Wheels and Tiles:
Maintaining social connections through mah-jong and roulette gambling in Manchester

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This is to certify that the work presented in the following thesis is my own.

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on Chinese gamblers in Manchester. It compares mah-jong and roulette play and relates these different forms of gambling to wider experiences, including those of migration and settlement.

The thesis is based on extended ethnographic fieldwork with Hakka or Cantonese speaking regular gamblers in Manchester who have migrated from Hong Kong, Si Yi or other places in Canton Province in China via chain migration. They largely make their living by working in Chinese ethnic enterprises, especially the catering trade. Lineage networks are commonly cherished by these migrants. The thesis argues that, among Manchester's Chinese community, gambling contributes to the construction of new relationships and the maintenance of existing lineage and locality networks.

This thesis compares mah-jong and roulette in response to the hypothesis that commercial gambling is less fully 'social' than domestic gambling. My data suggests that despite the tendency to view traditional games as somehow intrinsically more generative, the social aspects of commercial gambling are also important for Chinese gamblers in Manchester.

This ethnography demonstrates how anthropologists can contribute to studies of gambling by producing detailed and in-depth understandings of gamblers' experiences which may not be captured by other, more quantitative research methods, including questionnaires and surveys. This allows us to ask more complex questions about gambling, and to relate them to wider social processes including migration and settlement. As a result we are better able to

understand the role of gambling in particular communities, rather than assume that it is the same everywhere, for everyone and for the same reasons.

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For the gamblers.

Introduction

1 One hour at the casino

12 o'clock, noon. It's still early for mah-jong at Circus[1]. In the Mah-jong area, only two tables are active and there are three men sitting on the sofa nearby watching TV while waiting for their friends to turn up. Mr Chan is among them. Mr Chan is a regular mah-jong player. Like many other mah-jong regulars, he believes the casino gets more business by offering free mah-jong tables to the Chinese, as mah-jong players bring their families and friends to the casino and sometimes mah-jong players also play casino games while waiting for their opponents. Mr Chan, Wong and Little Man are all waiting. Wong and Little Man have declared that they will not play at the same table, having accused each other of being slow players before. But Wong and Mr Chan do not have to wait long before Fong and another Chan join them. The four men quickly arrange the table and chairs. Wong gets the tiles from the cashier, where he puts down a refundable £10 deposit. 'Let's play £5,' they say to each other, and then they cast the dice to decide who will be the first banker and who takes which seat. Their game finally starts; all four men look relaxed and satisfied. About half an hour later, Chan has won four hands, Mr Chan and Wong has won two hands respectively, and Fong hasn't won at all. Wong suggests ordering something to drink. Mr Chan demands that 'the winner' pays all their tips, which is 50 pence or £1 per person. Chan mumbles that he hasn't actually won much, while Fong keeps absolutely quiet. I have been reminded a few times before by other informants that, when someone is losing continuously, they may feel that their luck has been obstructed by

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[1]. Circus is a casino within walking distance of Chinatown Manchester. There are five casinos in or near Chinatown; four of them provide free mah-jong tables, and the fifth only opens at night. Circus is the most popular casino for mah-jong players. During my fieldwork, these casinos were the main places where I observed people gambling, although I also visited three other venues to watch people play mah-jong.

the person standing nearby watching the game, at which point the onlooker should stop the observation and leave the table. Fong's silence reminds me that it is time to leave their table. So I walk away back to the sofa.

As I watch the four men start their game, the casino becomes busier. More and more people come in and almost all of them are Chinese[2]. Uncle Li, a retired caterer, is gambling on his favourite roulette machine. Beside him there are several other older Chinese players. Uncle Li is known as a mah-jong master amongst the Hakka and the Cantonese in Chinatown, but he stopped playing mah-jong years ago. Like many other former mah-jong players, Li condemns mah-jong as a 'nuisance', saying that mah-jong creates conflicts and ruins friendships. Li says that the game limits his freedom to gamble. He now only plays some blind chance casino games, such as roulette and fruit machines. In contrast to Li, Ng, a takeaway owner in his 30s, loves mah-jong, and describes mah-jong as a remedy for pathological gambling. Ng says that he used to play roulette and could not stop until he lost his last penny. Ng states that mah-jong is a much safer game in the sense that the players have better control over the time and money spent at the gaming table. Besides, because mah-jong is played among a stable, small group of friends and relatives, the money circulates quite evenly amongst the players and does not lead to unequal winning or losing. 'Playing mah-jong is not even gambling, it is getting together with friends and family,' Ng says. Ng sits beside a roulette table but with no chips in his hand. He says the croupier at that table is very strict and will not allow the gamers to win at all. He has no intention of joining the roulette table. He is waiting for his friends to

[2]. A receptionist at the casino told me that 75% of their customers are Chinese, which includes between twenty and thirty-six active players at the mah-jong tables.

arrive to set up their own mah-jong table together. That afternoon in the casino only two types of table games are played, mah-jong and roulette, the most popular games among the regular Chinese gamblers.

2 Why studying mah-jong and roulette among the Chinese players?

Gambling seems to be highly prevalence among the Chinese population. For many Chinese people in Britain, gambling is almost an essential part of their everyday life. If one visits a casino repeatedly, he can easily find out that there is a group of steady regular Chinese players there. As a Chinese myself, it is not unusual for me to hear others claim that 'Chinese love gambling'. But as a Chinese who never visited a casino or betting shop, or bought a lottery ticket, I felt that the gambling was irrelevant to my life. My relationship to gambling changed in 2006 when I worked as a community development worker in Birmingham. I met my PhD supervisor Dr Cassidy through work Also I helped to organise a conference 'Counselling Chinese gamblers', where people from Chinese church, Chinese community centres, Chinese Mental Health Association gathered to discuss how to help the Chinese gamblers to stop gambling. It was then I heard that there was higher prevalence of 'problem gamblers' among the Chinese in Britain, and I could see that my Chinese colleagues were quite eager to do something to 'help the gamblers and the community'. But nobody told me who the 'Chinese gamblers' are, how they gamble, and what they get or lose out of gambling. I become quite curious about the topic of gambling inside the Chinese community.

My Chinese colleagues concern about the gambling issues inside the community

seemingly echoed the liberalisation of gambling in Britain. In 2005, the UK broke with its tradition of 'unstimulated demand' (Miers 2002, 2004) for gambling and voted in the Gambling Act 2005. From the preliminary discussions and more intensively from the effect date on 1st September 2007, a process of liberation has been redefining the gambling environment in the UK. Liberalisation has provided greater freedom for the gambling industry by lifting numerous restrictions including, for example, membership of casinos, licensing of betting shops, bans on advertising and limits on opening hours. By making gambling more widely and easily available in the name of deregulation the government is also exposing gamblers and potential gamblers to greater risks of inappropriate consumption, conceived of in this case as 'addition'. The new legislation, therefore, clearly states the necessity in 'protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling' (Gambling Act 2005, Section 1©) In accordance with the gambling liberalisation and the regulatory framework, research into 'problem gambling' has been encouraged.

It is in this context, I have been funded by Gambling Research Education and Treatment Foundation (GREaT) which replaced the former Responsibility in Gambling Trust (RIGT), with the expectations that my findings will bring some answers about how to cater for the Chinese gamblers who are believed to be more disproportionately affected by the Gambling Act 2005. My project is part of Professor Rebecca Cassidy's ESRC project on gambling. Rebecca focused more on betting shops in London, while our colleague, Claire, worked on the Chinese who gamble in the casinos of London. I studied gambling in the Chinese community in a locality outside London and my study involves both traditional

gambling and commercialised gambling, particularly focus on mah-jong and casino table games, which later is narrowed down to roulette following some early finding of field work.

To study gambling within Chinese community seems to be a natural choice for me. Meanwhile, I also believe that Chinese community in Britain provide high level of heterogeneity and fluidity. The Chinese community in Manchester is composed of different waves of migrants. With new waves of migrants joining in, existing social relationships surrounding the migrants are constantly renegotiated. Old Chinese migrants from the same lineage group or the same locality tend to form their own social groups and different groups share different social networks. New migrants try to join such social networks during the early days of their migration. By maintaining or extending those networks, the migrants' social groups are constantly re-establishing their boundaries. Through gambling, Chinese migrants maintain and construct their social relationship with other Chinese migrants inside or outside those social networks, which they expect to convert into their social resources.

The choice of studying mah-jong and casino table games is partly related to the apparent contrast of the two games. Both games are popular among the Chinese in Manchester, while the two games form intriguing contrast. It's believed that mah-jong is the most popular form of traditional gambling among the Chinese all around the world. Roulette is the most popular game among regular Chinese casino gamblers in Manchester. During the day time in a casino in Manchester, if there is only one table game is played on the gaming

floor, it is always roulette. Both games share the commonality in being popular among the British Chinese casino gamblers. However, these two games differ greatly in several ways. Roulette is a game of blind chance. Mah-jong is a game of skills and strategies (as I explain in details in chapter 3). Casino roulette gambling is asymmetric and commercialised while mah-jong gambling remains largely private in the sense that money circulates only among the four players at the same table and every player theoretically has an equal chance of winning. Roulette is usually only played inside casinos and can be either table roulette or electronic roulette. Mah-jong is played not only in casinos but also in a lot other Chinese spaces, such as in Chinese community centres, Chinese restaurants, homes, and at the back of takeaways. Roulette players at the same table do not necessarily know each other before the game starts or get to know each other after the game has finished. But, at a mah-jong table, the players usually know each other before the game. Or if not, which is rare, the two strangers often have one acquaintance in common and that acquaintance must be present at the game. Playing with strangers is generally frowned upon among the Chinese in Manchester. Mah-jong is commonly taken as a socialising game, while roulette so far has not acquired such a reputation, at least not among the Chinese gamblers.

The contrast of mah-jong and roulette makes me think of the categories of gambling provided by the 2005 Gambling Act. The Act distinguishes gambling between commercial and non-commercial one. This is a useful distinction, and one which I am interested in exploring. However, these two categories are not always mutually-exclusive. Does gambling at roulette have any social aspects? Is mah-jong gambling always a socialising

game? Roulette and mah-jong are not solely commercial and non-commercial respectively. No gambling activity is either commercial or non-commercial at all times and everywhere. Following the proliferation of gambling industry globally, some people worry that the commercialisation of gambling may lead to the loss of gambling's social and no-material sides. In this study I would like to compare roulette, a seemingly commercialised gambling to mah-jong, and find out how sociality is perceived and practised by the group of regular Chinese players in Manchester.

3 Some intellectual considerations

In the existing literature, gambling is often examined as a potentially problematic addictive and risky behaviour through psychological or public health approaches (e.g. Blaszynski, Huynh, and Farrell 1998; Steel and Blaszczynski 2002; Korn and Shaffer 1999; Korn, Gibbins, and Azmier, 2003; Griffiths and Parke 2003; Griffiths 2006). Or it is treated as a social problem that demands social policies of constraint and regulation (Eadinton 1976; Rosecrane 1988; Rose 2003; Mires 2002, 2004). Many gambling studies put their focus in the realm of problem gambling and largely rely on surveys, questionnaires and other quantitative methods (Slade and McConville, 2003; Orford, Sprosten, Erens, White, and Mitchell 2003; Abbott, Volberg, Bellringer and Reith 2004; Papineau 2005; McMillen and Wenzel, 2006). The amount of research that locates gambling as a deviant, dangerous, and anti-social activity is 'disproportionate' (Casey, 2006: 124).

While most gambling research and journals are dominated by psychology, quantitative sociology and the phenomenon of problem gambling, the past and potential future

contributions of anthropology remain somewhat overlooked. Little attention is given to sociological and anthropological studies which have demonstrated that the function and social significance of gambling vary within and across cultures, between genders, classes, ethnic groups and ages (McConville & Slade 2003, McGowan 2004, McMillen 1996). Knowledge of local groups' perceptions of gambling and problem gambling and how people get involved with gambling and how gambling relates to gamblers' life are still not informed by existing psychological and sociological literature. Anthropological studies of gambling come as an accomplishment to the mainstream gambling studies in this sense.

Having reviewed the popular trend of gambling studies, Prus (2004) points out that more attention should be paid to what and how gambling means to human group life. He suggests (2004), to learn about gambling, we researchers need an approach that allow us to both study gambling and relate various aspect of group life in the making, and examine the ways in which people engage and experience gambling and find themselves in the here and now situation as part of the on-going life. Cassidy's point echoes with this suggestion. In anthropological approaches, as Cassidy explains (2010) gambling may be seen as a distinctive form of exchange, the meaning of which taken from context in which it takes place. involves recognising the historical specificity of the 'individual' as a unit of analysis and instead paying attention to socially meaningful concepts, such as luck, fate, fortune, chance, and to how wealth generation, retention and generosity are understood under particular circumstances. As Cassidy (2010) points out, anthropologists understand gambling as inherently social, and are interested in what kinds of people and relationship it creates and depends upon.

Following Cassidy (2010), Prus(2004) , McMillen (1996), I do this ethnographic study of gambling among the Chinese population in Manchester. I explore the socially meaningful concepts, such as money, luck, exchanges, and how these concepts are understood under gambling context and how these conceptions reflect the social relationships surrounding them. Together with the other ethnographers of gambling, I would like to offer another ethnographic account to highlight the diversity of gambling behaviours in the making, and emphasize the continuous 'exchange' of the social meaning of gambling and its social cultural contexts.

4 How to read 'Wheels and Tiles'

This thesis has two focuses. The first focus is Chinese migrants, the other is gambling. It researches the heterogeneous composition of Chinese migrants in Manchester, focusing especially on the group of Chinese who dominate Chinatown and the casinos. The majority of this group are Cantonese or Hakka Chinese. This group's pre-migration background, migration process and their social networks in Manchester work together to provide the background for the second focus of this study: gambling in the Chinese migrants' community in Manchester. This contextual information is presented in the Chapter two 'A bowl of loose sand'.

There are two main types of gambling in the community of this Chinese group: mah-jong gambling and casino gambling. In this thesis, casino gambling means the gambling in which money circulates between the gamblers and the casinos. Mah-jong gambling could also take place in a casino since the casinos near Chinatown provide free mah-jong

facilities, but in mah-jong gambling, during the game, money circulates almost exclusively among the players at the same table, and the casino is not involved in the monetary exchange, thus mah-jong gambling is not casino gambling. To provide information about mah-jong, I devote chapter three to describe this traditional Chinese game, focusing especially on the game's equipment and basic rules. This chapter helps to illustrate that mah-jong is a game of skills and strategies. It is the foundation for a later discussion of the social meaning of luck at mah-jong gambling. Thus the first two chapters of this thesis work to describe the context and background information of the study.

The second focus, gambling, emerges from the third chapter, as a social activity embedded in the Chinese migrants' community in Manchester. It reflects this group's internal structure, the social networks maintained by this group and its group members' connections to the wider society. These reflections unfold through comparisons between mah-jong gambling and casino gambling. Chapters four, five, six and seven compare mah-jong gambling and casino gambling from the following perspectives: employment of luck, social boundaries of different mah-jong spaces, nicknames associated with different types of social networks in the casinos, and monetary circulation in the casinos. Chapter eight tries to combine the two focuses and understand gambling in the context of migration.

Chapter 1 Studying Chinese gambling in Manchester

In this chapter I first conduct a literature review around the five domains of my study, namely anthropology of gambling, gambling and migration, Chinese migrants, exchange and money. Then I discuss the fieldwork procedure, present a summary of the demographic information about my informants, and reflect about doing fieldwork in my

own community. By doing so, I illustrate the theoretical and methodological grounding of my study.

