by such qualities as the frequency and strength of influence, the diversity of influence across different behaviours, and the length of time the relationship has endured (Rubin, et al., 2006, p. 576). As children in pre-school years spend more time in groups, their experience comes to be organised with respect to particular friendships, and gender-related preferences (Hay, et al., 2004). Social skills may facilitate consolidation of peer relationships in the pre-school years.

The final concept related to social behaviour in this study is friendship. Friendship is a voluntary and reciprocal relationship between two people affirmed by both. The mutuality of affection, companionship and interest is key to the quality of the friendship, and this distinguishes friendship from acceptance by a group, or popularity, which is a one-way construct (Dunn, 2004, p. 2). According to Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (2006) there are four aspects to what constitutes friendship. Firstly, a reciprocal relationship must be affirmed or recognised by both parties. Secondly, reciprocity of affection represents an essential, though not necessarily exclusive, tie that binds friends together. Thirdly, friendships are voluntary, not obligatory or prescribed. A final point is that relationships must be understood according to their place in the network of other relationships (Rubin, et al., 2006, p. 578).

These concepts are important in the study of social interaction among cross-ethnic groups. Thus, in order to explore friendships, ecological environments need to be identified, because children's friendships are influenced by the relationships they have at home with parents and siblings. A major developmental outcome of social behaviour in peer interactions is children's success in developing and maintaining relationships with peers. The keys of success with peer relationships include becoming integrated into social networks and establishing friendship with others. The relationship derives primarily from mutual affection; each partner views the other partner, and the relationship itself, as pleasant, fun, and likeable (Rubin, Fredstrom, & Bowker, 2008, p. 1086). Instead of only understanding peer interaction itself, this study puts more emphasis on understanding the environmental factors influencing children's social behaviour in multi-ethnic pre-school.

Researchers have assumed that children younger than six or seven years of age have a very limited ability to relate to other children in an intimate way and difficulty in maintaining friendship, although some childhood friendships last considerably longer (Dunn, 1993; Howes, 1983; Howes & Phillipsen, 1998). However, some investigators have argued that children can have friends by or before the age of two (Howes & Phillipsen, 1998). According to Hay, Payne, & Chadwick (2004) children's relationships with peers begin in the first years of life, with stable individual differences and preferences for particular peers emerging by three years of age. Very young children seem to select and prefer some children over others, touching them, and engaging in positive interaction with them more than they do with other peers (Eisenberg, et al., 2006; Howes, 1983). However, another study of pre-school children reported that more than one half of pre-school-age children had reciprocated friendships, and more than two-thirds of these friendships were stable over a 6-month period (Hayes, Gershman, & Bolin, 1980).

Observational research has shown that child's interaction with their friends differs from that with children who are not their friends in several ways. For instance, children spend more time in interacting with their friends (Hartup, 1983) and their behaviour in conflict differs; they are more likely to attempt conciliation with friends, although they may actually quarrel more with them than with non-

friends (Eisenberg, et al., 2006; Hartup, Laurensen, Stewart, & Eastenson, 1988). Pre-school children are also more likely to resolve conflicts in controlled ways, such as by negotiating, asserting themselves nonaggressively, acquiescing, or simply ceasing the activity that is causing the conflict (Eisenberg, et al., 2006; Hartup, et al., 1988). Friends resolve conflicts in ways that result in equal outcomes rather than in one child winning and another losing. Thus, friends are more likely to continue their interactions and to maintain positive regard for one another (Eisenberg, et al., 2006; Rubin, et al., 2006). The picture of social interaction is more complicated when it involves young children from different ethnic backgrounds, including how they resolve conflicts.

Researchers have suggested that peer relationships are particularly important in the development of a child's sense of self, interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and self-regulation during pre-school (Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004). Children's social behaviours such as helping, caring, and sharing have repeatedly been shown to be associated with classroom environments encouraging prosocial behaviour (Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Lapp, 2002; Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004), which may work by exposing children to competent peers who can model helping and caring behaviours (Bandura, 1977; Criss, et al., 2002). Ladd and Burgess (2001) found that those showing prosocial behaviour, e.g. children who play cooperatively, were more likely to be accepted by peers. Studies concerning children's peer relationships, sociability and prosocial-cooperative behaviour account for the majority of the correlates and predictors of peer acceptance (Chen, Li, Li, Li, & Liu, 2000). Among these different aspects or dimensions, sociable and prosocial behaviour functions have received particular attention in the area of social development.

Numerous studies have examined children's prosocial behaviour in pre-school in Malaysia. Majzub & Abdullah (2000) investigated the effectiveness of a social cognitive intervention program that was adapted from the "Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving Program" (ICPS). The sample of the study included 141 pre-school children from five English medium pre-schools in Penang, Malaysia. The experimental group consisted of 78 pre-schoolers and the control group consisted of 63 pre-schoolers. Research has found that the experimental group attained higher

scores in the prosocial behaviour of pre-schoolers. They suggest that behaviour can be modified by focusing on thinking processes rather than on behaviour itself. This finding implies a necessity to enhance social skills at home and need to integrate in the school curriculum.

Furthermore, Jelas and Yunus (1993) discussed the findings of a survey of the development of five- and six-year-old pre-school children as assessed by their class teachers. A Child Development Rating Scale (CDRS) was developed based on five aspects of development: language, early learning, behaviour, social interaction and general development. A development profile of a total of 3,012 six-year-olds and 2,101 five-year-olds was collected and the frequency based on a five-point scale was tabulated on each aspect of development. The implication of the findings is that the behaviour of five- and six-year-old children in pre-school shows some development problems including antisocial and prosocial behaviour. However, investigations have not devoted a specific focus on some aspects of behaviour from the parents' perspective and as such this study will investigate children's social behaviour from three different ethnic backgrounds.

3.3 Culturally Responsive Pre-school

Malaysia is culturally diverse and has a complex society with three distinct major cultural groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian (Refer to Section 2.2: A brief look at multicultural Malaysia). This is a big challenge for the government to promote social cohesion and integration because each of these cultural groups is inclined to identify with its own culture. A cultural group can be described as people who share a sense of identity, customs, and language. People belonging to a unique ethnic group may share a similar culture (Han & Thomas, 2010). The government of Malaysia has a diversified programme for pre-school to respond to cultural groups. A lack of cultural responsiveness may lead to significant misunderstandings resulting in consequences such as ineffective support for social development (Kemple, 2004) and possible social conflict. There are many benefits in being culturally responsive, such as good relationships with peers, fulfilment, and motivation for social behaviour.

According to Kostelnik, Whiren, Soderman, Stein, & Gregory (2002), developing culturally responsive sensitivity includes acquiring knowledge, respect, and ability to interact effectively with people of varying ethnic or racial backgrounds, and further recognising unfair treatment towards them. Being culturally responsive is the ability to learn from and relate respectfully with people of your own culture as well as other cultures. Culturally responsive pre-school education refers to the curriculum, teaching and learning, and the activities of pre-schools to reflect cultural background. The activities of pre-schools settings reflect an awareness of, and sensitivity to, the lifestyle and cultural background of the children and their family (Kostelnik, et al., 2002). A culturally responsive curriculum is designed to recognise and accept the wide range of cultural differences that exists in every classroom. Whether in a large, multi-ethnic urban setting or in a small, rural homogeneous classroom, students come to school with an array of life experiences which has been lived within the context of their unique cultural setting (Purnell, Ali, Begum, & Carter, 2007, p. 420). Culturally responsive teaching employs a pedagogy which “accommodates the dynamic mix of race, ethnicity, class, gender, region, religion, and family that contribute to every student’s cultural identity” (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 17). Children feel emotionally secure when they find themselves, and those they love, positively represented in curriculum materials.

Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively (Gay, 2002, p. 112). It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive teachers create learning environments that respectively reflect each child’s home culture, while inviting children to accept and explore cultures which are unfamiliar to them. By practising content integration and including high quality multicultural literacy materials as part of regular classroom activities, teachers model interest in, and acceptance of, difference (Purnell, et al., 2007). It is crucial to think

about how to instruct children in a multicultural classroom as different behaviours may be perceived as socially competent in diverse cultural contexts.

Culturally responsive teaching is often considered as a pedagogical paradigm that enables teachers to utilise children's cultural strengths in their curriculum and instruction (Gay, 2000). In order to become a culturally effective and responsive teacher, one must (a) be aware of his/her own biases and assumptions about human behaviour; (b) acquire knowledge of the particular group of children with whom they are working; and (c) be able to use culturally appropriate strategies in working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds (Han & Thomas, 2010, p. 472). A culturally responsive pre-school curriculum content is inclusive, meaning it reflects the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of society. There should be pre-school programmes and practices drawn from a child's knowledge, culture, and language which are responsive to the needs of individuals and their families, which are often based on their cultural backgrounds. This helps families and communities to support the children's social behaviour and academic success.

According to Chen, Wang & DeSouza (2006) in the collective cultures which include different ethnic groups, individual need to demonstrate self-control may be highly appreciated or valued, because it may facilitate harmony and cohesiveness in the group. For example, to maintain interaction in a collective culture with three different ethnic groups, individuals need to demonstrate self-control and restrain personal desires in an effort to address the needs and interests of others in order to maintain interpersonal and multi-ethnic harmony. In the Malaysian context, according to Majzub (2006) being very aware of the multi-racial nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, religion and language, PERPADUAN Pre-school aspires to unite the three major ethnic groups from the early childhood stage. She believes that cultural responsiveness such as social cognition, social skills and respect for other races begin at a tender age before formal schooling occurs. Therefore, in developing and designing a pre-school curriculum, the government of Malaysia has emphasised the cultural values of the three ethnic groups in order to instil pre-school children's awareness of multiculturalism engendering social cohesion.

3.3.1 Interaction between Cross-ethnic Groups in Multi-ethnic Pre-school

There is little consensus about the way the terms ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ should be defined. ‘Race’ is used to refer to differences in descent for which there are physical cues, such as skin colour and facial features. ‘Ethnicity’ is used to refer to differences in descent for which the primary cues are cultural (Robinson, 1998, p. 76). Ethnicity reflects a group’s common history, nationality, geography, language, and culture (Graham, Taylor, & Ho, 2009, p. 395). Early observations of racial cues (colour, hair, facial features, etc.) start well before the age of three. Children recognise racial differences between the ages of three and five years old. The ability to recognise racial differences develops rapidly over the period from three to six years, the improvement being most marked in the fourth year (Milner, 1975; 1983, p. 108). However, other researchers found children tend to identify themselves according to their ethnic group at about at age seven to ten, and at approximately age ten to eleven begin to understand that their ethnicity is a constant, unchanging feature of themselves. Children’s ethnic identity is viewed as having five components (Bernal, Knight, Ocampo, Garza, & Cota, 1993, p. 106): ethnic knowledge; ethnic self-identification; ethnic constancy; ethnic-role behaviours; and ethnic feeling and preferences. By the early school years, ethnic minority children know the common characteristics of their ethnic group, start to have ideas about members of the group, and may have begun to form ethnically-based preferences regarding foods, traditional holiday activities, language use, and the like (Ocampo, Bernal, & Knight, 1993). Pre-school children do not really understand the significance of being a member of an ethnic group, although they may be able to label themselves as “Chinese”, “Indian”, “Malay” or the like.

According to Milner (1975) a child learns the concepts of race and ethnicity and matches them to people in the same way as his parents do. Children express their attitudes in their behaviour, and these tend to be confirmed, both by the act of expressing and by the reactions they elicit from other children. This is a spiral process which may result in all three elements of racial attitudes - the ‘cognitive’ or information aspect, the ‘affective’ aspect or feelings, and the behavioural aspect -

becoming firmly established, as each element ‘tows’ the others (Milner, 1975, p. 213). This is supported by Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001), that racial and ethnic thinking is, at least in part, prefabricated for children, and it makes as much sense for them to use it in their daily interactions as it does for adults (p.188). Racial concepts are quite accessible and easily worked into daily interaction among pre-schoolers of all backgrounds (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001, p. 194). Most researchers agree that the majority of children have a solid conception of racial and ethnic distinctions by the time they are about six. Van Ausdale & Feagin (2001), with findings from eleven months of observation of children, show children as young as three have constant, well-defined, and negative biases toward ethnic groups, because in wider exposure children, through social interaction, begin to actively construct racial groups, with complex racial identities, and racial relations with each other. This means children are exposed to racial and ethnic ideas through immersion in observation of the larger social world.

Multi-ethnic pre-school refers to “pre-school that includes children of different ethnic groups, which is the policy of the pre-school itself to ensure the composition of the pre-school entrants consist of mix of Malays, Chinese, Indian and others. The aim of the multi-ethnic pre-school is to unite three dominant ethnic groups of Malaysian in order to ensure national integration” (Majzub, 2006, p. 87). Research shows interracial contact between different ethnic groups improves intergroup attitudes. According to Feddes, Noack, & Rutland (2009) multi-ethnic schools and the tolerant nature of such schools influence positive interethnic friendships. Longitudinal results show that cross-ethnic friendships positively affected children’s intergroup attitudes. Longitudinal, direct and extended cross-ethnic friendship effects on out-group evaluations among German (majority status, N = 76) and Turkish (minority status, N= 73) children (age 7-11 years) in ethnically heterogeneous elementary schools were examined at the beginning and end of the school year. The findings demonstrated that direct cross-ethnic friendship is more effective in changing children’s intergroup attitudes compared to extended cross-ethnic friendship. However, this was evident among ethnic majority but not ethnic minority status children.

Aboud, Mendelson, & Purdy (2003) found intergroup contact and friendship are keystones to the reduction of prejudice. Based on various indices of peer relations (interactive companions, mutual friendships, and the stability and perceived qualities of mutual friends) for elementary school students who differed in grade, gender, and racial background, they explored whether racial attitudes were associated with befriending or avoiding classmates. Their findings show cross-race mutual friendships declined with grade and among fifth-graders were less likely to show 6-month stability than same-race friendships. Finally, racial prejudice was most strongly related to the number of excluded classmates, while children with less biased attitudes had more cross-race interactive companions and more positive perceptions of their friends. Therefore, friendships may be presumed to be one mechanism for the maintenance of sustained contact and reduce prejudice.

Multi-ethnic schools increase the opportunity for cross-race friendships. Aboud and Levy (2000) have suggested that ethnic friendships may be optimal dyads that provide certain levels of intimate exchange, cooperation between friends from different ethnic backgrounds; and may encourage the development of awareness of or sensitivity to other ethnicities. These evidently are vital to the establishment and maintenance of ethnic friendships in the context of mutual ethnic acceptance and tolerance. Research examined same and cross-race friendships of blacks and whites in racial composition; as the proportion of minority group (white or black) students increased in a classroom, majority group students were more likely to befriend them (Hallinan & Teixeira, 1987). However, only a few of those contact studies actually measured interracial friendships, and even fewer were carried out with children. Cross-ethnic friendships are related to improved intergroup attitudes, but there is indeed a need for different contexts and a different approach such as longitudinal study.

According to Kawabata & Crick (2008), children who formed cross-ethnic friendships were more likely to be viewed by teachers as relationally inclusive and possessing leadership skills. The frequency and correlates of cross-racial/ethnic friendships were examined in a sample consisting of 509 (188 African American, 135 European American, 106 Asian American, and 80 Latino) children in 4th grade

from 39 classrooms in several public elementary schools in United States. The result showed that children of all ethnicities did have cross-ethnic and same ethnic friendships; however, the number of cross-ethnic friendships differed across ethnicities. For instance, European-American children displayed a higher frequency of cross-ethnic friendships than African-American children. Moreover, Latino children displayed a lower frequency of these friendships, compared with the average of all other groups. One possibility is that African-American and Latino children, on average, tend to be more family- or community-oriented (DuBois & Hirsch, 1990). Children from different cultures may make friends with peers outside school, such as in the neighbourhood or with relatives (Kawabata & Crick, 2008).

The multi-ethnic pre-school nurtures a spirit of harmony, neighbourliness, unity, and nationality among children from different races. As stated in the circulation letter from the Department of National Unity and Integration, one of the criteria of Multi-ethnic (PERPADUAN Pre-school) is the recruitment of not less than 20 children, if possible, from multi-ethnic backgrounds. This is so they have the opportunity to understand and develop the social values of the three ethnic groups and the practices of commonality based on Malaysian culture. In order to understand the impact of ethnicity on children's behaviour and cross-ethnic relationships, I reviewed the literature in line with this study. The study of cross-ethnic relationships in a multi-ethnic pre-school is important for the improvement of intergroup relations.

The behavioural styles of children belonging to different racial and ethnic groups may influence not only interactions but also peer preferences and peer relationships. Young children adopt patterns of behaviour, along with social rules and values, from their families and communities (Ramsey, 1995). This is supported by Feddes, Noack, & Rutland (2009), who found that direct and extended contact promoted more positive social norms regarding cross-ethnic friendships, which then resulted in improved out-group attitudes among majority children. It appears that social norms about cross-ethnic friendships are an important mediator of the friendship attitude relationship among majority children. Their study focused on *injunctive* norms, children's perceptions of whether other German and Turkish children think it is normal to have an out-group friend. It is possible that cross-

racial/ethnic friendships, whereby the child builds up advanced social competence and prosocial behaviour, are particularly beneficial (Aboud & Levy, 2000). Reciprocated cross-ethnic friendships have also been found to promote prosocial behaviour. However, Kawabata & Crick (2008) argued that cross-ethnic friendships are uncommon and relatively fragile. The literature suggests that ethnicity is one of the major divides in social interactions.

Corsaro (1994) found the differences in interaction between groups is related to language use. Italian pre-school children were distinguished by participation in intense and involved debates, 'discussione', black children in the USA by verbal jousting, and white children in the USA by use of language to regulate their partners' behaviour. He also found that these language styles were central to the formation and maintenance of peer relationships within each group. The potential for misunderstanding in inter-group interactions and the consequences this might have for relationships seem obvious. The findings suggest that ethnic difference may influence the quality of inter-group interaction only when one of the peers has limited proficiency in the shared language. The quality of both play and speech during interaction between a target child from the majority and two minority group peers depended on the peers' proficiency in the shared language (Robinson, 1998). Several researchers have argued that what appears to be ethnic or racial bias in the quantity of interactions may really be a bias in favour of peers whose language is similar to one's own. This proposition has not been examined with respect to quality of interaction and how children relate to each other that what this study will explore.

Trommsdorff, Friedlmeier and Meyer (2007) studied prosocial behaviour among Malaysia pre-school children. The results from their comparative study between Western culture, Germany and Israel, and two South-East Asian cultures, Indonesia and Malaysia, showed sympathy and prosocial behaviour were significantly positively correlated in the four cultures. German and Israeli children displayed more prosocial behaviour as compared to Indonesian and Malaysian children in the experimental situation. The difference could be due to less ability and experience to help, and less self-efficacy to help effectively. The difference could be the different context of subject culture: western children are socialized in a context

where asymmetric hierarchical relations are less pronounced and independence, self-reliance, self-efficacy, and taking initiative are valued. Children initiate prosocial behaviour when they perceive another person in need, regardless of the person's familiarity and status (as an adult). In contrast, in a culture which promotes interdependence and respect for hierarchical relations, children may refrain from initiating prosocial behaviour, especially when face-saving values are implied (Trommsdorff, Friedlmeier, & Mayer, 2007). Face-saving behaviour is more important in social- as compared to individual-oriented cultures (Triandis, et al., 1988). The low amount of prosocial behaviour of Malaysian children does not necessarily apply to all ethnic groups. Other studies have reported high rates of prosocial behaviour with reference to family duties for children from social-oriented countries.

There needs to be more research on the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia to investigate domain-specific contexts of prosocial behaviour and observe whether the reverse effect can be found under specific conditions. These studies should focus on sequential analyses in order to understand how children's social behaviour is guided specifically by parents' cultural norms and values.

Historically, most studies of social behaviour have been of Western children or middle-class European-American families. The majority of research into social behaviour is derived from primarily Western families. Researchers indicate that there is still limited information comparing ethnic groups and cultural differences and prior understanding of parental cultural capital in collective communities. There is a need to investigate whether closer contact between members of different ethnic groups promotes a positive racial attitude. Research into cross-ethnic relationships needs to enhance, and allow space to understand, not only the quantity of interaction but the development of interaction to establish relationships.

There has been little research on the qualitative differences between friendships with peers from the same and other ethnic groups. However, these friendships may serve different functions and be associated with different levels of interpersonal acceptance.

There is very little research on the influence race and ethnicity exert on different aspects of friendships between children. Firstly, we know little about whether race and ethnicity affect some facets (e.g. intimacy, competition) more than others, or influence some in different ways to others. Secondly, the interrelationships between developmental changes in children's understanding of ethnicity and race and children's inter-racial and inter-ethnic friendships are not understood. Thirdly, there has been little attention paid to whether ethnicity influences changes within friendships, despite evidence that the factors that influence the initiation of relationships may differ from those that maintain them and how ethnicity affect friendship

3.3.2 Gender and Peer Interaction

In order to understand gender interaction at pre-school, it is important to look at children's play. For example, at age five and six years, boys and girls begin to play separately when they are in group situations because of more compatible styles of play (e.g. boys tend towards aggressive pretend play, such as rough-and-tumble, while girls' pretend play often involves family roles such as mother-child or teacher-pupil). It is less fun to play with children of the opposite sex, because these differences in styles of interaction (Dunn, 2004, p. 103) make smooth coordination difficult. The boys are less interested in games initiated by girls because there are differences between boys and girls in the ways that they regulate their emotions (e.g. anger, sadness and love). Research found differences in activities and interests between boys and girls in the playground (for example, boys' football, involving large groups of boys, while girls were talking together, involving smaller groups of girls). Another difference between boys and girls is the way they handle conflict, and their way of talking (i.e. boys are involved in dominance issues within a group of children). Boys engage in play fights and direct physical competition from an early age in order to establish a dominance hierarchy of familiar peers that is established in the early years. Some form of fighting seems to be an essential part of the interaction between young children (Pellegrini, 1988; Pellegrini & Perlmutter, 1989). Meanwhile, a longitudinal study of cross-gender friendships found that children,

especially boys, were particularly well-matched in terms of their social skills. They considered being friends with others who could share their favourite games with ease or comfort, or were particularly interesting as a partner (Howes & Phillipsen, 1992). Thus, reciprocal roles and cooperative play are commonly found in groups of boys who share their favourite games.

During pre-school, the two sexes engage in such different activities that they are almost like two separate cultures: girls play more frequently with dolls, tea and kitchen sets, and dressing-up, whereas boys engage in fantasy play involving action heroes, aggression, and themes of danger (Dunn & Hughes, 2001; Maccoby, 1998). For example, an analysis of the stories told by pre-school children revealed that most girls' stories involved themes of family relationships with virtually no aggression or violence; the reverse was true for boys. Consistent with other research on gender differences (Maccoby, 1990), findings show that gender (whether it reflects socialisation practices or sex differences) plays an important role in children's early social and behavioural development. Girls showed greater increases in social competence and greater declines in behavioural problems in first grade (Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004, p. 542). Insights about gendered relationships can be gleaned from research on how children evaluate exclusion. About 30% to 50% of pre-school children used gender stereotypes to condone exclusion during play, especially in situations involving activities rather than roles. Although children have stereotypes about play with peers that are used in certain situations, principles of equity and fairness may override their use (Theimer, Killen, & Stangor, 2001). Maccoby and Jacklin (1987) found in a longitudinal study that, among nursery school children four-and-a-half years of age, children spent three times as much time playing with same-sex playmates as they did with cross-sex partners, with some play also occurring in mixed groups. When the children had reached six-and-a-half years, the ratio of same-sex to opposite-sex play increased to 11 times (cited in Maccoby, 1988).

Although beyond the limits of the current study, research assessing differences in girls' and boys' experiences of ecological advantages and risks and how these ecological experiences affect their development is warranted (Hoglund &

Leadbeater, 2004). Research also suggests that gender-typical activity involvement increases dramatically during the pre-school years. Knowledge about sex differences in relationships increases with age. Pre-schoolers recognised that boys prefer to play in groups but not that they have more shared friendships than girls (Martin, Fabes, Evans, & Wyman, 1999). Children's increasing awareness of performance of gender is accompanied by increasing preferences for same-sex activity between 6 and 10 years (Ocampo, et al., 1993). Children have different conceptions of relationships with girls and these views change developmentally. Young children understand that certain relationships are more acceptable than others (i.e., same sex-sex play and friendships are more acceptable than other sex-sex play and friendships). For instance, children showed strong stereotypes about others' relationships (i.e., they believed boys prefer to play with other boys more than with girls) that increased from 4 to 6 years, and these beliefs correlated with same- sex play partner preferences (Martin, et al., 1999).

Corsaro (2006) suggested the first sign of social differentiation in children's peer relations is increasing gender separation, with children as young as three showing preference for play with other children of the same sex. Gender segregation and preference for different activity by gender were increased in children five to six years old compared to younger children at age three to five years, which is in line with the general findings previously noted. Berenntzen (1984), observing peer interaction among five- to seven-year-old children in Norwegian pre-school, found that with few exceptions both boys and girls followed the self-imposed rule that "girls/boys don't play with boys/girls," (cited in Corsaro, 2006: p. 110). Girls and boys also organized their activities around different concerns: boys valued competition and toughness, whereas girls were concerned mostly with affiliation.

Another issue that is important to emphasise in peer interaction is a gender difference in the use of language. According to Besag (2006), girls do not use as much directive language as boys when there is a difference of opinion at play. Boys appear to come straight to the point, with little preamble, with those most forceful and confident giving the orders (p. 35). Observation of the boys in the classroom showed that they decided quickly on the game they would play and how they would

play it; for example, taking the role of captain of a spaceship. The leader and his friends would have an exciting time chasing after the rest of the group (Besag, 2006). The character and content of peer interaction is important to show gender difference, such as boys using imagination in an activity but girls using imagination for their chats and discussions. Girls enjoy chatting with friends, telling each other stories from books they have read, films and television programmes they have seen, or stories developed from their imagination, but boys' focus more frequently appears to be directly related to their play (Besag, 2006). What the boys did in their free time was of prime importance to them, whereas with whom they played was more important to the girls (Maccoby, 1998). The activity appeared of secondary importance to the girls, as they would choose a less preferred activity in order to remain with their friends. Girls were more selective regarding their playmates and companions, using more personal criteria when making a choice. The boys were happy as long as they had someone to kick a ball with, or engage with in a play fight or other physical activity.

Borhan (2004) made observations on child interaction during free play at an Islamic pre-school in Malaysia. During free play it was observed that, generally, the boys played among themselves and the girls played around them. The girls and the boys played in the same space. They were free to choose with whom they played or came in contact. It was just that most of the children chose to play with children of the same sex as themselves. However, in Islamic Pre-school free mixing between the sexes is prohibited, and this practice upheld this teaching.

Based on the literature, it is important to explore the interaction of children during play time and free time to get greater understanding of relationships, especially between different ethnic groups. Much research has investigated the relationships between genders; there is still a need to investigate differences between genders in children from different ethnic groups. However, research on social differentiation in children's peer relations is increasing: gender separation with children Corsaro (2006); Dunn (2004) has done research on friendships; Thorne (1993) has pioneered research on children's understanding of gender; and Connolly (1998) and Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001) have done the same in interviewing

children about their racial understandings. It is vital to explore research in cross ethnic relations. There is a need for extended research, particularly in a Malaysian context, as that society practises a collective culture which should be considered.

3.4 Parental Cultural Capital

There are a few domains of demographic factors as cultural capital which, it has been proposed, contribute to children's behavioural development: socio-economic status; status of education; religion, norms and values; parents' settings and schools' settings (i.e., environment, pre-school ethos, teachers and peers). Pre-school children's relationships with their friends are links between the quality of children's relationships with their parents and with their friends (Dunn, 1993). For example, the quality of earlier attachment related to some aspects of social behaviour with peers, and positive association between family and friends would influence relationships. Consistent with an ecological model of children's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), several studies have documented that a wide variety of aspects of parent-child relations influence children's behaviour.

Researchers have revealed some association between family and peer relation, which fall into three types: (1) the peer relations of institution-reared children who have experienced disrupted parenting or a lack of attachment relationships in childhood (2) parental behaviour and attitudes and their links to peer relations (mainly with cross-sectional studies of peer status); and (3) early attachment status and later behaviour with peers (Dunn, 1993). The evidence suggests that differential relationships across ethnic group may be influenced by the cultural meaning of parenting behaviours or the challenges and opportunities afforded to a particular cultural group. Therefore, the results from the three different ethnic backgrounds may differentially impact upon the expression, perception, and interpretation of similar social behaviour across cultures.

This study attempts to investigate the relationship between parents and children's behaviour. The study aims to explore the views of Bronfenbrenner (1979), who suggested that a child's environment affects that child's behaviour. The

ecological approach proposes that family, home environment, social, and cultural worlds interact with each other at various levels in ways which affect the child and family. Thus this study attempts to expand research on parental involvement influences and takes into account the significance of mediating and moderating factors that might impinge on the child's social development. The suggested mediating factors are parenting style, parental social and cultural capital and parental involvement in the child's schooling, whereas the presence or absence of help in the family, socio-economic status (parental educational attainment, family income, and occupational status) and the gender of the child.

Socio-economic Status

A common marker of socio-economic status or SES (Oades-Sese, Esquivel, Kaliski, & Maniatis, 2011) is typically a composite of occupation, parental education, and family income. The impacts of economic hardship on the family and particularly on children are well documented in many literature reviews (Koblinsky, Kuvalanka, & Randolph, 2006; Lareau, 1987; McLoyd, 1990). Related to this issue, McLoyd (1990, p. 311) formed the conclusions that: (a) poverty and economic loss diminish the capacity for supportive, consistent, and involved parenting, (b) a major mediator of the link between economic hardship and parenting behaviour is psychological distress deriving from an excess of negative life events, undesirable chronic conditions, and the absence and disruption of marital bonds; (c) economic loss and poverty affect children indirectly through their impact on the parents' behaviour toward the child, and (d) father-child relations under conditions of economic hardship depend on the quality of relations between the mother and father.

Previous research examining the relationship between lower socio-economic status and children's development has shown more social and emotional problems among these children than their more economically advantaged peers. According to McLoyd (1990) "mothers who experience stressful events such as financial difficulties increased their psychological distress and produce changes in family and child-management practices contribute to children's anti-social behaviour. Distressed mothers increased their use of aversive, coercive disciplines in children. The

economic hardship overall had adverse consequences for the behaviour” (p. 312). These circumstances are worst when children are raised in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. According to McLyod (1998), low family income affects the quality of the neighbourhood in which children grow up. They have low access to high-quality public and private services such as parks and playgrounds, childcare centres and pre-schools, community centres and health care providers, as well as fewer social supports and less effective social networks. Ethnographic researchers have suggested that parents who live in dangerous and poor neighbourhoods might use more restrictive monitoring practices with their children to minimize the children’s exposure to negative community influences (Burton & Jarret, 2000b).

These findings support the notion that parents’ socio-economic status (Oades-Sese, et al.) influences children’s behaviour. Rahman and Mohammad (1977) reported the results of aggression shown by pre-school children in their homes. The data were obtained from interviews with mothers of the children. It was found that there was no difference in aggression between SES. The variable that was important was socio-economic status; the lower the SES of their fathers, the more frequently the children showed aggression. Several implications of the study are discussed, such as parenting style and family pattern. Maurice (2000) examined the effect of family income on children in Malaysia. He found family income to be a determinant of educational outcomes and behaviour. He emphasised the timing of income is an important influence on children. Family income has a positive effect on education and behaviour in early childhood (0-5 years old) and, to a lesser extent, adolescence (11 -15 years old) (Maurice, 2000).

Parental Education

Research has shown the possible effect of parental education background on children’s behaviour. For example, Cheah and Rubin (2003) wrote about “parents’ beliefs about strategies that parents can use to affect their children’s development” (p.2). This is supported by Achhpal, Goldman and Rohner (2007), who stated that “parents wanted their children to develop appropriate behaviour according to general social norms, such as being a good boy or girl, having manners, being polite and

being socially conscious” (p. 10). A study was made of similarities and differences between Head Start parents of European-American and Puerto Rican backgrounds regarding their socialization goals and expectations concerning the early educational experiences of their pre-school children in USA. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 parents (30 European-American and 30 Puerto Rican) in their homes. The results showed that both groups of parents valued pro-social skills, school readiness skills, and skills related to good behaviour. The results showed the parents wanted their children to be good, well-mannered, even better than themselves. They tried to encourage children with their ability, experiences and strategies according to their level of education (Achhpal, et al., 2007). Evidence has shown that poorly educated parents are more socially isolated, are less connected to the school system, and generate fewer social learning opportunities for their children outside the school environment (Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Kupersmidt, Griesler, DeRosier, Patterson, & Davis, 1995; McLyod, 1998). However, little research related to social behaviour, for example parents’ education, has been positively related to children’s behaviour (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Koblinsky, et al., 2006).

Brooker (2002) found that cultural capital like family educational practices, creates social and cultural capital for the children’s prosocial, compliant and independent behaviour. She divided cultural capital into three aspects most commonly associated in children: mothers’ educational experiences; family language and communicative skills; and family literacy practices. For example, mothers’ education makes possible the ‘domestic transmission’ of useful knowledge for children’s development. The mothers were sufficiently educated to provide their children with cooperative, caring and sensitive experiences, and furnish them with some degree of school regulation and ethics. When parents, particularly mothers, have little education, especially a background of education based on ethnic groups, this is seen as a risk factor for children, affecting the resources available to aspirations for children, and less initiative and confidence in their behaviour (Brooker, 2002, p. 33). This is more complex indeed when it is compared between the different ethnic groups.

Research found, consistent with expectations, children whose mothers had low levels of education showed modest increases in social problems when they were in classrooms with low levels of peer prosocial behaviours. Parents with low education levels may be constrained in their capacity to scaffold children's socialisation (Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004, p. 542; McLyod, 1998). If parents show limited engagement in their children's social experiences (e.g., rarely invite children's classmates over to play), their children may have fewer opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and may lack protective friendships with peers. A low level of parents' education may also mean limited access to social resources, including supportive adult mentors or neighbours who could help to care for their children or generate socially stimulating environments (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998; Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004; Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1993). At the same time children are put at risk of a variety of social and behavioural problems, including a lack of learning resources and opportunities at home; too much television viewing and troubled parent-child relationships (Florsheim, et al., 1998). According to Pettit, Bates & Dodge (1993), among these factors, quality of parent-child interaction seems to be central to the development and evaluation of behavioural problems of children.

Research studies in relation to parenting behaviour and children's social behaviour problems have consistently revealed that parenting behaviour is influenced by parents' socio-economic and educational status. Studies including parents' education and socio-economic status as predictors of child behaviour have been criticised for incompleteness. Research efforts have provided evidence that these predictors might be mediated by other environmental characteristics that distinguish children.

Norms and Values

Studies investigating parent socialisation have often been made in the context of Western societies. A study is needed to explore how socialisation in a collectivist culture affects children's behaviour. Norms and values may be important factors especially involved in influencing children's behaviour in a multicultural society. *Culture*, generally viewed as patterns of behaviours that are transmitted among

members of a society, comprises the rules and norms that promote stability and harmony within that society (Rogoff, 2003). Norms and values have been shown to affect many domains of family life, including the way in which parents socialise their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Brooker, 2002).

Barron (2007) found children's ethnic identities are explored in relation to boundaries where different communities of practice collide, alongside other aspects such as gender and sexuality, and under the influence of factors such as power and religion. An ethnographic approach was used to record the children's daily experiences and relationships as contexts where they reveal, shape and reshape the children. Nevertheless, few studies have investigated children's behaviour. The most thorough research on cultural capital among working-class children showed many parents lacked the resources to feel comfortable confronting teachers. These resources include family lifestyle, values, political preferences, locality and education level, occupational status, and so forth (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002; Lareau, 1987; Monkman, Ronald, & Th eram ene, 2005). Qualitative work from the late 1980s through to the present has provided a rich description of the experiences young children and their parents have with the school system and have considered the role of cultural capital.

According to Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, (1988), collectivist culture refers to the socialisation pattern that emphasizes "we" consciousness, collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, filial piety, group harmony, and duties and obligation, while, alternatively, an individualist culture holds the "I" consciousness, autonomy, emotional independence, and right to privacy. People in a collectivist culture might perceive family functioning very differently from people in Western culture. Collectivist cultures value the welfare of group as more important than the personal (Chang, 2004; Hurenkamp, 1998; Rao, McHaleb, & Pearson, 2003). They place a strong emphasis on the nature of relationships between parents and children. Children are expected to be obedient and respectful and to avoid behaving in a way that could bring shame to their family (Chang, 2004; Cheah & Rubin, 2003; Rao, et al., 2003). In addition, families

transmit socialisation through rituals, activities in their daily life, and the parenting of children according to their belief and customs.

In a collectivist culture, males are more involved in aggressive and assertive behaviour compared to females. This may be because the cultures show aggression as a way to gain status and power (Chang, 2004; Cheah & Rubin, 2003). Otherwise, the reason may be because the culture holds the belief that females need more supervision than males and are expected to stay at home more often. Furthermore, Kling (1995) found that a collectivist culture emphasises that females are instructed to be more passive and obedient. This may help to control the number of females involved in anti-social behaviour.

Researchers found differences between Asian and Western cultural values and norms and their implications for parenting styles (Kling, 1995; Rao, et al., 2003; Triandis, et al., 1988). There is a fundamental difference in an individual's perception of his needs, feelings, thoughts and behaviour between cultures with individualistic and collectivistic orientations. In individualistic cultures, such as those in the United States and Northern European countries, the self is defined by the individual's pursuit to become independent of others via attending to his private thoughts, desires, and feelings, as well as expressing and actualizing these inner attributes that distinguish him from others (Cheah & Rubin, 2003; DiMaggio, 1982). An individual who engages in behaviour that highlights this separation of one's self from others will experience positive or negative emotions, depending on the nature of the circumstances.

Thus, an individual may feel good and proud when he expresses and defends his personal opinion in a group and receives recognition for his spontaneity and courage to be different from others. By the same token, an individual may feel angry and hurt when other people overlook his interest or talent. Kitayama, Markus & Kurokawa (2000) have pointed out that in individualistic cultures, the emotion of anger tends to focus on how one's rights or welfare have been violated, and consequently, the experience and expression of negative emotions are not deemed as entirely undesirable. Also, within the family, which is the fundamental social unit for individuals in collectivistic cultures, the boundaries between the self and other family

members are much less distinct than those in individualistic cultures (Kitayama, et al., 2000) Thus, an individual's interests, desires, concerns, and motivations are perceived as inseparable from those of the family.

In most Asian cultures, parents socialise their children toward the development of interdependent relationships (Lareau, 1987; Rubin, et al., 2006). It is dependent on belief according to cultural norms, for example, how parents socialise their children toward the development of autonomy, either dependence or interdependence. In collectivistic cultures, such as Malaysia and other Asian countries, the self is viewed as an integral member of a group that fosters connectedness and interdependence, and is rendered meaningful by constraining, taming, or otherwise conditioning internal desires or wishes in order to facilitate the ever-important interpersonal harmony and unity (Kitayama, et al., 2000). Thus, socially engaging behaviour that conveys empathy, modesty, agreeableness, and sensitivity in anticipating the needs of others will be accompanied by positive emotions, whereas socially disengaging behaviour that focuses on the promotion of individual interests and interferes with the interest of others will trigger feelings of anxiety, fear, indebtedness, and shame (Chung, 2006; Kling, 1995). Kitayama, et al., (2000) point out that these commonly-experienced negative emotions in the collectivistic cultures tend to be different from those experienced in most individualistic cultures. These emotions essentially reflect the central cultural value of maintaining connectedness and harmony between the individual and others. Thus, in contrast to individualistic cultures, the experience and expression of anger is perceived as detrimental to the preservation of interpersonal harmony and has to be suppressed.

Chung (2006) illustrates how parents' culturally shaped emotions and emotional expressions are an integral part of each family's meaning system. Cultural values and norms are significant in order to influence emotion and behaviour among Chinese children (Cheah & Rubin, 2003). Similarly, Kitayama, Markus & Kurokawa (2000) found that when and how emotions are experienced is a complex and variable reality that may differ from one culture to another. Each culture essentially has a schema of meanings assigned to its specific set of behavioural tendencies constructed

around the social orientation of children within each culture. Each group of parental norms may discipline children in different ways; e.g., what forms of discipline children and parents believe other parents in their cultural group use or what forms of discipline parents within a cultural group actually use (Chen, et al., 2000; Lansford et al., 2005). Lansford et al. (2005) suggest that norms and values play a role in the way that physical discipline is related to children's behaviour, yet also suggest potential problems in using physical discipline even in contexts in which it is normative.

Furthermore, research shows cultural comparisons are an excellent way of determining which aspects of development are universal and which are culturally variable. Most comparative studies of emotional development index culture on the basis of nationality or social position (e.g., ethnic minority status). These comparisons document group differences, but when groups differ in many factors it is difficult to determine which are key and why culture has an influence (Chang, 2004). Carpendale and Lewis (2004) note that children gradually construct prosocial behaviour through the regularities they experience in interacting with others from different ethnic groups. Eisenberg, Cumberland & Spinrad (1998) found understanding of how children's emotions are socialized is incomplete without an account of the role of cultural factors. They suggest future studies should include more observations of more children and more observations per child. Secondly, those observations might be more revealing if they included extended sequences of interaction instead of the immediate responses that were recorded. If possible, it would be a considerable improvement if the intensity of children's emotions was also assessed. A third improvement in design would be direct assessment of the various related factors that comprise culture.

Therefore, it should be possible to observe the norms and values of every ethnic group in socialising their children as they acquire the cultural norms of their community. This research will investigate the role of cultural factors which are important to study children's social behaviour in the context of Malaysian society.

Based on the above literature, the following investigation will attempt to explore children's behaviour through parents' socialisation and parenting styles. In the Malaysian pre-school educational scene, not only are such studies relatively few

but the approach used needs to diversify into qualitative study and ethnography. The review of literature, particularly children's social behaviour among pre-school children, showed in depth the extreme need of explanation from cultural perspectives. How do parents nurture their children's social behaviour in order for them to participate in a classroom environment? The next section will discuss parenting styles. What parenting style might affect children's acquired knowledge of structures that allow them to make judgments about what constitutes school rejection or what determines children's perceptions of what is fair and reasonable discipline?

Parenting Styles

This section discusses the role of parenting styles in affecting children's behaviour within a multi-ethnic school system.

Several studies have shown parents play an important role in promoting their children's social skills and nurturing children with more socially competent behaviour in pre-school (Koblinsky, et al., 2006). Three widely-accepted, general parenting constructs have been associated with more optimal child outcomes: parental support, structure, and control. Parental support and structure have been positively related to children's competence, self-reliance, and compliance (Baumrind, 1971). Eisenberg (1998) has identified three ways in which parents instil prosocial behaviour in their children: (1) through their modelling and teaching prosocial behaviour; (2) through their arranging opportunities for their children to engage in prosocial behaviour; and (3) through their methods of disciplining their children and eliciting prosocial behaviour from them. That children are generally perceived positively and tend to be popular with their peers supports the notion that prosocial children tend to have positive peer relations. Thus, children who act in a prosocial manner are liked by their peers and elicit positive regard.

Similarly, Koblinsky et al. (2006) found parenting to be a significant predictor of children's social behaviour, with more positive parenting practices associated with fewer child behaviour problems and easier interaction with classmates. They found mothers who participated in more family routines had

children who demonstrated greater social skills, as well as fewer social behaviour problems. These findings add to the sparse literature on family routines which links greater involvement in routines to more cooperative behaviour among pre-schoolers (Keltner, 1990). They have greater social competence and self-regulation as school-age children. Routines such as eating dinner together, reading or telling stories to children, visiting relatives, and attending church as a family promote social competence and consistent traditions involving the extended family (Keltner, 1990; Koblinsky, et al., 2006). Family routines may foster secure, predictable, and organized home environments, enabling mothers to exert positive control over their pre-schoolers' time, activities, and friends and acquaintances, and reducing the potential for impulsive, aggressive behaviours that stem from boredom and idleness. Such routines may have particular benefit in poor, high-crime neighbourhoods, where parents often confine children to their residences and firmly restrict outdoor play to keep children safe.

Furthermore, positive parenting is significantly related to children's positive behaviour. Parents who teach children social skills, teaching them how to get along with others, help their relationships with family members and with peers, and improve family cohesion (Meadow & Blacher, 2002). Another study has examined relationships between supportive parenting and pre-school children's behaviour and adjustment. Mothers who engaged in involved, supportive parenting had pre-schoolers with fewer behaviour problems and greater school readiness than those providing lower levels of involvement and support (McGroder, 2000). McGroder (2000) found that, in 193 low-income African-American mothers of pre-schoolers, mothers' nurture was positively associated with children's social maturity. Children were excited to play with their school friends. Instead of refusing to go to school, they were happy to go. Positive parenting may help to foster development of prosocial skills and reduce the incidence of behaviour problems, despite residence in challenging neighbourhood environments.

Children whose families engaged in predictable routines exhibited more cooperative, compliant behaviour and interest in school than those whose families had no regular routines. One can speculate that family routines, such as eating

together or visiting relatives, may provide young children with a sense of order, security, and contact with supportive adults in neighbourhoods (Harden et al., 2000). Family routines are observable, repetitive behaviours that involve two or more family members and occur with predictable regularity in the day-to-day and week-to-week life of the family. These patterned family practices are thought to organize daily family life and define members' roles and responsibilities (Harden, et al., 2000). Chen, et al. (2000) found that prosocial orientation was significantly and uniquely predictive of social and school adjustment, including the Chinese measures of social standing, academic achievement, and teacher-rated competence.

Researchers expected both a lack of positive parenting behaviours and negative parent-child interactions to predict prosocial behaviour problems at kindergarten. In Western industrialised countries, parental discipline includes inductive techniques, physical punishment, time-out followed by explanation, redirection, and negative verbal feedback. In these societies, positive guidance, limit-setting, induction, and redirection are preferred. Furthermore, Javo, Ronning, Heyerdahl and Rudmin (2004) found in Norway (Western culture) child behaviour problems were associated with lower levels of parental cuddling and with higher levels of physical punishment. Family demographics such as low maternal age were also associated with more behavioural problems. This supported Aunola and Nurmi's (2005) study of 196 children (aged 5 – 6 years) in Finnish kindergarten, which investigated the combination of mothers' and fathers' parenting styles (affection, behavioural control, and psychological control) that were most influential in predicting their children's internal and external problem behaviours (p.1144). They found that behavioural control exercised by mothers decreased children's problem behaviour but only when combined with a low level of psychological control.

Studies on the relation between parenting style and children's behaviour conducted in South-East Asia in the Philippines revealed the same outcomes. Harper (2010), using data collected from an urban Southern Visayan province, examined a sample of 133 Filipino fathers to consider potential relationships between father behaviours and child outcomes. The results showed increased paternal psychological control predicted increased problematic child outcomes, with sons being more

affected than daughters. Furthermore, increased authoritative fathering was associated with decreased behaviour problems of children especially for sons. Increased father involvement predicted improved quality of sibling relationships for children. Overall, these findings support the idea that Filipino fathers play a valuable role in the lives of their children.

In conclusion, elaborating on the work of Baumrind (1971), Maccoby and Martin proposed a typology, defining parenting styles according to a two-dimensional framework which consists of: (1) support, such as warmth, acceptance, affection, and responsiveness; and (2) control, which refers to punishment, restrictiveness, supervision, inductive parenting, and conformity demands. They identified four parenting styles: authoritarian (low support, high control), authoritative (high support and control), permissive (high support and low control), and neglecting (low support and control). Parenting styles are configurations of attitudes and behaviours of parents towards their child and create a context or a climate for the parent's behaviour.

As we have seen, family ecology factors are important for child outcomes. Studies have shown that parents' child-rearing practices are interrelated with family ecology factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). During childhood the family environment constitutes the basic social ecology in which the child's behaviour is manifested, learned, encouraged or suppressed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These factors may either be mediated through parenting or affect child problems directly via their individual effects or in interaction. When interpreting child-rearing determinants across different ethnic groups, we need to bear in mind that parental attitudes and practices that beneficially affect child development may well differ from one sociocultural context to another. Likewise, children's culturally determined expectations of how their parents should behave must be taken into account (Javo, et al., 2004). Thus, in cultural contexts in which strict parental discipline is prevalent and therefore perceived as normal by children, it is perceived not as rejection but as concern. However, in those cultures in which permissive parental behaviour is valued, strict parental control is perceived as rejection. The issue is complicated and difficult to assess because there are many debates among researchers from different

perspectives. Therefore, this study is really needed to understand child rearing practices across different ethnic groups in Malaysia.

Based on the research review above, parenting style have been prominent in research on culture and parenting (Chao, 2001; Chen, et al., 2000). Three parenting styles have been identified that are broadly significant for children's social development. However, much of the research need to focus on comparisons of "Western" and "Eastern" cultures (Chen, et al., 2000) and comparison between country and other nationality (Pomerantz & Wang, 2009) such as Asian countries. In this study, the researcher will explore three parenting styles - authoritarian, authoritative and permissive parenting – cross-culturally in the three ethnic groups of Malay, Chinese and Indian in Malaysia.

Parental Home Languages

Children acquire language through interaction with peers and parents. (Vygotsky, 1978) Zone of Proximal Development indicates the space between a child's actual development and what can be achieved with a more knowledgeable person such as parents and teachers assisting their learning. Vygotsky considers the adult or knowledgeable person can build 'scaffolding' or 'bridges' to help the children e.g., the way teacher scaffolds the learning second language. However, the type of 'scaffolding' given may be different across cultures and contexts according to how learning and interaction are perceived (Gregory, 2008). There are two different types of language-learning experience: first-language acquisition takes place from birth with parents and close family, and the second-language acquisition process is different from learning the mother tongue, occurring in situations that the child experiences outside the home e.g. pre-school. In this study, I will emphasise how home language and multilingual families influence children's peer interaction among children from Chinese and Indian backgrounds. Children begin to learn a second language after the first language is partially established as 'Sequential or successive acquisition' (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000, p. 29).

Previous research indicates the importance of bilingualism for peers interaction. Omeldo (2003) found bilingualism can enhance and promote communication skills of children. They collaborate with each other and serve as language mediators for their interaction with peers through making judgments about the bilingual proficiency of their peers, and provide scaffolds to maximize the comprehension and communication of their classmates. Children read contextual and situational cues, and rely on the language of classroom routines to interpret verbal messages and facilitate the participation of their classmates in classroom interaction.

Furthermore, Tabors (2008) has shown that young children who are exposed to a second language in out-of-home setting, such as an English-language early childhood classroom move through a specific developmental sequence that includes four phases: home language use-may continue to speak their home language with those who speak that language; nonverbal period in the new language; telegraphic and formulaic language and producing new language. However, this developmental sequence is influenced by at least four factors-motivation, exposure, age and personality that may impact on how quickly young children acquire a second language. An important factor to understand children's language acquisition is related to environmental factors such as families and school.

Tizard and Hughes (1984) observed thirty four-year olds girls from nine different nursery schools and classes in London studying their language development. They used observation and analysed children's conversation, comparing two middle-class and working class. Findings have shown that a difference in language style would be related to values and attitudes. It showed that a different language style at home had implication for the children. Differences in language style included vocabulary, the amount of mother talk, the length of conversations, the frequent use of 'challenging' questions, imaginative play, information on family, household and domestic topic. They found that middle-class mothers tended to make more frequent use of language for complex purposes, a wide range of general knowledge and information and used wider vocabulary in talking to their children compared to working class mothers, who seemed to place more stress on helping their daughters to acquire domestic and mothering skills. These

differences obviously make sense in terms of different educational and occupational careers of the two groups of women. However, the findings of the study have been doubted by some teachers, who argued that in school, children arrive 'hardly able to talk'. They found the differences were too small to suggest that the working-class children suffered from language deprivation or a language deficit at home (Tizard & Hughes, 1984, p. 159). Therefore, the implication of this study to my research is important in order to understand how language styles at home influence children's social behaviour at school. This study is very important in investigating parental languages and its relationship to children's language acquisition in the pre-school as differences in language style may provide a bigger impact to the interaction of the children from the three ethnic groups. As most of the children in my study have parents who come from a lower education background and different ethnic groups, the findings from Tizard and Hughes (1984) may provide some of the justification for this research.

According to Kenner (2000), the home languages experience may provide the children with the ability in multilingual literacy to interact in the pre-school. Kenner (2000) in a study of South London nursery class shows how children can benefit from the language activities they engaged in at home and be part of school curriculum. She shows the literacy world of three children with the domain of multi-layered language environments in which bilingual children live. One such domain is the home, which is the most important among the factors that influence the children instead of the school and community. She indicates the significance of each domain in terms of the amount of time the child spent – thus school is placed between home and local community. The school layer involved parents and children bringing texts in different languages from home into school and using them together as a resource for writing in the classroom. This study showed the importance of setting up a multilingual literacy environment by bringing home literacy into the school in both English and other language. This finding shows the use of 'home text' material which is familiar to the children from their everyday experience. The use of the 'home text' material may encourage the children to talk more about their everyday experience and thus promote them to have more interaction in class. How the

different children may take on different elements in their social environment use in their everyday interactions with other children in school is an important issue in my study.

In order to further understand the family factors, Gregory (2008) uses sociocultural theory, while drawing on examples of from America, Australia, Britain, China, France, Singapore, South Africa and Thailand which showed that the students participate as they learn to read in a new language. Families across the world have different 'funds of knowledge' (skills, knowledge and resources) and interpersonal relationships in families as well as fluidity of practices in multilingual homes. This is important because the parental cultural capital of three different ethnic groups as indicated in the 'fund of knowledge' and the families' interpersonal relationships may provide different communicative development to the children. Gregory (2008) explained that siblings, grandparents and friends provide children with very special help as children learn a new language. For example, first siblings are unique mediators of language. Second, grandparents in a multilingual family often provide unique access to the language, literacy and cultural heritage of the country of origin. Third, children learn and practise their new language with their friends as a teacher. Gregory (2008) showed that home language environment that involved parents, sibling, and grandparents as resources for children in multilingual pre-school. Meanwhile pre-school is a place for children to get resources between home and community which is important in multi-ethnic context that children expose with multilingual. The different language practices between home or community and school might affect children in term of communication, meaning and children's characteristic. Being able to use their home languages is giving children a positive of self-esteem and confidence. Although in my research context, majority of Indian and Chinese children are not expected to understand Malay language as a new language for them, therefore, the role of parents, grandparents, sibling, peers and teacher is vital in helping them.

Li (2007) relates different forms of family capital to second language acquisition, with the analysis of the families' language environments, the parents' relationships and interactions with their children, and the families' interactions and

relationships with people in the communities. Li indicates that each family had a distinct second-language environment including differences in family investment in learning, levels of parental involvement, and access to familial and community resources. This ethnographic study involved four Chinese families in two different neighbourhoods in a university town in Western Canada. Li also noted their cultural activities and access to resources associated with second-language and literacy acquisition. The analysis demonstrates that parental educational background, their occupational choices and chances, the communities they resided in had a significant impact on the families' accumulation and activation of family capital to support their children's second-language learning and their situational circumstances influenced how second-language literacy was acquired at home. These findings provide significant insight in understanding children's sociocultural contexts of learning and their discursive practices that occur in their homes and communities.

Although there has been considerable research on home and second language acquisition among young children, there is much less research in the Malaysian context. In this research, I will concentrate on discussing the possible range of experiences of bilingual and multi-ethnic children born in Malaysia. PERPADUAN Pre-school setting is the type of early childhood classroom setting for multi-ethnic children. In this type of classroom there are children with a variety of first language backgrounds and Malay is the common language for classroom. It is crucial to understand the interaction of children using home language and second language when doing research in a pre-school that involves three different ethnic groups and linguistic backgrounds.

Religion

Religious orientation appears to be an important function of a healthy and strong family. Strong families seem to be joined in a sense of purpose, usually religious or spiritual in its foundation, sometimes secular. This provides the strength for commitment to the family as well as to the larger purpose (Barron, 2007; Bhatti, 1999; Coles, 2008; Regnerus, 2003). This is supported by Pearce and William (1998), who studied religious dynamics between parents and children. They found

that parents and children who reported more similar values, including religious values, perceive greater affective closeness to one another. Closeness in a family is important to family cohesiveness, one dimension in the family functioning. In the religious context, Coles (2008) notes that the support from families and communities is important to ensure every child's health, positive contribution and wellbeing.

However, this contradicts the research from Krauss, Hamzah and Idris (2007), who measured religiosity of Malaysian youth across four faith communities (Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian) at age 14 -17 years old from mixed religious groups on pro-social and anti-social behaviour. The Hindu sample indicated the highest mean scores. Only on the ritual subscale was the Muslim sample score higher, maybe reflective of the emphasis Islamic teachings place on rituals. The Hindu sample indicated the second highest score on ritual. Moreover, the Muslim sample scored lowest of the four groups on the pro-social behaviour scale. It is less clear as to why the Muslim sample scored lower than the other groups on pro-social behaviours, as Islamic teachings place considerable emphasis on this aspect of religion. The Muslim sample scored highest on ritual observances, but also indicated the lowest score on the pro-social behaviour subscale. The Hindu and Buddhist samples, on the other hand, indicated the most consistent scores, albeit one being high and the other low, respectively, with the Christian sample ranking second or third throughout (Krauss, Hamzah, & Idris, 2007). These results indicate that the scale from their research may be most sensitive for Muslims, but the reason why remains unclear.

Bhatti (1999) used ethnographic work to understand Asian children at home and in school education in the United Kingdom. She found that Asian children's view of life was affected by their close relations with their parents. Most children reported that their fathers were strict, liked to order their children about, and were not the sort of people with whom the children could joke, especially among sons. She added that parents put emphasis on their children learning religion very early, like attending mosque for Muslims and attending temple for Hindus and Sikhs. Religion played an important part during childhood. This is similar to another study, that of Borhan (2004), who made observations in a case study of an Islamic pre-school in

Malaysia. The results of her observation give an understanding of one type of pre-school education in Malaysia, illustrating the different ways of teaching values - in this particular case, Islamic values. Firstly, parents send their children to religiously affiliated pre-schools in the hope of inculcating particular religious values in their young children. Secondly, perhaps more importantly, children learn to read and write in three different languages - English, Malay, and Arabic; learn the prayers, which were done entirely in Arabic; and memorize many *surahs* of the *Qur'an*.

Batson (1983) has proposed the role of religion in promoting prosocial behaviour. Images of religious kinship may promote prosocial behaviour by increasing the range of application of a highly limited natural impulse toward altruism (Batson, 1983). Religion is the guiding principle that reaches out to every aspect of one's life, showing children good behaviour; their own behaviour should reflect the values of being a good child. This idea was supported by Ulsner (1999), who stated that "most people seem to rely on a simple, straightforward moral code, often based on religion" (p. 50). However, few studies investigate how the religious factor influences children's behaviour, and there is a need to explore how religious setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) plays a role in the childhood context, either through the parents or directly to the child.

The literature shows an important gap in how religious sub-groups in the Malaysian context differ in regard to religious practices and prosocial behaviour, an area which needs more in-depth inquiry. Therefore in this study I shall focus on the religious effect on children, especially on prosocial behaviour, in the context of multi-ethnic pre-school.

3.5 Family's Social Capital

Most research has focused on parents as one group of socialisers. Indeed, there is a major gap in the literature concerning the role of parents' social capital and variables like peers and teachers in the development of children's social behaviour. This section has discussed extended family, community and neighbourhood, and pre-school as significant domains influencing children. The home learning environment

and school are two important indicators which may influence children's behaviour, and need to be explored in a Malaysian context.

Extended Family

There are two perspective of social capital contribution to parents and children, within the family, and between families. According to Coleman (1990) social capital refers to the social resources in the family and in the community that are accessible to the family; it is the network of social relationships that exists in the family (within-family social capital) or between the family and the community (between-family social capital). Research has shown that grandparents in extended families may have a direct effect on children as sources of attachment, affection, and knowledge, as well as indirect effects through their support of the parents (Hwang & James-Roberts, 1998). Cochran and Neigo (1995) reported that there is an overlap between parent and child social networks as shown in 6 year-olds' social networks which were also included in the mothers' networks. Others studies suggest that the grandparents' role has positive effects on cognitive skills and language development, and is associated with improved social development (i.e., social skills, social relationships and positive social behaviour) (Cochran & Neigo, 1995; Parke & Buriel, 2006).

Children from extended families maintain their behaviour compared to children from nuclear families (Al Awad & Sonuga-Barke, 1992; Hwang & James-Roberts, 1998; McConaughy & Achenbach, 1994). Al Awad & Sonuga-Barke (1992) found children in nuclear families had more conduct, emotional, and sleep problems, poorer self-care, and were more likely to be overdependent than those living in extended families. A study of relation between emotional and social development and family structure in Khartoum, Sudan on children between the ages of 4 and 9 living in extended and nuclear families were compared on mothers' ratings of a range of childhood problems. They revealed that grandmother's involvement was the strongest predictor of normal social and emotional adjustment. They found in Sudanese extended family shown grandmother as maternal advisor, social support, and socialization agent. According to Al-Awad & Sonuga-Barke (1992), in Sudanese

traditional culture, social life is governed by ideals of communal interdependence, intergenerational harmony, and social conformity motivated by feelings of collective responsibility and filial piety. Their study is appropriate to my study which is will investigate the role of extended family to children's social development from multiple cultural.

According to McConoughy & Achenbach (1994), bearing in mind that Korean nuclear family children tended to score higher on all the behaviour problem dimensions, internalising and externalising problems often coincide. The samples of 2 705 children aged 4-18 were assessed via parent ratings on the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), teacher- and self-ratings. That children from extended families should have fewer behaviour problems is consistent with the research literature, which recognises the importance of parental and family variables for the development of prosocial behaviour. However, it conflicts with the study of Ferguson, Manghan and Golding (2008) who found that by age 4 children with extended early grandparent care are likely to show some increased levels of hyperactivity and of difficulties in relationships with peers. They used information collected from 8 752 families in the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) in United Kingdom on grandparent involvement when the study children were aged 8, 15 and 24 months; potential maternal and family predictors of grandparent care; and behavioural outcomes at age 4 years.

Support from the extended family is a crucial part of nuclear families, especially to a newly-married couple compared with experienced parents. Extended family are supportive in terms of information and financial and practical help, such as grandparents' assistance in the care of young children, otherwise nuclear families become isolated and their children suffer (Bowes & Watson, 2004). It is usual in Malaysia for members of the extended family to live in the household of nuclear families, such as traditional collective practices in all ethnic groups. Most of Malaysia follows the traditional East Asia cultures which lay emphasis on being respectful and obedient (Majzub, 2006). Grandparents usually exercise their authority on family matters, and their descendants should obey them. In the context of Malaysia, the research evidently shows the role of grandparent and extended

families towards children, as seen in the fact that widows receive more material and financial help from grandparents and relatives (Pong, 1996). Intangible assistance from relatives is also probable, such as supervision and mentoring of schoolwork and moral support of children's educational aspirations; this explanation may be due to collectivism practices being part of the Malaysian cultural context.

It is common among Chinese families in an urban area for members of the extended family to live in the nuclear family, but this does not apply to Malay or Indian families (Majzub, 2006). Nevertheless, they tend to keep in touch with the extended family by visiting each other and contacting each other via mobile phones, telephone, and e-mail. Grandparents are living longer and have a longer period of shared experience with their grandchildren. When grandchildren are of pre-school age and their parents are in the workforce, many grandparents act as regular part-time caregivers and increasingly are awarded custodial care of their grandchildren when parents are unable to care for them. In this way, they often take on shared parenting roles in the care of their grandchildren. Issues of family obligations within the extended family can vary according to cultural group (Bowes & Watson, 2004). In conclusion, extended families may be part of the input for children to build up social development (i.e., knowledge, social skills) and socialise among peers. A social relationship between grandparents and grandchild is useful in transmitting a family's behavioural norms and values. The grandparents may be transmitting norms and values to the children via daily interaction. However, these ideas come from a Western perspective and it may be perceived differently in Malaysian contexts. There is a need to investigate how extended families from three different ethnic backgrounds influence children's behaviour. Little is known about how these factors are associated with children's behavioural development in Malaysia.

Neighbourhood and Community

Several studies have shown that neighbourhood and community provide parents with resources in order to nurture their children. Pre-school and parents have a mutual understanding of everyone's cultures and norms. Pre-school provides more casual activities, aimed at getting to know everyone's cultures and norms. It is a resource

for the pre-school and parents in order to understand cultural diversity. The pre-school teachers are then curious and open to taking part in the parents' cultural capital and children's behaviour. Pre-school provides resources to complement to children. Pre-school complements the home mainly when it comes to the child's social development (Uslaner, 1999). Most parents see that pre-school aids in the child's language development. Every single home's values and norms, such as social competence and social skills, are practised at home and then enhanced with communities outside, especially pre-school. Child development may be shaped by social capital and linked to various positive outcomes, particularly in education. Positive outcomes are the result of parent's social capital in a community; the greater this is, the more parents are associated with their children' education (Burton & Jarret, 2000a).

Majzub (2006) conducted a study to examine community involvement and parental participation in PERPADUAN Pre-school. The aforesaid goals and objectives were examined in relation to enhancement of national integration. The study was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, using: (1) Focus group evaluation and (2) documentary analysis. The sample of the study included 100 parents and 100 pre-school teachers. She found that the parents were encouraged to take part in their child's activities. Parental involvement was expected in the following activities, namely, celebrating festivals in Malaysia, *bergotong-royong* (cooperation), attending talks, *sukaneka* (sports competition), birthday parties, visitations, food funfair, storytelling and cooking contests. She found the responses from the focus group interviews indicate the following: first, community and parental participation make the JPNIN's pre-schools unique; and second parental support from different ethnic backgrounds keeps up the motivation and excitement in these pre-schools. The study reports that there exists a critical group of parents who are enthusiastic but there also exists a need to increase parental participation. Problems of parental participation revolve around parental interests, open-mindedness and time constraints. Parents of different ethnic groups whose children are in pre-school must collaborate to ensure the success of the pre-school and the achievement of pre-school goals. She added, this is commensurate with the Ecological Theory proposed by

Bronfenbrenner, which states that the child exists in several systems including the micro (the home setting) and the mesosystem (the interaction between micro systems such as between school and environment). Responses from the study indicate the need to enhance integration, tolerance, and feelings of neighbourliness and the need to instil noble values in children. This study is relevance to my study which will relates the community involvement with pre-school and children's development.

According to Dunn (1993), the length of friendships may well be influenced by the propinquity of children who share the same neighbourhood over time. She attempted to understand the relationship between neighbourhoods and child development and found neighbourhoods influenced children's behaviour. However these factors are perceived differently in multi-ethnic communities and interdependent society. There is a need to investigate how the neighbourhoods and communities from three different ethnic backgrounds influence children's behaviour. There is lack of knowledge from a Malaysian perspective and a need to explore how these factors relate to children's behaviour. This study attempts to understand the relationship between neighbourhoods and children's social development. The next section will discuss pre-school factors influencing children's development.

Pre-school Environment

Sammons (2010) identified the domains of affecting children's behaviour such as family characteristics, e.g. parental education, home language; home learning environment, i.e. learning opportunities in the home; neighbourhood/community characteristics; pre-school attendance and experiences; and primary school experiences (Sammons, 2010, p. 115). The results confirm that pre-school effects remain evident as significant influences on children's social behaviour. The Effective Pre-school and Primary Education (EPPE) research was conducted in a United Kingdom, but may possibly be relevant to other contexts such as that of my study.

The classroom environment has been identified as critical in determining children's social development in diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004). Pre-school classrooms often provide the primary context for

children's interaction with peers (Chang, 2004), particularly among pre-school children from different ethnic groups. Classroom and school settings can enhance sharing behaviours including exchange of materials during cooperative play by providing social reinforcement for these behaviours in combination with techniques such as modelling, prompting, and reinforcement for true reports of sharing (Findlay, Girardi, & Coplan, 2006). Sandberg and Vuorinen (2008) indicate that children are given the opportunity to practise their social skills in the pre-school, since co-existing in a larger group puts higher demands on skills such as turn-taking and consideration.

This is supported by Sylva (2010), who suggests that to understand the impact of a pre-school environment on the development of a child, it is necessary to investigate the quality of interactions, pedagogy, resources and relationships between children as well as between adults and children. The EPPE study of quality of pre-school settings related to many positive social-behavioural outcomes at ages 7 and 11 found the most common aspects of quality that have been shown to predict children's learning, including such things as: the physical environment; tangible resources; curriculum/learning experiences for children; teaching strategies; staffing; planning, assessment and record keeping; relationships and interaction; parental and community partnership; and management.

Meanwhile, Brooker (2002) suggested three aspects of children's education which might become more inclusive: the process of pedagogy, the understanding of culture, and the involvement of parents. All these aspects are interlinked and closely linked too to the persistently reflective style of most early years teachers and school learning. The key to the school's ethos is: openness; the teachers being available to parents at the beginning and end of the day; the parents being able to communicate on a social level; and being friends to the parents. The whole ethos of the school is warmth and caring and understanding for the position of these parents. The social and cultural capital of children's family and community environments, language and literacy practices of the home, local cultural knowledge acquired in community; knowledge of the mainstream mass culture which holds sway outside the school walls - none of these are 'useful knowledge' for children unless they can negotiate their incorporation into classroom (Brooker, 2002, p. 162). However, the pre-school

ethos and the pedagogic discourse of the classroom were not equally favourable to all children; some children managed this effectively and some displayed differently. The main reason for this issue is that pedagogical discourse creates a barrier to learning in the classroom, which has difficulty in transferring capital from home to school.

Aspects of the pre-school setting such as the geographical space of the room and seating arrangements contributed to children's relationships. The teacher had information on each child as each parent had filled out a registration form, giving a lot of detail about the home, background, area, and general status of the family. It was made the basis for deciding where children would sit in the classroom. The children placed in Group 1 differed from the children put in Group 2, according to their different background such as ethnic group, gender, language, cognitive skills, and behaviour (Milner, 1983, p. 185). It shows a positive contribution to mix children from different ethnic backgrounds. Howes, Sander & Lee (2008) conducted a short-term longitudinal study examining peer interaction of 170 ethnically diverse low-income children, all new to their peer groups, who entered childcare classrooms with heterogeneous entry policies and ethnic compositions. They observed children's prosocial behaviour with peers and observed complexity of peer play. The findings show children who had a peer who shared their ethnic heritage and entered the most ethnically diverse classrooms increased their complex peer play more than other children who appeared to be struggling with peer interaction six months after entry into the peer group (p. 923). This is appropriate to my study, however present study may be different as the behaviour or language of the children may vary.

Baharuddin and Yaakob (2006) suggest the pre-school curriculum in Malaysia needs to emphasise behavioural aspects. Instead of a focus on understanding, the Malaysia pre-school approach emphasises practical and hands-on experience. This approach is expected to socialize children in order to increase children's internal control and to make sure children are orientated with moral values. Children have been helped to understand and practise values and norms as a part of their life. Elements of a sense of belonging and feeling connected to the part and parcel of a pre-school curriculum. The diverse activities and strategies across the curriculum need to implement multicultural components, such as anti-bias

multicultural education, to include more multicultural elements and education in peace, understanding, and tolerance, as well as stressing the strengths and uniqueness of each ethnic group.

The School Inspectorate of Malaysia Report in 2005- showed that all the Malaysia public pre-schools visited were using the National Pre-school Curriculum (NPC). It was found that 79.5% of the teachers were using the learning-through-play method, 83.6% were using the thematic approach and 78% using the integrated approach (Malaysia, 2008). This is consistent with the outcomes of an EPRD Study which also indicated a positive response towards the effect of the various approaches. However, it was inconsistent with the CDC study conducted by Ministry of Education (MOE) in the year 2007 wholly on the implementation of NPC, specifically the classroom teaching and learning. The findings from the classroom teaching and learning approaches indicated a less favourable situation. As much as teachers claim they conduct learning through play, observations made on 20 schools by pre-school officers from CDC as well as the State Education Department found that not much learning through play happens in the classroom. Observations indicated that a thematic approach was used more to the extent where the teacher mentioned the theme or wrote down the theme on the board at the beginning of a lesson. Not much reference was made to the theme after that. Integrated learning does take place but not to a satisfactory level (Malaysia, 2008).

The physical environment has been identified in various studies as having a powerful effect on young children's play and social behaviour. Pre-school settings enable young children to practise a wide range of social experiences, such as friendship (Howes & Hamilton, 1993; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998) and pro-social relations (Eisenberg, et al., 2006) through their daily contacts with peers. A further notable difference between school and home is that at school, most talk concerned play, and was almost always concerned with the 'here and now', whilst at home it most concerned the child's own past and future. The school's curriculum was considerably narrower than the home's – a smaller range of topics was discussed. Thus, in moving from home to school, the children encountered a different curriculum, one more concerned with their play activities and less concerned with

family relationships, domestic matters and social world (Tizard & Hughes, 1984). Levy (2008) calls 'small-world play', a typical setting of a 'small world' includes structures such as learning centres: designated spaces such as block corners, book corners and so on which demonstrate a belief in the value of learning through the hands-on manipulation of materials.

Teachers assume an important role in facilitating social interactions between peers in the socialisation process. Teacher roles include being sensitive and nurturing, and giving individually tailored child-care interaction in helping children solve problems, regulate behaviour, and sustain interactions with peers. Findlay, Girardi & Coplan (2006) found peers and teachers may affect a child's social development through their reactions to the child's acts. Peers' and teachers' reactions can shape the development of other social behaviours such as children's prosocial behaviour and aggression. The researchers suggested that results of studies show children's prosocial behaviour can be increased by the provision of social rewards such as praise.

A multi-ethnic pre-school with a fair representation of children from different ethnic group theoretically may be the level of ethnic diversity to maximize the opportunity for children to form friendships outside their own group. More ethnic diversity in school increases the opportunity for cross-ethnic friendship; however, instructional practices, such as academic tracking, limit the mixing opportunities of students of different ethnic groups even in diverse schools (Graham, et al., 2009). The interaction barriers do not necessarily result from racial difference because children do not appear to make racial distinctions at pre-school age, but age and sex discriminations are made very early (Harkness & Super, 2002). It has been argued that the "meanings" of given social behaviour or social relationships differ from culture to culture.

Research is needed to demonstrate the types of classroom social environments and interactions that are most likely to support social experiences among pre-school children from varied backgrounds (Chang, 2004; Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004; Reay, 1995). The present study will explore the effects of the school ethos on children's social behaviour, as little research has investigated the

context of multi-ethnic pre-school in Malaysia. Another issue is the degree to which cultures allow or encourage peer interactions.

3.6 Implications

Although there is an increasing number of studies that examine pre-school children and parents' functioning, there are some limitations inherent in the current literature. Firstly, most of the research studies on pre-school children in Malaysia focus on children's achievement (Jelas & Yunus, 1993). Researchers seldom examined children's social behaviour as a main focus (Baharuddin & Yaacob, 2006; Borhan, 2004; Majzub, 2006; Majzub & Abdullah, 2000; Mohd & Abdullah, 2000; Rahman & Mohammad, 1977). Investigations have investigated behaviour as part of the research objective instead of the whole research. Hence, it would appear that researchers need to investigate children's prosocial behaviour as a main issue in Malaysia.

Secondly, several research studies on the nature of the relationship between parents and children's behaviour raise doubts. These studies found that parents' socio-economic status (Oades-Sese, et al., 2011) was positively related to children's behaviour, but did not investigate the parental cultural and social capital. The role of SES is often viewed as basic factor influencing children's behaviour. Parents' culture, such as religion as a way of life, norms, and values, are a vital part of parenting style. Then, parents' social networks such as grandparents, neighbourhoods, even school, also influences parents how to educate their children. Undoubtedly, there needs to be a greater focus on parents' cultural and social capital rather than socio-economic status as a main issue.

Thirdly, studies investigating parents' role have often been conducted in the context of Western societies. Numerous studies in Malaysia have examined parents' influences on children's behaviour (Baharuddin & Yaacob, 2006; Jelas & Yunus, 1993; Nordin & Hassan, 1992; Rahman & Mohammad, 1977; Trommsdorff, et al., 2007). These studies differ from my study which involved three different ethnic groups. Still less is known about heterogeneous collectivist cultures as in Malaysia;

this suggests that increased attention needs to be directed towards collectivist culture. This research will investigate how parents' socialize their children from three different cultural context which is still rare in Malaysia.

Lastly, methodological limitations are apparent in existing studies. In the past, studies on parents' influence on children have used a survey and quantitative approach to analyse the data. This study requires an observation and interview approach to understand children's behaviour - a qualitative mode of inquiry - to gain in-depth understanding of parents' perceptions regarding their culture, and semi-structured questionnaires, which are suitable for cultural sensitivity. This is especially important in the Malaysian context, with more diverse samples of parents and children from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

3.7 The Research Questions of the Study

The study will examine children's social behaviour and the factors influencing children's behaviour that emerged from the Literature Review. More specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do children from the three different ethnic groups and of different genders relate to each other in pre-school?
2. How does the social and cultural capital of parents from the three different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia affect children's behaviour?
3. How do similarities and differences between parental and pre-school norms and values influence the social development of children from different ethnic backgrounds?

3.8 Summary of Chapter 3

This chapter has discussed children's social behaviour and how to promote relationships among children from different ethnic backgrounds. Previous researches has been discussed, including the factors of parental cultural capital comprising norms and values of ethnicity, mother tongue and second language, parenting styles

and religion; multi-ethnic pre-school contributing to cross-ethnic relations; and family's social capital, related to the interaction of children from the three different ethnic groups. These inter-connected factors have been used to predict children's social development. Thus the literature review has led to and contributed to the research questions of my study. In the next chapter the discussion will focus on the theoretical framework of this study. In order to develop the research framework, main theories will be discussed: ecological theory; social and cultural capital; sociocultural theory and parenting styles. The chapter will then discuss theoretical perspectives, leading to the development of the theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will establish the theoretical framework of my thesis. In order to develop the research framework, three main theories will be discussed: Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner); Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky); Social and Cultural Capital (Bourdieu). Then the chapter will discuss how the different theoretical perspectives are used to help the researcher construct a theoretical model for analysing data. Looking at the research questions gives me immediate reasons why I need to investigate relevant theories in order to build up my own model for analysing my data. In order to understand “How do children from the three different ethnic groups and of different genders relate to each other in pre-school?” and enhance the theoretical model of my study, I shall discuss Sociocultural theory and Ecological theory. Both theories are important for understanding how children from different ethnic groups and genders interact with each other in this case study. Referring to the second research question, “How does the social and cultural capital of parents from the three different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia affect children’s behaviour?” leads to investigating social cultural capital theory to help to identify and investigate the factors linking culture and children’s peer interactions. For the final research question, “How do similarities and differences between parental and pre-school norms and values influence the social development of children from different ethnic backgrounds?”, the most relevant theoretical perspective to help construct a theoretical model for analysing my data is once again Ecological theory, which discusses the intermediate level of environments influencing children’s peer interactions.