Chapter 2 A bowl of loose sand: the Chinese in Manchester

This chapter provides an historical and social context for this ethnography. It includes a brief history of Manchester's development, the establishment of Manchester's Chinatown, different waves of Chinese immigration to Britain and the formation of various sub-groups of Chinese migrants in Manchester. The history of Manchester's Chinatown explains the domination of Hakka and Cantonese migrants there, and the gambling venues. The history of migration explains the formation of Chinese sub-groups and the relationships between them. The division and the relationships between the sub-groups are reinforced instead of eliminated with the waves of new migrants. All these work together and contribute to the situation of the Manchester Chinese as 'a bowl of loose sand', a group of individuals who appear to be similar to each other but have distinct features respectively, and, more importantly, the group is full of discord.

Circumstances do not change the domination of the Cantonese and Hakka group in Chinatown and the gambling venues, or their relative isolation from other Chinese groups and wider local society. This chapter provides background information about the majority of Chinese regular gamblers in Manchester and helps to make sense of their interactions in the gambling context.

Chapter 3 the game of mah-jong

This chapter describes mah-jong's basic equipment, which includes the 144 tiles and the

dice. It also introduces the basic rules of the games and the skills that an experienced player will display at the table. This information elaborates on how mah-jong is a game that combines skills and strategies together with chance. The chapter provides a base for Chapter 4 and its discussion on the social meaning of employing luck in the game of mah-jong.

Chapter 4 Fishes and dragons: mah-jong players' social grouping

This chapter is ethnography of the interactions among mah-jong players before a game starts, which includes choosing opponents, negotiating stakes, and also choosing the venue to play in. The description of the pre-game interactions of the mah-jong players illustrates the social relations among mah-jong players that contribute to the formation of social space at each mah-jong table. Choosing opponents and negotiating the stakes helps to decide the type of exchange that will occur at the gaming table. Choosing where to play reflects people's definition of mah-jong playing or mah-jong gambling. If we ignored the pre-game interactions, we would lose a large part of the social life of mah-jong from which its social meanings derive and develop, and would also miss the underlying construction of the social space at the gaming table.

The chapter starts with an account of my attempt to explore a mah-jong den in Chinatown, which encapsulates this chapter's themes and provides general information about my field sites. Following this is a short review of current gambling studies to locate my own study of mah-jong in the academic field. Next, I introduce the different settings in which mah-jong takes place, aiming to illustrate the different types of mah-jong gambling in

Manchester. Then I focus on mah-jong players' interactions when choosing opponents and negotiating stakes in those different settings. I discuss how people choose to play at different places and the social meanings they attached to the mah-jong game at different sites. At the end is my final analysis and conclusion.

Chapter 5 A dance with luck: comparing mah-jong and roulette

Mah-jong is a game of skills and strategies while roulette is merely a game of chance. While roulette players make great efforts to 'improve' their skills and knowledge and to influence the outcome of the game, mah-jong players emphasise that winning or losing at a mah-jong table is largely determined by luck instead of skill. The chapter analyses the social relations between players of these two games and points out that, at the roulette tables, the social relationship between players is undetermined, while the relationship between mah-jong players is mostly settled around lineage networks or locality networks (networks of fellow-villagers to put it more precisely). The undetermined social relationship between players increases the contingency of the gaming environment and decreases the sense of trust between gamblers, which contributes to the players' stronger tendency to control uncertainty. At the mah-jong table, players are mostly friends, relatives and acquaintances, their social relationship is well established and they try to maintain the game as a long-term reciprocal exchange that helps to maintain existing relationships. The employment of luck at the mah-jong table is an attempt to decrease the potential conflicts that could be caused by competition between the players and so maintain the group cohesion.

Chapter 6 Casino regulars' nicknames: gambling and social connections

In this chapter, I continue to explore social space in a gambling context, but move from mah-jong gambling to casino gambling, focusing on the casino Chinese regulars. First, I provide general information about the group of casino regulars. The general information of the group indicates that most of the daytime regulars have kinship titles as their nicknames, and the night-time regulars tend to have nicknames that are irrelevant to either their lineage network or their relevant locality, such as their native place. I then continue with episodes of three casino regulars' contrasting casino gambling experiences. These experiences differ in three aspects, depending upon:

1) whether they take gambling 'seriously',

2) whether they think they socialise with the other gamblers, and

3) what type of nicknames they have in the casinos.

In order to contextualise the three episodes, I then start to describe the three types of names that the regulars use to address each other in the casinos. I argue that the names used in casinos reflect the different major social groupings among the regulars under study. At this point I will have presented a picture of different groups of casino Chinese regulars. Following that, I will try to explain how these social groups have come into being and how the social relations between these groups are constituted. To achieve that aim, I present the first generation of Cantonese or Hakka migrants' pre-Britain migration experience at their lineage villages in the Hong Kong New Territories. I explain that the groups' pre-migration life, and their migration experience, are important factors in the relationships they form in casinos. Then I refer to the literature on Chinese lineage

association and gambling, and argue that the group of Chinese casino regulars' gambling experience reminds us that gambling is not only a component but also continuity in a gambler's social life that starts outside the gambling venues. Gambling as a social artefact cannot be properly understood if we isolate it from other aspects of the gambler's life. Some casino games, such as roulette, may be simple and repeat themselves round after round, thus they may appear boring to an outsider, even to a researcher such as me, who is neither keen on, nor good at, games. But gamblers' social interactions are enormously rich and intriguing, and anthropologists have shown that important aspects of social life are revealed through games (Malaby, 2003; Papataxiarchis, 1999; Hayano, 1983, 1989 etc). Casino gaming tables are open to everyone regardless of their social status; however, the social space constructed by regular gamblers there does not readily take in a newcomer, unless the newcomer has a pre-existing connection to their social network, which extends outside the casinos.

Chapter 7 Money in the world of gambling: exchange and social connections

This chapter focuses on Chinese gamblers' perceptions of money and their monetary exchanges, namely winning and losing, borrowing and lending, sharing or withholding winnings, inside or even outside the casinos. Firstly, I analyse what the gamblers mean by 'useless' money. Then I examine the social contexts that encompass gamblers and find out what contextual factors contribute to the meanings of their money in casinos. Thirdly, I explore how different gamblers decide what exchange to participate in and analyse what they expect to get from those exchanges. Chinese gamblers and non-gamblers practices show that modern money could also become an expression, index and measure of social

relations. Instead of flattening social relations, it creates and maintains them. These relations give gambled money its particular social meaning.

Chapter 8 Migration, social networks and gambling

In this chapter, I explore a common opinion shared by my participants that regular gamblers are mostly migrants who have decided to settle permanently in the UK and that temporary migrants tend to avoid gambling. I explore how a migrant's social networks affect his or her life after migration and why some may choose to maintain and construct their social networks through gambling.

I discuss the factors that may affect a migrant's settlement patterns and use a case study to illustrate that illegality is not always the sole factor that makes a migrant avoid permanent settlement. I argue that the direct force that pushes a migrant to leave the host society is a lack of supportive social networks, a lack of social capital. Then I compare common social networks shared by Chinese catering workers and regular Chinese gamblers showing that they are largely restricted within the Chinese ethnic niche. Thirdly I focus on temporary migrants who do not gamble and in particular the stories of three participants, Zee, Heroine and Lucy. Their stories enable me to reflect on more general relationships between gambling, migration, permanence and legality.

Chapter 9 Conclusion: making connections in a gambling world

In the concluding chapter, I focus on my study's contribution to gambling studies, studies of the Chinese community in Britain, and anthropological considerations of money. I point

out that this study helps to create a more holistic understanding of gambling. It connects gambling to everyday life, to each individual's pre-migration history, and to the circumstances that surround them in the receiving society. Among many Cantonese and Hakka migrants, gambling is an essential social artefact. Through gambling they construct relationships and maintain networks they have transplanted from their home society through chain migration. At the end of the chapter I raise questions for further research.

1 Studying Chinese gambling in Manchester

Much of the existing work on Chinese gamblers has focused on problem gambling, or is conducted primarily for clinical purposes (Blaszczynski et al. 1998; Tang et al. 2007; Wong and So 2003, Oei et al. 2007). A number of studies indicate that the rate of problem gambling may be higher for the 'Chinese community' (Volberg, 1994; Thomas and Yamine, 2000; Chen et al, 1993; Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal 1997; Balszczynski, Huynh, Dumlao and Farrell, 1998; Oei, Lin and Raylu, 2007). However, this work also suggests that 'problem gamblers' constitute only a very small portion of the wider gambling population. Blaszczynski, Huynh, Dumlao and Farrell, for example, identify the incidence of problem gambling in the Australian Chinese community at 2.9% (1998). Nine years later, Oei, Lin and Raylu found that 2.1% of Australian Chinese participants were at what they describe as 'the tipping point' for problem gambling (2007). In Macao, the rate is less than 2.5% (Fong and Ozorio 2005). The wider population of Chinese gamblers is rarely studied, and there is very limited information about how Chinese gamblers perceive gambling. Who are these 'Chinese' gamblers? How do they gamble? Why do I need to find out the answers to these questions and how do I find the answers? In this chapter I first conduct a literature review around the five domains of my study, and then I discuss the fieldwork procedure. By doing so, I hope to illustrate the theoretical and methodological grounding of my study.

In this chapter I first conduct a literature review around the five domains of my study, namely anthropology of gambling, gambling and migration, Chinese migrants, exchange and money. Then I discuss the fieldwork procedure, present a summary of the

demographic information about my informants, and reflect about doing fieldwork in my own community. By doing so, I illustrate the theoretical and methodological grounding of my study.

1.1 Literature review

1.1.1 Anthropological studies of gambling

Traditional anthropologists have studied gambling as exchange. Woodburn's study of the Hadza (1982) is used to illustrate the idea that gambling may be embedded in an ethos of positive generalised reciprocity, honouring egalitarianism and sharing. A similar levelling function of gambling has been reported among the Wapte of Papua New Guinea (Mitchell, 1988), the Tiwi of North Australia Goodale (1987). Hayano's description of poker players in North America (1983) is characterised as an example of gambling as negative generalised reciprocity. Other ethnographic accounts of gambling among the North American Indians abound with descriptions of competitive gambling for enormous stakes in which one party challenge an opponent to high-stake gambling (see Maranda 1984, Trigger 1990). High-stakes gambling like the potlatch is regarded equivalent to war or feuding (Mauss 1990, orig. 1925). Zimmer observes gambling functions as a ceremonial exchange system among the Gende, a New Guinean people (Zimmer 1986, 1987). Following the literature review of the anthropological studies of gambling, Binde references to Breen (1977) Geertz (1972), Olmstead (1967) Walker (1999) and suggests that study gambling as an exchange system will help to reveal the character of the society and culture in which it is practiced (Binde, 2005). Caillois makes similar point a lot earlier by pointing out that the games that are played reflect the character of the society and culture in which it is embedded (Caillois, 1962). Cassidy also says that by taking an

anthropological approaches to study gambling, gambling may be seen as a distinctive form of exchange, the meaning of which taken from context in which it takes place (2010).

The social context of gambling is changing rapidly. Following the global proliferation of commercialised gambling, Binde suspects that 'in market economy, gambling is no longer a gift or revenge, but a commodity' (Binde, 2005: 474). Regarding commercialised gambling, some scholars raised their concerns. Abt argues that the emphasis on consumerism and immediate wealth in the promotion of commercialised gambling has eroded the culture of play in gambling, and conflicts with the productive ethos which has generated the material benefits of American society (Abt, 1985). Both Smith and Abt worry that by turning actions of spontaneous play into commercial transactions new cultures of gambling has diminished its social value (Smith and Abt, 1984). Does commercialised gambling really diminish the cultural social and non-material aspects of gambling? This wasn't a concern of the anthologists initially. The early anthropological studies of gambling tend to focus on traditional small-scaled indigenous social groups (Altman 1985, Geertz 1973, Goodale 1987, Hyano 1989, Maclean 1984, Mitchell 1988, Riches 1979, Sexton 1987, Woodburn 1982, Zimmer 1986). Apart from Hayano's (1982) study of poker rooms in California, little attention was given to commercialised and industrialised gambling and the social relationships they create. This slowly changes following the proliferation of gambling since the end of last century. Examples of this include Mann's (2003) study of Bingo halls into one of Britain's seaside resorts, Schüll's (2005, 2006) work in Las Vegas about machine gambling, Cattelino's (2008) study of

casino operations run by Seminole tribes in Florida and Cassidy's (2010) work on London's betting shops.

It is in this discipline context, I conduct my ethnographic research of the mah-jong and roulette gambling among the Chinese population in Manchester. Although the Gambling Act 2005 distinguishes commercialised gambling from non-commercialised gambling, it is not an unchanging category of gambling. Traditional and private gambling may be less commercialised but could also have a commercial aspect. Modern casino gambling could be presented as a type of consumption by the gaming industry, but when it comes to an individual level, it has rich non-material aspects and is largely affected by the social and cultural environment encompassing the actual gamblers. By comparing people's perceptions and practices of gambling in mah-jong and roulette table, I argue that even in a gaming environment that is dominated by a commercialised gambling, gambling does not always take one single forms of exchange. On one hand, the prevalent practices of gambling among the regular Chinese gamblers in Manchester reflects the social networks surrounding them, on the other hand they are also influenced by how individual gamblers perceive and practise the key elements of gambling, namely money, exchange, and luck. In the following section, I would like to review the literature on exchange, money, Chinese in Britain, and gambling in a migrant community. By connecting these domains I present the theoretical grounding of this thesis.

1.1.2 Making connections in migrant communities

Nowadays state sanctioned and commercialised gambling is portrayed by gambling providers as a type of leisure consumption. A night out at a casino is described as a pleasurable entertainment for casino visitors; and casino gambling is associated with 'play' and fun, and as safe and separable from everyday life. Marksbury observes that casino seemingly become a 'social equalizer' with their doors open to almost any individual without making distinctions based on social status (Marksbury 2009). However, whether someone automatically becomes a member of the gaming space by joining in the game(s) is still a question open for discussion The interpretation of a casino as a 'social equalizer' suggests that social barriers and social differences outside casino is demolished in casino, and the social space inside casino is rather different from the outside one. In the same respect, similar ethnographic observations made about the bingo hall (Mann, 2003). Mann notes (2003: 17-18) 'the perceived separateness of the bingo hall from the 'ordinary world'. Reith (2002), drawing from Caillois (1967 [1958] and Huizinga's (1970 [1938] separation of gambling activities from the real world, see gambling to be a wilful escape from the routine of life with its own boundaries of time and space. These observations sit in concert with the common explanations of individuals' gambling in opposition to a more normative or oppressive everyday life behaviours in the social sciences. Their view fits in the division of productive time where gambling makes sense as an island of freedom and decision-making within a life constrained by the demands of work (Burns 1973). This division is often taken for granted when in practice the distinctions are blurred. As Benjamin (2006 [1930] argues, factory work and gambling are not as different as they seem: they are based on the same constant repetition of similar actions. Conversely, work can be more than just a means of making money or constraining

one's freedom; it is also a positive means of constructing personhood (Harris 2007, Menger 2009).

For scholars of games and gaming, whether gambling can be separated from the everyday life is open for discussion. Huizinga defines play as free activity occurring outside reality within its own spatiotemporal boundaries according to fixed rules (Huizinga, 1955); however, he also sees both innovation and order in the uncertainty of play. For Huizinga, and for Georg Simmel as well, play, in its own crowded state of intense action, is a microcosm of life itself (Simmel, 1971). Malaby refers to the paradoxical qualities of gaming – how although games and play are inherently separable, safe and pleasurable, they are also 'intimately connected with everyday life to a degree' (Malaby, 2007). Casey's study of working class women's participation in Lottery, explores gambling's 'ordinary and everyday nature' (Casey 2006:7). Other sociological and anthropological studies have shown that gambling is actually driven by its own rationality against the mundane world dominated by money accumulation and productivity, that of social motivations and rewards (Goffman 1967, Papataxiarchis 1999, Stewart 1994, Tremon 2005, Casey, 2006).

While some researchers note gambling's temporality and seperablility from life, others study it as an un-separable social artefact and note the connections between gambling and wider social context. Most ethnographies of gambling map out the context of the gambling activities under study and observes the connection of gambling with something else of the wider social context in which it takes place. Papataxiarchis (1999), for instance, has described the idioms of spendthrift behaviour and 'disinterested sociality' in gambling on

Lesbos, and Thomas Malaby (2003) has explored how people confront uncertainty and contingency in gambling on Crete. Chu (2010: 260) has explored the rise of mah-jong gambling as an elusive form of "value production through other-worldly means" in the context of China's embrace of global capitalism and renewed popular preoccupation with economic prosperity. Steimüller examines the 'social heat' of gambling in Enshi, Hubei Province China (Steimüller 2011) serves as another vivid example of correlations between gambling and the socialities in which it takes place. Cassidy argues that gambling reflects something else of the wider social context in which it takes place (Cassidy 2010).

By exploring life within and outside the casino I have been able to suggest the contrary – that distinctions are made within the casino and that these distinctions are a reflection of relationships that extend through space and time, well beyond the casino and the present.

Different opinions about whether gambling is a sub-area that could be separable from life, or whether gaming itself as an un-separable social artefact, also exist in casinos in Manchester. Some informants emphasise that gaming should be treated as entertainment and that risk in gambling is contrived, thus gambling is a less serious issue compared to other issues in life. Other take gaming as serious as work and tend to relate gambling to their social status outside the gambling context. The fact that gamblers perceive or treat their participation in gambling differently is a phenomenon that exists in the field. Arguing against or for either of these opinions will not reveal more information about gambling. Instead, researchers who want to understand the social meanings of gambling should take the various views into consideration and find out what has generated a

division of opinion. In this study, some intriguing data lead my attention to the possible connection between these contrasting perceptions of gambling to the gamblers' migration and settlement patterns.

Anthropologists paid attention to the possible association of gambling with migration as early as the 1970s (Strathern, 1975, Salisbury and Salisbury 1977). Writing about migrant workers in Papua New Guinea, Hayano reflects that card playing as leisure time pleasure are 'inseparable from the labour migrant's acculturative experiences... and gambling are normal and acceptable adaptations a Highlander must make while working and living away from home' (Hayano, 1989, p235). Some recent sociological studies of gambling have also started to notice the possible connection between migration and gambling. For example, Multicultural Gamblers Help Program (2008) identified that gambling was more of an issue for established groups than it was for newly arrived groups. Some of my data seems to support this finding. Among my fifty-four participants, twelve of them settled temporarily, a quarter of the temporary migrants gambled regularly. Among the forty-four participants who have settled permanently, 54.5% of them gambled regularly. Within the group of people with whom I was closest during fieldwork, the more established group gambled more than the other group, a finding supported by more sporadic conversations and observations of a much wider group of roulette and mah-jong players. But is it also true that those who want to settle permanently have more 'problems' with gambling? Do the Chinese regular gamblers relate their gambling activities to their life as a migrant? If yes, how? To find out the answer, it will be help to review the relevant literature on the topic of 'being Chinese in Manchester'.

1.1.3Chinese migrants in Britain

Ethnic Chinese scatter across Britain and they were either born local or have come from various geographic areas in world. The study of Chinese migration and ethnicity used to be a small field at the margins (Pieke 2002, 2006). But this situation changed suddenly and rapidly in the 1990s, which, Pike suspects(2006), is related China's economic growth and increasing global prominence. At the same time, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora became heat topics and the 'Chinese overseas' were the object of much research and writing (See examples in Beck 2005, Christiansen 2003, Nagata 2005, Nyiri 1999, Ong 1999, 1997, Pieke 1999, 2002, and Xiang Biao 2003, 2005, Song 2003, Luk 2006, Parker and Song 2006, Song and Parker 2007, Gormez and Benton 2008, Liu 2009, Song 2010). Some researchers (Pieke 2006, Gomez and Benton, 2008) review the literature on Chinese migrants provide a rather comprehensive history of Chinese migrants in Britain and Europe which explain the historical economic and political reasons for different waves of Chinese migration which underwrite the diversity of the Chinese population in Britain. They also note the dominant core of Hong Kong Chinese in the settled local Chinese community(Waston 1976, Waston 2004, Pieke 2006, Christiansen 2003; Beck 2005， Pieke 2006). Britain's Chinese population is the most geographically dispersed sizeable ethnic minority in Britain (Dorling and Thomas, 2004). Following new emigration policies in China, the other sub-groups of Chinese immigrants, such as student immigrants and professional immigrants(Liu 2009), and Fujianese immigrants (Pieke, Nyiri, 2004) become more prominent. The Chinese community in Britain become more and more diverse, not just in term of its constitution but also in terms of its members'

perceptions of their identity. As Christiansen says, it is a community full of 'fissions' (Christiansen, 2003).

The composition of my informants reflects the diversity in one hand, and on the other hand, shows the domination of Cantonese or Hakka speakers in Chinatown and the surrounding casinos. The immigration history influences the social networks surrounding Chinatown area and contributes to the regular Chinese gamblers' perception and practice of gambling.

As Pieke (2002) Christiansen (2003) , Gomez and Benton (2008) point out, the Cantonese or Hakka immigrants came over to Britain via support from lineage network or locality networks. Watson (1975) has provided a detailed account in his ethnography of the New Territories emigration. In his account he mentioned how early migrants overcame the shortage of funding to set up their restaurants. Before secret societies in Chinatown were established and loan sharks became active, ex-villagers formed voluntary money groups among themselves, usually with dozens of members. This activity continues and caught Christiansen's attention in his study of the Chinatowns in Europe (Christiansen, 2003). Members of the money groups put money regularly into a pool and the one who was in most urgent need withdrew money from the pool and paid it back with regular payments afterwards. Both the joint businesses and the money groups were forms of informal voluntary economic cooperation for the early immigrants in the sixties and seventies. Because this cooperation is not protected by a formal social system such as legislation or regulation, the risks fall directly on every individual who participates in such a partnership

or group. To decrease the risks, this type of cooperation normally only takes place among people who are acquaintances. In the late sixties and seventies, the New Territories villagers came to Britain via chain migration following their lineage members' and thus brought with them the lineage network. This lineage network became their first social resource in Britain. This lineage network from their hometown helped to decrease the risks of the two types of informal economic cooperation and also in the early days kept these two resources exclusively for lineage members or fellow-villagers.

The importance of family, lineage connection and locality connection have been proven by a few sinologists' work on Chinese society in different geographical areas and historical eras, from the Jiangcun village in East China in the pre-Mao period (Fei, 1947), the villages in Fujian in South China and Hong Kong (Freedmen, 1958, 1966), in Beijing (Yang, 1994), the Man lineage village at the New Territories (Watson, 1976, Li, 1997) and the northern Guangdong in South China after the Chinese economic reform (Santos, 2008; Brandtstädter and Santos, 2009) and the north China urban society in the 1990s (Jankowiak, 2009). Social groupings are largely centred on kinship and locality.

For a migrant, making social connections was essential. Ong describes Hong Kong businessmen in the United States trying to accumulate social capital through alumni networks, sports clubs, and opera balls (Ong, 1999:104). Ong points out that what he refers to as the 'non-white' migrant's ability to convert economic capital into social prestige is limited in Euro-America. This contemporary example resembles earlier work by Oxfel (1992) and Riches (1975). Usually Chinese construct social networks through

various ways, for example schooling, work, neighbourhood, shared interest or other practical or effective factors (Yang, 1994). However, these routes are not immediately available for migrants who constantly feel themselves 'culturally inadequate' (Ong, 1999). As Ong argues, a migrant's ability to convert economic capital into social prestige is limited by the ethno racial moral order of the host society (Ong, 1999). Parker and Song (2006) notice that due to lack access to an intergenerational chain of inherited connections to powerful institutions second generation Chinese people's self-generated social networks as a means of accessing economic and political influence hardly move beyond full-time education. For the first generation of Chinese migrants, channel to maintain or expand their social network could be even more limited. Chau's study of Chinese older people in Britain points out that the older Chinese immigrants in Britain are isolated from both the local community and the Chinese community after retirement due to their language and culture barriers (Chau, 2008). Therefore, for the first-generation of Chinese migrants, an individual's social network often springs from lineage and one's native place. For former villagers from lineage villages, the lineage network comes first in this service, and the native place, in their case the New Territories or Hong Kong, is the extended realm of lineage. It is under these social circumstances I observe the Cantonese and Hakka regular gamblers maintain their social connection through regular exchanges in casino and at mah-jong table.

1.1.4 Exchange

Springing from Malinowski's account of the villagers' transactions on the Trobriand islands (Malinowski, 1922), an exchange model in 'primitive economic societies' was

believed to be similar to that in industrial society, which was rational transactions between 'self-interested individuals' rendering mutual benefit. However, not every scholar shares this unitary view. Following Mauss' (1996 [1935]) investigation into the compelling quality of gifts, which create social and spiritual ties between giver and recipient, Sahlins (1974) notes the opposition between 'commodity economy' and 'gift economy'. Gregory (1982, 1994, and 1997) proposes two conceptual opposite forms of exchange: gift giving and commodity exchange. Sahlins and Gregory believe gift exchange is more prevalent in societies dominated by kinship relations and groups, while commodity exchange tends to be the dominant form of exchange in industrial society. Gifts are inalienable and defined in terms of the identity of the giver and recipient, and the relationship between them; a commodity is alienable and defined in terms of its use value and exchange value and in that it bears no enduring personal link or obligation. According to Gregory (1982), in gift exchange, 'inalienable objects' pass between people already bound together by social ties whilst in commodity exchange 'alienable objects' pass between people acting as 'free agents'. Gift exchange underwrites social relations and is concerned with social reproduction; commodity exchange establishes relations between things and ensures their reproduction.

These definitions of gift and commodity were later reassessed by other anthropologists. Taking a culturalist approach, Appadurai (1986) argues that 'commodities, like persons, have social lives' and it makes no sense to distinguish commodity exchange sharply from barter exchange or gift exchange; everything has commodity potential. Parry (1986) and Hart (2001b.) believe that archaic gift was a mixture of purely altruistic gift and a sphere

of pure self-interest. Gift exchange and commodity exchange are no longer believed to be two exclusive categories, instead they can coexist in the same society and there are not always ‘hard and fast’ boundaries between them (Carrier, 1991; Humphrey and Hugh-Jones, 1992; Gregory, 1997). A very good argument in point is the case of barter presented by Humphrey and Hugh-Jones (1992) and Anderlini and Sabourian (1992). Although barter is often recognised as ‘trade’, a form of exchange separable from gift exchange, it is often associated with social and non-commercial features. Barter’s occurrence requires many kinds of social relationships where sufficient information, credits and trust are present; and people sometimes ‘join a barter club, swap with a cousin, or use a network’ for that, barter thus becoming ‘part of an ongoing relationship’ (Humphrey and Hugh-Jones, 1992; Anderlini and Sabourian,1992).

As Carrier summarises:

> Gift giving does occur in capitalist societies, just as buying and selling occurs in societies of the gift. Therefore gifts and commodities represent not exclusive categories, but poles defining a continuum. Many gift transactions contain an element of alienation and individualism; just as many commodity transactions are tinged by mutual obligation. (1991:132)

Humphrey and Hugh-Jones (1992) argue that barter is better understood when seen in the light of its social context; as the context varies, the features of barter will vary as well. In fact, many other forms of exchange should also be understood within their social context. Society is a synthesis of the relationship created by exchange (Simmel, 1978). Exchange is

formatted by the society that enables its existence. What defines an object as gift or commodity is not the identity of the transactors or the form of the transaction, but the social relations involved in the transaction, and it is not separable from the social cultural environment that compasses it.

Transactions, objects, people and social relations and the variation within the links between these things have inspired many anthropologists' inquiry into gambling. As an exchange system, what kind of relationship does gambling create and affirm? What is the understanding that gamers hold about the relations created?

There is already ethnographic literature concerning this web of questions. Sahlins (1965, 1974) puts forward a typology of reciprocity, namely generalised reciprocity, balanced reciprocity and negative reciprocity. This typology is heuristic but logically not complete. Mitchell (1988) challenges Sahlins' assumption of necessary correlation of social distance and personal motivation with specific modes of reciprocity, and proposed quarternate modes of reciprocal exchange by arguing that negative reciprocity is not 'a third logical alternative', instead it is 'a variant form' of the generalised and balanced reciprocity. The four modes by Mitchell are positive generalised, positive balanced, negative generalised, and negative balanced. However, from Sahlins to Mitchell, gambling is generally viewed as negative reciprocity, or more precisely, generalised negative reciprocity, with the emphasis on how people gamble to win at other people's expense (Sahlins, 1965; Mitchell, 1988).

However, the motive for gambling varies from one person to another and the meaning of gambling varies across different societies and cultures, and people have different motivations for participating in gambling (Meirs, 2004). This is echoed by Binde in his mapping of gambling across the world (Binde, 2005). Gambling reflects the character of society and culture in which it is embedded (Geertz, 1972; Walker, 1999). In an egalitarian society, gambling may be practised as an economic levelling device, taking the form of ceremonial exchange. In current Western society, gambling in commercial settings is often envisioned as a kind of consumption, taking the form of commodity exchange, a positive balanced reciprocity (Binde, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, different modes of exchange can coexist in one society and there is not always clear solid boundary between different modes of exchange. The previous ethnographic studies illustrate how gambling as various exchange systems is embedded in different socioeconomic environments and reflect their features respectively. Most of those ethnographic accounts focus on gambling as one kind of exchange system or another and there is no comparative work on gambling that takes up different forms of exchange in one single society. When exchange on the mah-jong table and exchange in casinos are compared, they appear to differ greatly. On the mah-jong table, it is more like gift exchange (positive reciprocity) with kin members and friends, while in a casino, monetary gambling exchanges are made on the spot with no obligation of an ongoing relationship. I hope my endeavour to study the Chinese community’s involvement in both traditional mah-jong gambling and commercial casino gambling can bring a new perspective to the anthropological study of gambling.

As proved by the rich literature referred to earlier in 1.4.1, winning money is not always the target of gambling. There is rich ethnographic literature showing that gambling is applied not as a tool to win at other people's expense, but has other 'functions', such as community integration in the Port Burwell Eskimo settlement (Riches, 1975), or a levelling economic device among the Hadza men of Tanzania (Woodburn, 1982), and the Wape of Papua New Guinea in the Sepik society, who gamble to circulate wealth in order to prevent cash accumulation (Mitchell, 1988). Gambling has also been likened to war or duelling, and can be understood as a contest (Goffman, 1969) where people gamble for 'prestige'. One example is the Chinese entrepreneurs in Calcutta who play high-stake mah-jong to exhibit their wealth and an associated desirable social status (Oxfel, 1991). Another example is cockfighting in Tahiti in French Polynesia (Tremon, 2005), where the results of the game can be interpreted in a range of ways, all of which are clearly understood by participants: the Raiatean Tahitian lose the game to the Tahiti Chinese almost all the time but the Raiatean Tahitian claim the honour in keeping the game without being concerned about losing money. All the three anthropologists who have studied mah-jong gambling point out that mah-jong gambling does not lead to unequal money accumulation for any of the players (Oxfel 1992; Papineau 2000; Festa 2007). In casinos, regular gamblers are well aware of the house edge[3] and understand that, in the long run, only casinos make money and they make it for themselves. The games they offer are not forms of gambling but commodities; the profits from these commodities are secured by the house edge.

[3] 'House edge' is the average profit from a player's bet, usually defined as the casino profit expressed as a percentage of the original bet.