4.2 Sociocultural Theory

Certain aspects of Vygotsky’s (1978) conceptual framework are useful for investigating the development of peer interactions of children from different cultures. Vygotsky’s work has been utilised by Rogoff (1998; 2003), Van Ausdale and Feagin

(2001) and Chen, Chun and Hsiao (2009) to give much attention to the cultural and interactional context in which children learn. According to Vygotsky's theory, children learn to use the tools for thinking provided by culture through their interaction with adults and skilled partners in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Through engaging with others in a cultural context, children internalize external signs, along with their cultural meanings. During guided learning, more experienced peers or representatives of culture and co-constructivists (Rogoff, 2003) assist the child to understand and perform tasks.

Several components in Vygotsky's theory are useful in analysis of children's ethnic relations and understanding social interaction. The most important part of children's development is actual social relations between individuals involved as social actors in reflecting upon and creating the patterns of their own lives (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). Interaction between individuals is important to the development of sense of the individual. Individual and cultural processes interact with each other in a broad array of cultural and societal activities (Rogoff, 2003). An individual develops as she or he participates and contributes to cultural activities, making use of and extending cultural tools from the previous generation. As active social actors, children take on elements in their social environment through imitating adults and inventing entirely new tools of their own. The children take various bits of ethnic group information and then experiment with and use that information in their everyday interactions with other children.

Secondly, most important for understanding the development of ethnically-oriented behaviour in pre-school children in this study is interactive play (Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001). Vygotsky views play as a more powerful determinant of learning than direct instruction because of play's immediacy for the child. A child is connected to the social world in interaction with others through play activities. Action in play is a crucial factor for children, enabling them to learn about and operate in the social world by relying on internal constructs and meanings, as well as on external social stimuli. Children may explore concepts and actions more openly with peers who provide opportunities to learn and build their own social structure (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). However, pre-school as a cultural institution is

important in providing interactive play, as proposed by Rogoff (2003). She suggests that parent volunteers routinely in classroom help children to learn by devising “fun educational” activities (p. 61). She shows how the community of school revises in practice as new generations of families join in, and how practices in school connect with culture. In my study, I expected children who were actively involved in interactive play to enhance interethnic play.

Finally, scholars working with Vygotskian theory (Chen, Chung, & Hsiao, 2009; Rogoff, 2003) proposed the importance of interpersonal concepts to understand children’s social interaction. A general sense of individual and cultural information is important as a background to understand what people are doing (Rogoff, 2003, p. 58). This involves an interpersonal focus of analysis (interpersonal, personal, and cultural-institutional) as a main aspect of the event constituting the activity. Cultural beliefs and values regulate interpersonal behaviour and development; for example, self-control may account for individual and group differences in social interaction. According to Chen, Chun and Hsiao (2009) self-control represents the regulatory ability to modulate behavioural and emotional reactivity, which is closely related to the maintenance of socially-appropriate behaviours during social interactions, and is particularly concerned with fitting in with others (p.433). However, different societies may place different values on self-control (Chen, Wang, & DeSouza, 2006).

4.3 Ecological Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stressed the interactions of organisms in a changing environment. The environment is composed of one’s immediate settings as well as the social and cultural contexts of relationships in different settings, such as home and pre-school. Two advantages of Ecological theory for this study are that, first, it allows the researcher to focus on individual children in the context of their immediate family and their social interaction with peers; second, the theory allows the researcher to investigate mediating factors in the links between culture and peer interactions. This ecological perspective shows cultural belief and values are manifest in children’s social behaviour through events and circumstances at an

intermediate level of environment. The details of culture or faith, of current economic policy, or the demands of adult employment, influence children as they trickle down through the layers and into personal relationships.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the innermost layer (microsystem) encompasses children's direct, daily experience with family, peers and friends. It also includes settings of which the child has direct experience: early years setting, school or place of worship. Children's socialisation occurs within this circle. The next layer (Mesosystem) refers to linkages among the immediate setting containing the child, the immediate settings in which children live their daily lives, and which are shaped by events and circumstances at the exo- and macrosystem levels. The next layer (exosystem) includes the social system that affects children. The impact may be their own direct experience but it can be filtered through their family. Important aspects can be the neighbourhood, local social networks, including their parents' friends and the world of work, which affects children through parents' experiences of job pressure or unemployment. The next layer (macrosystem) is comprised of the ideological or cultural blueprint for society and its institutions. Ethnic identity gains meaning from the predominant cultural values of society. These cultural beliefs and values are embodied in the macrosystemlevel in policies, institutions, and settings which influence the child's development indirectly. Finally, the broad social changes affect the nature of childhood over the years (Lindon, 2005). Bronfenbrenner recognises the impact of time as well as place, and in some discussion of his theory he talks of the chronosystem.

However, the most current summary of the model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) elaborates on characteristics of the developing person and on the dimension of time as a significant force in shaping development. It also expands and refines the concept of proximal processes and their role in development. Children's peer interactions take centre stage in development. The proximal processes that take place between children and others in their various microsystems are viewed as more powerful influences on development than the environmental contexts in which they occur (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) refer to this as a person-process-environment-time model, which is a child's development as

influenced by specific interpersonal processes, which in turn are influenced by characteristics of the developing person, the sociocultural environment, and the historical context. Settings influence children not only through their physical features but also through the personality and belief systems of people in those settings. A setting is dynamic and the effect of settings is modified by children's perceptions of the context and the people within them (Bowes & Watson, 2004; Rogoff, 2003). In the ecological model, the child is viewed as both product and producer of his or her own development. Thus, children's peer relationships are important as both a product and an influence of development. The focus in this study is on children's peer interactions as the product of cultural and other environmental influences. This current view is important to understand child's peer interactions as the at centre stage in development surrounded by different cultures.

4.4 Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words to membership of a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital...” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). A social network in itself is the social capital which may influence and support children, and a parental network which is linked to its possession virtually gives an advantage. Bourdieu (1979) defines the capital resources of social capital as “networks and norms of trust and reciprocity within networks” (p. 3), which are inherently social, the outcomes of which are various forms of collective action. Social capital for Bourdieu (1979) consists of social networks and connections: “contacts and group memberships which, through the accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities, provide actual or potential support and access to valued resources” (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 143), and sociability - in other words, how networks are sustained, which requires necessary skills and dispositions. However, Bourdieu does not mention children at all in his analysis. As Morrow (1999) argues, his construction of social capital as ‘rooted in the processes and practices of everyday life’ provides a

useful framework for understanding the relevance of social capital in the everyday lives of children (Morrow, 1999, p. 746). Meanwhile, Coleman (1990) defines social capital as “relations among actors that inhere in family relations among community organisation and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of child or young person” (Coleman, 1990, p. 300). Coleman distinguishes between social capital within the family and outside the family. Social capital within the family is ‘the relations between children and parents (and, when families include other members’ relationships with them as well)’ (Coleman, 1988, p. S110).

First, social capital within the family, that gives the child access to the adult’s human capital, depends both on the physical presence of adults in the family and on the attention those adults give to the child. It also reflects the time and attention that parents spend in interaction with children, in monitoring their activities, and in promoting child well-being (Coleman, 1990, p. 595). Social capital in families is stronger in stable families; when the parents are committed to each other, children benefit from the stability (Parcel & Dufur, 2001). The physical absence of adults may be described as a structural deficiency in family social capital (Coleman, 1988, p. S111). For example, here in the context of Malaysia as a multicultural country, the family structure changing from traditional family (collective) to modern family (individual) perceived in urban and suburban areas may be influencing parents in terms of bringing up their children. Over the last twenty years in Malaysia, urbanisation has changed family structures and societal attitudes and practices e.g., mothers are increasingly involved in the paid workforce. Mothers working outside the home have altered parenting practices, meaning families are lacking in social capital because parents simply do not have enough time to give their children sufficient attention. Thus, social capital is contained in relationships between and among individuals, the relationships between child and parents providing expectations and obligations of the family’s members. This obligation and expectation refers to the bonds between parents and children that are useful in promoting child socialisation.

Second, social capital outside the family is found in the community ‘consisting of the social relationships that exist among parents, in the closure exhibited by this structure of relations, and in the parents’ relations with the institutions of the community’ (Coleman, 1988, p. S113). The other is social capital outside the family, called “intergenerational closure,” that exists among parents in different households such as work colleagues, neighbours, school personnel and place of worship. Social capital outside the family is stronger in a collective community; children benefit when the parents are committed within the neighbourhood. However, Coleman also worries that increased maternal participation in the labour force will weaken the bonds within communities compared to mothers who stay home with their children and have time to mix with neighbours. A strong bond is helpful in protecting and socialising children to adopt group norms (Parcel & Dufur, 2001). With this line of thinking, several researchers have examined social capital as an important predictor of children’s social behaviour outcomes (Coleman, 1990; Parcel & Dufur, 2001; Parcel & Menaghan, 1993). Two main aspects of parents’ social capital which may affect children’s peer interaction will be discussed: good quality parent-child relationships, and extended family and neighbourhood as a resource for the child.

A close relationship between parents and child provides a good quality of social capital for the child. Coleman uses ‘the strength of relations between parents and children as a measure of the social capital available to the child from the parent’ (Coleman, 1988, p. S110). Children’s positive social competence and communication skills develop from positive interactions with parents and siblings. Children normally learn the structure of social groups from the family, through the structure of relations between adults. Peer interaction can occur at any level of social groups. It means social capital clearly includes the time and effort that parents spend on children. Stronger bonds between parents and children are a form of social capital that demands both the physical presence of parents and their attention and involvement (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993, p. 121). Each family member must have daily interaction, such as eating meals or spending time on other activities together, that will help children develop positive social behaviour. Parents who see family time as an important experience create long-lasting relationships which show positive

behaviour(Larson & Richards, 1994). This is achieved by having family traditions continuous across time and celebrations, and family routines stability on a day-to-day basis.

Social capital refers to characteristics of relationships among family members including both the quantity and quality of interaction and bonds developed. One useful advantage of having strong social networks is that they can be utilized as a source of information. The more time they spend in the local community the more parents contribute to sharing resources and drawing on its resources in their children's interest (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993, p. 121). Community is an important resource for child development in Malaysian contexts because community contributes knowledge of norms and values not only of their own ethnicities but also those of other ethnicities.

According to Portes (1998) "social capital is an individual asset to a community or national resource... is an asset of children in intact families" (p. 3). Parents are very particular in choosing good kindergartens for their children and will get information about good kindergartens from their neighbours and friends. Parents build up relationships with neighbours, chat to other parents about school activities, and invite friends to their home (Ann Farrell, 2004). The social capital in a community can aid parents' socialization of their children through several pathways. Firstly, when parents and children have community ties, support that is more social is available. Secondly, parental awareness of community services and their participation in shaping the institutions of the community promote the maintenance of values and norms that influence their children. Thirdly, parental participation with their children enables closer supervision of children and reduces the time children spend with their own peers (Parke & Buriel, 2006). Parents provide children with an outward-looking and trusting model of social relationships and a sense of being embedded in their community.

Nowadays, in Malaysia both parents work outside the home. I believe that the pattern of work activities of both parents now influences the social capital available to children, with parents' experience in the workplace also affecting children at home. Social capital embedded in family structure, as well as parents' personal

characteristics, affects children's socialisation such as norms and values, language, worship or table manners. "Parents' personal resources and in family composition may influence internalisation of behavioural norms" (Parcel & Menaghan, 1993, p. 121). Such changes as the birth of additional children or experience of unemployment may reduce the amount of attention as well as the amount of quality time given to young children, and thus may influence children's behaviour.

The nearest people who normally give support to parents are those in their neighbourhood. At first glance, the neighbourhood can be defined as part of a child's microsystem because it is within walking range of a young child. The neighbourhood is the setting in which parents participate independently of the child; however, at age between 5 and 6 years children need parents to communicate with neighbours as well as relatives. The quality of the support, encouragement and feedback parents receive from the neighbourhood also affects children's development (Gonzalez-Mena, 2002; Monkman, et al., 2005). Thus, a strong and healthy neighbourhood enhances a child's development by providing multiple connections and multiple situations for children that permit them to make the best use of their intellectual and social resources.

Nevertheless, the quality of a neighbourhood depends in large part on how community, economic and political institutions treat it. Neighbourhoods that are categorised as a risk to child development such as e.g. lower class, non-academic culture, lack of basic models may be associated with a government policy which structures the society according to a class system or which ignores the problems of certain groups. Policy-makers' decisions about work, residence, budgets, transportation, housing, and civil liberties will determine the quality of any neighbourhood. This theory will help me investigate the elements surrounding the children which involve them not directly, but through their parents.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) outlined three types of cultural capital; embodied, objectified and institutionalised. The first, embodied cultural capital, refers to styles, manners,

cultural preferences and affinities, and valued types of cultural knowledge. Embodied cultural capital is the disposition to appreciate and understand cultural goods. Most researchers have tried to relate cultural capital in their studies to children's interest in music, art or hobbies (Dumais, 2002). The embodiment of cultural capital has been discussed by Bourdieu (1977) as 'habitus'; namely, basic mind and body dispositions derived from past familial experience and actively organising future experience (Monkman, et al., 2005). The second is 'objectified' cultural capital, which is the transmittable goods - books, computers, artwork, etc. (Monkman, et al., 2005); artefacts and goods generally thought of as cultural, such as literature, music, dance forms, art, historical sites, museums, and the like. School syllabi and texts are also cultural artefacts of this type (Olneck, 2000). The objectified cultural capital also refers to objects that require special cultural abilities to appreciate, such as works of art. Thirdly, 'institutionalised' cultural capital refers to academic credentials and educational qualifications such as diplomas and degrees, which certify the value of embodied cultural capital items (Monkman, et al., 2005). These institutionalised objects signify one's cultural distinction. Institutionalised cultural capital develops as a result of one's having embodied cultural capital and successfully converting it via the educational system.

Cultural capital is the most effective form of capital and the best variable to explain children's academic success or good behaviour (Bourdieu, 1977). Language can be viewed as an 'objectified' cultural capital through which parent transmit cultures to their children. Ethnic groups identities such as languages Malay, Mandarin and Tamil are the main embodied cultural capital, which parents transmit to their children (Bourdieu, 1977). Every ethnic group has its own home language instead of the major language. Malay Language or *Bahasa Melayu* is the official language or medium of communication; Mandarin language and Tamil language are second languages in national communication. The most important cultural capital component in Malaysia is that every family uses its home language to endow children with the necessary tools for thinking and communicating. Every ethnic group uses its home language to interact and communicate with peers within the group, and the Malay Language is used when they communicate with other ethnic

groups. The Malay Language is a prominent social agent as a medium of communication between ethnic groups (Dawi, 2006). However, the ability of parents to communicate, whether orally or in writing, with their children's school depends not simply on their language use or educational level, but also on their confidence, communicative skills and their knowledge of the school culture. Parents who have skills in this area are able to develop their child's skills like school or community norms and values (Brooker, 2002). Thus, cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1977) is needed to explore how parents promote the majority language to their children in order to develop peer interaction with other ethnic groups in pre-school.

Further elements that relate to embodied cultural capital are 'fields' and 'habitus'. A field can be any structure of social relations (King, 2005). The field, the setting in which practices take place, is a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) described the school system as a field. Following one's school ethics is a practice in this field. School syllabi and text mediate children's access to the field. However, this mediation is usually informed by dominant group practices (Dumais, 2002). Schools provide academic ability and social styles and behaviour, including children and their parents' styles of interaction with the school (Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Sullivan, 2001). Therefore, schools play a main role as a resource for children developing their habitus. Habitus can be derived from an individual's habitus which is often defined as being dispositions that are inculcated in the family but manifest themselves in different ways in each individual. These two elements are important in my study in order to understand the factors linking the child's habitus (dispositions) and the family's culture and children's peer interactions. A child's behaviour may be formed by the habitus of the family and by the objective chances of the class or ethnicity to which the individual belongs in their daily interactions and changes with the individual's position within a field. Children who have more cultural capital (having been exposed to it from birth in their middle-class families) feel more comfortable in school, communicate more easily with teachers, and are therefore more likely to do well in school (DeGraaf, DeGraaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000). Lower-class children find the school environment different from their home

environment and lack the capital necessary to fit in as well as children of higher socio-economic status.

Family educational practices create cultural capital for the child in school. Families provide a good foundation for bringing up young children. They have capability to mobilise goods, status and social connections, and sophisticated scheduling capacities in order to advance their children's educations and provided a good environment (Lareau, 2000; Symeou, 2007). Families from lower social groups, though not providing the same cultural environment as the dominant classes, can nevertheless prioritise the effort to give their child a gain in time, transmitting what knowledge they have to the child in the years before primary school (Brooker, 2002). Cultural capital requires above all a lengthy period of acquisition, and it is too late to catch up when the child begins statutory schooling. Therefore, transmitting knowledge needs a lengthy early period, such as in the early years, in order to nurture children's social relationships and prosocial behaviour at very young age.

All aspects of Malaysian family life - religion, values and norms, historical and geographical contexts, daily activities, entertainment - differ between the ethnic groups. Most parents nurture their children with different styles either within or between ethnic groups. Every ethnic group will keep family ownership of cultural capital in each generation by investment and time (Majzub, 2006). Brooker (2002) explains "cultural capital in three aspects most commonly associated in children: mothers' educational experiences; family language and communicative skills; and family literacy practices" (p. 33). The value of an individual's cultural capital may be enhanced by the ownership of parental cultural capital. Children are expected to have the same norms and values as their parents and grandparents.

Thirdly, the 'institutionalised' cultural capital refers to academic credentials and educational qualifications such as diplomas and degrees, which certify the value of embodied cultural capital items (Monkman, et al., 2005). Parents' ability to help children effectively will be partly determined by their own academic abilities (Monkman, et al., 2005; Sullivan, 2001). Parents deliberately teach their children norms and values in the early years, and, later on, coach them in school values and school subjects. Not all parents are equally aware that these forms of help fulfil

school expectations; it is dependent on their credentials. According to Majzub (2006) parents as the first and prime educators of their children from PERPADUAN pre-school still play a less active role in their children's learning at home. In addition, children inevitably pick up styles of speech and vocabulary, though talking to their parents, and hearing their parents talk to each other and to others in their social circle. The forms of parents' transmission of cultural capital are likely to be crucial in a child's development of language and cultural knowledge, yet have been given less empirical attention than child's attainment. In Malaysian contexts, each ethnic group has a sense of belonging to its ethnicity through e.g. language, norms and religion. Each has its own skills and knowledge to educate children by their moulding instead of following the government curriculum.

Based on cultural capital theory, parents provide children with cultural capital, the attitudes and knowledge that make the educational system a comfortable familiar place in which they can succeed easily. In order to understand that, the researcher will examine parents' expectations of children's behaviour in pre-school. A thorough investigation is needed to understand how cultural capital, including habitus and field, may affect the children's peer interactions among different ethnic groups. At the same time, in order to understand parental and pre-school expectations, the research will investigate the differences and similarities between parental norms and values and the pre-school ethos.

4.5 The Conceptual Model

Three theories discussed earlier include Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner); Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky); and Social Capital (Bourdieu). The most relevant theoretical perspective to help me to construct a theoretical model of the developmental influences on children's social behaviour (refer to Figure 4.1) for analysing my data is Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, which discusses the intermediate level of environments influencing children's peer interactions. Thus, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory forms the overall framework of my study; the centre of the model combines sociocultural theory followed by social and cultural capital at the microsystems. These three theories are important for understanding

how children from different ethnic groups and genders relate to each other in multi-ethnic pre-school.

All theories emphasise the determinant factors in a multi-ethnic pre-school context as follows: firstly, they deal with children's peer interactions i.e., prosocial behaviour, relationships, and friendships and how they relate with others. Secondly, the ecological model of the developmental influences on children's social behaviour (refer to Figure 4.1) explains how parents' social and cultural capital diversity, i.e. the norms and values, languages, religion, beliefs, and parents' networks, affects children's behaviour. Thirdly, it deals with the pre-school ethos and community setting which suit cultural diversity i.e., curriculum, ethos, and environment. In sum, the results of the study will help us to better understand children's social behaviour in different ethnic groups.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated that a child's development is influenced by four environmental systems, namely microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. The variables that are determinants of children's social behaviour in social contexts such as parents, grandparents, neighbourhood, pre-school, peer, media, and place of worship have been discussed in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. These elements are categorised and discussed as follows: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem and Macrosystem. The following paragraphs summarise the main points and important issues of the theories that are related to this research. Figure 4.1 show the ecological model of developmental influences on children's social behaviour Version 1. This was developed from Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model.

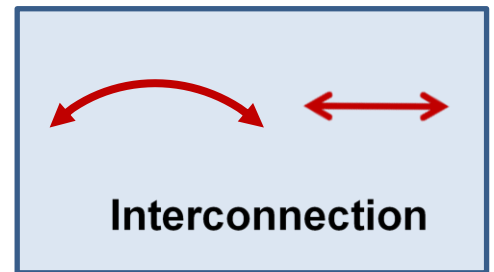
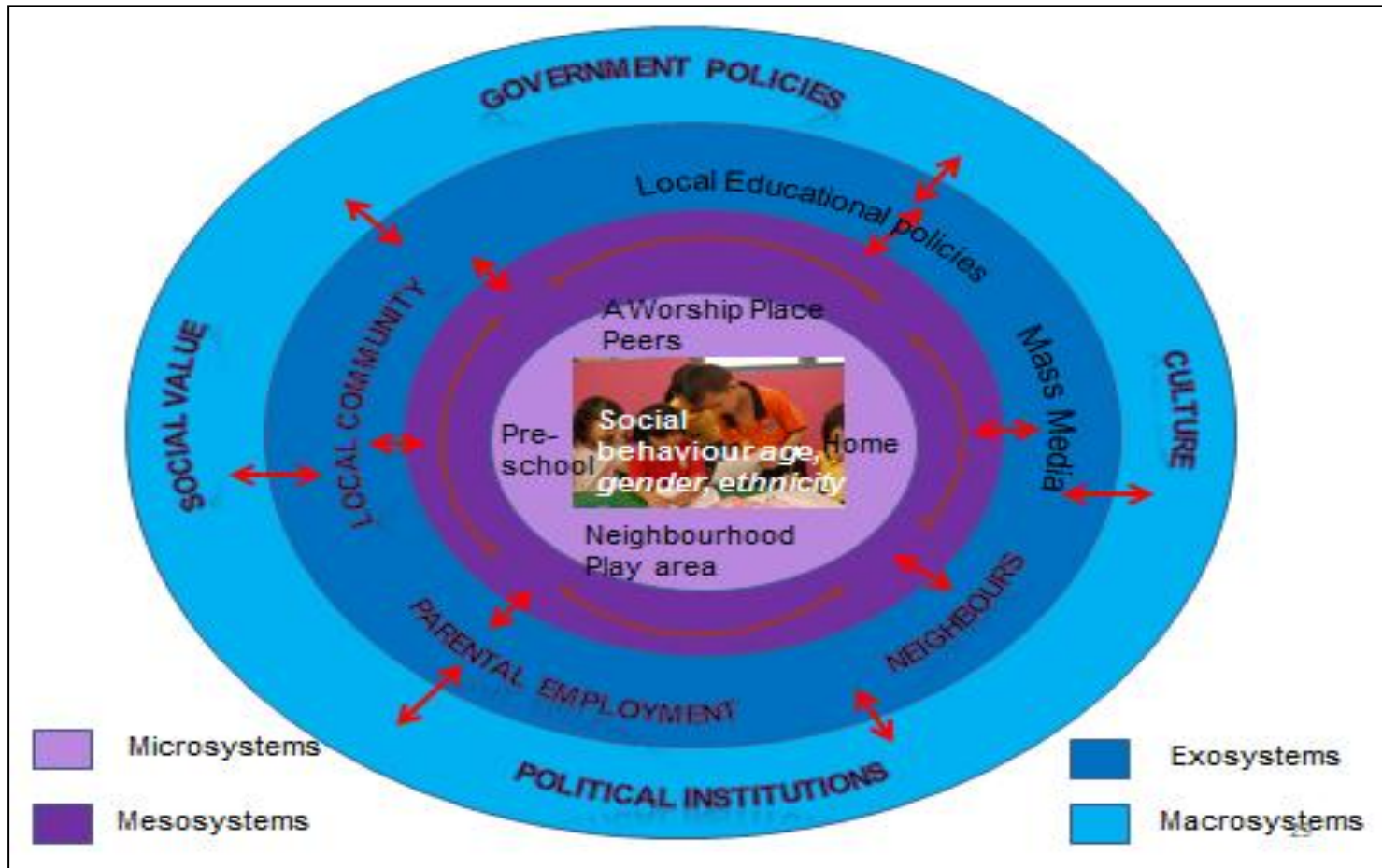


Figure 4.1: An ecological model of the developmental influences on children's social behaviour, Version 1

4.5.1 The Microsystem

I have considered elements from Bronfenbrenner's theory that are important in driving this model for my study. Figure 4.2 shows the microsystem layer. The centre of this setting is the child, home, pre-school, neighbourhood play area, place of worship, and peers. A setting is a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction – home, day care centre, playground, and so on. Activity, roles and interpersonal relations are the elements or building blocks of the microsystem. In Figure 4.1 and 4.2 the red arrows in the mesosystem layer show the connections between elements in the microsystem such as families, pre-school and neighbourhoods, play area, worship places, and peers. Strong supportive links among a child's various settings can reinforce the values of each and make transitions between microsystems easier for children. For example, the interactive and synergistic nature of a link between the family and other settings in which children spend their time influences a child's peer relations.

The centre of the model is the child, and possible influences on the child we routinely need to consider are the demographic factors of age, gender and ethnicity; refer to Figure 4.2. These three factors place that child in a particular environmental niche. The focus in this study is on children's peer interactions as the product of cultural and other environmental influences (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The settings (e.g., home, school, neighbourhood play area, peers and place of worship) influence children through the physical features, personalities and belief systems of the people in those settings. However, the settings are dynamic and the effect of the settings is modified by age, gender and ethnicity of children and their perception of the context and the people within them (Bowes & Watson, 2004; Rogoff, 2003). In order to get a deeper understanding, I prefer to combine this model with Vygotsky's conceptual theory, which is that children learn to use the tools for thinking provided by culture through their interactions with adults and skilled partners in the zone of proximal development. Children internalise external signs, along with their cultural meanings, through engaging with others in a cultural context. This development process is important because it involves not only parents, but grandparents, teachers

and the experience of peers. This model is not complete if only the mediating factors are discussed without relating the processes of child's development such as zone of proximal development. The model explains how the process of peer interaction is more important than the other factors in understanding social interaction among children from different ethnic groups.

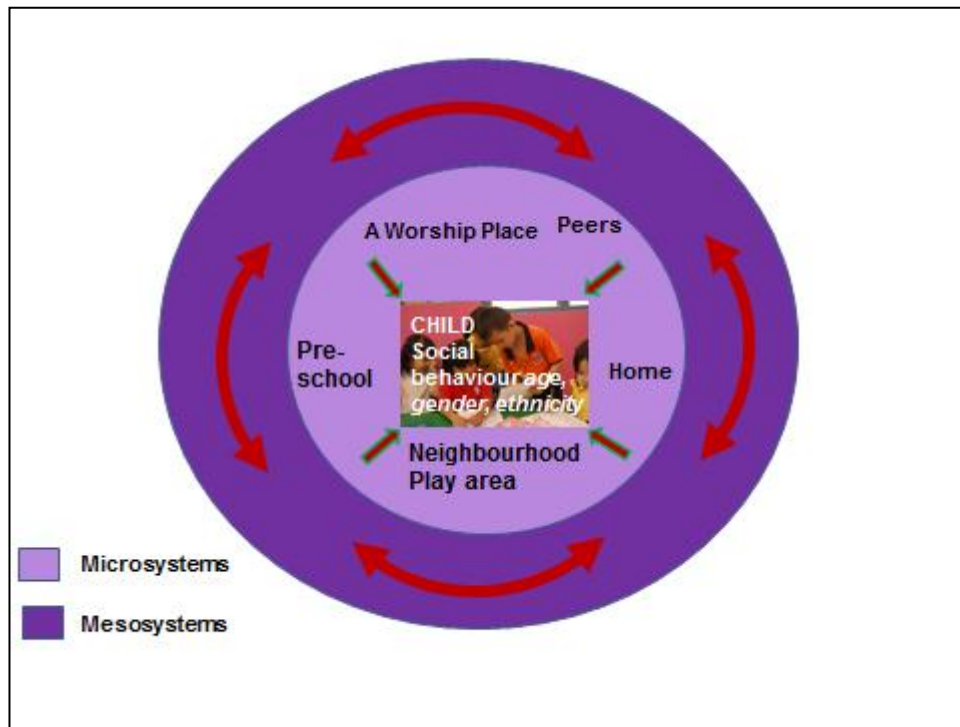


Figure 4.2: A microsystem ecological model

Critical aspects which need to be explored in this study in children's peer relationships are: first, a reciprocal interaction among children; second, the reason children relate to each other is instigated by various factors, including objects and symbols, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006, p.798); third, the condition of interaction is fair, enduring and beneficial. I have developed an ecological model of children's social behaviour (Figure 4.2) in order to understand the interaction and relationship of peers and the type of behaviour that persuades them to interact. Children's experience of activities differs from child to child, and their behaviour is also different.

According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), the experiences of children take place in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit, engagement in sustained,

progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. The child's development is enhanced when children are able to observe differences in their dyadic experience. In this context a more enduring reciprocal interaction, a larger and more complex microsystem as the child grows older, means enhanced development. The forms of interaction in the immediate environment, referred to as proximal processes, are found in child activities, group or solitary play, reading, learning new skills, problem solving, caring for others in distress, and acquiring new knowledge. A relation obtains whenever one person in a setting pays attention to or participates in the activities of another such as a dyad.

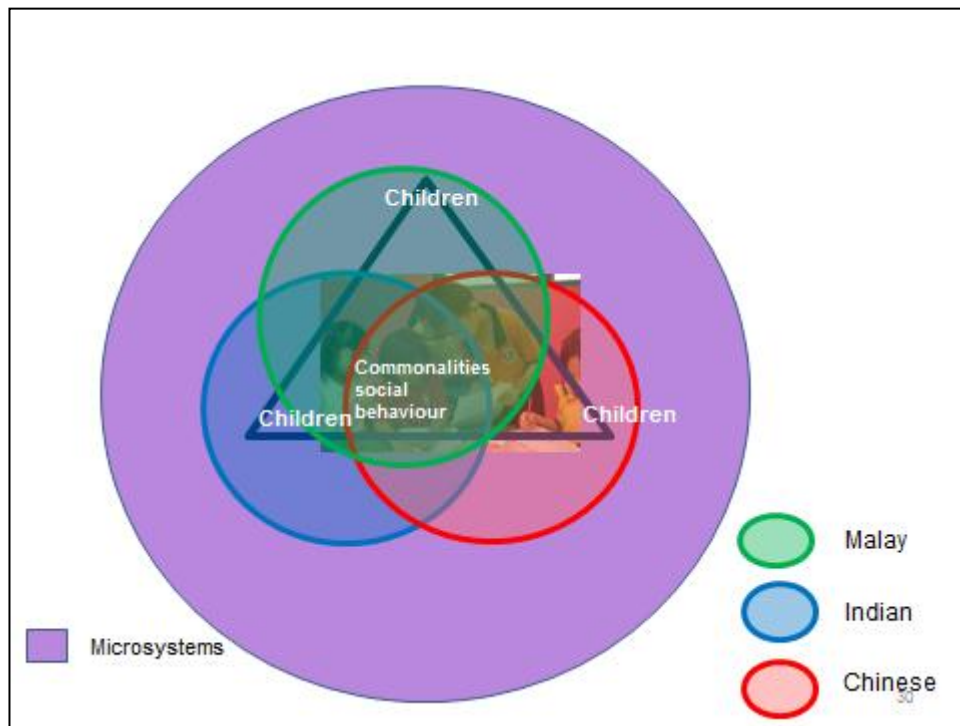


Figure 4.3: An ecological model of children's social behaviour

Social roles as contexts of human development provide a child with acceptable behaviour. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p. 85) considers "a role is a set of activities and relations expected of person occupying a particular position in society and of others in relation to that person". A child develops his or her role in interaction with the home (parents, sibling and grandparents) and then beyond (peers, teachers, and neighbours). Referring to Figure 4.3, children interacting with others from different ethnic backgrounds maybe develop social roles in the context of their relationships. The centre of the model shows the commonality of social behaviour they practise in

their own ethnic groups. In this study, a child's role usually follows role expectations from the parent according to age, gender, kinship relation, ethnicity and religion. This is associated with Bronfenbrenner's (1979, p. 104) view that "human development is facilitated through interaction with persons who occupy a variety of roles and through participation in an ever-broadening role repertoire". In this case, the parent is expected to provide guidance for the child parallel with societal expectation from the ethnic groups and expectations of the pre-school. However, the role between the two institutions may be different and there are many possible contrasts between the two different entities (parents and school or community) because of their ethnicity. At a pre-school age, a child may be confused whether to practise home norms or pre-school norms. Sociocultural theory emphasises interaction between individuals is important to the development of an individual sense such as self-control (Chen, et al., 2009) in order for children to compromise to sustain their peer relationships. Social roles as contexts of human development provide direction for this research approach.

Another connection to emphasise is the relationship between child, parents and teacher. The connection between teacher and child in term of pre-school ethos practices (i.e., level of norms and values or openness), sub-culture and culture meeting parental expectations is very important as an indicator of pre-school success. The pre-school ethos and curriculum practices are important for policy analysis and for the planning of prevention or intervention programmes in order to reduce negative consequences for children (Bowes & Watson, 2004; Gonzalez-Mena, 2002; Monkman, et al., 2005). Through that connection between child, parents and teachers, they built their own personal characteristics which are suited to a multicultural society.

4.5.2 The Mesosystems

A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as, for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighbourhood peer group). Meanwhile, Bowes and Hayes (2004,

p.8) refers to the interrelationship between settings in which the child actively participates and refers to the degree of congruence or match between two settings. However, according to Barbara Rogoff (2003, p. 47), the mesosystem in Bronfenbrenner's approach is the relationship between the context of the microsystem such as the complementary or conflicting practices of home and school. The mesosystem involves "relations between and among systems - two or three or more in relation" through which the developing child experiences reality. Children belong to many microsystems and need to make adjustments. A mesosystem is established at the point where a child first enters a new setting, termed an ecological transition (Dunlop & Fabian, 2002). Although each setting is a different entity, each setting can be seen as interconnected.

In this context the actual participation of people other than the child in both settings, bolsters the similarity between the two settings. The stronger the links between settings, the more powerful the mesosystem effects will be on the child's development. Then, connected settings will increase the child's competence and, in future, he or she might have the ability to make further connections.

Therefore, there must be a two-way linkage between home and school where the child participates in both. A minimum "linkage or interconnection" would place the child at risk, particularly if there is little agreement and overlap between home and school in terms of values, experiences, objects and behavioural style. If the style, expectations and values of people working in a pre-school are similar to those that children have experienced at home, they and their parents will settle more readily into the routines of the centre (Prochner, Cleghorn, & Green, 2008). To give another example, if children are not prepared for pre-school by their experiences in another setting such as home or childcare centre, skills such as holding a pencil, cutting with scissors, or tying shoe laces, can make transition very difficult and delay development in the new context (Bowes & Watson, 2004; Prochner, et al., 2008). Homes that do not value schooling or do not use the formal language used for instructional purposes put the child at a disadvantage in school. The schools which do not value home experience put the child at a disadvantage in school. In contrast, where all these links are strong and reciprocal, the odds favour the development of academic competence.

An effective mesosystem occurs when parents are interested and involved in school. The home nurtures the child to be comfortable and competent in dealing with the school's basic activities such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. To make it more effective, the home always conveys a positive regard for written materials and the use of language in formal, problem-solving and systematic question-and-answer sessions, organised around the solution of problems involving objects, quantities and relationships. Children exposed to "academic culture" are more likely to work to their fullest potential at pre-school (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews, 2008; Prochner, et al., 2008). Formal language is the language that is composed of language code and values code. The language code gives the child the categories for structuring and communicating his or her experience while the values code tells him or her what in his or her experiences is important (Bernstein, 1975; Hood, et al., 2008). For one child the codes learned in the family and those required by the school may be continuous, while for another they may be discontinuous.

4.5.3 The Exosystems

This exosystems circle in Figure 4.4 includes the social system that affects children such as parental employment, local educational policy, neighbourhood, local community, and the media. The impact may be directly on their own experience but can be filtered through their family. The elements can be the neighbourhood or local social networks, including their parents' friends and the world of work, which affect children through parents' experiences. A mothers' network may influence their children's network, including modelling, teaching, providing opportunities for social interactions, or parent networks (neighbours/friends) can help parents deal with stresses that undermine their parenting and may also provide them with role models and sanctions for parenting. The local community plays a major role in providing premises for the school with cooperation from the Government Departments that are directly involved. Meanwhile, the Local Educational Agency in this context plays an important role in terms of providing staff, curriculum, and a policy which is in line with the local community and based on the locality. However, I have only had access

to Local Education Agency information through documents from pre-school. Mass Media provides resources and information for the parents.

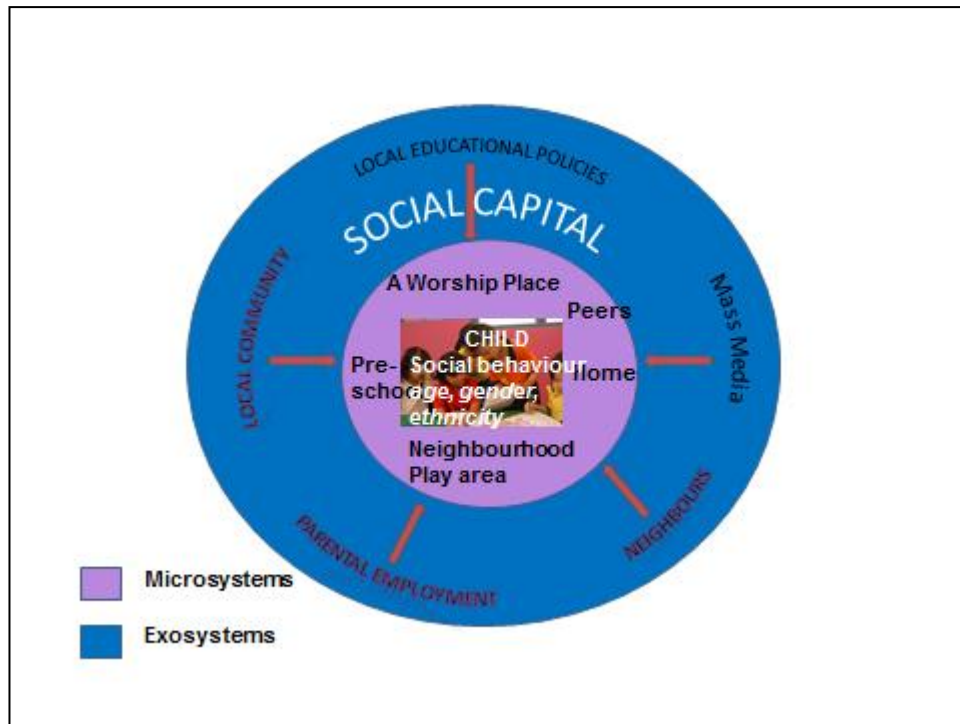


Figure 4.4: An exosystem ecological model

In line with these theories is the importance in social behaviour of social capital such as reciprocity and network resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). Social capital is associated with an increase in children's peer interactions and peer competence (Chen, et al., 2000; Høglund & Leadbeater, 2004; Keltner, 1990) and as an important resource in a child's development (Baumrind, 1978). For example, financial and information support, family educational and practical help, and community create social and cultural capital for the children (not including grandparents' assistance and extended family, regarded as part of the home element in this study).

The changing of family structure from traditional family to modern family is perceived as influencing parents in urban and suburban areas in terms of bringing up their children. The mothers, who work outside the home, have altered parenting practices. Formal and informal child-care or pre-school, as well as enriching children's knowledge such as providing new activities, presents a new setting of

group care involving larger groups of children than would be present in a family (Conger, Ge, Elder, & Lorenz, 1994; Gottfried, Gottfried, & Bathurst, 1995; Hoff, Lausen, & Tardif, 2002; McLyod, 1990). This kind of setting demands social skills of sharing, learning to play cooperatively with other children, and forming relationships with peers (McGroder, 2000).

Referring to Figure 4.1, parents have been considered to be the primary socialisation agent and are the contexts whereby individuals develop aspirations for their future across the transition to adulthood in the microsystem level. Although parental cultural capital gives children practice in proper social norms and values in multicultural society such as social roles (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), social capital resources are important to help complement the norms and values children practise. Then, parents have enriched children's social and cultural capital in the pre-school through bidirectional nurturing practices.

According to Rogoff (2003, p. 47), "the exosystem relates the microsystem in which children are involved to settings in which children do not directly participate, such as parents' work places if the children do not go there". It refers to the linkages between two or more settings that are represented as a step further removed from the child than the microsystem, because in the exosystem the child is not directly involved in all settings but is directly affected by them (Bowes & Watson, 2004). The exosystems most likely to influence children, through their influence on family members, are the settings where parents use their social capital. These include workplace, parents' networks and community (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988) and mass media (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Exosystems are situations having a bearing on a child's development but in a situation in which the developing child does not actually play a direct role. They are settings that have power over a child's life, such as the workplace of parents and those centres of power, e.g. school board and planning commissions that make decisions affecting the child's day-to-day life (Gonzalez-Mena, 2002; Hayes, et al., 1980; Hood, et al., 2008). The exosystem affects the child when the child's parents or other significant adult in the child's life suffer in a way that impoverishes their behaviour in the child's microsystem: home, school, and peers.

4.5.4 The Macrosystems

The outer layer is the macrosystem (see Figure 4.5), which includes political institutions, government policy, culture, social and cultural values systems. Ethnic identity gains meaning from the predominant cultural values of society. These are the set of values or cultural beliefs around which life in a society is organised, and which are passed on through families, school, religious settings and other social and government institutions (Rogoff, 2003). The macrosystem provides the “blueprint” for the ecology of human development. It is a combination of meso- and exosystems within the broad ideological and institutional patterns of a particular culture or subculture. The “blueprint” reflects that people have shared assumptions about “how things should be done” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In Malaysia, one such value of collective society is tolerance of ethnic groups in order to maintain social harmony. Besides that, other prosocial behaviour might be important in everyday life, especially for children in the early years. Of course, the values vary among the ethnic groups within this country, but this variety of values reshapes the experience of a great many children in families and school.

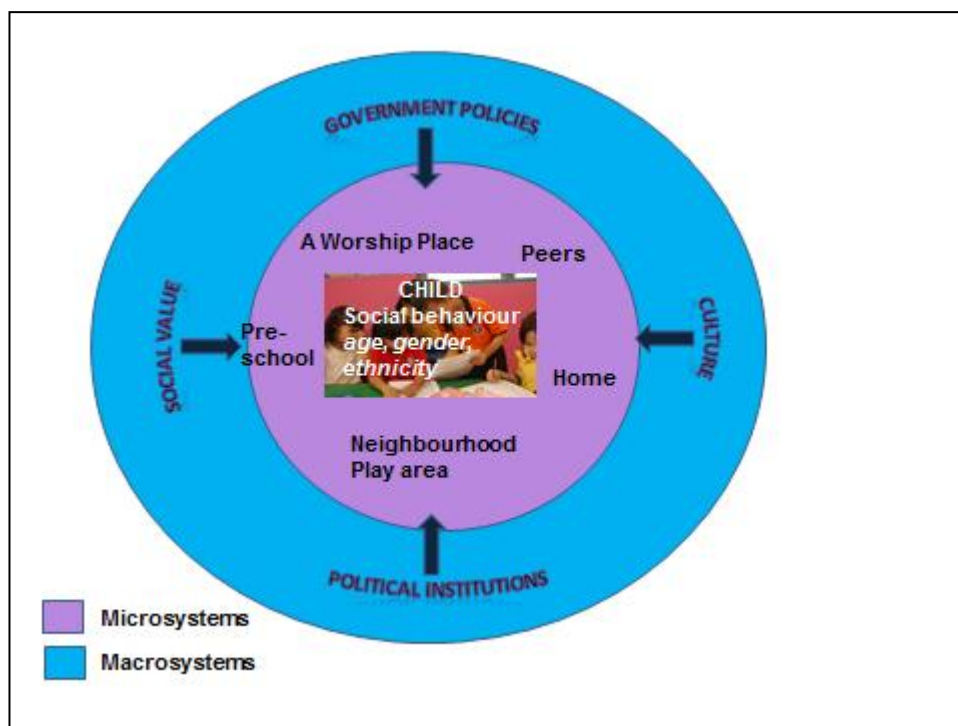


Figure 4.5: A macrosystem ecological model

This argument suggests that there may be two major effects of the macrosystem on families: positive and negative. The positive effects are the opportunity that is offered by a social pattern that encourages and supports parents and children while the negative one is any social pattern or social event that impoverishes the ability and willingness of adults to care for children and for children to learn from adults (Lareau, 2000; Symeou, 2007). Much of a child's development is based on his or her immediate setting (mesosystem) and the indirect influence of a setting in which the child does not participate (exosystem). Many of the most important influences on children's lives come from social, economic and political changes that occur at the level of nations and whole societies (Adam & Chase-Lansdale, 2002). For instance, the migration of rural Malays to urban centres has changed their family structure and many mothers have entered the work force primarily in response to the needs of the urban life that is so expensive (Conger, et al., 1994). As a result, many children have experienced their mother's absence without much support from the community's social system. Many children suffer from loneliness and neglect, or develop on their own without proper observation (Hoglund & Leadbeater, 2004). This environment may disrupt the child's development.

Furthermore, young children need to form powerful attachments that provide the basics for prosocial motivation to develop (Ainsworth, Blehar, Water, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Eisenberg, et al., 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2002). Once they have developed basic prosocial motivation, e.g. to obey, to attend to rules, and have established the rudiments of conscience, they need situations that are more challenging. These include being exposed to moral dilemmas in a nurturing and supportive setting. Nevertheless, in a situation where there is no alternative or no choice, where only slavish obedience is required, the child's moral development can languish. Upon all of these arguments, it is suggested that democratic society (a pluralistic society) offers a healthy environment in which humans can grow, think, and make decisions and evaluations.

4.6 Summary of Chapter 4

In conclusion, the detailed discussion of different theoretical perspective has helped the researcher to construct a theoretical model for analysing the data. Thus, Figure 4.1 elaborates elements from the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem contributing to children's social behaviour. Figure 4.2 explains child behaviour in the microsystem and Figure 4.3 represents the commonalities of social behaviour of children from different ethnic groups, including prosocial behaviour. This figure describes the basic input characteristics from parents that predict the effect of children's behaviour. These elements in the model show how they are interconnected as having an impact on children's social behaviour. Figures 4.4 and 4.5 indicate elements from the exosystem and macrosystem that influence parents' socialisation of children. The variables that have an impact on parents' socialisation of children were found to be interconnected and overlapping. Therefore, the theoretical framework is in line with the aims of this study, to understand Malay pre-school education to be culturally responsive to and inclusive for all cultures present in the setting by investigating positive and constructive parent-child relationships across the three cultures. In addition, this study also investigates the effects of gender and ethnicity of the groups. In order that the theoretical framework delivers constructive results, the next chapter will discuss the methodology of the research.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods that I employed in this study in the processes of gathering, analysing and interpreting the data. The chapter restates the research questions, followed by the Research Approach that guided me in this research project, and then continues with the description of the research design. Data collection techniques and data analysis for this particular research study are also described.

This study sets out to answer the research questions which were derived from a comprehensive analysis of extant research and literature on the influence of parents' social and cultural capital on children's social behaviour (See Section 3.7):

1. How do children from the three different ethnic groups and of different genders relate to each other in pre-school?
2. How does the social and cultural capital of parents from the three different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia affect children's behaviour?
3. How do similarities and differences between parental and pre-school norms and values influence the social development of children from different ethnic backgrounds?

5.2 A Qualitative Research Method

Techniques employed should be judged on the extent to which they can use the data gathered to explain particular forms of behaviour. It would be wrong to criticise quantitative data for not helping to pinpoint causality, so it is equally wrong to criticise qualitative methods for their inability to generalise. Each method can contribute only a certain amount of understanding of any particular social phenomenon, and it is in the synthesis of results gained from various techniques that, slowly and surely, we can begin to develop the wider picture (Connolly, 1998). There remains a distinct tendency to judge social research by how far one can

generalise from the result and develop universal laws of social behaviour and interaction. If a researcher wants to develop an overall picture of human interaction, to identify regularities of behaviour and to generalise about particular aspects of society, then quantitative methods are the most appropriate. However, while such methods can illuminate interesting correlations between particular social factors, they cannot explain the precise nature of the relationship between them. Quantitative data, for example, may therefore show that a statistically significant correlation exists between ethnicity and the pattern of child's interaction, but it would be wrong to assume that the data can offer any understanding of how and why this is the case.

Most studies of children's behaviour have used research methodologies centred on attitude testing, behavioural checklists, or modest field experiments. Infrequently, surveys of children's attitudes are undertaken, but usually not for children younger than about seven years of age (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). These surveys typically have a very limited scope and generally rely on simple yes-or-no response questions to gauge attitudes toward social issues. Therefore, in this sense, in focusing on concrete social processes and the intentions and experiences of a particular child, qualitative methods can help us understand *causality*, i.e. what causes a person to behave in a certain way (Connolly, 1998, p. 7). In essence, this is the function of qualitative methods. A child's behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside, and be seen as a subjective rather than objective undertaking. The present study, in using qualitative methods, therefore attempts to understand the nature of interaction between young children and the particular ways in which it comes from the influence of their gender and ethnic identities.

When qualitative research is conducted with children it gives a researcher insight into children's lives within a cultural context. Most research on childhood socialisation takes an interpretative view, viewing children as active agents who are influenced by and influence others. From the interpretative perspective, children's individual development is part of a more general collective process in which children become active members of the adult culture through processes of interpretative

reproduction. A variety of types of qualitative method are well suited for conducting research with children when hearing children's own voices. Qualitative studies contribute to a comparative perspective of children's peer relations in a cultural context. For example, some of these studies have found important differences in styles of play, interaction, and friendship processes across subcultural groups. Others have compared peer relations across cultural groups and noted important differences in interactive style, friendship relations, and cross-gender relations. These differences are related to different styles of interaction, value systems and beliefs, and social and educational policies in different cultures.

This study used a qualitative research method, including observations and interviews. Observation techniques were applied to the children and then semi-structured interviews were held with the parents, children and teachers. Apart from interview and observation, children's behaviour records were also investigated. Thus, the research framework represents the overall direction of this study guided by the literature review in answering the research questions.

For the purpose of this study, I have applied a qualitative methodology because of its appropriateness in acquiring and analysing the data in question. A qualitative method is considered appropriate because the study is primarily concerned with human understanding and focuses on behaviour. This research deals with human personal relationships within a specific cultural context. As presented in various scholarly works, qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in depth, without imposing pre-existing notions on the research setting (Patton, 2002). The definition of qualitative research that was used in the present study is one that focuses on methodological traditions. In relation to this, Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as a

Process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (p.15).

Qualitative research offers an approach that is both complementary to, and transcendent of, conventional scientific inquiry (Padgett, 1998). Qualitative research is interested in the individual subject's point of view, feelings, and motives through

the documentation of internal ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Padgett, 1998). Qualitative research is descriptive of the taken-for-granted experience of members, draws on 'natural setting' as the source of data collection and reports all valuable perspectives available. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) stressed that a qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand elements of behaviour by getting to know those involved, their values, beliefs, and emotions. Moreover, qualitative research produces descriptive data about people's words and their observable behaviour. The research offers rich descriptive reports of individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, views and feelings, the meanings and the interpretations given to events and things, as well as their behaviour.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007) note that in qualitative research the researcher is the primary research instrument and the researcher's insight is the key instrument for analysis. Qualitative strategies enable the researcher to record and understand people in their own terms and the data collected consists of detailed descriptions of people, events, situations and conversations. Depth and detail are revealed through direct quotations and careful descriptions of behaviour. Qualitative research is thus the term often used to describe the study of people, systems and phenomena in their specific contexts. Miles and Huberman (1994) believe qualitative research can allow the researcher to gain an holistic overview, is inductive and is sensitive to researcher effect. This involves analysing data with words, acquiring data from the inside through a process of understanding behaviour, listening to a number of interpretations of material, and choosing the most compelling ones.

An assumption is important in this research to explore cultural context, that it is possible to engage in methods such as observation, interviews and report analysis in a theoretical vacuum, with no guiding definition, concepts and constructs (Cohen, et al., 2007; Greig, 1999). In a natural context, children's behaviour occurs freely, however it relates with others in the community. The data describe and interpret children's perspectives. Data collection was unobtrusive, seeking insider knowledge, verbal recordings, field notes and similar methods such as observation and interview. Detailed narratives revealing participants' perspectives explain and describe what, why and how. A qualitative methodology was used in this research because it was

considered to be the most appropriate way of discovering or uncovering perceptions about children's social behaviour from their parents. It was considered crucial in this research to hear personal views from groups with Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic backgrounds, because the research could contribute to the planning of culturally appropriate ways to improve ethnic relationships in Malaysia and to make these relationships more resilient and vibrant. Therefore, an ethnographic method was vital in order to understand the ethnic group culture that affects children. This conceptual issue will be discussed in the next section.

5.3 Ethnography

The framework for the conduct of this research includes observation, field notes, talks, interviews and documents that form the bases for ethnographic research. This study aims to describe and analyse the practices and beliefs of cultures in pre-school and at home. Most contemporary definitions of ethnography are compatible with Denzin's notion that ethnography is "that form of inquiry and writing that produces descriptions and accounts about the ways of life of the writer and those written about" (1997, p. xi). As a result of this, ethnographic research observes a setting and gathers data, and is directly involved in the setting under study, including the researcher as object of inquiry (Silverman, 2004). The keys of inquiry for an ethnographer are exploration of the site and the questions guiding the researcher's activities. Ethnographers explore a site over time, new questions arise, new analytic opportunities are presented, and new approaches to the analysis of data are indicated.

Freebody (2003) notes ethnography has been taken up by educational researchers to explore ways of describing and interpreting what is happening in formal and informal educational settings. Ethnographic research, with its emphasis on context and 'thick descriptions', has been seen as offering a range of procedures that give applicability and flexibility in an education setting. Indeed, one of the strengths of ethnographic research to which its practitioners often refer is the flexibility of its conduct. The researcher chooses an appropriate sample of people, and the collection of data but those things are flexible and when the researcher

becomes more immersed in the research site, all will have a highly interactive effect on the nature of what may be inferred from the findings.

This study involves an approach that focuses on understanding what needs to be known, done, predicted and interpreted in order to participate in the construction of children's social behaviour within a social group, through which culture knowledge is developed. It is concerned with the social and cultural dynamics of a classroom. I seek to understand the cultural patterns and practices of everyday life of the children and parents under study from an insider perspective and exploration of culture. In this way, 'a piece of culture' can be examined in depth to identify larger cultural issues and elements in communities (Freebody, 2003). In terms of selection of participants in this study, I used a purposeful selection approach. These people have been selected because they are taken to represent instances of group behaviour according to ethnicity. Ethnographers put effort into bracketing their own cultural knowledge and values, focusing on how the members under observation show their knowledge in the patterns of their practice.

Since the study involved detailed qualitative research on children's social behaviour, it was impossible to cover all the PERPADUAN Pre-schools in depth within the 14-week period of study spent in Malaysia for the collection of data. Though limited, the duration of 3 months was sufficient time for me to collect data. The policy of my employer allowed me funding to stay in Malaysia for only 3 months, after which I would have to use my own resources. For this reason, I chose one PERPADUAN Pre-school for data collection and observed about 25 children. I carried out further investigations, such as observation and interviews, during the school session from June to August 2009. In order to cover in-depth data, I worked in PERPADUAN Pre-school every day for 14 weeks. Ethnography involves long term commitment from the researcher. I was there every day for 14 weeks building up a picture of human behaviour, working on getting to know the children and getting to know the setting so I was able to build up a 'thick description' of the setting and children's behaviour and I consider this to be ethnography.

In collecting the data for this study, a number of different approaches were chosen. The techniques used in qualitative research may include observation,

documenting, analysing, and interpreting attributes, patterns and characteristics. This means the overall data came from a combination of interviews, observations, and documentary analysis. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), the process in qualitative research may be carried out using a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, and recordings. Thus, data in the form of quotes from interviews, episodes from field observations, and documentary evidence are to be presented to support the study's findings adequately and convincingly. One of the main methods employed for examining children's peer relationships is naturalistic observation of social behaviour (La Greca & Stark, 1986). Naturalistic observations have been extensively employed for describing the developmental parameters of children's peer interactions and friendships. Details about the data collection techniques which have been used in this study are explained below.

The Location

One Tabika PERPADUAN Negara (National Unity Pre-school) in Malaysia was used for this research. Every pre-school has three ethnic components in class. The pre-school chosen was in an urban area (Tabika PERPADUAN, in Kuala Lumpur). This pre-school was selected because of its multi-ethnic proportions. Children were from three ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian.

Sampling

I used purposeful sampling or selection. In "purposeful sampling", a researcher intentionally selects a site or people "who best help them to provide useful information and to help learn about the phenomenon"(Creswell, 2008, p. 215). These children were selected because they were taken to represent a best case of multi-ethnic children.

Patton (2002) notes that "the key of purposeful sampling is to select cases for systematic study that are information rich and illuminate, that is, they offer useful manifestations of phenomenon of interest; sampling then, is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population"(p.40). I chose a sample based on purposeful sampling, selecting cases from a pre-school

which has different subgroups (Bailey, 2007; Patton, 2002) including Malay, Chinese and Indian, and different economic backgrounds.

In this section, I shall describe the sample involved in my study (see Table 5.1). For the sampling, I observed and interviewed the children (n=25), the parents (n=24) and the teacher and assistant (n=2). The total number of children in one class is 25.

Table 5.1: Number of sample

Respondents	Number of Sample
Children	N=25
Parents	N=24*
Teacher	N=1
Assistant Teacher	N=1
Total	N=51

* Total 24 parents because 1 parent has twin children.

For selection of the children, I selected 25 children in one pre-school class. They belonged to different ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese, and Indian. All children were chosen as respondents regardless of their age (5 – 6 years) and ethnicity. For the purpose of interview, as the study progressed, I made certain selections of common behaviour based on the children's behaviour and decided to focus on the views of children.

All the information obtained from the interview session was analysed in detail by merging it with information from the teacher. For that reason, I needed to identify respondents who were able to provide appropriate levels of insight into the phenomena being studied and answer the questions of the study. The children as a sample were chosen on the basis of particular insights that they could provide on the events being studied, and it was important that those being interviewed could indeed provide a meaningful contribution. For selection of the parents, I selected the parents of the children who were chosen.

The teacher and assistant teacher were chosen as my respondents because they are important personnel who are acquainted with the children in their class, are familiar with the children's behaviour, and are the people guiding the children. Therefore, I interviewed them in order to obtain valuable information and further clarification about matters related to the children's behaviour in class and school.

Profile of Participants

This section includes profiles of the children, parents and teachers. The research participant profiles give information about the number of children, their age, education background and occupation. This study involved 25 children from a multi-ethnic background, with 9 children aged 5 and 16 children aged 6 years. There were 11 Chinese children, 8 Malay children and 6 Indian children in the research sample (refer to Tables 5.2 and 5.3). This sample was appropriate and representative of the PERPADUAN Pre-schools in the country because the characteristics of the pre-schools throughout Malaysia are similar in terms of their structure, ethos and implementation.

Table 5.2: Population of the participants comprised of pre-school children

Ethnicity	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Malay	3	4	7
Chinese	2	9	11
Indian	3	4	7
Total	8	17	25

Table 5.3: The pre-school children participants

List	Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Language
1	Adam	Male	6	Malay	Malay
2	Asah	Female	6	Indian	Tamil
3	Ashok	Male	5	Indian	Tamil and English
4	Arif	Male	6	Malay	Malay
5	Ardini	Female	6	Malay	Malay
6	Canny	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin, English, Malay
7	Ellin	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin and Malay
8	Gee Ze	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin and Malay
9	Harun	Male	6	Malay	Malay
10	Nini	Female	6	Indian	Tamil
11	Jenny	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin and English
12	Yee Zi	Female	5	Chinese	Mandarin and English
13	Lela	Female	5	Indian	Tamil
14	May Ying	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin
15	Asmira	Female	5	Malay	Malay
16	Raju	Male	5	Indian	Tamil
17	May Ling	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin
18	Rony Chia	Male	6	Chinese	English and Mandarin
19	Irda	Female	5	Malay	Malay
20	Sree	Female	5	Indian	Tamil
21	Suriani	Female	5	Malay	Malay
22	Si Mi	Female	5	Chinese	Mandarin
23	Vejay	Male	6	Indian	Tamil, English, Malay
24	Wee Jo	Male	6	Chinese	Mandarin
25	Zi Ni	Female	6	Chinese	Mandarin

This research involved 24 sets of parents. Mostly, the participants in the interview were the mothers of the children. Only nine participants interviewed were fathers, and both parents of one child were interviewed (refer to Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Profile of participants' parents

Code List	Father or Mother	Children	Place of interview	Ethnicity	Work	Date of Interview
1	Mr Benny	Ashok	School	Indian	Admin	21 July
2	Mrs Devi	Sree	House	Indian	Housewife	5 August
3	Mr A.Rahim	Adam	Office	Malay	Officer	20 July
4	Mrs Chang	Canny	House	Chinese	Housewife	14 August
5	Mrs Deev	Raju	House	Indian	Housewife	20 July
6	Mrs Mai Yen	Si Mi	School	Chinese	Clark	3 August
7	Mr M.Nor	Ardini	House	Malay	Teacher	31 July
8	Mr Bo	Wee Jo	House	Chinese	Businessman	18 August
9	Mrs Ruggy	Nini	School	Indian	Housewife	23 July
10	Mrs Ryan	Rony Chia	House	Chinese	Salesman	7 August
11	Mrs Tan	May Ling	School	Chinese	Housewife	20 July
12	Mrs Chong	May Ying	School	Chinese	Housewife	29 July
13	Mr Tee	Ellin	School	Chinese	Hawker	14 August
14	Mrs Slam	Asah	School	Indian	Housewife	4 August
15	Mrs Chia	Gee Ze	School	Chinese	Clerk	23 July
16	Mrs Maniamah	Lela	School	Indian	Housewife	28 July
17	Mrs Nani	Asmira	School	Malay	Housewife	22 July
18	Mr Ahmad	Irda	Office	Malay	Teacher	6 August
19	Mr and Mrs Lim	Jenny	House	Chinese	Mechanic & Teacher	31 July
20	Mr Lou	Zi Ni	School	Chinese	Hawker	19 August
21	Mr Rajah	Vejay	School	Indian	Teacher	3 August
22	Mrs Rohani	Suriani	School	Malay	Housewife	5 August
23	Mr Zainon	Arif	House	Malay	Admin	17 July
24	Mrs Mona	Harun	School	Malay	Housewife	23 July

A teacher and an assistant teacher were also involved in the study. Mrs Faziah, who is the Malay teacher, has a certificate in early childhood education from the Science University of Malaysia. She has been teaching for more than 10 years. She has a clear voice, and is firm but kind. She has also attended many courses regarding early childhood education since she started teaching.

The assistant teacher was Mrs Chong WC who comes from a Chinese ethnic background. She has more than 30 years' experience as an assistant teacher at PERPADUAN Pre-school. She also teaches the children Chinese language. Her experience has convinced the parents to send their children to the pre-school. She is also an expert in the Malay language. She helps children to adapt to the pre-school norms during the transition period, especially those children who do not understand Malay.

In conclusion, all the participants in this research volunteered to participate because they were willing to contribute something for their children's development. Most of the respondents also agreed and signed the consent letter as participants in the research. Basically, the research participants fulfilled the characteristics and gave their full commitment. They also gave in-depth information in detail as needed in the research.

Observation

Naturalistic observations of children's social behaviour have been frequently and extensively employed as an assessment method and have played a critical role in our understanding of children's social relationships (La Greca & Stark, 1986, p. 181). Behavioural observations offer a number of distinct advantages relative to other methods of assessing children's peer relationships. They provide information on actual peer exchanges while minimising some of the subjective bias inherent in more traditional assessment procedures, such as teacher and parent reports. Behavioural observation methods are more conducive to frequent repeated measures, making them ideally suited for evaluating treatment outcomes in studies employing individual subject designs.

I employed observation techniques as a means of collecting data for this study. Nachmias and Nachmias (1996, p. 206) identified that observation involves “watching what people do, listening to what they say and sometimes asking for clarification”. The main advantage of using observation method is its directness; it enabled me to study social behaviour as it occurred. There are few research studies that have made observations of children’s actual day-to-day relationships with each other in order to inform knowledge about children (Connolly, 1998; Corsaro, 2006; Dunn, 2004; Thorne, 1993; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). A few studies have actually interviewed children or carried out in-depth interviewing or direct observations of children in their natural setting to assess their ethnic groups and others social attitudes.

In addition, Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) explained that, whereas other data collection methods introduce elements of artificiality into the research environment, data collected by observation describe the observed phenomena as they occur in their natural settings. They further emphasized the use of observational methods when people are unwilling to express themselves verbally. Further, through observation, researchers can validate verbal reports by comparing them with actual behaviour. Observation is the best technique when an activity, event, or situation can be observed first hand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the phenomenon under study, especially in exploring relationships of different ethnic groups. Naturalistic observations are relevant to describe the development of children’s peer interactions and friendships.

In this study, every child was observed within a 14-week period for a total of 3 to 5 times for each child. The observation required a sufficient number of observation sessions in order to achieve ‘saturation point’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2002), that is, for it to become evident that any additional sessions would be simply repeating. The saturation point consisted of three to five sessions, depending on each child. I spent about 10 to 20 minutes per session. The series of observations promoted the development of confidence and trust between the researcher and the respondents (children). During my observation sessions, I was able to assess the consistency of children’s moods and behaviour at different times. I could simply

watch individuals act and speak and this enabled me to collect data first hand, thereby preventing contamination of the factors, such as standing between the researcher and the object of research. After observation I spoke to the children and asked them about their own behaviour and actions (discussed in detail in the section 'Interview' below)

For this study, I used direct observation to understand children's behaviour (refer to Appendix A1). Rolfe (2001, p. 226) noted "most direct observation is of behaviour: children's behaviour, parents' behaviour, the behaviour of early childhood staff". Researching children's social behaviour, for example, includes observation of the nature of peer interactions, such as instances of quarrelling among peers and prosocial behaviours such as comforting one another.

There are a number of techniques I considered before collecting the data. I chose a technique which was suitable to answer the research question. I used an holistic observation or naturalistic observation to assess children. I observed each child and wrote down that child's interactions and social behaviour seen as related to the question as it occurred, for example, what a child did and said to and with his/her peer, over a specified period of time, that accounts for on-going behaviour (Sattler, 1992). I wrote descriptions of the children's behaviour as field notes.

Designing a Naturalistic Observation

This research designed was according to Sattler's recommendations (1992). Each child was observed 3-5 times for 10 -20 minutes. The child's age, the setting, and circumstance determine when the observation period would be conducted, for example group activity in the morning. The type of narrative recording to use: fully describe the setting of the child referred for example a description of the scene, the people in the setting, and the on-going action. Report behaviour that is done to the child, what other people say and do. Use every day descriptive language in all researcher narratives. The narrative is like a short story, telling what, when, and how the behaviour of concern occurred and what features of the environment served to increase or decrease the interaction (Sattler & Hoge, 2006). The target behaviour to

be observed: the researcher observed all the social behaviour included the antecedent and consequent events associated with the child interaction and social behaviour. The method of recording data: the researcher wrote down the data and used a designed description form to write down the behaviour (refer to Appendix C2).

Identify the child engaged in the behaviour and clearly identify the behaviour of the child and other children and adults in the setting situation that affect behaviour. Record the reactions of others to the child's behaviour both interaction and social behaviour. Identify the setting and the time of day and consider how the child's environment (including other children, adults, and the physical and spatial determinants) affects the behaviour of the child. The researcher is alert to both verbal and nonverbal cues generated by the child and others in the child's environment. Write down the event as soon as possible after it occurs and record important verbalization as precisely as possible, including direct quotation of the child and others, to preserve the flavour of how things were said. The researcher should be objective, accurate, and preserve the sequence of the episode. Use everyday language (which is Malay language) to record the behaviour and describe rather than interpret the child's behaviour. The researcher tries to understand the child's viewpoint rather than impose adult perceptions on the behaviour. Finally, attempt to integrate all sources of behavioural information, and build a coherent picture of the child's behaviour.

I divided my observation in two: general (group) observation and individual observation. General observation started with the 'big picture' at the beginning of the week with an increasing focus during the week. I took note of all the children's behaviour all the way through from morning until the noon session. I wrote down what I saw of any of the child's interactions. I noted down the child's facial expression when she or he interacted. At the first stage, I sat a short distance away from the children, as it is important to be as unobtrusive as possible. This means not creating a great flurry and disturbance or drawing attention from the children. It was possible for me to write down swiftly what the children were doing, but not to be able to carry on a conversation with the children or capture everything they said. I felt it was not so difficult to get information compared to the first observation during

the pilot study, when the first 30-minute observation in a big group was unproductive as I was unable to concentrate on specific behaviour. Observing the children in the whole class, I really needed to share out attention between children. I focused on watching and listening, concentrating only on children's interaction behaviour (refer to Appendix A1 Observation).

I sat in the group of children and wrote down anything the child did or said. This style of observing makes the children feel comfortable because someone is observing them. Children like it because they feel someone is giving them full attention. They asked me what I was writing and why I was doing this job. They always tried to see what I wrote. They felt happy, especially a few boys, who came to me and asked about football and Formula 1 car racing. Maybe they had never seen a man in their class and were willing to share male interests because Malaysian pre-school teachers are female. Observing the children in a group was easier than general observation. It was easy to take notes about who was interacting with whom and what a child was doing, and discussing among them. Sitting together enabled me to carry on a conversation with the children and capture everything they said, being able to give them full attention, watching the children's behaviour and listening to what they said. The most important thing was that I needed to be alert and do things quickly at the same time. After I finished taking notes, I asked a few children about what they had been doing. They could not really remember what they had done (refer to Appendix C1 Samples of Observation).

I observed each group and moved from one group to another. I observed the children's interactions and took notes about individual children in the group one by one to see the actual interaction among them. After that I focused specifically on the chosen child, taking note what, when, and how the interaction of the child occurred and features of the environment. Information from previous observations guided me in individual observations to get more information. It was not too hard for me to do three things at once about an individual child in a group; observe the child's behaviour and think about which behaviour I should note; take account of the child's behaviour; and lastly, take pictures quickly before the activity changed. It was still necessary for me to be alert and do things quickly. I also had difficulties taking

pictures because the children's motion was too fast, so the pictures look quite blurred. After that I spoke informally with the children in a group of two to three, meeting with them for ten to fifteen minutes in a resource room in free time. I showed the children all the pictures that I had taken and asked them what was happening in those pictures (refer to Appendix C1 Samples of Observation). The photographs encouraged children to speak in discussion. I also interviewed children based on semi-structured questions (refer to Appendix A1). I attempted to transcribe as much as possible of each child's behaviour, how they interacted with each other, and the setting in which things were said and done. Silverman (2003) noted two ways of systematizing field notes and suggested practical rules for making field notes: first, record what can be seen as well as what is heard; second, expand field notes beyond immediate observations in order to make deeper and more general sense of what is happening.

I made sure of a few aspects of the environment which might affect the child's behaviour before beginning the observation. There were three adults: the teacher, assistant teacher, and myself. Children's activities involved general or group and individual activities. Children were expected to be doing regular activities such as sitting, listening to teacher instructions, doing activities and interacting between group mates at the time of observation. I started with first-day orientation in the classroom to watch and listen in order to understand what a typical day is like for the children and the teachers in the pre-school, how children and teachers relate to each other and express feelings, and what happens as the parents come and go. Initially, I tried to obtain an overview about general classroom organisation, knowledge and information. After that, I wrote down and took notes what, when, and how the behaviour of a child occurred along with features of the environment.

The teacher introduced me to the children and explained who I was, what I was doing at the pre-school, and how long I would be there. She said "this is *Cikgu (Teacher) Nordin* from the University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom who studies children's behaviour and who will observe your interactions". At the first meeting with the children, they looked uncomfortable, sitting quietly because someone was watching them. For the first two hours they looked at me and chatted to each other,

then asked their teacher about me, who I was and what I was doing there. I asked the teacher to explain to the children again. The children were asking each other about me and looked at me a few times. The teacher also looked uncomfortable when I observed the children in her class. This situation was obvious for the first few hours I observed, when it seemed like she was trying to control her nerves during the observation. This uncomfortable situation finally eased after I had a discussion with the teacher. Afterwards, the teaching process went smoothly. The teacher also talked to me about the children's behaviour.

The teacher introduced me to all the parents who sent their children to pre-school when I met them the first time. The parents greeted me with the warmest greetings and welcomed me to their community and neighbourhood. At the same time, they asked about the purpose of my observation. A few of them told me about their role in play and their contribution to the pre-school. All the information about the kindergarten was stated on the notice board that was placed inside the class. Any new announcement was stated on the notice board outside the classroom.

My method of systematically recording expanded data after recording in field notes, such as writing an extended memo after each observation, is very important because it is directly linked to the quality of data analysis. It was derived from field notes to serve as the basis for data analysis and a reminder of the context at a later stage. Such data may also suggest new or revised codes. The observations recorded in a naturalistic observation record can encompass both molar (broad) and molecular (fine) descriptions of behaviour (Sattler, 1992). Molecular detail will explain the how and why associated with an event of a child's behaviour, either physical or verbal. Sattler (1992) noted that naturalistic observations form a continuum from low inferential judgements (behavioural descriptive statements) to high inferential judgements (behavioural inferential statements). Behavioural descriptive statements relate behaviours as they occur without explanations beyond the behaviours. Behavioural inferential statements go beyond describing behaviours, which is an integrative and theoretical level. In the early stages of naturalistic observation, it is important to concentrate on behavioural descriptive statements, keeping interpretive statements to a minimum.

In the next stage, I expanded notes into descriptive statements on a computer and wrote full sentences about behaviour from field notes while the events remained fresh in my memory. According to Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchard (2001) “field notes are often written on the spot and subsequently amplified and elaborated while the events remain fresh in researcher’s memory” (p. 198). I merged the field notes with the photographs and interviews. I sorted the photographs and filed individual notes into individual files. A combination of field notes, photographs and children interviewed was important to explore ideas from observations for the next observations. “Photographic, audio and video recordings are being used to supplement these accounts and to provide more permanent records” (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchard, 2001, p. 198). I discussed the next step with the teacher based on that data. The next stage was that I referred to school documents, such as school registration and Child’s Development Report, as reference for confirmation about a child’s behaviour before the stage of a provisional running record of analysis and interpretation using the Nvivo program (refer to Appendix E1).

Photographs

A digital camera was used because it is relatively unobtrusive and easily operated. I explained to the children why I was using the digital camera. I told them how I would use the photographs as props to help children communicate verbally, to help me to remember what and who they interacted with, and to help me understand how they interacted. All names used here are pseudonyms. More than 250 photographs were taken in the pre-school but only 150 photographs were used, and these were shown to and discussed with the children (refer to Appendix C1 Samples of Observation). Some photographs are blurred because the children moved when I snapped the event. The quality of the photographs is low because the use of flash photography would have distracted the children. Photographs were used as a visual stimulus; i.e., used to generate ethnographic data in interview. Photographs can include information not mentioned by the ethnographer. They may contain an excess of meaning that the ethnographer cannot control. A photograph retains the child’s behaviour, such as distinctive posture, expression and characteristics. Photographs

can catch and portray aspects of a situation which are impossible to record when using only written observations or transcribing verbal interactions (Fasoli, 2003, p. 36). Fasoli (2003) demonstrated the methodological use of photographs as visual data and reflected on the use of photographs in research with young children.

However, although photographs have strengths that words often lack, they alone do not inform; rather it is the analysis that the ethnographer is able to accomplish with these records of persons, places and activities. They are incomplete because they are exceptionally evocative, and are relatively open to interpretation. Ethnographies that include photographs inevitably and necessarily also employ written description (Ball & Smith, 2001, p. 308). There is no easy consensus on the issue of interpreting research photographs, except to say that photograph and text can work together to 'enlarge' each other. A photograph, especially when compared to the use of verbal data, offers a researcher a distinctly different and potentially richer new way of telling. Photographs are capable of recording a range of nonverbal dimensions of a situation that support observation and stimulate children in interview.

Interviews

In this study, I used the interview technique as one of the major sources of data collection to answer the research questions. In carrying out the data collection, I spent approximately 14 weeks in one pre-school, attending class sessions five days a week from Monday to Friday (refer to Appendix A1). I interviewed the teacher (n=1), the assistant teacher, (n=1), the children (n=25) and the parents (n=24). My aim in the interviews was to obtain accurate information from the interviewees and to form opinions about them. The interviews were semi-structured and unstructured. I used interview technique because this is the best way get an accurate account of the cultural element in the family. The parents have their own ideas and explanations to put in the picture of what and why children socialise. I held face-to-face interviews in which I asked respondents to answer the research questions. I chose this technique for the pilot study which enabled me and the respondents to have two-way communication in providing and acquiring information. The parents being

interviewed immediately and precisely told the meaning of their understanding of culture. Further, the semi-structured interview is an ideal method to continually check the credibility of the information collected by constantly questioning the interpretation. In addition, Biber and Leavy (2004) emphasised that through semi-structured interview, an interviewer can develop and explore new topics that are relevant to the interviewee.

The technique was useful in acquiring a rich and vast amount of information about the cultural context in different situations which has not yet been identified and understood. This technique gives a chance to explore responses from the parents who have unique perceptions or roles, or who may persuade their children with a typical value or a specific culture. It is in contrast to the context of a highly structured interview which is less likely to allow for respondents' feelings and inside information. This means, from the interviews, I explored how the parents nurture their norms and values in children from their interaction in everyday life. For example, the parents use various strategies to make sure their children enjoyed participating in ethnic group culture such as ethnic clothes, prayer or fasting, or were obedient, although these particular practices are quite complex.

In interviewing, I utilized semi-structured and unstructured interview because these are valuable techniques for understanding culture. They also allowed me to confirm whatever information was given by the respondents and offered the freedom to explore general views or opinions in more detail. Biber and Leavy (2004) noted that in semi-structured interviews (refer to Appendix A1), an interviewer has his or her own list of topics for interviewees to respond to, but they have considerable freedom in the sequencing of questions, the exact wording, and the amount of time and attention given to different topics.

For this study, the interview sessions for children and teachers took place at the school, and, for parents, in places which were comfortable for interviewer and interviewee, such as the parents' house. Before the interviews, the respondents were, as part of the ethics procedure, informed by letter about the purpose of the investigation and how the interviews would be conducted.