In mah-jong or casino gambling, one simply cannot gamble without money. But is the money at a gambling table the same as money in other social contexts? So far the social meaning of gambling money has remained largely unexplored. Manzenreiter (1998) and Bjerg's (2009) works are exceptions. Manzenreiter discovers that in pachinko gambling, money is not treated in terms of market shares, productivity cycles, cash flow or investment strategies, but rather in terms of the way it affects the commodification process of space and time in post-war Japan (Manzenreiter, 1998: 359-360). Bjerg claims that in casinos money is not tied to an entity, in the form of a commodity, but to the form of chance, which means that there is no regularity in the way profit is generated and distributed. Bjerg states that in casinos money will 'emerge out of nothing or disappear into nothing' (Bjerg, 2009: 55). Their works suggest that the money in the gambling context seems to relate more to its social and culture aspects than to its market value. My participants also commonly claim that money in the casinos is not money anymore; they gamble because their money is 'useless'. Money's meaning is not only situationally defined but also constantly re-negotiated (Parry and Bloch, 1989: 23). Retrospectively, the social meaning that the people assign to money in a specific social context reflects the social environments that encompass people. How does Chinese gamblers' perception of gambling money relate to money's detachment from any form of exchange value? What does this detachment mean for the group of Chinese gamblers in Manchester? When does money become 'useless'? What do people get from gambling by squandering 'useless' money at the gaming table? Answering these questions may help us to understand not only

gambling better but also the specific group of Chinese migrants who are the major regular gamblers at the gambling venues in Manchester.

1.1.5 Money

In the classical accounts of Marx, Weber, and Simmel, modern money is defined as the ultimate objectifier, homogenising all qualitative distinctions into an abstract quantity. The pure utilitarian conception of 'market money' tends to eliminate the social and cultural aspects of money. Zelizer argues that while money does indeed transform items, values, and sentiments into numerical cash equivalents, money itself is shaped in the process. Culture and social structure mark the quality and even the quantity of money (Zelizer 1989). Money's meaning is defined by how it is circulated (Carruthers and Espeland 1998; Zelizer, 1989).

Similarly, Parry and Bloch relate money's symbolic meaning to the cycles of exchanges money enters, but they take their analysis further to two cycles of exchange, namely a cycle of short-term exchanges which is the legitimate domain of individual acquisition and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order (Parry and Bloch, 1989: 1-2). The meanings of money are influenced by the meanings of whole transactional systems. While the long-term cycle is always positively associated with the central precepts of morality, the short-term order tends to be morally undetermined since it concerns individual purpose which is largely irrelevant to the long-term order. If, however, that which is obtained in the short-term individualistic cycle is

converted to serve the reproduction of the long-term cycle, then it becomes morally positive.

It is not that what is obtained in the short-term cycle is a kind of ill-gotten gain which can be 'laundered' by being converted into socially approved channels of expenditure and consumption. It is rather that the two cycles are represented as organically essential to each other. This is because their relationship forms the basis for a symbolic resolution of the problem posed by the fact that transcendental social and symbolic structures must both depend on, and negate, the transient individual (Parry and Bloch, 1989: 25-26).

The symbolism of money is only one aspect of a more general symbolic world of transactions which must always come to terms with some absolutely fundamental human problems. One of these is the relationship between the individual human life and a symbolically constructed image of the enduring social and cosmic order within which that life is lived (Parry and Bloch, 1989: 28). For example, the Malay fishermen of Langkawi earned their money via commercial exchanges with comparative strangers. Then the fishermen handed their earnings over to the women who remained uncontaminated by the amoral domain of market transactions. The women then purified the money by ‘cooking it’ and transforming it into a morally admissible resource for sustaining the household and the community (Carsten, 1989).

The possibility of conversions between the two orders also has much to do with their moral evaluation. While the long-term cycle is always positively associated with the

central precepts of morality, the short-term order tends to be morally undetermined since it concerns individual purposes which are largely irrelevant to the long-term order.

In Chinese traditional society, family-orientated value provides the possibility of converting the short-term cycle into the long-term cycle. A Chinese individual's acquisition is related to the benefit of the family the person belongs to. The family, instead of the individual, is regarded as the basic unit of social and cosmic order reproduction in Chinese society. The Chinese patrilineal kin group (whether in the form of the lineage or the extended family) was not only a corporate economic unit, it was also a religious and social unit. It was an all-embracing entity, such that there was little incentive for the individual to disengage in order to involve himself in the wider society. Self-advancement tended to be identified with advancement of one's extended family and local community (Woon, 1983). An individual acquisition could be converted into a socially and culturally acceptable resource by connecting the individually-earned resource with supporting family and family reproduction.

Traditional Chinese society had a relatively open social system. It was possible for an individual to rise above his station life. A peasant's son could become a high-ranked officer or a well-honoured scholar. An emperor did not have to have royal blood. Merchants and artisans were not prevented from becoming a member of the gentry. Money could be invested in land and in education for their sons, which eventually led to higher social status. This open system allowed the individual to convert his acquisition into symbolic capital which was valuable in the reproduction of the social system. An

individual in this society was assessed through the social connection that sprang from the family. Under the impact of this social tradition, an individual's social connections are important factors that are frequently taken into consideration by others in judging overall social status (Jacobs, 1979). A society dominated by the *renqing* (人情) rule must be a relation-orientated society (Hwang, 1987:60). Thus many Chinese individuals may often evaluate their achievement by calculating how much their social relations and social status could benefit their family.

As Parry and Bloch point out, all these systems make some ideological space for individual acquisition and, within that space, a social or cosmic order could transcend the individual (Parry and Bloch, 1989: 25). They relate money's symbolic meaning to the cycles of exchanges that money enters, and they address their analysis to two cycles of exchange, namely a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual acquisition and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order (Bloch and Parry 1989:1–2). They also point out that while the long-term cycle is positively associated with the central precepts of morality, the short-term order tends to be morally undetermined since it concerns individual purpose, which is largely irrelevant to the long-term order. If, however, that which is obtained in the short-term individualistic cycle is converted to serve the reproduction of the long-term cycle, then it becomes morally positive. Bloch & Parry's (1989) intervention is 'redirecting the analytical attention to the different time scales according to which transactions take place' as Maurer points out in his review article (2006: 18). Following the lead of this literature, I study the monetary exchanges inside and around the gambling context.

1.2 Fieldwork in Manchester

In this section, first I give a detail description of my fieldwork procedure and the data I've collected. I explained the reasons of certain methodological choices I've made, such as spreading field sites, withdraw from a main field site, and deeper degree of participation in the later stage of field work. I reflect about studying gambling among the Chinese population with which I share the same ethnic origin and point out that the studying a group of people who I may have been previously related to does not reduce the reliability of the knowledge generated in this ethnographic account.

1.2.1 Fieldwork in casinos

As I mention in the Introduction, I study the Chinese population involved in mah-jong and casino gambling. This subject demands me to make to make some specific methodological choices. The first one is to find a field where I can observe both mah-jong and casino gambling. Finding the field that fit for my research purpose was the first task. Manchester is a good option in this sense. In Manchester I could access the Chinese population who are caught in the interfusion of traditional and commercial gambling settings. Manchester has the second largest Chinese population outside London. In2008， in Greater Manchester there were 14 casinos, six of which are within walking distance of Chinatown. Four of these six casinos were popular with Chinese regular gamblers and three offered free mah-jong tables and tiles to Chinese people. Chinese people in those casinos were directly involved in both mah-jong gambling and casino gambling. Also, Manchester's Chinese community was comparatively more accessible for me as a researcher. I worked

at a Chinese community centre there and conducted a two-year sociological study of elderly Chinese people in Manchester as well. Through these previous engagements, I made connections with both Chinese individuals and Chinese organisations, although the connections needed to be re-activated and reconsidered in relation to the new research project on gambling. Manchester is a good field option for me, not because it geographically away from London where my college locates, but because of its suitability for addressing the issues under investigation, and because the Chinese community in Manchester could be comparatively easier for me to enter.

My fieldwork in Manchester started from July 2008 and I left the field in September 2009. During my fieldwork period there were 14 casinos in Greater Manchester, and 6 of them located in the city of Manchester. However, as a field for ethnographic research, those venues were not static; it was shaped by my encounters with participants, and my positioning as a researcher. My construction of field sites were influence by my selection of site according to its accessibility and suitability for research, as well as my encounter of the informants and participants.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, before I found any participant who would visit a casino with me, I went to the casinos alone, aiming to find out the major group of regular gamers, the games played and the opening time of every specific casinos. Soon I identified two casinos, Mint and Circus, where Chinese gamblers gathered every day to play mah-jong. All of the two casinos locate at the city centre, at the edge of Manchester Chinatown. As I mentioned earlier, I would compare mah-jong gambling and another traditional casino

table game. These two casinos became my ideal starting points where I could access people who played roulette as well as mah-jong. I visited the two casinos three days a week to meet the people there and to watch them gambling.

Circus was almost the Chinese regular mah-jong gamblers' first choice. In 2008, it opened at half pass twelve at noon. Often before it's opened, there were already Chinese players queued up outside its main entrance, carrying their box or bag of mah-jong tiles, waiting to get in and start the game. Circus's mah-jong area was often located between the staircase and its main gaming floor. Anyone who visited Circus could comfortably wander around that area without distracting the players too much. Circus also turned out to be my key gambler participants' Chin and Chee's favourite casinos. In Circus, I observed the profound social interactions between the Hakka speaking gamblers and the other non-Hong Kongers gamblers, which helped to reveal the social relationship between various groups of Chinese regular gamblers. These relationship extended geographically far beyond the gaming venues, historically far before the Chinese migrants' migration took place. A typical scene of those interaction and analysis of their social relationship are presented in Chapter 6. From the beginning to the end of my fieldwork, Circus was the casino I visited most often.

Mint was less popular. Mint's mah-jong area was in a long narrow space at the back of the main gaming hall, away from the hall's entrance. Although there was no physical barrier between the mah-jong area and the gaming floor, the lights in the two areas were different; the mah-jong area had fluorescent lamps which gave a white light, that was even brighter

than daylight and which sharply distinguished this area from the gaming floor, which had soft, dim yellow light. No casino gamblers went there unless they wanted to play mah-jong or they wanted to look for their friends or families who played there. As a stranger, whenever I went into that area, the players seemed rather disturbed and some of them even paused and stared at me. Mint's mah-jong area was less accessible to non-player. Also, Mint was a lot less popular among general Chinese gamblers. There was a rumour that Mint was haunted because about twenty years ago a gambler died there. Many participants explained that they don't like Mint because its decoration looks tired, its air conditioners did not work and it was a bit humid and stuffy. Its poor conditions may have been exaggerated but Mint was much quieter than the other casinos near Chinatown. When I visited Mint on my own to observe people playing mah-jong, I had to sit on the main gaming floor to watch the mah-jong area from a distance. Its main gaming floor was never busy in the day time. After about three months, I had found some key participants and started to follow them to their casinos, and Mint wasn't their choice, I no longer visited Mint as frequently as I did. However, occasionally, when Circus was too busy and my participants couldn't find a mah-jong table, I followed them to Mint which because of its less popularity would normally have more mah-jong tables available.

Another two casinos, Soames and Casino 235 (hereafter shortened as 235), both located in city centre became my main sites after I met some participants who lead me to there. Soames was the one located in Chinatown. It was the first casino opened in Manchester city centre, and because it was literally around the corner of Faulkner Court, a flat housing about 40 Chinese pensioner, the Chinese older gamblers gathered there every day to meet

each other. Also probably because it was at the door steps of the restaurants, Soames always had Chinese gamblers in it, even during the quietest time, from 8am – the time when the other casinos were usually empty since the overnight players had left and the daytime gamblers had not yet arrived; often the early gamblers were the caterers who worked a few yards from the casino in Chinatown. It was the only casino in Manchester that provides its visitor a spacious non-gambling room, where the Chinese gamblers gathered to play Chinese chess, to have a quiet chat, or to read newspaper, or just sitting there and do nothing. The Chinese older gamblers regarded Soames as 'their casino', even 'their social club'. Soames was the most productive site in term of collecting data about the Chinese who have switched from mah-jong to other casino table games. Simon was the key participant who was active in Soames. Simon, Huang, together with other older Chinese people at Soames, told me stories of mah-jong ruining friendship. Following my participants from Soames to the restaurants at Chinatown gave me valuable opportunities to observe people combined the exchanges in gaming contexts and their exchanges in their wider social life.

235 became my field site because two of my key participants visited it regularly. 235 was promoting its business in the Chinese community and attracted many daytime regulars. During the Chinese New Year celebrations, it was the only casino that ran a stall at Chinatown, alongside lots of charities and ethnic community organisations. But 235's stall was empty. It was selling nothing and giving out no free gifts, only a few casino brooches displayed on its large table. This casino's empty stall seemingly attracted nobody at the ceremony and looked rather out of place while the whole of Chinatown was packed and

almost every stall was surrounded by curious and excited visitors. But 235 soon became another popular casino among Chinese gamblers, especially with its free lucky draws during the day. 235's most popular game among the Chinese regular gamblers was roulette. In fact, during my fieldwork, roulette was the only table game played by the day-timers at this casino. A group of day-timers, including my key participants, Huang, Heroine, often wander between Soames, 235 and Circus every day.

Following my participants to these three casinos became an essential part of my fieldwork in the last five months of fieldwork. I often met up with Huang at Soames in the morning, and had lunch with her at Chinatown, then went to 235 in the afternoon, and went back to Circus in the evening. Huang's favourite game is roulette and I tried to gamble together with her while keeping my daily budget of £20. When Huang wasn't available, I went to 235 to meet up with Heroine and observe her playing roulette. The combination of the three casinos' gaming population gave me a more complete picture of the gambling community in Manchester. Frequent visit to these three casinos enable me to see the regular gamblers' various approaches of gambling and social interactions. I also start to understand the social meaning of their different types of nick names. Relating the regular gamblers different ways of gambling and their relationship outside the casinos, I start to discover the social relationship signified by the nicknames. Luck was a conspicuous topic at the casinos especially during the lucky draws. Sharing luck money with close friends is also a common practise at these three casinos. I start to notice the interesting phenomena of the Chinese gamblers endeavour to turn roulette, a blind chance game, into a game of strategies and skills. During the fieldwork, luck has been a topic that confused me. I

observed lots of contradicting perceptions and practices of luck. I follow some existing academia discussion of chance and contingency and draft a chapter on luck, but was not able to relate it to the rest of the story. It's after I finish analysing the data regarding making social connections via gambling, largely reflected by the phenomenon of nicks and reciprocal exchanges in gambling context, the social construction of luck, the subject of chapter 5 became relatively more visible for me.

1.2.2 Fieldwork outside casinos

The casinos were an essential site of my fieldwork. But I also visited the bookies inside or near the Chinatown, where I spoke to some undocumented Chinese migrants who gambled but did not go to casinos as becoming a casino member required document to prove one's identity. In order to understand gambling, as Prus (2004) and Cassidy (2010) suggest, one cannot just look at it in isolation. I tried to relate gambling to its wider context, and also explore how gambling is perceived by people outside the gambling venues. Besides, the spread of field sites is not just correlated to the purpose of gambling studies, but also an inevitable methodological choice when facing the subject of 'Chinese'. Although Hong Kong Chinese and the Cantonese language continue to dominate the Chinese communities in Britain Chinese population is very heterogeneous due to the incoming different waves of Chinese immigrations through long historical period since 1800's. (Pieke and Pal Nyiri, 2004, Benton, Gregor and Gomez, Edmund Terence, 2008). The population is so diverse that Christiansen (2003), Gomez and Benton (2008) notice that many Chinese in Britain do not feel that they have a Chinese community in the sense that they don't feel they have a common identity or share an ethnic social cultural life. Chinese people socialise and

gamble in various space. Some regular gamblers seldom visit a casino, some casino visitors seldom turn up at a community centre. Some mah-jong players only play in certain venues, some venues prohibit gambling activities. It is impossible to study the diverse Chinese population and observe the variety of their gambling actions within a single site. So I tried to access various field sites and extended from gambling venues to restaurants, people's homes, Chinese associations, a Chinese luncheon club, Chinese temples, library, and even tram stations – any place I could come across Chinese people in Manchester.