Once the interview schedule was refined, I undertook the research in

Malaysia. The interviews were conducted in either *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay Language) or English depending on the preference of the participants. Purposely selected for inclusion in the research were groups of children in a pre-school classroom that represented a diversity of ethnic backgrounds and gender. The children, parents and teachers were interviewed between June and August 2009. Each participant was assured full confidentiality and each interview lasted approximately one hour. All the interviews took place in the participants' homes or pre-school office. At the start of each interview, participants were given a copy of a letter explaining the procedures and outlining the confidentiality of the project. The participants were asked whether or not they preferred to be audiotaped and were told that both audiotaping and note-taking were acceptable to the researcher.

The general question addressed in this study is about how parents' social and cultural capital affects children's social behaviour. During the interviews, participants were able to raise topics they identified as significant. All the interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and verified through meetings in mini-seminars with parents at pre-school. The recordings and the field notes were transcribed.

I started each interview session by introducing the purpose of this study and how it would benefit them. I also informed interviewees that the names of individuals in this study would be anonymized. At the same time, I established rapport with the respondents as a step to minimize possible biases. Rapport with the respondents during the interview helped the researcher to create a context within which respondents feel comfortable and motivated to express their knowledge, thus alleviating further potential bias as follows. I tried to use a few words from parents' ethnic languages like Tamil or Mandarin, especially greeting words, to build up a relationship with parents and children. I avoided asking about any sensitive issue regarding ethnicity or religion. As part of the multicultural community, I considered a few restricted issues should be avoided; for example, racial and religious sensitivities run deep in Malaysia, and all of Malaysia's communities have inherited legitimate grievances over the years. To ensure clarity and accuracy of the information acquired from the respondents, I used a tape recorder throughout the interview sessions to minimize distractions. The use of a tape recorder enabled me to

gather information from the respondents accurately, since the interactive nature of in-depth interviews can be seriously affected by the attempt to take verbatim notes during the interview.

I used information obtained in the interviews to generate themes about the children's behaviour and interaction. In order to develop the themes, I identified an interaction and behaviour, factors associated with that behaviour such as antecedents and consequences, and the frequency, duration and contributing factors associated with the children concerned, for example, parents and environment.

Interviewing Children with Photographs

Interviews with every child took place in the school office school classroom between three to five times for ten to fifteen minutes at a time. I continued with the interview sessions until I felt I had enough data to enable me to answer the research questions or the data were saturated.

Sattler (1992) suggests interview strategies for children: "Formulate appropriate opening statements and give praise frequently and avoid critical statements. Formulate question in the subjunctive mood when necessary. Use simple questions, concrete referents and photographs to help children communicate verbally, and reflective statements to rephrase what the child has said or done" (p. 416). I interviewed children only to obtain very specific information. I used props (photographs) to help children communicate verbally especially with simple words (Refer to Appendix C1). These special techniques were used to facilitate the expression of culturally unacceptable responses such as might be involved in interaction between ethnic groups, and to clarify episodes of behaviour by recounting them.

In addition, I carried out unstructured interviews with children after each class session based on what I had observed on that day. This allowed the children as respondents to respond in their own words, and since the nature of the response is unlimited, the result of this more open-ended approach is a richness of data. Thus, it

enabled me to ask more complex and sensitive questions, and each interview became highly individual (Biber & Leavy, 2004).

Photographs helped me to recount the behaviour that occurred and get very specific information from children, confident that they understood the questions, and then a direct question-and-answer format became acceptable. Children were given two or three photographs depicting a situation as it unfolded, and the researcher, supported by the photographs, simply asked for children's insights into the day's activities, drawing on the children's spontaneous observations about the day. It was therefore inappropriate to pre-determine questions, but the questions actually used were not 'leading' and did not include assumptions about a child's behaviour or motivations.

I observed and took notes about children's behaviour in their group, including movement, the things that they talked about among their friends, copying their friends' work, sitting in their seat quietly as though they were dreaming, concentrating on their work, listening to their teacher. I showed all the pictures that were taken to the children and asked them what was happening in those pictures. All the children gave full responses when I asked them about their behaviour. They also told me about their friend's behaviour. As well as observing children in groups, I also observed individual children as the easiest way to concentrate on observing and taking notes at the same time as taking photographs. I spoke informally with each child individually and in a small group of two or three children, meeting with them after the school session. During the interviews, I tried to obtain information about a child's perception of parents, siblings, teacher, and other important individuals in his or her life; his/her ability to discuss relevant information; and interest, thought processes, language, and affect. These sessions were held privately in the meeting room and prompted them about their friends and behaviour.

All the children were interviewed individually and in small groups to enable me to ask important questions which were considered quite sensitive, such as "Why did you do this behaviour?" "What is your opinion about your parents' practices or style?". This depended on the child; if they really did not understand Malay or English, I interviewed their friends. Actually, if children are interviewed in a group,

it might affect the willingness of the children to give answers to these questions freely. During the individual interviews the interviewer and the interviewee were free to give their comments (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After that, the data from observations and interviews with children were used to interview the parents, as discussed in the next section.

Parents' Interviews

The interviews with parents played an important part in getting information about children's behaviour because parents have a wealth of knowledge about their child. Parents provide a valuable source of information about the child and family. A well-conducted parental interview will serve to establish rapport with parents and help focus the parents' perception of children's behaviour (Sattler, 1992). Interviews with parents are designed to elicit information about their concerns regarding the child, the child's problems, and how they have dealt with them in the past. The goals of the interview with parents were to assess parental perception of their child's behaviour; to gather information about parental concerns and goals; to identify the child's behaviour areas and related antecedent and consequent events; and to assess parents' cultural capital and resources for their child. After greeting parents, I introduced myself and the research objective. I opened each interview with an introductory statement

- i. Ask parents the background information and review problems
- ii. Describe the procedure and the interview (Refer to Appendix A1 and A2)

Each parents' interview took between one and two hours. The interview sessions were carried out at the pre-school class and homes (within fourteen weeks).

The Teacher's Interview

The interview with the teacher concerned the teacher's perception of how she reacts to the referred child's behaviour at school, the antecedents and consequences of the behaviour, and what she has done to alleviate or encourage the behaviour.

Precede the question with an introductory comment such as the following: I talk with teacher about (child's name) and his (her) behaviour. I discuss the children's behaviour, when it occurs, how often it occurs, and what occurs in classroom that might influence the behaviour (refer to Appendix A1). I discuss some other matters related to (child's name) that will help us to develop (child's) development.

The interview session lasted about one-and-a-half hours for the pre-school teacher and her assistant. There was one formal interview session, and informal interviews such as conversations for confirmation of children's behaviour took place for 10 to 15 minutes almost every day. The teacher supported me with the monthly documented report, photographs of pre-school events such as festive events (*Hari Raya, Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Merdeka* day and Sports day), and children's crafts. These informal interviews gave me a lot of information about children's behaviour through the teacher's observations from when school started in January.

Documents

The main documents I referred to in this pre-school were the registration book, Child's Development Reports, and Pre-school booklet. These three documents were used to support the information related to children's behaviour. The first document, the registration book, was the main resource for me to refer to a child's background, including family background, ethnicity, religion, parental contact, and occupation. The second document was the Child's Development Report. The teacher observed children every day and gave a report monthly including cognitive and behaviour skills. I only focused on the reports about behaviour. The teacher explained this report to me based on teacher perspectives. These reports gave me information from the last five months. I also referred to Letters and Circulars from the Department of Unity and Integration for pre-school from state and federal sources such as policy.

Mini-seminars

Two mini-seminars were arranged in the last two weeks before I finished my fieldwork. These seminars, held in the pre-school resource room, took two hours' discussion between the parents. The purpose of the mini-seminar was to discuss and recheck the data transcriptions of interviews from parents and to verify the meaning of that information based on their contextual culture. The first day the common social behaviour of children overall during observation was discussed as well as the common norms and values practised at home by parents of the three ethnic groups. The parents were given transcripts of interviews to check and discuss in the second session. On the second day, if there had been any misinterpretation of the parents' meaning in my interpretation, it was clarified (further discussion in Section 5.7.Validity and Reliability)

In order to provide direction for the research and explain the research process, the following research methodological framework was prepared (see Figure 5.1). The figure shows two sections: the left hand column shows the process of collecting data about children's social behaviour, and the right hand column the flow of the methodology process. In the left hand column, the figure shows the methodology process which was used in this study. The flow started by using qualitative methods in this study (further explanation in section 5.2 A Qualitative Research Method). Within this ethnographic approach three types of data collection were undertaken to ensure triangulation: field notes, photographs, and then interviews with the children. This process ensured validity and reliability as I ensured that all children and parents had a chance to add any new or important information during the interviews. The triangulation process in data collecting also contributes to reliability.

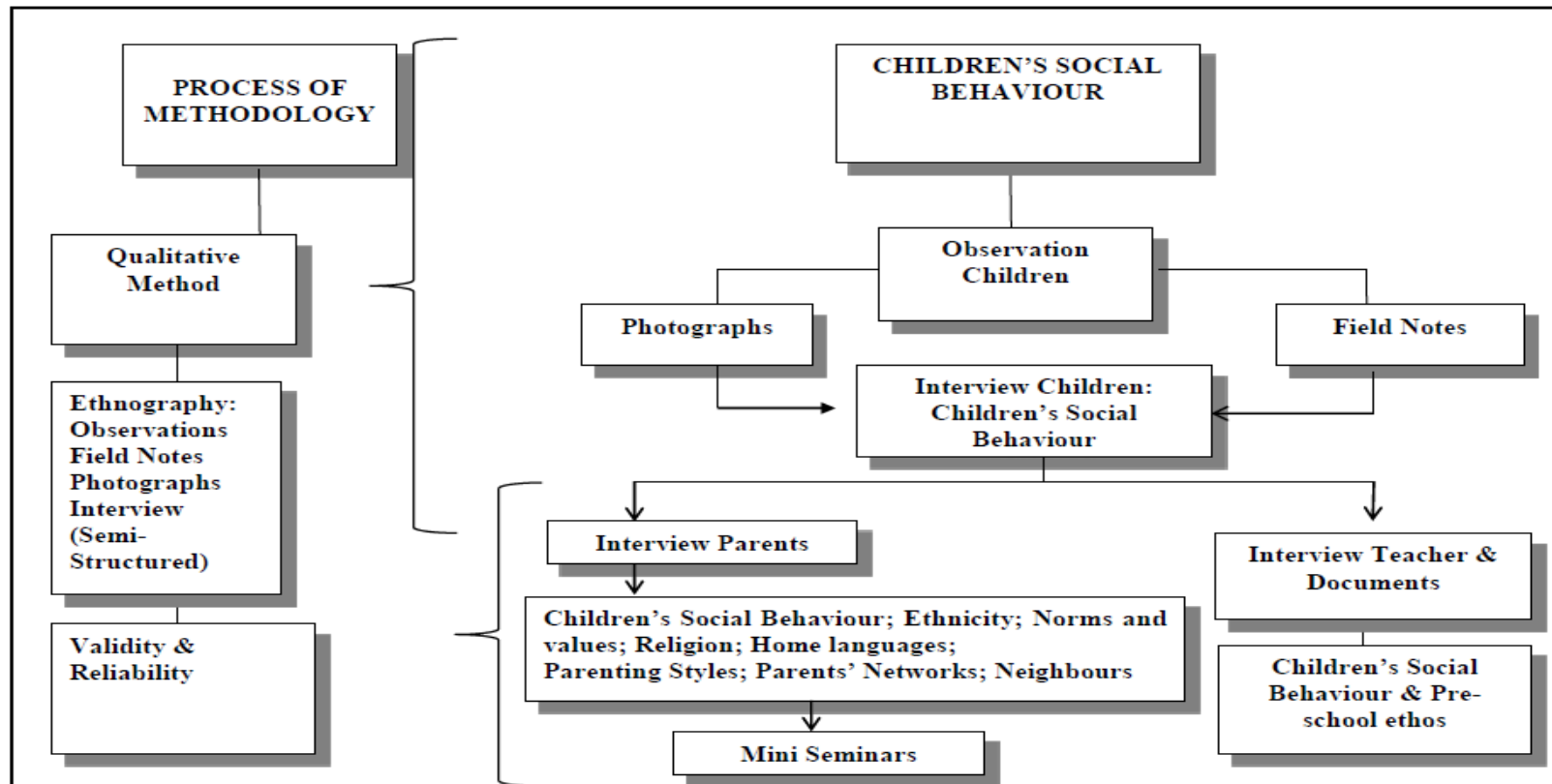


Figure 5.1: Research methodological framework of children's social behaviour

The right hand column shows how data concerning children's social behaviour were gathered from observation, field notes, photographs and interviews with children. After identifying a child's behaviour, I interviewed teacher about particular child. After that I referred to documents from the pre-school and confirmed with the teacher and assistant teacher about a particular child (further explanation in section 5.3 Ethnography). In the next stage, I interviewed parents and teachers about children with the information that I had. The interviews gave me an understanding of children's social behaviour and the elements that affected the children.

This is the second stage of triangulation of data from children, parents and teacher. These two sections give an understanding of undertaking qualitative research with children which is show in Figure 5.1.

5.4 Ethics in Research with Children

In carrying out qualitative research, certain research ethics are important. Diener (1978) noted that there are three types of ethics: the relationship between society and science, professional issues, and the treatment of research participants. Values are always involved in qualitative research to guide and assist researchers in deciding goals (Diener, 1978). Burgess (1989) further highlighted ethical problems concerning gaining access and informed consent. Summarily, he stressed that it was essential to obtain the voluntary consent of research participants even though it was not as simple as that. I have followed principles of professional ethics based on the Nuremberg Code that was promulgated and has been incorporated into many codes governing research. The main statement is 'the voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential'. A researcher is required to assume an obligation to ensure no harm comes to children. The idea of informed consent is based on the ethical view that humans have the right to autonomy, that is, the right to determine what is in their own best interests (Beuchamp & Walters, 1989). Beauchamp and Walters (1989) noted the ethical principle of autonomy is "personal rule of the self by adequate

understanding while remaining free from controlling interferences by others and from personal limitations that prevent choice (p. 28). Subjects should be told the nature of the research in words they can understand; exactly what will be expected of them; any possible risks of the research, and that they can withdraw from the research at any stage and withdraw from the research any unprocessed data.

Children and Consent

According to legal definitions children cannot give consent, but a child's legal guardian can give consent on behalf of the child. However, it is in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to ask the child also to give consent, or 'assent' as it is known in these circumstances. The children were given explanations before asking for their consent (Bailey, 2007). I distributed a card (Refer to Appendix B5) to all the children in class (25 children). If one of the sample chosen had refused to be involved in this study, this would have reduced the total. I could not include another child because there are only 25 children in one class. I arranged with the class teacher to send consent letters to parents via their children.

Procedure of Ethical Approval

I applied to the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee and Department Ethics Committee twice, during the pilot and the actual fieldwork study. I used the consent letter and forms for children (Meyer, Murphy, Cascardi, & Birns, 1991), parents and teacher which I used on a previous occasion in the pilot study and for which I received ethical approval (refer to Appendix B6). These forms had incorporated suggestions from the Ethics Committee.

Procedures of application for approval for research study in Malaysia involve several departments. The processes took a month from submitting the application for approval.

- i. Application to conduct research in Malaysia. Approval from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Government of Malaysia (Refer to Appendix B7).
- ii. Application to conduct research in PERPADUAN Pre-school (National Unity Pre-school). Approval from National Unity and Integration Department , Government of Malaysia who have responsibility for this PERPADUAN pre-school (Refer to Appendix B8).

Confidentiality

Issues related to anonymity were equally important in this study. Ensuring anonymity gives confidence to respondents giving information the researcher requires. Anonymity was ensured by separating the identity of the research participants from the information that they gave. Another procedure for ensuring anonymity is simply not to acquire names or other means of identifying respondents in a research project (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). For example, in this study, the researcher did not request the names of the respondents during the interview sessions, to make sure that they felt comfortable and willing to give all the information that was required. I had exercised the same practice during the pilot study, and the respondents had been inclined to give full cooperation during the interview sessions. Thus, I was confident to continue with the same approach for the final study. Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) also emphasised that, while preparing data for analysis, researchers can maintain anonymity by separating identifying information from the data itself.

Another ethical concern with regards to conducting research is confidentiality. Confidentiality refers to the ability to link information or data to a person's identity. The expectation is that information that an individual has disclosed will not be divulged to others without permission (Bailey, 2007). As such, for this study, the researcher informed the parents that he would ensure confidentiality of the research participants' information by not disclosing that information publicly. In fact, during the data collection, the researcher clearly informed participants and respondents about the meaning and limits of confidentiality. Notwithstanding the fact

that I have to maintain the information as confidential, with regards to certain issues, there was a need for me to get some clarification from the National Unity and Integration Department. However, this did not affect the confidentiality of the participants' information because the information disclosed to the National Unity and Integration Department, for purpose of clarification was not considered as a public disclosure of information.

5.5 Pilot Study

The objectives of the pilot study were: (1) to develop the interview guide; (2) to become familiar with interview and observation techniques and qualitative data analysis; and (3) to learn to cope with the problems in gathering information which might obstruct the smooth carrying out of the final study. The experience I acquired helped me to gain a better understanding in the final study. It helped to build confidence, which is beneficial to the researcher for final data collection. The most important, I established the categories of behaviour based on frequent occurrence during the pilot study of a month's observation, and also via the interviews with the children.

A pilot study gives me more confidence when I involved in field work such as observation and interview. It gives a researcher the valuable experience of doing the observation and interviewing children and parents, and at the same time enables him to correct and amend the instrument that has been used in the pilot.

The first purpose of the pilot study was to test the techniques of observation in order to determine its reliability and validity for use in the later research. The second purpose was to ascertain from the responses of the children, teachers and parents whether they understood the questions, or were confused by the format, or the level of language used. Another purpose was to discover any material which could not have been predicted.

Based on the pilot observations, interviews and responses from respondents, I made a few amendments to this research methodology:

A few techniques were used in observation of children's behaviour, such as taking notes, taking photographs and video recording. I found a good balance of these techniques.

A few questions were asked of the children and parents but invoked the same answer, and a few questions were confusing to them. I took an approach combining the same questions with the correct language level so that they were suitable for the children.

I also found a couple of questions in the interview that did not give useful information regarding the research questions. Therefore a few more specific questions were added to fulfil the research question, and the interview questions rearranged in sequence.

After the pilot study I reviewed a few aspects of the observations and parent interviews:

Before interviewing the parents, I clarified the children's behaviour into categories. Children's behaviour was used as a guide in order to get more information about parent socialization. Every character of children's behaviour was related to parenting style and parenting practice. I used the child's behaviour as a prop when interviewing parents. Thus, I was able to get the big picture in every single aspect about parent socialization.

The sample was reduced to between twelve to eighteen children and parents. Based on the pilot study, I was having difficulty getting in-depth information about parent socialization. I needed in-depth information from parents about family life, parenting practice, family culture and religion to answer the questions.

As well as interviewing parents, I also needed to get information from other family members and the community, including family settings such as home, neighbourhood and workplace. I arranged interviews with the parents who were willing to be interviewed; 8 at home, 3 at the office, and the rest at pre-school. I also attended a meeting of the *Jawatankuasa Rukun Tertangga (Neighbourhood Committee)* to explore the community activity in general and for pre-school, and to share my experience.

Most of the interview sessions for the pilot study were held at the pre-school instead of in houses. Therefore, I was not able to get enough information about the home

environment in terms of a natural setting. Through conducting interview sessions at home or at the office, the interview discussions gave me much information about parental norms and religious environment.

Data Analysis

In this section, the data analysis is discussed in the following subtopics: first, data processing; observation data processing; photograph coding and analysing; coding data; and mini seminars. Analysis of data in qualitative research proceeds along with data collection and is the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data. It can be a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating process (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 150). The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data, which involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Patton, 2002, p. 432). The coding and analyses of this study followed methodological guidelines developed by prominent qualitative researchers (Bazeley, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002; Richards, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Qualitative data analysis used all the information from observation and interview, and then referred to documents as a cross-check. I used an inductive analysis to discover patterns, themes, and categories in the data, meaning that themes and categories arose from the data and were not determined in advance before the data collecting stage. Inductive analysis emphasises the importance of being open to the data (Patton, 2002, p. 454). I have categorised the data processing into two levels.

At the first level, I started processing data by transcribing, using word-by-word information from observations, photographs, and interviews. Transcripts of written observations, photographs and interviews were examined to generate a tentative coding system from which categories of phenomena could be derived. During the first-level coding, I read the transcripts to look for similarities and differences between data segments and connected these units of similar meaning

together as categories. These processes overlapped one to another but sometimes they were simultaneous. Analysis often begins in the profile work stage in the clarification of the research problem, and continues during the process of writing reports (Hammersley, 1995, p. 2005). At this predominantly concrete level, information evident in the text is coded (Fabes, Fultz, Eisenberg, May-Plumlee, & Christopher, 1989). I used the participants' language in data transcription, which therefore contain some sentences which are short, unstructured or incomplete, and words used by children.

The data from the transcriptions of parents' interviews were discussed with the parents during the Mini Seminars that I had arranged beforehand. Data from field notes and observations were read carefully word-by-word to identify themes and categories. A tentative coding scheme was developed, consisting of categories and sub-categories. I set a few categories of constructs to guide the ongoing coding of interviews. In developing codes and categories, the analyst must figure out what things fit together and begin to look for recurring regularities in the data which reveal patterns that can be sorted into categories (Patton, 2002). In this process, I code all statements that are relevant to the coding scheme, developing and guarding against selective attention to points of particular interest. As the coding progressed, a few additional categories were identified and added to the code guide, using the same process until the coding process was completed.

The next level of analysis was comparing and contrasting the categories to discover the relationships between them. The goal at this second level of analysis was to collapse the categories into themes and sub- themes by locating patterns that appeared consistently in the data set. The continuous process gave me a chance to discover new data and views and then to make connections or interrelations between the data. These processes show how the analysis process proceeds simultaneously with data connection and I was able to build an organizing system of categories which emerged from the data until no more new data was found or the data achieved saturation level.

When a category was formed, all the incidents and conversations that appeared to fit were compared. Once a major category was in place, I searched for

trends of commonality and difference, and inductively began to synthesize explanations and phenomena. Explanations were checked and cross-checked for accuracy and understanding, and were modified to support new information. This approach was used to ensure that the data obtained for the present study were valid and meaningful.

In order to discover the consistency of themes and sub-themes I also used a few additional strategies in the analysis. The first step form of analysis was to search for words and phrases that individual interviewees used to describe meaning based on their cultural context and to cluster these expressions into categories. At the same time, I also looked in the responses for metaphors that reflect their culture. Secondly, I checked with the parents in interview what exactly was the parents' opinion of the transcriptions. I discussed the ideas with the parent during the Mini seminars I had arranged (refer to sub topic Mini Seminar at page 126).

I was the translator as well as the interviewer. The interviews were transcribed in *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay Language), coded and then translated into English. Two types of translation processes were utilised. First, I translated the text using Oxford Advanced Learner's English-Malay Dictionary. The internet-installed dictionary and Microsoft Word Thesaurus were also used in order to allow a more careful review of the translation process, especially in the meanings of words and phrases as well as the context. In addition, a translation of a single transcript was read thoroughly by research colleagues, including my supervisor, to ensure that independent coding and comparative themes could be made and verified. It started with coding photographs and descriptions of events to form and discover consistent themes and sub-themes.

Qualitative research uses a constant comparative method to analyse the prime data collected. This method was used to ascertain categories from the data collected to answer the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The stages of constant comparison are firstly finding interrelations among events; secondly, showing relationships between categories, thirdly, integrating the categories with characteristics. Fourthly, drawing theory from the collected categories and fifthly, developing basic theory. The constant comparative method gives the study capability

to increase reliability. Analysis of data in qualitative research begins almost immediately and it proceeds along with data collection and transcript of written observation.

Overall the object of the analysis of data was to build an organizing system of categories which emerged from the data. These processes involved an inductive process of reasoning which allowed the pieces of information to find their own categories rather than following ones hypothesised beforehand. This is followed by the process of a detailed evaluation of the text, where the topics which describe each aspect of it are identified and a process of trying to identify relationships between common topics begins.

I coded the data with short form symbols which represented the data meaning, built subcategories until they formed a basic category unit, and made interrelationships among categories. For example, coding photographs included “photo code and description code”. At the next level I analysed the data continuously until the data collected did not contribute any new category, i.e. it had achieved saturation level. Furthermore, I triangulated the information from data sources to obtain validity and reliability of the outcomes through interview with a third party or someone who was related to them. Through the triangulation process, categories or themes which arose from data collecting were validated.

Data Coding

All the documents, such as observation, field notes, digital photographs and interview transcripts, were coded manually, and the qualitative software package NVivo 8 (QSR NUD*IST Vivo) was used for organising non-numerical data (refer to Appendix E1). In the first stage, the data were coded manually, identifying categories and properties of the observations, photographs and interview data. The data from observations were written into words before being interpreted into categories and themes. The data from photographs were also written into words and after that were interpreted into concepts, categories and themes. I coded photographs according to a photo code and a description code. The tape recorded interview data

were transcribed into texts. The data produced was textual in character, thus producing voluminous paperwork which was analytically demanding and which entailed a very long and time-consuming process, sorting them manually one-by-one and then keying them into the Nvivo programme.

An open coding strategy was used to discover major themes and identify meaningful pieces of information. The purpose of this process was to identify as many themes and categories that were related to the phenomenon as possible, and to identify categories related to the research questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, through the open coding process I ascertained concepts and categories with characteristics and dimensions. The steps that I used in the open coding process included identifying and classifying categories based on the themes that emerged from the data. The temporary categories needed to be verified. The data from field notes and photographs were verified by the interviews with the child participants. They gave comments about every aspect based on their observations in the six months since school started. They were interviewed informally 3 -5 times in order to verify children's social behaviour. The teacher used the document files as a source to support her opinions about children's behaviour. Meanwhile, the data transcriptions of interviews from parent were verified through discussion in the Mini Seminar. Afterwards, I labelled the data in categories based on similarities.

The verbatim transcripts were analysed line-by-line for every word or phrase that could be considered to point to a key theme. The verbatim transcripts were read several times and the digital photographs and audio interviews were reviewed in order to detect any inadequacies or mistakes in coding. All the data transcriptions from observations, photographs, and interviews were read repeatedly to ensure reliability. In this initial manual step-by-step approach, I undertook a quantitative analysis of the regularities and repetitions within the texts as they emerged from the transcripts. I analysed the data from observation and interviews from the 24 participants and continuously compared the data to obtain the similarities and differences. After the long process of reading, listening and categorising, the data was managed, grouped together to ascertain the same pattern or categories. Words or phrases that were similar in categories and properties from one transcript to another

were counted until the very last of the last transcripts. The data from the same categories would be in the same group if the similarities were the same. I developed a list of concepts and categories for the data (refer to Chapter 6). The in-line coding and review process developed much detail and continued until the saturation point was reached. The constant comparative method involved comparing emerging themes from the data with those that had already been identified.

All the data from photographs, field notes (observations), and interview transcripts were written into words and after that I identified them into concepts, categories and themes as show in Figure E1 (e.g. Sources: Photograph), E2 (e.g. Sources: Individual Observation), and E3 (e.g. Sources: Interview Transcripts). I used related literature and my research questions to guide and lead me in data analysing. This process is basic in developing categories and coding for further data analysis. A list of codes and their meaning were drawn up which have specific meaning for my research study. The coding of meaningful segments derived from participants' words and concepts.

In developing codes from the interview transcripts, I labelled it based on the words from the participants and I also created code in order to develop categories and themes of Social Capital in Tree Nodes as show in Figure E3. This is a coding process which developed index concepts that would help me interpret data. A further detailed sample of the theme "Grandparents and Children's Behaviour" is shown in Appendix E8 Sample of Data Reductions: Provide Valuable Resources (*Grandparents and Children's Behaviour*) which demonstrates my explanation of N-vivo data reductions and categories about the role of grandparents and children behaviour. The code quotation from parents' transcripts show how and in what way grandparents from different ethnic backgrounds influence the grandchildren and then I arranged and refined into this category. I rechecked the codes in order to determine whether it is relevant and interrelated with the data that I have collected and related literature. This refinement process was important to show intra-coder reliability, meaning that the codes are applied consistently, with similar segments being assigned the same code.

In order to ensure reliability and validity of the coding, I received assistance from two experts: first from Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop from University of Strathclyde who is an expert in Early Childhood Education and is also my supervisor. Second, Professor Dr Othman Lebar an expert on the Malaysian education system . He is an expert in qualitative research and is involved directly in developing the Early Childhood Programme in Sultan Idris Education University since 2002. Both of them have given constructive comments and suggestions in developing meaningful coding which is relevant to my study.

Once I developed a coding frame I could see if certain codes ‘fit’ together. Broad themes were thus developed that would reflect the underlying meaning of the participants’ responses. After identifying themes and relationships among the codes and categories, I compared and contrasted the categories to discover the relationships between them. The goal of this analysis is to put the categories into themes and sub-themes by locating consistent patterns in the data set. The continuous process gave me a chance to discover new data and views. It also gave me a chance to make interrelations between the data. These processes enabled me to build an organizing system of categories which emerged from the data until no more new data was found and the data had reached saturation level. I counted the frequency of phrases and categories that emerged from the texts to be presented as a main theme, as shown in the Figure E4 (e.g. frequency of sources and references in Tree Nodes), E5, E6, and E7. This is the process which involves relating the themes generated back from original research questions.

Applying Software Package NVivo 8 (QSR NUD*IST Vivo)

In order to add trustworthiness, all of the raw verbatim transcripts data were then entered into the NVivo programme, a software programme which is considered to be a highly efficient and reliable tool in qualitative analysis of data (Bazeley, 2007; Richards, 2005). This programme facilitates data storage, coding, retrieval, comparing and linking and offers the ability to manage and analyse data. The analysis of qualitative data using these tools still involves creativity, intellectual discipline, analytical rigour and a great deal of hard work (Patton, 2002, p. 442).

Initially, after I used this programme, it was easier to review the transcript data documents using line-by-line analysis in order to develop categories or patterns, which are called nodes in this software. During this process, line-by-line coding sharpens the use of sensitising concepts; that is, those background ideas that inform the overall research problem. It leads to the refining and specifying of any borrowed existing concepts, categories and themes. The coded themes were based on recurring ideas, issues or key phrases emerging across observations, photographs and interviews. In NVivo, these nodes stored the references systematically so that they could be retrieved easily. As the interview transcripts were processed, new nodes appeared as new ideas, topics and categories evolved. At the end of the process, every sentence was allocated to a node or a child node (a property of a node) which was then further explored, organised, changed or removed.

When I first started coding the observation, photograph and interview transcripts manually, there were more than fifty core categories with attached properties and it seemed complicated. NVivo analysis located categories and properties that had not been noticed. NVivo enabled me to reflect on the analytical process, develop ideas, and identify emerging themes as the data was coded. This is because NVivo has the benefit of allowing the researcher to keep asking questions, to add more categories and then think and write about those. After codes and categories had been derived from the text, the patterns were compared across interview transcripts. This started with open coding, then clustering codes into families of concepts or categories, and finally capturing emergent themes from the clusters of codes. The NVivo coding involved the use codes of particular meaningful words or phrases from participants. These were created and refined in order to capture helpful concepts linking thematic material in order to make an attempt at final thematic conceptualisation analysis. The themes were arranged hierarchically into major themes and minor themes. These themes were cross-checked and verified with the help of NVivo.

I validated the categories involving reanalysis, compared and combined the categories and subcategories interrelated amongst categories and explained the relationship. These processes assisted me to find out and relate the concepts,

subcategories and categories to investigate the context, events, phenomena and the effects of the interaction process. I investigated the context where categories happened, identified the influences of situation in one category, strategy in another category and the strategy outcomes. The purpose of the investigation is to identify the behaviour and the context which influences the behaviour. Therefore, these processes enabled me to relate the categories with main categories to answer and explain the research questions.

5.6 Validity and Reliability

The issues of internal validity, external validity and reliability are important in qualitative research. Research validity and reliability refer to how far the accuracy of outcomes can be trusted. Validity also refers to data accuracy in representing the phenomenon. The outcomes were transferred from the qualitative data which was evaluated in terms of trustworthiness (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton, 2002). Therefore, I have taken effective steps to ensure the validity and reliability of all the data collected, including the use of multiple sources of data or views, with the aim of bringing many perspectives.

Validity

A research study is considered valid if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain, or theorize (Hammersley, 1995). According to Silverman (2004, p. 224) validity is another word for truth. He proposes five strategies for increasing the validity of findings. These five steps include: using the refutability principle or the refuting of assumptions against data as the researcher proceeds through the research; using the constant comparative method, or the testing of provisional hypotheses against at least one other case; doing comprehensive data treatment, or incorporating all cases into the analysis; searching for deviant cases, that is including and discussing cases that do not fit the pattern; and making appropriate tabulations, or using qualitative figures when these make sense, as in mixed method designs.

According to Merriam (2001) there are two types of validity - internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is defined as improved through long engagement with the respondents in data collection (Merriam, 2001; Patton, 2002). I ensured that all children and parents had a chance to return and add any new or important information during interviews (Patton, 1990, 2002). For example, children were interviewed after observation in order to get their responses to the photographs. Probing questions were used to further explore the field of inquiry based on photographs as a prop. This form of inquiry was used in order to ensure more comprehensive reports were obtained and to clarify any doubtful interpretations or misunderstanding of different aspects of the behaviour. According to Richards (2005) taking researcher interpretation back to the respondent is often a very useful, pleasant and helpful act. Child and parent responses were built into the research design for validation of researcher interpretation.

I have used suggestions from Patton (2002) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) regarding the triangulation process. Triangulation is a term widely used for research design in order to ensure the data are consistent in cases where different sorts of data or methods of handling data get very interesting results. I collected data from different sources, i.e. observation, children's interviews, photographs, parents' interviews and teachers' interviews, to get data about children's behaviour.

The next step was interviewing parents and teacher about the parental environment and school environment. Admitting that a qualitative interview is a special kind of knowledge-producing conversation that occurs between two parties (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006), I encouraged the respondents to share their stories by building rapport.

In addition, I carried out informant checking during the analysis and after the analysis of data was done. During the analysis, I discussed the data of the interview with the respondents. After completion and analysis of the initial interviews and observations I arranged a two-day Mini Seminar for the parents at pre-school. These two days gave me an extra chance to meet parents and discuss with them. The attendance was only 65 % but it was valuable. It was a win-win situation: it was good for them to share how to nurture children and it gave me a chance to get confirmation

from them. Before running the Mini Seminar I was doing preparation about the common social behaviours that children had been showing at the observation stage and the common norms and values of nurturing children shared between parents in the three ethnic groups. That was given to the parents to recheck meaning based on their contextual culture. I had to be a sensitive researcher because I was working with different cultures. I had to understand the parents' backgrounds in order to minimise the possible biases during data interpretation. I represented myself and engaged as much as possible with the cultural embeddedness of respondents showing due backgrounds and viewpoints.

Therefore, every single aspect that involved a cultural aspect of parents' views needed to be checked with them. I made an agreement with the parents about what they said during the interview sessions. Parent checking involved, once the transcript had been reviewed by the interviewer, returning it to the participant and asking him or her to check that the content was an accurate reflection of what was said. If the meaning was not agreed they could change it. The data transcriptions of interviews from parents were verified through discussion in the Mini Seminar. I gave the parents the interview data to check the meaning and ideas they spoke about during interview. This was done to get verification from the respondents of the information given, since analysis begins as soon as the initial data is collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The verification of information from the respondents was an on-going process. Informant checks are the most critical technique for establishing credibility. They allow the researcher's conclusions to be evaluated by those individuals who provide the information. In addition to checking the accuracy of what was said, it is also important to check the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of what was said. I also used member checking techniques for providing feedback on interpretation (Richards, 2005) and outcomes, including giving comments about particular situations observed.

External validity, according to Guba and Lincoln(1989), is achieved through a 'thick description' of the research process to allow a reader to see if the results can be transferred to a different setting. In qualitative research, external validity is related to the transferability concept which is the ability of research results to be transferred

to situations with similar parameters, populations and characteristics. External validity in qualitative studies is concerned with the degree to which the individuals studied, and what they do and say, are representative of individuals to whom results might be generalised (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 2001). I took the above approaches to enable me to get the real situation and an holistic picture of the phenomenon. I also provided a thick description about the research contexts to enable readers to feel and internalise the research situation, especially in describing the children's social behaviour and peer relations (see Chapter 6) and parental social and cultural capital (see Chapter 7).

Reliability

Reliability, according to Silverman (2005), can be achieved by tabulating categories if a researcher so chooses, and also by being certain that when transcribing interviews all aspects of data are transcribed, even the most minute. It is important to bring rigour into the research, including investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy, taking an active analytic stance and saturation. Furthermore, Creswell (1998) proposed eight different procedures for achieving credibility and trustworthiness of findings, including prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, triangulation, using peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, in member checks, rich thick description, and external audits.

Reliability of qualitative data can be thought of as the convenience of fit between what a researcher records as data and what actually occurs in the setting. With reliability it is important to note whether the questions were appropriate and whether there were any methodological shifts, and how were they identified, explained, and supported (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The reliability of data depends on consistency of source, analysis, and interpretation to research outcomes. It is worth noting that regularity is implied to different degrees. Regularity and standardised procedures fit poorly with life and qualitative research. The goal of standardised measures which return consistent measurement in controlled settings is obviously incompatible with qualitative work. The audience should be able to

depend on it, to put confidence in the research result, that it should be seen to be trustworthy. In other words, the best way to assure that data is reliable is to have well-validated procedures in all that the researcher is doing. The researcher must be able to assure readers that they have reliably examined the data records, that they can count on locating and consistency using the categories created, responsibility storing and using all information available, and that the processes of questioning and combining the data in explanations are transparent and well documented. The researcher achieves research reliability by doing research, collecting data, analysing until the final report.

Furthermore, in playing the role as main research instrument I had an advantage in understanding the research phenomenon to enable me to enhance reliability. This is significant because qualitative inquiry depends on the researcher as the instrument (Patton, 2002) to conduct the study ethically and carry out the research process in accordance with the standards outlined for scientific discourse. As the nature of the study was to capture perspectives of parents' social and cultural capital, I became confident and remain convinced that this was the most feasible mechanism and proper way to conduct the inquiry. However, a researcher remains aware of the biases and weaknesses in conducting unstructured or semi-structured interviews, as personal and situational constraints can easily affect the integrity of the inquiry. At the time the researcher also builds up a very good relationship with the participants and respondents and this ensures all the data are the true points of view of the respondents.

Since the research methodology used included observation and interview, I continuously sought clarification from the teacher for answers that I acquired from the respondents, wherever relevant and necessary, for the purpose of verification. This process maintained the reliability of the data in question. This procedure implies that validation is part of the research process, with continual credibility checks of the collected data carried out.

5.7 Summary of Chapter 5

In this Chapter, the basic concepts and principles relating to research methodology have been expounded and the relevant methods of data collection used in the study elaborated upon. As discussed, qualitative research enabled me to explore the types and unique features of children's behaviour, and school's and parents' cultures, in the context of this study. In establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative data, I discussed important elements to be considered in the evaluation of data. These include internal validity, external validity and reliability elements. Certain research ethics about children are also essential and issues related to anonymity and confidentiality were also discussed. After considering the above, the researcher determined the method of data collection by choosing an appropriate data collection technique to be used in this study. The use of observation, interview, and documents were identified as appropriate techniques. Thus, I continued with detailed discussions of these techniques and further explained the data sampling which was very important for the study. Finally I discussed the process involved in the analysis of data, and how this study was limited by the conditions that may have influenced the results of the study. In the next chapter I shall discuss the data analysis from my fieldwork and report the findings.

CHAPTER 6: CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR AND RELATIONSHIPS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the outcomes which purposely elaborate on how children from the three different ethnic groups and of different genders relate to each other in pre-school (Research question 1). As this study is carried out in the hope of obtaining the answers to the three research questions stated in chapter 3, the relevant data collected from observation, interviews with children prompted by photographs, in-depth interviews with parents and teacher, and scrutiny of documents; are considered as the findings of this study. These data were analysed by using the constant comparative method and were continuously compared with other sources. Research questions two and three will be discussed in Chapter 7 and 8.

6.2 Children's Behaviour: Prosocial behaviour

The children's behaviour in their pre-school group consisted of movement, the things that they talked about among their friends, copying their friends' work, sitting in their seats quietly as though they were dreaming, concentrating on their work, and listening to their teacher. Some of them kindly helped their friends, such as showing what they had to do and such things. I established these categories of behaviour based on frequent occurrence during the pilot study. The focus was on the children's behaviour in their interaction with others, particularly with other children from different genders and ethnic groups. Using photographs to prompt the children's discussion was with a view to getting accurate answers and to avoid misinterpretation. However, these behaviours might be subject to change based on what emerged from the actual field work. When I did the main study, I also referred to the framework in order to avoid missing something from my categories. The boundaries for the research helped me to focus on the outcomes. The following findings, which are described as the children's behaviour, emerged from the analysis

of the data as being relevant to the pre-school children: helpful behaviour; respectful behaviour; positive response; cooperative behaviour; and sharing.

Helpful Behaviour

The following data explain how I exemplified my findings according to the themes. This observation of peer interaction helps to illustrate children's behaviour.

Ellin helped Asmira to open a can of drink when she saw that Asmira was having difficulty to open it...she also helped her friend (Adam) when he needed help ... with his work.

(Observation Session 1: Child 7)

The above was an example which showed helpful behaviour such as helping each other, giving help to anyone regardless of ethnic group. This helpful behaviour happened without being prompted by the other party. Furthermore, this data shows how children practise helpful behaviour as a pre-school norm in different ethnic groups. This helpful behaviour can be shown through the learning activities either in the classroom or during outdoor activities like physical education and movement. I divided this behaviour into two categories (i.e. classroom activity and outdoor activity)

The pre-school classroom environment provides the children with opportunities to practise helpful behaviour. A basic practice in this pre-school environment is lending coloured pencils to their peers. A few children in the class had the same practice of lending things to their peers. According to my observation, this would be a particular behaviour shown by a child:

She (Zi Ni) showed prosocial behaviour like being helpful every time to anyone who needed help. She let her classmates borrow her things, such as lending Harun and Vejay her coloured pencil without asking for rewards. She liked to share things with her friends...

(Observation Session 1: Child 25, Child 9, and Child 23)

A typical behaviour related to helping each other would include giving information, helping one another with tasks, or offering things, and these were described as examples of prosocial behaviour. According to one of my observations:

Canny showed good behaviour to other children like helping, giving information, helping Vejay to answer the work sheet first and giving the answer.

(Observation Session 2: Child 6, and Child 23)

Through my observation, it was always the same children who lent things to their friends in class. This helpful behaviour was a typical one in class as it had become a habit to the children. They would get their friends to help them finish their work. Children who were in need would walk to a more knowledgeable child, and those children would become the centre of attention when they helped the children in need. Children would prefer to ask their peers than their teacher. One child stated that:

...ask friend...she gave the answer...but teacher did not (not giving answer)...

[When I asked the teacher, she and her assistant always encouraged the children to help each other because they [children] may have a problem with the language, and shyness].

(Interview: Child 23)

However, based on the observation, helpful behaviour frequently occurring during free time at the playground was different. Through these outdoor activities the children had built up helpful behaviour because during that time the children had choices. They had choices and were free to choose the activity they wanted and which partner they wished to play with. These behaviours seemed to be between close friends and related to friendship. Children who played regularly with peers tend to play with the same children in the classroom and neighbourhood area. I have noticed this relationship involved a lot of skills such as tolerance, empathy and understanding about the partner in order to maintain their friendship.

There is a sample which is related to helpful behaviour and empathy skills from a child:

Ellin was crying while playing on the swing and Canny helped her... pushed her swing. Canny tried to make Ellin calm down ...

(Observation Session 3: Child 7, and Child 6)

The above situations were regularly observed during outdoor activities. This showed that the relationships between the children from the different ethnic groups in the

classroom frequently occurred among the children in the same table formation as the one in the classroom. From that situation I concluded the importance of the geographical space setting of mixed multi-ethnic groups in the round table formation.

In another case:

Vejay, Arif, Harun and a few other children played with the blocks instead of the swings. Vejay saw that Irda had difficulty climbing on the block, he went to help her. He pushed her up to the block.

(Observation Session 3: Child 23, Child 4, and Child 9).

From my perspective this helpful behaviour was related to empathy. In this case Vejay helped Irda and this was probably motivated from empathy and influenced by everyday experience with children from different ethnic groups and gender. This was not related to other social behaviour, which in many cases was the main reason for the behaviour occurring because of friendship, and same group. An important fact I noticed here concerned Vejay (an Indian child) who formed cross-ethnic friendships and had more intimate exposure to variations in ethnically-based play styles than other children who did not select cross-ethnic friends.

Respectful Behaviour

I observed that every morning, the children met their teacher at the gate and they gave greetings such as *salam*, *selamat pagi* (good morning) to the teacher and assistant teacher or other adults.

At 7.45 am: Children started arriving at the pre-school. The teacher normally arrived at the pre-school at 7.30 am. After keeping the stuff in the pre-school office, at 7.40 am Cikgu Faziah would stand at the gate and keep the gate open. [...] This started with a Chinese girl with her mum arriving at the pre-school gate, the parent said good morning to the teacher and gave a greeting in Mandarin to the assistant teacher. A child (Canny) conveyed the greeting also to the teacher and researcher. She held the teacher's right hand and then kissed it. After that she went to classroom accompanied by the assistant teacher. As usual, she left her shoes on the shelves beside the door. At 8.00 am, a few children came accompanied by their mothers. The children gave a greeting to the teacher and assistant teacher. After that they went into the classroom to keep their bag. [...] At 8.25 am, the teacher closed the school gate and went to the classroom. After that she called the children to stand up at assembly area in front of the school's door.

(General Observation: Morning Routine Episode)

Respect is a pre-school routine that the children practised every morning. Being respectful refers to children who are always polite to other people and give greetings to others. The children showed respect to the teacher, assistant teacher and even to me and parents who came to the pre-school - friends, adults, peers, visitors. According to the assistant teacher's statement:

She (May Yin) really respects her teacher. She loves her teacher. Her mum bought a cake for her birthday; she wanted her teacher to have some.
(Interview assistant teacher)

Sometimes the children showed respect to the teacher by listening properly and not distracting other children from paying attention. The children gave full attention during the teaching process and actively participated in the teacher's class. They demonstrated good behaviour and became role models to other children as well as following school norms and principles.

He pays attention to the teacher. He complies with the rules. He is respectful to teacher. Follow other's request (obey)...he doesn't walk about.
(Observation Session 1: Child 1)

At the same time the children respected other children just the same as the teacher nurtures them in classroom. Although the children seemed quiet, they were still respecting their friends:

Adam is introvert- doesn't talk much with his friends; he only talks when his friends talk to him. Talks to Canny with respect, eats politely. He is observing his friends' attitude and behaviour. He interacts with other children with full respect for each other. He doesn't have any problem with the teacher.
(Observation Session 1: Child 1, and Child 6)

The pre-school's aim to nurture the children's personal character, attitude and practice of honour in the curriculum is emphasised here (Refer to Chapter 8, Section 8.2).

Here I have reported some respectful behaviour which the children showed in my study. The most common respectful behaviour practised by children, as well as emphasised in the pre-school, included granting or conveying polite greetings to the teachers, adults, visitors and friends, kissing the hands of parents and teachers;

following the rules and regulations of pre-school; respecting the national anthem and the rule of the country, respecting prayer, following norms such as waiting in a queue and lining up to wait in a queue; respecting the opinions of others; respecting the need for silence; and standing or sitting at the right distance to indicate respect.

Every morning before the children entered the classroom, they would line up in front of the pre-school to take attendance before singing the national anthem and reciting the pledge rule of the country. The practice was also reflected in the queue while they were waiting to wash their hands in the sink. This practice was identified as an important sign of respect to others. Its implementation was continued in free activities such as the playground, as was the case with Adam with Zi Ni taking turns on the game slide (Observation P094: Child 1 and Child 25) and the case of Asah and Canny who took turns to use the cradle. This interaction involved not only rotation but also involved tolerant attitudes and skills such as negotiation. In the context of a multi-ethnic pre-school, the practice of standing in line is very important since children in pre-school need to familiarise themselves with and get used to these practices, while developing respect for others. The children queued up to wash their hands in the basin in the washroom before they ate (Observation P089: Child 2 and Child 6). They queued up for five minutes to learn how to wash their hands properly. Perhaps some confusion arises here in relation to respect for listening to others. There are differences between the eastern and western perspectives about silence as it is regarded as respect by people in the East. Eastern cultures see the concept of community as important in the culture of education in Malaysia to nurture a child who not only has high moral standards but also has a high compliance and respect for parents and teachers and the people around them. Listening in respectful silence here means respecting knowledge, events, guests and teachers who are delivering knowledge. This is frequently shown by the children in this study. This condition is also associated with the eastern culture which still strongly believes in the philosophy of compliance to the parent, teacher or leader, without being afraid to express a contrary opinion and idea.

Obedience

According to Kling (1995), in a Malaysian society, respect and obedience is emphasised in relations between the parents and child, teacher-child's relationships and relationships with adults. Children cannot raise their voice in whatever circumstances, or show a negative attitude through body language. They are required to listen with full attention and to hear the information, messages and ideas submitted by parents or teachers. They are not allowed to interfere because in the context of Malaysia this is considered as rude. They can only ask when they are given the opportunity, and even then only in the classroom or at school. Respect still requires a lot of practice and the children need to abide by the practice of the family as they are not allowed to interrupt, answer back or dispute parental instructions or directions. The children are often less consulted and not invited to discuss with their parents compared to their relationship with their teacher. Usually, teacher-child relationships are not too rigid and are more likely to be flexible than parent-child relationships. Perhaps the case studies below can explain this, as in Adam's case:

Observation 1 Story Telling: Adam was shy, and obedient. It was story telling time, Adam and his friends got together around the teacher. When the teacher was telling the story and showing the book to him and his friends, he listened attentively and looked at the pictures showed. He gave full attention to the teacher. He respected the teacher and followed other requests. He complied with the school rules and regulation. His character showed that he preferred to agree to do something without any questions. He did not talk much with his friends or his teacher. He made some friends and socialised with the children in the group just like Canny, May Ling and Irda.

(Observation Session1: Child 1)

Observation 2 Meal Time: It was break time. Adam had washed his hands and took his meal. He went straight to his seat and sat down quietly. He didn't talk much. He only listened to what his friends said and only commented on it when necessary.

(Observation Session 2: Child 1)

Observation 3 Watching TV programme: In every single activity I had observed Adam, he would always sit in front. He won't let the teacher push him. He would only concentrate on the TV programme because he would not want to miss the story.

(Observation Session 3: Child 1)

For more information I interviewed Adam about his friends and activities based on a few photographs.

R: Could you tell me about your friends based on these photographs?

Adam: I like to be friends with Canny because she is kind to me. I don't like to be friends with Jenny because she doesn't want to be friends with Ellin and me.

R: What are you going to say if your friends were sick?

Adam: I will help friends and cares

(Interview: Child 1)

The teacher commented about Adam: A little bit quiet compared to other Malay boys. He only talks among the group members. He doesn't walk about. He doesn't socialise with his friends much. His work is neat and good but he does it slowly. He is a nice child, respects teacher, helpful. Always helps other children but needs asking. He is not naughty (Interview: Teacher). Referring to the above case and other cases, many Malaysian children remain silent most of the time because they are listening attentively to the teacher. In the context of the Malaysian culture, being silent while a teacher is teaching is a way of showing respect. Being silent and restrained from asking any questions, especially during the teaching and learning process, is regarded as a good act in the Malay culture. One of the reasons why they are reluctant to interrupt the ongoing class is because the interruption in class could annoy other people and could delay the lesson being taught. Therefore, these children are encouraged to keep quiet and to wait until the end of the class if they needed to ask their teacher anything about their lesson.

In this research I discovered that there were several cases of children who were perhaps too respectful and obedient. In some examples of the cases here, I was worried that if there was too much respect and obedience, the children would practise these norms in school and this would have a negative impact on them in terms of social skills in building relationships with the teachers and peers and the surroundings. These adverse effects would also confuse the children between the practices of home and school as their over-obedience and respect might bring feelings of fear. As an example of the confusion here, if their respect is too high, they might be afraid to speak out because they would be worried about any mistake that would bring negative implications such as an inferiority complex. For example, in

the case of Child 3:

Session 2: He always moves to other children's places to look at what they have done. He would be copying the answer from other children. He has difficulty finishing his work. He does not really understand what the teacher said. He cannot write properly.

(Observation Session 2: Child 3)

When I observed for the third time, I found that Ashok, a 5 year old boy, is still unable to master the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) compared to other children of the same age. I noticed that his behaviour was in line with what I was told by his father during the interview, he usually listened to and obeyed his dad [parent 1]. Indeed, I noticed that he does not play mock fight with others and listens to the teachers talk. However the problem is his school attendance has not reached the minimum level set by the school and this causes him not to achieve the school attainment. I found that he did not finish a lot of school work. The teacher would give a different work to him compared to other friends. He needs his friends to help him to do his work. He is very playful, even when the teacher is talking to him, he imitates the teacher. He likes walking around. He talks a lot especially to Gee Ze and Asah [sitting in the same group]. Therefore, he can become friendly easily with his friends, e.g. he touches Carmen's hair [sitting in the same group] and plays with it, Carmen doesn't mind. He didn't do the work that had been given to him. He needs his friends to help him do his work.

(Observation Session 3: Child 3)

Even though these two cases (child 1 and child 3) are different situations - for example, in the first one, we have an obedient and silent child, and in the second case, a child who is obedient but is very friendly with his friends and here the obedience shows a negative impact. A child who is more comfortable being silent than participating in conversation may lack certain opinions and may not be keen to become involved in class activities or relationships with peers. At this stage the child would be confused, especially in a multi-ethnic pre-school where the children are exposed to different cultures. The different cultures have an impact on the family setting for the children to adapt to in terms of words and behaviours that may differ from their primary culture.

Positive Response

In this context, I defined positive response as a good behaviour which is the child's own. I found this behaviour important to highlight because it occurred most of the

time in the classroom and happened frequently within an ethnic group and between children of different ethnic groups. Therefore, for them this behaviour occurs regardless of ethnic background. They give help when other children request it.

This showed positive response behaviour from a Chinese child to a Malay child:

Arif was having difficulties in doing his work. He asked May Yin to help him doing his work. May Yin helped Arif and showed him how to do it.
(Observation Session 1: Child 1 and Child 14)

In another case,

The teacher gave the children a worksheet each. May Yin was having difficulty in doing the work, she asked Jenny for help. Jenny sat next to May Yin, and then she helped May Yin complete the work.
(Observation Session 2: Child 11 and Child 14)

The above data shows two different cases of children giving their help to other children when asked. The first case above shows to us that a Chinese girl was helping a Malay boy doing his work. Without any doubt she helped the Malay boy to finish his work. The second case above concerned the same girl who herself had problems doing the work and asked another girl to help her. These two cases show that the children have a positive response among them when they are asked. They are able to give support when another child asks for it. This action occurs as a response to the request.

In most of the children's contexts, their relationship has been built up from interacting with each other based on asking for help and assistance from other children. Such examples include asking advice or approaching for help. Then the other children would respect them by giving help and assisting them. Children need advice and support like material aids, for example a coloured pencil, or even the answer for their task. They have the intention to give help when requested, such as giving their opinion on colouring pictures or giving an answer.

This concept describes the social relations that occur between children in pre-school, which involved two, three or a group of children. Assistance would be given when asked for during the learning process in the classroom and outdoor activity outside the classroom, especially after the teacher gave instructions and when the child was asked to complete the task. The following behaviours were shown by the

children in relation to the behaviour of helping other children: lending stationery, describing the teacher's directions, giving an answer, helping complete the task, etc. These episodes show positive response behaviours from the children as they interacted with their friends as exemplified in the observations and photographs. For example, they helped their friends to solve tasks directed by the teacher. Vejay asked Canny how to do an exercise. Canny checked the question from Vejay's paper and compared it with her answer. She explained to Vejay how to do it. She showed her answer to Vejay. After the observation, Canny said that she always tried to help anyone who needed her help, normally, the children around her including Vejay, Adam, Asah, Ellin and more (Observation P030: Child 23, Child 1, Child 2, and Child 7).

Finding the cause of the behaviour is important in this study as the conduct of the children such as reciprocity, the need not to offend friends, popularity, would affect the basis of friendship and also because it is required. At this stage the value of friendship will encourage children to help their close friends, for example in the case of Canny and Ellin. Canny helped Ellin to get turns on the swing from Asah and this reflected their friendship. Friends are more likely to help other friends in situations of need, as in the above case. In other words, friendship motivates a child to help a friend more than other non-friends.

Furthermore, this behaviour also occurs due to the negative consequences such as loss of friends, not being invited to play or not being heeded by friends. Here, I found that those who are most popular in class showed certain criteria such as lending stationery to others, for example, the case of Zi Ni. She was the preferred friend of Ashok, Asah, Vej, Harun and other helpful children because of her willingness to lend stationery. In the interview with Zi Ni, she stated that if she did not lend stationery, she feared they would not want to become friends with her. There were also others who provided support to friends, because they had been asked to do it. It becomes a responsibility; if they didn't do it they would feel guilty or it might have a negative impact on their social relations. So a child would feel compelled to help other children. This is illustrated by Ellin's case below, which shows how a positive response created a sense of responsibility and this compelled Ellin to help her friends.

Between Ellin, Adam, and Canny: In the first place, Adam had a problem with his task and asked Ellin to explain how to do it. Adam had observed them [Ellin and Canny] on how to do the task. Ellin went to Adam and she explained to Adam what he was supposed to do.

(Observation P008 and P011: Child 7, Child 1 and Child 6).

Observation 2:

Ellin showed the exercise which Adam needed to work on with a ruler. She showed Adam properly and helped Adam to do it. Ellin noticed that Adam did his work wrong, she went to Adam's place and she erased the work for Adam.

(Observation P012: Child 7 and Child 1).

Observation 3:

Ellin showed and drew on Adam's worksheet how to do the exercise given. She explained to Adam how to make a good drawing.

(Observation P013: Child 7 and Child 1).

Observation 4:

Ellin helped Asmira to open a canned drink when Asmira had a problem with that. She showed Asmira how to open the canned drink.

(Observation P014, Child 7, and Child 15)

Based on this observation I had a series of interviews with Ellin and asked what led her to help Adam. She replied that this was due to her sense of responsibility and also because Adam is her friend. They also sat in the same group, helping each other. In this study, this particular behaviour has been shown by many children who are close around the same group. Sometimes there is a sense of obligation, as in the case of Adam requesting Ellin to show the answer. Based on this case, gender and ethnicity seem to be unimportant, as the factor of group sitting encourages friendship between Ellin and Adam. Ellin felt like a group member and the positive response encouraged her to show good behaviour when it involved a request. She felt guilty refusing and said it might have consequences like "maybe she will not be a friend". I conclude here that this existing behaviour is not driven by gender. It is not clear whether gender roles motivate children to help other children who are otherwise driven by request. Next, the effect of the request is that she/he cannot reject the request as it has become an obligation and its effects have consequences.

Based on the number of cases such as the instance of May Ling lending her stationery, Asah went to May Ling's table and asked for a coloured pencil

(Observation P020: Child 17 and Child 2). Lending stationery to friends who need it is important to maintain friendship, and to make them like her or him.

Cooperative behaviour

Cooperation refers to teamwork, collaboration, combining effort, give-and-take, or working together or joint operation or action between two or more children. This cooperative behaviour was one of the most popular behaviours occurring in this pre-school. Most cooperative behaviours happened in classroom activities through the teacher's plans. Normally the teacher would arrange cooperative activities after tea time.

A cooperative behaviour is initiated from a group activity which can be identified in the case below.

Ellin, Adam and Canny sat together to solve a group task which was given to them...they discussed together. Adam led this task...after that they helped each other count and answer the questions.

(Observation Session 1: Child 7, Child 1 and Child 6)

The children cooperated with each other to do the group task. They discussed together to solve the task. This activity gave the children a chance to practise cooperative behaviour as one of the pre-school norms which they were supposed to practise. The activities included problem solving in Maths and Language subjects. The children cooperated together to get the answers for the questions. In these group activities, cooperation involved three different ethnic groups which regularly worked together in group seating arrangements. Based on my observation, these cooperative behaviours were instigated as the children could finish their individual and group tasks. This cooperation only happened during activities which involved the teacher.

Cooperation in outdoor activities happened when they played together. The types of cooperation have been divided into two; firstly, the activities which were planned by the teacher, such as physical education activities and secondly cooperation happened in activities which were planned by the children. These activities were independent where the children were not restricted to their friend's group in class, and instead, they could choose their close friends to work together as

a team. I perceived this cooperation would be related to past relationships. For example they would play together a game known as bridges. They sang a song called 'London Bridge is falling down' together. Two children held each other's hands and raised their hands up and other children would walk under it (Observation Session: Outdoor activity).

Secondly, cooperation happened in activities which were planned by themselves, usually during free time in the morning or after school time, inside the pre-school, for example at the playground. This cooperation involved the close friends with whom they usually played:

There were three girls playing see-saw during free time. Two girls sat at the opposite ends of the see-saw with the Chinese girl [Zi Mi] and the Malay girl [Irda] trying to balance on either sides. May Yin pushed Zi Mi's seat to ensure enough weight for them [Zi Mi and Irda] (Observation P113: Child 14, Child 19 and Child 22).

After that I interviewed them:

R: What were you trying to do?

Irda: We play see-saw.

Zi Mi: play together...work together

R: Why did you push Zi Mi's seat May Yin?

May Yin: Play together[cooperate together]

R: Do you like to play with Irda, Min Yin?

May Yin: em..em (nodded) [yes].

R: Why?

May Yin: Play together.

(Interview P113: Child 14, Child 19 and Child 22)

Based on my observation, as regards to the cooperation during the free time, normally the children would choose their regular friends compared to the activities which the teacher had planned. In this case, it involved inter-ethnic group relationships even though May Yin cannot communicate fluently in Malay. However, the above case is contradicted by Nini's case: when I interviewed the child and asked her why she did not involve herself with other ethnic groups, she replied, "because they can't understand my language".

R: Would you be friends with others besides Raju and Vejay?

Nini: em...em (shaking her head) [No].

R: Why?

Nini: (she told Vejay in Tamil)because she can't understand my language.

(Interview P51: Child 10)

Some children thought cooperation in shared play activities would not be a problem with other ethnic groups. The majority of the children interviewed can play together with other peers from different ethnic groups, except in two cases. When asked why they co-operated in the teacher-planned playtime activities, in most of the answers given, the teacher had always told them to do so and as a team they were supposed to co-operate with each other. For example:

R: Based on this photograph, do you play with Harun?

Raju: I like to play with Harun

R: Why?

Raju: Teacher asked to be friends with others...like play mock fighting

R: Do you play with other children ?

Raju : Wee Jo, Arif, Zi Ni and Jenny

(Interview P89: Child 16)

In another case I asked children who gave the same answer, for example in the case of child 12 (P77) and child 15 (P68). In these three cases, the role of teacher is important in encouraging children to cooperate with children other than the children in their groups.

Features from this problem-solving task had shown that the cooperative behaviour of children do determine how they coordinate their actions in cooperative activities and what they understood about the social roles involved. The observation showed Ardini, Arif and Jenny working together to find answers. They referred to a book to compare and match the exercise. They worked in different ethnic groups to answer the question. They worked together to solve the problem of "match" (Observation P001: Child 5, and child 4 and Child 11). In these interactions the children had an intention (e.g., they had the goal to get the "match" answer).

This next case demonstrates the amount of time spent in cooperative behaviour by a child. It showed a child teaching another child how to play a new game. Wee Jo taught a girl to play 'teng-teng' [hopscotch]. This process occurred several times. The first time he showed Sree how to play it, and then let her have a try. Wee Jo was not satisfied with Sree's performances, and so he showed it to her once again. Time-consuming cooperation in terms of the amount of time spent by Wee Jo with Sree is important here. I would emphasise the spontaneous help and play activity coordinated between Wee Jo and his friends.

Children engage in cooperative activity with a joint goal. In this study, this activity towards a joint goal or intentions happened frequently. The children actively joined an activity set up by their group partner and friends. They did tasks parallel with what their partners were doing. They acted according to what their partners were doing. The children were able to cooperate with their partners in a variety of tasks between two and more children. They needed to work cooperatively and find the answer to achieve that joint goal. A full commitment is important when having a joint goal and every child should be given support for achieving the target.

The most interesting findings emerging from the cooperative behaviour involved a popular child who would always lead and coordinate games. I have observed that children like Canny, Harun, Asah and Jenny always led in the pre-school activities such as singing the Malaysian national anthem and reciting the *dua* (prayer). Children like Canny, Asah, Vejay and Wee Jo who were fluent in Malay frequently offered their assistance to their group in school activities. This case was described as the teacher put on some educational music on the computer. Some music has a lot of beat or rhythm that makes you want to dance. Vejay and Harun got up and start dancing together. Then a few children followed them including Suriani. Suriani danced with Vejay. Vejay told her that he could do a tap dance, then he showed her the moves, Suriani imitated the moves, and they danced happily with the others. When the teacher switched off the music, they settled down and laughed, satisfied with their dancing (Observation Session 2, Child 21, Child 6, Child 9 and Child 23). In my observations, children of 6 years of age were seen to be more proficient co-operators than children of 5 years of age. 6-year-old children were skilful in initiating cooperation, leading a task and coordinating activities among others. I observed a group of 5 year olds led by a child of 6 years old who was more coordinated in his efforts when cooperating with the same-age group.

Sharing behaviour

The sharing behaviour was observed during activities in everyday routines which frequently occurred in the classroom. Therefore, the pre-school ethos aimed to integrate the children from different ethnic groups and sharing is prominently part of

the PERPADUAN Pre-school principles, as most of the activities provided an environment for sharing and cooperative behaviour. Sharing behaviour is considered a crucial aspect for the children to get along with others in a classroom. From my observation the forms of sharing behaviour among children were composed of items such as shared play, shared learning materials (coloured pencils, books, food, or other materials). The children shared with each other, especially among the group's members, such as cognitive skills (sharing the answer) and experiences, especially activities involving their cultural background. Through sharing their own experiences from different cultures, activities were made meaningful. Other children had shared learning materials, toys, skills and even food.

The following cases show the form of sharing behaviour among the children as they shared their task:

Case 1: Arif and Asah showed their work to Jenny on how they did the sum. Jenny was copying some of Asah's answers.

(Observation P 024: Child 4 and Child 2)

Case 2: Canny was explaining her answers to Vejay and Ellin. She showed them her answer and explained how to do it.

(Observation P025: Child 6, Child 7 and Child 23).

Case 3: Asah asked Wee Jo whether he could compare and share his answers with Wee Jo's answers. Wee Jo replied to Asah that he agreed to do so (Observation P026: Child 2 and Child 24).

Arif pointed at Jenny's work and told her that she had the wrong answer. After that he shared his answer with Jenny.

(Observation P107: Child 4 and Child 11)

These samples explained the importance of the sharing experience to find the answer, and the cognitive skills among the children in solving class activities and tasks. Sharing the answers happened between children in the same group. Sitting in a group circle is part of the pre-school setting in order for the children to communicate among themselves and become a small community. I had observed these sharing behaviours occurring frequently among the group's members and their classmates who were close to them. Sharing seemed related to regular contact which involved children who interacted in everyday partnership. This behaviour was also related to a group sitting pattern formed by the teacher in order to encourage the children to share. It also gives the children a chance to develop relationships and finally friendships. It involves sharing between the ethnic groups and genders.

I noticed that the children were always sharing food with their friends in two situations, first during meal time, and second “for special friends”. I had observed during meal times that the children were familiar with sharing food and drinks, which frequently happened in the groups and among close friends. The meal time normally took about 15 minutes for the children to eat and the teacher provided the food and drink for all children. In between this time, I observed that the children were willing to share by offering their food like a snack (*kuih*) to others. This sharing of food in this study was not arranged by the teacher. The following sample from my observation shows the sharing of food among children:

Rony Chia offered Irda some 'kuih karipap' (Curry puff). He cut 'kuih karipap' into a small piece and offered it to Irda. She just ate that 'kuih karipap' and told Rony Chia she still had another one
(Observation P149: Child 18 and Child 19).

I noticed that this behaviour frequently occurred among the children surrounding the group. This type of behaviour is quite common in the group between the group members, and involved mixed gender and ethnic groups.

Sometimes the children shared sweets with their best friends, especially after meal time, when one of them brought the sweets from home purposely for his or her best friends. I observed this behaviour frequently between the girls, and this involved personal relationships such as best friends. I interviewed a case of two Chinese girls who were always sharing sweets: The question was “Why do both of you like to share sweets with each other?” The answer they gave was, “We are friends”. In order to clarify my argument I observed another case.

Si Mi gave May Yin some water. Sharing water was quite common among these pre-school children because of the warm weather
(Observation P150: Child 14 and Child 22)

I had interviewed both of them about their friendship,

R: Do you give water to May Yin because she is your friend?
Si Mi: "Yes, I like to play with her. After we finish we drink together, [she laughed]."

Based on the two cases above, I concluded that sharing food is an important behaviour between two children and it occurred between close friends. The quality of children sharing among the classmates reflected on friendships factors which are associated with trust, reciprocity and probable past and future friendship. Sharing

learning materials frequently occurred during the teaching and learning period especially in structured activities that were arranged by the teacher. The children shared the materials from pre-school such as pencils, coloured pencils, drawing paper, paper, books, scissors and glue, and materials privately owned by children such as pencils, coloured pencils and erasers. In a group, they were given a bucket of coloured pencils to share among themselves. This is part of the pre-school strategy to encourage sharing behaviour (Observation P107: Child 4). This sharing behaviour is common and occurred frequently between the children and involved different ethnic groups and gender.

However the second case below describes a different situation and different connotation which gave a new experience to the children. This case explains sharing behaviour in the playground area. The outdoor equipment apparently was not enough for the 25 children in the pre-school, so the children had to share every single piece of equipment the pre-school provided, including the swing, slide, block bricks and see-saw. There was a group of children enjoying the free time play outdoor activities with sharing behaviour. They knew how to take turns and tolerate each other without fighting (Observation P122: Child 6).

R: Do you take turns to get on the swing?

Canny: Yes.

Wee Jo: Ada cikgu(yes, teacher)

Asah : Saya main sikit (I played a little, because Wee Jo played too much.

R: So, how do you divide the time?

Canny: We count how many times the swing moved.

Asah: Canny asked Wee Jo to stop swinging because he won't stop it.

(Interview on P122: Child 6, Child 2 and Child 24)

Sharing things and tasks with friends are challenging for these children. It involves interpersonal situations in which the children need to balance their own desire with their friend's wishes. It is important for the children to develop tolerance, empathy and social skills and at the same time it gives them a good chance to develop the ability to coordinate play with friends in situations in which there is potential for conflict if they cannot use their social skills.

6.3 Children's Relationships: How the Children from the Three Different Ethnic Groups Relate to Each Other

In this section, I plan to discuss findings related to the research question: How do the children from the three different ethnic groups and of different genders relate to each other in pre-school?

In this section, I shall focus on the children's interactions and school activities involving children from different ethnic groups. I have included a collection of data not only from my information observing children first hand but also from the interviews with children based on photos and field notes, reports from the teacher and the assistant teacher, and school reports. In this way, I hope to show triangulated evidence and obtain a clearer understanding of how the children interact in different ethnic groups. The first thing I focused on was how to measure these relationships in order to elicit ideas about them. The main purpose was to obtain information relating to relationships with their friends and background. From observation, I could see the children's daily interaction inside and outside the classroom as a reflection of their relationships. Through the interaction that occurred between children, I managed to identify a few things, including the friends the children chosen to be close to, the frequency of interaction between them, the time spent by the children with others, and the pattern of this interaction, as was evident in the social behaviour that I have discussed above.

Based on photographs taken during interactions, I obtained information on the factors that drove their relationships and the quality of the relationships that occurred. This information was obtained from my interviews and then I referred to the pre-school documents which were provided by the teacher and discussed the information in connection with the relationship between the children and others. Next, I organised the information and factors that encouraged this behaviour into themes. Based on my observations, I found it quite difficult to see through the detailed information about the relationships of children in this kindergarten. This continued until I had to observe in detail the social acts shown by the children. Some of the social behaviours as a guide included helpful, cooperative, respectful, sharing and positive responses by children when they interacted with their friends.

Based on these indicators, I compared them with the results of interviews with the children in a picture to show the behaviour. The interviews with children provided a new challenge for me, as the answers were similar in terms of the language used; for example, the terms "friend" and "love" are normal to children. As such, I tried to see the various aspects based on signs of the relationship of children in the actual context.

It was difficult for me to look for the relationships in this study. I decided to categorise two stages, interaction and relationships. It is inequitable to emphasise only one stage because not all interactions of children can be categorised as relationships. Based on the resources, I made a detailed comparison, including social behaviour that existed in this study, and how this happened. Relationships were inferred from the effects of individual behaviour on children. These inferences were based on the social behaviour of children as shown by the children after an interaction occurred. More social behaviour occurred between close friends compared with children who were not close to them. Relationships were invoked by the positive social behaviour of the two children. Based on my observations, interaction normally occurred only among the children who appeared not as close to each other and less involved in the process of social behaviour as being helpful or cooperative. However, it was difficult to make a judgement of relationships that existed between two children if I only observed without interviewing the children. In fact, during the interview I still required thorough research to interpret the relationships between them.

Figure 6.1, this maps the direction of children's friendship networks between the children in my study. The network was developed from the observations, photographs and interviews with children. A shape is used as a symbol for gender and a colour as a symbol for the ethnic groups (i.e. green for Malay, blue for Indian and red for Chinese). Meanwhile, coloured arrows show the patterns of direction relationships (blue for ethnic direction, one-way black arrow for instigated direction, two-way red arrow for reciprocal direction, and two-way brown arrow for shared play). The importance of these children's friendship networks explains why it was useful to make this map. This network helped me to find data that I did not spot in

my observations. I did not acquire some data from photographs or interview, but by looking at the map networks I found a few puzzles. For example, why is Vejay in the middle of the map? Is it something to do with gender, ethnicity or perhaps to do with age or size? Other children like Sree had no other connection, and this was the same with Lela. In another case, Asah had made an approach to Lela. When I looked at the map network it helped me to understand my data and even more.

There were some patterns of child interaction which emerged at this pre-school based on Figure 6.1, and I divided the relationships into a few groups, starting with a wide range to a narrow range, or in other words, from the outside to the inside of the map.

First, relationships based on ethnic groups in this case can be seen in the relationships between Nini and Sree, and Simi and Ying. Why did these relationships happen? They were because Sree and Simi could not communicate in the Malay language and could only communicate in their mother tongue. Their friends around them were from same ethnic identity, including Gee, who was always friendly with Yee Zi. However in the case of Raju, Adam, Irda and Lela, the relationship seemed to be instigated by other children from different ethnic groups.

Secondly, relationships based on instigated direction could be seen as in the cases of Irda, Arif, Ashok, Raju, Adam, Rony, and Yee Zi. From these relationships I found the main reason was to show popularity between the instigators. Most of the children (instigators) in this case seemed to be 6 years old, fluent in Malay and with good social skills. These instigated interactions were created by a child who was popular among the children. For example, in the cases of Asah, Vejay, Canny and Harun, they instigated interactions with other children. This type of interaction only existed with a few children who had good social skills.

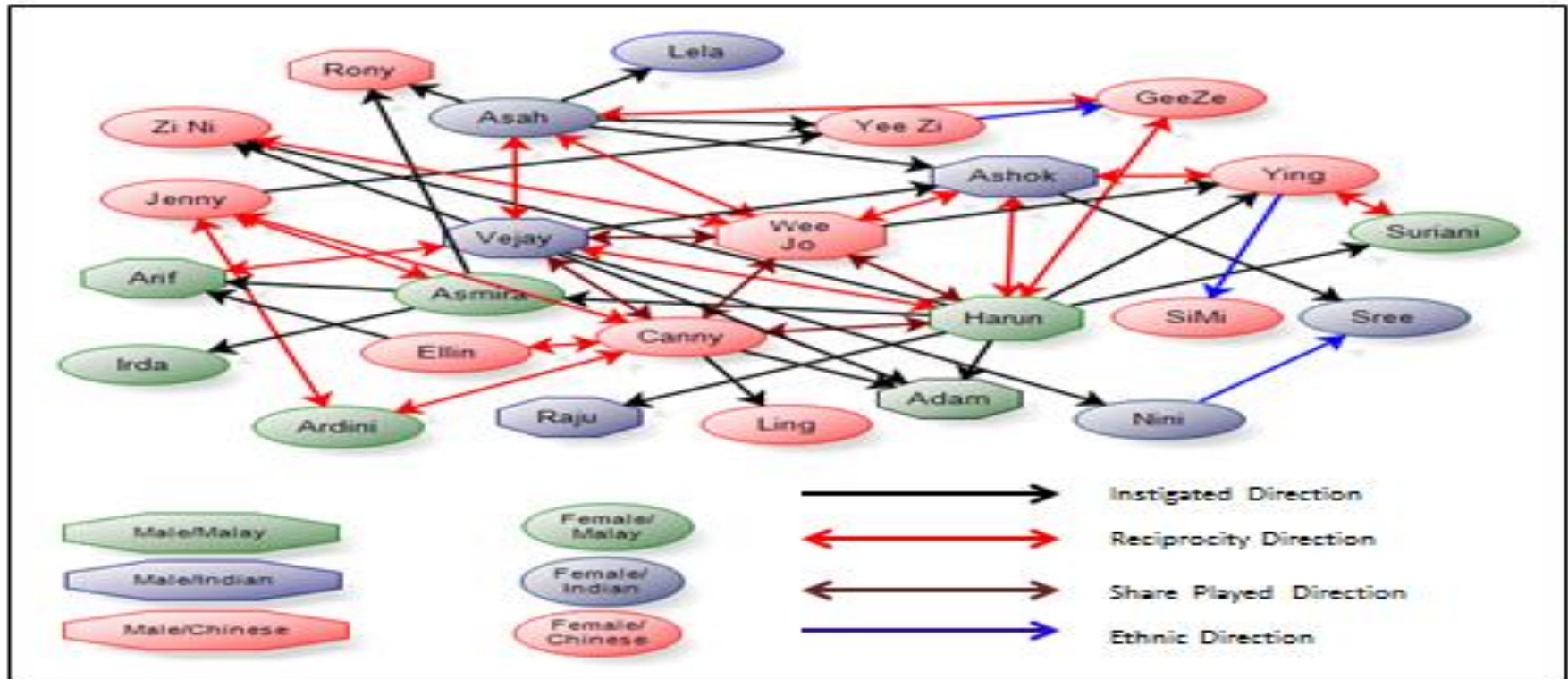


Figure 6.1: Pre-school children's friendship networks

Thirdly, reciprocal relationships happened between a child who was popular in the classroom, as in the relationships between Canny, Vejay, Asah, Harun and Wee Jo. These were the most popular children in their class and were always interacting with others. The second reason was the seating arrangement, which encouraged them to communicate with other children, e.g., sharing coloured pencils. This study showed that the children related to each other based on reciprocal interaction. The children practised a mutual exchange in classroom activities, especially in something that is concrete. A frequent interaction was one of helping friends, and this usually initiated more interaction with one another. For example, helping each other swing or playing see-saw together, and assisting friends in daily activities while completing schoolwork, colouring pictures, showing answers, and helping their friends to borrow pencils.

Fourthly, relationships based on shared play. These relationships existed between Jenny, Wee Jo, Harun, Canny and Vejay, who always created play and prompted others to join their play group (See Shared play activities page 175).

The following findings, which best describe relationships between children from different ethnic groups, emerged from the analysis of the data as being relevant to the PERPADUAN Pre-school situation:

1. Interaction by reciprocity
2. Shared play activities
3. Interaction in fantasy play and object
4. Interaction by gender
5. Interaction by age-mates and cognitive maturity
6. Interaction by ethnic identity

These will now discuss.

Interaction by Reciprocity

A reciprocal relationship exists because both children feel the need to help the other. The relationship between giving and receiving enhancement among children can be described as a two-way or reciprocal process, as in the case of Child 25:

She selected a colour pencil for May Ying to borrow. She did not mind other children borrowing but she made sure they returned the pencils because the next day they were going to borrow the pencils again. She did not let May Ying pick the pencil from her pencil box. Zi Ni was colouring her work which was given by the teacher. Wee Jo wanted to borrow some of her coloured pencils. She willingly let Wee Jo borrow them. Zi Ni was very helpful in terms of giving something to other children especially coloured pencils. She showed pro-social behaviour like being helpful every time to anyone who need help. She let her classmates borrow her coloured pencils without any rewards. She liked to share things with her friends. Most of the other children were very close to her because they needed her.
(Observation: Child 25)

The case above shows how a child develops reciprocal relationships when other children need assistance to complete a task in daily activities, such as allowing them to borrow a pencil or crayon, helping to colour a pictures or showing an answer.

The children developed relationships based on reciprocity, which is the principle or practice of mutual exchange, especially in sharing something that is concrete. Mutual needs are factors that drive the children to develop relationships which emerge in a dyadic relationship process.

Reciprocal relationships can also be seen in activities such as playing in the playground during free time. The children might be helping their friends on the swing or on the see-saw. For example, in the case of a particular relationship:

It was time to do number [Mathematic] work, the children listened to the teacher's instructions. After a few minutes Asah went to Wee Jo and May Ling to see if they had started the work or not. Wee Jo had started answering a few questions. Asah went to Wee Jo's place to ask the answer from him. Wee Jo showed his answer to Asah. She asked him for answers to the work that the teacher had given. Wee Jo willingly let Asah copy his work. Asah looked at Wee Jo's answer and copied it from Wee Jo's worksheet without doubting Wee Jo's answer. Asah needed people to help her do her work, or else she couldn't do the work, she depended on her friends rather than the teacher. Wee Jo just smiled. After she finished copying, she brought her answer to other group. She showed Arif and Jenny the answer. She showed them the answer and discussed the answer one by one a few minutes.

(Observation and Interview P018: Child 2)

This event showed that the girl built a relationship by offering the answers to her friend. The above statement showed Asah interacting with Wee Jo to get the answers to the exercises given by the teacher. A closer friend has more interaction, and

positive social behaviour will occur simultaneously. It could be suggested from Asah's case is that a child who always helps another usually has a good relationship with all children. Based on the frequency of interaction, this reciprocal relationship is established by mutual preference. This relationship occurred frequently between close friends compared to other children who were not close to them. This inferential support of relations was based on the social behaviour of children as shown by the children after an interaction occurred. It was found that the friends initiated more interactions with one another than with other children. A frequent interaction was that of helping friends, and this would initiate more interaction. For example, the trust which Asah showed Wee Jo through positive social behaviour led to further interaction by Asah with others.

Based on my observations, reciprocal relationships are reinforced by intensified interaction and reinforcement of social behaviour by others. This is shown in the case of the reciprocal relationship between Asah and Wee Jo:

Wee Jo came to Asah's place and asked Asah for the colour he needed. He looked for the coloured pencil. Wee Jo was searching for the right coloured pencil to use. Asah let Wee Jo to search for the colour he needed in her coloured pencil case. Asah recommended which coloured pencil Wee Jo should use.

R: Do you always lend your coloured pencil to Wee Jo?

Wee Jo: Yes teacher, I always help him. He helps me as well. We are good friends.

(Observation and Interview P028: Child 2 and Child 24)

The reciprocal relationship is maintained here when a dyad interaction is continued and supported with social behaviour such as helping each other. The frequency of interaction between dyads helps to enhance the reciprocal relationship, and also creates a more intimate relationship. For example, in daily activities in the classroom, acting as help will be enhanced with advice and ideas such as solving school tasks. The children had been using their relationship with friends to compare themselves. In this case the children had taken their friend as guidance when evaluating their behaviour, personality, social skill and competence.

I wished to see if there is a difference between Indian and Chinese children towards Malay children, who could be categorised as a dominant group in the

community. Similar to Asah's case with Wee Jo, I would like to describe here the relationship between Asah [an Indian child] and Suriani [a Malay child] as not being restricted by their ethnic background. On the other hand, the relationship was motivated by a reciprocal relationship and a positive social behaviour among them.

Asah came to Suriani, and asked about the sweet that she had. Suriani took some of her sweets from her pocket and gave them to Asah to cheer her up. She was willing to share with Asah.

(Observation and Interview P064: Child 2 and Child 21)

The above statement gives us a picture of the reciprocal relationship between an Indian and a Malay girl which was based on the willingness to share something with others. An important point here could be seen in the instance of the popular girl playing a main role in developing the relationship, in that the Indian girl, Asah, instigated the relationship with a Malay girl in sharing sweets rather than looking at the dominant group factor.

Another observation shows the relationship between Malay and Chinese boys who were very close to each other and how this was driven by reciprocity in play:

Wee Jo was leaning towards Harun. Wee Jo whispered something to Harun about the story they had seen. They seemed to be very close together. They played and sat together. Later, they [Wee Jo and Harun] leaned their heads towards Canny and Suriani [P74]. [Interview]: Why? We ate...help each other...play together.

(Observation and Interview: P071 and P074: Child 9 and Child 24)

Based on this sample, a reciprocal relationship can be seen as developing among a dyad from a different ethnic group is strongly related with play. Using body contact especially in play interaction shows a close relationship with trust and bonding where the children had built up the quality of the relationship. In the case of Child 9 (see Appendix C2 Case Child 9), the reciprocal relationship shown did not only relate to the positive social behaviour but may also be correlated with other factors such as personality. The quality of a relationship will last long and the frequency of interaction will increase when there is reciprocity in play. However, I observed in this study that these interethnic relationships emerged among the children who were popular in the Friendship Network.

I wished to find out if the relationships driven by gender. It is not easy for us to generalise that reciprocal relationships are influenced by gender. Based on my observation, the situation is more specific and depends on what kind of reciprocity they agree on. It depends on an individual children's personality or the background.

The data show that some children are willing to follow other children's advice because both of them happen to have mutual understanding of reciprocity. Their understanding of reciprocity means if you want to have a relationship you have to take this advice, especially during free time activity. According to the observation notes:

Canny said that she was reading a rhyme book and looking at the pictures in the book. Canny looked up and saw that Jenny hadn't finished her apple yet, she told Jenny to finish off the apple quickly so that they could read the rhyme book together.

(Observation Session 2: Child 6)

In this context, mutual understanding between two children is very important in order to maintain the relationship. Both children comply with each other's requirements and favours; bonding helps the interdependent relationship to exist. Bonds of mutual understanding actually occur between many children during free activity. In order to coordinate play with friends, children must communicate clearly, attend to the perspective of the other, and agree more than disagree with each other or clarify on getting what they want. Sometimes the children managed their disagreements so that they could prevent arguments and they could settle things amicably.

Another case about bonding which is more related to girls and mutual trust can be seen in the following statement from observation and interview:

Observation: Asah tied Gee's hair properly with a hair band. Gee just let Asah touch her head. Gee liked it. Gee liked someone like Asah to care about her. Their interactions seemed borderless. Chinese and Indian girls were playing together without any doubt.

R: Let's look together at the photos from today - can you tell me about what your friend is doing?

Gee: She touches my hair ... also tied my hair.

R: Do you like it?

Gee: Yes it looks beautiful!

R: Do you have any relationship with her?

Gee: Yes, friends.

R: Why?

Gee: I like Asah. We play together ... sit down together, she is good ... I love to help friends.

(Interview P002: Child 2)

Although mutual understanding exists here, it is still clear that this is dominated by children who have the most skills. I noticed that the ties seemed to be instigated by one relatively dominant child, and the other children would follow.

Shared Play Activities

It seems important in this study to investigate the play activity that the children were involved in. Most of my observation showed that the children relate to each other based on play either during free time or learning time. They relate to each other because of the shared play activities. The type of play is different according to the children; it is subject to the group or situation.

The play I emphasise here is the type of play initiated by the children, not the organised play activities initiated by the teacher. For example, here we have a type of play activity that a group of children created:

May Ling saw Harun and Vejay jumping on the green carpet with a square shape design on the floor. They played with the carpet shape. She went to Harun and Vejay to play with them. She imitated what they did which was jumping inside the shapes.

(Observation Session 1: Child 17)

In this case, a group of children created a type of play, jumping on the floor based on a carpet shape. The children carried out their assigned roles among their group and imagined that the square shape design on the floor was part of their rules. I observed that the children created and engaged in cooperative play involving three ethnic groups. Cooperative play occurs when two or more children are engaged in a play activity. This play activity initiated an interaction, communication and understanding with other children who were involved. They were copying the activity that the others were doing and showing their willingness to become friends. The children communicated through the activity they were involved in together and had the same feelings towards each other.

The case below could be described as similar to the one above:

Si Mi followed Wee Jo, she put a pencil between her nose and her mouth and showed it to Asmira. They looked happy with this play activity.
(Observation P096: Child 22)

Like the case before, a friend is a play partner, so the children relate to each other because they need a partner to interact or to share the fun with. Another thing, shared play activity developed in inter-ethnic relationships but, compared to the case here, the ethnic relationships influenced peers in the same ethnic group compared to peers in different ethnic group. Another case explains how play activities trigger the children to build relationships. They forgot about their ethnic group and gender when they were involved in playing enjoyable games. The following case is from my observation and interview:

May Yin [Chinese girl] and Vejay observed what Harun was doing. Harun told them the rules of the game and what to do.

When I asked about what was their relationship to him, Harun told me that they were all his friends. He always played with them during free time and when they were doing outdoor activity. He said that Zi Ni always gave coloured pencils to him when he needed them.

When I asked Zi Ni about her relationship with Harun, she said that they always played together during play time. She was also Harun's friend in classroom activities.

When I asked them together, Harun, Zi Ni, May Yin and Vejay admitted they were friends.

(Observation P072: Child 10)

Referring to this case, I realised that based on this photograph and interview, gender and ethnic group was not the main factor for the choice of friends. Harun had developed his friendship in a group with a child from a different ethnic group. He understood friendship as playing together and sharing together. In this case the triggers of relationships here included feeling comfortable with another child when they were playing. Through play they developed relationships and became closer. When they admitted that they liked to be friends with most of those who interacted in the above case, this gave a picture about the play activities, and how they developed relationships without taking into account gender and ethnic groups. By playing together, they were building up their bond of friendship. The difference in ethnicity or skin colour did not seem to be noticed by the children as they engaged in this

imaginative play. The team consisted of three different ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian.

This was continued in the classroom activities when they needed each other's things like coloured pencils, as in the case below. According to my observation:

After Jenny had finished her work, she tidied up her table and put her stationery back into her pencil case. A few moments later, May Ling came to Jenny and Arif, and showed her [May Ling] her new coloured pencil. Arif was impressed with the coloured pencil. Jenny told May Ling that she also had the same coloured pencil, but it was at home.

(Observation Session 1: Child 13)

This case showed an impressive instance of the children being able to build conversation in the abstract. The children were talking about the coloured pencil they had and they were able to imagine the colour. Sharing the same thing helped to seal the bond of relationship. The above example points towards sharing a common thing that created pleasure among the children without any ethnic barrier. The main factor for them to be friends was the fact that they enjoyed sharing everything together during play. A friendship happens when two or more people share the same things together, someone gives something to them and someone who is sitting near them and this applies to people who prefer being together.

In this study, the children who attended the pre-school lived within a range of less than a mile and walked to school. This meant that their parents knew some of the other children's parents and that they tended to share community facilities. Pre-schoolers tended to become friends with peers who lived nearby, as neighbour or playgroup members. They also knew their friends' siblings and parents. They were interested in playing together because they would play together after school time as well, in their community area. They had known each other since they were small. From the observation and my interview, Asah stated, "I went back with Vejay...we stayed same (same neighbour)...my mum always takes him together..." (Interview: Child 2). This situation was also referred to in the Friendship Network, as Asah and Vejay always interacted with each other and had a good relationship.

Another case from the interview with Ellin: If you are at home, would you still be friends with them? Are you friends with Irda? "She lives near my house"

(Interview P004: Child 7). Some of the friendships developed because the children went to the same day-care centre after the pre-school session. This meant that they could go home with one of the pre-schoolers' mothers. Therefore, their friendships became closer.

Vejay stayed in front of my house...and Ardini behind...but we played together....we played together at our ibu (baby sitter)...always played together.

(Interview: Child 7)

In this case, the children became friends when they stayed in the same neighbourhood and played together. The interview cases above shows these children as being friends as they play together at the babysitter's home after pre-school. The babysitter (home day care) influenced the children to maintain their friendship at school. The experience with the same friends and the length of time spent at home care enabled them to make friends and develop important skills for social interaction. In this case I observed that the children were most likely to communicate effectively with a familiar child. Children who stayed in the same day care (transit place) with their friends always played together and cooperated easily in play when interacting with the children they were familiar with.

In another case, I observed from this pre-school, some of the children were friends as their parents were friends. Their parents had known each other since the children were small, and their children started as playmates. This friendship continued and became closer because their mothers had arranged a routine to send and pick up the children between home and school. This pattern of interaction could be seen in Figure 6.1 as regards to the relationships between Vejay and Asah, and Yee Zi and Gee Zee.

Interaction in Fantasy Play

The children related to each other driven by the objects they played with. In this case study, the children interacted with each other when they shared the same interest or had something to share or talk about. For example, the children would relate to each other when they wanted to share a story from a TV programme. The children related

to each other because they had something to share. They shared the same interest to get friends. By sharing, they built up a relationship based on something to play or to discuss. The observation showed that:

Harun had a new handkerchief, he showed it to May Ling. May Ling took out her handkerchief and showed it to Harun too. Then May Ling told him that they could do shapes using the handkerchief, Harun asked her to teach him make shapes. May Ling showed him the steps to do it, and Harun followed. He liked to show the hanky to the few children nearest to him like Suriani and Wee Jo, like putting his hanky on Wee Jo's head and Wee Jo looked like he enjoyed it.

(Observation Session 1: Child 9)

In this case the boy liked to play with the object with the girl as his play mate. The boy enjoyed that play and followed what the girl showed him. The interaction here was driven by the handkerchiefs, and then the child initiated another interaction with other children. In this case the friendship was not emphasised by the boy to a girl but for their enjoyment and to make fun with others.

In a case different from the one above, the children related each other to develop their friendship by using an object or fantasy play to encourage them to talk, to work and to sit together. They were talking to each other about what they did during the everyday activity. Through this discussion topic, automatically a relationship had been built up.

R: Let's look together at the photos from today - can you tell me about what your friends are doing? Ardini: We eat fruits...apple and watermelon.

R: Do you like it?

Ardini: Yes it tastes great!

R: Do you have any relationship with them?

Ardini: Yes, we are friends.

R: What make you all become friends?

Ardini: Chatting together...work together. We play together...sit together. They always help me.

R: Have you ever become angry with anyone?

Ardini: No... but we always tease each other.

(Interview on Observation P004: Child 5)

The case above showed that the child understood friendship as going beyond play. The child understood the meaning of friendship here as having a conversation, chatting and working together even though they were talking about fruits. In this case

the fruit helped to create an interaction. Another point concerned playing and sitting together which showed their relationship. The child had his own style to make a friendship, for example, teasing each other is part of friendship.

Other evidence about the same issue from the observation showed that:

Jenny told Ardini and Harun that she had a new water bottle. She took it out of her school bag and showed it to them. While eating the curry puff, she told them that the water bottle was so good; the water in the bottle wouldn't spill out so it wouldn't make any mess. As the children had hot chocolate for their mealtime, she stated hot chocolate was nice but not healthy. She stated that water is much healthier than hot chocolate.

(Observation Session 1: Child 13)

Based on the above observation statement, we can get a picture that sharing the same object or the same topic helped to develop a relationship among them. The children had shared the cognitive maturity of their thinking at the same age through this activity. The children always related the things they found with their experience during tea time. They would chat with their friends based on the cake or fruit eaten by them during that time. Everyone would tell their friends about their experience of the cake, or fruit served in the morning. The stories they discussed were related to their food at home, the food cooked by their mothers, a favourite cake or favourite food and favourite drink. This showed the children's desire to create and sustain friendship through sharing stories and experiences, rather than specifically through play.

Interaction by Gender

This section will focus on how children relate to gender. First, the discussion will begin from my observation and from the children's point of view as regards to which gender the children belong to. Next, we shall see how gender identification plays a role in the children's relationships. This study gave some evidence that boys tend to interact more with boys, girls with girls. I looked at a set of masculine behaviour which showed the children's understanding of a gender set of rules and expectations about relationship. The children had their perceptions of boys' and girls' norms. The boys' norm included attitude, values and behaviour which are more active and

expressive than girls'. That is, it is normal for boys to use physical fighting in relationships. Mostly, this 'gender role stereotype' view influences their relationships, and this is what the following discussions are mainly about. According to my observation:

After the video session finished, between the meal times Harun played motor cross under the whiteboard with Wee Jo and Raju. They were running, crawling and jumping to take a challenge among them. The games were a little rough and dangerous because they were playing under the whiteboard and display. It was not a proper place (not a place to play). They created their game with their own rules but found it enjoyable.

(Observation Session 2: Child 9)

In this case, the boys played together under the whiteboard pretending to ride motorcycles under the whiteboard. They were running and crawling to show their commitment to their play. I realised that here they were interested in playing something connected with challenges and dangerous places. In this case, a challenging place that enabled them to do different movements like crawling and jumping or climbing became an interesting place for boys. In another example, the boys were shown as preferring to play in a place which looked adventurous such as on top of a block.

Most of the group of boys played in this place and at top of the block and most of the girls played inside the block circle.

(Observation P122: Children Group)

In this case, a group of children were playing in the block area. Most of the boys preferred to play on the top rather than inside the block circle. Several boys competed with each other to be at the top of the block circle. They climbed to the top of the block first and then shouted "I won". In this case the action showed that the boys tend to choose places and friends which are challenging.

Another issue in this case also showed the pattern of activity the boys chose. They preferred more physical activity compared to the girls, who preferred to talk in a small group and were less active, sitting inside the block circle and chatting to each other. The boys in this case were playing in a larger group of more than three. They communicated with nonverbal communication through physical movement and action. Physical movements like running and climbing were involved in the boys'

friendships. They played in the same group which was interested in the same types of play. The evidence bellows shows that the girls chatting:

Si Mi, Ellin and Suriani were sitting in the playground. Si Mi was playing with Suriani's hair and tried to make it as a plait of hair. She touched a hair tail and tried to pull it up and down. She plaited one hair section.

R: What are you doing with Suriani's hair?

SM: ...smile...make it a plait.

(Interview P139: Child 22)

In this case, during free play, a group of girls were sitting at the playground and chatting to each other instead of playing with the playground equipment as were the boys. In this case the girls chose to sit at the stairs and look at the other group playing around, and this gave us an indication of less physical activity or passive play. In this case a girl from the group was playing with her friend's hair and trying to make a plait. The action of touching the hair of another person gave a picture of friendship and showed that the children shared trust and confidence with each other because when I looked at her, she had plaited her hair nicely with a decorative rubber band.

This can be contrasted with the children's relationship in my interview in the case below:

Harun: I like to play with Wee Jo...We always play 'fight-fight' together and we play tag as well

R: How do you play tag together?

Harun: ...you might not know...we play it like in the television called Ben 10...there is like bad guys...and we fight them

Harun: we always jumped...crawl...running... Wee Jo and Raju are strong, I like them...

(Interview: Child 9)

In the above case, the statement showed that the type of active play was more obvious to children when they played in a group. The words *jumped, crawl and running* give us an indication of the type of active play. The mock fighting and aggressive actions show the friendship that they maintain. Based on this case, we might infer a gender difference in the type of play in order to create and sustain relationships. The study showed the data that gender interaction was related to mock physical fighting as shown by the three children (Vejay, Harun and Wee Jo) in Figure 6.1 Friendship web. The three children always created mock fighting between hero and antagonist, such as *Ninja, Ben 10, Power Rangers, and Transformers*. I

asked them about who would be acting as the hero and who would be the enemy, and why they preferred to do that. They explained that they liked to be the hero. I considered this mock play to influence them in maintaining friendships when they were play fighting and controlling their emotions. This type of friendship instigated by shared play activities between the children widely encouraged other children in the classroom; for example, it brought Ashok and Raju to play together. When I compared them to other children, the three children (Harun, Vejay and Wee Jo) had developed good social skills in terms of communication and characteristic.

This paragraph will identify the issues and topics of discussion between girls and boys, which I observed to be different. It depended on the age and gender; for example, a six-year-old child would give more attention than a five-year-old to a certain topic. A boy would give more attention to a discussion with another boy than a girl to a topic related to them and also the girl's discussion. This shows that gender is an important role to the children. Based on my observations, there were a few topics which the boys were extremely interested to discuss, such Formula 1 cars, games stations, the Power Ranger movie, and football teams and players. The boys would join the discussion when the topic related to gender; for example, most of the children were chatting about football so they would sit together to talk about the same topic. I had observed the girls' topic and their issues were different from the boys' issues. They were more likely to prefer feminine topics like gossip about an artist in *Akademi Fantasia* (similar to American Idol), singing, dolls, and even the colour pink. I found that they also talked during the interview about a pet (a cat) and a baby in their family.

According to my observation of the children:

Jenny showed Ardini her new water bottle and told her where she got it and who bought it for her. She explained she liked this bottle so much because of its design. Ardini was listening to the story from Jenny. Harun looked like he was not interested with the story from Jenny and so he just ignored it. The topic and object that they were discussing did not interest him (Harun). (Observation P091: Child 5, Child 11, and Child 9)

This statement shows us that sharing the same object or the same topic helped to develop relationships among them. The discussion topic concerned the girls because

usually boys do not like to bring a water bottle to school, especially if it has a picture around the bottle. Another matter, as explained in previous research, is that girls differ from boys by being more talkative, using more affiliate language to establish or maintain contacts with others, using less self-assertive speech to influence others (Leaper & Smith, 2004). Even though the boy was sitting beside the two girls, they did not interest him with their topic of conversation.

Maccoby (1990) has highlighted the importance of taking a relationship perspective in this regard, noting that how a child behaves during interaction depends on the gender of the child, as well as the gender of his/her partner. For example, children are more likely to demonstrate that the girls' relationships dyads exhibit more positive interaction than boys' relationships.

During tea time all the children lined up in front of the bathroom to wash their hands. The two girls were Irda and Suriani who lined up in the middle and waited for their turn. During that time Irda was hugging Suriani with full feeling. I was very interested with the two girls' behaviour and asked them about their relationships, both of them told me that they were the best of friends. They liked each other.

(Observation P090: Child 19, and Child 21).

The above statement showed the evidence that the girls' interaction was also involved with the emotion and feeling of close relationships. The way they acted and played gave them a chance to get closer. This is different when compared with the boys, who related to each other based on conflict interaction. The following shows the boys' interaction and play:

Boys are more prone to activities of the nature of conflict. Using their imaginations, Vejay and Harun play together and they are pretending to be one of the Power Rangers and pretending to fight each other.

(Observation P059: Child 23 and Child 9)

The children's relationship was engaged in the most intense conflict and this gave them the opportunity to move to the stage of close relationships.

Interaction by age-mates and cognitive maturity

In this section, I aim to explain how age-mates and cognitive maturity encourage the children to choose their own friends. Based on my observations, I found that the children were interested in being a friend with children of their own age. For example, usually a 6-year-old would choose friends from other 6-year-old children. 5-year-olds get along with classmates of the same age. This can be seen in a group case from my observation and interview:

A group of 5-year-old children play under the tunnel. They were playing in a place which seemed to offer them privacy. Yee Zi was asking to join May Ling and her friend.

After I interviewed them about their relationship, they told me that they shared a close relationship among them. They played and chatted together. They did not like to join another group with the 6-year-old children.

(Observation P145: Group Children, Child 12, and Child 17)

Based on the above statement, the group of 5-year-old children preferred to have a close relationship among a group of the same age. In addition, if a 5-year-old child was playing with 6-year-old children, the younger one would be a follower. Instead of giving any opinions or ideas, most of them just followed the instructions and became quiet. If they were playing with friends of the same age group, they became more creative, good planners, capable of telling a story, and had more enjoyment.

Almost all the same age children had learnt the same skills like reading and writing in the same group. The evidence from my observation here can be seen in the additional class as the children read "*buku Sinar*" (a phonic reading book). The teacher would teach the 5-year-olds using this book after school hours on Tuesday and Thursday only. These factors put them on the same standard in interaction with friends who had the same maturity. The same level of cognitive maturity made it easier for them to develop new friends or maintain their friends with those at the same level.

These were acknowledged by their teachers, although several approaches had been taken to mix them together and showed a strong tendency, especially children from the same ethnic groups. The teacher acknowledged that the limitations of language competence factors such as vocabulary tend to discourage these children.

When I compared relationships between the 5- and 6-year-olds, the conversation of the 5-year-old children was limited. As their language could be limited and they had less communication, this made them more silent, and less confident, the situation became uncomfortable and the decision to remain silent or not tended to interrupt the conversation time or group work. The children talked to each other because they had the same discussion topic. According to the observation and interview:

She gave her hair band (hair rubber) to Ardini and then talked to her about her pink hair band. She said Canny's hair band was beautiful...she liked it. Ardini said she had a lot of hair bands at home, her mum bought them at "pasar malam" (night market, like a car boot sale).
(Observation Session 1: Child 7)

The children tended to like peers who were similar to themselves in cognitive maturity as they played. They liked to be friends with children who had the same age and cognitive maturity. According to a child:

Canny: I like to be friend with her (Ardini)... she is so clever...we are in the same year (6 years old)... we always play together...
(Interview: Child 6)

The above statement shows that this child tends to make friends with the same age-mates. Contrasted with the above statement, some children feel that a relationship with an older child gives them secure protection and more maturity than one with a child of the same age. In this, I refer to the relationship between Ashok, a 5-year-old boy and Vejay, a 6-year-old boy. When I interviewed Ashok and asked him why he liked to be friends with Vejay, he answered,

I like to be his friend because he can help me if anyone bullies me, like in the movies. He is strong and famous among us, and our friends like to be his friend.
(Interview: Child 3)

To confirm this idea, I asked other children about protection and maturity. Most of the answers were the same, for example between Harun and Raju, a 5-year old boy. Raju said, "If I become friends with a clever pupil, I would be clever as well".

The frequency of interactions children of the same age had more frequent interactions than children in a different-age relationship. Based on my observation I can see that same-age children are closer to each other, this could be referred to a

case between Yee Zi and Gee, they were always together either in the classroom or outside, especially when they went to the playground and were always talking to each other. However, it was indicates limitations of my inferences due to sample size.

Interaction by Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity is generally understood to be a social concept referring primarily to perceived common ancestry and a shared history, language and culture. In my case study of relationships, it seems ethnicity and language form a certain community of practice, with most children playing with the same ethnic groups. Malay pupils are more likely to interact with each other; for example, Malay females are more prone to befriend other Malay females. This pattern of interaction is also the same with the males. This case refers to the relationship map networks in Figure 6.1 between Arif, Asmira and Irda, and that between Suriani and Harun.

Based on the cases that I showed before, correlation relationships based on ethnic groups still exist. Some children still remain with their single ethnic group relationships. Based on my observations, a relationship became more established by the ethnic group, which makes it difficult for us to identify the single factor that encouraged the child's relationship. The children related to each other based on ethnicity when two factors were involved: first, the problem of the child's language; secondly neighbourhood.

Language provided a trigger to develop a relationship based on ethnic group. This may be the reason why the children preferred to be friends with others in the same ethnic group due to their lack of a certain language. Some of the children's friends in the same ethnic group who had communication problems would usually become less interested in socialising with children from other ethnic groups who spoke Malay or Tamil language. The children had taken their limited knowledge of other languages which made them give the main priority to relate to those from the same ethnic group. This could be the issue in Zi Ni's case:

She also liked to play with Malay and Indian children; she always played with Harun, Vejay and Mei Yin. She tried to be friends with them.

(Observation Session 3: Child 25)

Referring to the above case, the children tend to be friends with peers of the same race, although this tendency varied across the groups (refer to Figure 6.1 Friendship Networks). The children who appeared to have the most doubts at home and could speak some Malay, seemed to be the ones who became disappointed when they arrived at the pre-school. They often refused to play with some of the equipment or material except for dealing with teachers only. It was as if they did not really know how to engage with the environment in which they found themselves.

From my observation the pre-schoolers in the classroom with different languages found difficulty in forming relationships with different ethnic groups. Those pre-schoolers who spoke in the native language seemed to be sitting quietly when compared to other children who were fluent in Malay. If I compared them to children who had typical developing peers in the same ethnic group, they neither expressed positive effects on factors related to the quality of interaction nor positive socialisation. This observation shows that:

The relationship between Zi Ni and her friends was based on the ethnic group because she did not understand the Malay language. This meant that language could contribute the main factor in order to choose friends. She socialised with her Chinese friends more than with others. She depended on her Chinese friends to do her work because she didn't really understand what to do. She always asked for her friends' opinions e.g. she would ask her friends what colour would be the best for the picture that she had to colour.

(Observation Session 2: Child 25)

This shows that language contributed to develop the child's interactions and would initiate the relationships. Parental cultural capital like home language is an important factor that affects children's cross-ethnic relationships. In this case, parents with little educational background may restrict their involvement in language and literacy learning activities with their children at home. Those children who were fluent in Malay or English had a lot of friends. They had more competence to make conversation with people around them and also became more popular among their

class than others. A popular child in class has no problem finding friends because others come to him or her. Usually, such competent and popular children would finish their work on time and could speak Malay language fluently for the Chinese or Indian ethnic groups. According to my observation on Canny:

... She is hard working and good in drawing. She is cheerful...she can speak Malay fluently...

(Observation Session 1: Child 6)

With her fluency in Malay, the girl would find it easy to socialise with peers around her and adapt to the school environment. The following evidence showed the language influences a child's relationship:

Nini was doing the work on the worksheet given. Vejay sat next to her. She would ask Vejay for help when she had a difficulty. She talked to Vejay in Tamil. She wouldn't talk to anyone except to Vejay. Arif came and talk to them but Nini didn't talk to Arif, because she couldn't really understand the Malay language which Arif was using.

10 minutes before the physical education time ended, the children played in the playground nearby. Nini followed Vejay all the time. She played with what Vejay was playing. Vejay climbed the blocks and walked on it, Nini followed.

(Observation Session 2: Child 10)

Based on the above statement, we can see the child chooses a friend from the same ethnic group because of language. The main factor could be that she could only communicate in Tamil so it was difficult for her to have friends from other ethnic groups. This happened not only in the classroom but also in outdoor activities. The effect of this problem led to a problem of social behaviour: she was always absent from pre-school. She did not do her homework. She did not bring her own stationery. She liked to disturb her friends. Sometimes she damaged her friend's books and liked to take her friends' things (Teacher's Report, Nini).

Teacher: Sometimes you can see a group of Indian children talk to each other in Tamil. [...]When they talk in the mother tongue [Tamil], the children seem comfortable to chat as they belong to the ethnic group and the characteristic of their preference as a group member. When they gather around in their ethnic group...they get closer to each other ..., the ethnic relationship helps to bond them as members of their ethnic group.

(Interview Teacher in Nini's File)

Based on the explanation from the above statement, children in the same ethnic group can be seen as sitting together and chatting among themselves and this helps to develop a strong relationship.

Furthermore, children copy ethnic-role behaviours from their family and also from their friends. The children's behaviour reflected the characteristics of their ethnic groups. Sometimes when close friends did something they felt that they were supposed to copy the behaviour. An ethnic group relationship could be considered important in sustaining that relationship. For example, in the case of Si Mi:

Si Mi followed Wee Jo, she put a pencil between her nose and her mouth and showed it to Asmira. The ethnic relationships had influenced the children in the same ethnic group to do what her friends had done.
(Observation P096: Child 22)

Based on the above observation, even though it looked silly, the children's behaviour could be important to sustain the relationship. It was very difficult to describe how the children viewed their own ethnic identity and that of others. The awareness of ethnic identity appeared only rarely and it seemed to be about recognition of boundaries and differences in relation to skin colour, language and religious celebrations and practices. An awareness of kinship and ethnic identity may be seen to be performed in the way in which ethnicity appeared to underpin the children's friendship groups but these also operated in articulation with gender, which often seemed to be a more significant aspect in shaping friendships.

Secondly, I would like to relate children related to each other based on ethnicity when living in the same neighbourhood and community involved. I would like to relate to the family's norms and values at home and in the community, including the religion and language at home. Assimilation into the neighbourhood by the children also helped them to build relationships with other children of different ethnic groups.

"Me, Asmira and Asah are best friends, we live near to each other, every evening we play together" "I like to be friends with Asmira because we always play cooking together"
(Interview on Observation Session 1: Child 21)

The above statement shows evidence that living in the same neighbourhood and community could be an important factor in developing children's relationships among the ethnic groups. I found that in this study the neighbourhood and the

community contributed towards the children's relationships. Children who stayed around with their peers at their places would also maintain close relationships. So, language and community important factors help to shape the social relations of children in pre-school.

6.4 Summary of Chapter 6

This chapter attempted to address one of the research question one. Much of my attention has been focused on children's social behaviour, friendship networks, and how the children relate to each other in classroom and outdoor activities. From observation and interview relating to individual and group interaction between the three different ethnic groups, helpful, sharing, cooperative, respectful and positive response behaviour emerged. This is something which I would have predicted from the social behaviour I observed. The children's relationships derived from reciprocity, shared play activities, fantasy play and objects which were related to the ethnicity, gender, and age and maturity of children. However, the factors influencing social behaviour and relationships could probably be reflected from the norms and values, language style and religious values of parents, as examined in the next chapter, Social and cultural capital.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings related to the research question: How does the social and cultural capital of parents from the three different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia affect children's behaviour? Detailed explanations on how social and cultural capital affects behaviour of pre-school children from the different ethnic backgrounds are described in several sections and sub-topics. The first section is about family cultural capital and the second section concerns family social capital. The first section presents a more in-depth analysis of the data, looking at the contribution of cultural capital to children's behaviour. This chapter is related to Chapter 6, which explained behaviour. In Chapter 6, the results showed prosocial behaviour which is helpful, cooperative, sharing, positive response and respectful. Therefore, this section will clarify how the cultural capital of the parents influences these types of behaviours. In my analysis, four themes emerge:

1. Families' norms and values
2. The role of families' language
3. Parenting styles
4. The influence of religious capital on children's behaviour

The second section concerns family social capital and children's behaviour; parental social capital influences children's networks and the community contributions to the parents sharing the resources. In short, I shall explain how parents from the three ethnic groups practise norms and values based on their own ethnic backgrounds. I shall examine similarities and differences of parents' norms and values influence on children from three ethnic groups.

7.2 Families' Norms and Values

This section describes in detail how parents from different ethnic groups foster norms in family members. The following is a common standard of norms and values which are practised at home. This section describes the norms and values of the Malay ethnic group and how parents from each ethnic group encourage their children

to behave according to their culture. Most Malay parents here practise their cultural norms and values based on their ethnic norms and beliefs. Parents set their own rules at home based on their ethnic background. All parents were asked, “Do you practise norms and values according to your culture and faith?”

Mrs Mona: I practise based on the Malay norms and values and my beliefs. I shall teach my children what I have learnt from my mother and father learnt from their parents. My son will follow what I have been doing until now.

(Paragraph 87)

This parent’s norms and values are dependent on her parents, based on ethnic background. The following statement is from Mr M Nor:

Mr M Nor: Give them a good education and good social behaviour ... when walking in front of the elders or a guest, a child needs to bend down (to show respect) ... before entering the house one should give “saalam”(greeting) ... the moment you enter the house one should wish “saalam” ...kiss the hands of the elders or special guests. When one is inside the house it is rude to look around the house as it is the first visit...one should keep one’s eyes to oneself.

(Paragraph 39)

The “*adat*” (Malay norms), such as kissing the hands of parents and older people as a symbol of respect, was instilled in the children. This statement illustrates the importance of respecting elders and guests, greeting them by saying “*saalam*”, and kissing their hands. These practices are encouraged by Malay parents in order to nurture their children’s behaviour. Below is another good example of how Malay parents nurture their child. Mr M Nor added:

Mr M Nor: I taught my child not to lie...be sincere... be honest ...be helpful...these are good values...be a good example...the father should be a good model...practise good behaviour. Most Malay practise traditional “petua” (guidance)... this is a traditionally continuing heritage...This guidance provide the parents some ideas on how to educate their children. The guidance in a way moulds a child personality and his way of life...for example girl cannot sing in the kitchen, cannot speak during eating, and children are not allowed to stroll at dusk... clipping nails at night is taboo but is “sunat” (recommended or good practice) to cut on them on Friday. We follow the “adat” (norms) if it is not against our religion...

(Paragraphs 45)

The statement above clearly explains how parents nurture their children to have a good character such as being honest and helpful. He explained guidance for parents to nurture their children. The guidance is in line with religion, and “*adat*” (*Malay norms*). This guidance gives the parents ideas on ways to develop the character of their children perfectly. Another example that reflects the importance of ethnicity in developing children’s behaviour is shown below:

Mr A Rahim: Ethnicity is important, for example children who are Malay will give “saalam” (greeting) and take off their shoes before entering the house, recite the “dua” (blessings in Arabic words) before entering the toilet and sit to urinate.
(Paragraph 22)

This statement describes how this parent trained his son to be a good Muslim according to the *adat* and religion. In this case, the parent combined the values from the *adat* and religion. Another statement from Mr A Rahim is given below:

Mr A Rahim: Our norms at home include encouraging ... children to help their parents. My son helps me to wash my car, water the flowers, clean our backyard, clean the drains and even to wash the toilets. My daughter helps her mother to wash the dishes in the kitchen, and to set the plates and serve rice. She has helped me when I asked...my son understood that his daily task should be in accordance with his gender, I won’t have my son help his mother in the kitchen.
(Paragraphs 43)

This parent also encourages a child to practise prosocial behaviour in relation to gender. A son is given a task that reflects his masculine side. The parents set gender roles for their children according to the traditional viewpoint that gender roles are divided based on the type of job. The next statement is about how the parents oversee their son’s life:

Mr A Rahim: Emphasis on nutritional quality food... what he eats at school and with whom he is friends ... he will also implement what he learned at schools at home ... how to talk. At home, less emphasis compared in the school.
(Paragraph 90)

This parent is monitoring his son’s friends, encouraging him to practise the school’s norms and regulations. A Chinese parent, Mrs Lim, responded to my query “Do you practise norms and values according to your culture and faith?” She commented:

Mrs Lim: Whatever we practise... whatever my parent taught me I shall teach my children... my parent always supports and... they always guide me. They (my children) follow me whatever culture which is according to mine.... If you are not exceeding our culture then it's okay. We are not so open-minded like Western that I control. The action they (children) do the word they said according to me.
(Paragraph 89)

Mrs Lim practices the norms and values that she received from her parents. She prefers her children to follow traditional cultures. Mrs Chang teaches her children based on what she has learnt from her parents and grandparents.

Mrs Chang: We do...when we were small we followed what our parents taught us...how to eat politely, how to sit with our leg crossed...but now we sit on the chair (laughed). Be asking the parents to eat first, and then children can start eating. So our children will respect the elderly. They will be teaching their children later on. The manners they eat like we practise now.
(Paragraph 57)

She follows the daily routines of her family and then trains her children accordingly in order to ensure that they consciously adopt the beliefs, values and attitudes. For example, the ritual of table manners, including eating with chop sticks from a bowl, is part of a parenting approach to nurture the children's well-being and respect values. This practice occurs in traditional families as one way to educate the children's attitude of respecting their culture and faith. Simultaneously, it leads to the characteristic building of their children such as being respectful and the sense of belonging to their ethnicity. They believe that these characteristics must be cultivated in the children's mind either consciously or unconsciously. The same situation also occurs in another Chinese household. This is a statement from Mrs Lim:

Mrs Lim: Whatever we practise and whatever my parent had taught me I shall teach my children. My parents always support... they always guide me. Even though we are living in the modern ages now and we follow the modern context of clothing, fashion, and food...we do show our respect during "Tahun Baru Cina" (Chinese New Year) celebration...that is preparing traditional foods and clothes like wearing "cheongsam" (traditional costume).
(Paragraph 94)

For the Chinese parents I interviewed the parents' and grandparents' practices guide the children to be inclined towards Chinese culture and norms. Wearing traditional

costumes and eating traditional foods are still maintained and practised today. Such acts describe the sensitivity these people have towards their traditional culture when it comes to celebrating their festivals such as Chinese New Year, Moon Cake Festival or “*Chap Goh Meh*”. In celebrating these festivals, they wear traditional costumes such as “cheongsam”, a unique and popular Chinese garment.

This is a perspective from Indian parents. Mr Benny states that:

Mr Benny: I set a standard of behaviour to my children ... you should do this and not do this. They know that. For example, when they asked permission to go to a friend's house for a party..., they would look at my facial expression...which indicated whether they could or could not go... my facial expression exhibits my decision. Therefore, they know what they can and cannot do.

(Paragraph 17)

The statement above reflects how an Indian parent has set the standard of behaviour for the children to follow. Mrs Devi, another Indian parent said:

Mrs Devi: We practise traditional way. Let her observe what beliefs we practise, what dresses we wear, and what norms her father and grandmother practise instead of coercing them. I let her choose dresses, however we encourage her to wear sari, ornament and Indian tradition...concern about good behaviour and good personality especially when she interact with her father and grandmother such as knee bow and kiss hand.

(Paragraphs 25)

This view shows the parent's emphasis on how children need to be exposed to and encouraged to follow important traditional norms in order for them to continue practising the family's norms in their current context. She is concerned about good relationships that emphasise respectful behaviour between her daughter and her father and grandmother. In addition, she lets her daughter observe the family's norms and tries to persuade her instead of coercing her. This is different compared to this view from an Indian parent, Mr Benny, who is a fulltime husband. It is important for him to be strict with his children:

Mr Benny: I look after my children at home ... they spend the whole day with me. We are very close. I look after my children full time. Every day, I look after my child ... every child is different. They have a lot of requests and are very demanding. I always put my children's needs a priority, but they have to follow my requirements too, so it is a win-win situation and

an understanding exists here. If my children use bad words or talk dirty they will be punished. If they behave well, they will do well, but if they behave badly, they will receive nothing good...somehow there will be a balance. We would give only one warning. I followed my father's era ... is very stern and fierce... It is different now, we rather taught them the rules first. First, we inform them of the rules... You suppose to do this ... do you remember that... however, if they fail to follow the rules, action will be taken... I shall take immediate action in accordance with the situation either by using my hand or the cane.
(Paragraphs 23-25)

Mr Benny is fulfilling the demands of his children and at the same time the children must also fulfil their father's expectations. This act of compromise is part of complying to the prescribed rules. Hence, in accordance with the rules, if any of his children do not respect these rules, they will receive a relatively severe punishment depending to the situation and circumstances. According to the explanation from Mr Benny, he handles his son in a rough physical manner because of the big burden a man has to face later on that includes taking care of the whole family. The above parents from the three ethnic groups in this study emphasise the importance of the family's role in transmitting norms to children in order to nurture their behaviour.

The parents were asked about their children in terms of respecting their culture.

R: How would you feel if your child did not seem to respect your culture?

Mr M Nor: I won't feel much disappointed...depending on the environment surrounding him. You have to understand the environment around the child because nowadays the culture has changed.

R: What do you mean the culture has changed?

Mr M Nor: My children have adapted the current culture based on the current environment. They have adapted the urban culture. The environment is different between urban and rural area, "kampong" (village) is more traditional than the urban area. For example, in a "kampong", they respect the elders more strongly than those in the urban area. So this is the result of living in the urban environment, no more practising the traditional ways, due to the exposure of the urban environment.

R: What do you mean by the way they are exposed to the environment?

Mr M Nor: You have to accept the way they are exposed to...the children now behave according to the environment they have been exposed to. In the rural areas... the Malay culture and tradition is still strong. Tradition is strongly practised in the rural area compared to the urban area. In the

urban area, the traditional practices are diminished by many people. Following traditions or livings in a rural environment teach one to be respectful of the elders who include the parents, the teachers and also old people. This teaching is based on religion. They have to respect the parents, the teachers and the others.
(Paragraphs 16-24)

This parent believes the children do not respect traditional culture anymore because they have adapted to the current urban culture. The effect of the urban environment leads to the decreasing practice of tradition. The way the children now behave depends on the environment they have been exposed to. Apparently, they have to rationalise *adat* (norms) and religion with the current context, including the importance of traditional values to respect the eldest. The flexibility of parents is important in order to nurture children's behaviour. Norms and values become a regulation, especially to the traditional Malay community in rural areas. Each parent must follow the norms and values in everyday life. If you ignore these norms and values, you will probably receive a negative response, such as being isolated from the community. However, as time and environment have changed, the parents thus have to prepare to face these challenges for the future generation.

This is a response from a Chinese parent about issues of the surrounding environment and family norms:

Mrs Ryan: Chinese traditional values should be reserved and maintained, however, some of the conservative ideas are not suitable or ideal for this generation.
(Paragraph 59)

Based on this explanation from Mrs Ryan, she believes that the Chinese traditional values should be preserved and maintained and should be practised. Her ideas are slightly different from other Chinese parents, who look at relevant norms and values that suit the contemporary environment. It seems clear that several parents only practise norms and values in the family which are suitable in the current context.

Another parent has similar views. Mrs Chang feels that:

My son is very much influenced by the outside norms...it is difficult to teach him the right way but we try to guide him through his ways ...we encourage him to dress appropriately...inform him not to be too open...be

careful with our language, choose friends wisely, and we also look after the kinds of food he is taking.
(Paragraphs 59)

Mrs Chang has adapted the environment in order to teach her son their family's norms. She has to accept the influence of the surroundings on her son with regards not only to his behaviour, language, friends but also his food intake.

Mr Bo told me that:

My children follow whatever I do. I have been teaching my children about our culture since they were born. The best practice is that we act as role models...teach them what is right...what are good morals and what are bad ones....give them guidance and teach them skills...inform them well about social rules so they understand and know who they are ...and that they should behave well. I trained my son (Wee Jo) to be brave and truthful and admit his mistakes if he does something wrong...always honour his mum and himself. He may act a little rough but we need our child to be strong when he is alone or when he is exposed to a new environment. Give him responsibility, trust him and encourage him to do good things. It may seem too extreme but to me it is relevant when I taught my son to sit properly...sometimes I alerted my son through my body language and he understood what I meant.
(Paragraph 70)

The above case suggested that in being faced with contemporary challenges, a child is prepared to be strong and brave in order to be ready to overcome the challenges in any new environment. Besides guiding his son with skills and prosocial behaviours, he needs to rationalise the reason why one needs to be good and avoid doing immoral activities. This guidance is inculcated at an early age, that is, at five years old. Based on this view, it is profitable that parents act as role models, always advising their children about their responsibility, and encouraging them to be trustworthy and to do good deeds. These values developed by the parents and the ethnic community, shape and influence children. An Indian parent responded,

Mrs Deev: Adhering to the Indian practices include ...clothing (wearing sari)...food (eating curry on banana leaf)...the style of speaking and behaving well; wearing ornaments such as wearing bracelets. These practices should be adjusted to the current situation ... they cannot be forced but need to be understood well because they may refuse to follow the norms later on.
(Paragraph 17)

This parent indicates that she has to find a way for a child to follow and respect the traditional culture yet make adjustments so that it is suitable for the current culture. Another Indian parent set a standard of behaviour at home based on family and community values:

Mrs Slam: It is not written but we practise the norms and values of the Indian community. We follow what our parents had taught us and what the neighbourhood has been doing as long as they are good. So my child will follow what I do day-to-day.

(Paragraph 96)

Mrs Slam has accepted and applied the family norms that she has received from her family and the community. Mrs Slam explained that children need to be exposed to the values of caring and sharing so that they are able to practise these values when they actually face these types of situations. Another view from Mrs Mariamah is that culture determines the pattern of family life:

R: So...do religion and culture influence you in nurturing your child's behaviour?

Mrs Mariamah: Religious and cultural norms determined my family lives. Our roles are determined by the cultural norms, beliefs and society where girls are obedient, helpful, patient, motherly, but not 'weak and to be controlled' by men.

(Paragraph 13)

However, with regards to men being dominant in the family, she is looking at the context of universal life whereby she will educate her daughter not to be controlled by men and to be mentally strong. Nevertheless, she still wants her daughter to acquire a compliant behaviour, such as being patient and motherly. In addition, she explained that she admitted her family life continued based on the concept of the traditional patriarchal family structure of an Indian family. Her father strongly influences their family and her husband has the dominant role in the family. The female is subordinate to the male. A female's life depends on her father, then her husband, and finally on the eldest son. However, many environmental conditions today are also moulding the life of their family on how to educate their children.

According to Chinese culture the male plays an important role in the family, as also practised by the Indians. The males in the family will carry the family name,

and the parents will live with their sons. The grandparents of the father's side are favoured more than the mother's side.

Mr Lou told me:

Mr. Lou: The title from the father and mother side is different, it is also seen more clearly emphasises family man ... grandfather and grandmother from the male side is given priority. The colour of mourning also favours the male side.

(Paragraph 78)

This indicates that the Chinese prominently value the males in the family to be the head in many things as they are responsible for maintaining the family name, traditions and norms of their ancestors. These norms and values will later be passed on to the children by the males in the family. In addition, Mr Lou continued explaining to me, the Chinese are also influenced by their culture when it comes to having children. They prefer and are proud to have sons rather than daughters, as the males are the ones who are going to carry the family name and traditions.

From my observation, it is essential to rationalise traditional culture with the current context so that it is in line with the context of present education, with the culture that is requisite in the school syllabus and with contemporary concepts. This adaptation is important to maintain the continuation of practising traditional culture for the next generation in the future. Thus, traditional concepts would not be forgotten and become a necessity in the children's everyday lives. Parents nowadays need to consider the influence of globalisation and its impact on their children and how this impact could change norms and values. Parents should accept the impact of global culture in today's borderless century. Traditional Chinese culture and values should maintain their dynamism and resilience in order to maintain endless and continuous practice.

Consequently, it is necessary for parents not to force their child to follow a traditional norm but to educate him/her to understand and exert the culture based on the environment he/she has been exposed to or otherwise he would reject the culture altogether.

The Effect on Children's Respect

From the parents' perspective, being respectful refers to being polite to other people such as adults or guests, and being respectful reflects one's behaviour. In a multicultural society such as Malaysia, respecting and tolerating other cultures is essential in uniting the various ethnic groups. A family's practices that emphasise unity within the multicultural community to make children aware that respecting other cultures and races is vital in the context of Malaysian society as a benchmark of racial unity. Respect can also be associated with manners practised in our daily lives, at home, among friends and relatives. I shall present evidence on being respectful from the parents' interviews, showing how they stress such behaviour in their children, and the effect it has on the child.

Respect varies from one ethnic group and culture to another and also in accordance with the standard of education. Although it may vary, all parents agree that respect should be nurtured in the Malaysian community at an early age and should start at home. Mr A Rahim said about respect:

...respect carries different meanings to different people and cultures ... it does not depend on one's educational background but different families and culture from different ethnic groups... respect is important to a family...it needs to be nurtured since young.
(Paragraph 38)

Mr M Nor expressed his view:

In this context...you have to explain the background of one's family and religion... one's background and religion is important because religion teaches you how to respect the elders...not only the parents, but the teachers and all the elders as well. Those who are older than you ...you must respect them. How do we encourage this behaviour...based on religion and the existing cultural background you advise him.
(Paragraph 21)

Mr M Nor has stated he nurtures his children to be respectful. He states being respectful is influenced by the cultural background and religion. He rationalises that being respectful is part of the culture and religion and thus they need to practise it. Some parents follow a strict rule when it comes to respecting elders. Mr Ahmad said:

I always reminded my daughter the importance of being respectful ...that you must respect the teachers, parents and the elders. It is very important to respect them.
(Paragraph 100)

Mrs Mona develops her son's sense of respect through mutual understanding. She discusses with her son respectfully about relationships and at the same time she trains him to speak politely:

...let the parents eat first, bowing is a sign of respect in the Malay culture. According to the Malay community one should show respect based on... ages, levels and class system. Showing respect reflects one's humble character. Respect has relationships with shyness. Shyness as a sign of respect not shame for fear. This reflector with respect ... the Malay child interact at equal dimension hierarchy example ... a friend who called older sister means respect.
(Paragraphs 20)

Mr Zainon taught his children to respect his parents starting with table manners, family relationships and friendship. For example, children do not only serve parents their meal but also invite them to eat first. Children should always bow when walking in front of parents or even their guests as a sign of respect. The children's manners reflect the way the parents are nurturing their children.

Mr Zainon: I also gave him the opportunity to speak if he is not satisfied with us by speaking politely and by keeping his tone low, showing respect to the parents and also the parents of his friends.
(Paragraph 41)

Mr Zainon also stresses that being respectful may be symbolised by shyness. The shyness here is a symbolic of respect not shame because of fear. The parents prefer children are doing something because of being respectful. He also stresses how children show respect to other people through interaction, for example a friend who is called older sister as a sign of respect. Mr Benny stated:

...it is better to understand the manners and morals ... about respecting people. They would talk politely to their sister, mother and friends.
(Paragraph 37)

Mrs Slam indicated:

We taught them ... to bow when walking in front of guests. Do not walk behind them. The titles "kakak or abang" (sister or brother) should be

used all the time. The titles refer to the hierarchy system and are part of showing respect.
(Paragraph 51)

Mrs Slam taught her children to respect their parents, starting at home. The children are taught to use the terms “*kakak*” and “*abang*” when referring to their elder sister or brother so that they have a close relationship between the family members. An Indian parent relates the values of respect to her religion, Hinduism. Here is a statement from Mrs Devi:

Relate the concept of respect to the religion...the religion asserts that guests must be respected. We remind our children when to show respect to the guests... associated with religion. If people worship their culture...they respect the elders...you have to inform the children what words to use when you communicate with other people. Religion teaches you how to respect the teachers, parents or elders.
(Paragraphs 22-23)

According to the above statement, nurturing a child in respectful behaviour is related to religion. In Hinduism, children are supposed to respect their family guests as a family member. Mrs Devi explained to me, the guests need to be provided with a special food on a “banana leaf” as it is believed that their guests will bring them prosperity.

The Chinese parents also put an emphasis on being respectful. All the parents from the traditional Chinese background agree that respect is an important moral value to be taught. Therefore, the parents nurture their children to respect their elders, and to be more informed about and value their Chinese cultural beliefs and practices. They also agree that respectful children are frequently more disciplined. Respecting elders is shown in verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Mrs Tan said:

I have advised her to respect the parents, but she does not understand and does not follow the advice. Tell her to talk politely. Do not shout at her brother...father and mother.
(Paragraph 71)

According to Mrs Tan, she taught respect to her daughter, emphasising the values of respect to her daughter since she was young. Her daughter does not question why she should be respectful or disobey the teachings given by her parents. She explained to me that a child who displays a respectful manner towards the elders reflects a

parent's success in educating her. Mrs Lim always reminds her daughter to respect her and her husband and the elders:

Mrs Lim: I always told my daughter to respect those who are older than she is and to speak to them politely... she must respect her parents as well.
(Paragraph 66)

Mr Lou talked about the implementation of respectful behaviour to the family and patriarchy,

Mr Lou: ...let them start to eat first at meal time... Men prefer the family name. Tribute more parents... Ranks prefer from men side. A title of ranking is accordingly to father side.
(Paragraphs 101)

The statement above indicates the way this Chinese family practises the norms of respect. They are similar to the ways the Indian families implement their norms. Both families place male figures as the dominant individuals. Thus, they receive the highest respect from the other family members. The family members from the father's side too would acquire the same respect. Hence, the family heritage and roots will not be forgotten and the culture and norms will stay in the family for generations to come.

The Effect on Prosocial Behaviour

Based on responses to the question "Do you emphasise the guiding of character development towards morality? How?" I shall in this section relate the norms and values of parental cultural capital towards children's prosocial behaviour, and differences between ethnic groups. I discuss similarities and differences. Mrs Nani's statement show how she teaches and cultivates her child's character:

Mrs Nani: Be firm ... my daughter (Asmira) obeys the rules. Do not let her see like I said before ... do not fight in front of them ... the way to educate children is not to fight. We show our children how to respect our own parents, they will observe and evaluate us... we must use the standards and clear words, do not talk about other people in front of them ... do not complain ... respect my husband in front of my children no matter what the situation may be. We are also taught to respect our husband or wife.
(Paragraph 64)

Mrs Nani teaches her child by exhibiting examples of good behaviour and being a role model for her daughter. In Mrs Nani's case, her daughter is more likely to obey the rules and respect her and her husband rather than being naughty and disrespectful. She has been trained at home to respect and obey her elders. According to my observation, her daughter's well-mannered characteristic is shown clearly when she speaks to her teacher and elders by facing them and using words that display respect. Her daughter's body language is also soft and kind in nature, as shown in my observation that she always gives *saalam* and greetings. Sometimes these behaviours can be shown through her body language such as using soft voice and inclining her head a little in respect (Observation Session 1: Child 15). Mrs Nani considers that parents should control their emotions, respect both their parents and respect their spouses, especially in front of the children, as these actions are the key to build good character in the child.

Mrs Mona shares Mrs Nani's opinion. She also believes that being a good role model is vital, respecting parents, including caring for them and talking to them with great prudence, asking permission and bowing before walking in front of older people:

Mrs Mona: As I have said before ... do not quarrel in front of the children ... it is the way to educate children so that they do not quarrel. Respect the parents...the elderly, or the elders ... when you speak, speak politely ... keep your voice low ...bow when walking in front of older people or ask permission...

(Paragraph 85)

The significant effect that I am able to perceive in the case of Mrs Mona is the politeness and respect demonstrated by her son. Every morning at 8:15 in the morning, I noticed Harun came to school with his mother. When he reached the gate just in front of the school, he would hug her and kiss the hands of his mother. After that he said *saalam* and kissed the hand of the teachers. He also kissed my hand (researcher) while I was making observations (Observation Morning Routine: Child 9). His upbringing has led him to follow the values his mother has taught him, that is, to kiss his parents' hand, to show kindness and to bow in front of his elders.

Mrs Lim shared her opinion:

I told her not to use any bad words and to speak politely...I try to behave myself in front of her. The language I use and actions that I do in front of her could affect her.

(Paragraph 29)

Mrs Lim considers that parents should be a good role model by using proper language and by exhibiting acceptable actions in front of their children. Here is one of the views of a parent regarding how Chinese parents form the moral character of their children. I observed Mrs Lim's twin daughters, showing very proper language when they spoke to the teachers and researcher (Observation Session 3: Child 11). Their mother, who speaks fluently in three languages, gives a good role model for her children to speak politely in three languages.

According to the explanation provided by Mr Ahmad, controlling one's feelings in front of the children is one factor that encourages children to have good character:

Mr Ahmad: I try to behave myself in front of her...sometimes if I am arguing with my wife we will try to control ourselves in front of our children... I try not to argue in front of them.

(Paragraph 97)

As a part of instilling moral values in the children, Mr Ahmad shows healthy moral acts and controls his emotion in front of his children. He has provided a practical and spontaneous lesson which not every parent is able to do. An Indian parent, Mr Benny, said:

We are very close. I look after my children full time. They have a lot of requests or very demanding. I always place my children's need a priority, but they also must follow my requirement, so an understanding and compromising situation exist here. If they use bad language or talk dirty they will receive punishment.

(Paragraph 23)

According to Mr Benny, in order to develop children's respectful character, parents should respect the needs of their children and in return the children should respect their parents' wishes. Mr Benny sets a win-win situation with his children. He would tend to his children's needs first and then he would inform them of the proper way to behave, what they should and should not do. Therefore, based on the set of standard rules, all the children are treated equally.

Mrs Chang describes how firm a parent's action should be to discipline the children:

Mrs Chang: ...they must follow my rules. They should listen to me ... and cannot dispute. They should help me around the house ... sometimes look after their little brother. They must help me in the kitchen as well. We are teaching them to have basic skills and clever enough to do some work on their own. The girls are also taught to speak politely...they must use kind words. They must not shout when talking to me or to their father. We must be strict and inform them how important it is to maintain discipline. If we fail to do so, problems may occur later on.
(Paragraph 51)

Mrs Chang considers that imposing strict discipline on children helps them to have strong characters. They learn to take care of others such as their siblings. This kindness and unselfishness shown by the children can lead them to be more caring and loving towards their family members. In addition, by following the rules provided by their parents, they are respecting their family's way of living. Mrs Chang also emphasizes that it is much better that the children respect the parents more rather than fearing them. Thus, the children will always respect their parents even when they are not living with them anymore.

Some parents also stressed that it is important that the children possess certain characteristics. These characteristics include maintaining a proper way of speaking, wearing suitable clothes, how the children present themselves, and appropriate use of eye contact. All these would develop their social skills and eventually their character. Regarding social skills, Mr M Nor says:

...character is very important. They include clothing, "mulut dia" (words)...language...eye contact, the way you dress...the way you present yourself to people or any other people. I prefer to emphasise interpersonal skills.
(Paragraph 40)

Mr M Nor has shown a positive effect of his own cultural capital may help his child to succeed in pre-school. I observed his daughter's behaviour when she interacts with her friends using an appropriate language. She also respects her teachers and looks at others with good eye contact. I noticed that the family's norms are shown well by Ardini; a lot of things done by her in the classroom are in line with what was said by her father (Observation Session 2: Child 5). He is able to nurture his daughter to obtain good skills in communication (using suitable language and eye contact) as well as the ability to present herself adequately.

Mr Rajah relates the construct of children's social skills to interpersonal skills, including prosocial behaviours such as being helpful to other people and communicating with and respecting other people:

Mr Rajah: You should not do what is against the religion. You must do well to others, and not harm others. When I bring up my children, I teach them religious knowledge...I help them a lot in social skills...to communicate...to talk to people, respect others etc.

(Paragraph 28)

Mr Rajah also exposes his children to religious education and religious knowledge so that he can evaluate what is good and not good in terms of morality. The characters of the children are also formed by the construction of social skills by the parents at home. The form of social skill that is given emphasis should also be seen through children's social relationships. The language used at pre-school during interaction has shown how his son communicates well and respects his peers. His son (Vejay) is among the popular children in the classroom and has many friends (Refer to Figure 6.1 Friendship Networks). A Chinese parent shared the same opinion:

Mr Bo: The teachers give hundred per cent support to encourage children to relate to one another...from classroom activities to out-door activities. Encourages them to express their concern by helping other children and finding practical ways of comforting their friends...it can develop good relationship...good attitude such as caring and making the effort to help classmates.

(Paragraph 119)

Encouraging good relationships and developing the feeling of caring in the children are important according to Mr Bo. Parents must ensure that prosocial behaviours among children are nurtured at home as this can encourage them to be more aware of their importance. Being helpful and caring are valuable moral values that children need to have. These behaviours can be developed when the children carry out the actions themselves.

These types of characteristics can lead to other favourable characteristics, as stated by this Indian parent:

Mrs Slam: Usually children who respect their parents are likely to behave well ... they display good "budi bahasa" (polite)... such as honesty and kindness

(Paragraph 75)

It is essential to educate children to be truthful and to be honest. Having these characteristics will prevent any lying or stealing and are important in the foundation of character building. The parents' perspective above and evidence from my observations shows the behaviour of children at pre-school is driven by the behaviour shown by parents.

Summary

The Malays and Indians emphasise being respectful is part of being faithful to religion and following the *adat* (norms), steering the children to be more obedient; for the Chinese, it is a favourable way of disciplining the children. The meeting point of the above shows that the value of being respectful can develop the children's relationships among family members and the communities. However, the norms and values of each ethnic group are dynamic with time and the environment. There are commonalities between the effect of families' norms and values towards children's prosocial behaviour within and across ethnic groups. The left of the table shows type of norms that affect children's behaviour and the right shows ethnicities. The model was developed from analysis of parental interviews. I developed Table 7.1 to show the commonalities (differences and similarities).

Table 7.1: Summary of families' norms and values

Type of Norms	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Respect	Norms and values are based on the Malay “ <i>adat</i> ” (norms) of the ancestors as long as they do not contradict with Islamic values and beliefs. Example: the importance of respecting elders and guests in greeting such as “ <i>saalam</i> ” (greeting) and hand-kissing	Practise norms and values that are received from the Chinese ethnic ancestors. Example: show respect to parents, elders and guests by shaking hands	Norms and values are based on the Indian norms of ancestors according to Hinduism or Christianity. Example: show respect with knee-bow and hand kissing.
Respect, religion and culture	Being respectful is part of religion and the <i>adat</i> (norms) ethics which lead children to be more obedient to parents	Being respectful is part of the culture and children are frequently more disciplined	Having respectful children is part of religion and children are frequently more obedient to parents and religion
Role of Gender and respect	-	The male is the prominent figure in the family as he has the role in maintaining the family descendents	Practise the concept of the traditional Indian family, the family structure is patriarchal
Respect and children	Show a good model-respect Control emotions in front of children	Show a good model-respect Control emotions in front of children	Show a good model-respect Teach them to be honourable Inform child of the importance of discipline.
	Develop interpersonal skills	Develop good relationships and caring	Construction of children's social skills
<p>Meeting points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The types of norms and values are almost the same, the families' norms and values are based on ethnic group and religion becomes a regulation. Applying their family norms following their family and community. 2. Emphasis on respect, showing a good model-respect and building prosocial behaviour. 3. Dynamic norms and values according to current situation 			

7.3 The Role of Families' Language

A family's language is part of the cultural capital which emerged from the data that contributed to the children's behaviour. The diversity of language used in PERPADUAN Pre-school is quite apparent among the children and their parents. The main ethnic groups speak different languages, i.e. Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. However, "*Bahasa Melayu*" or Malay is the national language and English is the second language. Malay is the main medium of communication to interact with other ethnic groups and it is expected that all children will have knowledge of this as well as their mother tongue. The mother tongue is an important element in the family cultural capital. Parents use the mother tongue to convey family culture to their children. Most of the parents use their mother tongue to communicate within the family. In the next section, I shall show the evidence that language capital affects children's behaviour.

Mother Tongue and Other Languages

The findings suggest that in this study there are three mother tongues used by parents to communicate with their children. Malays use Malay, Chinese use Mandarin and Indians use Tamil. These parents are discussing language use:

Mr A Rahim: At home, we are speaking in Malay only. Our neighbours also speak the same language...Malay. Now she is able to greet in some Mandarin and Tamil words.

(Paragraph 12)

Mrs Deev: We speak Tamil language at home. We do not talk Malay language at home. Now, she can talk a little bit of Malay. I taught her a few words of Malay language that she does not know.

(Paragraph 15)

Mrs Mai Yen: We use our mother tongue (Mandarin) at home only. Our neighbours also use the same language. I understand a little bit of Malay. We do not talk Malay at home. Now she is able to talk a few Malay words. She frequently talks [Malay] in kindergarten. At home she was more to the Chinese.

(Paragraph 9)

These three mothers from different ethnic groups explained that they use their mother tongue when they speak to their children at home. Both the Chinese and

Indian parents above, who do not speak fluent Malay, have seen their child learn Malay at school. They support their children speaking Malay as a common language after their children enrolled at pre-school. Based on my observations in pre-school, parents who use only their own mother tongue at home may affect children's ability to communicate with friends from other ethnic groups (refer to 6.4.6: Interaction by ethnic identity). Children tend to be friends with children who use the same mother tongue as they do because they have problems in communicating with children from the other ethnic groups (refer to Figure 6.1 Friendship Network). However, parents who use their mother tongue at home and speak Malay as a second language may assist children's ability to communicate at pre-school. Mother tongue may only be one reason for this.

Similarly to the Malay parents, the more skilfully their children communicate at home, the more confidence they have in communicating at school. The following statement is from Mr A Rahim about his son's behaviour in pre-school,

Mr A Rahim: The first time he started at pre-school... he was quiet, but here now all mixed with Malays, Chinese, and Indian. He was getting along with friends from the multi-ethnic backgrounds in pre-school. He always talks about his friends to me. He respects his friend, helps him if he needs help. He is pleased to be friends with all ethnic groups.
(Paragraph 55)

The above statement shows how his son communicates with peers from other ethnic groups. He gets along with friends from multi-ethnic backgrounds in pre-school and always talks with friends. He practises respect to his friends, helping them if they need help. Children who are capable of utilising the national language make friends with their classmates more easily than children who only communicate in their mother tongue. According to an interview with a Chinese parent:

Mrs Ryan: We speak English and Mandarin at home...I don't speak Malay language with my children because my Malay language is not good. Saya hanya faham sikit-sikit sahaja bahasa Melayu jadinya (I only understand a little bit of Malay). My background is English medium school and my working environments also compel me to use English. However, after my son started studying at this pre-school I speak to him using both languages, sometimes English and sometimes Malay.
(Paragraph 13)

Her education background and working environment have led Mrs Ryan to use the English language and this affects her children in the use of English language. The advantage her son has of using English gives him credit in the classroom, especially during activities involving English. The language used at home affects the social competence of children to communicate at school; for example, Mrs Ryan's son who can speak English, Chinese and Malay has an advantage in pre-school.

A Malay parent who uses English as a medium of communication at home supports the opinion given by the Chinese parent. According to the interview:

R: Why can your daughter read, speak and write in English very well in pre-school?

Mr Ahmad: Because my background was English medium. I studied at an English school...so we always spoke in the English language. One thing I realised...my daughter picks up a lot from watching TV programmes. Some parents don't believe that TV is a good idea to educate children, to me why not. It's not harmful, I select my programmes, I select my channel and she will watch educational programmes like Sesame Street, Bunny, and other educational programmes. I let her watch TV especially national geographic channel. I let her learn by herself from watching TV. I choose the channel for her. So, some of the programmes are all in English. I exposed her to a variety of programmes including English programmes. That is how I educate them in terms of language and culture.
(Paragraph 46)

An Indian parent, Mr Benny, also supports this:

Mr Benny: We are speaking English at home. We do not speak the Malay language but because we have a maid (domestic worker) from Indonesia so I help my children to speak Malay. Now they can speak some Malay. I also taught Malay language to them.
(Paragraph 13)

These statements reflect how parents use English as a medium of communication at home. The purpose of parents using English is to allow their children to master languages other than the mother tongue and the Malay. Most of the parents are also aware of the potential of English and Malay languages to develop the confidence of their children at school.

The Concept of "budi bahasa" and "ganti nama diri" (pronouns)

In the context of the Malay community, language plays an important role in educating children. In Malay culture the concept of care "*budi bahasa*" is very much emphasised with children, especially to the daughters. "*Budi bahasa*" refers to the "polite behaviour" which should be practised when speaking because it represents the personal character of that person. The following statements are parents' views:

Mrs Mona: Sometimes I taught him how to speak well, communicate politely and "berbudi bahasa" such as greeting in the morning, how to dress politely and taught English language that I know...I also taught the colour of dress.

(Paragraph 91)

Mr Lou: I told her don't use any bad word or speak politely and don't ever show bad body language when you do not agree with something...always greets the teachers and parents. Show your appreciation by saying thank you...kalau tak kena nanti (if you fail to do this, you will be punished later!)

(Paragraph 29)

Both these parents emphasised the use of polite language or "*berbudi bahasa*" when interacting with the teachers, elders or friends as a sign of respect. The traditional values of "*budi*" (etiquette) and "*bahasa*" (language) are synchronized with social relationships. The values of "*budi bahasa*" to other people sum up the kind of proper behaviour an individual should display both in private family life and in public. The parents emphasised this "*budi bahasa*" in the child's interactions and parental interactions. This is much in line with values of being respectful to elders. Every parent is very particular of these values and promotes them to their children. Malaysian culture places high value on the person who practises "*budi bahasa*" or "politeness" in his language during communication.

Parents are also concerned that their children should be able to use a decent and proper pronoun when addressing elders, for example using the title "*pak cik*" or uncle and "*mak cik*" or aunt. It is impolite if children use the pronoun "*aku*" (I) when they are talking to elders. In the Malaysian culture that is "*kurang ajar*" (rude). The terms "I" and "you" are only used when the children are speaking with their very close friends. According to the interview:

Mr Zainon: Maintain the hierarchy ... for example a friend who is older should be called "kakak" (sister) or "abang" (brother) as this shows respect. Use "kita" (we) instead of "aku" (I)... normally "aku" (I) will be used when speaking to close friends.

(Paragraph 34)

According to the statement above, the parents emphasises the status quo of who is oldest in the family. The oldest person is respected by the youngest and each person has a title in the family. Titles as symbols of honour and respect also exist in other ethnic groups, as stated by the Indian parent below:

Mrs Deev: Our norms...children supposed to respect the father, mother and brother or sister or younger brother ... they cannot call the first name, it is rude ... he supposed to use "kita" or first name or "adik" (younger brother) and followed by the common name.

(Paragraph 17)

In addition, young children should also familiarize themselves with "kita" (we) as a substitute name when talking to older people. The pronoun "aku" (I) is banned as it shows "kurang ajar" (rudeness), and can only be used when talking to good friends. Children are taught to use a proper pronoun "name" when talking to older people as a symbol of respect, and put themselves in a humble position. Such a practice significantly affects the behaviour of children when they communicate with guests who come to the house or when they go to the houses of neighbours, relatives or friends of their parents. According to this parent:

Mr M Nor: In this context...you have to explain the background... why the background and base on the religion because religion teach you how to respect the elders...not only parents, but teachers and all the elders. Anyone who is older than you ...you must respect them...use titles "abang" or "kakak" for those who are older than you or "adik" for those who are younger than you. Using pronoun "kita" (we) or "saya" as the first speaker and not using "aku", although it has the same meaning in English, because it is rude. Every single person has his or her own title as honour..."along" (first child), "ngah" (second or middle child), "uda" (third child)... "usu" (last child). How can the children be encouraged to follow this, based on religion and the existing cultural background you advise him...more rationalise...the parent encourage the children to rationalise...and more rationalise.

(Paragraph 21)

According to Mr M Nor, a title of respect for each person is a practice in his family and it may be a practice in others families, especially the Malays. Titles of respect are also connected with Islam as the honour of respecting a higher position in the system, whether government, community, or family.

In educating children to communicate well, most parents also emphasise the use of tone of voice when interacting with older people. Parents stress that when talking with parents or adults the children cannot use a loud voice, such as when Mrs Mona stated about her son:

Mrs Mona: Respect the parents...the elderly, or the elders ... when you speak, speak politely ... keep your voice low ...bow when walking in front of older people or ask permission...
(Paragraph 85)

Summary

Parents emphasised this “*budi bahasa*” in the child’s interactions which is much in line with values of being respectful to elders. They promote these values to their children. Therefore, “*budi bahasa*” and the use of respectful pronouns are two main commonalities in the three different ethnic groups. This is summarised in table 7.2 below, developed from analysis of parental interviews.

Table 7.2: Summary of parental languages and children’s behaviour

	Malay	Chinese	Indian
1. Mother tongue	Malay	Mandarin Two families speak English and Mandarin	Tamil One family speaks English and Tamil
2. Other languages	Two children have no basic knowledge of English	Three children have no basic knowledge of Malay or English	Two children have no basic knowledge of Malay or English
3. Respect	Practice of “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ”	Practice of “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ”	Practice of “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ”
	Use respectful pronouns for elders	Use respectful pronouns for elders	Use respectful pronouns for elders
Meeting Point			
1. Home language affects children’s social skills 2. Practice of “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ” and respectful behaviour in interactions with parents, elders and peers			

7.4 Parenting Styles

Based on the interviews with parents, I have discovered that there are two parenting styles practised in the families: authoritarian and authoritative. The differences between the parenting styles can be derived from the subject matter the parents are concerned with. The parents use an authoritative style during parenting when it comes to the children's education and cognitive activities, including exerting high control and high acceptance, whereas they use an authoritarian style in order for the children to obey religious responsibility, respect for the elders, and control the children's behaviour.

Authoritative Style

Based on my evidence, the parents' approach to nurture their children and encourage their behaviour indicates a relationship between parent and child. Children can learn the limits such as *can and cannot* through guidance and advice. Once they know the reasons, they will make the best decision.

The following case is related to how Mr A Rahim educates his children:

Mr A Rahim: Guidance is important compared to action [physical punishment]. I prefer my child to know the reason he does this or the reason why he can and cannot do something. When he knew he would cause or reason to think his own. I am also concerned about how he selects a friend because I would prefer that he avoids having a friend who uses dirty language, in terms of level of misconduct or do not behave well. I'm not concern about who his friends are, Indian or Chinese as long as they respect their teachers and parents.
(Paragraph 25)

This parent explained that his children need good guidance, reasoning, the cause and the implication of misconduct. Parents should talk nicely, and being a good role model is part of guidance. This is supported by Mrs Mona:

Mrs Mona: I would advise him to keep trying and do as much as possible. I shall guide him to do better. I believe that if children are shown the good that they can do, they will be happy but we should be flexible and must be patient. Yes ... at first, he would find it difficult but in the long run he would be able to do it. I won't compare my child to other children because

he has his own advantages and disadvantages but I believe with our guidance.

(Paragraph 17)

Mrs Mona will advise her son to do his best and she will help him on how to complete a task and encourage him to do more than once and, in doing so, her child will be able to do it in the long term. Next, she explained the form of action she will take against her son if he misbehaves:

R: So...have you take any action on him?

Mrs Mona: If I am angry with him...I will only scold him but his father will use the cane... on the wall (shows the cane hanging on the wall). More advice ... I shall never stop advising him, until he is aware ...sometimes I would tell him that, just like the saying, "the men's heaven is beneath their mothers' feet, so they must respect mothers.

(Paragraph 31)

The actions that she has taken were only advising her son. Furthermore, she added how she treats her son's behaviour with maturity:

Mrs Mona: I also teach my child not to lie ... transparent ... if he is not satisfied with the mother, talk to her. Do not steal if he needs any money... talk properly, I also gave him the opportunity to speak if he is not satisfied with the mother and father but the language that he uses should be suitable and speak politely, respect parents.