My main field sites also included two Chinese organisations; one was a Chinese community centre called Wai Yin and the other was a Chinese locality association called Wuyi. From August 2008 to May 2009, I worked two days a week at Wai Yin, as a project worker. The part-time job at Wai Yin served as an efficient introducer for my entry to the field. Through the work there, I met large numbers of Chinese people, who were service users of the centre or my colleagues. I built up connections some of them and they became my informants. At the early stage of my fieldwork, when people found it hard to understand my status as a student anthropologist studying gambling, they accepted me as a worker from the community centre. However, Wai Yin had its limitation as a field site, and my position as a part-time community worker affected my fieldwork which I will write about in the later section of this chapter. But Wai Yin was an essential field site. There were people gathered to play mah-jong there every Friday. I learnt to play there. At both Wai Yin and Wuyi, there were Chinese people gathered to play mah-jong. But the mah-jong in these two places varied greatly from each other. At Waiyin, people played mah-jong without wagers; at Wuyi, people played high-stakes mah-jong. I had free access to

the mah-jong gathering at Wai Yin, but my access to Wuyi was limited even though I had filled in a form, paid the fee and gained a membership. My information about Wuyi was gathered via my three visits to the venue and by interviewing its regular mah-jong players and Lucy, a key participant, who used to work at Wuyi and organised the mah-jong gatherings.

1.3 The data collected

My fieldwork in Manchester lasted fourteen months and I left the field at the end of September 2009. In my field work, I interacted with many different individuals. But not every individual were willing to or able to share their experiences and discuss about their ideas. Besides, some were easier to access, some were not willing to talk or even resent being observed. Some stayed in the sites stably, some left soon after I started. In total I had repeatedly met up with 54 informants at casino, at Wai Yin, at Chinatown or around city centre. To give a quick general picture of the 54 informants, I summarized the following points:

- 17 male informants, of which 10 are under 60.
- 37 female informants, of which 23 are under 60.
- 51 informants are migrants, 30 of them came from Hong Kong, 15 from China, 3 from Macau, and 1 from Malaysia, 1 informant's origin is unknown.
- 49 of the migrants have settled permanently, 12 of the migrants reside in the UK temporally (although 5 of them have permanent residency, they are thinking about returning to their place of origin, and 1 of them did return to Hong Kong eventually).
- 1 informant is local British, 3 are 2nd generation of Chinese migrants.

- 27 informants describe themselves gamble regularly in casinos, at mah-jong table (4 only play mah-jong at home instead of going to casinos), or betting shop. All of them are caterers or catering workers or retired from the catering industry.
- 27 informants claim that they do not gamble at all or only occasionally. 24 of them work outside Chinese ethnic enterprises.

I have done 36 interviews.17 of the interviews are arranged semi-structure interviews. 19 are spontaneous open structure interviews. 31 were recorded which add up to 1266 minutes of audio record. 5 of the interviews were only recorded in field-notes. The 36 interviews were conducted at Wai Yin (6), casino(16), restaurant (1) , cafes(3), at my home(2), at informant's home (3), at streets (2), at Buddhist temple (1) and over the phone(2). 3 long interviews with key participants were transcribed. With the others, I took notes of quotations relating to several domains, which include mah-jong, roulette, casino gambling, money, luck, Chinatown, Chinese, and migration.

1.4 In my own community

Strathern (1987) argues that the anthropological processing of 'knowledge' draws on concepts which belong to the society and culture under study. Boas made this point much earlier by saying 'if it is our serious purpose to understand the thoughts of a people, the whole analysis of experience must be based on their concepts, not ours' (Boas, 1943:314). However, what is theirs and what is ours?

In the case of my study of gambling in the Chinese community in Manchester, I find this division ambiguous. The ideals of objectivity formulated by methodologists can only be met in parts and influences from researcher's personal experience, social and cultural

backgrounds are difficult to avoid. Thus what is significant is competence of introspection and the ability to reflect on experience (Ladislav, 1984). In this section, I reflect upon my position in the Chinese community and the impacts that my position has on my fieldwork.

As a Chinese, knowing that I will be studying gambling among the Chinese population in Manchester, I thought that I would be fieldworker at home. Am I doing field work at home? My answer to this question became uncertain after fieldwork started.

When choosing Manchester as my field, I thought I was going to do ethnography 'at home'. I am Chinese. I carried out fieldwork with the Chinese population in Manchester, where I lived for four years. I am more familiar with Manchester and know more Chinese there than any other places. In the sense of familiarity, I probably have to admit say that I am 'in my own community'. Especially when I was offered a part-time job at Wai Yin and my entry to the field was largely smoothened by the support from my colleagues, I felt I was at home. I needed to 'transcend the limitation of a pre-ascribed position' (Mascarenhas-Keyes, 1987) and clarified to the other people in the field that my purpose of returning to Manchester was conducting the ethnographic study of gambling. By prioritizing my position of a researcher, I thought I was started to construct my field at home.

However, I soon found out that I couldn't assume the absence of cultural barrier between me and the other Chinese people. When first arrived at the field, I noticed some people who I categorized as Chinese refused to call themselves Chinese, instead they call

themselves Hong Kongers (香港人). Some other ‘Chinese’ call themselves ‘Taiwanese’. I soon realized Chinese was a blur concept, because it embraces too large a diversity. As a linguistic background, Chinese has over 2,500 different possibilities. As a cultural background, it has to be considered together with individual’s migration history. As a place of origin, I’ve met people from Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Mainland China. They have been influenced by different social political and economic environments. Although my informants and I may probably tick the same ethnicity in the census form, we are not from a single social group. What’s more, I had no experience of gambling before field work. I didn’t know how to play mah-jong. I had never been to a casino or betting shop. For quite a long time I felt out of place at casino. I wasn’t able to find a single familiar face there, and I could not get a person to speak to. My presence at casino triggered other Chinese people’s suspicion. When I eventually familiarized with the people there and started to talk to people, I constantly found that we had very different ideas of some seemingly very basic questions, such as ‘what is gambling’. Gambling is a topic that I had not previously been involved with. Both the informants and I needed a process of mutual discovery about each other. Through this mutual discovery, I hoped to achieve a mutual understanding of each other’s position in the field of gambling and gradually to acquire ‘a competence at meaning construction equal to theirs’ (Gupta,2000).

Passing the early stage of feeling unease at fieldwork, the question of whether I am at home in the field turn into a constant juggling of my mixed roles of personal and professional. After all, the difference between the field and home is that the field constitutes a place for ethnographic enquiry while home may perhaps be taken for granted.

Whether conduct the ethnographic research at home or not, the important point is to ground observations 'in critical reflection on the nature of their participation and its suitability to the particular research circumstances, and the relationship between researcher and subjects' because the information provided by the informants is also affected by the position of the ethnographer as well as their evolving personal relationship and understanding of each other's social worlds (Davies, 2008). At the later stage of fieldwork, it became obvious that my role as a community worker unavoidable affected the information I got. As a charitable organisation, Wai Yin had a very strict non-gambling principle. At its luncheon club and its main site, it offered free mah-jong tables for the service users but they were not allowed to wager on the game and the centre usually offer the tables for one hour only. These restrictions largely destroy the players' autonomy in organising the game. The difference between the mah-jong at Wai Yin and the casinos is striking and meaningful, which I would talk in details in Chapter 4. The discourses between me and my informants who I met at Wai Yin were heavily affected by the centre's no-gambling restriction. They tend to claim that they didn't really gamble although they gambled often, they didn't gamble seriously. Some participants avoided talking to me about gambling as if it became an even more sensitive topic in an anti-gambling environment. One key participant, Heroine, once refused to be interviewed saying that she did not want to disclose information to someone who work for Wai Yin. The regular visitors at Casino avoided inviting me to their games as they expected me to be 'a good girl' from Wai Yin. After ten months of working part-time at Waiyin, I felt I had sufficiently explored the connection and interaction with the self-claiming 'non-gambling' part of the community. However, the gambling part of the community was still waiting to

be fully revealed. I still wasn't I left the centre, and spent the last five months of fieldwork without technical connection with it.

After leaving Wai Yin, my fieldwork at casino changed from participant observer to an observing participant. I started gambling in order to get closer rapport with the other players. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) say that degree of participation is sometimes determined by the researcher, sometimes by the community. Being free from the people's expectation of me 'being a good girl' and 'don't even start it', I started to gamble myself. I soon became accepted by a key participant, Huang. She hanged out together with me three days a week and allow me to record our conversations all the time. Heroine finally allowed me to interview her. And the other regulars watched my change with great curiosity, and they became more willing to talk, commenting on my gambling strategies, teaching me how to gamble, including how to share winning and how to behave properly at the gaming table. Interesting often they always remember to remind me not to get addictive. Ms Xin, a 40 years old regular player from Macau even kindly offered to be interviewed. She said 'if you want to know anything about gambling, ask me, but you don't gamble too much yourself, it's dangerous, you will be addictive'. That gave me a feeling that I was really looked after as an apprentice at casino. In the last five months, I discovered about the practise of luck at gaming table, the circulation of money in casino, and the intense underplayed social interactions between night-time casino visitors.

Jorgenson (1989) once suspects that going native happens when researcher sheds the identity of investigator and adopts the identity of a full participant in the culture. He

concerns that it is generally associated with a loss of analytic interest. I participated in roulette gambling not because the loss of analytic interest, on the opposite I gambled because I wanted to find out what difference could a deeper degree of participation could bring, and it turned out to be productive in collecting more complementing data. Besides, even when I turn myself into a gambler, my way of gambling is very different from my informants. I had a daily budget of £20, and in order to make the small budget last for longer hours, my bet was small and slow. My way of gambling was frowned upon by the other regular players and attracted more advice and comments, which were also meaningful data about what they think 'proper gambling' should be like.

Full participation is not equal to giving up the identity of investigator and a loss of analytic interest. In fact, no matter to what degree we participate, an investigator's research is inevitably influenced by our interactions and relationship with our informants. As Mead (1934) argues that the formation of the self is dependent upon the symbolic social interaction one have with other individuals belonging to the same society. Davies further relates Mead's point to ethnographic research and points out that if the self is continually under construction, then ethnographer's experience in the field 'clearly alter their own selves in accordance with the cultural expectations of the others' (Davies, 2008:26). This opinions echo with Fabian's(1983) famous argument, although from a slightly different perspective, that during the construction of 'Other', we actually constitute our knowledge about ourselves. It is through the constant reflection and negotiation about 'Other' and 'self', the otherwise unobservable entities became more visible. In the first ten months of field work, I've collected data about the observable

phenomenon such as giving luck money, sharing of dim sum lunch, gambling quietly or gambling noisily, participate or withdraw from a game. Through the development from observer to participator, I became a member of the gambling group and was involved into constant negotiations of social relationship between the gamblers. Through those negotiations, I started to see how my informants understand and interpret these phenomenon and their effects on the social relationship surrounding them.

2 A bowl of loose sand: the Chinese in Manchester

2.1 Introduction

The Chinese in Manchester have access to various social networks, some of the networks are generated in Britain and some were brought over from their home country. The lineage network and locality network are the two most common social networks that the Cantonese and Hakka ethnic entrepreneurs and their employees rely on. Mah-jong and roulette gambling reflect the way in which this group of Chinese migrants maintain and construct their social networks and their sub-group boundaries in their post-migration life. In order to understand their behaviours in the gambling contexts, it is essential to learn about their background and even their pre-migration relationship. The purpose of this chapter is to provide this background information about my participants.

As mentioned in Chapter one, my research was conducted in a Chinese community in Manchester. In this chapter, to provide general background information about my research participants, I write about the Chinese in Manchester and Chinatown which is the focal point of my participants' social life. So there are two main subjects in this chapter, the field site and the people. I first describe the two subjects generally. Then I describe in detail Chinatown as one of my main field sites. After that I move the focus back to the people, the Chinese, and continue to describe the different waves of Chinese migrants which lead to various subgroups of the Chinese in Manchester. This chapter's main contribution to the study of the Chinese in Britain is in Sections 2.4.3, 2.4.4, and 2.4.5, in which I present ethnographic data to show that the majority of the Chinese that are actively involved in casino and mah-jong gambling around Chinatown in Manchester are

Cantonese and Hakka speakers. I point out that the Chinese in Manchester are a richly diverse group and the Cantonese and Hakka Chinese is a heterogeneous sub-group. I make it clear that the majority of my research participants come from the Cantonese (mainly Siyinese in Manchester) and the Hakka Chinese, who made or make their living from ethnic enterprises such as the Chinese catering trade, and the argument I make about gambling in the rest of this thesis is based on the data I collected from this particular group. I conclude that the Chinese in Manchester are like a bowl of loose sand. Although the Chinese appear to be similar to each other, they have distinctive backgrounds and different types of lives.

2.2 Why should I talk about Chinatown?

The majority of regular Chinese gamblers in Manchester casinos are Cantonese and Hakka migrants who make/made their living in ethnic enterprises, mainly the catering industry; the majority of my participants also come from this group. In this section, I will present some general information about how they became my participants and who they are.

Chinatown in Manchester, the Chinese community centre, and the four casinos near Chinatown are the earliest sites of my fieldwork. As the start points and main sites of my fieldwork, they led me to the major group of my research participants. Among my 54 participants, 52 are migrants, 44 of the 52 migrants are Cantonese or Hakka speakers, and 37 of the 44 have worked or are still working in the catering industry to earn their living.

The Cantonese or Hakka caterers or former caterers are the most obvious group in the Chinese ethnic area in this metropolitan centre. However, this group in itself is also very diverse. It is a combination of the Hakka and Punti from Hong Kong, the Siyinese from Canton[4] in China, and other Cantonese from Canton. Punti means 'indigenous' in Cantonese. However, many of my Punti participants were actually born and grew up in Canton instead of Hong Kong. They use the term Punti rather than Hakka, as Hakka means 'guest' in Chinese. The Hakka are a group of Chinese who migrated from central China about six hundred years ago. Many Hakka in Canton speak both Cantonese and Hakka. Punti, in my participants' context, only means native Cantonese speakers or native Cantonese language. When my participants call themselves Punti, they do not mean that they are indigenous to Hong Kong, they mean that they are native Cantonese speakers. Most of the Punti and Hakka are early migrants who came to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s or even earlier, and they are known as 'the old migrants'. The comparatively latecomers, for example the new migrants, from further afield than Hong Kong or Canton only, after the 1990s, are often called 'the new migrants'. Among my eight non-Cantonese/Hakka participants, there are Chinese from mainland China, Macau, Malaysia and Vietnam. Many of the Vietnamese Chinese came in the late 1970s or 1980s after the Vietnam War. My Vietnamese Chinese participants are actually twice Chinese migrants from Vietnam. They speak fluent Cantonese and played mah-jong with the Cantonese and Hakka in the casinos. They are also called 'the old timers'. However, the participants from mainland China, Macau and Malaysia mostly came after the 1990s, so are often regarded as 'newcomers'.

[4] Canton is also known as Guangdong. It is a province in South China and it borders with Hong Kong.

The combination of my research participants reflects both the heterogeneity of the Chinese in Manchester and the dominance of the Cantonese and Hakka group. This heterogeneity is the outcome of the migration and settlement history of the Chinese immigrants in Britain. They came to Britain at various times with different backgrounds (I write in detail about this point in the later sections of this chapter). The Cantonese and the Hakka have formed the most prominent group in Chinatown. They are also the major group of Chinese customers in the casinos in central Manchester. Also, they are the main mah-jong players. They play mah-jong in Chinese community centres, the city-centre retirement flats and casinos. Most of them are clansmen who have extended their lineage networks from the New Territories in Hong Kong or Si Yi to Britain. Lineage and locality connections provide them with a social network that largely excludes other groups of Chinese. New migrants often find it difficult to penetrate their networks unless they can find a connection to existing members. At the same time, however, they are also a sub-group that is largely isolated from not just British mainstream society but also other sub-groups in the Chinese community[5] in Manchester. They are largely clustered in the catering industry and, among my participants, the Cantonese and Hakka speakers who are regularly active in the casinos have all worked as caterers.

However, neither field nor people are static. Different waves of Chinese migrants continue to arrive in Britain. The new Chinese migrants speak different languages, have different social and political backgrounds, and have different access to different social and

[5] Christiansen (2003), Gomez and Benton (2008) have mentioned that many Chinese in Britain do not feel that they have a Chinese community in the sense that they don't feel they have a common identity or share an ethnic social cultural life. Here, I am only using the term ‘Chinese community’ in a casual sense.

economic resources. They have their own impact on Chinatown and the Chinese community. The Chinese in Manchester are becoming more heterogeneous. Chinatown changes through the various waves of Chinese migrants and decentralises in two way: first, more Chinese sub-groups are active outside Chinatown; secondly, although the Hong Kong Chinese and Si Yi Chinese still appear to be dominant in Chinatown, more and more new migrants from other parts of China and South East Asia have begun set up their business in Chinatown. In the following section, I would like to discuss the development of Chinatown under the impacts of various waves of Chinese migrants.

2.3 A brief history of Manchester and its Chinatown

The development of Chinatown cannot be separated from its wider environment, the city of Manchester. In fact, the first opportunity for its establishment was brought by the city's development. So in this section I will present a brief history of Manchester in relation to Chinatown's early development.

Manchester declined seriously in the first part of the 20th century and then thrived vigorously in the later part of the century. Both the decline and revival of the city provided opportunities for the establishment of Chinatown in the two decades after World War Two, and its rapid development after the 1980s. Historically, Manchester was famous for manufacturing wool, cotton, linen and silk. In the late 18th century, following the industrial revolution, the textiles industry boomed. In the early 19th century Manchester became world famous as a manufacturing centre. In the early 20th century the old cotton industry went into a steep decline and suffered during the depression of the 1930s. During

the 20th century more and more people moved out of the city centre to live in the mushrooming suburbs. The population of the city centre dropped considerably (Hylton, 2003). In contrast to this, Chinese migrants slowly moved into the city of Manchester. It is believed that the economical rents, in a declining part of the city, offered a new generation of entrepreneurs their opportunity. Manchester's Chinatown, as a concentrated separate city centre quarter, owes its present origins to the post war period in the 1940s (Liao, 1992, Parker, 2005). According to the Manchester Chinese archive, which is held by Manchester council, the first Chinese restaurants arrived in the city shortly after World War Two, with the Ping Hong in 1948, and then a bigger wave of Chinese immigration came in the 1950s. Gradually in the old cotton warehouses around Nicolas Street, Faulkner Street and George Street, several restaurants were opened. In those early years, as recorded by my participants, Manchester Chinatown was a dark and derelict area, dominated by abandoned textile warehouses. In the second half of the century, Manchester's manufacturing industry was, to a certain extent, replaced by service industries such as education, tourism and finance. Manchester council was dedicated to the regeneration of the inner-city areas. In the late 20th century, the old warehouses, exchange houses and the port areas were converted into museums, shopping centres, conference and exhibition centres. The old city centre's canal sides were cleaned and transformed into the site for modern offices, luxurious apartments, popular pubs and the famous gay village which attracts numerous tourists every summer during the gay festival.

The development of Chinatown is part of the broader scheme of this regeneration of central Manchester. It was almost simultaneous with the revival of Manchester;

Chinatown started to develop fast. In the 1980s, derelict buildings were pulled down to create an open space between narrow streets, and a much-needed parking lot was put there. A Hong Kong Chinese who was a member of the Chinatown Association then proposed to build a Chinese arch in order to attract tourists and bring more business to Chinatown (Christiansen, 2003:80-81). This proposal was welcomed by the Manchester city council. With funding from the council, Chinatown entrepreneurs and the Chinese government, a Chinese arch was built in 1987. It is believed to be the most authentic arch outside China because its materials were directly imported from China and it was built by a team of Chinese engineers and builders from China. The Chinese arch is now a place of interest for many tourists in Manchester.

Manchester has successfully changed its ‘northern soul’ which was once rooted in the manufacturing industry into a metropolis of tourism and an entertainment centre for North West England. On 30 January 2007 Manchester was announced as the winning bid to be the location of the first 'super-casino' in Britain. But on 29 March 2007 the House of Lords urged the Government to review the plans. In 2008, Prime Minister Gordon Brown declared that the Government would not be proceeding with the 'super-casino' in Manchester. Even without the super-casino, Manchester has the third most casinos in Britain, six casinos in the city and fourteen in total in Greater Manchester. Among the six casinos in the city of Manchester, four are within walking distance of Chinatown. Some of my research participants say that Chinatown is ‘embraced by the casinos’.

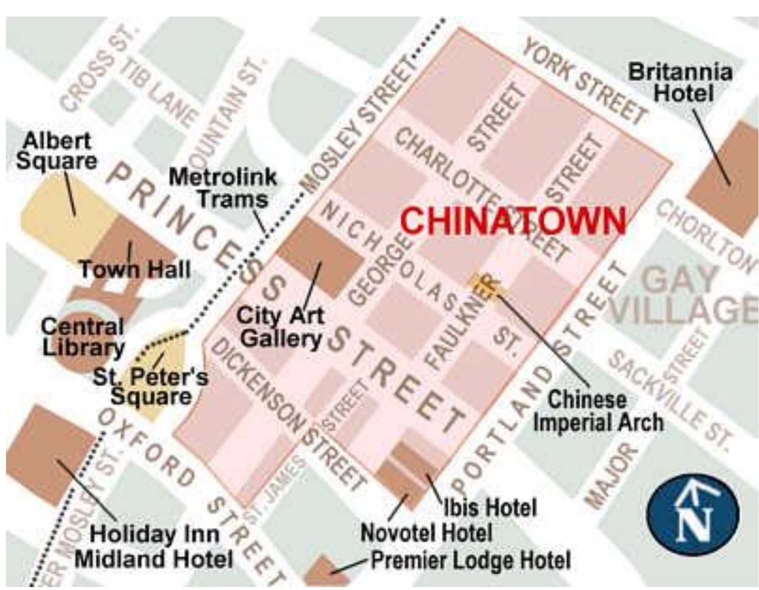

Fig. 2.1 A map of Chinatown in 2008

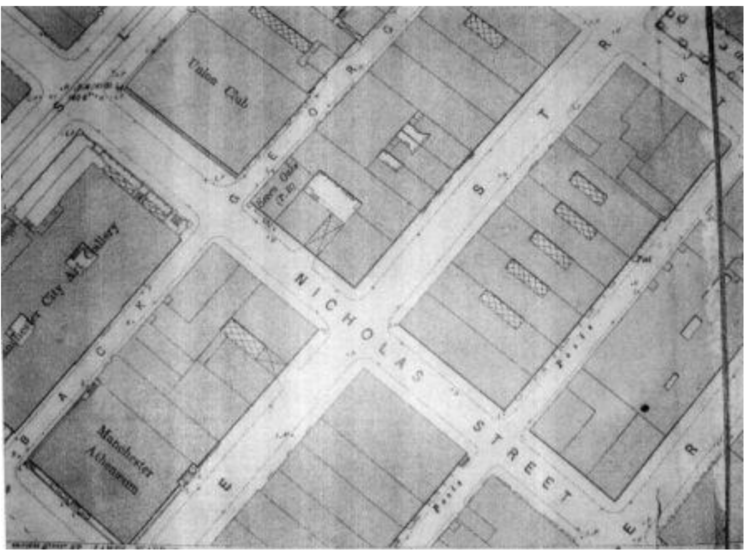

Fig. 2.2 A map of Chinatown in the 1890's

(http://www.manchesterchinesearchive.org.uk/index.php?p=10)

2.4 Chinatown and the Chinese

Manchester's Chinatown is situated at the centre of the city, off Mosley Street behind the Manchester Art Gallery. On a weekday morning, to visit Chinatown, I usually get off the Metrolink tram at St Peter's Square station in front of Manchester Central Library. Next to

the library is the Manchester Town Hall. Together with the hasty crowd of commuters I walk down the antiquated corridor outside the town hall to Princess Street. I cross Princess Street to get to West Mosley Street. The first shop at West Mosley is a café. It is quite busy in the morning, filled with early commuters who have their morning coffee there. On the other side of West Mosley there is Manchester Art Gallery, the Chinese embassy's visa and passport application centre, the Bank of China and the Wai Yin Chinese Women Society (a well-established Chinese community centre). During the first ten months of my fieldwork I worked four half-days a week at the community centre and got to know quite a few of my participants. The quiet tearoom inside the art gallery and the café at the beginning of West Mosley were ideal meeting places for my participants and me, especially when my participants wanted to have a quiet talk near the familiar Chinatown but without being seen by other Chinese[6].

At about nine o'clock in the morning, the streets around Chinatown are filled with people who work in the city centre, cars, buses and clattering trams. But Chinatown is different. I walk past the large front entrance of Manchester Art Gallery, turn right into Nicolas Street and come into Chinatown. Only about thirty metres down Nicolas Street, I am already at a focal point for Chinatown. The car park, the red and green wooden gazebo, the Pacific Restaurant and Hung Wun grocery shops are on the left and the Oriental buffet restaurant and the back of the gallery are on the right. In sharp contrast to the hectic town centre

[6] An in-depth interview often involves memories of very personal experiences and those memories could be quite emotional, so shedding tears is not unusual in an in-depth interview. Most of my participants were active in Chinatown and had many acquaintances there. Conducting an in-depth interview in Chinatown could make them uneasy and less open to recall their personal experiences as they could have been seen by their friends during the interviews. When asked about where to have the interview, they often chose these two places, where there were normally very few Chinese visitors.

around it, at this time in the morning Chinatown is still asleep. The gazebo is empty, so is the car park. The shops and restaurants have not yet opened. The streets in Chinatown are quiet, only a few people hurry through to their office at the city centre. I may see one or two Chinese old men wander quietly and seemingly aimlessly. The old men may be the residents of Faulkner Court, a Chinese retirement home.

Fig 2.3 The Chinese arch

Faulkner Court is located at the centre of Chinatown and houses about 40 elderly Chinese. It is the first Chinese retirement flat in Britain, built in 1989. There are four other retirement flats like Faulkner Court in the city centre, all located within walking distance to Chinatown. They were established in the early 1990s. Their residents are also mainly Chinese pensioners. The five retirement flats together house about 205 to 255 Chinese older people, mainly Cantonese or Hakka speakers. More than one third of my older participants, who are over 60, live in these retirement flats. These retirement flats have

changed Manchester Chinatown from a mere business area into a business and residential area. The Chinatowns in London and Liverpool are only centres of businesses and services. Manchester Chinatown is different, it has residents living 'on site', but its residents are older people only. It is thus understandable that you see older Chinese in Manchester Chinatown more often than in other cities' Chinatowns or Chinese quarters in Britain, even at unsociable hours and especially in the casinos.

Fig. 2.4 Faulkner Court (retirement flats for Chinese people in Chinatown)

Chinese pensioners' offspring are dispersed outside Chinatown, but they often come to visit them at weekends or holidays. Manchester Chinatown has thus become more like a Chinese village in the north of England. It bustles with life, especially at weekends, when the Chinese come into the city centre to promenade and chat and meet up with their older parents. They gather at the restaurants, some may visit the Chinese community centre, or

visit the medicine shops and the Chinese financial and legal services offices. People pop in and out of the shops and supermarkets and drop off the children at the two Sunday schools nearby. On Sundays or Tuesdays, Chinese caterers from all over Greater Manchester, or even further away, descend on the area to buy food supplies from the proliferation of grocery shops or the nearby huge Chinese wholesale warehouse.

2.4.1 Establishment of Chinatown

The earliest restaurant that has survived from the immediate post-War period up to now was opened in 1972 by several Siyinese; one of them is my key participant Sauchun's father-in-law. According to Sauchun, it was a humble noodle shop on the first floor of an old cotton warehouse (面纱仓库), which was located where the current Chinese gazebo at the corner of Nicholas Street and George Street now stands. On the warehouse's ground floor was a basic Chinese grocery shop; in its basement was a card room, where Chinese men gathered to play Paigow and Fan-tan, two card games that are no longer popular among the Manchester Chinese[7]. In the 1970s, no local people visited the noodle shop on the ground floor or the card room in the basement. The shop had Chinese customers only. Later the shop moved to the south-west edge of Chinatown and was transformed into a Cantonese-style restaurant, one of the grandest in Chinatown in the 1980s and 1990s. Now, although it is not very popular among new immigrants, many old timers still love it. In 2009 the Chinese community centre held their Mid-Autumn Festival celebration for older Chinese people at this restaurant. Some older Chinese casino regulars tell me that they go

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[7] *Paigow* occasionally is still played by several older Hakka women, normally only four, at the mah-jong area in one of the casinos near Chinatown. *Fantan* was never seen during my fieldwork.

there for their evening meal if they have won in the casinos and go to the new restaurants if they have lost[8].

2.4.2 Chinatown's dominant groups

Manchester's Chinatown is the second biggest Chinatown in Britain. With the earliest Chinese retirement homes and other well established services delivered in Chinese languages, Manchester's Chinatown is well known among the Chinese in Britain. However, Manchester was not the earliest reception area for Chinese migrants in Britain. In Britain, the Chinese have had a resident population for over 150 years, with the beginning of the coolie trade after China's defeat in the Opium Wars[9]. The initial Chinese community was very small but dominated by male seafarers sojourning in the main seaports of London, Liverpool and Cardiff (Jones, 1979). And those initial Chinese groups were mainly made up of seamen from China's east and north-east coastal areas. Hong Kong was not yet the site of emigration. But somehow, Hong Kong appears to be the hometown of many Chinese who make their living in Chinatown.

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[8] This section is largely based on my older participants' memories of the development of Chinatown. They came over to Manchester in the 1950s and early 1960s and had witnessed and participated in the development of Manchester Chinatown.

[9] Historically, the first Chinese person arrived in Britain as early as 1784, and after that there were also several sporadic Chinese visitors who left their footprints in England. But no Chinese people settled in Britain until the end of the first Opium War in 1848 (Benton and Gomez, 2008).

Fig. 2.5 Faulkner Street (About 300 metres from the arch, in the redbrick block at the end of the street, is Circus, the most popular casino for Chinese mah-jong players.)

In Manchester, the Chinese seem to have the impression that Chinatown is dominated by Hong Kongers (香港人), meaning people from Hong Kong. (‘Hong Kongers’ is a term popular among the Hong Kong Chinese who do not want to call themselves Chinese as they think it would mix them up with the Chinese from mainland China.) The impression of the predominance of Hong Kongers could be caused by the fact that Cantonese is the common social language in Hong Kong and Cantonese has been the common social language in Manchester’s Chinatown. In almost all the shops, restaurants and offices of Chinatown, people speak Cantonese if not English. In Chinese organisations around Chinatown, the staff are mainly English-Cantonese speakers; native Mandarin speakers are rarely heard although some staff make an effort to learn Mandarin as they are beginning to have increasing numbers of Mandarin speaking clients. But Cantonese

speakers are not the same as Hong Kongers. Many Chinese from Canton province in mainland China, from Vietnam and from Malaysia speak Cantonese as well. Some Mandarin speakers from mainland China also learn to speak Cantonese in order to find a job in Chinatown. I often hear Chinese people say 'If you speak Cantonese, you will be able to earn your living in Chinatown'（会说广东话在唐人街就饿不死）. However, despite the fact that more and more Mandarin speakers set up their businesses in Chinatown, more and more English-speaking British-born Chinese work in Chinatown, and more and more non-Cantonese/Hakka Chinese outside Chinatown, there is still a popular perception among Chinese migrants that Hong Kongers are the dominant Chinese group in Manchester. This perception is caused by the historical fact of the influx of migrants from Hong Kong since the 1950s (I will return to this point later in this section when I write about the influx of New Territories immigrants) and non-Cantonese speakers' misconception of the mixed group of Cantonese speakers.