(Paragraph 41)

She helps her son by guiding him to solve a problem. She explained to me, discussion between a child and parent gives the child the chance to tell what he feels right or to voice his opinion. She treats her son to be honest and develops relationships among the family members. According to a Chinese parent, who emphasises the concept of guidance of proper development of character toward morality, Mrs Mai Yen said about parenting style:

She is very close to me... even with her father too. I'm a little bit firms but always give her guidance and ...show her the right ways. We never scold her but stare at her... guide her. It is not easy to nurture children to have good behaviour...they always need us to guide them.

(Paragraph 25)

Another Chinese parent stated:

Mrs Tan: I am not very fierce because every day I talk to her. I haven't scolded her... just let her know what is wrong and what is right. I always show her to do the right thing...behave well and try to do her best. If she is still not good at her task we are willing to help. Her father never scolds her...or ever pinch her...he is very close to her. If she was not behaving well we would advise her properly.

(Paragraph 25)

These statements demonstrate how parents take care of their child through guidance in order to educate them to be good in education and behaviour. Both of these parents agree that guidance and words of advice are important for their young children. Another Chinese parent explained how she educates her son through mutual understanding:

Mrs Ryan: ... My husband is working in the night shift. He is more lenient than me. I am more firm than his father except when he is angry. I have cared everything from the early morning until bed time. I'm the one who guides him. I have my own way of teaching...each parent has their own way of teaching their child...but an educated person raises children differently...for me our family is quite open...so we respect our children's values. We give him freedom to choose the time and what to do first...not the same typical things every day. We have a mutual understanding and it is successful.

(Paragraph 20)

Her son has a choice regarding the sequence of what to do and at what time. She added that if her son is doing wrong or not behaving well she will ask him about the right thing to say and do, then let him find the answer and figure out what to do. Her explanation shows the importance she places on giving choices to children and having mutual understanding between child and parents. Discussion with the child allows him to find out the answer and how he is supposed to behave well.

According to the cases from Indian parents, they educate their children in good behaviour by providing guidance, showing and letting them understand the reason, then advising and informing them of the implications. The parents would also notify their children of the impact of good behaviour and bad behaviour. Here, Mrs Slam explains her opinion on parent's guidance:

R: Based on my observation, your child shows a good example to her friends, so how do you nurture her?

Mrs Slam: The first thing I did was, told Asah the rules. Let her understand the rules and the reason why we need to have rules and regulations. After she understands, show the proper one...the only thing always shows her. I realised that it is the best way.

R: How many times have you given her guidance?

Mrs Slam: From nothing until she really understands rules and shows it to me...if not perfect continue do it again and again until she is bored (laugh).

R: If she got bored, did she show any bad sign like body language?

Mrs Slam: sometimes she did...if she did...I stare at her and dare!

R: Is it enough?

Mrs Slam: Normally she understands it...it warning sign. After that I shall explain to her later.

R: If she still continues?

Mrs Slam: I just keep quiet and won't talk to her until she understands.

(Paragraphs 34-39)

Mrs Slam guides her daughter to behave appropriately, matching her expectations. She lets her daughter understand the rules and regulations at home and shows her correctly. If she is not satisfied with that she shows her practically again, talks to her and asks her the problem until she really understands and applies it to whatever she does. Another parent, Mr Rajah, stated that he nurtures his son Vejay and educates him by exposing him to social skills and religious education.

Mr Rajah: ...should teach my child with proper social skills and religious education. I didn't force him. I have created the awareness so he knows his responsibilities...you don't have to force but create the awareness, I talked to him about the importance of following the religion, doing good things, what religions tell you to do, at last so he was aware, awareness is already there, so it is not a problem.

(Paragraph 18)

Based on the above statement, it is important for a parent to expose the child to the appropriate social skill and awareness of their responsibility as children to themselves, to the family, and to the community. At the same time, he relates responsibilities to religious values and morality:

Mr Rajah: I treat my children differently between the boy and the girl but both are expected to behave well, always respect the eldest, and bring honour to the family in any conditions. I treat my son roughly but not so towards my daughters. I don't like my children to behave like a traditional girl, assertive and passive. I encourage her to speak firmly. I always

encouraged my children to be patient, and control their emotions. I don't give them too much freedom, especially my girl because it is for her safety. However, we have given a little bit of freedom to the boys but not too much because I don't want him to be disrespectful towards the parents later.
(Paragraph 25)

This parent explained his expectation towards his children is to behave well, always respect elders, control their emotions, and bring honour to the family. The children are encouraged to keep their minds, mouths and hands from hurting others irrespective of race, creed or colour. Mr Rajah also explained about respecting parents, grandparents, relatives and older people. They should show this kind of respect at all times through verbal and non-verbal behaviour. A parent has the responsibility to prompt children to control emotions, be patient, and respect people.

An Authoritarian style

Most of the Malay families in this study use an authoritarian style in matters related to religion. They require their children to recite the *Qur'an* and to pray. Why do they require this of their children? Mrs Rohani explained her obligation to children:

Mrs Rohani: When they were 4 years old I started to require them to recite the Qur'an. They go to Qur'an classes, to perform the "solat" (prayer) with the eldest and then to respect the eldest, listen to whatever the eldest advises which are good for them.
(Paragraph 19)

This shows that religious obligations are a priority for this Malay parent. Another reason that Malay parents use an authoritarian style is to educate children in verbal behaviour. The basic education from parents is to ensure that their children do not use bad words easily. Mrs Mona describes how she educates her child's behaviour:

Mrs Mona: His father was very strict with his behaviour. The first thing is children should not be shouting when talking to parents, and does not matter to the younger...what we respect.
(Paragraph 27)

From the statement above, Mrs Mona and her husband are very strict about their son's behaviour, especially when he says bad words or shouts at his parents.

This is different from when I asked Mrs Slam, an Indian parent, about her nurturing style of her child. She stated:

Mrs Slam: We follow our own style to educate our children ... because we work all the time so there is less time together with our children. We let the school educate them. For other things...I played an important role in nurturing them...so that must strict and then easy to control.

R: When do you start nurturing your child?

Mrs Slam: I started to nurture when Asah was little...we nurture her a little bit rough. We keep the distance and less communicates to avoid her not respecting us.

(Paragraphs 63-65)

It is clear that in Mrs Slam's case, she and her husband nurture their children with an authoritarian style in order for them to control their daughter easily. However, this is unlike Mr Benny, who sets a standard of behaviour:

Mr Benny: I set a standard of behaviour to my children ... you should do this and not do this. They knew that. For example, when they went to other house that has party..., the way I stare ... my face shows them whether they can or cannot. Therefore, they know what they can and cannot do.

(Paragraph 17)

By setting a standard of behaviour, his children will know to what extent they can or cannot perform that behaviour. If they cross the border that he had set, his children will receive the consequences. According to Mr Benny he always uses the cane in educating his son Ashok. He explained to me, the best way to teach children in this case is to provide a set standard of behaviour. These instructions will make sure children obey their parents.

Meanwhile, compared to others, some Chinese parents take stern action with their daughters if they do not do their best and do not meet academic standards according to their parents' expectations. For example, here is how Mrs Chang requires her daughter to do school work repeatedly to make sure she gets outstanding success:

R: What about if she did badly in her work?

Mrs Chang: Force her to do her best. Tell her to do it again and again. If she does badly in her work and has the wrong answer...I would first advise and then warn her... cane or any grounded like TV or games station.

(Paragraph 18)

She added this statement about behaviour,

Mrs Chang: I told her don't use any bad word or speak politely...otherwise you will receive... punishment.

(Paragraph 25)

Mrs Chang is concerned about her daughter's behaviour. Another Chinese parent expressed of her child:

Mrs Lim: If she failed to meet my expectation.... I would cane her. You can even see the cane there because I believe in discipline. Discipline is very important it is a key to success. If she does not follow, she is not listening to your instruction. It would be very difficult for her to catch up on her study. So I asked her to memorise the times tables. Even my husband asks her to memorise the times tables.

(Paragraph 69)

This parent will take severe action if her daughter does not follow her schedule and fails to meet her expectations. She trained her daughter using a strict discipline schedule in order for her daughter to achieve success. Mrs Tan shares Mrs Lim's opinion, explaining how she handles her daughter with regard to encouraging her to focus on the problem in her studies:

Mrs Tan: My daughter has difficulties to focus on her study...so the best way that I force her first and then let her get used herself to the duties and responsibilities.

(Paragraph 24)

Mrs Tan actions her daughter by forcing her to do whatever she wants through drilling and letting her daughter get used to what is important to her and explaining to her these responsibilities. When she is familiar with the task, she is expected to manage her own tasks. The physical discipline still acceptable in Malaysia as part of parenting style compared to United Kingdom.

Summary

In summary, the actions utilised by the parents of the three ethnic groups to educate their children are authoritative and authoritarian. This is shown in Table 7.3 developed from parental interview analysis. The meeting point of the three ethnic

groups is that the parents provide good guidance to inform their children of the reasoning, cause and the implications of misconduct.

Table 7.3: Summary of Malaysian parenting styles

	Malay	Chinese	Indian
An authoritative style	Good guidance to inform children of the reasoning, cause and the implications of misconduct.	Take care of their child with guidance	Guide children to behave appropriate to parent's expectations
	Discussion between child and parent gives the child a chance to tell what he feels is right	Give choices to children and set a mutual understanding between child and parents	Let child understand the rules and regulations
An authoritarian style	Religious obligations are given priority by Malay parents	-	-
	-	Parents take stern action with children who do not meet academic standards	-
	Obey Malay norms	-	-
	-	-	Strict discipline for respect
			Setting a standard of behaviour
Meeting point	Good guidance means to inform children of the reasoning, cause and the implications of misconduct.		

7.5 The Influence of Religious Capital on Children's Behaviour

In this section I shall discuss what and how religion affects children's behaviour. The religious practices adopted by Malay parents in nurturing their children include worshipping, such as performing the solat (prayer), and obeying the obligations of being Muslim, such as bringing the children to the mosque to perform prayers,

memorizing the *Qur'an*, wearing clothes that do not reveal any part of the body, and studying religion. In addition, relationships between children and their neighbours can be established through religion. Mr M Nor refers to how he educates his children about religion:

Mr M Nor: They follow me to pray at the mosque, during Friday prayer, terawih prayer (Ramadan). Going to the mosque keeps my children praying.
(Paragraph 57)

Parents take their children to the mosque to perform prayers. Additionally, most Malay parents send their children to mosque school for religious study and to learn the *Qur'an*. Mr Ahmad below reflects the importance of religion:

Mr Ahmad: I send my daughter to the mosque to recite the Qur'an. I shall also bring her to the mosque if we have the time during the weekend. We will go there too to attend a major occasion like Eid Mubarak. I bring her to the mosque for the everyday prayers as well.
(Paragraph 122)

This parent sends his child to religious classes so she can learn how to perform the prayer, the foundations of worship and faith. Mrs Mona explains how she stressed the recital the *Qur'an* to her son:

Mrs Mona: Emm ... send him to our neighbour's house to recite the Qur'an from afternoon to evening at Mak Long's (neighbour) house. After praying, she also taught the Qur'an. She taught voluntarily the Muqadam (Chapter 30 in the Qur'an) and pre-school children read at home Iqra' (basic of Qur'an) only ... I also taught him to read muqadam.
(Paragraph 25)

The teachings of the *Qur'an* is not solely the responsibility of the parents, others can play a role too. Answers to the question "Do you require your child to perform religious obligations in order to educate them?" showed Malay parents held different views:

Mr Zainon: ...do not use coercive measures but use more of persuasive measures (remind) for example, has adik (small brother) performs prayer, remind them (my children) a few times.
(Paragraph 61)

He prefers using a persuasive approach instead of forcing his son to perform religious obligations, only reminding and teaching them. Compare that with this parent, who forces her children to perform religious obligations:

Mrs Rohani: When they were 4 years old I started to force them to carry out their religious duties. Going to Qur'an classes, performing solat (prayer) with the eldest and then to respect the eldest, listen to whatever the eldest give advices which are good for them.
(Paragraph 19)

This is another statement by Malay parent:

Mr M Nor: ...No question asked. "Jadi sebarang perkara berkaitan dengan agama tidak boleh dipersoalkan" (Thus any matters related to religion cannot be questioned)
(Paragraph 23)

Based on the above statement, it is clear that religion is a priority for this Malay parent. However, the styles used to educate their children are different; for example, according to Mr A Rahim:

The Malays are required to follow Islam. In the present context some differences may take place ... initially, one learns the Qur'an through tok guru (religious teacher) but today there are Compact Discs (CD) and the mother or teacher can teach the children... an Ustaz (religious teacher) can also come to the house. It is considered a terrible act if you do not recite the Qur'an regularly but it is even much worse, a sinful act if you do not pray. This is up to the parents.
(Paragraph 66)

Practising religion diligently is imperative in the life of the Malay community. Religion plays an important part in guiding the children through the *Qur'an* and he believes religion will steer children to do well. For example, in answer to the request "Tell me about the importance of your religion in the life of your family" Mrs Nani said:

Yes indeed, it's important. Religion leads our way of life. Religion is showing us ... guiding us. We believe that religion helps to shape the personality of the children ... if we are not guided by our religion we would deviate. I think what is written in the Qur'an is guidance for all life. To me every religion teaches and calls towards good such as love.
(Paragraph 73)

Her statement affirms that religion guides one in every level; Islam is the Malays' way of life. She believes in religion as a way of life and as a guide. The *Qur'an* is guidance; it helps shape the good values and personality of the children. The next statement recounts Mr Ahmad's opinion on how religion influences his way of life:

We give a suitable name to our children because Islam claims it. We also teach and celebrate religious festivals, for example, fasting during Ramadan...and then Eid, encourage the children to celebrate the first day of Muharram [Islamic New Year]
(Paragraph 126)

According to Mr Ahmad, carrying out the Islamic way of life started with giving a good name to his child, and continues with teaching and celebrating religious festivals, for example, fasting during *Ramadan*. Mrs Mona believes that by reading the *Qur'an*, the children tend to be more courteous:

He (her father) has also provided me with a lot of dua (prayers) and asked me to recite one of the Qur'an... which could develop my children's character into becoming courteous and obedient.
(Paragraph 25)

According to Mrs Mona:

At home I would ask him about two things ... one ... has he prayed, two, has he completed his school work or not. ... he will ask about school work and pray. My children are all boys, he was number one so we have to monitor because the other brother would follow him. So we follow the old way ... the way our parents taught us before... pray and then recites the Qur'an.
(Paragraph 26)

Then Mrs Mona, a Malay parent, explains about practising religious values:

I shall carry out activities associated with religious ceremonies.... Sending them to the Qur'an class and learn about Islam in religious class. The first language taught is a good language, kissing the hands of parents and older people...taking them to the mosque during prayer time, encouraging them to fast during Ramadan although for just half-a day.
(Paragraph 30)

This Malay parent is very serious in performing all activities in her life according to religious norms. She continued by explaining to me that religious practices are

guiding her children to behave well, to respect their parents and to obey God. Thus, they would avoid punishment from their parents.

Chinese parents are divided into two religious groups, namely Buddhist and Christian. The following is a statement from Mr Bo about his family's practice of Buddhism:

There are many celebrations that Chinese community observes...we can get confused between cultural celebrations and religious...for example Chinese New Year celebration is a cultural celebration... I am not going further. Most Chinese community here are Buddhist and retain strong ties with the ancestral homeland...but because we have settled in Malaysia for a long time, my family gradually adopted elements of Malaysian culture and so it has produces a variety of practices, beliefs, foods, clothes, and arts. Let them be proud of our culture...but I do not deny that Western culture especially American movies influence them a lot. We celebrate almost all the Chinese festivals like Chinese New Year [lah], Chengbeng [a cultural and religious activity], Moon Cake Festival or Lantern Festival (Cultural Festival)... [...]

(Paragraph 76)

According to Mr Bo, most of the Chinese community in Malaysia are Buddhist. Mr Bo explained how the principles of Buddhism adopted elements of Malaysian culture and so produced a variety of practices, beliefs, foods, clothes, and arts in order to maintain a harmonious relationships with others, and provide knowledge on how to develop being obedient and compliant. Having self-control, and a loyal and obedient character, is the precursor to harmonious relationships in a multi-ethnic country. Mrs Lim describes how she and her family are extreme followers of Buddhism:

We (my parents) are extremist Buddhists. I am a strong Buddhist follower; I learn from my parent and pass to my children.... We bring them to the temple if we have the time at the weekend. I bring them to the temple for major occasion like Wesak day. I brought them to the temple for our normal routine prayer.

(Paragraph 106)

Mrs Lim brought her children to the temple only when they have a celebration such as Wesak Day, birthday celebrations of the temple or other religious festivals, and sometimes during the weekends. Some parents provide places of worship in the home. Mr Lou stated:

I learnt from my parent and pass to my children. At home we have a Tokong (temple) for prayer...we pray in the morning with burning joss sticks in front of the house asking God to give a good luck and long life. We also have also put at shop, before opening our shop at morning. Children sometimes have joined the same prayers. At the Tokong there are also pictures of grandfathers and great grandfathers...prayers for them as well.

R: Did you go to the temple for prayer? And bring your child together?

Mr Lou: We rarely go to the temple, normally once a month or during the festival. A lot of time we pray at home.

(Paragraphs 40 -42)

Mr Lou he encourages prayer at home with his children and goes to the temple once a month or during festivals. They follow *Guan Xi* (Buddhism) which involves praying to their dead ancestors, placing their pictures in places of worship. According to Mr Lou, they also have special books such as other religions. Followers of *Fu Tiao* (Buddhism) do not eat meat and only eat vegetables. According to Mr Lou:

Pray in the temple. Pray for the dead grandfather. There are also certain days that important day. Fu Tiao followers do not eat meat, they only eat vegetables. Ta Fu Tiao has a holy book. Pray on the first and 15th day of the lunar calendar.

(Paragraph 35)

There is a *Fu Tiao* place of worship where a few fruits and cakes are given. The Statue in the place of worship shows the image of the temple or the characters. Buddhists (*Fu Tiao*) pray on the first day and on day 15 of the Lunar Calendar.

Regarding the question “Do you require your child to perform religious obligations in order to educate them?” this parent who practises Buddhism does not ask children to fulfil their religious obligations. She does not put an emphasis on teaching children about worshipping their God or praying. Mrs Shia Yin explains:

In every activity there are basic rules. Having polite manners, are good. She does not know who God is... because she does not understand. For example on Wesak day, I have a bath ritual for the child.

(Paragraph 120)

Mrs Chia exposed her daughter to religious rituals because each religious activity has rules, so these rules will teach the children. In answer to the request, “Tell me about the importance of your religion to the life of your family”, Mrs Chang explained:

Yes...yes. Religion is important as it gives my child guidance; it provides him with the necessary directions that lead him to be good in all aspects. I believe religion will help my child to do well. I hope my child follows whatever we practise.

(Paragraph 72)

This parent also sees that religion is important in providing guidance and examples of good behaviour to children. Religion can shape children's character and values, and emphasises serving others through welfare, sharing and caring of family members and people around them. Mr Bo explained:

... [...] We also follow the principles of Buddhism. It is important, as a parent to nurture our child to have good character, control their feelings and emotions well, be obedient and have a compliant character and good relationship with others. We believe we have to share, care and not be too individualistic.

(Paragraph 76)

From the above explanation, we can conclude the principles of Buddhism with regard to self-restraint and controlling feelings and emotions, direct children to have specified characteristics that are appropriate and accepted. Therefore, religious values play an important role in building appropriate characteristics in children.

The parents of Indian ethnic background can be divided into two groups: one group embraces Hinduism and the other, Christianity. Hinduism has many gods and the main god is Brahman. Hindus believe that people have many lives, one after the other. The pattern only ends when the believer becomes close to Brahman. Hindus strongly hold on to a code of conduct that influences the behaviour of family members. These codes of conduct are used as guidelines in the socialization of the children's behaviour particularly to provide deterrents, especially to delinquent behaviours. Hinduism emphasises abstinence in terms of mind, mouth, and hand from anything that can cause pain to any living creatures, physically or emotionally (Kling, 1995). Based on interview data with the Indian families, religion plays an important role in their life. According to Mr Rajah;

I believe religions are important for Malaysians to develop multi-ethnic relationships. I am a practising Hindu but I know a bit about other religions. All religions promote racial harmony. No religion would want its followers to live alone. Hinduism promotes racial harmony. You must work with your friends; cooperate with them, without even asking what

their status is, what religion they practice, whether they have money or not etc.

(Paragraph 28)

The Hindu religion has adhered to teach its followers how to behave well and emphasise Hinduism promotes racial harmony. It is important for parents to develop multi-ethnic relationships. According to Mr Rajah:

I didn't force them. I created the awareness so they know their responsibilities; you don't have to force them. To create the awareness, you have to talk to them about the importance of following the religion, creating the text, doing good things, what religions tell you to do, so they are aware, awareness is already in them, so it is not a problem.

(Paragraph 39)

The above explanation illustrates that parents create awareness in their children instead of forcing them to practise their religion. According to Mr Rajah, through this awareness, children will know their responsibilities and understand the need to worship god. He added:

Mr Rajah: You should not do what is against the religion. You must treat others well, and do not harm them. When I brought up my children, I taught them religious knowledge. It helped them a lot in their social skills like how to communicate...how to talk to people and respect others etc. Teaching children the proper social skills is essential.

(Paragraph 42)

In response to the question, "Tell me about the importance of your religion to the life of your family" Mr Rajah explained:

In Hinduism religious education and worldly education such as ... science, maths, language are important. Both must be in line. If you study anything, make sure what you are studying also promotes what are in the religion. You should not study anything that is against religion. You must do well to others, do not harm them. When I brought up my children, I taught them religious knowledge.

(Paragraph 30)

Based on the facts given by the interviewed parents, the Indian parents who send their children to religious class or temple stated that they practise the Hindu religion in their families. If the children argued, or refused they would force their children to perform religious obligations. According to Mrs Maniamah:

We do not send our children to formal classes, but I usually take my children to the temple. They follow us to worship at temples, usually on Friday or Saturday evening. We always ask our children to pray in the morning.

(Paragraph 81)

This parent does not send her children to formal classes but they go together to worship at temple. She explained to me that temple has a religious book like other religions. However, according to Mr Rajah, he sends his children to formal classes at the temple. He does not teach his children (Paragraph 45).

Among the practices conducted by an Indian parent is bringing their son to the temple. For example, Mrs Deev said: "I am going to bring my son to the temple on Friday night" (Paragraph 58). According to the explanation provided by Mrs Deev, there are some parents who have a small temple for worship at their home. Mrs Deev clarified that, "I have a small place for prayer in my house. It includes pictures and statues of gods "(Paragraph 70). According to Mr Benny, their family had embraced Christianity since their parents, and his family also continues to follow the same religion. Mr Benny sends his children to Church to study their religion:

Mr Benny: During the weekends, we usually go to Sunday class at the church. I shall bring Ashok to the church for Sunday school. He will study religion. It is just like any normal religion school ... he can understand God more.

(Paragraph 58)

The above statement shows that Mr Benny pursues the same religion as his children. Every weekend his son learns religion at the Church. At that religious class he studies the norms and values of Christianity. Christianity rather than Indian culture influences most of his family life. A Chinese parent who embraces Christianity, Mrs Ryan, said "My parents are Buddhist, but my family is Christian. We brought them to church. We send our children to Sunday school" (Paragraph 48). On the one hand, these parents who profess Christianity put more emphasis on teaching children about worship of God and to how pray formally, and their children show moral values and love.

Summary

Although all three ethnic groups have different religions, they have shared commonalities: religion is a way of life in a family which is providing guidance in shaping the personality of the children; religion can lead a child to have good character; to be able to control feelings and emotions, to be obedient and caring, and have good relationships with others.. This is summarised in Table 7.4 developed from parental interview analysis.

Table 7.4: Summary of religious capital

	Malay	Chinese	Indian	Christianity
1.Principal	Malaysian Muslim stems from the adoption of Malay norms and values with Islamic values	The practice of Buddhism adapted into Chinese culture.	Family life influenced by religion: Hinduism holds strongly to the code of conduct	Christianity influences most of family life
2.Nurturing	Nurturing children in worship such as performing the <i>solat</i> (prayer) and religious responsibility	Nurturing children in worship such as performing the prayer	Awareness for understanding the need to worship god and performing the prayer	Teaching children about worship of God and to how pray formally
3.Formal class	Send children to mosque or religious school for religion classes	Learn from the parents	Send children to temple for religion classes	Send children to church for religion classes
The Meeting Point	1.A way of family life which provides guidance in shaping the personality and good character of the children 2. Aim to be able to control feelings, caring, obedient and have good relationships with others 3. Instilling religious values in everyday life, family and children, including sending children to religious classes, and going to the mosque, temple or church.			

7.6 Social Capital and Children's Behaviour

In this section, a few themes have emerged which are related to the grandparent's communities' roles in nurturing children's behaviour. These two factors have contributed to both parents and children as social resources within the family, and between the families. The factors relate to social capital (Coleman, 1988) which is the network in the family (within-family social capital) or between the family and the community (between-family social capital). I shall explain in this section how and in what way grandparents affect children's behaviour, and the differences between the three ethnic groups.

Grandparents and Children's Behaviour

The following statements show how and in what way grandparents from different ethnic backgrounds influence the grandchildren.

According to Mr Ahmad:

I let my parents look after my child for a few days during the school holidays to build a close relationship between them. I think it is a good way for them to know each other well and nurture the feelings of caring and love...I think my parents nurture their grandchildren with love. They talked to them using polite language and tried to do their best to nurture their grandchildren liked they did with their own children.
(Paragraph 91)

Mr Ahmad explained that his parents have been nurturing their granddaughter with love and care rather than using punishment. He added:

Mr Ahmad: My mother taught her granddaughter to care for the family members, environment, and show filial piety to others...during visiting families and relatives like her cousin who lives near their grandparents' house, feeding the chicken around the house.
(Paragraph 98)

He explained that his daughter was taught to care for the family members, environment, and show filial piety to others, most of which elements are nurtured indirectly. These contextual values and hands-on experiences are more effective than the knowledge a child may get from a book.

Mr Ahmad: When we met once a month, ... first thing my mother did to my daughter after hugging is asked about...pre-school experience and to tell her to "recite the Qur'an" Even though we only met them during school holidays, or any special event and Eid Mubarak.

(Paragraph 103-106)

This first thing the grandparents do after hugging the grandchildren is ask about the children's pre-school experience and to tell them to recite the *Qur'an*. Although they meet with their granddaughter for a short time, these meetings are valuable moments for Mr Ahmad's daughter. Thus, this develops a closer relationship and instils caring values in the grandchild. When his daughter came back during the holiday she always talked about her grandparents.

Mrs Mona shares same view as Mr Ahmad; her son meets his grandparents almost every celebration of *Eid Mubarak* and sometimes during the school holidays.

According to Mrs Mona:

My mum supports me and helps me a lot in terms of taking care of my son. It started since my son was a baby ...and now she (my mum) is also involved in encouraging my son to learn. But one thing that I respect about her is that she always uses persuasive language towards my son. Sometimes I feel it is unfair of her because she treated me differently 20 years ago compared to how she treats her grandson

(Paragraph 83)

In this case, a particular thing Mrs Mona realised is that the language her mother and father used towards her son was kind. They were using language that showed love and care towards their grandson such as calling a title name, and rhythm and body language that impressed grandson to grandparents. Mrs Mona's parents always encourage and persuade her son to do something without forcing him, therefore, her son does not refuse to do what they ask (e.g., helping granny or praying). She admitted the way grandparents treat their grandson was quite different compared to what they had practised before.

Like Mrs Mona, Mrs Rohani also brings her son to the grandparents' house during the weekend (Paragraph 38). When they went to the grandmother's house, her son would follow what the grandmother's asked him to do, such as performing *solat* (prayer).

These views differ from views given by other parents with regards to the roles of grandparents. In the case of Mrs Nani, she stated that her mum treats her granddaughter more leniently than she does, but Mrs Nani prefers her daughter to be more independent and assertive, and exposes her to new environments. Below is Mrs Nani's statement:

My mum wants her granddaughter to have characteristics like being polite, gracious and respectful, so she treats her rather leniently ...but I treat my daughter with a more assertive attitude, let her have more independence and expose to new environment
(Paragraph 58)

There are two different generational attitudes in term of nurturing child in this family, first nurturing with cultural aspects (e.g., norms and values), and second educating with a view to the contemporary and global situation in which competence is needed. Both parenting styles have their strengths, and they depend on the situation that the child faces. Based on my observation of Nani's daughter Asmira (Observation Session 2: Child 15), this situation has affected the character of this child positively. I explain this in two different situations; for example, she always respects elders, and leads the group in many situations - she explained about animals in the posters to the class (Observation Session 3: Child 15) even though she was only 5 years old. She instigated friendships with a few 6-year-old children (Irda and Arif) (refer to Figure 6.1).

In another case, a grandmother has a role as supporter, protector, and facilitator to her grandson, and sometimes supports her grandson in certain things, for example, warning parents not to scold him. This grandmother has notably affected the grandson's behaviour.

Mr Zainon: The grandmother is acting as the facilitator and nurtures Arif... she tends to remind me not to scold her grandson. Arif always informed her when I scold him.
(Paragraph 47)

This is the only case describing the role of a grandmother being dominant compared to the father, created as protector towards her grandson Arif. From the child's perspective, it is clear that his grandmother has authority in his family.

As a result, from the Malays' perspectives, the evidence shows that the role of grandparents is more to transfer norms and values and characteristics. They do not interfere much in the academic aspect but provide help by being carers or advisors of their grandchildren, or in terms of being a baby sitter or nanny. Most of the Chinese parents in this case allow their children to stay with their grandparents and in the area around their grandparents. For example, Mrs Lim lives near her parents, giving her family the advantage of baby-sitting and other benefits. She sends her daughter to her mother's house but she visits her every day:

Mrs Lim: Almost every day. Regularly I shall take my daughter on Friday and send her back on Sunday. I let my parent keep my child. Every week I took her once a week, every night I shall go to my parent's house because of my working hours and my husband who often goes outstation.
(Paragraphs 60)

In terms of role, grandparents play an important part in their family as baby sitters and carers and even more. In another case Mrs Chang stated that:

My parents have supported my family since my daughter was born until now...my parents also cared for my daughter.
(Paragraph 49)

Furthermore, the case below shows the role of a grandparent:

Mrs Lim: My mother always gives her mathematics exercises. My parent have a very important role in order for me to be in this position that's I shall practise whatever my parent teach me before continuing their position.
(Paragraph 99)

The above case refers to parents who do not stay together with grandparents who care for their grandchild who studies at PERPADUAN Pre-school near to grandparents' house. Mrs Lim explained that her second daughter lives with her parents. Mrs Lim let her second daughter stay with her grandparents because she wanted her to go to PERPADUAN Pre-school.

The grandparents in this case play an important role teaching the granddaughter, for example in Mathematics and other school homework, especially that related to their first language, Mandarin. Mrs Lim asked her mother to monitor her daughter while she was doing her Mathematic exercises. The grandparents make sure all the school homework is done before they let her play or watch television.

According to Mr Bo, his parents live together with his family and they give him a lot of support. He stated that:

Mr Bo: Actually my parents stay with me, so... They play significant role in nurturing my children and caring for them. My father or father in-law or mother and mother in-law are part of my resources so they always gives me advice and show me how to nurture my son but never obstruct what I do.
(Paragraph 82)

Based on these, grandparents who live together with the grandson as a big family play a strong role in nurturing the grandson, especially in social development, language (i.e., mother tongue), ethnic norms and values, and communication skills which they practise. The parenting style of the grandparents in nurturing the grandson's behaviour is more lenient and caring. They always tell and remind their grandson to do something instead of forcing him. They will explain the reason why any misbehaviour is wrong without punishing or threatening the grandson. Both grandparents are the main resources in providing advice to the parents.

Below are views from the Indian families regarding the role of grandparents in influencing children's behaviour. According to Mr Rajah:

Mr Rajah: They help a lot in social skills such as how to communicate, how to talk to people, and respecting others etc. sometimes they show our culture.
(Paragraph 34)

Mr Rajah illustrates the contributions the grandparent has given to his son, that the involvement of grandparents has led to the transferring of Indian culture (i.e., Tamil language, religious practices, concept and practice of respectful values toward people, including social skills such as a good communication, politeness) toward the grandchildren. Mr Rajah explained:

My parents mostly visit their grandchild on a weekend and sometimes stay together with them for a few days. During that time, my parents would share the story about the family's traditions with the grandson (i.e., the dressing and accessories, table manners such as eating with banana leaf, and put pottu (a mark on the forehead as prayer mark), inform him of the proper social behaviour like respecting the parents (verbal and nonverbal), uncle and great grandparents. Sometimes, they explain about god and belief in the second life after death which is dependent of life today.
(Paragraph 40)

The relationships between the grandparents and grandson in this case contribute to shaping the grandson's behaviour. Mr Rajah emphasised to me that his son likes the way explanation is given by his grandparents. Mrs Maniamah agreed with Mr Rajah; she stated that her mother always emphasised the importance of family norms to her daughter:

Mrs Maniamah: a lot...about praying and being obedient. The values related to respecting the parents...but sometimes my mum tends to indulge Lela even for a small thing
(Paragraph 75)

In the case above, the mother has contributed three main things to the development of her daughter's behaviour. Firstly, the grandmother stressed worshipping and the elements of being obedient; secondly, characteristics of granddaughter with respect to parents; and thirdly, to love parents, grandparents and others. These prosocial behaviour values are important for a young child to develop personality at an early age and avoid any misconduct.

Based on my observation of a few cases in this study, grandparents play the role of caretaker or custodian when their grandchildren go to pre-school. Three families from the Chinese ethnic group, one Malay, and one Indian live together with their parents. The cases of these five children who live together with grandparents demonstrate a positive effect, the children frequently showing respectful and prosocial behaviour such as being helpful and cooperative toward others, for example, child 11(Jenny), child 6 (Canny), and child 24 (Wee Jo). Maybe these grandparents are one of the factors contributing to this prosocial behaviour. In the case of Jenny and Canny, they are always with grandparents when they are picked up from pre-school and one or two other children follow them after school. They frequently showed prosocial behaviour, like being helpful and being respectful toward other children (Observation Session 1: Child 6). It was evident during the outdoor activities when they were playing on the swing, on the playground, and in the classroom during meal times. However, this cannot be generalised across the whole study.

Parents' Influences on Children's Networks

There is evidence revealing that the parental social capital in the community has a positive effect on children's relationships. Parents' social networks such as neighbours influence their children's relationships and provide play partners at the neighbourhood play area. This is an explanation from Mrs Lim about how well her daughter knows her neighbours and how she relates to them:

Mrs Lim: Yes we have. She knew them. She likes to play with her neighbour... My daughter likes to play with them. They are the only neighbours she plays with every day. Every day she comes and visits my daughter or my daughter goes over there.
(Paragraph 102)

It is apparent that Mrs Lim's daughter and her neighbour's child are play partners. A positive relationship has developed in the everyday interaction and children network among children. They play together regularly after school in the evening and during weekends, either together with their parents or alone (but I was told that most of the time the children were accompanied by the parents because of the children's safety). My observation revealed that relationships between parents who live in the same neighbourhood or who are friends led to the same relationship developing among the children. Whenever their mothers chatted to each other before school started and after school time, the children would carry out their own activities. Children took this chance to play at the pre-school playground and they spent their time together. Sometimes children also played with their network while walking back to their homes or played together at the playground near their neighbourhood. This is dependent on the area where they live, like Mrs Ryan's son who went to a neighbour's houses in an area surrounded by Chinese families:

Mrs Ryan: They go to neighbour's house to play with a nice pet. Our house is surrounded by the Chinese community.
(Paragraph 58)

The case above exhibits that a boy went to his neighbour's house because he was excited to play with a nice pet. These two cases show the existence of a circulation network between parents' social capital in the neighbourhood area. Interrelations between parents and child, both parents' networks of other adults and child's

network of other children, as well as members of social networks, provide a source of possible play partners for children.

Next I shall explain how ethnic groups and different genders are involved in this network. According to Mrs Maniamah,

We knew only a few neighbours around our block. We mixed with the Malay and Chinese families. My daughter's relationship with our neighbour is good...she knew which family has a child with the same age as her. I always encourage her to send something to our neighbour's house especially when we celebrate Deepavali.

(Paragraph 78)

The above statement explains about a child mixing with other children from different ethnic groups who live in the surrounding neighbourhood or in the same block. Her daughter has a close relationship with a friend who lives near their house. Normally, they meet their neighbours in the evening and at the weekend at the playground. Sometimes they meet their neighbours when the community association arranges fiesta events like *Deepavali*, *Chinese New Year* or *Eid Mubarak* in the open hall of the ground floor flat. In addition, in Malaysian culture, neighbours always exchange food with each other as another way of developing relationships between neighbours (i.e., oranges during Chinese New Year, “*maruku*” (cookies) and “*ketupat and rendang*” (rice and chicken) but this exchange usually occurs regularly with the nearest neighbours.

Children became friends with the neighbours surrounding their house regardless of the ethnic group. In the case of Mr Benny, he explained that his son knew the neighbours around their house, including those of different ethnic groups, very well. He stated that:

Mr Benny: He knows almost every family who lives around us...most of them are Chinese families. There are only two...three Malay families staying around our terrace house.

(Paragraph 71)

These cases show the community involved in this study stays in same area where the three ethnic groups are mixed together. They live in two main areas, an area of flats and one of low-cost terrace houses. The environmental factors, for example the design of the flats providing a ground floor open hall as a community centre,

encourage the community's members, giving the parents and children a space and chance to mix in community activity.

Sharing the Social Obligation

A collaborative responsibility between neighbours is practised in this neighbourhood, especially for Malay, Chinese and Indian parents in the community who live in the same flats. They are like one big family, which protects, cares for, or sometimes becomes the babysitter to one of the children. The statement below exhibits this:

R: Tell me how important you feel the community is in the upbringing of your children.

Mr Zainon: Yes. Community is like our big family; neighbours are part of our family. They play an important role in fostering my son. I cannot monitor my son's behaviour all the time, so our neighbours will help me monitor him. In front of me, my son behaves well but I am not sure what he is like behind me! My son's behaviour reflects how I raise him ...norms like respecting the elders, intonation (the way he speaks)... greeting. I prefer our neighbours carry some of the responsibility and interfere in the process of rearing my child.

(Paragraph 34)

The above statement indicates how the obligation to take care of neighbours' children or "ambil tahu" is part of the social capital in order to nurture the children. These attitudes of neighbours are important to avoid deviant behaviour and unacceptable conduct from the children and to encourage behaviours like respecting elders, being helpful and cooperative, and protecting and caring for the community. These kinds of behaviour were often discussed between the parents when they met each other in a coffee shop or in the wet market. Mr Bo explained to me, they always discussed their children's behaviour with their friends and neighbours:

Mr Bo: We always care for our community members...we are a family. This pre-school was originally for the community, so children in this pre-school were part of our responsibility. We discuss with one another regularly at coffee shop or front of pre-school, especially after taking our children to pre-school...The main topic being about our children's attainment and behaviour.

(Paragraphs 94)

The topic of discussion is the behaviour of their children and this is shown as part of community obligation. Mr Bo and other community members show interdependent relationships in bringing up their children. This topic of discussion included children's education.

In another issue of sharing resources, the more parents spend time in *Rukun Tetangga* (Neighbourhood Association) the more they can contribute and discuss the behaviour of their children. The local community acts as an agency for the parents and provides and contributes not only the knowledge of norms and values to the multi-ethnic culture but also exposes them with the parenting ways, positive relationships, and national integration which includes choosing kindergarten for their children. I have tried in this study to emphasise the neighbours' or colleagues' contribution to the parents in developing the children's behaviour and preparing them in nurturing their children. For example, Mrs Maniamah explained about parental resources:

Mrs Maniamah: Yes...but not so much. They only told me a few things like what is a good pre-school in our area. Some of them explained where they sent their children, and which books are good for reading and writing.
(Paragraph 77)

The statement above shows the role of the social network of parents in giving information about pre-school and how to choose the pre-school. The conversations that occur among parents regarding the best school, or pre-school activities can establish relationships with neighbours who provide them with valuable information. The values of "*ambil tahu*", or taking care of neighbours as an obligation, plays an important role in developing children's behaviour. Neighbours monitor prosocial behaviour and unacceptable behaviour or misconduct in the neighbourhood as an obligation of social capital.

7.7 Summary of Chapter 7

The norms and values of families in this study are based on ethnicity and religion. Referring to the past, the norms and values become a regulation in the community,

for example “*adat*”, but now it has become subject to dynamic norms and values. The types of norms and values are almost the same amongst the different ethnic groups: being respectful and building good character. Being respectful is a part of religion and “*adat*” (*norms*) and children are more obedient to parents in order to develop the children’s good relationships showing good model of respect. The parents apply the norms and values of “*budi bahasa*” as a sign of respect when speaking to elders. All parents place religion as a guide in shaping the behaviour of their children. The values of religious practices adopted by parents were seen in the effects of the value of caring and helpfulness in children. The effect of religion on children of all ethnic groups was found in respectful behaviour to the parents, teachers and the elders which is shown in greeting, and kissing hands.

Two parenting styles, authoritarian and authoritative, are practised according to the subject matter the parents are concerned with. The parents give good guidance, explaining reasons to the children, the cause and the implication of misconduct. The parents each have a different way of nurturing their children’s behaviour even though they are of the same ethnicity and religion, which is dynamic according to the current situation and other factors including parents’ educational background. However, the principles, which aim at building positive behaviours, are the same.

CHAPTER 8: THE PERPADUAN PRE-SCHOOL AND PARENTAL PERSPECTIVE

8.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss findings related to my final research question, “How do similarities and differences between parental and pre-school norms and values influence the social development of children from different ethnic backgrounds?” The writing of this chapter is organised into four main topics, as follows. The first topic is the curriculum practices at PERPADUAN pre-school; the pre-school goal of inculcation of national integration that promotes positive feelings among children from different ethnic backgrounds, and pedagogical approach are considered. The second is the medium of instruction and language. This topic touches on instruction in language in pre-school, which is *Bahasa Melayu*, Mandarin Class, English Class, and Sinar Book Class (Malay Phonics). Children’s life experiences at home have been used as the starting point for learning and processes of communication. The third topic is the Pre-school Setting. This topic focus includes classroom management and seating arrangement, pre-school routine and cultural elements, teaching the subject of moral and spiritual values, and respectful behaviour. I shall focus on the pre-school setting and how the pre-school activities support the children’s social development. The fourth topic is PERPADUAN Pre-school as “a Mini Malaysia” as it represents the diversity of Malaysia society. In order to triangulate the data according to the issues and themes, I include data from the pre-school teacher and assistant teacher, pre-school reports and documents, parents, and observations. Document analysis based on the issues and themes helps to triangulate the data using the evidence to support the findings. By doing so, I hope to show triangulated evidence and obtain a clear understanding of how parents and pre-school nurture the children’s social development. I present an analysis of the data looking for the similarities and differences between parental and pre-school norms and values that influence the children.

8.2 The Curriculum

The following findings describe pre-school philosophy and the approach to nurturing children from different ethnic groups according to the objectives of PERPADUAN pre-schools (refer to Section 2.5.2). In this case, the children at PERPADUAN Pre-school are expected to develop cognitive skills, thinking skills, problem-solving skills and emotional maturity. This is in line with the National Pre-school Curriculum 2003, the aim of which is to enrich the potential of children in all aspects of development, ensuring that children master the basic skills and inculcating them with a positive attitude to prepare for a smooth transition to Primary School Education. The National Pre-school Curriculum contains the basic elements to help children in various aspects of development, including language and communication, cognitive skills, moral values, spiritual, emotional, social, physical development, and creativity and aesthetics. It is targeted at children from 4-6 years old. In short, the curriculum's aim is to nurture the holistic development of the child.

The PERPADUAN Pre-school goal not only aims to cultivate children's potential in all aspects of development, mastering basic skills and fostering positive attitudes as preparation for entry into the school or school readiness as stated in the National Pre-school Curriculum, but children are expected to develop the personal qualities, character and positive self-concept to become patriotic citizens. For example, they are exposed to a daily routine like the "Rukun Negara" (Malaysia Principle) and "Negaraku" (Malaysia Anthem). What I observed was the priority PERPADUAN Pre-school placed on promoting positive feeling among children, a feeling of unity, acceptance and tolerance among children from different ethnic backgrounds. In my opinion, this goal is not emphasised in regular pre-school due to the nature of enrolment of other pre-schools being dominated by one ethnic group. The government agency under the Department of National Unity and Integration has a huge responsibility to ensure national integration among Malaysians.

The intake of PERPADUAN Pre-school has a mixture of children from different ethnic backgrounds and they have the opportunity to understand and develop the social values of the three ethnic groups and the practices of commonality based on Malaysian culture. The first respondent that I met and had the chance to

interview at this PERPADUAN Pre-school was the pre-school teacher. She is the most significant person to explain about this PERPADUAN Pre-school as she has been teaching more than twelve years. She shared her experience regarding this school and explained to me about the school philosophy and school ethos, which are in line with the local community:

Teacher: We have followed the philosophy of national pre-school...all activities in classroom are based on national curriculum guidelines ...emphasise on the various aspects of development included the language and communication...cognitive, emotional, social, physical, moral values and spiritual; and creativity and aesthetics. The PERPADUAN Pre-school goal was given priority...the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, and language which aim to unite the three major ethnic groups at an early stage and then customise with our local community only.
(Paragraph 32)

The above statement shows how the teacher nurtures her pre-school children based on the national curriculum and pre-school guidelines which emphasise six components. Her explanation above shows her awareness that there are ethnically diverse children in the PERPADUAN Pre-school. Children at this pre-school stage with a diversity of individual experiences and developmental differences face developmental challenges with cultural diversity. The most important aspect from her explanation is the need to customise the aims of PERPADUAN Pre-school with the local community in line with the national pre-school curriculum. Her explanation is supported by the circulation letter (refer to 2.5.2) from the Department of National Unity and Integration.

There are some similarities between parental and pre-school norms and values according to parents, and the PERPADUAN Pre-school curriculum practice also shares some similarities with the daily practices in the families of the three ethnic groups in Malaysia. The PERPADUAN Pre-school goal is based on the National Pre-School Curriculum and it aims to contribute towards the holistic development of the child. In response to the researcher's question, Mr Ahmad understands the school philosophy as follows:

Mr Ahmad: Em... pre-school programmes in PERPADUAN Pre-school is a good medium as one of the national educational system to develop children with social skills based on their multi-ethnic background. I know

that...PERPADUAN Pre-school consists of multi-ethnic children in one roof. It is good for the children to build up relationships between the three ethnic groups. This pre-school is equal, it is open for all ethnic groups... Its emphasis is on the multicultural society and the development of the nation.

(Paragraph 57)

Based on his explanation, PERPADUAN Pre-school aims to develop cognitive and social skills based on a multi-ethnic cultural background. The curriculum is geared towards developing a child's interaction within and between ethnic groups. The strength of this pre-school is its multicultural aspect that includes different ethnic cultures to develop Malaysian identity equally in every child. The view of Mr Bo, a Chinese parent, indicated his understanding of the pre-school:

Mr Bo: PERPADUAN Pre-school aspires to unite the three major ethnic groups from the early childhood stage...aware of the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, religion and languages. ...belief in... respect for other races [ethnic groups] ...so the policy of this pre-school is to ensure as far as possible that the composition of the pre-school entrants consists of a mix of Chinese, Malays and Indians. It also stresses school and academic readiness ... as well as the child's ability in the 3 Rs [reading, writing and arithmetic]

(Paragraph 22)

Mr Bo explained that PERPADUAN Pre-school has its own niche, which is to unite the three major ethnic groups for the children from the pre-school level. PERPADUAN Pre-school also emphasises the nurturing and development of multi-ethnic values such as cultures, religion and languages. It is the principle of nurturing children to respect other ethnic groups from as young as pre-school age, so that the children can together adopt and appreciate the values in a plural society. The uniqueness of this pre-school, according to Mr Bo, is the policy of the pre-school to ensure the entrants consist of children from multi-ethnic groups. As a committee member of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), he understands the pre-school curriculum's emphasis on cognitive development such as academic readiness and a child's ability in the 3 Rs [reading, writing and arithmetic].

Another parent, Mrs Maniamah, stated her views about the PERPADUAN Pre-school:

This pre-school is important for my daughter to develop Malay language skills ...we are from a non-Malay background and we need to understand Malaysian cultures... since she started studying here... to unite multi-ethnic children. The aims of this pre-school is to develop children's social skills ...to provide a conducive environment ...and to integrate those who stay in the same area ...all ethnic groups as known in the name PERPADUAN [unity]...I remember that it is part of the Persatuan Rukun Tetangga [Neighbourhoods Association] ...and I know this is free.
(Paragraph 25)

She sent her daughter to this pre-school in order to develop Malay language skills and to understand the Malaysian cultures from different ethnic groups emphasised here. To understand other ethnic groups' cultures and languages will help to increase children's interest in interacting with each other. This pre-school also provides an environment that is really conducive to developing the children's social skills and uniting the different ethnic groups who live in the same area. These ideas are in line with the government policy to ensure parents understand the pre-school ethos in order to support the national policy to unite children from pre-school level through early interaction.

Pedagogical Approach

The PERPADUAN Pre-school Curriculum follows the National Pre-school Curriculum with regards to the methods of instruction, and stresses learning through play, which suits the children's diverse ethnic backgrounds. The pedagogical approaches taken for teaching and learning methods include *Learning through play*, *Thematic approach*, and *Integrated approach*. From my observation:

There are learning corners in the PERPADUAN Pre-school which can initiate play, such as the dramatic play area, blocks and building; art corner; science and the reading corner. The children can have a choice of selecting play materials and embarking on their imaginative journey.
(Observation: Classroom Episode 17 June 2009).

The Pre-school provides play activities that can enhance creativity amongst children, such as in pretend play where a child can act as king and another as queen - but I observed that the boys preferred to play as Robin Hood (Observation: Child 6 and Child 23). In the teacher's opinion:

Teacher: This approach [learning through play] is most appropriate and relevant to help the child's interaction. The child learns to express himself through play and play can also enrich language, vocabulary development and peer interaction across ethnic groups. They learn something from the play course, starting with observing their friends in the socialisation processes, learn how to empathise and learn how to expand their minds.
(Paragraph 50)

She explained that this is not only the child's cognitive gain but they also learn the rules of play and team work, and socially they learn how to respect and appreciate others.

The Thematic approach focuses on several themes in a semester whereby the themes selected are relevant to the child's everyday life, such as Malaysian culture, belief and religion, and the environment (Pre-school Document: Yearly Planning). I observed:

The teacher regularly starts the teaching class with the theme of family life, kind of food and dress, and this continues towards more complex themes. She explains to the children about daily life in teaching activities. For example, family activities, the kinds of food the children have every day, words that they use and different clothing. This pre-school emphasis is placed on themes such as the appreciation of festivals in Malaysia with festivals like "Hari Raya (Eid Mubarak)", Chinese New Year (Kong Xi Fatt Choy) and Deepavali introducing the children to an understanding of different cultures.
(Observation: Teaching Episode 13 July 2009)

The learning process gives the children enjoyable learning experiences based on their ethnic practices. They are expected to contribute to the development of creative ideas and to develop mind maps on each particular theme. Through individual and group contributions they are able to share their ethnic group's life experience in the classroom. Sharing hands-on experience through play helps children to develop a peer culture which contributes towards them understanding multi-ethnic culture.

The Integrative approach centres on the need to transcend domains of child development as well as across skills, knowledge and attitudes of the child, and the need to employ different modes of learning. It appears to be focused on child-centeredness much along the theories inherent in Developmentally Appropriate

Practice (DAP) (Majzub, 2006). It has a balanced curriculum using both individual, small group and large group activities. Based on observation:

The teacher had divided children into small groups which involved groups of different ethnicities and ages. The group activities gave them the chance to relate and develop interdependence among the group members. The children were painting on the wallpaper in groups but they were supervised by the assistant teacher. During this activity Ardini, Raju, Harun, Zi Mi and Asah were discussing the water colour for the trees.
(Observation: Learning Activity Episode 24 July 2009)

When I asked this group of children, they stated that

“We like this painting cikgu (teacher)...seronok (exciting)”
(Interview in Observation: Learning Activity Episode 24 July 2009)

In order for the children to relate to each other this activity may be helpful. It may help to build up national integrity and interpersonal skills which are important in order for them to have a team building spirit in classroom activities such as painting, block building, drama and reading. In order to acquire a true understanding of the teaching and learning approach in pre-school, I consulted some documents and teaching resources, including the syllabus for National Pre-school.

However, the teacher can adjust the curriculum content according to the situation and circumstances. Teachers should also have knowledge about children's psychology, caring for the children differently in terms of ability, interests and backgrounds, and teachers should also be sensitive to changes in current education and development. Hence, teachers can implement the teaching and learning based on DAP. The physical and social proximity in the teaching and learning atmosphere should be more conducive towards developing respect for other ethnic groups.

Similarities and Differences: Parental Perspectives

There are similarities between parental and pre-school ethos and the pedagogical approach of learning through play to develop children beyond the specific ethnic groups. Based on the National Pre-school Curriculum, the learning-through-play approach can improve cognitive ability and willingness to explore, can encourage curiosity, gross and fine motor skills, innovative skills, critical and creative thinking,

as well as help overcome feelings of fear and depression. This approach emphasises the following characteristics: activities that delight; exploration and interaction with the environment; free and planned games; relaxation time; the chance to experiment with own ideas and the opportunity to give focus and attention (National Pre-school Curriculum, p. 71). I observed that the pre-school ethos emphasises childhood and play among children:

The teacher implements play as a pedagogical approach such as the child-centred approach and learning through play which is believed to be important in children's lives. She arranged the activities with toys, simulations. She encouraged their children to do role-play of occupations such as being police, a fireman, a soldier, a teacher, a doctor or nurse in the hospital. The teacher explains the specific role of occupation while the children are involved with the role play.

(Observation: play activity Episode 22 June 2009)

This view is practised by Mrs Ryan who encourages the concept of learning through play for her son at home. She explained:

Mrs Ryan: I always buy toys such as Transformers [robots], puzzles, interactive games, video games [Play station 2 games]...sometimes we play these games together or sometimes he plays with my sister [his aunt]. My sister always comes to my house and we would play Monopoly together with Rony. Sometimes he plays on his own. It helps him to develop skills. He likes his Transformers.

(Paragraph 45)

Mrs Ryan agreed that learning through play at pre-school is in line with their family practices at home. However, she explained to me sometimes she monitors her son playing or plays together with him, which helps to develop cognitive and social skills. Other parents who agreed with this learning through play stated:

Mr Bo: I believe that learning through play has helped my son in cognitive and social development. I bought Wee Jo a lot of educational toys like Lego or construction toys, CDs for example, Barney and friends, Teletubbies, Along and Upin and Ipin [Malay child's stories].

(Paragraph 137)

According to these two views, the Chinese parents show support to their children by providing educational toys which they perceived contributed to the child's development. A Malay parent, Mr Ahmad, expressed his opinion:

Mr Ahmad: I like this approach, if I'm not mistaken...my wife exposed my daughter with a doll, a car and Leapfrog programmes [interactive] since she [daughter] was 2 years-old. I believe it would help my child. I also played with her at the playground.

(Paragraph 62)

Mr Ahmad believed that exposing his daughter to educational toys would develop her cognitive and social development. Another parent shared the same opinion:

Mrs Mona: Yes...yes. I sent my son here because the teacher has a quality teaching [approach]. Children should be given an enjoyable childhood. Let them grow up cheerfully. The time has changed, when it was my time, it was a different approach- hafal (memorise) but now it's different. Although I'm busy but I still watch my son play construction toys like Lego if he has any problem I'd help.

(Paragraph 68)

These two views emphasise the importance of learning through play at an early age in order that children may grow up within a childhood world. An Indian parent stated:

Mr Rajah: I view the curriculum positively; I look forward to encouraging my son to learn from play activities like cycling on his bike at the park, play computer games, interactive games via the internet...Play station can also develop his social skills and problem solving.

(Paragraph 78)

In the current context, this parent exposed his child to learning incorporated through play with interactive games via the internet which help to develop his son's social skills. Although these parents from the three ethnic groups believe that they support their children in learning through play, they only observed and encouraged their children to play instead of actually joining them in play as Mrs Ryan did. Outdoor games for children are beneficial in the sense that they function as a realistic approach to encourage children's cooperative behaviour, to understand rules and regulations, and to involve themselves in teamwork games, not only for the benefit of enjoying the games but also to develop social skills.

Mr Ahmad stated:

In games activities children understand the rule...there are no double standard rules ...either you are big...rich or smart. Everybody must follow the game rules. They agreed among them...they have the consensus, those

who not follow the rule...either you get out or not play together. You know...through games they learn the humanistic part like tolerance.
(Paragraph 77)

Referring to the above statements, he emphasised an important part of play as a learning process. Children need to be exposed to play activities because they learn rules through socialisation, and most importantly develop humanistic values. Play group activity is a learning process whereby the children work as a team and each team can carry out activities towards one goal. Each member of the group must work in a collaborative manner to obtain a collective result. These similar views from the parents towards learning through play at pre-school give a positive impact to the children. This experience gives the children the advantage to learn and explore more than children who do not have this experience at home. From my observation, a child who has this experience always leads group activities, especially when they involve learning tools, like interactive games at the computer (Observation: Session 1, Child 23). I observed similar evidence in Child 9, Child 18 and Child 24.

In this case, from my observation and interviews with the Chinese parents who come from a higher educational background than SPM, they tend to have enthusiastic attitudes and expectations about the importance of the values of education, especially in communication skills. The parent below sends her son to this school to improve his use of the Malay language. According to the interview:

Mrs Ryan: We speak English and Mandarin at home...I don't speak Malay language with my children because my Malay language not good. Saya hanya faham sikit-sikit sahaja bahasa Melayu (I only understand a little bit of Malay). I went to an English medium school and my working environment is in English so this has influenced me to use the English language. However after my son started studying in this pre-school, I speak to him in both languages, sometimes English and sometimes Malay.
(Paragraph 53)

The above statement shows that the higher education background and working environment has led this parent to send her son to this pre-school because she wants him to develop his language and communication skills for future improvement. Even though her son is very good at writing and speaking in English, she is not satisfied because he is lacking in Malay language skills. The advantage of her son's English gives him a headstart in the classroom, especially in activities involving the English

language. She is very keen to see her son improve in Malay at this pre-school. She believes that Malay is important for his academic future and success.

The Differences between PERPADUAN Pre-school and Parental Norms and Values

There are differences however between parental norms and values and the pre-school ethos. The differences in the curriculum between pre-school and parental norms have certain implications in the ways the children adapt to the culture of the pre-school and home. According to Asmira's mother, besides facilitating the children's creativity, cognitive skills are important as the students will be able to understand concepts in the components of the PERPADUAN Pre-school Curriculum, especially in the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Mrs Nani states that:

Seronok betul [Fun learning]...two-way respect..... Two-way communication...teacher facilitates the children's creativity. In terms of cognitive development...a little bit slow here...compared to private pre-school...the private pre-school highlights memorisation skills with supporting tools make it fun...no time frame.

(Paragraph 41)

The PERPADUAN Pre-school may show slow progress in cognitive development compared to private pre-schools as the latter highlight a learning approach based on memorizing skills supported by a variety of learning tools. The children also enjoy learning in private pre-school because there are many educational tools. Therefore, this parent prefers a focus on cognitive development in early childhood education instead of focusing only on learning through play.

Mr Tee, Ellin's father showed the same opinion as Mrs Nani;

Mr Tee: I like the teacher to teach my daughter Ellin learn about numbers [arithmetic] and language than teaching play...she helps to serve foods for customers/[he shows his food store in front of the pre-school] and helps me in my business. (Teachers) should not let her play so much at pre-school, that will make her lazy.

(Paragraph 37)

He explained that he preferred his daughter to develop cognitive skills such as arithmetic and language through direct teaching rather than learning through play. He

stressed that, because Ellin always helps him at the food store, arithmetic and language skills are important for their family business. The language and mathematical components allow Ellin to contribute to their family. This view is supported by other parents, like Mr Lou, who also runs a food store:

Mr Lou: The teacher must teach kira-kira [arithmetic] like other private pre-schools, more reading than play.
(Paragraph 45)

An Indian parent gave a different view:

Mrs Ruggy: Learning through play does not (stress) learning but playing, I prefer the teacher to teach Nini reading and Math [arithmetic] by showing her how to do it and practise because playing takes time.
(Paragraph 32)

The next parent commented further on the concept of learning through play at pre-school because it contradicts with the home teaching style:

Mrs Maniamah: Play all the time isn't good because the children become playful. Play causes [contribute] the child to lose concentration. At home he wants to play games every time. So at school he has to learn. Play makes my child lazy...at home when she plays with her brother or plays alone she won't help me at kitchen.
(Paragraph 42)

These two Indian parents totally rejected the pre-school approach of learning through play because it contradicts with their style at home in which their children learn directly from a book. They believe that the approach takes time and these concepts also demotivate their children from concentrating on reading and make them lazy to study or to carry out household responsibilities. According to Mr A Rahim, this pre-school would not be the preferred school for parents if they had a choice:

Mr A Rahim: If the parent has a choice, this pre-school would not be the first choice. The curriculum and philosophy are the same that it aims to develop human excellence ...cognitive but the percentage of play activities to fulfil the multi-ethnic point ... there are different contents and programs. The priority for the three main ethnic cultures would mean less emphasis on the subject matter ... more on play activities. Maybe they chose the school because there is no tuition fee and near to the house or any other reason.
(Paragraph 77)

This pre-school may not be the preferred choice of some parents from this perspective as there is too much emphasis on play activities compared to the private pre-schools. The main reason for the majority of parents' choice could be because this pre-school is free or is near to their store. Compare this situation to the private pre-schools where they have to pay fees of around RM 200 to RM 400 per month. This view is supported by Mr Lou and Mr Tee, who sent their children to this pre-school because it is free and near to their house and workplace. For parents who want their children to master the 3Rs, they would prefer a private pre-school.

Another view came from a Malay parent who believed that play activity is a waste of time. This view was supported by another parent, who emphasised:

Mr Zainon: The Malay parents' paradigm has changed from focusing on the play activity towards memorization which is emphasised in the Islamic pre-school. The Islamic pre-school does not focus on play activity and is less practical. This pre-school focuses more on the locomotive instead of the cognitive (reading). The singing praises focus on the concept of the greatness of Allah because the Islamic system emphasises more on the cognitive and the affective. The modern pre-school emphasises on the practical and the psychosocial. The pre-school represents Malay orientation...it fulfils the need of the Islamic society at the pre-school level for example, they use "tudung" (scarf) at an early stage. This Malay paradigm seems to reject rejecting the modernity as well as the secular aspects.

(Paragraph 50)

This statement shows that this parent has different perceptions about the pre-school ethos and the expectations from parental practices towards the pre-school. According to him, in the Malay context, norms and values are based on religious activities. He assumes that culture is not the strong solution to solve current social problems compared to religious practices. He emphasises the importance of the cognitive and affective contexts (focusing on exam-oriented learning) and the attainment of values at an early stage is important for the children to develop their cognitive skills. He totally disagrees with a curriculum which emphasises the psychosocial more than religious practices.

However, not all parents think this way, according to Mr Rajah, who is involved with much of the pre-school curriculum and believes that pre-school should

stick to the original philosophy which emphasises social skills, language and promoting interaction. His statement here:

Mr Rajah: The philosophy behind pre-school education is to have social skills. Allowing the children to interact, to get confidence, to communicate, to play and cooperate with friends. The pre-school philosophy is to promote social interaction...The philosophy actually helps children to acquire social skills. Since 20 years ago, they [pre-school] have this problem until now. Parents want more than that [social skills]. Parents want more benefit from the pre-school especially private pre-schools or kindergarten. Parents don't understand that the use of pre-school is to acquire social skills for the children...The pre-school philosophy ethos is supposed to promote unity, understanding between the different races. Unfortunately, only now the government is saying all ...pre-schools. Before this or 20 years ago, it was the duty of the private sector.

(Paragraph 40)

Operators like the government agency and local councils should stress social skills and help children to promote social interaction among the diverse ethnic background instead of being academically-oriented. The pre-school ethos is supposed to promote national unity and better understanding between the different ethnic groups. According to his explanation, pre-school should stick to its original philosophy which emphasises social skills. They should not over-pressure the children to focus on academic excellence at an early stage and ignore their main priority. In conclusion, when I compared both views, I found the socio-economic status and educational background of those parents who agree with the learning-through-play approach are higher than parents who disagree. Parents such as Mr Ahmad, Mr Rajah and Rony's mother, who hold degrees, look positively on the play activities which are important for the children. Meanwhile, the parents who have SPM level (Standard Grade level) or less, such as Mr Tee, Mrs Maniamah and Mrs Ruggy, tend to have negative perspectives on the pre-school approach and feel that it wastes their children's time and gives children less concentration for their cognitive activities.

Impact on children:

Constructing social skills is important, and parental and pre-school norms and values are similar. Both parents and pre-school are very keen to construct children's social skills. The social skills from the parent and teacher perspectives in this study refer to

the children learning to develop friendship with others. A child should play well with others, communicate and interact well, should share and co-operate with other children. All parents and the teacher view the early pre-school years as an important period for children to acquire social skills, either from the parents or from pre-school. Both assumed that children have to develop the ability to interact on an equitable basis with others, irrespective of gender, ethnicity or background. Mr Bo comments on developing social skills in the children:

Mr Bo: I

I believe it does...I agree this pre-school helps to develop the relationship among the children. Actually our pre-school is a success because it is made up of multi-ethnic children...if you go to other "Tadika" (pre-school) you see only one ethnic groups. It gives children competence...more capability...ability and sociability to relate with peers. The teachers give hundreds per cent support to encourage children to relate to one another...from classroom activities to out-door activities.

(Paragraphs 113-119)

This pre-school has its own speciality about ethnic diversity that gives advantages to the children in terms of building social skills especially in order to interact and communicate among the different ethnic groups. This becomes the impetus for the children with a healthy competitive spirit. Importantly, social skills here like ability and sociability relate to peers from different ethnic groups. This advantage helps children to develop their ability to socialise with other people without any prejudice. In fact, it helps to build the children's self-confidence to interact with peers from different ethnic groups. Not only that, diversity is also strengthened with the activities provided by the teachers to help the children understand the culture of each nation. In addition to this construction of social skills, I have observed that they are associated with internal psychological traits such as developing children's independence, having self-confidence, being truthful to others, as well as having a sense of being autonomous. In this case, developing and constructing higher social skills are the most important abilities for pre-school children to prepare them for their future schooling and academic success.

Another issue about the PERPADUAN Pre-school with regards to the similarities with the parental norms and values is the objective of nurturing patriotism. The PERPADUAN Pre-school nurtures the feeling of love for the country, recognizing

and respecting the national flag and state flag, the speciality and privileges in the state of Malaysia, famous places and buildings, the results of the National, The “*Rukun Negara*” (Malaysia Principle) and the singing of the national anthem “*Negaraku*” (Malaysia Anthem). According to Mr A Rahim:

PERPADUAN Pre-school emphasises patriotism more, for example I Malaysia elements and religion is a second element. Perhaps the main element is the language factor. The strength of language has been understood by all people. Most of the activities are driven towards nationhood, national integration ... that's why the books in PERPADUAN Pre-school library show the ethnic characteristics of children, by including the children's characters such as names as well as other local aspects like important places, the structure or architecture of houses and the types of clothes. PERPADUAN Pre-school has its own niche ...benchmarks or brand that show the Malaysian culture such as from the Indian ethnic group, Malay, Chinese, Kadazan, and others. The design of the PERPADUAN Pre-school...in many activities it's based on nationhood and unity.... It's not the commercial image and it's also not for profit... If the parents are given the option PERPADUAN Pre-school would not be their preferred choice.

(Paragraph 60)

This parent considers the main objective of the PERPADUAN Pre-school is to develop the children's minds with Malaysian culture through the teaching and learning of pre-school activities. At the same time the pre-school emphasises developing patriotism and national integration through the Malay language.

The similarity that emerged from my study in this pre-school is the fact that development of children's inter-ethnic relationships is encouraged both at home and in the pre-school. It is clear that parents who send their children to study at PERPADUAN Pre-school understand the children are mixed in every aspect in order for them to understand and appreciate each other's views and feelings irrespective of ethnicity and background. According to one parent:

Mr Benny: He understood how to maintain his friendship. I also advise him about how to co-operate with friends. Be good to friends... no hanky-panky ...err help his friend, aware that some actions can harm the friend.

(Paragraph 82)

The quotation above shows that the parent taught his child how to maintain friendships. This may suggest that whatever the reasons, the mutual feelings of trust

and affection and the behaviours that typify relationships between friends in a multi-ethnic learning environment like PERPADUAN Pre-school are worthy of consideration. The development of mutual feeling and truthfulness in the children by avoiding sensitive issues will help to maintain the children's friendships, and this is part of the responsibility of the school as well as the responsibility of the family.

These pre-school norms and values promote children's sociability with their peers in a multi-ethnic setting which is a foundation for their social development. Children are aware that some actions can hurt or harm other ethnic groups; for example, beef or buffalo meat is food forbidden to Indians (Hindus) who are very sensitive about this issue. Similarly, Muslims do not eat pork. Therefore, the teacher avoids serving beef to the children during snack time or festival celebrations. Even the parents avoid serving the other ethnic families during festival season. This effort will foster good spirits in entertaining guests and universal relations. The nature of entertaining guests is very useful and good to be practised by Malaysia's multiracial communities. This practice will foster unity among the communities in Malaysia. According to a parent's view about which pre-school activities match the goals of the community association:

Mr Zainon: ... mestilah (of course) they match. We make sure the activities in the classroom or outside the classroom really suit the multi-ethnic culture. The activities must not touch any ethnic group's sensitivity... and it is restricted to any discussion on any particular ethnic group's polarisation topic. The pre-school practices are more focused on the multi-ethnic background and help to develop children's relationships.
(Paragraph 67)

The above statement shows the parent's concern about sensitive issues and prohibited topics that should be avoided in the classroom. The pre-school practices help to promote willingness and knowledge among this ethnically diverse group of children to work together towards social and national unity. In line with government policies and the multi-ethnic community circumstances, these pre-school objectives are geared towards integrating the children and preparing them with the concepts, information, knowledge, skills, language and values required by Malaysian society. Sensitive issues among the ethnicities actually become a national issue in order to avoid any political instability and maintain social harmony. Racial integration and a

national unity approach are targeted for everybody. The societal goal of the pre-school is to promote the feeling of unity and acceptance in an ethnically diverse society. From my observation and the children's point of view, the activities at pre-school did not touch any sensitive issues. Instead, all aspect of activities conducted took into account the various ethnic backgrounds. Such examples include the names and characters of actors in the stories, props or background of stories, culture and language. Activities like these are important for children in a multi-ethnic school like PERPADUAN Pre-school in order for them to understand and accept the homogenous ethnic, social and political structures of the wider society.

8.3 The Medium of Instruction and Language

In this section I shall discuss pre-school language and communication among the children, how language plays a role in cultural diversity, and what language programmes are practised in this pre-school. With reference to the national pre-school curriculum, the language and communication components include the Malay language as the national language, Mandarin as the medium of instruction in Chinese schools, Tamil as the medium of instruction in Tamil schools, and English as the second language. However, the PERPADUAN Pre-schools, pre-schools in the primary school only use the Malay language (national language) as the medium and English as the second language. At the PERPADUAN Pre-school, Malay is used as the medium of instruction across components and in everyday interactions. The mastery of Malay language skills is acquired through listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and the ability to interact with others. In order for children to be able to speak and write in Malay, skills are acquired through various meaningful learning experiences that are enjoyable and actively involve children in activities such as storytelling, chatting, discussion, singing, acting, games, role playing and tours. These activities help to increase vocabulary and improve language skills. Everyday life and routine give the children full communicative skills and an approach to start their new world. Here are comments from the teacher:

R: How do the pre-school activities help children to speak the Malay language?

Teacher: We use the Malay language as the language of daily communication in school ... so all the activities we do are in the Malay language... except for the English subject only... so that the activities could help them to communicate in Malay. In the early stage most of the Chinese and Indian children come to school without knowing any Malay words. They speak only Chinese or Tamil as their mother tongue. So in the first month it is very difficult to teach them... they do not understand what I say.

R: What is your action?

Teacher: For the Chinese children I am fortunate because I have Mrs Teng to help. She translates the instructions that I give into Mandarin but for the Indian children it is a little difficult since there is no one who can explain ... so I show them ... and help them.

R: How long has the teacher faced this problem?

Teacher: ...em...it is not too long ... between one to three months. It depends on the child. Some of them are slow and some...fast. It was difficult.

(Paragraphs 56-66)

Referring to the teacher's statement, she explained that PERPADUAN Pre-school gives children from other ethnic groups the opportunity to learn Malay. This pre-school uses Malay as the language of daily communication in all activities that can help children to communicate in Malay. Even though most of the Chinese and Indian children come to school with few Malay words, within 3 months they can communicate with other ethnic groups in Malay. The Chinese children are fortunate because the pre-school assistant teacher Mrs Teng can help to translate into Mandarin.

Mandarin Class; English Class, and Sinar Book Class (Malay Phonic)

Although this pre-school focuses on the use of the Malay language, basic words in Mandarin, Tamil and Arabic are also taught here, such as greeting words. On one hand, the children's ability to greet in different languages helps to foster mutual understanding and respect for other languages and national integration in general. According to this PERPADUAN pre-school policy, mother tongues such as Mandarin, Tamil and others can be taught on the condition they are implemented outside the timetable and there are enough teachers and assistant teachers who are willing to manage it. It depends on the parents' request and Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) initiatives for their children. Based on my observations, this pre-

school is unique compared to other pre-schools in that it offers Mandarin classes to the Chinese or other ethnic group children. The assistant teacher teaches the children once a week, from 11.30 am to 12.15 pm on Thursdays. This Mandarin class was initiated by the community more than ten years ago. The assistant teacher is a Chinese woman who informed me that she has been teaching in the pre-school for about 25 years. The assistant teacher has taught this Mandarin class for more than ten years. Most parents know her well. She has been involved in community activities and also as a community member of the neighbourhood association (*Rukun Tetangga*). This is her explanation about the Mandarin class:

R: Could you explain about the Mandarin class since 10 years ago in terms of objective and operation?

Assistant Teacher: Mmm...yeah more than 10 years I have been teaching Mandarin class in this school. I am teaching the basic writing and reading for children...most of the class focuses on writing. Most of the children are from the Chinese ethnic group, so far no one from other ethnic groups.

R: What is the response from the parents?

Assistant Teacher: Parents support this class. All Chinese parents want their children to attend it and they appreciate it. They do not expect much like Chinese pre-school, at least basic writing and reading. One thing, they choose to send their children here because of the bilingual system...Malay language, Mandarin, English and some greetings in Tamil.

R: Did the idea come from the PTA? How is their support?

AT: I am the PTA member and involved in person with other parents. We [PTA committee] are very committed to this pre-school. The main contribution of PTA in this development of language is to provide extra classes for Mandarin, English and Sinar Book (Malay Phonic). This is an initiative from the PTA committee and it is worth it.

(Paragraphs 41-52)

I agree with the assistant teacher's explanation about the extra classes run by this pre-school. Based on the pre-school document, English, which is included in the school curriculum, is taught in the classroom for at least two to three hours a week. However, due to the initiative of the PTA and teacher, an extra class has been set up in the PERPADUAN Pre-school: another English class is provided once a week, from 11.30 a.m. to 12.15 p.m. every Tuesday. This means that every Tuesday children leave class at 12.15 p.m. Mr Ravi is the parent of a former student and he has volunteered to teach the children. He started this extra class when his daughter

studied in this pre-school. This class uses the materials from Mr Ravi who was involved with this volunteer class more than 3 years ago. According to the teacher:

R: Could you explain about the extra English class in terms of objective, how it operates and the teacher?

Teacher: This English class was started to meet the demand from the parents. They [PTA] request every year to have this class. The aim of this class is to teach children about English grammar. I observed that it is good because it helps to enhance what I taught children in class activities. The children also enjoy this class, the activities and the teaching approach is enjoyable and fun.

(Paragraphs 68-70)

I discussed this English class informally with Mr Ravi. He explained to me that he has enjoyed teaching this class voluntarily for three years, from when his daughter studied here. He added that his aims include helping the children in language acquisition and language efficiency and these aims have helped them to think, understand concepts, to imagine with their ideas, to interact and to communicate effectively.

Another important class this pre-school has provided for the children in order to develop their language skills is *Sinar Book Class* (Malay Phonics). This class is conducted twice a week, on Monday and Wednesday from 11.15 am to 12.15 pm. This class is also a result of an initiative from the PTA committee and not included in the original schedule for the school. This programme aims to help children learn to read more quickly. It focuses on children's reading books which are provided. This class is taught by the teacher and assistant teacher.

The teacher explained to me,

Teacher: This class helps children to read a lot and quickly. It is an addition to the activities which have been practised in class. The parents told me that their children improved a lot in reading.

(Paragraph 74)

The teacher also explained to me that the children are divided into pairs who help each other in reading and listening. The aim is to enable the child pronounce correctly and read fluently.

Based on my observations and the responses, PERPADUAN Pre-schools give a big picture of "Mini Malaysia" such as in the language diversity. The Malay

Language has been enhanced as a tool to think, to interact and express thoughts and feelings. This refers to the cases of Child 2 (Indian), Child 6 (Chinese), Child 11 (Chinese), and Child 23 (Indian), who are among the popular children in class because of their fluency in Malay. Their language proficiency influences them in communication and this helps to develop confidence and capability to engage with other children actively in learning. In addition, mastering Malay skills enables the children to communicate with other children from different ethnic groups frequently. In line with the position of Malay as the national language and as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary levels, it is important for children to master the language from pre-school level. In order to develop the children's language ability to communicate more effectively with other pre-schoolers, skills are developed through diversified activities and meaningful learning experiences which actively involve the children.

Parental Perspectives

In this section I shall discuss the differences and similarities based on analysis of the parents' perspective on the medium of instruction and languages. Malay is used as the medium of instruction in the pre-school, with English as the second language. The languages at home are Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. All the Malay children speak Malay as their mother tongue. All the Chinese children speak Mandarin as their mother tongue except for three children [Jenny, Yee Zi and Canny] whose families speak Mandarin, Malay and English. All the Indian children speak Tamil as their mother tongue except for children from two families [Ashok and Vejay] who speak Tamil, English and Malay. There are three Chinese children [Si Mi, Zi Ni and May Ling] and two Indian children [Nini and Sree] who do not have basic knowledge of Malay.

Malay Language

In this section I shall discuss the extension of parents' views on pre-school language and how this influences children's social behaviour. These are the parents' views about how learning Malay helps children develop positive behaviour:

R: Has the teaching of Malay language in this pre-school helped your child to develop positive behaviour?