Cantonese speakers in Chinatown are not necessarily Hong Kongers. The Cantonese speaking group is very heterogeneous. It is a combination of Siyinese, Hong Kong Punti, Hakka, and other Cantonese speaking groups, as mentioned earlier. Although Cantonese speakers are seen as one group by other Chinese, in their actual social life they maintain their group boundaries, which cannot be ignored as it contributes to the formation of different Chinese organisations as well as affecting the conduct of their social activities in Chinatown and in the gambling contexts. In the next part of this section, I will introduce the history of various sub-groups of Cantonese speakers, namely the Siyinese, the Hong Kong Punti, the Hakka and the other Cantonese speakers.

The early Cantonese migrants in Manchester were actually not from Hong Kong, they were a group known as Siyinese. Siyinese are from Si Yi, commonly known as Siyi in an English context. Si Yi consists of four counties in Canton province (known as Kwangtung in Cantonese and Guangdong in Mandarin) in South China. The four counties are Xinhui (新會), Taishan (台山), Kaiping (開平), and Enping (恩平). Si Yi is a place with an emigration tradition. The vast majority of families in the Pearl River Delta area trace their roots to there. Since the 1850s, an increasingly large number crossed the Pacific in search of work and created the overseas Siyinese communities in North America, Europe and Britain (Poston Jr., Mao, and Yeung, 1994). My Siyinese participants claimed that the Siyinese actually came to Britain earlier than the Hong Kong Cantonese and Hakka. According to Watson's account of the early Hong Kong migrants in Britain, the laundry shops were mainly run by the Siyinese (Watson, 1975). Later the Siyinese and rich Chinese Northerners, who were ex-officers during the Kuomintang regime, opened the early restaurants in Manchester. The Siyinese migration chain was interrupted after the Communist regime came to power in 1949. My Siyinese participants recalled how they completely lost the chance to go back to China and lost contact with their families in Si Yi after 1952. They believe that this became the opportunity for the Hong Kongers to outnumber the Siyinese at Chinatown in the decades after 1949. But the Siyinese was still believed to be the biggest group in the early British Chinese community. Before 1952, the Siyinese migration chain steadily transferred Siyinese emigrants to South Asia, North America, Europe and Britain. They dominated the Chinese laundry shops and the earliest restaurants before the influx of the Hong Kong New Territories villagers in the 1950s

(Gomez and Benton, 2008). The Manchester Chinese archives state that when Hong Kong migrants came to Manchester, they largely worked at the Siyinese laundries and restaurants, which is also supported by material from the anthropologist who conducted long years of solid studies on Hong Kong emigrants (Watson, 1975). In Manchester the Siyinese own some of the oldest Cantonese restaurants and have their locality association, the Wuyi[10] township association.

There was an historical factor that contributed to the influx of New Territories villagers in the 1950s. In 1949 the Chinese civil war ended, the previous Chinese government fled to Taiwan and the Chinese Communist Party's regime in China started. In 1952 the new Chinese government closed the border between China and Hong Kong and ordinary Chinese people lost their right to leave China and the Hong Kong Chinese could not visit China. The Siyinese migration chain was thus cut off. Around 1949, unsure about the future of the country, many mainland Chinese, former Kuomintang[11] officers and their families, rich entrepreneurs, poor factory workers, and peasants, flooded into Hong Kong. Among my participants, there are many such double migrants. Some of them went to Hong Kong with their parents around 1949 from Shanghai, Nanjing, Wuhan and Guangzhou; some of them are Siyinese emigrants who worked in Hong Kong and could not go back to China after 1952. This influx brought to Hong Kong the money, skills, and labour for its light industry development. Hong Kong's urbanisation came into full swing in the early 1950s. During the urbanisation of Hong Kong's agricultural area, the New

[10] Wuyi is the joint name of Si Yi and another city called Jiangmen (江门).
[11] Kuomintang is the governing political party of the former Republic of China. Kuomintang retreated and stayed in Taiwan after 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party took over the country and renamed it as the People's Republic of China (China's current name).

Territories, villagers lost their land and at the same time the employment market became more competitive after the arrival of large numbers of mainland Chinese, many of whom had better skills but asked for a lower wage (Watson, 1975). After the Second World War, Britain extended British citizenship to its colonial citizens to cover Britain's loss of skilled workers in wartime. The New Territories villagers thus took this chance to seek a more prosperous life in Britain. Apart from Britain's labour shortage in the years following the war, the villagers' migration also coincided with three other historical conditions: the invention of the washing machine, the consequent collapse of the laundry shops and Chinese people in Britain transferring to the catering industry. The restaurants needed more staff than did the laundry shops. But the previous Siyinese migration chain from China was interrupted after the Communist Party came to power. The Siyinese in Manchester had to recruit their staff from Hong Kong. During the 1950s a large group of the Yip's clan, from the Lin Ma Hang village of Hong Kong's New Territories, immigrated to Manchester, working for a Siyinese clan. Some of the Yip's clan members are now operating the biggest Chinese supermarket and restaurants in Manchester. On 26 December 2008, the first Christmas Party was organised by the Yip's clan at the Chi Yip restaurant, Middleton; over four hundred members of their clan gathered together.

The influx of New Territories villagers accelerated in the two years before the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act came into effect. The voucher system introduced by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act strengthened village and kinship migration chains by making jobs dependent on the sponsorship of an employer already in Britain and consigned all but a few new immigrants to the restaurant niche. According to Benton and

Gomez's collection of materials, in 1968, 171 out of 193 vouchers were for catering jobs. In the mid-1960s, the number of wives and other dependants arriving from Hong Kong increased steadily as a response to the restrictions on primary immigration introduced in 1962 and the reduction in the number of employment vouchers in 1965. The 1962 Act, which aimed to exclude anyone without a close ancestral link to the United Kingdom, also provided for the exclusion of children under the age of 16 with only one parent in the country, causing a further increase in immigration by wives and in family reunions. The number of dependants reaching Britain from Hong Kong increased nearly tenfold between 1962 and 1967. By 1971, more than 2,000 dependants were arriving annually. These laws locked Chinese latecomers into the catering niche by throwing them into the arms of relatives or fellow-villagers who needed staff (Benton and Gomez, 2007: 326–329). This is also the factor that generated the chain migration in decades, leading to territorial concentration in Hong Kong, especially the New Territories and the occupational concentration in catering. By joining kin in Britain, the New Territories 'indigenous'[12] villagers have transplanted their social network from Hong Kong and they eventually seem to have replaced the Siyinese and become the most prominent group in Chinatown. In Manchester, Hakka villagers operate some of the biggest Chinese restaurants and supermarkets. As a Siyinese descendant once put it 'we were once richer than them, but now they are richer than us'.

[12] The New Territories was leased to Britain in 1898 and villagers who had come before that year are recognised as indigenous villagers and have British colonial citizenship. This concept is different from the original concept of the indigenous group, who are called Punti, meaning indigenous in Cantonese. The Cantonese Punti think they are the real indigenous group in Hong Kong and the Hakka who came to the New Territories in the later part of 19th century are late comers. In the New Territories the Punti occupied the relatively larger patch of more fertile farmland, and the Hakka occupied the small barren lands or cultivated their farmland from scratch in the northern area of the New Territories.

In the past 50 to 60 years, Chinatown has seen very different waves of Chinese migrants: first the Siyinese, then the Hakka and Hong Kong Cantonese, then the Mandarin Chinese, and the Chinese from South East Asia. During my four years living in Manchester and later 14 months fieldwork there, I found out that many Mandarin Chinese, especially those who only dine and shop in Chinatown, seem to share a common impression: Chinatown is dominated by the 'Hong Kongers'. There are actually no statistics to support this impression. People may have mistaken any Cantonese speaker as a 'Hong Konger'. As my Mandarin speaking participants thought I was a Hong Konger when they first met me only because I speak Cantonese, I suspect that Hong Kongers in their context only means 'Cantonese speaker'. The so-called 'Hong Kongers' are actually a complicated combination of several sub-groups of migrants. They could have come from Hong Kong, or Guangdong, or Fujian, even Shanghai. What is more, some of them, while having come from Hong Kong, were born and grew up somewhere else. Some of them were Shanghainese, Fujianese but had settled down in Hong Kong. Some of them are actually Cantonese from Canton and have never lived in Hong Kong. Among the so-called 'Hong Kongers' in Manchester, some of them call themselves Siyinese, some call themselves Punti or Hakka, and some simply call themselves Cantonese or Chinese. In Chinatown I also found Vietnamese Chinese or Malaysian Chinese workers or shopkeepers speaking fluent Cantonese, and my Mandarin speaking participants, if not informed otherwise, would just take them as 'Hong Kongers'. It is almost impossible for an outsider or a new migrant to distinguish these Cantonese-speaking sub-groups in Chinatown unless they are very familiar with each sub-group's subtly distinctive accent. It is not accurate to say that the Hong Kongers have dominated Chinatown, but it is true that most of the shop owners

and caterers in Chinatown speak Cantonese or Hakka. The complex composition of the 'Hong Kongers' is a reflection of the heterogeneity of the Chinese in Manchester. To put it accurately, the Hong Kongers are in fact Cantonese or Hakka speakers who may or may not come from Hong Kong. In the rest of my thesis, I will call them Cantonese and Hakka speakers.

Cantonese and Hakka speakers are the most active group in Chinatown and in the casinos. Their various sub-groups have brought their pre-existing social networks into the gambling world. Gaming tables become a stage for the performance of these social networks of various groups of 'Hong Kongers'. Social relations between individual Chinese are influenced by the relations between different sub-groups. These relations are affected by their pre-migration experience and their different ways of migrating, by which I mean chain migration or independent migration. The relations are displayed, tested, maintained and amended through social interactions in the gambling context. This thesis aims to discuss the social relations between various Chinese sub-groups in gambling contexts by examining their preparation for mah-jong gatherings in Chapter 4, their perception of luck in Chapter 5, the way they address each other in Chapter 6, and monetary exchanges among the Chinese in a gambling context in Chapter 7. An awareness of the diversity of the Cantonese and Hakka speakers prepares us to understand the complicated social interactions among the Chinese gamblers who may hardly appear different from each other to people who are not familiar with this group but are trying to understand their gambling behaviour.

2.4.3 The Chinese at the community centre

When the Siyinese formed the Wuyi Association at the centre of Chinatown, a group of Cantonese women from Hong Kong formed the Wai Yin Chinese Women Society at the edge of Chinatown. The community centre was one of the most important sites in my fieldwork. It was the place where I made my first contacts with most of my participants, although I developed further connections with them outside the centre and they eventually became my research participants.

Wai Yin offered a rich opportunity for me to meet many Chinese people in Manchester. The centre is mainly dominated by Hong Kong Cantonese. During my fieldwork, the centre had about thirty-five full-time and part-time staff and only three of them, including myself, were Mandarin speakers from mainland China, one part-time staff member from Macau, one from Malaysia, and six non-Chinese staff, and 24 were migrants from Hong Kong. The Hong Kong migrants' dominance in the well-established Chinese community contributed to the Chinese new migrants' misunderstanding that the Hong Kong migrants were the dominant group in Chinatown. Actually among the centre's service users there was a higher percentage of service users who are not from Hong Kong. I actually recruited quite a few of my Mandarin speaking participants at the centre.

However, the centre has its limitations as a field site. The contacts I developed from the centre were heavily affected by the centre's no-gambling restriction. As a charitable organisation that providing social services, the centre's management team seemed to be quite sensitive to the high prevalence of gambling among the Chinese in Manchester. The

centre's director once disclosed that she would feel uneasy receiving a donation from a casino or betting shop. The assistant director recalled to me resentfully that once she booked a taxi to Chinatown and the driver asked her if he should stop by the casino at George Street. She found the taxi driver's assumption offensive: 'he just thought we Chinese are all gamblers'. 'You should consider doing something to change that' she said to me. Another member of the senior management team, when asked how he would respond if someone invited him to a casino, said he would feel as if someone was inviting him to a pole dancing club, making him feel excited but guilty. The community centre had a very strict non-gambling principle. At its luncheon club and its main quarter, it offered free mah-jong tables for its service users but they were not allowed to wager on the game. During my fieldwork, the participants who I recruited from the community centre all claimed to be non-gamblers, although that was not always true and actually after I left the centre in the last five months of fieldwork some of my participants became more open to me about their perception of gambling. Quite a few of them had gambled before and one of them, Heroine, actually became a regular roulette player at the casinos. I will return to the various reactions that gambling prompted among my participants in Chapter two, and consider how the shameful or stigmatised response to gambling can prevent people from describing their activities as 'gambling'. In Chapter four, I will also discuss this reaction in relation to how mah-jong players choose which venue to play in and with whom to play with.

Even regular gamblers seemed to feel uncomfortable talking about gambling when they were at the community centre. I would hardly have found a single gambler if I had

recruited participants just from the centre. Even if people at the centre did gamble, they did not want to talk about it. In fact only one participant has ever talked to me quite openly about her gambling experience at the centre.

Aiming to study casino table gambling and mah-jong gambling, I had to find Chinese gamblers who play table games. Where were they? There were Chinese entrepreneurs playing high-stake mah-jong at Wuyi Association. However, direct access to Wuyi was restricted because I was not an entrepreneur, neither did I play high-stake mah-jong. Restaurants could be another type of place, but they are for friend and family gatherings only. I had been to a younger Chinese parents and toddlers gathering at a Cantonese restaurant. The organisers had requested a mah-jong play set. But the young parents were not very familiar with each other and they were too busy looking after the kids. So nobody sat down to play the game at all. Some Chinese also gamble at mah-jong at home, but I needed to be invited to go to people's houses. So the casinos were the places where I could access freely and find Chinese gamblers, especially the Chinese who gambled on table games.

2.4.4 The Chinese at the casinos

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Chinatown is embraced by casinos. In this section I evoke this social world by describing a typical day at the casinos near Chinatown. This information will help to frame the more detailed analysis I provide of individual play in Chapters six and seven.

The oldest casino in Manchester was opened in Chinatown. It is the Grosvenor casino in George Street, on the quiet side of the street. On one side of the street is the vast solid grey-yellowish wall of the Manchester art gallery, there are vast windows in the wall, but they are always shut and they are dusty. The casino in this street faces the back of the art gallery, and is located just two restaurants away from the gazebo and Chinatown car park. During my fieldwork from July 2008 to September 2009, it was the only 24-hour casino in Chinatown, and the Chinese call it 宋市, a transliteration of the casino's old name Soames. The Grosvenor casino also has its Chinese name, 巨富来. But Soames (宋市) remains the name used by Chinese participants.

At midday during fieldwork, I often saw a bunch of Chinese men in front of Soames. They worked in the restaurants next to it, and they had their afternoon cigarette break near the casino entrance. In the morning, they were not there; the cigarette ends and dry marks of phlegm reminded me of them. At nine o'clock in the morning, Chinatown was still sleeping, Soames was also quiet. Inside the ground floor gaming hall, there were four middle-aged Chinese women and two middle-aged Chinese men, two young Chinese men, all Cantonese speakers. They were all on electric roulette or slot machines. Near the entrance, there was a cash machine; in front of it was a row of electronic roulette machines. These roulette machines' minimum bet is fifty pence, higher than the other electronic ones on this floor, which had a minimum bet of twenty-five pence. There was only one man at the higher-stake electronic roulette. He was the owner of a small but well-established Cantonese restaurant in Chinatown. During my fieldwork, I went to his place to have my £4 two-course dinner break every now and then. He had the reputation of a kind-hearted

but unlucky boss in Chinatown. Kind-hearted, as he never let his gambling delay his employees' pay day, as another much more prosperous restaurant owner did. Unlucky, as he was industrious while his small restaurant was not that busy even at its peak hours. My Cantonese colleagues at the Chinese community centre often chose to go to his restaurant to have lunch because he is ‘kind but unlucky’. He saw me and nodded his head and smiled. He was almost always smiling humbly and worriedly except when he was playing on his electronic roulette. Each time I saw him in Soames, it was always in the morning before the restaurants opened, and he was always on the £0.50 electronic roulette along the railings of the stairs, which led down to the underground gaming floor where blackjack, roulette and £2 per bet slots were located. That morning he was not winning, and he drew money from the cash machine behind him twice in about half an hour. He left at about ten as usual. The restaurants in Chinatown normally open at 12 o’clock. Whenever I went to Soames in the morning, he was there, but I never saw him stay later than 10.30 am.