Mrs Deev: I chose this pre-school for Raju so that he can learn Malay. I sent him to a pre-school that used English medium last year but. ...to improve his Malay I prefer him to study in this pre-school. I think learning Malay is important and it helps Raju to communicate with other children.
(Paragraph 23)

It shows the importance of Malay language to her son so that he can interact with others in Malay. Instead of sending the child to an English medium pre-school, this parent preferred the PERPADUAN Pre-school so that he can experience learning Malay in a Malay-medium environment, and this has also influenced Raju to communicate with other children from different ethnic groups. The PERPADUAN Pre-school also provides good facilities to encourage the children to master more than one language. According to Mr Tee:

I like this Pre-school because there are a lot of facilities...close to my house and my neighbours also send their children to this school. Ellin [My daughter] learns more than two languages so that's good. She knows Mandarin, Kadazan [the dialect at home], and Malay. She can greet using Tamil words, that is amazing. So my daughter would get more language skills. At least she will find it easy to communicate in Malay with others...it would also help her in the national primary school later.
(Paragraph 30)

Ellin's father, who is of Kadazan descent, and his wife, who is Chinese, speak Mandarin and Kadazan at home. They both agree with the pre-school policy which encourages children to learn more than one language. He views the school policy positively and seems satisfied with his daughter's efficient language acquisition. The bilingual programmes in this pre-school influences his daughter to develop self-confidence to communicate with others.

Mr Rajah shared his views:

...(the kids) learn social skills, including language and communication. Learning how to greet (others) is the strength here...and then the learning environment has helped Vejay to interact and develop his social skills.
(Paragraph 72)

The PERPADUAN Pre-school has provided his son with social skills as well as helping to develop his confidence to interact with others. All the parents I interviewed

agreed with the importance of pre-school for the children to learn languages, integration, and social skills.

The views stated below are from parents regarding the effects of pre-school instruction and language on their children. According to Mrs Ruy, her son is now able to communicate with children from other ethnic groups after he had practised communicating in the Malay language in pre-school. The following is Mrs Ruy's statement:

Now he [her son] can already speak a few words in the Malay language...after speaking [learning] Malay language in the pre-school.
(Paragraph 15)

She told me that the pre-school has given her son the opportunity to communicate in Malay, even though they speak Tamil at home and with the neighbours around their flat. This situation was supported by Mrs Chang, who described how her daughter learned to communicate in Malay at pre-school and how her performance in two languages was good:

Mrs Chang: At home she learns and communicates in Mandarin, at school she has to learn Malay and English, that's a good opportunity and she did well [competently] a little bit.
(Paragraph 30)

Mrs Chang described that her daughter learned to communicate in Malay in the pre-school and her performance in two languages (Malay and English) was good. Mr Benny also shares the same views:

Mr Benny: Before he came here I saw that my son was not brave enough [could not speak in Malay], but after he came here ... he improved his Malay a lot. He became friends with kids from all ethnic backgrounds. He has a lot of friends in the pre-school ... He has now ... mixed with all the children ...Malay, Chinese, and Indian.
(Paragraph 45)

Mr Benny explained that his son has not only improved his command of the Malay language but this multi-ethnic pre-school has changed his son's attitudes and developed his self-confidence. Becoming friends with children from different ethnic backgrounds helps to expose his son to other cultures.

An important aspect of the multi-ethnic pre-school is that it offers bilingual programmes such as Malay and Mandarin, which enable the children to develop better mother tongue skills and also better second language skills which may improve and broaden their educational opportunities. This situation has also occurred to children of Malay descent:

Mrs Mona: The pre-school has also assisted my son in terms of his ability to talk Malay fluently ... even with full sentences he talks rather slowly...some Chinese and Tamil words that he knew that even I don't know like greetings...

(Paragraph 55)

Mixing with different ethnic groups encourages her son to communicate in a standard Malay language with full sentences. He has confidence and has developed the ability to talk fluently with other children. She is also proud of her son's ability; her son knew at least about greeting in other languages.

Mr A Rahim: I observed that the pre-school has helped my child [Adam] a lot in mixing with other children, I see if you are find it easy interacting with other ethnic groups at this stage [pre-school level] you won't have any problems with ethnic integration. He has learned not only languages but also understand the culture of other people here.

(Paragraph 45-48)

According to this parent, his son has opportunities to understand the culture and language of other ethnic groups, and interact with other children. The statements from the parents above give evidence that PERPADUAN Pre-school plays a major role in developing the Malay language and communication skills to be a Malaysian who can speak Malay perfectly. It enables Chinese and Indian children to develop stronger cultural understanding, cultural and social values, and mutual respect for the cultural values of others and to play a more positive role in interaction with different ethnic groups at school.

These are the views from the parents who agree with the pre-school policy of offering Mandarin, English and *Sinar* book (Malay Phonics) classes, introduced above:

Mr Bo: The Mandarin class at least has helped my son with basic hand writing which is a good skill. The extra English classes were good as they help my son to be more fluent in English and The Sinar classes [Malay

phonic] have improved his reading skills. I totally support the PTA committee and I appreciate it involvement.

(Paragraph 103)

These three classes have definitely helped his son develop linguistic capital. He really appreciates and supports the extra classes that are organised by the PTA committees. This view is supported by another parent; these three extra classes are very useful for her daughter. Mandarin class will support and maintain the development of her mother tongue:

Mrs Chia: Oh, these three extra classes are very useful for my daughter...I am not worried of my daughter's lack of fluency in Malay or English languages. The school has a good programme for us. I have two children which are three and two years old and I'm planning to send them here.

(Paragraph 46-48)

Another parent holds the same opinion,

Mrs Chong: I would support it... If you are in my situation, wouldn't you? All those things are ready-made, so I only accept that...all for my daughter and it is free. I don't think you could get these from another school for free.

(Paragraph 37-39)

There are the views I received from Indian parents giving the same response:

Mr Benny: I support these Sinar book and English classes [extra classes] ...at least the school lessens our burden [to teach languages]. My son is getting better... and better.

(Paragraph 45-46)

He explained to me that extra classes have helped his son improve language skills such as reading. Another parent commented the same:

Mrs Ruggy: These extra classes are important for our child, it has helped Nini a lot ...but if school can provides the same thing for Tamil language I think this pre-school could really be a multi-ethnic pre-school.

(Paragraph 45)

Extra classes provided by the pre-school are useful for her daughter to enhance her linguistic capital. This parent suggested pre-school should provide an extra class for Tamil language which is important for the multi-ethnic pre-school environment. PERPADUAN Pre-school should represent all multi-ethnic groups of Malaysia by offering diverse languages for children who study at pre-school. I agree with this view because children who learn other ethnic groups' languages also learn other

cultures. Thus, parents would no longer feel doubtful about sending their children to PERPADUAN Pre-school.

All parents in this case support the pre-school policy that offers Mandarin, English and *Sinar* book (Malay Phonic) classes which have influenced children's cognitive and linguistic capital. These practices enable children, especially ethnic Chinese, to develop stronger self-confidence and mutual respect for the cultural values of the Malay language.

Impact on Children

In this section I shall be looking at the linguistic issues that most children face that have an impact on them. They are as follows:

- a) Multilingual home capital influences child's interaction
- b) The children's preference for mother tongue language
- c) School as a complement to the home

Looking at the interaction of children from different ethnic groups in PERPADUAN Pre-school is important to provide evidence of the impact on children as I shall show in all the field notes of the child as seen in the boxes. There is no doubt as to the importance of mother tongue to the children; they learn norms and values in their mother tongue. Actually the mother tongue itself is important in influencing the children's language capital and language proficiency, which in turn influence their social life and self-esteem. I observed that in this study it seems that proficiency in the mother tongue influences peer interaction within ethnic groups, but there seems to be no difference between ethnic groups which are influenced by the language proficiency of Malay or English as mother tongue. These cases show the influence of multilingual homes and how the children's linguistic capital at home affects their relationships and behaviour.

Before I show the impact from the case study, I would like to refer the Figure 6.1: Pre-school children's friendship networks (p. 172) looking at children who are popular and less popular in this map and relating that to parental norms and values at home. I have identified the children that I described as popular by looking at the

friendship map, and then I tried to place these children at the centre of the map. Thus a popular child is identified as well as aspects concerning parental understanding and influence which have helped the child to become popular. This is to inform the reader how I identify certain children as important by using sign post. The Friendship Network is useful for showing children who are the most popular have certain attributes, characteristics and capital. When I look at a very popular child, I see that she or he knows more than one language; can communicate with more children; and other children are confident with him/her. Children who can communicate in more than one language and also gender may be the strong features. These children, such as Canny, Harun, Wee Jo, Vejay, Asah, and Ashok, have more than one language and can communicate fluently in Malay.

*I observed May Ying go to Ashok and her talking in Malay language to Ashok, Ashok replied in Malay. Impact of Ashok, an Indian boy who is 5 year-old coming to school with his father. He can speak well in three languages: Tamil, English and Malay. Ashok's father told me that their family communicate in these three languages. He was lucky because they [family] speak Malay with their servant who is Indonesian which also influenced his Malay language. The acquisition of three languages gives an advantage for him to interact with other children from different ethnic groups. This shows the importance of the Malay language for children to interact with other children from different ethnic groups. In this session I observed May Ying go to Ashok and talk to him in Malay, and then Ashok replied in Malay. Ashok asked for May Ying's hands. He compared his hands with May Ying's hands. He comments that his hands and May Ying's hands do not have much difference except the colour only. They play full palm touching which is measuring the size of the hands [palm and fingers]. Here is the interview with Ashok (P079).
(Observation: Child 3)*

R: Let's look together at the photos from today - can you tell me about what are you doing [with May Ying]?

Ashok: Play with May Ying...

R: Do you have any relationship with May Ying...?

Ashok: Yeah...she good [nice]. We play...together (quiet)

R: What kind of play you play with her?

Ashok: I touch my hand palm to her hand [palm]...look whose hand is bigger [between him and May Ying]

R: When you are playing with her do you say how you are feeling?

Ashok: I told her I like her very much.

R: How about you May Ying, do you friend with Ashok?

May Ying: Yes, we play together and like play with him.
(Observation and interview: Child 3 and Child 17)

This case describes how the multilingual home influenced Ashok to interact with a child from another ethnic group. Malay as a medium of communication is an important factor that helps him to communicate with the surrounding children. In this case, his fluency in Malay gives Ashok an advantage to make meaningful conversations with May Ying. It also gives May Ying confidence to be friends with Ashok. May Ying's response explained she likes to play with Ashok. There is far more common ground than difference in the accounts of these children. The common points are as follows, in the case of Canny. Canny has more than one language and can communicate fluently in Malay.

*I observed Canny, Ellin, Vejay, Adam, and Arif doing their Mathematic sheet in a group at a round table. Canny discussed with Ellin in Mandarin how to answer minus (take away) questions. Ellin asked Canny how to answer it....they are answering it together [take around 5 minutes]. A few minutes later, Vejay comes to Canny and Ellin, he stands between Ellin and Canny to show his answer (P 151). Canny checked Vejay's answer sheet, meanwhile Ellin observed it. Instead of talking Mandarin, Canny changed to Malay to explain to Vejay that his answer was wrong. Ellin also compared her answers with Vejay's answers. They spoke in Malay. After that Vejay rubbed out his answers in front of them and wrote in the correct answer. A few minutes later, Canny discusses with Adam in Malay about Adam's answers and about Adam colouring the answer. At the same time Arif came to their table and observed it. This shows the importance of Malay language for children from different ethnic groups to interact. Being excellent in both cognitive skills and fluency in Malay gave Canny an advantage to make meaningful conversation with friends around her. It also gave Ellin, Vejay, and Adam confidence to be friends (P011)
(Observation: Child 6)*

This is the interview between Canny and Ellin.

R: Let's look together at the Photos 151 from today - can you tell me about what you are doing with Ellin, Vejay and Adam?

Canny: Emm...discusses take away [minus]...find answer

Ellin: Asked Canny....find answers [nod her head]...

R: Do you have any relationships?

Canny: Friends...help Ellin, Adam since we're sitting at the same table.

Ellin: Ummm friend.

R: What kind of friend do you mean?

Ellin: Work together [quiet].

Canny: Play swing together, eat together.

Ellin: She helps me. I like her
R: When did you know each other?
Canny: Here [since they come at pre-school]
R: [Show Photograph 076 Canny and Ellin, Canny touched Elin's hair softly] what kind of play do you play with her?
Canny: Touched Ellin's hair, keep her look beautiful
R: Do you like it Canny?
Ellin: Yes [nod her head].
R: Do you like Ellin?
Canny: She is my best friend.
R: [Show Photograph 050 and 151 Canny, Ellin, Vejay and Adam, Canny helps Vejay and Adam, give them the answers].
R: Are you friends with Adam and Vejay?
Canny: Yes. I help them...always play with Vejay.
 (Observation and interview: Child 3 and Child 6)

This case describes how Canny used Mandarin to interact with Ellin at first and then changed to Malay when she interacted with Vejay and Adam later. After that their conversation is in Malay and she can lead the group discussion in Malay fluently. Thus, children around her are confident with her. She encourages children from other groups to come to her group and talk to her. The influence of a multilingual home or linguistic capital in her home put her at the centre of the map.

Another child, Harun is also at the centre of a map:

Harun is a popular Malay boy. He likes to play with most of the children in class. He plays with Chinese girls such as Zi Ni, May Ying, Gee Zi and Canny. Harun shows them [Zi Ni and May Ying] how to play the 'teng-teng' game. Harun shows the rules of games and what to do. When I asked about the relationships among them, Harun told me:
"They all are my friends... always plays with them in free time and outdoor activity. Zi Ni always gave coloured pencil when I need it". When I asked them together Harun, Zi Ni, May Ying and Vejay, they admitted they are friends. I realise that based on this photograph and interview, Harun, a sociable child, fluent in Malay and English and with skills to convince others in their relationships, was accepted among different ethnic groups.
I observed Harun, proficiency in language developed self-confidence and social skills; easy to find friends with role play. For example, I observed Harun pretending to be a bull and attack Vejay with his head and move back [P39] and pretending to play Power rangers [P59]. Harun, May Ying and Wee Jo play handkerchiefs together. Harun shows his new handkerchief to the group and then play with imagination. We are teaching Harun how to make a fold ship using the handkerchief [P66 and 67]. By using their own imagination, they take the board as if an obstacle, they go right under it to get to the other side. Wee Jo [P73] lends his body to Harun. Wee Jo is

whispering something to Harun. They [Wee Jo and Harun] lean their head to Canny and Suriani [P74].
(Observation and Interview: Child 9)

Harun's strength to interact with others is related to proficiency in language; Harun's two languages cause him to be surrounded by others. Harun's case is similar to the cases of Vejay and Asah. All three children prompt children from different ethnic groups to be friends.

Based on my observations, the main impact on the children is the linguistic barrier. This barrier was proven through the children's language preferences for communication dependent on their mother tongue ethnic groups. It is quite interesting to see how children communicate in multiracial groups, especially when referring to everyday interactions. This refers to the case of Nini:

Session 1

I observed Nini doing the work on the worksheet given. Vejay sat next to her. She would ask Vejay for help when she was in difficulty. She talks to Vejay in Tamil. She doesn't talk to anyone except to Vejay and Sree in classroom. For when Arif came close to her and Vejay, they [Arif and Vejay] talk to each other but Nini doesn't talk to Arif, because she couldn't really understand Malay language which Arif spoke in [P040].

Session 2

10 minutes before physical education time finishes, the children play at the playground nearby. Nini follows Vejay all the time. She plays what Vejay plays with. Vejay climbed the blocks, Vejay pulled Nini's hands and walked on it, Nini followed [P051]. After a few minutes, Nini went to the swing area to observe Canny, Wee Jo and Asah play the swing. She leans her back at the swing stand waiting her turn. She didn't ask Canny or Wee Jo that she intends to play too.

(Observation: Child 10)

These two sessions I observed continued with the interview:

R: Let's look together at these photos - can you tell me about what are you doing? [After a few seconds she did not answer I asked Vejay to explain to her]

Nini: Talking with Vejay and doing writing

R: Do you have any relationship with Vejay and Sree?

Nini: Yes...friends
[I show photo at playground-she and Vejay play]
R: Why do you like Vejay?
Nini: He chats and helps me, he good.
R: When you are playing with Vejay do you say how you are feeling?
Nini: Enjoy and fun.
R: Do you friend with other child?
Nini: No.
R: Do you friend with Asah?
Nini: No... [quiet].
(Interview: Child 10)

I discussed with the teacher about Nini. She explained to me:

She doesn't always bring her own stationery. Rarely come to school. She doesn't do her homework and forgets to bring exercise books. Sometimes she disturbs her friends and grasps her friend's book. She does not interact with other children, except Vejay and Sree and children around her group.
(Child 10 and Interview Teacher)

This shows two points: first, inadequacy in Malay gives the child limited interaction with other ethnic groups because she needs a trusted person who can share with her; and second, she does not seem interested in school and shows a negative attitude to school work. In this case, a language preference for communication is based on proficiency with one's mother tongue. This case shows a similar principle with other cases of the children who are not fluent in Malay, such as May Ling (see below), Lela and Zi Ni.

My observation suggests that children feel more comfortable using their mother tongue even though they are bilingual. Although most of the children are bilingual and have freedom of language preferences, most of the time, either during formal or non-formal communications, the children would rather use their own mother tongue. For example in formal situations, the children communicate in Mandarin with the assistant teacher who is Chinese. It is interesting to consider how children prefer to use mother tongue because of fluency, internal consistency, and confidence to express themselves.

I observed Canny, Ellin, Vejay, Adam, and Arif doing their Mathematics sheet in a group at a round table. Canny discussed with Ellin in Mandarin how to answer minus (take away) questions. Ellin asked Canny how to answer it....they were answering it together [take around 5 minutes]. A few

minutes later, Vejay came to Canny and Ellin, he stood between Ellin and Canny to show his answer (P 151).). Canny checked Vejay's answer sheet, meanwhile Ellin observed it. Instead of talking in Mandarin, Canny changed to Malay to explain to Vejay that his answer was wrong. Ellin also compared her answers with Vejay's answers.
(Observation: Language Episode P0136)

I noticed that when children communicate with friends of other races, they have no choice other than using “*Bahasa Melayu*” (Malay language). Of course if the children of the Chinese or Indian ethnic group had to choose, they would prefer to use their mother tongue (either Mandarin or Tamil) when interacting with peers of their ethnic background. This shows that the language is more than words, it is about acts of meaning.

Based on my observations, the third impact of the children's preference for mother tongue is the barrier to the formal process of classroom teaching and learning. The teacher faces a linguistic barrier and applies variety to her teaching skills to overcome it. In this case, especially regarding the response of Chinese and Indian children who communicate in their mother tongue to classmates and teacher in PERPADUAN Pre-school, this is what the teacher has to say:

Teacher: At an early stage most of the Chinese and Indian children come to school without knowing any Malay words. They speak only Chinese or Tamil as their mother tongue. So in the first month it is very difficult to teach them...they do not understand what I say.
(Paragraph 78)

The above statement shows that the children's language preference for communication depends on their ethnic background. The teacher is concerned about second-language competence among the Chinese and Indian children, as in the first three months they speak only in their mother tongue. I have concluded that these children's lack of ability transpired merely because they were speaking Mandarin or Tamil at home, always getting together with their own ethnic group, and did not have the incentive to learn other languages. Although this clearly refers to Chinese and Indian children in the PERPADUAN Pre-school, it also applies to the Malays, who are strongly attached and comfortable using their mother tongue and dialect. These situations create problems for children interacting with different ethnic groups during formal classroom teaching and learning:

Teacher: If we want to improve...to improve the children's language, we have to mix them ... because at the time they mixed ... they would interact. If we put them in the same ethnic group, they will talk in their mother tongue ... it's difficult to teach them also.

(Paragraph 82)

The above statement evidently shows deliberate efforts have been made to mix children of different ethnic groups or separate children from the same group. Further discussion in Section 8.4 "Classroom management and seating arrangement" (page 283), an alternative approach is to arrange strategies like sitting formation. Based on my observation during teaching, the teacher encourages children to interact with peers from different ethnic groups and with mixed groups. She encourages a child who is slightly better to translate and help group mates or others who do not understand instructions in Malay. In order to ensure that things run smoothly, she always uses sign language and watches children closely; for example, when she sees any difficulty among the children (Observation General). At the same time, I saw how the children asking group members helps them build positive interactions, especially in Malay. Referring to May Ling:

I observed May Ling who is fluent in Mandarin only. She understands a little bit of Malay words. The assistant teacher helped and explained to her when she does not understand instruction from the teacher in Malay. She also asked Yee Zi when she faced some difficulty to do tasks. She has a good relationship with Yee Zi. They would always go together to the playground, or outdoor activity. I observed for more than 35 minutes in her group, she only talks to her Chinese friend, Yee Zi and never talks to Nini and Suriani. She does not talk much compared to other children in her group. Because of her lack of fluency in Malay, she does not interact with other children around her. For example when Nini asked for permission to borrow a colour pencil from her she only nodded or shook her head [P020]. She finished her work on time that morning. Her drawing is beautiful and tiny compared to the drawings done by Nini, Adam, and Yee Zi. She is good in drawing and colouring the picture, compared to others in her group. She pays attention when the teacher is teaching in front. She helps Yee Zi a lot as she is only close to her.
(Observation: Child 17)

In this case the assistant teacher has helped May Ling by explaining the instruction in order to ensure she and a few other Chinese pupils understand the teacher's instruction in Malay. This not only affects her understanding of the teacher's

instructions but affects her friendship with others. Based on my observations in the above case, there are lots of implications if a child does not understand in terms of communication. Firstly, she does not understand the instructions. Secondly, she is having difficulties in reading and writing Malay, but there are no problems in drawing. Thirdly, there is an effect on her social and emotional development; she is lonely and quiet, having difficulties socialising with other children and not having many friends.

In conclusion, even though the teacher makes an effort to mix and separate the children with others in order for them to have a better understanding of other ethnic groups, the question arises, why among the children is there still a strong tendency to get together in their ethnic groups and speak in their mother tongues? I suspect that it is quite natural for a person at this early age to seek someone with whom he/she feels safe and has common ground.

Based on my observations, the fourth impact on the children is that pre-school is seen as a complement to the home partly when it comes to identifying the development of a child's language at an early pre-school age and partly when it comes to a more common school preparation. In this case, a parent sees that pre-school aids in the child's language development. According to the view of parents:

Mr Benny: We speak in English and Tamil at home. We do not speak in Malay language but as our house maid is from Indonesia, she speaks to the children in Malay. For example, my child asks me for some fried rice, so I ask him to speak in Malay about the meal with our maid. Now he can speak broken Malay. I also taught Malay language to him...then they practise at school.

(Paragraph 13-17)

With a conducive environment at pre-school, this child's language is improving. The above statement shows the child has learnt Malay words at home and does not have a problem when he goes to pre-school. Probably the words that the child speaks are simple but I would emphasise here the pre-school role is to complement the child and strengthen the language. In order to support this statement I refer to Ashok, the son of Benny, showing he can interact fluently with other children in Malay. He also appears among the popular children of 5 years old (Observation Child 3:Ashok).

Furthermore, based on my observation, pre-school helps children convert the meaning of mother tongue from home into pre-school context. Various words are translated from mother tongue which are sometimes quite crude according to the actual context in the Malay language and even do not suit to the Malaysian contexts. This was shown when I interviewed the children, especially Chinese and Indian children, using “aku” [I] and “kamu” [you] which are rude in the Malaysian context. Therefore, pre-school does not only identify the child’s language but configures his or her language into acceptable and actual contexts of a Malaysian. It does reinforce Malay as a language medium for the multi-ethnic commonalities that streamline the language to be a symbol of children’s verbal behaviour, not only for Chinese and Indian but also for Malay children. For example, children with little vocabulary and limited language skills will be enhanced at pre-school. They are exposed to complex language, questions answered or reasoning and explanation. The PERPADUAN Pre-school emphasises the children’s communication skills to encourage them to interact in friendly and well-behaved ways, such as taking turns, according to situation and age. The teacher explained to me that after the first three months children are familiar with acceptable words like “saya” [I] when they talk to the teacher or adults or even with classmates. This issue supports the parent’s view that in this situation, children interact spontaneously and “bertatasusila” (well-behaved), and state requests and demands with good manners. The code of conduct from pre-school is in line with parental norms:

Mrs Lim: I told her not to use any bad word or speak politely and don’t ever show negative body languages when you do not agree...always give greetings to the teachers and parents. Say thank you as appreciating something...

(Paragraph 29)

The data presented above support the niche of this pre-school which is to develop Malay as the National language and show politeness in communication. Its use should be enhanced as a tool to think, interact and express thoughts and feelings. In addition, the acquisition of Malay enables children to communicate with the right respectful language and “bertatasusila” (*politeness*) to adults. Both home and pre-school emphasise polite language such as “noun (name) and pronoun (we)” to replace pronoun “aku” (I) in social life. In conclusion, parents emphasised this “*budi*

bahasa” relates to children’s interaction. The traditional values of “*budi*” (etiquette) and “*bahasa*” (language) are synchronized with social relationships. They accustom children to the practices of *budi bahasa* as part of life at home. The values of “*budi bahasa*” to other people sum up the proper kind of behaviour an individual should display.

Parents nurture their children’s behaviour in verbal language and body language. In nurturing children’s language at home, analysis of parents’ interview transcripts shows parents use a lot of negative words. There are negative words: don’t do this, cannot do this, should not do this, should do this, you need this, must do and must not do this. Mr Benny, Mrs Lim, Mrs Ruky, and Mrs Mona use verbal rather than written instructions like the pre-school. So, the parents will repeat these words to his or her child. This situation is the same with the school, I noticed the teachers and assistants also use negative language, for example, do not do this or cannot do this, you must do this. However, I observed here both are different in terms of consequences when the children do not follow their orders. The parents tend to mention the punishment a child will face if he or she breaks the order but the teacher explains the reason for it. I observed here, in order to control and discipline children, the assistant teacher used a lot of negative words, and sometimes in Mandarin language which I understood based on her body language and her tone or intonation. The pre-school also emphasised the children’s polite language and prosocial behaviour. The teacher teaches the children polite words when they interact with each other such as greeting words, please and thank you.

I found from the analysis of parent interviews that body language is important for parents of all three ethnic groups in this study. They use body language such as eye contact, gestures and hands. The three ethnic groups of parents used the same body language and emphasise the same things, such as prosocial behaviour. It seems that body language is related to obedience. I observed that the parents who practised body language use less verbal language; for example Mr Benny, Mrs Ruky and Mrs Mona approach using body language as an instruction to children. However, this situation is not related to parental education: it is a symbol of respect to children compared to a verbal warning, especially when they misbehave in front of their

friends or guests. This body language is important when they interact with guests as a symbol that helps parent to control their children’s behaviour.

Summary

The PERPADUAN Pre-school view from a parental perspective has the following advantages;

- i. The children have opportunities to learn about and have the ability to greet others using different languages. Ethnic integration could be realised if only young children could communicate more effectively with each other;
- ii. Homes and community environment have significant impact on language performance of children in the PERPADUAN Pre-school;
- iii. There are high expectations for young children growing up in a multilingual environment like the PERPADUAN Pre-school to have knowledge about other languages as well as their mother tongue.

This is summarised in Table 8.1 developed from parental and teacher interview analysis.

Table 8.1: Parental languages and pre-school ethos

	Malay	Chinese	Indian
Medium of communication	Mother tongue: Malay	Mother tongue: Mandarin Two families speak English and Mandarin	Mother tongue: Tamil Two families speak English and Tamil
Children’s experience	Two children have no basic knowledge of English	Three children have no basic knowledge of Malay or English	Two children have no basic knowledge of Malay or English
Parental practices	Practices “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ”	Practices “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ” as part of life	Practices “ <i>budi bahasa</i> ” as part of life
	Using respectful pronoun for elders	Using respectful pronoun for elders	Using respectful pronoun for elders
Pre-school Practices	1. In PERPADUAN Pre-school only Malay is used as the national language with English as a second language 2. Extra class for Mandarin language. 3. Extra class for Malay language (Sinar book-Malay Phonics)		
Impact on children			
a) Multilingual homes’ capital influence child’s interaction			

- b) Children prefer to use mother tongue language
- c) School as a complement to the home

8.4 The Pre-school Setting

The following discussion will touch on the classroom structures and practices in PERPADUAN Pre-school in order to understand social development among the children's diverse groups. The teacher provided some comments about her decisions regarding classroom management and children's seating arrangements; the pre-school routine and teaching cultural elements; and teaching the subject of moral and spiritual values.

Classroom Management and Children's Seating Arrangements

The teacher and her assistant have been trained and are qualified based on a certificate course from JPNIN emphasising a diversified approach to provide an environment of stimulating activities in a child-centred context with regard to the National Pre-school Curriculum. I found that the teacher and assistant teacher were busy rearranging the children's seating early in the morning. They changed and shifted a few children between the groups. I realised that the teacher rearranged children according to ethnic group, age, competence, and gender. Every group included children from a different ethnic group, at least one or two Malays or Indians in a group. The teacher explained to me following my query below:

R: Why is there a need for this seating formation?

Teacher: This is one of the factors to get children close to each other...em...mm of course at the early stage they [children] look uncomfortable and difficult to make friends...but after a few days it was alright. This sitting format is used when we have a child who shows a negative behaviour (e.g., makes noise in a group).

R: How do the parents respond to this? Do they agree with this idea?

Teacher: I told them this, they agreed. They told me that it helped their children to mix with others.

R: How many times a year?

Teacher: Two or three months when they [children] mix around during free time, but I only started after April when the students settled down during the transition period especially for 5 year-olds.

R: How effective is this idea?

Teacher: Actually, this idea is one of the suggestions from the Daerah Brickfields Teacher Trainer to the new teacher and the teachers who have been teaching less than 5 years. Physically it has been effective [lah] so far, and no complaints from children or parents. It seems they show cooperative behaviour, helpful, respecting each other. At least we can see them playing and chatting with other group members.

(Paragraphs 84-98)

Teachers can maintain the meaningfulness of activities for children when they take into account those aspects of an activity that the children cannot (yet) carry out independently. By doing this, the teachers construct Zones of Proximal Development (ZPD) for the children and lay out a step-by-step learning route which is tailored to the needs and abilities of the children. It is evident that the teacher has a significant influence on what happens in the classroom. The nature of that influence depends on the constraints of the situation, on the teacher's personal beliefs, expectations and attitude, and on how the teacher interprets the behaviour of children. As a result there is an increasing variation in the ways teacher interact with the children in her classroom.

In PERPADUAN Pre-school classroom, the children's seating arrangement had been set up by the teacher. According to the assistant teacher, maybe this arrangement would make it easier for the teacher to conduct class discussions or small group activities, as suggested by the following statement from the assistant teacher,

Eer ... We put them in small groups... 5 to... 6 people for the teacher to arrange group activities ... easy for the teacher to watch ... they cooperate with each other ... no matter what ethnic group or race...

(Paragraph 36)

According to the explanations above, the children were also developing sociability among themselves. The above explanation suggests that children of different ethnic groups in pre-school "mixed" as a result of the mixed ethnic seating arrangement in the classroom. According to the assistant teacher, the major aim for the classroom

sitting arrangement is to encourage children to communicate and to enhance the children's language development. This seating formation helps them to build positive interactions and then helps them to develop their language, especially Malay as the National language. From my observations, this cluster seating arrangement seems useful for group discussion, cooperative learning, or small group tasks. In this arrangement, the children were asked to move their chairs and face the teacher. To sum up, the classroom sitting arrangement is believed to be a crucial method to promote the children's social development.

The Pre-school Routine and Cultural Elements

The common routine activities in pre-school day consist of the arrival time, morning assembly, hand-kissing, the *salaam*, the *Rukun Negara* (Malaysia Principle) and *Negaraku* (Malaysia Anthem), outdoor activity, and table manners during meal time. These will be analysed for the ways in which the teachers use these activities to nurture the children's development among diverse ethnicities. The schedule for pre-school is made up of subjects like numeracy and literacy, science, language, arts, and religious or moral studies, and the students usually begin their studies after assembly or physical activity.

The teacher in charge would stand at the school gate to greet the children and the parents as the children arrive. The teacher would greet the child with the salaam. The child, in turn, would answer the teacher with the prescribed answer and also shake the teacher's right hand with his or her own right hand and kiss the teacher's hand by bringing it to his or her nose. The child would then put away his or her things in the school building and join the other children playing.

(Observation: Morning Session Episode [12 June 2009]).

This hand-kissing ritual is an element of Malay culture and perhaps an adaptation of Indian cultures. Hand kissing has been practised in Indian families, and children even need to kneel and bow the head to touch the parents' feet as a sign of respect. The rule of Malay hierarchy is observed by the act of the children kissing the teacher's hand. This ritual is encouraged, as it serves to emphasise the values of respecting one's elders, particularly one's teachers, and this is present in both Indian and Malay

traditions. This kind of ritual has become the regular basis for all children because it is acceptable to the other ethnic groups as part of showing respect to elders.

The children were called in at 8.30 a.m. for their daily assembly. The children line up in front of the pre-school door with two lines. The teacher led the assembly. She stood in front facing the children while the assistant teacher stood on the periphery of the children's group. The teacher started off by calming down the children, asking them to take deep breaths, and to give a big smile. What followed next was a ritual of greetings. The teacher first greeted the children with the salaam, to which the children responded appropriately. Then she asked how they were doing in English, to which the children answered: 'Very well. She next used the Malay greeting morning, and again the students answered appropriately in Malay. This was followed by an exchange of greetings in Arabic, Mandarin and Tamil. (Observation: Morning Routine Episode [12 June 2009]).

The *salaam* is both the greeting and farewell ritual in Islam while “*Vanakkam*” (Tamil) and “*Chao an*” or “*zao'an*” (Mandarin) which mean “Good morning” have created a sense of understanding among all the ethnic groups. The *salaam* is both the greeting and farewell ritual in Islam. It involves an exchange of prescribed phrases. The teachers, who get to the school first offered the *salaam* to arriving students. However, if the children themselves offered the *salaam* first, this was treated as a normal occurrence and the teachers responded appropriately. By the time the observations started, the children seemed to have this ritual down pat, as there seemed to be no occasion when the student failed to participate in this exchange. In this regard the school had managed to instil in the students an Islamic sociocultural practice in this otherwise daily routine.

This was followed with the morning routine:

The teacher had chosen a child to lead the others to read the Malaysia Principle which is Rukun Negara and enjoy singing the Malaysian Anthem, Negara Ku, while flying the Malaysia flag. While singing the Malaysian Anthem a child will raise the flag on the flag pole. (Observation: Morning Routine [Episode 12 June 2009]).

These basic activities are important to develop patriotism among the children. Singing songs is a normal activity in pre-school. One of the teaching approaches is singing a song, for example the children sing more familiar songs like ‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’. After the assembly ended, the children dispersed in an orderly manner to their respective classes. They put away their shoes in the shoe rack

provided and entered the pre-school class in their bare feet, as did the teachers. This followed a brief session where the teacher asked the children if they had had their breakfast that morning, and asked them to have breakfast first with the assistant teacher.

The meal time began with the children from the various groups lining up and going to the wash basins. The children washed their hands in the wash basins provided. Then they went to their tables and sat on the regular chairs where plastic plates and cups had already been placed on the table. An interesting point here is that the children aged 6 years old would serve the food and drink by routine at every table (Observation: Meal Time [16 June 2009]). According to the teacher,

Teacher: It is the practice here that the children would serve food and beverages to their classmates...to the children's tables. Usually 4 to 5 persons will be served each day. Before that the food is placed on the plate by the assistant teachers or parents who volunteered to come half an hour earlier. This practice is important so that children will feel responsibility.
(Paragraph 110)

Based on the above explanation by teachers, the children who helped the teacher are mostly girls. To help serve the food is considered a regular chore for girls at home. As a result, these practices would help children build a sense of responsibility, to become more mature and increase their self-confidence.

I observed the routine *dua*,

After the food had been served, the teacher asked a child to recite the dua. The dua is in Arabic and Malay language but the meaning is general such as thanking God for giving us sustenance today. The dua is described as a supplication to God; it also serves to remind the believer that everything is related to God.
(Observation: Meal Time [Episode 16 June 2009]).

By having these children learn the form and the usage of the *dua*, the school is attempting to instil this habit in children. We see that the Islamic rituals associated with eating had been consciously observed during the snack time. In addition to the *dua* before and after eating, practices such as not playing with one's food and finishing one's food were taught as manifestations of one's appreciation of God's benevolence. The children were gently reminded of their manners and of the

appropriate hand to use when directly handling food. Although eating using one's hands is also a cultural thing, eating with one's right hand is religiously prescribed. Thus, the children were taught to handle food with their right hand when eating with their hands and, while using fork and spoon such as the utensil used to bring food to the mouth should also be in their right hand. The values I saw taught in the pre-school concerned table manners.

In the classroom, the lesson began according to the regular subjects such as numeracy, English, Malay, science, and the arts. As discussed before, I observed that,

At the close of the lesson the children sang a few popular Malay folk songs such as bertemu dan berpisah, injik-injik semut, and English songs Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. Children are singing happily. Teacher asked Canny to lead the class.

(Observation: Singing Episode [16 June 2009]).

Learning through singing is an important approach. The songs play a vital role as a pedagogical tool in learning processes. Messages are conveyed to the children in a manner that is engaging and enjoyable to them, and these messages are also learned faster and retained longer. In this regard the school uses songs to enhance its teaching of language in several ways.

The school day officially ended at 11.30 regularly and 12.00 pm on Tuesday and Wednesday after *Bacaan Sinar* book (referred to *Bacaan Sinar*) or after extra English and Mandarin classes. The routine according to my observation:

The children took their chairs and put them on the table nicely and picked up their bag. They were lined up in the classroom near the door in two lines. As practised during their arrival in the morning, they exchanged greetings such as terima kasih cikgu (thank you teacher) and the teacher replied sama-sama (you are welcome) and goodbye teachers. After that the hand-kissing ritual would be practised again. The children would kiss their teacher's hands and the children would wave goodbye as they left the school. In this interval, before their respective transportation arrived, the children again had time for free play around the pre-school area either in the Science Garden or the Playground. The assistant teacher or a volunteer parent on duty would be at the gate to ensure the children got into their transportation safely. Similarly, as per their arrival, the salaam was exchanged and the children waved goodbye as they left the school.

(Observation: Time-out Episode [16 June 2009]).

The children generally played in the play area situated in front of the pre-school. The playground was equipped with a slide, two see-saws, a field area, three swings, and a trampoline. There was another playground on the lawn in front of the building. The children also played in the main gathering area inside the pre-school area. The children had physical activities twice a week. Regardless of ethnic groups the children express their willingness to play together at pre-school.

Teaching the Subject of Moral and Spiritual Values

In the PERPADUAN Pre-school classrooms children are exposed to the teaching of moral and spiritual values. The teaching of spiritual and moral aspects contains components of Islamic Education for Muslim students and Moral Education for non-Muslim students. Islamic Education focuses on the delivery of knowledge, skills and appreciation of Islam. Moral Education focuses on the delivery of knowledge to develop a human being with noble character and morality. The classroom environment is the best place for children to understand what kind of moral values they need for life and inculcated moral values. The teaching of moral values is important to encourage children from multi-ethnic backgrounds to understand and practise acceptable values. This statement becomes evident in replies to the question about inculcating moral values in children:

R: How do you teach moral values?

Teacher: Actually we are not teaching the moral subject but relate the moral values in our teaching...and practices.

R: How do you relate the moral values to children in teaching?

Teacher: We taught children followed the theme. Every story in the theme contains moral values. So...we will explain the moral values in the story telling or explanation. Every character in story will show moral values...there is even an example to explain the moral values either behaviour or language.

(Paragraphs 112-118)

The elements of moral values which are being taught directly to children in the classroom through their lessons are officially documented in Moral Subject and every subject or syllabus or even in every theme. The teaching of moral values is one of the six components in the pre-school curriculum. The teacher has to explain to

children the example and relate to them which examples are similar with their culture and context.

Furthermore, from my observation the children were asked to practise moral values in the classroom every time and show their teacher an example. Children normally show acceptable behaviour which is accepted among their friends as long as this behaviour is not aggressive or even assertive. Another point is that the most popular child would show very gentle behaviour to other children. The words he uses and speaks are acceptable to all ethnic groups (Observation: Child 9). The more polite behaviour shown, the more popular that child will be in the classroom.

Respect to Parents, Teachers, and Elders

The next similarities between parental norms and values and the pre-school ethos is about good behaviour. In this sphere of influence, all parents want their children to develop appropriate behaviour according to universal social norms and Malaysian contexts; for example, in this case study, being a good child, a respectful child, having good manners, being polite, and sociable, and being obedient. At home the parents' disciplinary efforts in the three different ethnic groups were mainly teaching good manners and respectful behaviour. However, the social disciplinary efforts in school were mainly teaching the children to follow school routine such as shoes off, go to the assembly area, go to the playground, wash hands before eating and sit quietly for story time, take turns, share, be kind, and do not quarrel.

In this case, the parents placed a higher value on children who showed respect to parents, teachers and elders. Some of the parents show that they want their children to be obedient. For example a child is prohibited from refusing to do as parents order, or to argue with parents. The parents implement a proper demeanour in order to nurture children's conformity to parental authority. Based on my observation, the pre-school ethos follows a neutral approach that includes justification of how and why the children should be respectful to the parents, teacher and elders in order to nurture the children's conformity to parental and pre-school authority. The implementation of the pre-school code of conduct and regulations are

the learning process for children to adapt to the pre-school regulations. According to a parent's view:

Mrs Nani: In school all follow the rules, so can nurture the children. This helped my son to be more disciplined at home. Another one I think here unified all the rules at home it does not matter what ethnic group.

(Paragraph 80)

This above shows the parent thinks that pre-school influences her son to be more disciplined. Pre-school is the place where the children have a formal learning process including coping with rules and regulations, and then apply the same rules at home. It is hard to deny the role of pre-school as a transmitter to unify all the rules from home, no matter what ethnic group they originate from. The children will receive the resources and interpret rules and regulations, types of behaviour and school code and conduct into their concept of past experience from home. The transition period process continues until it reaches a meeting point. This is an ongoing process between children, home and pre-school institution, and parents and teacher would supervise.

R: Do you feel the atmosphere of the pre-school facilitates school norms and values? Do the children find it difficult to follow the school norms and values?

Mrs Maniamah: I agree...because it is here where the norms and values are enhanced...practised. Whatever we practise at home can be evaluated here, but after the transition period because the children discover many things after all, other children and teachers... Home and pre-school practices are interrelated...We can see our home practices in the pre-school as well as the pre-school practices in our home.

(Paragraphs 48)

This shows a role interrelated between pre-school and home to transfer and enhance elements of norms and values for children. Both places are where children learn about being able to follow directions, rules, and routines, or to listen to the teacher and pay attention at pre-school, and to be someone who is a responsible child. This is a dynamic process which encourages a child to develop the ability to assume responsibility for his/her own actions and limitations of behaviour. Therefore, the pre-school ethos works in line with the behaviour that is accepted by parents and community. Parents place a higher value on being respectful, being close to family and siblings, and to listening to parents, teachers, and grandparents. This study shows

parental norms and values describe parental family-oriented values. These elements are adopted as families' socialisation. The evidence shows a family *status quo* and a hierarchy of authority among family members. Every family member has to respect the authority in the family. This family-oriented emphasis on children's conformity to parental and extended-family authority often extends to the authority of other adults as well. According to a parental view from Mrs Slam about values of respect and a hierarchy of authority among families' members in their practice that is similar to practice in pre-school:

Mrs Slam: We taught them ... to bow down when walking in front of the guests. Do not walk behind them. The titles "kakak or abang" (sister or brother (older) are used along with the names of the individuals. The titles refer to the hierarchy system as part of showing respect.
(Paragraph 51)

This parent shows how she taught her child to respect the parent, teacher and elders, starting at home. A child is taught how to act and speak respectfully by the family's members at home. Second, to maintain respect and a hierarchy of authority among family members, the parent uses "*kakak and abang*" (sister or brother). In line with these parental norms and values, a pre-school teacher has similar practices in order to sustain acceptable behaviour. Both practices have an important impact on the children in order for them to be obedient, to listen and respect elders. Children have to show a standard of respectable behaviour in the community because these standards of behaviour are thought to bring respectability and success. In addition, it is also important in family-oriented communities to develop close relationships among the family members such as being loyal to one's family. In future, such children will be aware of their responsibility to take care of parents (be loving and kind to them). This culture was adapted to most of Malay, Chinese and Indian families towards their parents. This Malaysian collectivist culture of being family oriented is implemented in the pre-school climate. The structure of organisation shows the *status quo* of the teacher and parents around children. The teacher also creates a sub-organisation between children which gives authority to children who lead the class.

Similarities and differences of Parental Perspectives and pre-school ethos

In this section I present specific examples of the similarities and differences between pre-school ethos and parental norms and values by providing data and quotes from parents and children. The routine daily practices in the PERPADUAN Pre-school were acceptable to the multi-ethnic children.

Similar to the parental norms and values, the pre-school also has its own culture which is to ensure that there is a smooth adaptation and transition between the routines of home and pre-school. The niche of PERPADUAN Pre-school addresses the multi-ethnic nature in pre-school practices. According to the parent below:

Mr M Nor: This...pre-school has its own strengths which are in addressing the multi-ethnic practice of its pre-schoolers and ensuring the implementation of the elements of integration in its curriculum...at the same time the teacher encourages children to express concern for and try to see how they could support their friends.

(Paragraph 68)

The parent considered the PERPADUAN Pre-school has own strengths to accumulate the diversified cultures of greeting from different homes and backgrounds in a single place. The teacher encourages children to express their concern through greeting others. Most importantly, it shows concern for each other among them. These practices are in line with the home norms which are practised in pre-school every morning after assembly and before going back home. Based on my interviews with the children about their concern with friends, all children interviewed give positive concern to their friend. This is the view of the children:

R: If your friend does not feel well, what do you do?

CR: Say sorrylah [Malaysia English lah (please)]...give her medicine ...ask her go to the doctor...eer care her.

(Interview Child 7, Chinese, [F])

The statement above shows this child's concern about her friend who is not feeling well. When I asked another child the same question the point of view was the same. The first choice of most children at this early years stage if someone is "sick" is matched to medicine or doctor. Indeed, it does seem that children are naturally concerned about their friends. This reflects pre-school practice. The teacher helps

children to show considerable concern and make practical efforts to find ways of comforting their friends, such as taking action for classmates and involving a kind of initiative.

Based on my observation these cultures are assimilated in children's lives in everyday routines. According to children's views, even though practices at home and pre-school are a little different in terms of everyday routines like greeting, they understand the concept and meaning of a greeting which is pleasing to others. For example, one norm that is the same at home and pre-school is taking off shoes. At pre-school shoes are taken off and put on a shelf outside before entering the classroom, the same as entering a house. All children here understand the rationale why they take off shoes at pre-school and home, which is to keep the class clean. It develops more understanding about safety, germs, or even diseases that they could have if the classroom were dirty. Entering a house should begin with the right foot. Right hands and right feet should be used for good luck when starting out. Right hands should be used whenever receiving or giving things. It is considered impolite if a child uses the left hand and it reflects the practice of family values and shows the norms and values of family. The most important part is a teaching process for children of the awareness of and appreciation of their own and other cultures that are accepted as national cultures. Teaching the children to say 'please' and 'thank you' is a priority with the teacher.

The next impact is the consideration about appropriate behaviour in children. Some children would like to show respect to others by doing things which they observe are cultural practices of other ethnicities. For example, some children would greet his/her friends using a 'noticeable phrase' known only to his/her friends' culture. Based on my observation, sometimes non-Malay children address somebody using "*saalam*" because they would be excited with Malays. To them, "*assalamualaikum* (a frequent address among Muslims, meaning "May peace always be upon you") or "*Wa'laikum saalam*" (May peace be upon you too) is the same as (in Malay), "*Selamat sejahtera*" (Be in good condition always) and then they understand the meaning of all that.

Despite developing children with good characteristics through pre-school routines like “*dua*” and kissing hands, some of the findings evidently suggest that there are some lively ‘sensitive issues’. Most of the issues commented on by the parents are related to the school’s reluctance to act in a culturally sensitive way. Mrs Tan stressed:

Let the children understand the three main ethnic cultures ...rather than Malay culture as it seems to be the case today...nurturing the children with three languages and different cultures should be the way to promote ethnic understanding. It does not show in school practices, does it? The school norms tend to practise the Muslim religious values [Malay] in everyday practice which does influence my child’s behaviour. Is it fair for this multi-ethnic pre-school? But this is only my opinion.
(Paragraph 47)

This parent said that the pre-school practices seemed to disregard cultures other than Malay and proposed a multi-ethnic pre-school should incorporate the three ethnic group cultures of Malay, Chinese and Indian. She viewed that this multi-ethnic pre-school is important to nurture children with three languages, and different cultures are the keys for ethnic integration and understanding of ethnic belonging.

A parent who worried about pre-school practices compared to twenty years ago, which he considers was better than school today, expressed the view:

Mr Bo: 20 years ago, I didn’t have any problem with other friends from different ethnic groups. Nowadays school practice is different, the practise elements of Islamic apply to all children at PERPADUAN Pre-school which look like an Islamisation process. I am concerned about this issue because it is not in line with the pre-school aims. Why not just go back to the original goal which involved only social skills and 3Rs. I agree with the teacher’s explanation that practice in school will not necessarily interfere with norms and values of home.
(Paragraph 144)

This parent is concerned that practising the elements of Muslim religion at pre-school contradicts what he gives his child at home. He is not only worried about the process of *Islamisation* but he considers this practice is not in line with the aim of the pre-school. He compared the situation between his generation and the current generation and says how his learning environment 20 years ago contributed to ethnic integration because the school environment did not tend to mention any religion or

ethnicity, unlike this pre-school. However he is positive about the teacher's explanation about the integration of Islamic values in pre-school.

I observed that maybe some parents are really worried about *Islamisation* of PERPADUAN Pre-school. This is not the only Islamic practice deliberately implemented in the school. Some of the non-Malay parents are "scared and afraid of the Muslim *dua*" and kissing hands. An Indian parent, who seemed to be doubtful about giving her view, commented about the *dua*, trying to explain the pre-school's effort to *Islamise* the children;

Mrs Deev: I'm worried if there is too much "dua", you know...this isn't a religious school. Please, let the children enjoy learning and singing happily.
(Paragraph 39)

Even though this view is short, it is an important view of a pre-school ethos that claims to be multi-ethnic. This parent accepts the practice like *dua* in this pre-school but is worried that this practice may be too much for her child. This parent may feel doubtful about giving her view because this is a sensitive issue that might be unsuitable to discuss to avoid racism.

The teacher responded to these issues with two points: first, that particular *dua* is only for Muslim children, and non-Muslim children were asked to have a blessing with their belief. Second, the phrases in *dua* are in Malay words instead of fully Arabic words. The teacher has discussed the aims of *dua* with the parent committee members, and the hand kissing is not to create *Islamisation* or impose a dominant culture on other ethnic groups. However, some of the reactions and reflections on the routines suggest that they create prejudice and develop fear among parents, especially the non-Malays.

However, this issue does contradict with a Malay parent's views:

Mr Zainon: ...this is not religious practice but it is more towards showing respect and politeness in the Malay culture to the elders like father, mother, and teachers which is not practised by non-Malays even in other Islamic countries like countries in the Middle East.
(Paragraph 73)

This parent views the hand kissing as Malay norms that are practised in a Malay social system to show respect to parents, teacher and elders. This is a really important issue because the PERPADUAN Pre-school aims to be multicultural; the teacher believes they are multicultural, and argues the practices are multicultural. However, non-Malay parents are worried that the practices are neglecting their culture, and are imposing Malay culture; they are using Malay as a synonym for Islam and Muslim.

In the curriculum there are two subjects which are taught separately, Islamic Religion for the Muslims [Malay and others] and Moral Education for non-Muslims [Chinese, Indian and others]. These two subjects show the school policy has embedded Islamic and moral values into the curriculum. The school has positively decided there should be separate provision for moral education for those who are non-Muslim in order that there is no confusion between morality and religion. The school is attempting not to *Islamise* the culture, so not only is the teacher saying there is no *Islamisation* but the practices indicate it is not *Islamisation*; nevertheless, the parents are still concerned. The message from non-Malay parents here is trying to say, if the *dua* is from the Malay, what about the Chinese or Indian parents? However, I surmise the practices of norms and values that are emphasised in PERPADUAN Pre-school such as hand kissing are the same as practices of hugging in Western culture to show caring or respect.

8.5 PERPADUAN Pre-school is “Mini Malaysia”

According to the assistant teacher, the PERPADUAN Pre-school can be considered a “Mini Malaysia” because the ethnic situation in the school reflects the diversity of Malaysian society. The kind of ethnic acknowledgement mentioned brought out her emotional responses or personal thoughts. The assistant teacher explained that,

Assistant Teacher: This pre-school is a model of “Mini Malaysia”...the communities who live here come from diverse ethnic backgrounds just like the school children. The ethnic composition here is balanced every year. We practice cultural diversity...celebrate Raya (Eid Mubarak), Tahun Baru Cina (Chinese New Year) and Deepavali. So...every child has been

exposed to different cultures and the most important thing is to be sensitive towards other ethnic groups.

(Paragraph 19)

With the above race identification, the assistant teacher personally thought that PERPADUAN Pre-school is a “Mini Malaysia” because the ethnic situation in pre-school is as diverse as in Malaysian society. The assistant teacher explains with reference to the ethnic groups that the composition of the school is balanced. In terms of social group domination in this pre-school, the assistant teacher explains that the “majority” positions belong to the Chinese and Malays and the minority is comprised of Indians. These ethnic group positions do not show the dominant social groups. The above statement provides evidence for the practice of cultural diversity among the children in the classroom, especially during festive celebrations. The teacher exposes the children to the cultures of every ethnic group to ensure they have sensitivity towards them. The assistant teacher added:

Assistant Teacher: I have observed from 20 years ago this pre-school is always an indicator as a reference for the government to show a multi-ethnic society. Other departments such as Department of Health conduct clinical research here.

(Paragraph 26)

It is not surprising that this PERPADUAN Pre-school is a model of the multi-ethnic pre-school and has become a reference for the Department of National Unity and Integration and other departments in Malaysia, including the officer who recommended I should find my research sample in this pre-school.

Based on the PERPADUAN Pre-school document, and my observation, PERPADUAN Pre-school is a centre for the parents and the government agency to transfer national values to the children. It is a transmitter towards ethnic diversity and a symbolic act of keeping the national flag flying for the children via the explanation of government policy towards a multi-ethnic community. For example,

The teacher teaches about respect, respecting teachers and parents have all become good habits for the children when they greet the teachers. Children get teacher’s hand kiss it.

(Observation: Morning Session Episode [12 June 2009]).

Indeed, in Malay culture the children also kiss their teacher’s hand as a symbol of respect when they meet and leave school.

This pre-school concept is based on religious tolerance, which respects other religions even though Islam is the official religion in the country. Everyday rituals like saying *dua* in Malay instead of Arabic before classes start, before having breakfast and tea time become meaningful acts for all ethnic groups. The *dua* prayer is specific for all ethnic groups such as *dua* for good health, thanks to God (this does not only refer to *Allah* [God in Arabic] (Observation: Meal Time Episode [16 June 2009])). The use of the word *Allah* may be sensitive for parents who are Hindu or Buddhist.

In PERPADUAN Pre-school, transmitting positive cultural and religious tolerance is of utmost importance in order to guarantee a harmonious community especially in a multiracial country like Malaysia. Each ethnic group in this community respects the culture and beliefs of other ethnic groups and one should not get trapped in the shallow thinking of one's ethnic culture and religion as the only one that is right and perfect. This pre-school shows responsibility to develop the children's mind set to respect other religions. Every ethnic group has its own rituals, which fosters religious tolerance towards other religions, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. For example, I observed that:

There were five Indian children wearing the pottu marks. Pottu is a round mark on the forehead (between the eyebrows). The children also wore black bracelets around their wrists to ward off disaster. A type of string (black or red) that has been recited with spell is worn.
(Observation: Morning Session Episode [26 June 2009])

When I asked a response from the teacher about this issue, she replied

"I have explained to the class [children] that religious practice is a sensitive subject, they [children] do not make jokes about that".
(Observation: Informal Response Episode [26 June 2009])

According to the Hindus, *pottu* is a third eye of wisdom. To open an eye of wisdom is one of the motives in life (souls) any individual should achieve.

A part of the effort by the National Unity and Integration Department includes the ethos of this pre-school which aims to strengthen awareness and positive tolerance that has been inherited by the Malaysian community. The PERPADUAN Pre-school takes the responsibility to combine the three ethnic cultures and beliefs as Malaysian culture. This can be seen in all the activities that are held, like cultural

festivals, religious celebrations and ethnic ceremonies. Pre-school children are exposed to these activities. During the celebrations, the children wear their traditional dress: *baju Melayu* and *baju kurung* for the Malay children or *cheongsam* for the Chinese children, while the Indian children wear their *sari* and *dhoti* (Document: School Presentation). This pre-school is a place for the children to learn about each other's cultures and the culture of any other ethnic group that is practised in the country.

The pre-school aims to develop the mindset of children by sharing norms and values from different backgrounds. A tolerant attitude among the children can be seen by the recognition and acceptance of culture among them and the respect shown to each other. I observed the community here sharing the same values and viewpoints beyond their ethnicities. These things help the community to develop cross-cultural relationships although their backgrounds differ in aspects such as culture, language and religion. The sharing of values and norms in a multicultural society can be seen in the community cooperation activity which is their priority for integration and harmony. Their relationship is based on their community, not their ethnic group *per se*. Ethnic sentiments and religion are not important factors between the ethnic groups. For example, they get used to ethnic foods such as *nasi lemak* (rice with coconut milk) from the Malay culture and *roti canai* (paratha) from the Indian culture or even using chopsticks. The pre-school activities show the children's open-minded attitude towards culture.

Celebrating Festivals in Malaysia

According to the teacher, the following activities celebrating festivals in Malaysia based on ethnic backgrounds are held in pre-school as part of the annual ceremonies in all pre-schools under the Ministry of the Prime Minister. For example the celebration of "*Hari Raya*" (Eid Mubarak) for Malays, Chinese New Year for Chinese and "*Deepavali*" for Indian were together held in pre-school in 2008. The Malaysian government recognises these as national holidays and declared a public holiday on those days. So after the celebration the teacher arranges with children and parents to celebrate the festival at school in order for children from different ethnic

backgrounds to understand the situation and environment of every festival celebrated by Malays, Chinese or Indians. The main objective is to integrate Malaysia and a multi-cultural approach is being developed. For example, as a preparation to celebrate Deepavali, the school is decorated with “a row of lamps”, with foods like “*kuih batu*”, “*maruku*” and others. There are similar celebrations for “*Hari Raya*” and Chinese New Year which come up with various decorations and foods. During the celebrations, the children wear their traditional dress for example “*baju Melayu*” and “*baju kurung*” for the Malay children, “*cheongsam*” for the Chinese children whilst the Indian people wearing “*sari*” and “*dhoti*”. According to the teacher, these three celebrations are held in pre-school once a year after the celebration with full preparation that involves children and their parents as a part of PERPADUAN Pre-school niches. This explanation is based on the document from the teacher’s report and pre-school yearly report which is documented in the pre-school video and summary in the Annual Report to the Department of Integration and National Unity. It has given children respect for other cultures. According to Mrs Mona’s view about the impact on pre-school children exposed to other cultures:

Mrs Mona: I think mostly the teacher will take into account the multi-ethnic background. For example during the three main ethnic festival celebrations my child knows... when and what other people will wear and eat. The pre-school also inculcates social relationships between my son and children from other ethnic groups.
(Paragraph 61)

The statements above also suggest a tendency towards tolerance of both ethnicities and cultural diversity in PERPADUAN Pre-school during celebrations and inculcating social relationship. From my observation, I would say it has a genuine impact on the children because they understand what and when the celebration is described. Here is a response from a child regarding a celebration they experienced at school:

I love to play with Malay friends ... during “Malay raya” (Eid Mubarak) we meet together.... We went to our neighbour’s house because it is near to our house ... we eat “ketupat-rendang” (rice with beef)
(Interview Child 16)

The above statement demonstrates that the environment has developed true understanding about the festivals children celebrate. The impact from school activities is translated into the children's actions, therefore nurturing the sense of belonging and developing a good friendship. I believe that is the starting point for children to work in friendly fellowship and help all partners regardless of background. The genuine understanding of other cultures comes up to the attitude of helping friends, neighbours and the local community. These explanations show the features of traditional Chinese and Indian culture at pre-school have influenced the curriculum.

The Involvement of the Community

Here I will touch on two aspects which are the form of community contribution to the pre-school and how the community role contributes to the development of pre-school children. According to the *JPNIN*, the pre-school classes for pre-school premises are situated in *Pusat Aktiviti Perpaduan* (Unity Activities Centre); *Pusat Rukun Tetangga* (Neighbourhood Centre); *Bangunan Tabika Perpaduan* (Unity Pre-school Building) etc. This shows that the establishment of pre-school is based on requests and initiatives of the community and parents and it is also based on the conditions set by the Department of National Unity and Integration (refer to Section 2.5.2). The *Jawatankuasa Penyelaras Tabika Perpaduan* (Pre-school Coordinator Committee) or *JPTP* has been established in each *PERPADUAN* Pre-school since the schooling started. This organization committee is similar to the Parent Teacher Association in other pre-schools. The committee members consist of neighbourhood members, parents, interested residents, pre-school teacher and assistant teacher. *JPTP* aims to help foster unity among pre-school children, their parents and the local community and to develop the pre-school so that it runs smoothly and according to high quality.

Here the association is not described *per se*; instead we also have the involvement of *Rukun Tetangga* (RT) or Neighbourhood Association showing how the Department of National Unity and Integration calls upon neighbourhood members to get involved in the formation of the pre-school. RT is a platform that

assists the government to strengthen racial ties among the people in urban areas, especially in the housing estates. Activities and programmes implemented by the RT do not only enhance the concept of neighbourliness, but they also serve to address crucial social issues such as the community's education, safety, sports activities and charity. These associations rely on the RT annual grant from the government for financing their activities.

The role of the RT is important in developing and strengthening the pre-school which starts from the foundation of the establishment and continues through the development of the pre-school and the structuring of the programme for the children's development. The RT members are associated with the JPTP committee members and they play an important role in the pre-school establishment in order to contribute to the development of pre-school children. A JPTP member aims to foster unity among the pre-school children, their parents and local community and develop the pre-school so that it runs well, smoothly and at high quality. The RT is part of the community acting as mediating agents between parents and the pre-school teacher to the children. The RT community role is to supervise pre-school activities with parents through the pre-school committees. This shows the close relationship and great contribution from the RT in the pre-school committees. According to the teacher,

Teacher: Here (this pre-school) we use the Neighbourhood Association (RT) buildings, so all matters related to the building is the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Association. This includes providing air-conditioning in the classroom; modifying the science park for the children, providing huts and rabbit cages, all this uses the budget of RT. RT also provides a computer for children to contribute to the children's trip. The JPNIN only provides the budget for the pre-school management, learning tools and for the children and staff.

(Paragraph 130)

Based on her explanation, it is clear that the strength of PERPADUAN Pre-school is not only the responsibility of the Department of National Unity and Integration but the role of the RT. In addition, she firmly stresses that the contribution from the community includes a contribution to the programme which involves the visit/trip, providing the science garden, and computer classes. These things are important for the pre-school in order to ensure and encourage child development. Every child

activity involves the parents. The community is responsible for taking care of the children during a trip or outdoor activity. Most of the community would involve the mothers, as full-time housewives provide many advantages to the pre-school as regards the activities. Supporting each other without discrimination may also help the pre-school in many ways.

Even though the RT and pre-school are two different entities, they both share a close relationship and are always helping each other. The pre-school is the source of learning for the children in the community and the RT always helps the pre-school's needs in order to provide for the children comfortably. The RT will always try to fulfil the needs of the pre-school such as painting and repairing any physical problems, etc. The RT also contributes a variety of amenities to develop this pre-school, such as air-conditioning, an extra computer, reference books and manpower which enable the pre-school to achieve a high level and compete with other pre-schools like private pre-schools. The community is also involved directly in any pre-school activities.

In every Community and RT meeting, all the pre-school teachers are present to give their point of view about the development of the children's education and to report achievements to the parents. The researcher was also invited to the community meeting and was given a warm welcome to join the meeting. Although most of the community members are from the Chinese ethnic group, he was warmly welcomed and allowed to participate in the group, even though all the issues that were mentioned touched on local matters. For a while I felt doubtful about joining in; however as I needed to acquire knowledge about the community and know it better, I needed to be present in this discussion.

A unique feature of the PERPADUAN Pre-school is the parent component. Most of the parents live in low-cost apartments and terraced houses near the pre-school. Almost all of the children's parents work as drivers, factory operators, teachers, soldiers, hawkers and public civil servants. Their socio-economic status gives a pattern of social value to the children. For example; the hawker's children seem to develop co-operative values and are willing to help their friends. The children whose parents come from a working environment also seem to have

developed their attitude to help other people in need. These values are not limited to skin colour or ethnic group. Parents are encouraged to take part in their child's activities and parental involvement is expected in the following activities: celebrating festivals in Malaysia; "*bergotong-royong*" (co-operative); attending talks; pre-school fund raising; "*sukaneka*" (fun sport) or sports competition; birthday parties; visits; food funfair; storytelling; and cooking contests. Various activities undertaken by this committee directly involve the children as well as indirectly involving parents and the local community. These efforts are expected to develop and enhance the image of the pre-school and foster neighbourhood spirit among local residents.

8.6 Summary of Chapter 8

The findings of this study indicate that the pre-school knows the importance of parental norms and values to its ethos, and undertakes this by making efforts "to cater for all ethnic norms and values for all ethnicities", particularly the norms and values of the majority. Instead of overlapping different norms and values from the three ethnic groups, the pre-school has standardised them as a pre-school ethos. Furthermore, the findings also point out the pre-school claims that its norms and values are designed to increase the social behaviour of children. We can see that children are committed to these pre-school programmes and routine activities, in particularly everyday routines such as greeting and using the right hand. Indeed, most pre-school programmes are similar to the parents' perspective, like the construction of children's social skills, developing children's relationships, respectful behaviour, and being obedient to parents, teachers, and elders.

Despite developing children with good characteristics through pre-school routines like "*dua*" and kissing hands, some of the findings evidently suggest that there are some 'sensitive issues'. Most of the issues commented on by the parents are related to the school's reluctance in a culturally sensitive way. Some of the non-Malay parents are "scared and afraid of the Muslims "*dua*" and kissing hands. Some parents seem really worried about *Islamisation* of the PERPADUAN Pre-school, as this is not the only Islamic practice deliberately implemented in the school. However, the teacher countered with two reasons; that particular "*dua*" is only for Muslims,

and non-Muslim children have a blessing with their belief. Second, the phrases in “*dua*” are in Malay instead of fully Arabic words. The teacher has discussed with the parent committee members about the aims of “*dua*” and hand kissing is not creating *Islamisation* or a dominant culture over other ethnic groups. However, some of the reactions and reflections on the routines suggest that they are creating prejudice and developing fear among parents, especially the non-Malays who think their culture is neglected. In order for me indeed to understand the discussion, I have summarised the parental norms and values, and pre-school ethos together into Figure 8.1. Key elements shown in Figure 8.1, which provides a model for analysis and specific discussion, are based on the research question from the respondents’ point of view. This figure shows the summaries of parental norms and values of three ethnic groups, and the pre-school ethos. It is also shows the overlapping of norms and values from the three different ethnic groups and how pre-school has integrated them as a pre-school ethos. The discussion of the sub-themes emerged from the main themes of norms and values of families.

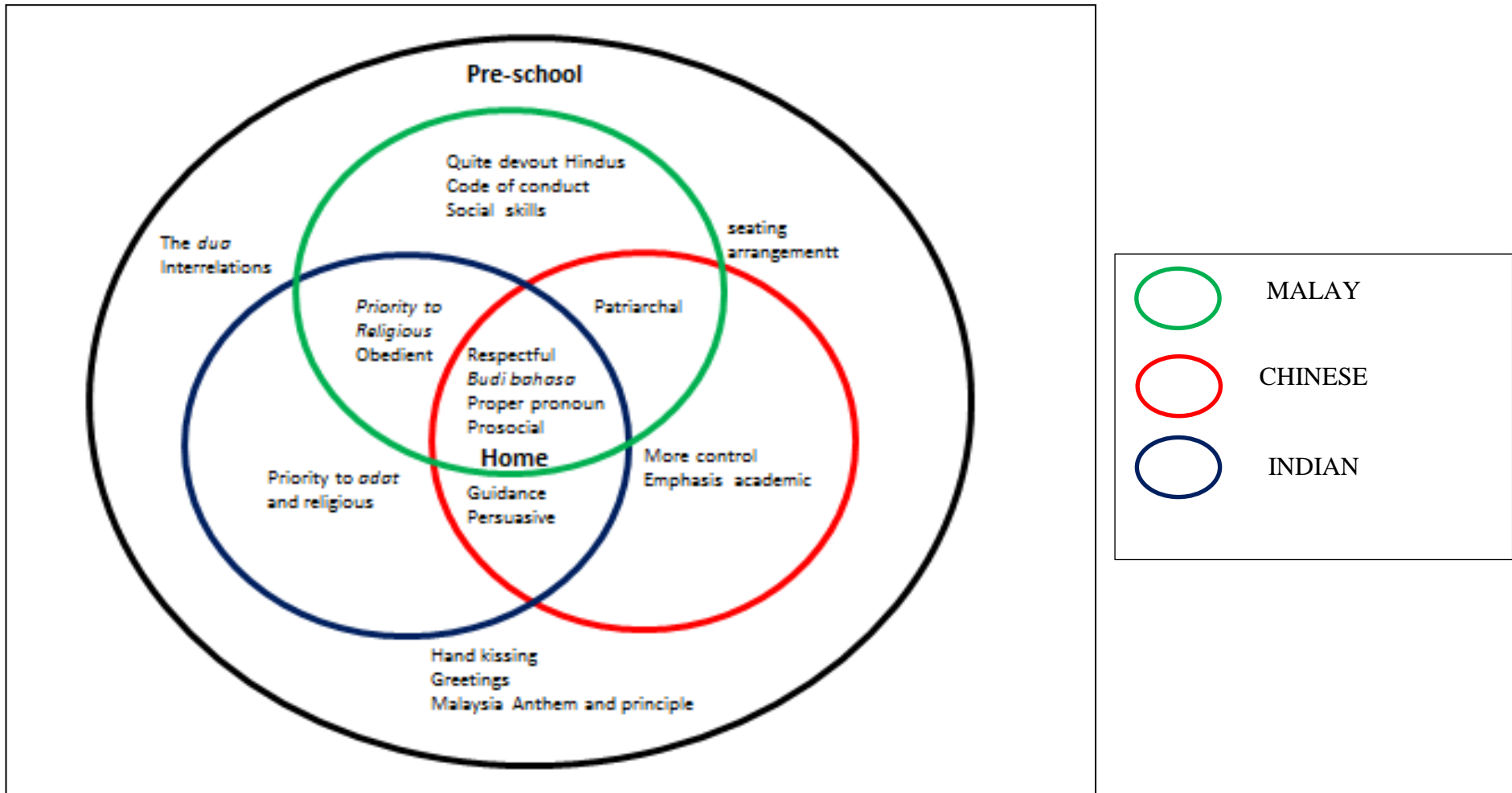


Figure 8.1: Parental norms and values, and pre-school ethos

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

9.1 Introduction

This chapter attempts to establish a link between children's social behaviour, parental social and cultural capital and the role of pre-school towards viewing diversity positively. It provides a synopsis of the thesis with a view to answering the question, "What can we learn from the Malaysian case regarding how a multi-ethnic pre-school responds to cultural diversity?" in order to understand what, if any, are the implications for wider education policy in Malaysia.

In this chapter, I shall consolidate the major findings and compare them to previous similar studies. The first theme discussed will be children's social behaviour and how the children relate to each other.

9.2 Children's Social Behaviour

Children's social behaviour is an important topic to be discussed in Malaysia especially with reference to the different ethnic groups. This section will describe the findings pertaining to the pattern of social behaviour, comparable literature, and related theory. Various patterns of children's social behaviour have emerged from this study: helpful, sharing, cooperative, respectful and obedient behaviours.

As seen in Section 6.3, based on typical scenes of peer interaction, I have observed helpful, sharing and cooperative behaviours occurring frequently during learning activities, either in the classroom or during outdoor activities like physical education, or free play within the school's geographical space. Teacher-planned seating has led to peer interaction within and between ethnic groups. The children show a willingness to help, share and cooperate with other children even though they are from different ethnic backgrounds. However, helpful behaviour during free time in the playground seemed to be between children who had close relationships, and this is important in order to maintain their friendship. This behaviour would positively prompt children to interact regularly with different ethnic groups.

Cooperative and sharing behaviour in outdoor activities happened when children played together; this was led by popular children and was related to their past relationship. Both behaviours seemed to be related to regular contact which involved children who interact in everyday partnership. These behaviours were also related to the group seating pattern formed by the teacher in order to encourage children's sharing. Most cooperative and sharing behaviours happened in classroom activities through the teacher's planning. Involving sharing between the ethnic groups and genders, they also gave the children a chance to develop relationships leading to friendships. That the ability to cooperate with others develops further in the pre-school years is consistent with the findings of Hay, Payne & Chadwick (2004) and Eisenberg, Fabes & Spinrad (2006) regarding prosocial behaviour (helpful, sharing and empathy) towards others. According to Warneken, Chen & Tomasello (2006), cooperative interaction demonstrates some form of shared intentionality. In this case, children do not just react to one another's actions, but they have intentions toward the other's intentions; they must understand the intentions of the other and incorporate them into their own intention. Most of the pre-school activities provide an environment for sharing and stimulate cooperative behaviour in the children.

The study revealed that, based on cross-referencing between three sources, helpful, sharing and cooperative behaviours that the children practised were related to the teacher's view, who acknowledged that these behaviours are stressed in the pre-school curriculum activities which are part of the syllabus. The pre-school ethos aims to integrate children from different ethnic groups and this is prominently part of the PERPADUAN Pre-school principles. Interviews with parents have shown that this is in line with the parental norms and values of collective oriented culture in families that encourage helpful, sharing and cooperative behaviours across ethnic backgrounds. Based on the current findings, I have concluded that social behaviour of young children in multi-ethnic pre-school may be affected by the way the teacher sets up the pre-school ethos for them. Arranging the physical environment, geographical space and the activities in learning either in the classroom or outdoors may create a better context for positive social contacts especially in the early months. This finding is similar to that of Shohet and Klein (2008), who assert that the

physical environment plays a role in the early development of social behaviour and can be affected by changes in the physical environment; more specifically, the way in which their play materials are presented. The physical environment has been identified as having a powerful effect on young children's play and socialization. However, pre-schoolers may need additional support from the teacher in order to create positive social contacts with their peers.

Another issue of importance to highlight in this study is respectful behaviour from children towards other ethnic groups. This behaviour is significantly emphasised both in pre-school and at home. Based on my observation, pre-school children from different groups have to respect friends, teachers, assistant teachers, their parents, visitors and elders. They show respectful behaviour either through greeting and hand kissing, or by using good body language, and being polite to other people. This behaviour is also emphasised at home, as seen in the parents' interviews in Chapter 8, and forms part of parental norms and values of the three ethnic groups. Practising respectful behaviour in pre-school is in line with the parental cultural capital at home and has become one of the daily routines in the pre-school ethos. I also discovered that there were several cases of children who were perhaps too respectful and obedient. Being obedient is very prominent in the Malay and Indian cultures. These findings are in line with Corsaro (1992) who views children's peer culture as a stable set of activities or routines, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers as an interpretive reproduction of adult culture (Corsaro, 1992, p. 162). These are transformed constructively within activities in the local cultures that make up their everyday lives such as family, pre-school, and peer group. Similar to Kawabata and Crick (2008) the findings revealed that these behaviours from cross-ethnic group children in the classroom context were more likely to be viewed as led from the teacher setting.

9.3 How the Children Relate to Each Other

According to the observations of peer interactions, there are two patterns of friendship. First, emerging from this study, pre-schoolers were more likely to have several short-term or sporadic friendships and peer interactions. A pattern which

existed in this group would most likely occur in classroom activities and in group seating. An interaction was accommodated with social behaviour which was coordinated within dyads to produce contingent interactions and sporadic friendship. It also involved objects that stimulated the interaction. It has been demonstrated that pre-school friendship dyads engage in more positive exchanges, mutuality, and sharing than do non-friend dyads. Second, close friendships which are more stable and maintained friendships are more likely to occur in classroom activities, shared play, free time and during outdoor activity. I have observed that to maintain relationships, close friendship involved shared play and emotional attachment, for example, between Canny and Ellin, and this is consistent with other researchers, including Corsaro (1981, 2005), Eisenberg et al. (2006) and Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (2006). I found that within the multi-ethnic pre-school, children were interacting and forming friendships with cross-ethnic as well as same-ethnic peers. Interactions were frequently instigated by popular children (refer to Figure 6.1 Friendship Networks) who have the social skills and language ability to engage others in close relationships relying on reciprocity, shared play, ethnicity and gender. This is similar to Hay, Payne & Chadwick (2004), who state that social skills facilitate peer relationships consolidated in the pre-school years, during which time peer groups become structured with respect to friendship groups, gender and dominant relations; some children begin to be rejected by their peers (p. 84). Two patterns of friendship are highlighted in these themes as regards the development of children's friendships: reciprocal and shared play interaction, and interaction based on ethnic group and gender.

Reciprocal and Shared Play Interaction

The primary findings of this research found that children relate to each other within and between the ethnic groups based on reciprocal and shared play interaction.

A child develops a reciprocal relationship when assistance is needed in pre-school daily activities such as sharing something that is concrete. Children practise a mutual exchange in classroom activities, and this can also be seen in activities during free time play in the playground, such as helping friends swing and playing see-saw.

Based on the frequency of interaction, these reciprocal relationships are established by mutual preference. A frequent interaction includes helping friends and this initiates more interaction with one another. These reciprocal relationships come into being and are subsequently maintained through reinforcement by intensified interaction and reinforcement of social behaviour by others. This reciprocal mutual preference among children was confirmed by teacher observation and interviews. This mutual preference friendship between ethnic groups frequently occurred between dyads in classroom, similar to findings from Howes (1983).

However, contrasted with the above idea is the interaction instigated by a popular child among the children. I observed in this study that the interethnic relationships emerging among the children who are popular in the Friendship Network show a popular child relating to others based on a reciprocal direction and this relationship is developed among a dyad from a different ethnic group strongly related with play. Body contact, especially in play interaction, shows a close relationship and this may come from trust and bonding as the children build up the quality of a relationship. These relationships were not driven by gender but influenced by what kind of reciprocity they agreed on. These interactions would mostly emerge with a few children who have good social skills such as coordinating play with friends, communicating clearly, attending to the perspective of others, agreeing more than disagreeing with each other, or clarifying what they want. This ability to engage in skilful interaction was only gained by the dominant children in class. Children complied with each other's requirements and favours; bonding makes an interdependent relationship. A reciprocal relationship is very important for children in their life to develop social skills. Children develop their mind, self and personality through social processes from social relationships (Vygotsky, 1978).

Referring to Chapter 6, shared play direction occurred when two or more children shared the same things together in the classroom. The children related to each other and this was instigated by the intention to play. The children shared common things that existed in pre-school like Lego, story books and education tools such as toys. They also shared objects like a pencil box, handkerchief, drinking bottle or lunch box as a topic for discussion. Within this range of objects, the children were

able to build conversation from concrete to abstract objects (objects in their imagination). This helped to create pleasure among the children from different ethnic groups. In this study, by playing together, the children were building up their bonds of friendship. These findings are in line with three of the four ideas of Rubin, Bukowski and Parker (2006): that friendship is a reciprocal relationship that must be affirmed or recognised by both parties; friendship shown through reciprocity of affection represents an essential, though not necessarily exclusive, tie that binds friends together; and relationships must be understood according to their place in the network of other relationships.

Another issue emerging from my observation in this study is that children's interethnic group relationships are prominently related to each other based on shared play activity. The children go through play activities together either in classroom or outdoor activities. They relate to each other because they need a partner to play and to share fun with. Ethnic groups and gender categories do not form a barrier when the children play enjoyable games. In this case the triggers of relationships here are mutual enjoyment, and feeling comfortable with another child when they play together. Understanding friends' emotions and behaviour during play, and sharing stories and experiences together, may create and sustain friendships. These include initiating an interaction, communicating and understanding about others, and copying an activity others are doing, and all these show a willingness to become friends. In this case, the children at pre-school age are interested in interacting between ethnic groups driven by playmates rather than understanding the values of friendship, and this is consistent with previous research by Ocampo, Bernal & Knight (1993), Kawabata and Crick (2008) and Howes, Sander, & Lee (2008).

Interaction Based on Ethnic Group and Gender

In this section of the study of the multi-ethnic pre-school I shall explain how children relate to gender. As seen in Chapter 6, girls tend to be friends with girls, and boys, with boys. The evidence shows that boys did indeed interact more with boys, girls with girls. These outcomes are in line with Fabes, Martin, & Hanish (2003) and this is evident in social networks and in friendship choices. However, these findings

show some differences as regards children who are involved in ethnic segregation: the children tend to choose and be involved in ethnic group rather than gender as a priority.

The next issue concerns findings which show that children understand a gender set of rules and show behaviour according to gender expectation. Boys' norms such as attitude, values and behaviour are more active and expressive than girls. The children's beliefs that they are similar to their own sex and different from the other sex are similar to the findings of Martin et al. (2005). The boys tend to use physical fighting and challenging things, so it is normal for the boys to use mock physical fighting and something challenging with their friends. This is consistent with the findings from Boyatzis, Mallis & Leon (1999) as regards the likelihood of boys segregating when they get involved in competitive games. Consistent with previous research, children at the ages of five and six are mature enough to get involved in playgroups to meet the human need for affiliation; however, this may depend on the type of play. This shows us that gender is an important factor for the children. For example, for types of play or topics for discussion, previous research explained that girls differed by being more talkative and using more affiliative language to establish or maintain contact with others, compared to boys, who tend to use less self-assertive speech to influence others (Leaper & Smith, 2004). The age and sex-segregated groups depend on the number of children available in playgroup; if not many children are available, the playgroup will include both sexes and a range of ages, but if they are in sufficient numbers, they will split up (Lansford & Parker, 1999).

Another issue touches on the activity pattern: boys choose energetic activities compared to girls who prefer a smaller, less active group such as sharing the same gossip and sitting inside the block circle and chatting to each other. Physical movements like running and climbing drive the boys' friendships. They play in a group which is interested in the same types of play and this shows gender group separation in the children's play contacts, as found in previous studies (e.g. Corsaro et al. 2003). This is similar to Maccoby's (1998) findings which state that children choose friends from the same sex as play partners. Maccoby (1990) has highlighted

the importance of taking a relationship perspective in this regard, noting that how a child behaves during a social interaction depends on the gender of the child, as well as the gender of his/her partner. For example, children are more likely to demonstrate that girls' relationship dyads exhibit more positive interaction than boys' relationships.

The findings in this study have shown ethnic group separation in peer interaction and children's play contacts, as found in previous studies (e.g. Corsaro et al. 2003). It would seem that ethnicity and language form an ethnicity direction, with most children playing with the same ethnic groups. As I explained in Chapter 6, I would like to stress here that the children relate to each other based on ethnicity as regards to two factors were involved: firstly, when the children have problems with linguistic acquisition and secondly neighbourhood.

This shows that language contributes to the development of child's interaction and this is a factor in initiating relationships. Pre-schoolers who had difficulty in forming relationships with different ethnic groups were sitting quietly but their nature of helpfulness would depend on the approach of the instigator. Another main point touches on the respectfulness among these children and this does show a positive response. Children who speak Malay fluently tend to socialise easily with peers and adapt to the school environment. My findings show that children in the same ethnic group sit together and chat among themselves and this helps to develop a strong relationship. Parental cultural capital like home language is an important factor that affects children's relationships in cross-ethnic groups.

Secondly, children related to each other based on ethnicity when living in the same neighbourhood and community involved. Assimilation into the neighbourhood by the children also helped them to build relationships with other children of different ethnic groups. They relate to each other based on family norms and values at home and in the community, including home language and parents' religion. This is consistent with the argument from Bernal, et al. (1993) that although pre-school children do not really understand the significance of being a member of an ethnic group, they may be able to label themselves, as shown in my case; children were from "Chinese", "Indian" and "Malay" ethnic groups which they know as ethnicities.

I have seen children's ethnic identity developing gradually during the early school years such as knowing the common characteristics of their ethnic group, befriending members of the group, and comparing ethnically-based preferences as regards to mother tongue use, costume e.g. scarf and accessories such as bracelets, foods, traditional activities and religious practices. I found that in this study the neighbourhood and the community contributed towards the children's relationships. Children who stayed around with their peers at their places would also maintain close relationships. So, language and community important factors help to shape the social relations of children in pre-school.

9.4 Parental Social and Cultural Capital

One objective of the current study was to examine whether the social behaviour of pre-school children from different ethnic groups would be affected by parental social and cultural capital. This objective was based on findings of earlier studies suggesting the influence of parental social and cultural capital on children's behaviour. As seen in Chapter 7, the current study revealed that families' norms and values, language, parenting styles and religious capital all affect the children's social behaviour.

Parental Norms and Values

In this study, as seen in Chapter 7, I found that ethnicity is very important in developing the children's behaviour based on ethnic groups. The parents set the family rules according to their ethnic background.

The findings showed that Malay parents encourage their children to behave according to their culture. The Malay norms and values practised are based on Malay "*adat*" (norms) as a regulation from ancestors and are being practised as long as they do not contradict with the Islamic beliefs. The "*adat*" instilled in the children certain ways to behave appropriately, such as showing respect to elders and guests, politeness, greeting "*salaam*" and hand-kissing. Malay parents also nurtured their children's personality such as being honest and helpful with "*petua*" (guidance)

which helps to guide them. Regarding Chinese parents, I found the Chinese norms and values in this study show that the parents practise norms and values which have been passed down from the grandparents. They nurture their children according to what they believe in their culture as a way of life and sustain traditional values in practice. All Chinese parents considered the Chinese norms such as table manners and respectful behaviour as aspects which needed to be practised regularly. Indian norms and values are based on their ancestors and Hinduism or Christianity. The parents pick up their family norms from their family and community. A code of conduct is used as guidelines for children's behaviour and this exposes them to a model of caring and sharing. The meeting point of these three ethnic groups shows that the norms and values are based on ethnicity and religion as a way of life; this becomes a regulation towards building a good character. The evidences demonstrate a variation on how different backgrounds and dispositions support their children depending on cultural capital and educational resources, and even social capital as a resource. This is a link to the theory that success is dependent on parental cultural and educational resources.

However, the parents have adjusted the norms and values to the current situation. These norms and values are dynamic and they are suited to the current context and tend to be more moderate towards the multicultural society, for example, the "*Congxiraya*" (sharing Hari Raya and Chinese New Year, and the "*Deeparaya*" (sharing Deepavali and Hari Raya). Malaysian norms and values are based on ethnic and religious aspects. Referring to the past, the norms and values become a regulation in the community; for example, the "*adat*" (norms), but now they have become dynamic norms and values. The types of norms and values are almost the same: towards respect, and helping to build a good character in the children. Being respectful is part of religion and "*adat*" (norms) as well as being a part of culture. Children are more obedient to parents in order to develop respectful relationships and show a good model of respect for the Malays and Indians. However, in Chinese families, the children tend to be disciplined more frequently. The respectful value develops a strong bonding in the children's relationships among the family members and the communities. It is important for the children to develop characteristics

towards unity. The meeting points and commonalities in families' norms and values within ethnic and cross-ethnic groups contribute to the general behaviour of children in the multi-ethnic pre-school, including showing a good model of respect. These family-oriented values appear to be consistent with empirical evidence that describes several collectivist cultures like the Malaysian culture as being family-oriented (Rao, et al., 2003; Triandis, et al., 1988). Indeed, during the interview with the parents, all parents expressed deep interest and concern about their children's social behaviour like helpfulness, cooperation, respect and positive relationships. Interestingly, most parents in this study believed that promoting prosocial behaviour, relationships and unity among children is a responsibility shared between parents and the pre-school teacher. Conclusively, these findings show how parental social and cultural capital becomes a form of cultural capital in the pre-school setting which draws on Bourdieu's views of cultural capital.

Another issue touches on the tendency of the Chinese families to favour the patriarchal point of view in many aspects in order to maintain the family structure, and this is similar to the concept of the traditional Indian family. However, Malay norms remain rather unclear as only two parents emphasised gender segregation. All parents agreed that norms and values are supposed to be dynamic and resilient in order to maintain endless and continuous practice.

Parental Language and Children's Behaviour

In this section I discuss two issues: parental language contributed to the children's social behaviour, and the parental language is a driving factor for the children's respectful behaviour. First, the languages used at home affects the child's interaction. The parents who have more diverse linguistic capital assist the children's ability to communicate in pre-school. This finding is consistent with previous studies Li (2008) families' language environments, and the parents' relationships and interactions with their children affect children's second-language acquisition. Language acquisition is interrelated with social skills of children in order for them to interact with peers and parents, as seen in the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), which represents the gap between what children practise and what

their parents and peers can assist. The more skilfully their children communicate at home, the more confidence they have in communicating at school. For example, children who are capable of utilising the mother tongues and second language (Malay and English) make friends and get along more easily with friends from multi-ethnic backgrounds and they always talk with friends in pre-school, as compared to children who communicate only in their mother tongue. Children who only communicate in a mother tongue more than Malay may have difficulties in their interaction with others from different ethnic groups in school, however they learned to use Malay in communication with others because they want to develop relationships with others.

Secondly, the parental language drives the children's respectful behaviour and encourages them to practise respect with their friends and adults with the two concepts of "*budi bahasa*" and "*gantinama diri*" appropriate pronouns. "*Budi bahasa*" refers to etiquette and language and the need to use a proper pronoun when speaking to elders as a sign of respect. "*Budi*" as etiquette and "*bahasa*" mean that the language is synchronized with the social relationships. The parents emphasise this "*budi bahasa*" as appropriate behaviour when children communicate with peers and adults. This is much in line with values of being respectful to others, particularly elders. Every parent from the different backgrounds is very particular about these values and promotes them to their children. The meeting point is when parents of children from the three ethnic group of this study emphasise the practices of "*budi bahasa*" and the use of an appropriate pronoun when speaking to elders as a sign of respect. Titles as symbols of honour and respect also exist in all ethnic groups. Through language, the families have built scaffolding for their children such as linguistic relevance, the use of non-verbal communication, demonstrating, repetition and reminding to assist the children in learning prosocial behaviour and respect. This findings are consistent with Kenner (2000) who showed children can benefit in school from the language activities they engaged in at home, and Gregory (2008, 2010) who demonstrated how families (siblings, grandparents and friends) provide children with very special help as children learn a new language and nurture children's behaviour.

Another issue I wish to highlight concerns the two patterns of parenting styles in this study, which are the authoritative parenting style and the authoritarian parenting style. Generally, Malay parents emphasise good guidance which means to explain the reasoning, the causes and the implications of misconduct. The actions that would be taken include advice and discussion between a child and parent in which the child is given a chance to tell what he feels is right. For the Chinese parents, taking care of their child with guidance means that words of guidance are more important than advice. They prefer giving choices to the children and a set of mutual understanding between child and parents, and interdependence (Triandis, et al., 1988). The Indian parents emphasise a certain guide to ensure that their children behave appropriately and achieve expectations. They prefer to let the children understand rules and regulations by exposing children to the appropriate social skills and awareness.

On the other hand, we have the authoritarian parenting style. Malay parents tend to facilitate their children by giving priority to religious obligations. However, the parents also use the authoritarian style to nurture the children's behaviour if they have disobeyed rules or regulations. This is totally different to the Chinese parents, who take stern action on their children if they do not do their best and do not meet certain academic standards. These parents tend to force their children at the early stages of teaching to familiarise the children with their responsibilities. This is different from Indian parents, who prefer being strict at an early stage. The main objective is to use fear to educate the children and then the feelings of self-respect will come later. They use the cane as a way to educate children and as a tool.

The meeting point shows that good guidance gives a positive impact to children to fulfil family norms and values. The basis of using the authoritarian style for the sake of religion can be seen from the Indian and Malay parents' expectations that their children should become more controlled and respectful. The Chinese parents only use the authoritarian style to focus on educational achievement. These findings are similar to other outcomes regarding beliefs about strategies that parents can use to affect their children's development (Cheah & Rubin, 2003).

Religious Capital and Social Behaviour

Referring to what and how each ethnic religious capital affects the children's behaviour as discussed in Chapter 7, generally Malaysian parents in this pre-school follow the four main religions, namely Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. All the parents put religion as a guide in forming the basic behaviour of their children. The value of religious practices adopted by parents can be seen in the effects of the value of being caring and helpful to their children. It helps to develop the attitude of love to all human beings and God's creation, including other animals and plants. The only difference is the approach and philosophy, but these have the same goal. For example, through practices such as fasting practiced by Islam, the children are taught how to feel hunger as if they were impoverished people. The Malay parents practise Islam as an adaptation between Malay norms and values and Islamic values. Muslim children are nurtured in aspects such as worship (for example, performing the “*solat*” or prayers) and obeying the responsibilities of Muslim life. Parents force their children to perform their religious obligations. Islam is a way of life. The *Qur'an* is the guidance which helps to shape the values and personality of children and develops the value of love. The Chinese parents' practice of Buddhism has been adapted to Chinese culture and does not emphasise the worship of God or prayers, unlike Christianity, where there is more emphasis on teaching children about worshipping God or formal prayer. The principles of Buddhism emphasise self-restraint, control of feelings and emotions to develop appropriate and accepted manners. Most of the Indian parents practise Hinduism which is strongly held on the code of conduct and this influences the behaviour of family members. Awareness of this will make the children know their responsibilities and understand the worship of god. They also tend to force their children to perform religious obligations.

The meeting point concerns the religious backgrounds of the parents as adapted by the ethnic culture, but Malay parents and Indian Hindu parents tend to force their children to perform religious obligations. As seen in Chapter 7, based on my observations of the social behaviour of children, the effects of religious practices on behaviour can be seen as obedient, compliant with instructions, respectful,

respected, sharing and helpful. The effect of the capital of religion can be found in the social behaviour of children of all ethnic groups as regards to respecting the teachers and older people like parents who come to visit them. The Muslim children will greet the Muslim teachers with the “*salaam*” while the non-Muslim students will say “Good morning” when they meet their teachers in the morning or “Farewell” when they leave to go home. They will also “*salaam*” the parents who come to the school. The value of respect is also shown through the kissing of the teachers’ hands during the current meeting and when they go home. This value is synonymous not only with Malays but can also be seen in the effects of pre-school ethos concerning the Chinese and Indians. This finding is consistent with Batson (1983), Ulsner (1999) and Krauss, Hamzah and Idris (2007) who have proposed the role of religion in promoting prosocial behaviour and as the guiding principle of one’s life, showing children good behaviour. The main outcomes show that the parents emphasise religious values to promote social behaviour of children like helpfulness, respect and sharing behaviour. These findings show the importance of religious capital as one entity in the context of this study. When I interviewed the parents, I was impressed that religious capital is important to the parents in this study.

However, children have adapted to the current culture based on the current environment including behaviour. The children now behave depending on the environment to which they have been exposed. Apparently, the children have to rationalise with the current context of *adat* and this is based on the religion including the importance of traditional values to respect the elders. This has a prominent impact on children from the surrounding environment and their family values. The flexibility of parents is important in order to nurture the children’s behaviour. It is totally different compared to the previous decade of Malaysian development. Apparently, the times and environment have changed and the parents have to prepare the future generation for this challenge.

Family’s Social Capital and Children’s Social Behaviour

This section will look at the bonding between grandparents, parents and children, and the importance of parents’ network and social relationships. Families I was

investigating had a strong bonding social capital with the grandparents. With regards to the role of grandparents, the first findings showed that grandparents develop a close relationship and instil caring values, for example in respecting the elders. This prosocial behaviour value is important for a young child to develop personality at an early age and avoid any misconduct.

The evidence shows that the role of grandparents is more towards transferring norms and values, languages and characteristics. They do not interfere much in the academic aspect but provide help by being the carer of their grandchild. Grandparents who live together with their grandchild as an extended family play a strong role in nurturing him or her, especially in social development, language (i.e., mother tongue), ethnic norms and values and communication skills which they practise. Three commonalities in the roles of grandparents contributed towards the development of children. Firstly, the grandparent stressed worship and the elements of being obedient; secondly, the characteristics of grandchild with respect to the parents, and thirdly, the need to love one's parents, grandparents and others.

This study is similar to other research which states that children who have received resources from grandparents usually show positive characteristics (Al Awad & Sonuga-Barke, 1992; Hwang & James-Roberts, 1998; McConaughy & Achenbach, 1994). Most Malaysians follow the traditional East Asia cultures, which are influenced by their religions (Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism) representing the highest moral values (Majzub, 2006). This study showed the tendency in Chinese families in an urban area for members of the extended family to live with the nuclear family; grandparents usually practise their authority in the family and their descendants should obey them, consistent with other outcomes (Campbell, 1987; McConaughy & Achenbach, 1994). This practice is also followed by Indian families where the extended family lives in close proximity (Majzub, 2006).

However, most of the parents bonded with their parents even though their parents lived far away. I have categorised this into 3 types of bonded relationship between grandparents and grandchildren: staying together e.g., baby sitter and moral guide, staying apart but in the same local area e.g., part-time baby sitter, especially during weekends and school holidays; and separate but maintaining relationships

e.g., during school holidays and ceremonies like *Hari Raya*, *Tahun Baru Cina* and *Deepavali* etc. The religions of the parents bond them to relate with the extended family or to celebrate ethnic group ceremonies. This practice is consistent with Gregory (2010) who explained that grandparents bonded with nuclear families, even though they lived far away, as supporter, baby sitter and source of knowledge about heritage, language, norms and values.

Finally, these findings show a major effect from the parental social capital of this study as regards the network of social relationships in which families are embedded. This can be seen in Chapter 7 (Parents' influences the children's networks). The findings show interrelations between parents and the children's networks; both parents' networks of other adults and children's network of other children as well as members of social networks, e.g., providing a source of possible play partners for children. This is consistent with other research by Cochran and Neigo (1995) which reported that there is an overlap between parent and child social networks.

I found the community members showed interdependent values in raising their children. Interdependence relationships between community members that I found in this PERPADUAN Pre-school go beyond the ethnic groups. Parents explained that neighbourhood obligations were practised in this community, including taking care of neighbours' children or "*ambiltahu*" as part of the social capital obligation, in order to encourage behaviours like respecting elders, helpfulness, cooperation and caring for the community. However, this is a case study which involved only parents surrounding the pre-school. In line with the concept of collectivistic (Triandis, et al., 1988) cultures like other East Asia cultures, the PERPADUAN Pre-school context in general helps to foster connectedness and interdependence among the parents, teachers and children in the community by guiding, socializing and nurturing the children's behaviour. Social capital in the community can aid the parents' socialization of their children through several pathways.

9.5 Pre-school Ethos and Parental Perspective

Pre-school Curriculum

There are two main issues highlighted in Chapter 8 regarding the PERPADUAN Pre-school goals and the curriculum: instilling children with “tolerance” or multicultural society, and nurturing multi-ethnic relationships. The PERPADUAN Pre-school goal is to unite children from different ethnic groups with integration values and ideals towards national unity. It has always been the ambition to immerse the children’s development in a set of guidance for respecting other ethnic group’s culture; respecting other religions and developing shared values and tolerance in a multicultural society. This pre-school also emphasises the nurturing of national values that children can adopt and appreciate in a plural society. This PERPADUAN Pre-school goal is in line with the parental norms and values in order to develop a sense of “tolerance with multicultural society”. The PERPADUAN Pre-school routines such as singing songs like “*Negaraku*” (Malaysia Anthem), reciting the “*Rukun Negara*” (Malaysia Principle) and respecting the national flag of Malaysia, have helped in developing the children’s citizenship. These issues are supported by the pre-school documentation, researcher observation and field notes, and teacher and parents’ interviews. The two practices are similar to the answers from the parents’ perspectives as they expected their children to be doing well in cognitive and social development, as well as the positive effects on the children. This impact on the children can be perceived in the children’s social behaviour in pre-school.

With these ideas in mind with regard to the second goal, we can see the impact on the children of the pre-school goal of developing multi-ethnic relationships via the way they relate to each other and develop friendships as shown in the Friendship Networks (refer to Figure 6.1). There are two ways in which the pre-school encourages children to engage with others, the geographical space of the room or seating arrangement, and the pedagogical approach. The children’s relationships in classroom were influenced by how the teacher distributed the children through the geographical space of the room. Mixing children at the pre-school level gives them a chance to understand and appreciate the views and feelings of others, irrespective of ethnicity and background. I observed that this affected the children’s experience

through the amount of access the children had to others, how well they could cooperate and share together. The teacher had information on each child from the registration form that each parent had filled out and this form gave a lot of details about the home, family background, area and general status of the family. It became the basis for deciding where the children would sit in classroom. The children placed in group one differed from the children placed in group two, according to their background such as ethnic group, gender, language, cognitive aspect and behaviour. The ones who talked most in their mother tongue and Malay were grouped with those with least knowledge in Malay, with the intention that they would help others in terms of language communication. These findings are similar to the findings of Corsaro and Molinari (2000), who stated that the children's earlier experiences in priming events in the pre-school were important in their adjustment to new rules, schedules and participant structures of instruction in the first grade.

The Learning Approach

The pre-school provides learning through play and thematic approach activities that can enhance creativity among the children, such as pretend play. A child learns to express himself through play, and play can also enrich his or her language, vocabulary development and peer interaction across the ethnic groups. They learn something through play, starting with observing their friends in the socialisation processes, learning how to empathise and how to expand their minds. As well as gaining cognitively, the children also learn the rules of play, team work and how to respect and appreciate others socially. The learning through play approach develops peer interaction across the ethnic groups. Children need to be exposed to play activities because they learn socialisation and rules and, perhaps the most important of all, the development of humanistic values. The thematic and integrated approaches develop the children's experience with aspects of everyday life such as Malaysian culture, belief and religion, and these transcend skills, knowledge and attitudes.

In terms of learning method, this study is consistent with the School Inspectorate report which stated that in all the public pre-schools visited, 79.5 % of

the teachers were using the learning-through-play method, 83.6% were using the thematic approach and 78% using the integrated approach (Malaysia, 2008). My study is also consistent with the EPRD Study which indicated a positive response towards the effects of learning through play, thematic and integrated approach. However, it is inconsistent with the CDC study conducted by MOE in the year 2007 wholly on the implementation of NPC, specifically classroom teaching and learning. The findings from the classroom teaching and learning approaches indicated a less favourable situation (Malaysia, 2008). However, these outcomes were found at a National Pre-school which is dominated by Malay children and so is not applicable to the situation in the PERPADUAN Pre-school. Reflecting on my study, which stressed learning through play as an important role for the different ethnic backgrounds to mix naturally with each other instead of the teacher led planning programmes, I found some parents with higher socio-economic and educational backgrounds who agreed that the learning through play approach encouraged the children's social development. However, three parents from a lower educational background had a negative view of this approach, as they felt that it is a waste of the children's time and that the children would have less concentration in their cognitive activities.

In terms of home norms and values, this study has focused on the parents' perspective about home practices. The teacher will encourage home values in the pre-school and this pre-school function as a transition centre for the children from different ethnic groups to adapt to Malaysian culture without interfering in the ethnic norms. PERPADUAN Pre-school is perceived to provide the most powerful context to socialise children in the transition process through the commonalities between the parental capital from different ethnic groups and the pre-school ethos. Therefore, learning through play and the thematic approach have helped in priming the children's peer culture through sharing multi-ethnic group cultures. Sharing hands-on experience through play helps to develop the children's peer culture which in turn contributes towards their understanding of the multi-ethnic society. A good quality pre-school will include an effective pedagogical approach which encourages learning dispositions favouring the development of social and behavioural development, and

which can benefit children, particularly those from low socio-economic classes, for the rest of their lives. This is consistent with previous research by McLyod (1998) and Sylva (2010). Meanwhile, in terms of the relationship between the home culture and the pre-school ethos, these findings show an interconnection with the PERPADUAN Pre-school as a centre for the reproduction of Malaysian multicultural aspects through developing the peer centre as a mini-Malaysia. This finding enhances the conceptual interpretative reproduction by Corsaro (2005) which shows how pre-school primes the peer culture and reproduction according to parental norms and values.

Another positive impact is evident in the building of children's social skills especially in order for them to interact and communicate among the different ethnic groups. The PERPADUAN Pre-school expects the children to play well with others, to communicate and interact well, and to share and co-operate with other children. This finding is similar to studies by Sandberg and Vuorinen (2008) which indicate that children are given the opportunity to practise their social skills in the pre-school. There are two main points about the PERPADUAN Pre-schools' curriculum and pre-school approach toward the children's diverse ethnic background which include:

- a) Parents' lower socio-economic values disagree with learning through play
- b) Parental expectation- Less emphasis on cognitive development compared to private pre-schools from the Chinese parents and less religious aspect for the Malay parents

These two points have a major impact on the parents regarding the pre-school education for their children which may influence some parents to prefer educational attainment instead of social skills at the pre-school level. Some parents disagree with the pre-school pedagogical approach, others prefer this pre-school to channel their children towards Malay religious education that leads to the behaviour of children in the pre-school. A few parents from the lower education background and lower socio-economic status would prefer their children to learn academic subjects such as arithmetic and language directly rather than learning through play. They came up with negative perspectives towards the pre-school approach and felt that the approach wasted their children's time and caused the children to show less

concentration in their cognitive activities. The two Indian parents totally rejected the pre-school approach of learning through play because it contradicts with their style at home where their children learn directly from books. They believed that this style take time. This concept also demotivates their children from concentrating on reading and makes them lazy to study or to do household tasks. According to the parents, they preferred their children to be good in Language and Mathematic subjects in order for them to help the family to run the store. When I compared both views, the socio-economic status and educational back ground of parents who agreed with learning through play are higher than parents who disagreed with it.

Educational attainment and being successful were more important to Chinese parents than Malay and Indian parents in this study. Being successful at the pre-school level is an indicator of the children's attainment and future schooling. It has been associated with having the social skills which lead to children's characteristics and competence in their future schooling. Most of the Chinese parents agreed that being successful in pre-school and future schooling would indicate the children's economic success. These conclusions seem consistent with the results from several other investigations reporting on ethnic minority parents' enthusiastic attitudes and expectations about the value of education and future schooling of their children (Chao, 1996, 2001; Li, 2004, 2007). This finding is similar to Brooker's study (2002) which found that parents' belief in the importance of young children's play, and their knowledge that little children are supposed to learn through play and 'discovery' rather than through direct instruction, gives rise to considerable unease when it comes to teaching at home. The majority of parents showed more confidence in their parental duty to instruct their children in a culturally appropriate curriculum at an appropriate time; inculcating religious knowledge, teaching the alphabets and counting systems, committed to more explicit teaching, and in view of learning as transmission for future success. One case shows the importance of reading, writing and reciting under the supervision and tuition of a (tutor) teacher.

In this study, we can see different ideas from the parents' overall perspective about the pre-school, one of which is that the parents would not prefer the PERPADUAN Pre-school if they had other choices because this type of pre-school

does not emphasise religious aspects, and there is less emphasis on exam orientation and attainment values. This pre-school shows less emphasis on cognitive development as compared to private pre-school. With these ideas in mind, we can see that the parents prefer a pre-school which provides their child with educational attainment. However, other factors like socio-economic status, proximity to home and free tuition fee are reasons why the parents have chosen this pre-school. This result is similar with the study by Sammons (2010) who suggests that the pre-school centres in neighbourhoods with a social mix may be difficult to achieve in practice, as many parents prefer centres closer to home, and because of the extent to which social and ethnic groups cluster in some neighbourhoods.

Medium of Instruction and Languages

One importance of multi-ethnic pre-school offering bilingual programmes is that it enables Malay, Chinese and Indian children to develop stronger self-confidence and mutual respect for the cultural values of the second language, and to play a more positive role in both the home and pre-school. In general, the diversity of language used in PERPADUAN Pre-school is quite apparent and this is commonly shared by the teachers, children and parents. The Malay language is used as a medium of instruction across components or subjects and is the medium of communication in pre-school. The teacher provides various meaningful learning experiences such as storytelling, singing, discussing, and role play to acquire language skills. This provides opportunities for children from different ethnic groups to communicate in Malay in daily activities. With the Malay medium environment and mixing children together among the three ethnic groups, within 3 months the Chinese and Indian children can communicate with others. In order to enhance the attainment in Malay and other languages for the children, especially the non-Malays, the pre-school has arranged extra classes such as Malay Phonics, Mandarin, and English Classes. These classes were initiated by the PTA with an aim to help language acquisition among children. It shows that the pre-school language policy and practice encourage the children's mastery of additional languages i.e. Malay, and enhance the maintenance of the mother tongue. According to Siraj-Blatchford and Clarke (2000) who

described this process as a ‘sequential or successive acquisition’, this occurs when the children begin to learn a second language after the first language is partially established (p. 29). In this case, the Chinese and Indian children starting pre-school first acquire the home language in the family and then acquire Malay when entering the early childhood setting.

Another important issue related to the pre-school ethos as perceived by the parents concerns the medium of instruction and language diversity. On the basis of analysis, most of the parents appeared to think positively about *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay) and English as the *lingua franca* (main medium of communication). As discussed in Chapter 7, Malay is the national language and English is an important second language. The parents expected their children to have knowledge of other languages as well as their mother tongue after attending school. All parents approved of the pre-school policy which encourages the children to learn more than one language by providing language learning support such as extra classes. The parents view pre-school as playing a major role in developing the Malay language and communication skills.

All the non-Malay parents placed a high value on their children’s educational success in learning a second language at this multi-ethnic pre-school. The PERPADUAN Pre-school is part of the national pre-school system and in terms of finance it is fully funded and controlled by the government agency. Most of the parents have a significantly favourable perception of the language policy of the Malaysian state which is “Malay”. It is generally agreed that in Malaysia the main ethnic groups speak different languages, i.e. Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, and so the Malaysian community is high in language diversity (Asmah, 1982, 1983; Gill, 2005). The parents expected the language the children were using in pre-school to incorporate home values. This research is in line with other studies which explained that most parents and pre-school teachers see that pre-school aids in the child’s language development (Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008; Tizard & Hughes, 1984). I have emphasised here that the PERPADUAN Pre-school gives children the opportunities and ability to learn about and to enhance their mother tongue and to practise languages other than Malay.

There are impacts on the children:

a) Multilingual home practices influences the child's interactions

I found in this study that a child who knows more than one language can communicate with more children and more children are confident with him/her. Children who can communicate in more than one language tend to interact with other children from different ethnic groups. A multilingual home may be described as demonstrating the strong features of the popular child as seen in the Friendship Network. Malay language as a medium of communication is an important tool that helps a child to communicate with other children. Fluency in Malay and other languages has become an advantage for children to converse meaningfully with others and it also gives others confidence to befriend them. I found that multilingual and linguistic capital at home affected the children's behaviour and relationships. These findings suggest that different forms of family language capital are significant in shaping children's second-language learning which is consistent with Li's study (2007) which reported a significant impact on the families' accumulation and activation of family capital to support the children's second-language learning.

b) Mother tongue as the children's language preference

I found that the children felt more comfortable using their mother tongue even though they are bilingual. Although most of the children are bilingual and have freedom of language preferences, they would rather use their own mother tongue most of the time, either during free time or in formal communication. For example, in a formal situation, some children would communicate in Mandarin with the assistant teacher who was Chinese. However, when the children communicated with friends of other ethnic groups, they had no choice other than using Malay. Of course if the children of a Chinese or Indian ethnic group had to choose, they would choose their mother tongue when interacting with peers of the same ethnic background.

c) School as a complement to the home

Pre-school is seen as a complement to the home partly when it comes to identifying the development of child's language at the pre-school ages and partly when it comes to more common school preparation. Within a conducive environment, the pre-

school's role is to strengthen the language, that is, help the children improve their language. The pre-school identifies and configures the child's language into acceptable behaviour between parental language and pre-school ethos and actual contexts of Malaysia. It does strengthen the Malay language of not only the Chinese and Indian but also the Malay children as a medium for multi-ethnic communication.

The teacher faces a linguistic barrier and requires a variety of teaching skills to overcome it, especially in responding to the Chinese and Indian children who communicate with classmates and teachers of the PERPADUAN Pre-school in their mother tongue. However, the teacher described how the differences in socio-cultural and economic backgrounds have created a strong impact on the language use among the Malay, Chinese and Indian children in pre-school. It seems that the difference in language use has become a barrier to ethnic integration. The teacher spoke of the prevalent negative attitude of some children towards learning and using Malay, and integrating with children of other ethnic groups and languages. Also, as mentioned by the teacher, less fluency in Malay affects the children's ability to interact, the children's personal character, leading to less confidence in the classroom and the need for a long transition period. This study has shown that the PERPADUAN Pre-school has accepted the challenges of multi-ethnic children. This finding is consistent with studies by Howes, Sander & Lee (2008) which suggest that children who lacked peers from a shared ethnic heritage and children who spoke a language at home different from the language most often used in the classrooms appeared to be struggling with peer interaction.

Pre-school Setting

The PERPADUAN Pre-school was founded to inculcate integration values and ideals towards national unity for the three major ethnic groups as targeted for every child. The aims include the need to integrate or assimilate the children and to get them ready and familiar with the concepts, information, language and values required by a multi-ethnic society. In this case, in the parents' point of view, the pre-school activities are important for the children in a multi-ethnic pre-school in order for them

to understand and accept the heterogeneous ethnic groups and social structures of the wider society. Several activities that are central to this approach are worthy of mention here.

The geographical space such as the seating plan, furniture arrangement, the amount of classroom resources and equipment, and the availability of outdoor areas are translated into children's attitudes. Classroom management and seating plan are a crucial part of the pre-school integration and unity programmes. It is strongly believed that the seating plan encourages the children to mix and swap well with each other. Teachers can maintain the meaningfulness of the activities for the children when they take account of those aspects of the activity that the children cannot (yet) carry out independently. Through this, the teachers construct zones of proximal development for the children and lay out a step-by-step learning route (Malaysia) which is tailored to the needs and abilities of the children. The result suggests that the children of different ethnic groups in pre-school "mixed" as a result of the mixed ethnic seating arrangement in the classroom. The major aim for the classroom seating arrangement is to encourage children to communicate, and build a positive interaction, especially in Malay as the national language.

Another issue concerning the setting of the pre-school is the use of materials which represent the ethnic groups. The surrounding of the pre-school setting is made up of materials which represent the ethnic groups and this provides a climate of Malaysian culture for the children and gives them a psychological message that affects their social behaviour. The features of the pre-school materials totally stimulate children's learning behaviour and develop a holistic development. This study is consistent with studies by Majzub (2006) and Prochner, Clegmen & Green (2008) who examined the way the pre-school space is constructed and used with reference to pedagogical materials. Materials are described as an element of the spatiality of pre-school, their meaning constructed from the interaction between physical and social forces, and which cultivated the children's aesthetic sense and self-confidence (Prochner, et al., 2008, p. 190). Materials in the pre-school space encourage the children's interactions. It depends in what way the pre-school materials and environment reflect the three ethnic backgrounds. This includes the

design of the building, its location in the community, the people, materials, and furnishings within it.

Furthermore, the teacher also cultivates the children's aesthetic sense and self-confidence by creating attractive environments; for example, they select colours and designs that are in accordance with the children's aesthetic taste when decorating their classrooms and outdoor environments, and they also put up or hang children's photos, drawings or handiwork on the walls of their classrooms, so that children can obtain more direct experience from their surroundings. Apparently, the PERPADUAN Pre-school teacher here has gradually focused on creating a social ecological environment that reflects the ethnic background and Malaysian culture. However, the information about materials needs to be inline between pre-school and home so that parents are clear about the school's expectations and their own expectations, and how they are considered an important part of the school community. Receiving the right information gives parents the opportunity to help and support their children at pre-school or home. The environment is organised so that children can choose materials and actively learn through play with blocks, construction kits, puzzles, and dressing-up with miniature home equipment, what Levy (2008) calls 'small-world play' which is in line with home's world.

The niche of PERPADUAN Pre-school is addressing the multi-ethnic groups' cultures in pre-school practices. The parents considered the PERPADUAN Pre-school as having its own strengths to accumulate the diversified cultures of appropriate behaviour from the differences with regards to home background into a single place. Being a respectful child, having good manners, being polite and sociable, are considered appropriate behaviour for the children on which all parents insist, but some of the parents show that they also want their children to be obedient. Prominently, the findings show that the parents placed a higher value on children who respect parents, teachers and elders according to the norms of Malaysian contexts. For example, the parents inculcate the children with two practices: firstly, respect for parents, teacher and elders starts at home. A child will be taught at home by family members how to act and speak respectfully. Secondly, the parents practise a hierarchy of authority among the family members to maintain respect. According to

the children's views, even though there is a little different practice at home and in the pre-school in terms of everyday routine such as prosocial behaviour, respectful behaviour, i.e. greeting, they understand the concept and meaning of a greeting, which is to please other people. So, it is a teaching process for the children to become aware of and appreciate their own and other cultures which have been accepted as the national culture. Some children would like to show respect to others by doing things which they have observed as being culturally practised by other ethnic groups. Therefore, in line with these parental norms and values, the pre-school teacher has similar practices in order to sustain acceptable behaviour. Both practices have an important impact on the children in order for them to develop appropriate behaviour according to universal social norms, especially in regard to the respect of elders. This is consistent with previous research by Kitayama, Markus and Kurokawa (2000) which states that parents socialise their children towards the development of interdependent relationships to facilitate interpersonal harmony and unity.

However, based on my observation, I found that the pre-school ethos has followed a neutral approach that includes justification of what and why the children should be respectful and obedient to the parents, teacher and elders in order to nurture children's conformity to parental and pre-school authority. The implementation of the pre-school code of conduct and regulation is the learning process for the children to adapt to official regulation. This process is an on-going process between the children and the pre-school teacher which needs supervision. It encourages the child to develop the ability to assume responsibility for their own actions and limit their own behaviour.

Another important finding shows that the pre-school encourages the children to be aware of the beliefs and customs of religious groups in a multicultural society with the introduction of religious beliefs through Islamic Education and Moral Education. The teaching of spiritual and moral aspects contains components of Islamic Education for the Muslim students and Moral Education for the non-Muslim students. Both subjects emphasise moral values which are inculcated in the classroom practices. The classroom environment is the best place for the children to understand what kind of moral values they need for life. At the same time, children

can realise the position of moral values that they practise and what the acceptance of moral value practice would look like. The teaching of moral values is important to encourage children from multi-ethnic backgrounds to understand and practise acceptable values. This is done in order to inculcate moral values to the children as part of the teaching practice.

For maximum impact on ethnic integration and unity, the PERPADUAN Pre-school routine and teaching cultural elements were accepted by the parents. The routines include Hand-Kissing during arrival time, Morning Assembly, the *Salaam*, the “*Rukun Negara*” (Malaysia Principle) and “*Negaraku*” (Malaysia Anthem), the *dua* during snack time, starting and ending lessons, and celebrating festivals in Malaysia. The children’s involvement in these kinds of activities could increase their understanding of the different ethnic groups that make up Malaysia. The hand-kissing ritual is an element of Malay culture. This ritual is encouraged, as it serves to emphasise the values of respecting one’s elders, particularly one’s teachers, and this is present in both Islam and Malay traditions. This kind of ritual has become the regular basis for all children because it is acceptable with the other ethnic groups as part of showing respect to elders.

However, some parents said that the pre-school practices seemed to disregard cultures other than Malay and proposed that the multi-ethnic pre-school should incorporate the three ethnic group cultures of Malay, Chinese and Indian. They viewed that it is important for a multi-ethnic pre-school to nurture children with the three languages and different cultures as the keys for ethnic integration and understanding of ethnic belonging. These parents are concerned that practising elements of Islam at pre-school contradicted what they gave their children at home. I found that some parents were worried about the *Islamisation* of the PERPADUAN Pre-school. Some of the non-Malay parents are “scared and afraid” of the Muslim “*dua*” and the hand kissing. The teacher has discussed with the parents’ committee members about the aims of “*dua*” and hand kissing, which are not to create *Islamisation* or a dominant culture. However, some of the reactions and reflections on the routines suggest that it creates prejudice and has developed fear among parents, especially the non-Malays. In the curriculum there are two subjects which

are taught separately, The Islamic Religion for the Muslims [Malay and others] and Moral Education for non-Muslims (Chinese, Indian and others). These two subjects show the school policy has embedded Islamic and moral values into the curriculum. The school is attempting not to *Islamise* the culture, so not only is the teacher saying there is no *Islamisation* but there are practices which indicate it is not *Islamisation*; nevertheless, the parents are still concerned.

Finally, PERPADUAN Pre-school can be considered a “Mini Malaysia” based on the ethnic situation in the school which reflects the diversity of Malaysian society. With reference to the composition of children from multi-ethnic groups, cultural diversity is practised among the children in the classroom, especially during festive celebrations. This pre-school is a centre for the government agency to transfer the national values to the children; transmitting positive cultural and religious tolerance is of utmost importance in order to guarantee a harmonious community. The teacher has exposed the children with the cultures of every ethnic group to ensure they have the sensitivity towards other ethnic groups. This PERPADUAN Pre-school is a model of a multi-ethnic pre-school and has become a reference for the Department of National Unity and Integration and other departments in Malaysia. Each ethnic group in this community respects the other ethnic groups’ culture and beliefs and should not get trapped in the shallow thinking that one’s ethnic culture and religion is the only one that is right and perfect. Therefore, the pre-school ethos works in line with the behaviour accepted by the parents and community, and this is consistent with findings from Corsaro and Molinari (2000) on the types of priming events in the pre-school in which children participate and attend prospectively to on-going or anticipated in activities have changed their lives. They identify different types of priming events in pre-school and show how collective activities in these events affect the children's representations (p.16). I found that different types of priming events involving children’s collective and practical activities with others in the pre-school setting such as seating formation, school routines and rituals, are crucial in priming children’s behaviour.

9.6 Summary of Chapter 9

This final part of this thesis draws together the findings of the study and reflects on them in order to link them with the theoretical framework. I strongly rely on the theoretical concept of cultural capital. The evidence from this study demonstrates that, despite the different ethnic backgrounds, there exists a meeting point of parental and pre-school norms and values, religion, and language. The parents value their children's behaviour and want their children to behave well and to show prosocial behaviour in the context of the multi-ethnic pre-school. All parents expressed deep interest and concern about their children's social behaviour like helpfulness, cooperation, respect and positive relationships. They believed that promoting prosocial behaviour, relationships and unity among children is a responsibility shared between parents and the pre-school teacher. Another issue shows that the parents emphasise religious values to promote social behaviour of children like helpfulness, respect and sharing behaviour. These findings show the importance of religious capital as one entity in the context of this study. This is a link to the theory that success is dependent on parental and pre-school cultural capital.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Introduction

The objective of this final chapter is to summarise and draw conclusions from the main findings of the study related to children's relationships; parental cultural and social capital, and pre-school setting; "Reproduction of Mini Malaysia". This is followed with discussion the implications for the development of theory, practices and methodology; identify the limitations of the study; and offer suggestions for future research endeavours as well as reflections on my research role and experience.

10.2 Children's Relationships

Two patterns of peer relationships emerged in this pre-school setting: short-term friendships and close friendships. These peer relationships were visible in children's prosocial behaviour such as sharing, cooperating, helpful and respectful behaviour, as an important element in peer cultures. Friendships were frequently instigated by popular children who have social skills and language ability. Children formed short-term friendships within and between ethnic groups but close friendships relied on reciprocity, shared play, shared ethnicities and gender. The friendships were developed by play activities initiated by the children. Children have a chance to relate when they play together among different ethnic groups and do not create borders but they do have a sense of gender in their play patterns.

Children relate to each other through play activities and here the use of language is more complex than in most other activities. Play activities provides rich opportunities for children learning language, especially interactive play. In this study children learned to use Malay in communication with others because they want to develop relationships with others. I notice that when children communicate with friends of other ethnic groups, they have no choice other than using *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay language). Of course, if the children of Chinese or Indian ethnic groups had to choose, they would prefer to use their mother tongue when interacting with peers

of their own ethnic background. For example, Chinese and Indian children become fluent in *Bahasa Melayu* as they interact with their Malay counterpart. For them in order to belong in the group they have to learn *bahasa*. The impact is children actually want to learn Malay because social relationships are being developed across language groups. The study provides evidence that play develops children's language ability to communicate and enhances the Malay language as a tool for interaction and for self-expression. It has been observed that if the children understand the language they are interacting in, it creates a playful environment which is much more fun.

10.3 Parental Cultural and Social Capital

This current study revealed that family norms and values, the role of parental language, parenting styles, and religious capital affect children's social behaviour. These findings show that ethnic background is very significant in order to develop children's behaviour based on ethnic groups. All the parents regarded religion as a guide for the basic behaviour of their children. The values of religious practices adopted by parents were seen in the effects of the respectful and obedient behaviour of their children in pre-school. Another meeting point is parental languages towards respectfulness. The parents from the three ethnic groups of this study emphasise the practices of "*budi bahasa*" and using proper respectful pronouns when children interact with their elders. In this context, the findings show that children negotiate, share and create norms and values with parents and each other in order to reproduce parental norms and values. Children participate in cultural routines at home and adapt norms and values as appropriate within the current context.

This study shows grandparents, community members and parental networks all impact on the child. On the one hand, a child's individual development is affected by the multi-ethnicity of the community which promotes multi-ethnic interaction in pre-school. On the other hand, grandparents play an important role at home in maintaining the child's individual ethnic and linguistic identity. Therefore the One Malaysia concept inculcated in pre-school does not swamp and hide individual ethnic and linguistic identity. The important role of grandparents means that the interethnic and multi-ethnic interaction in pre-school will not lead to what some of the parents

fear, which is the children losing their individual ethnic, religious and linguistic identity in pre-school. The implication is not only parental involvement but grandparent involvement is necessary. Therefore, the One Malaysia concept is truly One Malaysia with the freedom to preserve individual cultural identity.

10.4 Pre-school Setting: “Reproduction of Mini Malaysia”

The main finding from PERPADUAN Pre-school ethos toward children’s social development is to promote a feeling of unity and acceptance among the ethnically diverse society of Malaysia. The pre-school teacher and parents see that it is the responsibility of PERPADUAN Pre-school to instil in all Malaysian children the knowledge they will need to integrate and participate in a common shared national culture, values and identity toward One Malaysia.

Learning through play and thematic approaches are significant in PERPADUAN Pre-school as a means for the pre-school to reproduce a multi-ethnic Malaysian culture in order to promote prosocial behaviour towards ethnic integration and national unity. Firstly, the pre-school curriculum practises “learning through play” to develop interrelationships between ethnic groups. Secondly, the “thematic approach” and integrated approach develop children’s experience with everyday lives as regards Malaysian culture, belief and religion, and incorporate skills, knowledge and attitudes. For integration to take place effectively, the idea of creating “common behaviour between different cultures” which is composed of common knowledge, values and attitude of a nation and promoting children of diverse ethnic groups to take part in the process, are regarded by many as important and desirable. This pre-school becomes a model, a “Mini Malaysia” in that the communities who live here are ethnically diverse and practise cultural diversity, such as celebrating festivals in Malaysia (e.g., *Hari Raya*, *Tahun Baru Cina* and *Deepavali*). Every child has been exposed to different cultures and the most important thing is sensitivity to other ethnic groups.

Meanwhile, it can be argued that it is still good practice that children’s behaviour is sustained and maintained based on their own family or ethnic group

beliefs and traditions. When these groups of children from different ethnicities and cultural norms come into contact, they may adapt to the traditions and beliefs of the other cultural group, but not to the extent that “their culture melted away”. This is because some of their ethnic group beliefs and traditions are now part of the “common culture” of Malaysia. In the end this helps them to feel that their ethnic groups’ culture is respected and accepted. However, the challenges for this pre-school are to explain to those parents who feel learning through play wastes children’s time and gives children less concentration towards their cognitive activities compared to the traditional approach. These parents rejected the pre-school approach of learning through play because it contradicts with their style at home where their children learn directly from the book. They believe that this play style takes time and demotivates children to read books.

Based on my conclusion and my synthesis of evidence and theoretical framework, I have constructed a *Model of an ecological study of a Malaysian multi-ethnic pre-school*, developed from the data of this study. The evidence has enabled me to remodel the original theoretical framework based on themes from the study. The development of the theoretical framework Version 1 (Figure 4.1), generated from my synthesis of the theoretical literature, drove the study in the first place, and Version 2 (Figure 10.1) responds to the data. Version 2 of the model incorporates the insights gained from my empirical evidence. Three circles in the centre of the diagram show the children from different ethnic groups - Malay (green), Chinese (red), and Indian (C. Ho, Bluestein, & Jenkins) - in microsystems. The model is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

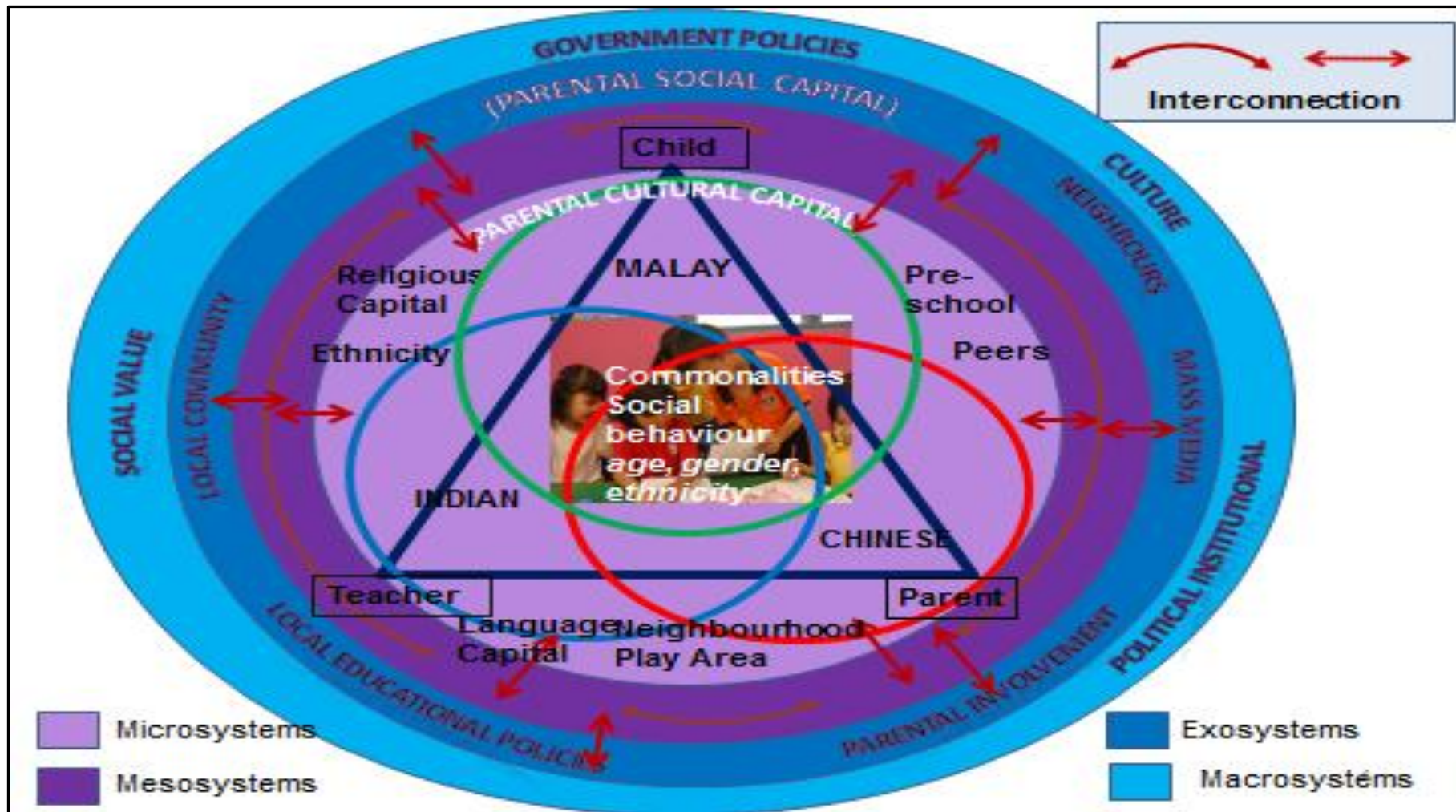


Figure 10.1: Version 2: Model of an ecological study of a Malaysian multi-ethnic pre-school

10.5 Theoretical Implications

The development of the model

i) The overlapping of the three ethnic groups is based on the commonalities between them. Children from the three ethnic backgrounds have adapted all three different cultures as common values in pre-school. There emerged four sets of commonalities between children regarding social behaviour: the centre shows the commonalities between the three ethnic groups; the overlap between Malay and Chinese; the overlap between Malay and Indian; and the overlap between Indian and Chinese children. The model also indicates the interconnection and bidirectional relations between children from the three ethnic groups. There are similarities and differences in behaviour between ethnic groups and within ethnic groups. The commonalities in behaviour were influenced by age, gender, and ethnicities of children. Some behaviour which is related to ethnicity or religion was not similar, belonging with and involving only one ethnic group. The centre of the model shows the overlapping of children's prosocial behaviour norms and values e.g. respect, obedience and language. The results from the empirical evidence show that every layer of the ecological model contributes to the children's development. At the first stage a child internalizes and adopts an appropriate culture. At the second stage, children reinvent and reproduce culture, especially norms and values, and Multilanguage of their cultures.

This disposition characteristic of children is the most influential in shaping the development of children's behaviour through zones of proximal development processes. This idea drove me to synthesise my data from the parents' cultural capital, which developed children's proximal processes according to their ethnicities, toward the children's social behaviour. Bourdieu's perspectives of the importance of habitus and different forms of capital factors influence children's lives in a variety of ways. A child's characteristics related to early childhood are experienced and inculcated in the parental capital but manifest in different ways in each individual as a habitus (see section 4.4 Chapter 4). Firstly, I found that the characteristic of child's disposition represented the

way parents exert ethnic norms and values, and all capital into a child's life processes plays a huge part in the context of my study. Secondly, the differences of child's disposition as I have indicated in this study (Figure 10.1) as the centre elements in the diagram which are related to children's social behaviour such as age, gender and ethnic groups. Ethnic background and gender contribute to the development of a child's disposition.

ii) There are existing inter-connected links between the elements in order to shape children's behaviour. The arrows in Figure 10.1 show inter-connections between elements from different levels. For example, each element at microsystem level is related to and influenced by the exosystem and macrosystem. Parents from different ethnic backgrounds occupy each level and each system by their inter-connections. The elements from the microsystem are also influenced by and related to the exosystem and macrosystem.

I believe that the findings from the investigation of family social capital in this study, the inter-connection between parents, grandparents and children in the microsystem, have important implications for early childhood research. In consideration of their role, grandparents are seen as important resources, and they might well have more time with their grandchildren. This study demonstrates how grandparents are excellent teachers of mother tongue language and literacy, especially in Chinese and Indian families. They also play a special role in developing children's skills and knowledge related to ethnicities compared to the parents. In some respects, grandparents have considerable family reference of the heritage of families and language, as well as knowledge of religion, norms and values of ethnicities, and other cultural practices important for the young child's developing disposition. In many ways, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is a synergistic process.

Furthermore, the findings show that a major effect of parental social capital of this study is the parental network of social relationships in which families are embedded. Parents' networks provide a source of possible play partners for children's networks in pre-school and the neighbourhood playground area. Interrelations in the network between

children, peers, parents and neighbourhood play area are shown in the model as members of social networks.

The diagram shows the children's social behaviour in the context of a multi-ethnic country such as Malaysia, showing the "dynamic social environment context". I have considered the elements in the systems, such as the elements from the macrosystem (e.g., social values and ideologies influencing the extended family culture, family structure, community, and social capital of family), exosystem (e.g., the parental social capital elements influencing children's behaviour informally thorough the parents) and the microsystem (parental cultural capital, pre-school, neighbourhood play area and peer), are dynamic. I have extended the elements of parental cultural capital into the norms and values of ethnicity, religious capital, and language capital that emerged from this study as contributing to the children's behaviour. On the one hand, the findings show the norms and values of ethnicities as the most important element influencing children's behaviour. On the other hand, the evidence shows that religious principles dominate norms and values. In the case of Malay and Indian families especially, religion is important to them as a way of life. This includes appearance, what their children wear, and how their children show respect to parents, teachers and adults such as kissing the teacher's hand and mixing with people in a way permitted by religion.

iii) The pre-school is a transition centre for children from different ethnic groups to adapt to the Malaysian culture without interference from the norms of other ethnic groups. PERPADUAN Pre-schools is at the centre of a microsystem to produce an effective model of social behaviour among families from different backgrounds (interrelations setting in microsystem), in a multicultural community (exosystem) and with different cultural, and ethnic political association (macrosystem) as seen in Figure 10.1. The finding also seems to show prominently that learning through play in multi-ethnic pre-school is a package for children incorporating language and social skills toward social behaviour and relationships. The findings of the present study show learning through play seems to stimulate and integrate a wide range of children's social behaviour such as being helpful, sharing, and cooperating, being respectful, and creating abilities to develop

a good relationships. Based on my observation, PERPADUAN Pre-school prepares children for real life in a multi-ethnic context, e.g. living democratically, living with differences and having the ability to cope with ambiguity. The curriculum for PERPADUAN Pre-school represents diverse perspectives, experiences and contributions of several different Malaysian ethnic-cultural groups. For example, the children are exposed to others' cultures in school activities, working and sitting in mixed ethnic groups. It gives children the opportunity for real-time interaction or direct interaction with one or more individuals from different cultural groups; it also enriches the concept and skills of interaction or negotiation because it enables children to identify or elicit different interpretations as well as establish relationships of similarity and difference between them.

In PERPADUAN Pre-school, reflecting on some of the parents' perceptions of the curricular material, mostly they try to represent the people of Malaysia as of different ethnic backgrounds which are able to maintain integration. However their views, concepts and themes reflect the culture and interest of the popular, main, majority or dominant ethnic group such as the Malays. The knowledge and information children receive throughout their programmes, activities, teaching and learning thus convey multicultural Malaysia. Over-simplified bits of information can be misleading and can lead to stereotyping. The challenge to the pre-school is not only to have the appropriate contents, materials and visual display (such as books, references, posters) free of prejudice, racism, or stereotypes, but also to be sensitive to aspects of every group's culture that are important to that group.

We see that the Malaysian government recognises the importance of such policy and language programmes to the children and to Malaysian society. But, as mentioned, they are vague about the crucial issues of how to plan strategically and schedule the language policy and programmes that currently segregate children according to their ethnic groups and languages (Malay, Mandarin and Tamil). It was concluded that, rather than learning only greetings, the policy and language programme should continually be given support, to accommodate children not only to learn the language of their interest,

but that all languages should be made widely available to all children in pre-school (See Chapter 8). The challenge to the PERPADUAN Pre-school is to plan and reschedule subject and classrooms timetables. Regardless of their ethnicity, language of preference or background, children should be encouraged and given equal opportunity to learn in all language classes available in pre-school.

The model shows interconnection between parents and pre-school toward children's commonalities. Some of the instructional principles I discovered from the parents' comments about the approaches that encourage interaction. They are: fostering positive behaviour, self-concepts and developing knowledge and skills; the children have to understand and explore every aspect of their own as well as others' culture and cultural practices; and to act and to treat people equally e.g. children. In line with parents, all programmes and activities that pre-school organises are very important and designed to work toward moderation, tolerance, integration and balance among the ethnic groups. Open-mindedness and exposure to cultures are important to the children because these will encourage ethnic integration. The pre-school is also committed to maintaining good discipline and a culturally positive learning environment. In the design of interventions for childhood behaviour we need to engage and collaborate with diverse groups and communities if our efforts are to be successful.

However, what the teacher, parents and children in PERPADUAN Pre-school do not seem to realize is that to a certain extent they are also in principle advocating assimilating everyone into a supposed national consensus and commonality culture. In this PERPADUAN Pre-school, their attitude to integration is that they are trying to create a common culture that gathers the contributions of all the majority ethnic and cultural groups. Thus, the issued activities are mainly based on the cultures of the majority, e.g., Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures, which are then presented to the young children as the "common culture" of Malaysia. At some point, they are more inclined towards the "conformity of majority" in their approach, especially when dealing with language issues. I saw some children who literally cannot communicate effectively in *Bahasa Melayu*

despite it being their mother tongue. This conformity to the majority can create a conflicting experience for children.

The next different approach I identified in the PERPADUAN Pre-school is a variety of cultures. This represents a kind of approach that a nation should consciously allow and encourage its groups of people to develop democratically, each emphasizing its particular cultural heritage. These social processes and conditions encourage group diversity and maintenance of group boundaries. This type of education is a widely-held notion among respondents, that society will be strengthened, not weakened, by the presence of various cultures. Thus PERPADUAN Pre-school offers a variety of programmes and activities to promote tolerance, cooperation, sharing, and freedom for children to practise their own culture and group activities. However, many of these programmes and groups operate 'exclusively' for a certain ethnic group or religion or in isolation from each other. For example, the Mandarin class is exclusively for the Chinese children and religion classes for the Muslims. Under these circumstances, it is likely that there are no Malays and Indians in the Mandarin classes and vice versa. Therefore, this application of "exclusivity" is a small step towards the marginalization of people, knowledge and culture. It could be argued that PERPADUAN Pre-school is marginalising the group and, most importantly, knowledge from other cultures to help the culturally diverse children to learn to respect those who differ, and live harmoniously. These, in turn, are establishing racial or cultural apartheid and a national pre-school that is in some ways perpetuating racial and cultural supremacy in children of different races. The children in PERPADUAN Pre-school learn that people who are culturally different are not welcome in the language classes or to participate in some of the programmes and activities because, both from historical and social reality, these people do not belong to their cultural group. It is difficult to see how young children can appreciate the similarities and differences when they are 'exclusively' excluded from and denied the chance to learn about other languages and cultures. After all, most of the parents identified these as the common culture of Malaysian society. Therefore we need racially diverse programmes and activities to help bridge the gaps of understanding. Without

these, PERPADUAN Pre-school will be just another form of “accommodation to the dominant ethnic groups”.

iv) The present study has illuminated several areas which may need to be re-evaluated to determine whether they remain applicable in a more dynamic and rapidly changing world. The application of the existing ecological model theory to the study of a multi-ethnic pre-school in Malaysia was unable to fully explain some aspects of this study. In regard to the underlying rationales of the multi-ethnic pre-school, i.e. taking into consideration the local and contextual aspects surrounding some of the cultural issues, the research speculates that the existing literature and theory of human ecological factors for different multi-ethnic groups may not fully explain the pre-school’s reasons in regard to beliefs and attitudes related to numerous efforts for managing diversity in an educational setting. It may suggest that there should be recognition of the contextuality of all experiences of multi-ethnicity. Behind this appears to be an assumption that the models that are commonly debated in the west may not necessarily work in the ways most of us expect them to, and the models that are being developed in countries such as Malaysia will need to be analysed in context. This study demonstrates and offers an explanation why ‘a commonality’ is important as a new paradigm for understanding multi-ethnic pre-school.

10.6 Implications of the Policy and Practice in Malaysia

The first implication of this research for pre-school policy makers and educators is to recognise the potential for the pre-school to support and equip children with the concepts, skills, knowledge, language, attitudes and values required by society in order to develop critical cultural awareness and positive relationships among different individuals and groups. The pre-school curriculum and practice incorporated with the policies could benefit children. However, policy makers attention should be drawn to the perspective of those parents - who have SPM level (Standard Grade level) or less – who have negative perspectives of the pre-school approach and feel that it wastes their children’s time and reduces concentration on cognitive activities. These parents of lower socio-economic

status and educational background disagree with the approach of learning through play, compared to parents with a higher educational background who agree with such an approach. Parents who are degree holders look positively on play activities as important for children. There is considerable room to build on this PERPADUAN Pre-school so that education policy and practice can build ever higher levels of mutual understanding on the approach of teaching and learning.

This current research shows that it is a crucial time for the government policy makers to look at the micro level before planning and implementing new policies in early childhood education. The different stakeholders at micro level such as children, parents, teachers and the local community have to be considered when preparing a good and realistic policy which benefits all. Thorough observation shows the evidence that children's views should be considered in order to provide a meaningful policy which is developmentally appropriate to the children's level. How well the views of children are taken into account in policy design and implementation is crucial, for example the ability of a policy to represent the perspective of children. Therefore, the policies and practices must always be responsive to all stakeholders to guarantee they profit from this programme instead of it just being a good idea in a booklet. However, cooperation among these stakeholders is important to ensure the policy and its implementation are successful. I hope my study will foster educational discussion in the wider arena of multicultural issues such as in international conferences (for example, refer to Research Output p. iv). Furthermore, this study might also help policy makers who are addressing similar agendas of ethnic group integration, so I plan to set up a seminar or conference and invite policy makers to participate or even become involved in research groups.

The second implication of this study is that it is recognised that the curriculum of this pre-school is adapted to a multi-ethnic community. This pre-school fulfils the needs of children and families from diverse backgrounds and accommodates the everyday life, religious beliefs and practices of the various ethnicities, including special cultural and food preferences. However, as mentioned before, I notice that "when interacting with friends of Chinese, Malay or Indian ethnic groups, they [children] have no choice other

than using the Malay language” but if they had to choose, they would prefer to use their mother tongue. Thus, this evidently shows that language practices in pre-school need to be revised and adapted in order to accommodate the multi-ethnic community. Rather than offering only Malay language, Chinese and Tamil should also be supported in the curriculum.

The third implication of this research for pre-school policy makers and educators issuing from this current study is the need for enhancement in term of a pedagogical approach which is appropriate for and sensitive to multi-ethnic backgrounds. The policy makers who are involved in this are responsible to expose teachers to multiculturalism and to give them training with an ethnically appropriate activities base. Such training may help the teachers to implement an appropriate pedagogical approach that has nurtured ethnic awareness among children. Aware of limited resources of teaching tools in the pre-school I observed, I suggested policy makers provide more teaching tools related to different ethnic groups for teachers and children to fulfil the parents’ demand.

The fourth implication of this research is a big challenge for PERPADUAN Pre-school teachers compared to other settings because they are serving different ethnic groups compared to other pre-school settings. Facing this situation, the agency needs to look forward to prepare the PERPADUAN Pre-school setting with well-trained teachers. The minimum qualification of pre-school teachers has to increase to at least diploma level. The agency has to consider the reasons for the parents’ preferences to send their children to the private pre-schools on grounds of better qualified teachers and conducive facilities. Access to training is a significant variable for a better quality of the setting and outcomes.

The fifth implication is that practices apparently focused on particular ethnic groups may encourage prejudice and discourage integration. Too much attention paid to a particular group will inspire prejudice and fear among others when their own group continues to receive minimal attention. A typical example of this takes place during the beginning of a classroom teaching and learning. On most occasions, especially during the pre-school assembly and at the beginning of classroom teaching and learning, the teacher

and children will first recite “*dua*” or blessing in Malay and a few Arabic words. Reciting “*dua*” is an act highly encouraged in Islam, regardless of time and place, but in a multicultural school like PERPADUAN Pre-school this ritual is ‘over emphasised’ and regarded as ‘compulsory’, so that everybody must follow it regardless of their religion, even though the “*dua*” is recited in Malay. Some might think that this is an act of the *Islamisation* of pre-school and this might worry them. For this reason it is understandable that those parents have concerns over the Islamic practices, in this case the “*dua*”, and decide not to send their children later to the national primary school. Perhaps this is why the national schools have become less attractive to non-Malays, who then have no other alternative but to send their children to the national-type schools. However, this has not exactly happened in this multi-ethnic pre-school.

These practices in the PERPADUAN Pre-school concern the non-Malay parents and so this suggests the need to hold more discussion between parents and teacher to explain the policies and practices and overcome these fears. What this research has importantly done is give a voice to the non-Malay parents and allows them to express those fears which can hopefully inform future policy. I have signalled to the pre-school that this could be an issue because the practices are not understood by the parents in the way that the school intends, so the school and government need to find ways of explaining the policy and practices and so reassuring the non-Malay parents that this is not an attempt at *Islamisation*. In order to scrutinize the implementation, the policy must be continually analysed to ensure that it achieves its goal of unity and multiculturalism. What I have done is to provide different perspectives and show whether the aim is being achieved and whether there are areas needing to be explored.

The sixth implication of this research for PERPADUAN Pre-school is to sustain and expand cultural differences for every ethnic group. In the PERPADUAN Pre-school, teaching to maintain cultures concerns every ethnic group which has the right to preserve and develop its own cultural patterns. We can see many school programmes and activities in PERPADUAN Pre-school that provide a good representation of an ethnic group’s cultural and religious practices. However, the pre-school practices appear from my data

to represent the majority ethnic group rather than equally representing the practices of the three ethnic groups. In term of curriculum practices, especially in the case of teaching cultural elements, their focus is Malay values, beliefs and cultural products, and there is less mention of the values, beliefs and cultural elements of the Chinese and Indians. It is therefore important to consider how the minorities will be able to sustain and expand their unique cultural and religious practices if they are forced to join and practise the main stream culture and religion.

10.7 Reflection on Methodological Implications

Two implications about the methodology of this research that I can take back to Malaysia are the use of qualitative methods and ethnography as an approach to research. These involve a number of worthwhile data collection techniques and strategies, some of which are innovative, especially in the Malaysian context. First, this research has provided me with an opportunity to learn about myself as a qualitative researcher. The deep interviewing techniques used in this study offered an opportunity to hear the participants in a new way. Part of the qualitative study convinced the parents that they were truly being listened to, eliciting a desire to clearly articulate their feeling and creating a rich experience. These three different ethnic groups of parents had a great deal to say when I approached them.

Second, I have learned to understand myself and be aware of my own eastern values. The most profound impact on my undertaking of this research is the use of ethnography as an approach to research. An ethnographic method is less familiar in Malaysia and from my experience it is certainly worthwhile. Professionally, I have always been interested in how to help make pre-school better for all children in my country.

These two implications reflect the two strengths of the methodological approach: Firstly, the strength of this study is the analytical approach I have taken, that is clearly described and clearly justified. The data were collected from three sources - parents,

teachers and children. The triangulation of data collection from three different perspectives, helps me to draw out my findings. The present study collected the data through naturalistic observation, interview and photographs, which is considered appropriate when working with children. The strength of interviewing children using photographs (150 photographs chosen from more than 250) is to elicit children's ideas. Other researchers might have chosen a different technique, so this is a limitation of the study. Also, the boundaries I created for this research made the focus on outcomes possible. A qualitative methodology was considered crucial in this research in order to hear personal views from Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic background groups, because the research will contribute to the planning of culturally appropriate ways to improve ethnic relationships in Malaysia and to make these relationships more resilient and vibrant. The design allowed for a build-up of rapport with the respondents, for example through communicating using diversified language and mother tongue, and holding the Mini-seminar. This rapport with the respondents during the interviews helped the researcher to create a context within which the respondents felt comfortable and motivated to express their knowledge. As part of a multicultural community, I have considered a few restricted issues that should be avoided, such as racial and religious sensitivities which run deep in Malaysia. I took another step when I gathered data in one language and analysed it in another. Involving more than one language in data gathering and analysis and finally writing in another language shows the complexity of methodology.

Secondly, the present study shows that the single case turned out to be the most applicable design after taking into account the purpose of the research. This particular study addresses a need by providing an in-depth understanding of a theoretical framework of how the environment affects children's behaviour in the actual context of a multi-ethnic pre-school. The participants' perceptions and responses to cultural diversity in the school represent such a complex phenomenon that it was more sensible to choose a research design that allowed a thorough and more holistic view of the case. The argument about how much I can generalise from this case study is a challenge to this study. This case might be different from other cases, but from this one we can learn much. My

answer from one PERPADUAN Pre-school may be the basis for a design across ten PERPADUAN Pre-schools in Malaysia.

10.8 Limitations of the Study

It is important to recognize the limitations of this research and understand that certain factors may render the results atypical. These include the theory, the methodology, the setting and the sample. The findings should be considered in relation to these, and therefore, limited generalization is warranted.

The observation and interviews provide an holistic view of the phenomenon under investigation. The respondents (i.e., children, parents and teachers) were articulate and very willing to discuss their views, and the research process was enjoyable and often entertaining. This did, however, mean that I had to be conscious of keeping the discussion within certain parameters in order not to deviate from the research focus. By the nature of the process, the respondents' replies were based on a set of interview questions and protocols. This means there may be other valuable information that, as yet, remains undiscovered, especially among the parents interviewed. All children were purposefully invited to participate; only those who consented were included in the observation and photographs, and then both child and parent participated in interviews.

The pre-school was purposely selected from the PERPADUAN Pre-schools, which have a majority of children from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, as such, the pre-school's ethos, the teachers and children might be expected to differ from other pre-schools, including other PERPADUAN Pre-schools. Furthermore, the study identified some possible cause-and-effect factors, for example, the disposition of the child affected by environmental factors (e.g., parental cultural capital or pre-school ethos). I found it frustrating not to be able to investigate causality between some of the different research phenomena; for example, in this case, the behaviour of children is different not only within and between ethnicity but also because of gender and age.

Additionally, although the use of the single case study may be an effective way of understanding people's perceptions and their response to cultural diversity in a complex multi-ethnic pre-school setting, here it does not necessarily lend itself to generalization. As the present study was based on a relatively small group of participants in a particular school, subsequent research should examine other samples. These might include samples in other PERPADUAN Pre-schools and a matched sample in another pre-school that could provide comparative data, especially in regard to the process of social integration. I have provided "thick description" of this case study PERPADUAN Pre-school and that is aiding the audience to find generalised ability.

10.9 Suggestion for Future Research

The term "multi-ethnic pre-school" is itself extremely complex and has many meanings in which further research in assessing this curriculum and policy is associated with ethnicity, gender and special needs. The purpose of future study should be to enable PERPADUAN Pre-school to be accepted by all Malaysians from multi-ethnic groups to become a major pre-school in the country and help the government to reduce ethnic polarisation. Since many PERPADUAN Pre-school children require a special focus or treatment, future research into early childhood in Malaysia should focus especially on behaviour, social skills and school attainment (arithmetic, reading and writing) with some early intervention such as home visits, counselling, parenting skills and parental involvement skills.

There is also a need for further investigation that will help increase our understanding of the family processes and their consequences. Certainly, longitudinal studies that unscramble causal patterns are crucial. Such longitudinal studies may give answers to several issues that were unanswered by the outcomes of the present research:

- (i) Is parental social and cultural capital consistent over years, or at least until children complete high school, and does it differ within and between ethnic groups?

- (ii) Supposing that parental social and cultural capital is not consistent over years, what is its effects on adolescents?
- (iii) Do children's social behaviour levels remain consistent over the years until they finish high school?
- (iv) Does the way children relate to others from different backgrounds remain consistent over the years until the end of primary and secondary school?
- (v) Is there any difference in behaviour between Malay, Chinese and Indian children when they go to primary school and high school?

In addition, the scope of parental social and cultural capital as part of family processes that may affect children's peer relationships needs to be widened to explore specific involvement in homework, parent-teacher interactions, and school-home relationships. Such research may give us strong evidence of the importance of the link between home and pre-school. Longitudinal research is needed to examine child outcomes in relation to the parental cultural capital found in the present study to be influential for children's social behaviour. Similarly, longitudinal research linking early socialisation patterns to peer friendships from different ethnic backgrounds would also be valuable. This type of research could also be used to establish the extent to which these early year problems such as children's integration carry over to the school setting, and to identify the factors associated with their maintenance.

10.10 Reflections on My Research Role and Experience

This section discusses the implications of the study for the researcher. I shall elaborate my reflexive account of the PhD process from a sketchy outline towards the completion of this study. It was a challenging journey for me as a non-English speaker to develop knowledge and thought to an analytical level. With commitment and optimum effort I have changed over the process and have made considerable progress in developing a theoretical framework and strengthening the methodology. For me, it would have been easier to undertake a piece of quantitative research rather than to engage in an

ethnographically-designed research aimed at interpreting and understanding the perspectives and views of children, teacher and parents on children's behaviour. Before pursuing my postgraduate study at the University of Strathclyde, I came from a research culture that predominantly uses quantitative methodology. Naturally, when one performs something that is new or unfamiliar, there is a lot to learn.

Engaging in ethnography, with which I was not familiar at the beginning of my study, raised many questions. Is it worthwhile? Is it suitable for my research methodology? Will it contribute things that other research approaches will not? Does its depth make up for its lack of breadth? I am trying to answer these questions briefly, the research that I embarked on has provided me with various challenges, but the experiences gained have been worthwhile. Additionally, besides broadening my understanding about what has been researched, this research methodology has provided me with an opportunity to learn about myself as a qualitative researcher and has contributed useful and in depth information than other research approaches. My research was conducted in a single site – a pre-school in Malaysia. The fieldwork in Malaysia began with a month's pilot study in June 2008. The main study took three months, from June to the end of August 2009.

The most profound impact on my undertaking this research is the use of ethnography as an approach to research. Without question, this has been the most stressful, yet rewarding, activity of my life. Completing a PhD degree has been a personal ambition of mine. Professionally, I have always been interested in how to help make pre-school better for all children in my country.

A turning point in my own understanding of qualitative research occurred when I began to represent the informants' voices. I had decided to portray the social behaviour of these children, their culture, and their experiences at pre-school. I thought the best way was to represent the informants' authentic voices in my study. However, I had no idea how to go about doing it. I began with the major themes that emerged from the data, the big picture, and decided to write first about behaviour. In all the themes, I drew upon my own observations, starting with more than 250 photographs, field notes and interviews

(children, teachers and parents) to compare actions that were “*true*” to the children’s behaviour. I struggled with this. There were a lot of things to write about these children. I used many direct quotes from the dialogues between myself and the children, the teachers and the parents. An internal conflict began to creep in. I knew I wasn’t “*making this up*”. The process was not as neat and tidy as I thought it would be. The key concern was to understand the interests of the informants, not the researcher. This is sometimes referred to as the insider’s perspectives, versus the outsider’s view (Merriam, 1998).

As I mentioned earlier in the previous chapter, Malaysia consists of three main ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian. At one point I considered myself an insider when I interviewed Malay parents because I am Malay and understand Malay culture, norms, values, and religion. Most of the time when I dealt with Chinese and Indian parents I considered myself an outsider because I did not have good understanding of their cultural values. The outsider is viewed as a detached individual who aspires to collect and process data in a manner which is free from subjective bias (Merton, 1972). When I went into detail about Chinese and Indian perspectives, I felt myself an outsider because I do not understand a lot of Chinese and Indian culture. Although we are Malaysian, our religious practices, cultural values and norms are different. So, I consider myself an outsider trying to understand other people’s perspective on pre-school education especially a Malay male talking with a child’s mother from a different ethnic group. Therefore I needed to develop a good rapport with them in order to get information from different ethnic backgrounds. There are three important things I developed during my research journey with parents: first I introduced myself as a teacher instead of a lecturer especially to children’s mothers who felt uncomfortable when I approached them at first. I explained to parents the details of my study which include the aims and why their children were chosen. Second, I attended a Chinese Community Meeting at the pre-school where all members were Chinese, and finally I greeted parents with a few words of Mandarin and Tamil when I met them before and after school. Every time I met them I tried to have a short conversation with them and listen to their opinions about this pre-school and their children. This good relationship gave me a chance to talk

longer with some of them, and later they even invited me to their home for an interview session.

Am I an outsider or insider? I am very familiar with the pre-school setting as a teacher, teaching in pre-school and being involved in designing pre-school curriculum for the Ministry of Education. The main point was that I felt I was part of the teachers and the children during my teaching experience as I could empathise with both parties. I was looking at the setting which was very familiar to me and as a result it was easier for me to build up a relationship with teachers and children. Therefore I did not encounter difficulty in obtaining data. Nevertheless, by adopting naturalistic observations—in which participants were allowed to behave in their natural surroundings—I have managed to ensure that I was not blinded by such familiarity. My relationship with the children grew closer and closer as we looked at photos together. Sometimes, I was sitting in their play groups and talking to them even though they felt a little uncomfortable initially. After that they answered my questions and talked to me quite warmly. I looked like a teacher and let them call me teacher. However, this did not include a few children who spoke only their mother tongue. When I interviewed two Chinese children and one Indian child I found it difficult to conduct the interview with them until someone among their friends helped me by translating into Malay.

In conclusion as I look back and reflect on the process and outcomes of undertaking doctoral study I have been able to draw out what I believe to be my original contribution to the field of early childhood research. Based on a multi-dimensional view of children's social behaviour from three perspectives: children; parents and teachers in a multicultural context, I have developed a new flexible ethnographic research approach to early childhood study in Malaysia. This approach includes observation, use of photographs, and discussion with children, complimented by interviews with parents and teachers that were responsive to the work I had undertaken with the children. My own experience as an insider-outsider researcher allowed me to represent the informants' authentic voices. Finally I have developed a new ecological model of multiculturally responsive pre-school education for Malaysia and beyond.

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APPENDIX A: OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
A1: OBSERVATION

A Sample of the Observation Form

CHILDREN'S OBSERVATION		
Date		
Child's initial		
Age		
Child's home language		
Setting		
Number and age of children		
Number of adults		
Field notes from observation	Discussion with the child	Discussion with the teacher

Observation Schedule

WEEK 1 - PREPARATION		
Day/Date	Activity Morning	
Day 1	Arrangement with gatekeeper (Management JPNIN and Teacher at Pre-school.	
Day 2	Arranging the school visits, and sending out the consent letters to parents and teachers	
Day 3	Arranging the school visits, and sending out the consent letters to parents and teachers	
Day 4	Discussing with the teacher and getting letter of permission from parents	
Day 5	Discussing with the teacher and getting letter of permission from parents	
WEEK 2 - OBSERVATION		
Observation Day 1:	One-day orientation in the classroom to watch and listen in order to understand: - what a typical day is like for the children and the teachers in the preschool;	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how children and teachers relate to each other and express feelings; - What happens as the parents come and go. - general classroom organisation, knowledge and information 	
Observation Day 2:	<p>I will observe and respond to children and teachers to obtain an overview</p> <p>The researcher will also write down and take note of what, when, and how the social behaviour of child occurred and what were features of the environment.</p>	<p>Start with the 'big picture' at the beginning of the week with increasing focus during the week.</p> <p>Evening - make adjustment to plans for next day</p>
Day 3	<p>I will observe and take photographs to use in discussion with children</p> <p>I will write down children's social behaviour</p>	<p>Evening - make adjustment to plans for next day</p>
Day 4	<p>I will observe and take a few more photographs and speak informally with the children in a group (meeting with them)</p>	
Day 5	<p>I will observe and take a few photographs and speak to the small group of target children</p> <p>I will write down children's social behaviour</p>	
WEEK 3 - OBSERVATION		
Day 1	<p>I will take note of children's social behaviour. Observe and speak with each child with photographs as a prop.</p> <p>Start by discussing the photographs in order to elicit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *ideas about relationships and playing together *views on their own and others' social behaviour *asking the child to comment on social behaviour based on photographs 	
Day 2	<p>I will observe and respond to children and teachers to obtain an overview</p> <p>I will write down children's social behaviour</p>	
Day 3	<p>I will observe and take photographs to use in discussion with children</p> <p>I will write down children's social behaviour</p>	
Day 4	<p>I will observe and take a few more photographs</p>	

	and speak informally with the children in a group (meeting with them) I will take note of children's social behaviour	
Day 5	I will observe and take a few photographs and speak to the small group of target children I will write down children's social behaviour	
	WEEK 4 - OBSERVATION	
	I will write and take children's social behaviour Observe and speak with each child with photographs as a prop. Start by discussing the photographs in order to elicit *ideas about friendship and playing together *views on their own and others' social behaviour *asking the child to comment on social behaviour based on photographs	
	OBSERVATION will be continue until week 14	
	INTERVIEW Parents and teacher will start at week 6 until week 14	

A2: INTERVIEWS

Sample of Informal Interview Question for Children:

1. Lets look together at the photos from today – can you tell me about what the children are doing? Do you have any relationship with...?
2. Sometimes all of us get mad if something happens that we do not like. What sorts of thing might make you feel upset?
3. If your friend does not feel well, what do you do?
4. When you are playing with your friends do you say how you are feeling?
5. Sometimes even best friends quarrel. Does that ever happen to you?

Sample of Parents' Interview Questions:

Parents will fill family profile detail during interview (refer to page 391).

Section I: Background Questionnaire

1. Refer to Parent Profile.
2. “Tell me about your school education” and follow up with ‘what was the highest grade or year you achieved in school?’ if not already mentioned.
3. Which category best describes your employment?

Section II: Children's Social Behaviour

The questions here need to encourage parents to talk about their children – first of all in general terms – e.g., ‘how is your child getting on in pre-school? Does he/she enjoy it? Could you tell me about what your child enjoys in preschool? Does she or he have friend from pre-school? Could you tell me about your child's social behaviour in preschool? Does she/he show positive behaviour or pro-social behaviour like being helpful or sharing? Does she/he show any different behaviours after attending pre-school? Further questions may include e.g., ‘You said your child behaves well in preschool – please give me an example’ and equally ‘You said you are concerned about your child's social behaviour in pre-school – please tell me more about that’ ‘Is your child's social behaviour in preschool similar to his/her behaviour at home?’ ‘Are there any other behaviours that cause you concern?’ Have you seen any different behaviours?

Section III: Parenting Styles

Respect for the parents and teachers are important aspects in the Malay, Chinese and Indian culture. How would you feel if your child does not seem to respect your culture?

What words do you use to encourage your child?

What sort of encouragement do you give your child?

Do you *require* your child to perform the religious obligations in order to educate them?

Section IV: Parent-child Relationships

How do you respond when your child do very well in preschool_____?

In general, the quality of parent child interaction seems to be central to the development and evolution of children's social behaviour:

What do you feel in Malaysian parental context?

How does_____get along with (each of) you?

How do you spend time everyday interaction with your children?

How you develop relationships with your child within family members?

Do you have any routines for your children to follow?

Could you explain a little bit more?

Section V: Parenting Beliefs and Culture

The community practice level of values, cultural and expectations is a very important indicator of successful children's social behaviour. "Tell me what you feel is important in the upbringing of your children?"

Do you emphasise the guiding of character development towards morality? How?

What beliefs and values do you practice as a parent?

Do you practice the norms and values according to your culture and faith?

How do you implement the norm and value to your family members?

Section V: Parents' Social Capital

Does your child see his/her grandparents? What role do the grandparents play in your child's life? Does she/he facilitate family norms to your child?

Does your friend or work colleague give parental resources in order to promote child well-being?

You have neighbours roundabout - can you tell me about them? It sounds as if you know them well/do not know them well - can you tell me a little more about this? How well does your child know your neighbours? When they meet their neighbours?

Section VI: Religious Practices in Family

Do you and your family follow a particular religion?

Tell me about the importance of your religion to the life of your family?’

Are there religious practices that you want to introduce to your children?’

Apart from teaching, your children about religion do you send them to religion classes at mosque, temple or church or *other*. Does a religion class give your child a chance to meet friends?

Section VII: Pre-school Ethos and Community

Do you understand the pre-school philosophy?

Are you involved in developing the pre-school curriculum, school-planning activities and classroom activities? Does the community association play a role into the pre-school?

Do the pre-school activities match the goal of community association?

Does the school ethos promote positive relationships among children? Does the pre-school nurture children’s development?

Do you feel the atmosphere of the pre-school facilitates school norms and values? Do the children find it difficult to follow the school norms and values?

Do the pre-school teacher and support staff co-operate with you?

Are you involved in pre-school activity?

Interview with Teacher: Sample Questions (Child)

The researcher will precede the questions below with an introductory comment such as the following: I would like to talk with you about __child’s name_____ and his (her) social behaviour. I would like to discuss this social behaviour, when it occurs, how often it occurs, and what occurs in your classroom that might influence the social behaviour. I also would like to discuss some other matters related to (child’s name) that will helps us to develop useful interventions.

1. Tell me about _____social behaviour in the classroom.
2. Please, describe exactly what _____.
3. How long has the social behaviour been going on?
4. What classroom activity is generally occurring at the time the social behaviour (for example, a lecture, unstructured play, independent work, interaction with you, and interaction with other children)?
5. How often does the relationship occur?
6. What makes the relationships worse or better?
7. How much contact have you had with _____’s family?

Sample Questions (Pre-school)

Could you explain about cultural diversity in this pre-school?

Are the school philosophy and pre-school ethos in line with local community? How?

Do the parents understand the pre-school ethos?

Do you explain to the parent about the objective, the activity or any communication with parents?

Could you explain the approach of pre-school teaching?

How do the pre-school activities help children to speak the Malay language?

Do the Chinese and Indian children who speak in mother tongue have a problem?

Do classroom sitting formations or desk arrangements affect the children's behavioural understanding of themselves as well as others?

How do you teach moral values?

Do have any relationship with the neighbourhood and community? Could you explain to me how the school and community relationships do?

APPENDIX B: LETTERS OF CONSENT

(Translation)

B1: CONSENT LETTER TO PARENT

Date _____

I am a Malaysian student currently pursuing my doctoral degree in childhood education at the Department of Childhood and Primary Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Strathclyde, Scotland, United Kingdom. I am conducting a study to examine parental influences on pre-school children's social behaviour in the Malaysian context. Results from this study may help the government in developing policy for preschool reflecting the multicultural context.

Your child has been identified as a potential participant in this study to form part of a sample of children balanced on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. This research will involve observation and interview about various kinds of parents' practices and culture in relation to children's social behaviour. Child observations will take place in school over a weekly period during which I will sample each target child's activities at intervals during 15 to 30 minute episodes. Observations will be followed by conversation in small groups and towards the end of the week by a short discussion with each child. These conversations will be supported by photographs taken in the preschool in order to help children to share their ideas about the children's activities and their relationships. I will use a digital camera to record my observation and to facilitate feedback from the children. After that I will arrange interviews with the parents. The interviews place will be arranged in a setting of the parents' choice after six weeks observation, which may include your home if appropriate.

There is no risk or discomfort associated with the participation in this study. Your child's participation is voluntary. He/she is free to withdraw from the study at any time. The participant is completely anonymous. He/she will not provide his/her name on the data collection. The information provided will be strictly confidential and used for this research only. All data will be destroyed after the analyses are completed.

I hope you and your child will be willing to participate in this study. Thank you for your cooperation and time. Without your permission, this study would not be possible. Have a wonderful family.

Sincerely,

Nordin Mamat
Postgraduate Student
Department of Childhood and Primary Studies,
Faculty of Education,
University of Strathclyde,

Glasgow G13 1PP
Scotland, United Kingdom.

Supervisor

Dr. Geraldine Smyth

Reader

Department of Childhood and Primary Studies,

Faculty of Education,

University of Strathclyde,

Glasgow G13 1PP

Scotland, United Kingdom. Tel: + 44 141 950 3744

B2: CONSENT FORM FROM PARENTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

Please fill in the form below and return it to the teacher by (date)_____

Consent form for persons participating in research projects
PROJECT TITLE: Parents influence on children’s social behaviour

Name of participant:_____

Name of Child : _____

1. I consent to participate in the project named above, the particulars of which - including observation and interviews have been explained to me in the letter.
2. I am willing for my child to be involved in the study as described to me in the information letter
3. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
4. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

If you agreed to participate in this research please sign below

Parent’s signature_____Date:_____

Address:

Contact detail:_____ (House phone)
_____ (Mobile phone)

FAMILY PROFILE

Please (√) and fill in the blank the following statements appropriately

Name of Father: _____

Occupation: _____

Education : _____

Name of Mother: _____

Occupation: _____

Education: _____

Address: _____

Contact number: _____

Your ethnic background:

Malay	
Chinese	
Indian	

Religion:

Islam	
Buddhist	
Hinduism	
Etc	

Number of children in your family _____

List of all children

Name

Age

Primary language spoken in the home: _____

Other language spoken in the home: _____

(Translation)

B3: CONSENT LETTER TO TEACHER

Date _____

I am a Malaysian student currently pursuing my doctoral degree in childhood education at the Department of Childhood and Primary Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Strathclyde, Scotland, United Kingdom. I am conducting a study to examine parental influences on preschool children's social behaviour in the Malaysian context. Results from this study may help the government in developing policy for preschool reflecting the multicultural context.

You have been identified as a potential participant in this study to form part of a sample of children balanced on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. This research will involve observation and interview about various kinds of parents' practices and culture in relation to children's social behaviour. Child observations will take place in school over a weekly period during which I will sample each target child's activities at intervals during 15 to 30 minute episodes. Observations will be followed by conversation in small groups and towards the end of the week by a short discussion with each child. These conversations will be supported by photographs taken in the preschool in order to help children to share their ideas about the children's activities and social relationships. I will use a digital camera to record my observation and to facilitate feedback from the children. After that I will arrange interviews with the parents.

Following observations I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these with you.

There is no risk or discomfort associated with the participation in this study. Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. The participant is completely anonymous. The information provided will be strictly confidential and used for this research only. All data will be destroyed after the analyses are completed.

I hope you will be willing to participate in this study. Thank you for your cooperation and time. Without your permission, this study would not be possible. Have a wonderful class.

Sincerely,
Nordin Mamat
Post Graduate Student
Department of Childhood and Primary Studies,
Faculty of Education,
University of Strathclyde,
Glasgow G13 1PP
Scotland, United Kingdom.

Supervisor

Dr. Geraldine Smyth
Reader
Department of Childhood and Primary Studies,
Faculty of Education,
University of Strathclyde,
Glasgow G13 1PP
Scotland, United Kingdom.
Tel: + 44 141 950 3744

B4: CONSENT FORM FROM THE TEACHER

THE UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY STUDIES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

Please fill in the form below and return it to the teacher by (date)_____

Consent form for persons participating in research projects

PROJECT TITLE: Parents influence on children's social behaviour

Name of participant:_____

1. I consent to participate in the project named above, the particulars of which - including observation and interviews have been explained to me in the letter.
2. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements.

Please tick (√) your decision in appropriate blank

Agreed to participate in this research ()

Not agreed to participate in this research study ()

Teacher's signature_____Date:_____

(NAME:_____)

(Translation)

B5: SCRIPT AND CARD FOR CHILDREN'S CONSENT

Script to inform the children about the purposes of the research as far as their understanding allows so as obtaining their consent to be involved

Procedure

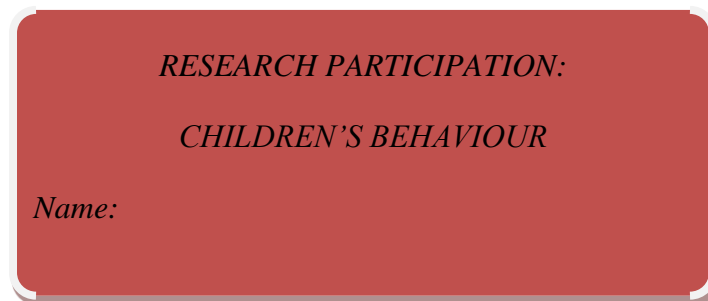
I will arrange to talk with small groups of children and their teacher – I will ask the teacher to introduce me. I will explain to the children that I am interested in watching them at the preschool class to learn about their activities and that I am studying at University. I will explain that their parents have given permission for the children to be included, and will ask the teacher to let the children know I may be using my camera will show the children the pictures later and talk together with them (using the photos as props).

The discussion with the children will cover these points as follows -

You have been chosen to take part in this study and your parents have agreed. We will talk about various kinds of social behaviour. We also will take your pictures. All information will be destroyed after project completed.

No need to worry. If you are taking part in this research there will be no harm. I hope you are willing to take part in this study. If you are agreed please take this card and keep it until this study is completed. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to leave the study early, you just give the card back to me. Thank you for your cooperation.

SAMPLE OF CARD



Nordin

Mamat

Postgraduate

Student
Department of Childhood and Primary Studies,
Faculty of Education,
University of Strathclyde,
Scotland, United Kingdom.

B6: Ethical Approval

Ethical approval

Geraldine Smyth

You replied on 22/05/2009 16:34.

Sent: 22 May 2009
12:53

To: Nordin Mamat

Cc: Aline-Wendy
Dunlop

Dear Nordin,

The Ethical Approval committee has considered your application and I had a discussion to answer some of their queries. They would like to see a few minor changes to your submission,

1. The letter of consent to parents should include a comment that the interviews will be arranged in a setting of the parents' choice, which may include their home if appropriate.
2. The final box in the family profile on religion will be changed to 'other' from 'etc'
3. The wording of the final question in Section 111, Appendix c, p. 9 will be changed from 'force' to 'require'

Please could you agree these changes and send me the documents as amended.

Thanks,

Geri

Geri Smyth

Reader

Department of Childhood and Primary Studies

University of Strathclyde Faculty of Education

Southbrae Drive

Glasgow G13 1PP

Scotland

tel: + 141 950 3744

B7: Letter of consent from the Government of Malaysia



UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
JABATAN PERDANA MENTERI
Prime Minister's Department
BLOK B5 & B6
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
62502 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA



EPU
ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT
PERDANA MENTERI KUALA LUMPUR

Telefon : 603-8888 3333
Telefax : 603-888

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref.:

UPE: 40/200/19/2393

Ruj. Kami:
Our Ref.:

Tarikh:
Date: 4 February 2009

En. Nordin Mamat
No. 9 Jalan Kenari 2A
Lembah Beringin
44110 Kuala Kubu Bharu
Selangor

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application dated 18 March 2008, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name : **NORDIN MAMAT**
Passport No. / I. C No: **690504-03-5073**
Nationality : **MALAYSIA**
Title of Research : **"PARENTS INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR"**

Period of Research Approved: **FOUR MONTHS**

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya and bring along two (2) passport size photographs. You are also required to comply with the rules and regulations stipulated from time to time by the agencies with which you have dealings in the conduct of your research.

3. I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

- a) A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and
 - b) Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.
4. Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,


(MUNIRAH ABD. MANAN)
For Director General,
Macro Economic Section,
Economic Planning Unit.
E-mail: munirah@epu.jpm.my
Tel: 88882809/2818/2958
Fax: 88883798

ATTENTION

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and **cannot be used as a research pass.**

B8: Letter of Consent from Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional (JPNIN)



JABATAN PERPADUAN NEGARA
DAN INTEGRASI NASIONAL
JABATAN PERDANA MENTERI
ARAS 7-10, BLOK E2, PARCEL E,
PUSAT PENTADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN
62502 PUTRAJAYA

Telefon : 03-8883 7000
Fax : 03-8888 8584
Laman web : <http://www.jpnin.gov.my>

JPN.03(S)/267/55 Jld. 3(31)

14 Mei 2008

Ketua Pengarah
Seksyen Ekonomi Makro
Unit Perancang Ekonomi
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Blok B5 & B6
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 PUTRAJAYA.
(U/P : Puan Munirah Abd. Manan)

Y. Bhg. Dato'/Tuan,

PERMOHONAN UNTUK MENJALANKAN PENYELIDIKAN DI MALAYSIA

Dengan hormatnya saya merujuk surat UPE/40/200/19/2262 bertarikh 28 April 2008 adalah berkaitan.

2. Jabatan ini tiada halangan ke atas permohonan Encik Nordin Mamat untuk menjalankan penyelidikan bertajuk "**Parents Influence On Children's Behaviour**" terutamanya menggunakan Tabika Perpaduan sebagai sampel kajian.

3. Jabatan ini mendapati kajian tersebut boleh :

- i. Membantu meningkatkan kefahaman mengenai pengaruh ibu bapa dalam tingkahlaku anak-anak serta membangun sahsiah diri kanak-kanak.
- ii. Faedah yang diperolehi dari kajian merangkumi perkara-perkara seperti :
 - a. Kerangka teori pengaruh ibu bapa terhadap anak-anak.


-
- b. Boleh membantu meningkatkan kualiti latihan Tabika Perpaduan dengan penglibatan ibu bapa.

4. Untuk makluman, Jabatan ini sedang menjalankan projek perintis yang melibatkan ibu bapa dalam membimbing anak-anak membaca.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,



(HO KHEK HUA)

Timbalan Ketua Pengarah (Perancangan)

b.p. Ketua Pengarah

Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional

S.K. 1. Y. Bhg. Dato' Ketua Pengarah
Jabatan Perpaduan Negara dan Integrasi Nasional

APPENDIX C: SAMPLES OF OBSERVATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS AND INTERVIEWS WITH CHILDREN

Key to transcripts

- [...] – indicates extracts edited out of transcript;
 [text] – indicates text added to speech for clarification;
 [*text in italic*] – indicates descriptive text added to clarify/highlight the nature of the discussion;
 ... – indicates a natural pause in speech

C1: Sample of observation

Observation Session 1:

CHILDREN'S OBSERVATION	
Date : 19 June 2009	
Child's initial: Ashok	
Age : 5	
Child's home language: Tamil	
Setting: Child's Play behaviour	
Number of children	2
Number of adults: 1	
<p>I observed May Ying go to Ashok and her talking in Malay language to Ashok, Ashok reply in Malay. Impact of Ashok, an Indian boy who is 5 year-olds came to school with his father. He can speak well in three languages Tamil, English and Malay. Ashok's father told me that their family communicate in these three languages. He was lucky because they [family] speak Malay with their servant who is Indonesian which influenced his Malay language also. The acquisition of three languages gives an advantage for him to interact with other children from different ethnic group. This is show the important of Malay language for children to interact with other children from different ethnic groups. In this session I observed May Ying go to Ashok and talks to him in Malay language to Ashok, and then Ashok reply in Malay. Ashok asked for May Ying's hands. He compared his hands with May Ying's hands. He comments that his hands and May Ying's hands not much difference except the colour only. They play full palm touching which is measured the size of hands [palm and fingers]. Here the interview with Ashok (Refer P079).</p>	

Lets look together at the photos P079 from today - can you tell me about what are you doing [What are doing with May Ying]?

Ashok: Play with May Ying...

R: Do you have any relationship with May Ying...?

Ashok: Yeah...she good [nice]. We play...together (quiet)

R: What kind of play you play with her?

Ashok: I touch my hand palm to her hand [palm]...look whose hand is bigger [between him and May Ying]

R: When you are playing with her do you say how you are feeling?

Ashok: I told her I like her very much.

R: How about you May Ling, do you friend with Ashok?

May Ying: Yes, we play together and like play with him.

R: Some times all of us get mad if something happens that we do not like. What sorts of thing might make you feel upset?

Ashok: Don't know...[quiet]

R: Do you angry with them?

Ashok: Mmmm...angry...he won't friends and annoying me.

R: When?

Ashok: ...[quiet] I want play...no...no I want borrow a coloured pencil

R: If your friend does not feel well, what do you do?

Ashok: Emm...help them...*jaga dia* [take care of them]

R: How about other friend?

Ashok: take care of them.

R: Do you have any other friends?

Ashok: Raju, Haron, Canny and Zi Qi.

R: Why do you like to be friends with them?

Ashok: They good [nice] help me...I play with them

R: Thank you Ashok.



Photograph P079: Fantasy Play Ashok and May Ying

C2: Sample of field notes (Case Child 9)

Harun is a Malay popular boy. He likes to play with most of children in class. He plays with Chinese girls such as Zi Ni, May Ling, Gee Zi and Canny. Harun show them [Zi Ni and May Ling] how to play the 'teng-teng' game. Harun shows the rules of games and what to do. When I asked about what relationships among them, Harun told me:

“They all are my friends... always plays with them when free time and out-door activity. Zi Ni always gave coloured pencil when I need it”. When I asked them together Harun, Zi Ni, May Ling and Vejay, they admit as friends. I realise that based on this photograph and interview, Harun a sociability child, fluent in Malay and English and has skills to convince others in their relationships was accepted among different ethnic groups. I observed Harun, proficiency in language developed self-confident and social skills easy to find friends with role play. For example, I observed Harun pretending to be a bull and attack Vejay with his head and move back [P039] and pretending play Power rangers [P059]. Harun, May Ling and Wee Jo play handkerchiefs together. Harun shows his new handkerchief to the group and then play with imagination. We are teaching Harun how to make a fold ship using the handkerchief [P66 and 67]. By using their own imagination, they take the board as if an obstacle, they go right under it to get to the other side. Wee Jo lends his body to Harun [P071]. Wee Jo is whispering something to Harun about the story they have seen. They are very close together. They play and sit together. Later, they [Wee Jo and Harun] lend their head to Canny and Suriani [P74]. Interview: Why? We ate...help each other...play together

APPENDIX D: SAMPLES OF INTERVIEWS (PARENT AND TEACHER)

D1: Sample of transcripts interviewing parent

Description: Chinese Parent

Pseudonym of interviewee: Mr Bo

Name of interviewer: Nordin Mamat

Date of interview: 18 August 2009

Place: House

Original Language of Interview: Malay

Translated by: Nordin Mamat

¶: Paragraph

¶1: R: Good morning, Mr Bo! How are you? Thank you for taking part in this research.

¶2: *Mr Bo: Good morning! Fine, thank you.*

¶3:

¶4: R: First of all can you tell me about yourself and your school education?

¶5: *Mr Bo: I studied at SJK. (Chinese school) Kuala Lumpur and Secondary School in Kuala Lumpur. I graduated from Universiti Malaya.*

¶6:

¶7: R: How is your child getting on in pre-school?

¶8: *Mr Bo: He enjoys it. He likes playing with friends. He always tells me what happens in the classroom...yeah, he is happy there.*

¶9: R: Does he have friends from other ethnic groups like Malays or Indians?

¶10: *Mr Bo: Oh yes...Wee Jo has a lot of Malay, Chinese and Indian friends...he likes this school...he likes their friends.*

¶11:

¶12: R: Could you tell me about your child's social behaviour in pre-school?

¶13: *Mr Bo: I was told by the teacher that he is very socialable in class...a lot of friends...is helpful and I encourage him...but sometimes I see he is a little withdrawn, though I not really sure that he is. He likes to play with boys and girls...but perhaps a little shy of girls.*

¶14:

¶15: R: Is there any other behaviour that causes you concern?

¶16: *Mr Bo: He likes to mimic what he listens to on TV such as expletives (bad words) and children's "slang" (children's language)...that I concerned but so far he has not use this words in front of his mum or me. Further, I feel he spends too much time watching the Cartoon Network [TV Channel].*

¶17:

¶18: R: So...have you taken any action regarding this?

¶19: *Mr Bo: So far I haven't taken any action...his mum always talks to him. I give him advice and sometimes threaten that we will stop subscribing to the Astro Channel [Satellite TV]...just a threat [laughs].*

¶20:

¶21: R: Do you understand the pre-school philosophy?

¶22: Mr Bo: Mr Bo: PERPADUAN Pre-school aspires to unite the three major ethnic groups from the early childhood stage...aware of the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, religion and languages. ...belief in... respect for other races [ethnic groups] ...so the policy of this pre-school is to ensure as far as possible that the composition of the pre-school entrants consists of a mix of Chinese, Malays and Indians. It also stresses school and academic readiness ... as well as the child's ability in the 3 Rs [reading, writing and arithmetic]. If I remember correctly PERPADUAN Pre-School ...aspires to unite the three major ethnic groups from the early childhood stage...aware of the multi-racial nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, religion and language...emphasis on social cognition, social skills and respect for other races begin at a tender age before formal schooling begin. ...so the policy of the pre-schools is to ensure as far as possible that the composition of the pre-school entrants consists of a mix of Chinese, Malays and Indians, who form the three, dominant ethnic groups in Malaysia. This pre-school also stresses the child's development in the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual areas.

¶23:

¶24: R: How would you feel if your child does not seem to respect your culture because of contemporary influences?

¶25: Mr Bo: I agree with that...our children's environment is different from that of ours...their exposure is more diversified....a lot media influence so they depend a lot on the environment surrounding them...that is why we need traditions to control and balance. The children have adapted themselves to the current culture based on the present day environment. They have been absorbed into the global culture...emm he [Wee Jo] is greatly influenced by the mass media. So this is the impacts of global environment, the way they are exposed ...receive the impact without even realising it.

¶26:

¶27: R: How do you rationalise on your child's environmental exposure?

¶28: Mr Bo: Environment...yeah...We have to accept their exposure to...as I said ...media like internet or TV influences them a lot...too many cultures...for example I can't control Wee Jo all the time...so the children will behave according to the environment they have been exposed to. Maybe we ought to ensure that traditional practices of our community are strong enough. So the global culture cannot totally replace traditional practices. So we have to accept our children's exposure to this environment but ensure they are not confused by it.

¶29:

¶30: R: Yes I agree with you "let them be aware about it" point. What words do you use to encourage your child? How do you encourage your child?

¶31: Mr Bo: In this context...you have to explain the background of your family...like ethnicity...why the background is important and base on religion because religion teaches you how to respect the elders...not only the parents, but also teachers and other elders. Anyone older than you ...you must respect them. How to encourage them based on religion, explain about faith and the existing cultural background. You advise him adequately.

¶32:

¶33: R: Does he understand that?

¶34: Mr Bo: *Oh yes...of course not the whole thing but at least he understands Chinese culture...and then Malaysian culture and other cultures.*

¶35:

¶36: R: You mentioned about faith, do you require your child to perform religious obligations in order to educate them?

¶37: Mr Bo: *Yes...to us religion is very important...although we are do not go to the temple everyday but we pray every morning...you see that red box [he points to small box] that is the prayer place. We ask our children to pray every morning...burned joss stick. We believe that religion can override negative influences and liberate children from social problem.*

¶38:

¶39: R: Do you and your family follow a particular religion? Do religious classes give your child a chance to meet friends?

¶40: Mr Bo: *Oh yes...They follow us to the temple...but not every day or every week...only when there is a celebration.*

¶41:

¶42: R: Yes, I understand...let's talk about Wee Jo. Based on my observation, Wee Jo shows positive behaviour to other children in school. Could you explain how you nurtured him? How do you respond when Wee Jo does very well in pre-school?

¶43: Mr. Bo: *[Smiles and laughs]...oh...you encourage him. Be a good role model like his mum who always gives him encouragement [...] Give him support and motivation...normally his mum knows best, so she [mum] response to him better.*

¶44:

¶45: R: In general, the quality of parent-child interaction seems to be central to the development of children's social behaviour: What do you think about the Malaysian parental relationship?

¶46: Mr. Bo: *I agree that...today is totally different from 15 year ago when parent-child relationships were really important, don't you agree? Nowadays this relationship develops child behaviour...Wee Jo has his own idols...his attitudes are mostly from me and his mum...language...family...emotion and communication skills.*

¶47:

¶48: R: How about the mother tongue and the Malay language?

¶49: Mr Bo: *Emmm...so far he has no problem with language or the mother tongue because I speak English, Malay and Mandarin with him...but a first he must learn mother tongue because I don't want him to not to be able to speak Mandarin.*

¶50:

¶51: R: How does your son get along with (each of) you?

¶52: Mr Bo: *We spend quality time together during meal times, like dinner, family times and parental discussing while watching TV together...he is always with his grandparents. They take care of him as well.*

¶53:

¶54: R: How do you develop a close relationship with your child?

¶55: Mr Bo: *Mmm...together...we go to the park and playground...we also visit the extended family. We develop a relationship together during seasonal celebrations such as birthday parties, weddings and even deaths". I believe that a close relationship*

between parents and children will promote children's development...language...self - confidence.

¶56:

¶57: R: Do you have any routines for your children to follow? Could you explain a little bit more?

¶58: Mr Bo: *His mum has arranged a schedule to make sure his time is gain fully occupied, for example after school he knows what he is supposed to do, and at night...he goes to bed by 9 p.m. During the weekends he attends swimming and Chinese (Mandarin) tuition classes. He was also equally occupied even when at pre-school age. We believe that the best time to start is at this stage.*

¶59:

¶60: R: Communal values and cultural expectation are very important indicators are of successful children's social behaviour. Tell me what you feel is important in the upbringing of your children?

¶61: Mr Bo: *Communal values and cultural expectation are very important indicators in our families....become ...a good child was start at the first day baby born and. I believed childhood experiences die-hard...and culture so family's life is based on culture...To us...the birth of a baby is celebrated joyfully. Could you repeat question?*

¶62:

¶63: R: Tell me what you feel is important in the upbringing of your child according to culture like respectful and prosocial behaviour?

¶64: Mr Bo: *To make sure our child is well behave, we even take into consideration the gestation period...there are a few taboos that have to be observed [laugh] I think as in Malay culture...An expectant mother is not allowed to hit or be cruel towards animals otherwise the baby may pick up this animals' trait. Similarly she is advised to be calm...so that the child that is born will be good-natured and patient... [laugh.]*

¶65:

¶66: R: Do you think those things are significant to children's behaviour?

¶67: Mr Bo: *Oh yes...sudah tentu we percaya (of course...I believe it). Even naming the baby is important ...the grandfather names the baby with a good name and that suits its gender. It is also about respect our heritage or family name...people will respect him.*

¶68:

¶69: R: How do you implement the norms and values of your family?

¶70: Mr Bo: *My children follow whatever I do. I have been teaching my children about our culture since they were born. The best practice is that we act as role models...teach them what is right...what are good morals and what are bad ones....give them guidance and teach them skills...inform them well about social rules so they understand and know who they are ...and that they should behave well. I trained my son (Wee Jo) to be brave and truthful and admit his mistakes if he does something wrong...always honour his mum and himself. He may act a little rough but we need our child to be strong when he is alone or when he is exposed to a new environment. Give him responsibility, trust him and encourage him to do good things. It may seem too extreme but to me it is relevant when I taught my son to sit properly...sometimes I alerted my son through my body language and he understood what I meant.*

¶71:

¶72: R: Oh really...Do you emphasise character development centred in morality? How?

¶73: *Mr Bo: Yes...yes I do. Moral character is pentinglah sebab banyak membantu kanak-kanak (important because it helps children) to behave well. If my child does not have a proper morals...I think the family values will be affected. Our children should dress and behave respectfully according to our culture.*

¶74:

¶75: R: What beliefs and values do you practise as a parent?

¶76: *Mr Bo: There are many celebrations that Chinese community observes...we can get confused between cultural celebrations and religious...for example Chinese New Year celebration is a cultural celebration... I am not going further. Most Chinese community here are Buddhist and retain strong ties with the ancestral homeland...but because we have settled in Malaysia for a long time, my family gradually adopted elements of Malaysian culture and so it has produces a variety of practices, beliefs, foods, clothes, and arts. Let them be proud of our culture...but I do not deny that Western culture especially American movies influence them a lot. We celebrate almost all the Chinese festivals like Chinese New Year [lah], Chengbeng [a cultural and religious activity], Moon Cake Festival or Lantern Festival (Cultural Festival)... [...] We also follow the principles of Buddhism. It is important, as a parent to nurture our child to have good character, control their feelings and emotions well, be obedient and have a compliant character and good relationship with others. We believe we have to share, care and not be too individualistic.*

¶77:

¶78: R: How about your language?

¶79: *Mr Bo: Every family has its own concept especially their language. It is depends on the family. Mine has selected the Chinese language as our first language follow by Malay and English...so my son can speak three languages. I would prefer my son to maintain our language, though.*

¶80:

¶81: R: As you mention, your father and mother stay together with you, how does your child relate with his grandparents? What role do the grandparents play in your child's life? Do they inculcate family values in your child?

¶82: *Mr Bo: Actually my parents stay with me, so... They play significant role in nurturing my children and caring for them. My father or father in-law or mother and mother in-law are part of my resources so they always gives me advice and show me how to nurture my son but never obstruct what I do.*

¶83:

¶84: R: Does your father or father in law interfere with your nurturing of your children?

¶85: *Mr Bo: My father or father in-law or mother and mother in-law are part of my resources so they always give me advice on nurturing my son but never interfere what I do...especially in front of my children.*

¶86:

¶87: R: Do your friend or work colleagues any input towards the nurturing of your child?

¶88: *Mr Bo: Yes they do as we often discuss families matter and children's upbringing such as pre-school activities and about social problem and affecting children...in other word we together take responsibility.*

¶89:

¶90: R: You have neighbours around you - can you tell me about them? How well does your child know your neighbours? When does he/she meet the neighbours?

¶91: *Mr Bo: We have stay here for than more than 30 years as a family in the neighbourhood. They know each family quite well...but second generation may not...my son knows only a few of our neighbourhoods.*

¶92:

¶93: R: What is the community's contribution to establish this pre-school?

¶94: *Mr Bo: This pre-school was established since 1980...which the original building was demolished because it was too old...after that Rukun Tetangga (Residential Association) initiated a new building for the community and pre-school... We always care for our community members...we are a family. This pre-school was originally for the community, so children in this pre-school were part of our responsibility. We discuss with one another regularly at coffee shop or front of pre-school, especially after taking our children to pre-school...The main topic being about our children's attainment and behaviour.*

¶95:

¶96: R: Were you involved in planning of pre-school activities?

¶97: *Mr Bo: ...the teachers will inform parents about the activity planned such as birthday party or any other celebration.*

¶98:

¶99: R: Are you involved in developing the pre-school curriculum, school-planning activities and classroom activities?

¶100: *Mr Bo: Yes...I am involved in curriculum or classroom activity planning, including in social activities of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) like fiesta, sport day, and kerja gotong royong (cooperative work).*

¶101:

¶102: R: What is your opinion about extra classes?

¶103: *Mr Bo: The Mandarin class at least has helped my son with basic hand writing which is a good skill. The extra English classes were good as they help my son to be more fluent in English and The Sinar classes [Malay phonic] have improved his reading skills. I totally support the PTA committee and I appreciate it involvement.*

¶104:

¶105: R: Does the community association play a role in the pre-school?

¶106: *Mr Bo: Yes. The community plays a role in pre-school because the parents send their children there...so if you ask in that sense ...and the pre-school is may be viewed as a community support system. For instance the PTA gives financial assistance to pre-school the need arises especially with reference to basic facilities.*

¶107:

¶108: R: Do the pre-school activities match the goals of the community association?

¶109: *Mr Bo: I would it does [lah] if not parent would not send their children there...and now a lot parents send them to the private pre-school. We make sure either the activities in the classroom or outside the classroom really suit a multi-ethnic culture. The activities must not touch any ethnic sensitivity. Pre-school practices are more multi-ethnic and*

develop children's relationship among the community...they (the teachers) never prepare food which is not halal or meat for Indian children who are vegetarian.

¶110:

¶111: R: Does the school ethos promote positive relationships among children?

¶112: Mr Bo: *I believe it does...promote relationships but better formally...when there fewer barriers. During the last 30 years the relationship among ethnic groups was closer but today there is a lot of restriction among the ethnic groups.*

¶113: *[interrupted by his mobile phone for a few second]... [...] I believe it does...I agree this pre-school helps to develop the relationship among the children. Actually our pre-school is a success because it is made up of multi-ethnic children...if you go to other "Tadika" (pre-school) you see only one ethnic groups. It gives children competence...more capability...ability and sociability to relate with peers.*

¶114:

¶115: R: What do you think of the niche of this pre-school?

¶116: Mr Bo: *We have multi-ethnic groups here...since this pre-school was established in early 1980 so...the pre-school has its own niche which is in addressing its multiracial composition...so this pre-school will ensure the implementation of the elements of national integration in its curriculum.*

¶117:

¶118: R: How about the teacher's role in your community?

¶119: Mr Bo: *The teachers give hundreds per cent support to encourage children to relate to one another...from classroom activities to out-door activities. Encourages them to express their concern by helping other children and finding practical ways of comforting their friends...it can develop good relationship...good attitude such as caring and making the effort to help classmates.*

¶120:

¶121: R: Does the pre-school nurture children's development?

¶122: Mr Bo: *One of the reasons why Chinese parent send their child here because of the extra classes for the Chinese language (Mandarin)... Most of the Chinese parents here are Chinese educated... so they insist on the propagation of the mother tongue Mandarin.[...]which other pre-school may not stress. We understand that...em...the National Pre-school Curriculum has stress our language but not every pre-school has offer our language to our children...so...emphasis on the child's development in the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual areas. It also focus to 3Rs [reading writing and arithmetic]....emmm.*

¶123:

¶124: R: How about the pre-school learning approach?

¶125: Mr Bo: *...the pre-school generally stresses learning through play and informal activities... and believes in the facilitating role of the teacher in the classroom...unlike private pre-school which stress achievement...most recite and excessive homework...that burdens our children.*

¶126:

¶127: R: Does the community association play a role in the pre-school?

¶128: Mr Bo: *Yes. The parents are encouraged to take part in their child's activities...such as celebrating festivals in Malaysia, working together, attending talks,*

participating in sports competitions, birthday parties, visitations, food funfair, storytelling and cooking contests.

¶129:

¶130: R: Do you feel that the atmosphere of the pre-school facilitates school norms and values? Do the children find it difficult to follow the school norms and values?

¶131: Mr Bo: *Oh yes...yeah...The pre-school environment has a multi-ethnic culture as portrayed by photos in the corners of school books, toys and other things provided for the children. They feel comfortable and enjoy the activities...the teacher always talks about the thematic approach and ask for our help to prepare a few things for classroom activities which are relevant to the child's everyday life...so they do not feel it difficult to follow the pre-school norms and values. So this stimulates children's view and understanding of different cultures which is stress in themes such as appreciation of festivals in Malaysia including Hari Raya, Kong Xi Fatt Choy and Deepavali. So...it will build up national integrity.*

¶132:

¶133: R: How about learning through play? Could you explain a little bit about that?

¶134: Mr Bo: *...err this contributes a lot to our children...learning through play has its strengths because the child learns to express himself through play and play can also enrich language, vocabulary and social development as well they made friends.*

¶135:

¶136: R: How about the impact on your son?

¶137: Mr Bo: *I believe that learning through play has helped my son in cognitive and social development. I bought Wee Jo a lot of educational toys like Lego or construction toys, CDs for example, Barney and friends, Teletubbies, Along and Upin and Ipin [Malay child's stories].*

¶138:

¶139: R: Do the pre-school teachers and support staff co-operate with you?

¶140: Mr Bo: *Of course a lot...in so many aspects as I said before.*

¶141:

¶142: R: Last but not least, is there anything else you want to share or you want to make reach conclusion before we end our session?

¶143:

¶144: Mr Bo: *20 years ago, I didn't have any problem with other friends from different ethnic groups. Nowadays school practice is different, the practise elements of Islamic apply to all children at PERPADUAN Pre-school which look like an Islamisation process. I am concerned about this issue because it is not in line with the pre-school aims. Why not just go back to the original goal which involved only social skills and 3Rs. I agree with the teacher's explanation that practice in school will not necessarily interfere with norms and values of home.*

¶145:

¶146: R: Thank you and have a good son.

¶147: Mr Bo: *Sama-sama [you are welcome].*

¶148:

D2: Transcripts Interview (Teacher)

Description: Teacher

Pseudonym of interviewee: Mrs Faziah Khalid

Name of interviewer: Nordin Mamat

Date of interview: 19 August 2009

Place: PERPADUAN Pre-school Resource Room

Original Language of Interview: Malay

Translated by: Nordin Mamat

¶: [Paragraph]

¶1: R: *Assalamualaikum, Cikgu (Teacher)!* Thank you for taking part in this research.

¶2:

¶3: *Teacher: Waalaikumusalam!*

¶4:

¶5: R: Could you tell me about yourself?

¶6:

¶7: *Teacher: I am Mrs Faziah Khalid. I have been teaching for the past 10 years. I've been in this PERPADUAN Pre-school more than 5 years.*

¶8:

¶9: R: From your personal view, what is interesting about this PERPADUAN Pre-school?

¶10:

¶11: *Teacher: It is very challenging because the children and the parents are from multi-ethnic backgrounds...differ in social economic status and education...they are some who are highly educated and other who are not.*

¶12:

¶13: R: You have been talking about multi-ethnic parents. Could you explain about cultural diversity in this pre-school?

¶14:

¶15: *Teacher: About cultural diversity it means a variety of ethnic groups' practicing their own culture. I would say that we have adapt to the different cultures and develop activities and program to suit the children.*

¶16:

¶17: R: What makes this pre-school unique compared to other pre-school?

¶18:

¶19: *Teacher: The mixture of ethnic groups' as there varieties of children here from the local area...that is Chinese, Malay and Indian. I think this pre-school is the only pre-school I've been in where the population is culturally balance. So the children are exposed to more things. They are being exposed to another child's culture, language and table manners.*

¶20:

¶21: "I have always believed in bringing good cheer to those around me. It may be old school beliefs but generosity and kindness will never go out of style."

¶22:

¶23: R: How do you handle the children?

¶24: *Teacher: I avoid being fierce. I prefer to respect children's right but I also learnt to stand up for what I believe when in handling children.*

¶25:

¶26: R: How do you feel this school was successful in nurturing children from different ethnic family backgrounds?

¶27:

¶28: *Teacher: We have a philosophy; vision and mission, and syllabus to implement. I believe that we have set a benchmark. I have always believed that academic excellence should exist alongside, and not in place of, a happy and enjoyable school life — busy, productive and above all, meaningful.*

¶29:

¶30: R: Is the school philosophy and pre-school ethos in line with local community? How?

¶31:

¶32: *Teacher: We have followed the philosophy of the national pre-school and all activities in classroom are based on national curriculum guidelines. There is emphasis on the various aspects of development including language, communication...cognitive, emotional, social, physical, moral and spiritual values as well as creativity and aesthetics. The PERPADUAN Pre-school goal was given priority because of the multi-ethnic nature of Malaysian society with diversity in culture, and language as it aims to unite the three major ethnic groups at an early stage and then customise with the local community.*

¶33:

¶34: R: Do the parents understand the pre-school ethos?

¶35:

¶36: *Teacher: Oh...yes but not all, some of them do not bother...for parent who involved directly understand it...participate in school activities...support by joining the trips, help school raise funds and so on.*

¶37:

¶38: R: Do you explain to the parents about the objectives, and the activities of pre-school program or any communication with parents at all?

¶39:

¶40: *Teacher: I send the brochures...which included the school calendar [quiet] ...permission letters before trips*

¶41: R: What is their response?

¶42: *Teacher: Some parents give good responses...some just ignore...so what can I do...nothing much.*

¶43:

¶44: R: Can you explain the approach of pre-school teaching?

¶45:

¶46: *Teacher: I follow what is recommended by curriculum provided by the department of education...and recommended by Teacher Trainers ...like Learning through play, Thematic approach, and Integrated approach.*

¶47:

¶48:

¶49: R: Can you explain about learning through play. I observed learning through play help children to interact with one another?

¶50: *Teacher: This approach is most appropriate and relevant to help the child's interaction. The child learns to express himself through play and play can also enrich language, vocabulary development and peer interaction across ethnic groups. They learn something from the play course, starting with observing their friends in the socialisation processes, learning how to empathise and how to expand their minds. We also provide learning corners to initiate play such as mini theatres, language corner, blocks and building materials; art corner; science and the reading corner...children can have a choice of selecting play materials for play from this.*

¶51:

¶52: R: Have you asked the parents about this approach?

¶53:

¶54: *Teacher: Yes...during the first meeting with parents I explained to them...three approaches such as Learning through play, Thematic approach, and Integrated approach. I told them about this approach one by one and why it is important for children and this school in general. I know some parents will feel doubtful about learning through play because they do not really understand. As they have been exposed with old school style...but in the end they are satisfied with their children's improvement [quiet and smile].*

¶55:

¶56: R: How do the pre-school activities help children to speak the Malay language?

¶57:

¶58: *Teacher: We use the Malay language as the language of daily communication in school ... so all the activities we do are in the Malay language... except for English as a subject only... so that the activities could help them to communicate in Malay. In the early stage most of the Chinese and Indian children come to school without knowing any Malay words. [...] They speak only Chinese or Tamil as these are their mother tongues. So in the first month it is very difficult to teach them... they do not understand what I say.*

¶59:

¶60: R: What is your action?

¶61:

¶62: *Teacher: For the Chinese children I am fortunate because I have Mrs Teng to help. She translates the instructions that I give into Mandarin but for the Indian children it is a little difficult since there is no one who can explain ... [...] so I show them so I used sign language to help them.*

¶63:

¶64: R: How long would the teacher face this problem?

¶65:

¶66: *Teacher: ...em...Not for too long ... between one to three months. It depends on the child. Some are slow and others fast.*

¶67:

¶68: R: Can you explain about the extra English class in terms of objectives, how it operates and the teacher?

¶69:

¶70: *Teacher: This English class was started to meet the demand from the parents. They [PTA] requested every year to have this class. The aim of this class is to teach children English grammar. I observed that it is good because it helps to enhance what I teach children in class. The children also enjoy this class, the activities and the teaching approach are enjoyable and fun.*

¶71:

¶72: R: Do the extra classes help the children?

¶73:

¶74: *Teacher: This class helps children to read a lot and quickly. It is an addition to the activities which have been practised in class. The parents tell me that their children have improved a lot in reading.*

¶75:

¶76: R: Do the Chinese and Indian children who speak in the mother tongue have a problem during learning?

¶77:

¶78: *Teacher: At an early stage most of the Chinese and Indian children come to school without knowing any Malay words. They speak only Chinese or Tamil as their mother tongue. So in the first month it is very difficult to teach them...they do not understand what I say.*

¶79:

¶80: R: How do you solve this problem?

¶81:

¶82: *Teacher: If we want improve to improve children's language, we have to mix them ... because when they are mixed, they interact. If we put them in the same ethnic groups, they will only speak in their mother tongue and so its will be difficult to teach them also.*

¶83:

¶84: R: Why is there a need for this sitting formation?

¶85:

¶86: *This is one of factors to get children close to each other...em...mm of course at the early stage they[children] look uncomfortable and find it difficult to make friends...but after a few days they become more comfortable. This sitting formatting is used when we have a child who shows negative behaviour (e.g., to make noise in a group).*

¶87:

¶88: R: How do the parents respond to this? Do they agree with this idea?

¶89:

¶90: *I told them about this, they agreed. They told me that it helped their children to mix with others.*

¶91:

¶92: R: How many times do you change this sitting formation in a year?

¶93:

¶94: *Two or three months when they [the children] mixed around during free time, but I only started after April when the children settled down during the transition period especially the 5 year-olds.*

¶95:

¶96: R: How effective is this idea?

¶97:

¶98: *Actually, this idea is one of the suggestions from the Daerah Brickfields Teacher Trainer to new teacher and the teachers who have been teaching for less than 5 years. Physically it has been effective [lah] so far, and so far there have been no complaints from children or parents. It seems they show cooperative behaviour, are helpful, and respect one another. At least we can see them playing and chatting with other group members.*

¶99:

¶100: R: Do classroom sitting formations or desk arrangements affect the children's behavioural understanding of themselves as well as others?

¶101:

¶102: *Teacher: Err ... we put children in their small groups ... we mixed them to include all ethnic groups Malay, Chinese and Indian. We change the groups almost every two months.*

¶103:

¶104: R: How do you try to maintain tolerance and harmony among the ethnic groups in the classroom?

¶105:

¶106: *Teacher: In the classroom situation, I see there is no problem...we just mix around. I think when we look at the classroom where the children just mingled so I can't see any problem at all...as they are mixed together in different ethnic groups.*

¶107:

¶108: R: I saw the children serve food and beverages to their friends, what does it mean for them?

¶109:

¶110: *Teacher: It is the practice here that the children would serve food and beverages to their classmates to the children's tables. Usually 4 to 5 persons will be served each day. Before that the food is placed on the plate by the assistant teachers or parents who will volunteer to come half an hour earlier. This practice is important so that children will be responsibility.*

¶111:

¶112: R: How do you teach moral values?

¶113:

¶114: *Teacher: Actually we are not teaching the moral subject but relate the moral per se but relate moral values in our teaching and practices.*

¶115:

¶116: R: How do you relate the moral values to children in teaching?

¶117:

¶118: *Teacher: We teach children to follow the theme. Every story in the theme contains moral values. So...we will explain the moral values during story telling. Every character in the story will show moral values .*

¶119:

¶120: R: Could we say this pre-school is 'Mini Malaysian'?

¶121:

¶122: *Teacher: Yes. This pre-school you can call 'Mini Malaysian'...it's true! You can see all ethnic groups here...Chinese, Malays and Indians and in previous years they were more than three ethnic groups.*

¶123:

¶124: R: Do have any relationship with the community?

¶125:

¶126: *Teacher: Yes...yes but it wasn't easy because I have a lot to do and all this is are extra....and because so we have so many ethnic groups that I have to listen... and think of the sensitivity of every ethnic group.*

¶127:

¶128: R: What about contribution from the neighbourhood? Could you explain to me how the school and community relationships are develop?

¶129:

¶130: *Teacher: Here (this pre-school) we use the Neighbourhood Association (RT) buildings, so all matters related to the building is the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Association. This includes providing air-conditioning in the classroom; modifying the science park for the children, providing huts and rabbit cages, all this uses the budget of RT. RT also provides a computer for children to contribute to the children's trip. The JPNIN only provides the budget for the pre-school management, learning tools and for the children and staff.*

¶131:

¶132: R: Last but not least, is there anything else you want to share or you want to make any conclusion before we end our session?

¶133:

¶134: *Teacher: To me...it seems that we are talking about integration...I think...Malaysia is a very good place....where we have many ethnic groups that are almost equal. We mix around very well like helping each other to make everybody happy. When we work together we share success and we are happier. If you are there alone I think it will be quite boring and I don't think you'll be too happy. Happiness should be shared and we help one another, don't think about race, don't discriminate a person because of hs/her race...they don't choose their race as we can choose our race. What's different between the Chinese and Malays? We are all human being so we can shake hands, talk, and laugh. I can enjoy your company. So why should I want to discriminate against you when I can enjoyed your company. I think it will be beautiful. Everybody can talk to everybody.*

¶135:

¶136: R: Yes, that is the idea. Thank you very much and nice talking to you.

¶137:

¶138: *Teacher: You're welcome.*

APPENDIX E: NVivo “TREE NODES” OR CODING DISPLAYS
Figure E1: Identifying categories and themes from the photographs

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. On the left, a 'Sources' tree shows folders for 'Internals' (General Observation, Individual Observation, Parent interview, Photograph) and 'Externals' (Memos). Below this is a navigation pane with options like 'Nodes', 'Sets', 'Queries', 'Models', 'Links', 'Classifications', and 'Folders'. The main window is titled 'Photograph' and contains a table with columns: Name, Nodes, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By. The table lists several items, with '072Children Play' selected. Below the table, a photograph shows four children in a classroom setting. To the right of the photograph is a 'Content' pane with text describing the scene and including a comment about gender and ethnicity.

Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
070Valkit-cooperati	1	1	01/11/2009 21:04	N	14/12/2009 13:59	N
071XQi-Play	2	2	01/11/2009 20:55	N	14/12/2009 14:01	N
072Children Play	0	0	01/11/2009 20:06	N	13/04/2010 12:50	N
073Haikal-Fantasy	0	0	01/11/2009 20:29	N	14/12/2009 14:03	N

Region	Content
1080.370 - 1770.1810	<p>Haikal show them how to play the 'teng-teng' game. Zi Qi and Mei Yee (Chinese girls) and Vasanthan observed what Haikal doing. Haikal shows the rules of games and what to do.</p> <p>When I asked about what relationships among them, Haikal told that they all are my friends. He always plays with them when free time and out-door activity. He told that Zi Qi always given colour pencil to him when he need it. When I asked Zi Qi, about relationship with Haikal, she also told that they always play together during play time. She also be friend with Haikal in classroom activities.</p> <p>When I asked them together Haikal, Zi Qi, Mei Yee and Vasanthan, they admit as friends.</p> <p>Comment: I realise that based on this photograph and interview, gender and ethnic group is not the main factor they choose friend. the trigger of relationships here are feeling comfortable with the reciprocity. Children</p>

Figure E2: Identifying categories and themes from observations

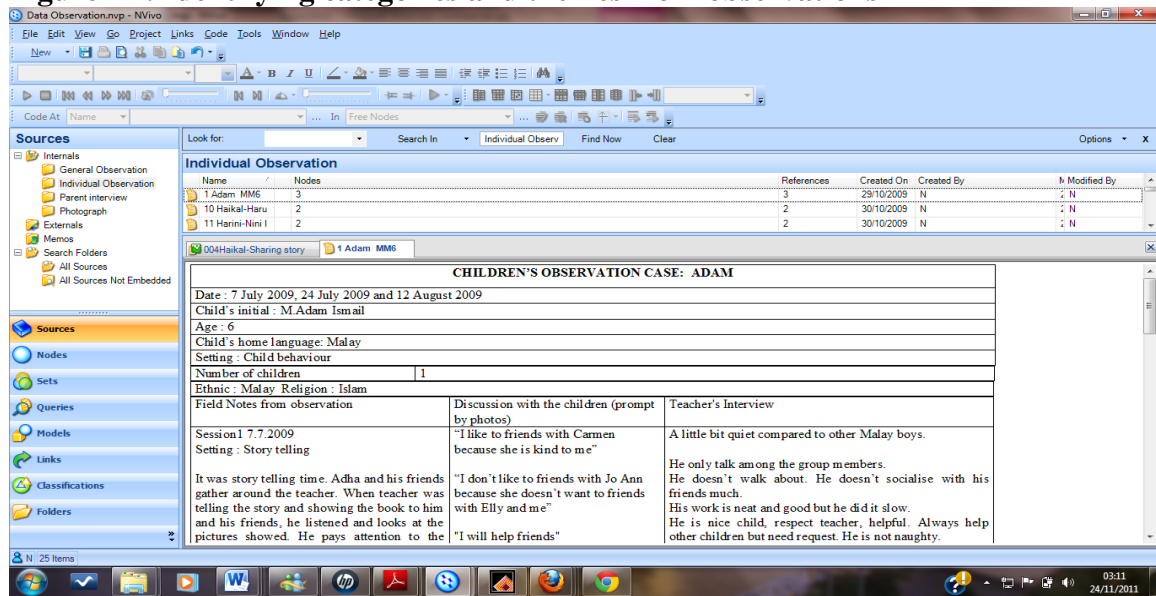


Figure E3: Identifying categories and themes from the interview data

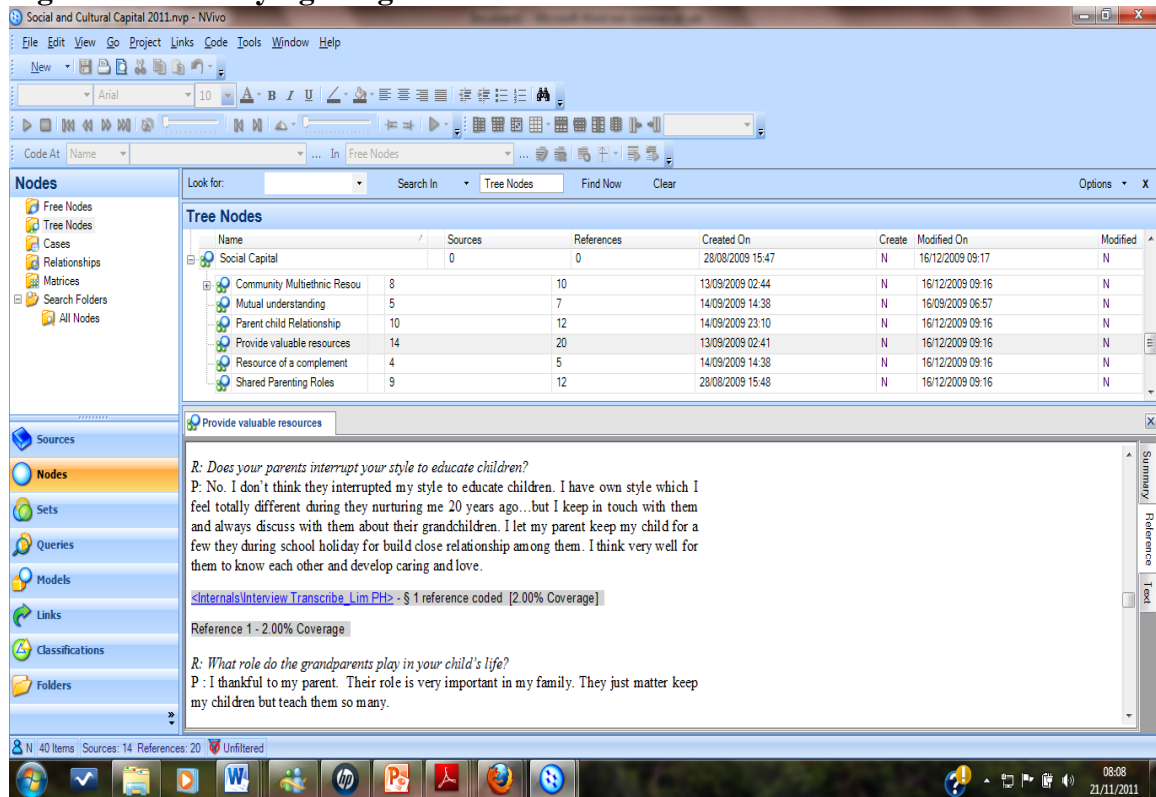


Figure E4: Themes of child's interaction

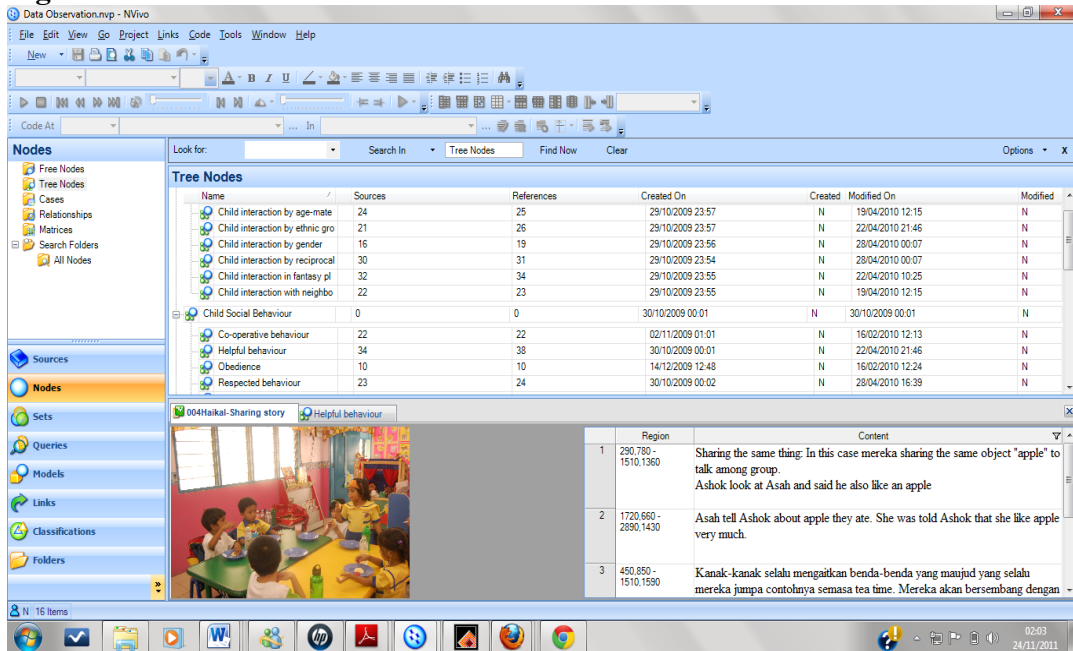


Figure E5 Themes of children's social behaviour

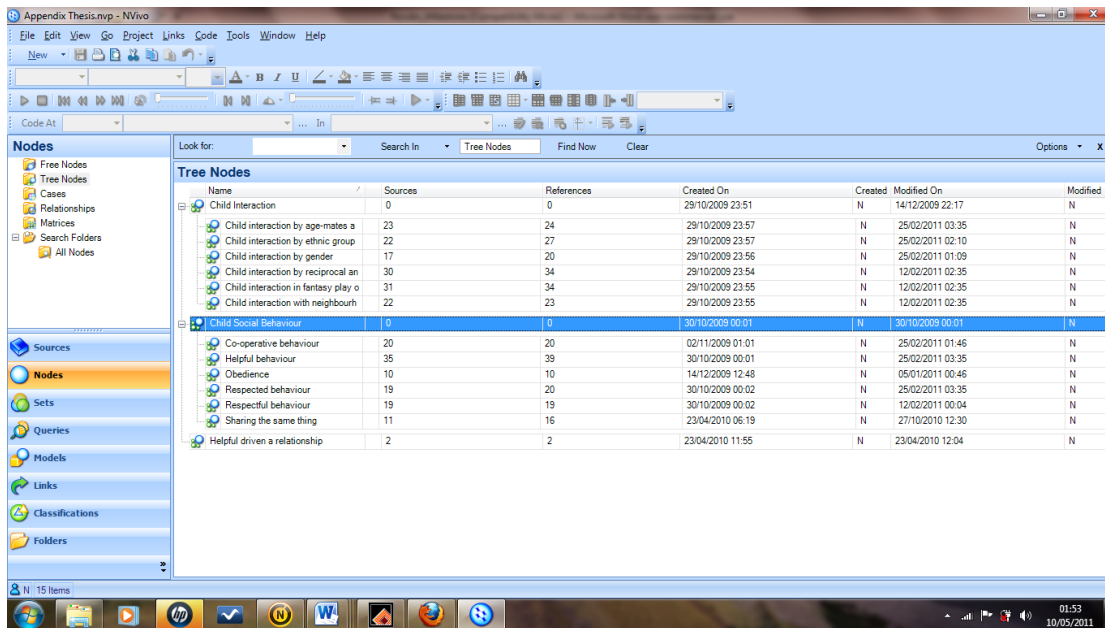


Figure E6: Themes of Social and Cultural Capital

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created	Modified On	Modified
Language	0	0	28/08/2009 15:15	N	08/12/2009 22:45	N
Home Language	15	25	28/08/2009 15:23	N	09/02/2011 12:16	N
Language and relationships	12	23	15/12/2009 16:16	N	10/05/2011 02:00	N
Norms and Values	0	0	28/08/2009 15:12	N	16/12/2009 09:09	N
Children behaviour	10	16	15/12/2009 16:17	N	09/02/2011 12:16	N
Moral values	10	12	14/09/2009 23:12	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Norms practice	17	28	14/09/2009 22:45	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Physical and emotional	7	8	08/12/2009 22:51	N	10/05/2011 02:04	N
Respect	17	20	28/08/2009 15:50	N	09/02/2011 13:46	N
Routine	17	18	28/08/2009 15:29	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
TV influence	11	16	15/09/2009 16:46	N	05/01/2011 04:11	N
parenting styles	0	0	28/08/2009 15:18	N	08/12/2009 22:46	N
Authoritarian	11	11	28/08/2009 15:21	N	10/05/2011 02:01	N
Firm and guidance	13	19	28/08/2009 15:27	N	09/02/2011 13:59	N
Nurturing	13	23	28/08/2009 15:16	N	10/05/2011 02:03	N
Quality time	10	12	14/09/2009 23:08	N	09/02/2011 12:16	N
Pre-school ethos	1	1	28/08/2009 15:45	N	10/05/2011 02:03	N
Community and pre-school	10	12	14/09/2009 23:18	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
ethnic integration	4	6	15/12/2009 20:58	N	16/12/2009 09:17	N
Facilitate school norms	8	9	14/09/2009 23:00	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Linguistic structure	5	6	28/08/2009 15:51	N	10/05/2011 02:06	N
Parent involvement	4	4	15/12/2009 16:10	N	15/12/2009 22:05	N

Figure E7: Themes of Parental and Pre-School

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created	Modified On	Modified
Pre-school ethos	1	1	28/08/2009 15:45	N	10/05/2011 02:03	N
Community and pre-school	10	12	14/09/2009 23:18	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
ethnic integration	4	6	15/12/2009 20:58	N	16/12/2009 09:17	N
Facilitate school norms	8	9	14/09/2009 23:00	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Linguistic structure	5	6	28/08/2009 15:51	N	10/05/2011 02:06	N
Parent involvement	4	4	15/12/2009 16:10	N	15/12/2009 22:05	N
Pre-school match community	8	14	14/09/2009 22:54	N	10/05/2011 02:06	N
promote relationship	8	19	05/09/2009 16:53	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Role of teacher	5	7	28/08/2009 15:46	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
School environment nurturing	12	18	28/08/2009 15:46	N	10/05/2011 02:05	N
Type of curricula	12	22	28/08/2009 15:51	N	10/05/2011 02:06	N
Religious	0	0	28/08/2009 15:08	N	16/12/2009 09:22	N
a way of life or code of condu	12	26	28/08/2009 15:13	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Belief	11	12	28/08/2009 15:19	N	17/12/2009 00:33	N
Prayer places	11	12	28/08/2009 15:20	N	15/12/2009 22:00	N
Social Capital	0	0	28/08/2009 15:47	N	16/12/2009 09:17	N
Community Multiethnic Reso	8	10	13/09/2009 02:44	N	16/12/2009 09:16	N
Mutual understanding	5	7	14/09/2009 14:38	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Parent child Relationship	10	12	14/09/2009 23:10	N	16/12/2009 09:16	N
Provide valuable resources	14	20	13/09/2009 02:41	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N
Resource of a complement	4	5	14/09/2009 14:38	N	16/12/2009 09:16	N
Shared Parenting Roles	9	12	28/08/2009 15:48	N	14/03/2011 07:35	N

Figure E8 Sample of Data Reductions: Provide valuable resources (Grandparents and Children's Behaviour)

<Internals\Interview Transcript/ Mrs Lim PH> - § 1 reference coded [2.00% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.00% Coverage

¶59: R (NM): *What role do the grandparents play in your child's life?*

¶60: Parent (Mrs Lim): Almost every day. Regularly I shall take my daughter on Friday and send her back on Sunday. I let my parent keep my child. Every week I took her once a week, every night I shall go to my parent's house because of my working hours and my husband who often goes outstation.

¶78: Mrs Lim: I thankful to my parent. Their role is very important in my family. They just matter keep my children but teach them so many.

¶99: Mrs Lim: My mother always gives her mathematics exercises. My parent have a very important role in order for me to be in this position that's I shall practise whatever my parent teach me before continuing their position.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mr Bo> - § 1 reference coded [2.88% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.88% Coverage

¶82: Mr Bo: Actually my parent stays with me, so... They play a big role such as nurturing my children...caring for them. My father or father in-law or mother and mother in-law are part of my resources so they always gives me advice and show me how to nurture my son but never interrupt what I had done.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mr Rajah> - § 1 reference coded [3.21% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.21% Coverage

¶34: Mr Rajah: They help a lot in social skills such as how to communicate, how to talk to people, and respecting others etc. sometimes they show our culture.

¶40: Mr Rajah: My parents mostly visit their grandchild on a weekend and sometimes stay together with them for a few days. During that time, my parents would share the story about the family's traditions with the grandson (i.e., the dressing and accessories, table manners such as eating with banana leaf, and put *pottu* (a mark on the forehead as prayer mark), inform him of the proper social behaviour like respecting the parents (verbal and nonverbal), uncle and great grandparents. Sometimes, they explain about god and belief in the second life after death which is dependent of life today.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mrs Maniamah> - § 1 reference coded [1.48% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.48% Coverage

¶75: Mrs Maniamah: A lot...about praying and being obedient. The values related to respecting the parents...but sometimes my mum tends to indulge Lela even for a small thing.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mrs Ruky> - § 1 reference coded [4.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.47% Coverage

¶61: *“Dia suka sama mak saya saja. Nenek tinggal sama, nenek banyak bantu dia dan kami semua. Nenek ada sikit garang tapi sayang”*

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mrs Ryan> - § 1 reference coded [7.94% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 7.94% Coverage

¶55: Mrs Ryan: We stay at our home...I will visit my father. My father definitely influence my styles...my gives me a lot of freedom...We live at kampong...we went *main pasir* (sand play)...we can play at any time until my mother shout and everybody will comeback.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mr ARahim> - § 1 reference coded [3.59% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.59% Coverage

¶92: *“Lebih kepada keluarga sebelah keluarga isteri..sebab datuk dan nenek dia educated jadi depa akan membentuk cucu-cucu dia semua. Dia tidak campur tangan tapi sebagai sumber atau advisor atas request. Mostly banyak dipergaruhi oleh nenek depa, terutama sekali kalau dia tinggal dengan nenek...faktor jantina yang berkongsi”*.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mrs Chang> - § 1 reference coded [2.86% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.86% Coverage

¶64: NM: Do your mother and father play main role?

¶65: Mrs Chang: *“Ada banyak juga, bila pasal duit tak cukup ka, juga pasal anak-anak kita hantar ke rumah dia juga”*.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mrs Nani> - § 1 reference coded [4.72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.26% Coverage

¶58: Mrs Nani: My mum wants her granddaughter to have characteristics like being polite, gracious and respectful, so she treats her rather leniently ...but I treat my daughter with a more assertive attitude, let her have more independence and expose to new environment.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Slam> - § 1 reference coded [11.61% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 11.61% Coverage

¶90: Mrs Slam: *"Ibu saya banyak bantu saya, semua benda saya tanya ibu saya bila ada masalah, dia mentor saya sejak dapat anak lagi"*.

¶92: Mrs Slam: *"Campur tangan tak adalah, tapi nasihat tu banyak. Kami pun minta nasihat dia. Dia selalu pesan supaya jangan terlalu manjakan anak, dan jangan pukul anak selalu"*.

¶96: Mrs Slam: *"Ya...tapi susah nak cerita di sini. Sebab tak ditulis tapi memang kami amalkan norms dan values masyarakat Melayu. Kami ikut semuanya selagi tak bercanggah dnegan agama. Jadi anak saya pun ikut apa ynag saya buat hari-hari"*.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Maniamah> - § 1 reference coded [1.78% Coverage]

Reference 2 - 1.78% Coverage

¶74: NM: *Does their granparent facilitate family norms to your child?*

¶75: Mrs Maniamah: *"banyak juga...pasal sembahyang dan hormat. Nilai-nilai berkaitan dengan hormat banyak dia tekan, Cuma anak-anak agak manja sikit dengan dia"*.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/Ahmad> - § 1 reference coded [2.73% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.73% Coverage

¶90: NM: *Does your parents interrupt your style to educate children?*

¶91: Mr Ahmad: No. I don't think they interrupted my style to educate children. I let my parents look after my child for a few days during the school holidays to build a close relationship between them. I think it is a good way for them to know each other well and nurture the feelings of caring and love...I think my parents nurture their grandchildren with love. They talked to them using polite language and tried to do their best to nurture their grandchildren liked they did with their own children.

¶98: Mr Ahmad: My mother taught her granddaughter to care for the family members, environment, and show filial piety to others...during visiting families and relatives like her cousin who lives near their grandparents' house, feeding the chicken around the house.

¶103: Mr Ahmad: When we met once a month... first thing my mother did to my daughter after hugging is asked about...pre-school experience and to tell her to "recite the Qur'an" Even though we only met them during school holidays, or any special event and Eid Mubarak.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Rohani> - § 2 references coded [6.27% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.25% Coverage

¶25: Mrs Rohani: ...I also bring my son to the grandparents' house during the weekend.

Reference 2 - 3.02% Coverage

¶40: Mrs Rohani: My mother sometimes support me, she usually pay the school *yuran*. But the most important thing is she is strict about *solat*, when it comes to *Magrib*, my mum would tell my sons to *Solat*. In term of motivation, she always motivated my sons.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mr Zainon> - § 1 reference coded [4.83% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 4.83% Coverage

¶57: Mr Zainon: His grandmother is acting as the facilitator and nurtures Arif... she tends to remind me not to scold her grandson. Arif always informed her when I scold him.

<Internals\ Interview Transcript/ Mrs Mona > - § 4 references coded [3.16% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.43% Coverage

¶82: NM: *Does the pre-school ethos promote positive relationships among children?*

¶83: Mrs. Mona: My mum supports me and helps me a lot in terms of taking care of my son. It started since my son was a baby ...and now she (my mum) is also involved in encouraging my son to learn. But one thing that I respect about her is that she always uses persuasive language towards my son. Sometimes I feel it is unfair of her because she treated me differently 20 years ago compared to how she treats her grandson

Reference 3 - 1.22% Coverage

¶70: Mrs. Mona: *“Kalu di rumah kita ada tiga kaum berbeza dan maca-macam cara didik anak and peraturan ada tegas...kurang ...jadi bila datang sekolah mereka ni akan disamakan jadi satu saja jadi semua akan ikut yang standard je dari segi norma dan nilai-nilai dia”*.