There was a middle-age couple on the 25 pence roulette. The couple played attentively. They lost and the woman took £40 out of her purse and put it into the man’s hand. Another woman, who looked to be in her 30s, was on a slot machine in the corner farthest away from the entrance. She was losing too, over £500. She moaned to me as I was the only person near her. She slammed the machine with her glittering silver handbag, ‘I hate it; if it gave me back my money I would definitely leave immediately, but now I can't leave, my money is in it’. She leaned the back of her chair against the machine to suggest that the machine was engaged. Then she walked a few steps away and took out a new fashion mobile from her handbag. ‘Bring me some money...I've lost 500 odd pounds, I

cannot leave it like this...,' she said furiously on her phone, complaining about her bad luck. I wondered who she was calling, but as a stranger and, moreover a stranger who was not playing, I didn't ask her. It seemed this morning, at Soames, that nobody was winning; the other players were also shifting between slots and electronic roulette, testing their luck on different machines, and occasionally I heard some of them utter words like '真黑！' ('Real black!'). It is an expression to moan about one's bad luck. While the colour red is regarded as a colour symbolising good luck, black is regarded as the colour of bad luck.

Morning gamblers at Soames seemed to be mainly caterers in Chinatown. They all left the casino around the time when the restaurants' working hours began. The casino became busy when the elderly Chinese started to arrive at noon. It became even busier in the afternoon. The catering workers had their break at two o'clock in the afternoon. Some of them took their break at Soames, gambling or chatting with their friends around the machines. When the time was approaching four o'clock, Soames became as crowded as a Christmas party because there was the afternoon lucky draw at four. Every day, there were two draws, one at four in the afternoon and the other at eleven o'clock at night. Every visitor to the casino collected a ticket associated with their name and put it into the box at the cashier's counter for the lucky draw. Every afternoon when it was nearly four o'clock, the two levels of the gaming floor were both packed with elderly Chinese and a few working-age Chinese. The whole gaming hall was full of the clamours of Cantonese and Hakka. Then the noise suddenly quietened when the ticket was drawn, the number of the winning ticket shouted out by the casino staff behind the cashier. Soon the clamour rose again. 'What number was it?' 'Who was it?' People checked with each other to make sure

that they had heard the correct number and tried to find out who the lucky winner was. Soon someone’s name, always a Chinese name, was shouted out even louder, normally in Hakka, sometimes in Cantonese. The ticket number and the winner’s name were loudly passed from the lower ground to the ground by the elderly Chinese, shouting in three languages, Hakka, Cantonese and English. Then the winner collected the £100 cash from the cashier in front of the dense crowd of Cantonese and Hakka elderly people, who were laughing, congratulating the winner or even shouting ‘请饮茶！请饮茶！’ (‘Buy us a cup of tea! Buy us a cup of tea!’). Some people recalled who had won before and who had won even twice, and the winner’s good luck was truly admired by the crowd.

A Mah-jong table was also available at Soames, on the lower ground floor. But it was not a popular venue for mah-jong. At the lower ground level, the ceiling was low and the light was dim. Its space was divided into several compact areas: the table gaming area, the bar, the electronic machine area. Two roulette tables and three poker tables engaged the table gaming area at the centre of this compact space. Poker players had to sit next to the stairway, the cashier was on the other side of the poker tables. The roulette tables lay between the poker tables and the electronic machines. The machines stood against the wall. Beside the machines and the roulette tables there were several small armchairs. The armchairs were facing the stairway. Behind the armchairs was the bar area. Chinese older people are satisfied with gathering around its small bar and chatted loudly in Hakka instead of playing mah-jong. It was said that mah-jong could be played at the tables beside the bar. But I never saw people playing mah-jong there – the venue looked rather cramped and the bar area was far too dark for mah-jong players to play comfortably. Interestingly,

beside the activity room there was a display cabinet; inside there were all the free gifts for visitors who collected enough points by visiting Soames. A box of mah-jong tiles was on display.

Soames was like a social club for the Chinese, especially older Chinese and the people who work around Chinatown. Soames' image as a Chinese social club even appeared to be more real when looking at its activity room. On the ground floor just beside the casino's second entrance there was an activity hall, bright and spacious, with a high ceiling, and large windows near its roof letting in light from the sky. The Chinese regulars used the space comfortably, reading papers, watching television, playing Chinese chess or simply just sitting there and doing nothing, but gambling was never seen there, not even mah-jong playing. It was kept that way by the Chinese gamblers. This room was rather unusual for a casino as I had never seen such a social area in any other casino. Soames is a popular gathering place for older migrants who had worked in Chinatown or now lived in the Chinese retirement flats near Chinatown. Even 20 years after Grosvenor had bought Soames (according to the participants), Chinese people still called it by its old name, Soames, thanks to the older Cantonese and Hakka migrants who made up the majority of its customers.

Many former mah-jong players now entertain themselves on the slot machines at Soames. My key participant Huang[13] was one of them. I met Huang at Soames when she was battling on two machines simultaneously but was not having any good luck. She pressed auto-play and chatted with me while the machines rolled on their own. A white woman

[13] As mentioned in chapter one, all names in this thesis are anonymised.

came over and asked if she could have one of the machines as it was her favourite, while to her Huang did not appear to be playing seriously. Huang refused. 'Tell her, there is no way for her to have this machine. I won't leave this machine unless the uncle comes up.' (The uncle is actually a Sphinx). Huang called it an uncle only because she did not know what a sphinx was and the sphinx's face appeared to be a man to her. On that machine, when the sphinx comes up the player has the biggest win.) Huang is in her 60s. She gambles regularly and heavily in casinos. Huang came from Hong Kong in 1960s. She used to run a take-away shop with her husband. They have two daughters; both were born and grew up in Manchester. Huang separated from her husband seven years ago after her younger daughter went to university. Now she lives in one of the Chinese retirement flats. She used to play mah-jong and she now played slot machines and roulette. Huang loves mah-jong as a game but she regrets that 'mah-jong ruins friendship'. Mah-jong is often associated with social bonds between the players. As a former mah-jong player puts it 'pressing these slots you can leave whenever you want, playing mah-jong you can't. Four rounds or eight rounds take a long time. And once you start playing the people come after you...'. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will write in detail about the social worlds of casino roulette gambling and mah-jong gambling. At Soames, unlike the young woman I described above, many people seemed to enjoy the freedom that casino gambling provides. This kind of freedom was often compared to the interpersonal obligations at the mah-jong table. But this freedom was also embedded in the social network of the Cantonese and Hakka migrants. In Chapter 6 I will write about the casino regulars' social interactions and their social network based on lineage and locality connections.

2.4.5 Mah-jong players

If the casinos are dominated by Cantonese and Hakka speakers, the mah-jong area inside the casinos was the place where I often heard people speaking Hakka instead of Cantonese. This section covers my visits to the mah-jong areas in two casinos. It illustrates that gambling is a very popular form of social life among Hakka speaking older Chinese in Manchester. In Chapters 4 and 5 I will analyse in detail how mah-jong gambling is woven into the social life of the mah-jong players outside the gambling context.

There is mah-jong at Mint and Circus, two casinos within five minutes walk of Chinatown. Circus is more popular for mah-jong players than Mint. Mint's mah-jong area is at the back of the gaming hall. The participants did not go there unless they couldn't find a table at Circus. Having been to both places, following my participants around most of the time, Circus became my main mah-jong casino. Circus mah-jong tables were fully active normally at around half past one in the afternoon. But to find out how people selected their competitors and prepared for the game, I needed to go there as soon as Circus opened. On a normal day before I went to Circus, I usually turned into a Chinese bakery shop to have a quick early lunch. Circus opened at 12 pm. One day when I got to Circus, it was still closed. Two Chinese women were already waiting in front of its turnstile entrance. Feeling uneasy about being seen to be waiting to get into a casino in public, I walked into the small Boots beside it. My mobile showed 12.09, five minutes earlier than the real time. A Chinese older woman came in. 'Is it open yet?' I asked her in Cantonese. 'When does it ever open early?' She threw me the question promptly and hastily in Cantonese with an obvious Hakka accent. I decided to walk round the block around Circus. It was raining.

Two Chinese women in their sixties were chatting excitedly and heading towards Circus. Then I saw a Chinese old man heading in the same direction. He seemed to have a bad back and he couldn't walk properly; he was leaning onto the wall while walking along. Turning around at the corner of a hotel, I came back to the entrance of Circus. There were already nine Chinese people waiting there, six women and three men. The casino had missed its normal opening time. It was raining more heavily, the temperature had dropped; it felt like a late autumn day. A big man in an orange fluorescent vest walked past the Chinese crowd and cast them a glance of amazement and disagreement. The crowd didn't notice; they were chatting excitedly, all in Hakka, seemingly detached from the entire surrounding environment apart from the casino.

Finally the door opened, the crowd rushed in and soon disappeared behind the double door beyond the reception area. When I got in, the reception area had returned to silence. I thought that they must have gone down by the lift. Circus has three floors. On the ground floor there is the reception and display area. One level down, in the middle of the first lower ground floor is a spacious staircase, on the left there are two slot machines standing against the wall, on the right is a baccarat hall call Big Tops. Three armchairs sit beside the entrance of Big Tops, beside the chairs is the casino's refuge point. The light in the stairway was quite dark, compared to the bright Big Tops and the glamorous main gaming floor on the second lower ground floor. Big Tops has a double door entrance. One wide side of Big Tops is open, with only metal railings facing the main gaming floor downstairs, making the whole Big Tops look like a large balcony. When there is neither baccarat nor mah-jong in there, the hall is shut and the wide sliding window behind the railings is

closed. Mah-jong is usually played either in Big Tops or in the narrow and long area behind the stairs in the main hall, running across the gaming floor, from the lift on one end to the cashier on the other end.

As soon as I pushed open the double doors beyond the reception, the click-clack of mah-jong tiles from Big Tops rushed into my ears. So today mah-jong was in Big Tops. I didn't like Big Tops that much as it was separated from the main gaming floor on a different floor. This kept the space comparatively exclusive to mah-jong players. Those who didn't play mah-jong or had no friends playing there usually didn't go into Big Tops. Although this kind of boundary is in itself a meaningful subject for me as a researcher, it was at the same time a barrier I needed to overcome as well. Hearing people calling each other uncle, aunty, sister, brother, even son or daughter, and greeting each other cheerfully in Hakka, I felt that the mah-jong group was closely knitted together and the mah-jong circle was not open to just anyone. When mah-jong was in the main hall, an open area for any casino visitors, I could wander around the tables more comfortably without acquaintances accompanying. When mah-jong was in Big Tops one needed a reason to enter if one was not a player.

Inside this mah-jong group, most of the regular players were from Hong Kong New Territories, some from Canton province in China, and some were Vietnamese Chinese. Due to the prevalence of former New Territories villagers, the common language in the mah-jong area was Hakka; the second most common language was Cantonese. Almost every player there, no matter where they came from, spoke either Hakka or Cantonese, or

both. The mah-jong players all knew each other quite well, and called each other fictive kinship titles. It seemed that the mah-jong at Circus was a game for friends or even relatives, filled with harmony. But a closer look to the interactions between players revealed lots of tacit conflicts, which I will discuss in detail in Chapters 4 and 7.

When I had no acquaintances playing inside Big Tops, I usually waited for my opportunity at the main gaming hall, facing Big Tops' open railing. The main hall in the early afternoon was not yet busy. Once when I was waiting I heard a conversation from upstairs. Two women and a man were waiting for the fourth player to turn up. One of the women, the younger one, in her thirties, lost patience. She was tempted to join another table which had already got three players ready. She approached the middle-aged woman waiting together with her, a bit timidly, obviously aware of the irritation her demand was going to cause. 'They are lacking one person, and they ask me to join them. I go, OK?' 'OK!! You agree with us first, now you want to go. OK, nothing is OK. You can go, just go!' The other woman replied forcefully. 'Well, if you say so, I won't go.' The younger woman gave up. The man with them kept his mouth shut, but stood on the other side of the angry middle-aged woman backing her up. The younger woman walked round and round beside her two 'friends', obviously hating losing the chance to join a quick table but daring not to irritate her 'friends' any further. At that moment, I finally saw one of my acquaintances turn up. Mrs Wong was slowly walking down the stairs, greeting the three people beside the staircase. However, she wasn't the one they were expecting. She saw me. 'So you are here, but it's still early, not much for you to see,' she greeted me, showing that she

understood what I had come to Circus for. ‘So, have you arranged any ‘Jiao’ (legs)[14] today?’ I replied, asking another question. ‘I haven’t arranged anything, I'll play with whoever comes,’ she said easily. She didn't bring her own tiles. ‘Too heavy and too much work afterwards’; she meant cleaning the tiles. Then we went to the cashier to put down a £10 deposit and borrow a set of mah-jong tiles. At last, I had my reason to go into Big Tops, comfortably with Mrs Wong, carrying the box of tiles for her. We chose a table in the middle of the hall and sat down. The box of tiles was on the table. Mrs Wong ordered her sandwich and iced lemon tea, paid the waitress £2 tips, took out a mini-electric fan from her LV hand bag, which is about the size of a grapefruit, and switched it on. We finally settled at the table. At last I had a chance to observe closely at the mah-jong tables. In this thesis I will devote Chapter five to mah-jong gamblers’ social lives at the table.

2.5 A bowl of loose sand

In this chapter, I’ve emphasised the domination of Cantonese and Hakka at Chinatown, at the community centre, and in casinos. But the domination of one group of Chinese does not mean that the Chinese in Manchester is less heterogeneous than Chinese groups in other parts of Britain. The Chinese community in Manchester is decentralising in a geographical sense as more and more Chinese set up their associations and become active outside Chinatown. It is also decentralising in the sense of group heterogeneity as more Chinese migrants come from places outside Hong Kong. This process inevitably informs

[14] *Jiao* means leg(s) in Cantonese; in the context of mah-jong playing, *Jiao* (leg) means the mah-jong players who one accepts to play together with at the same table. Mah-jong usually requires four players to play together just like a table requires four legs to stand stable. When there are fewer than four players available for the game, people will describe the situation as *bu gou Jiao* (not enough legs). When people are waiting for their preferred players to turn up, they will say they are waiting for their *Jiao* (leg).

my understanding of gambling among my research participants.

It is not uncommon for the Chinese in Manchester to describe themselves as a bowl of loose sand. By that they mean that although they appear to be similar to each other, they have distinctive backgrounds and different types of life. They even mean that the Chinese community in Manchester is full of discord. The Chinese community in Britain is diverse, not just in term of its constitution but also in terms of its members' perceptions of their identity. They may appear to be quite similar to each other and share the same ethnicity to the general public perception. But they do not necessarily feel that they belong to the same community. Some of them do not even think that they are Chinese. For example, Cantonese Punti and Hakka from Hong Kong prefer to call themselves Hong Kongers instead of Chinese. Chinese migrants brought with them their prior sub-ethnic identities. The sub-groups I've come into contact during my fieldwork include Siyinese, Hong Kong Cantonese, Hakka, other Cantonese, Fujianese, Shanghainese, North-easterners, Malaysian Chinese and Vietnamese Chinese. There are also student and scholar groups, professional Chinese groups or Chinese entrepreneur groups. Each sub-group formed its own associations and geographic clusters. As Christiansen says, it is a community full of 'fissions' (Christiansen, 2003).

From 1978 the Communist regime in China started its social economic reform and allowed its people to go abroad again. The 1980s onwards saw a new wave of Chinese immigration to Britain. Unlike the earlier wave which had its majority of Chinese immigrants from rural Hong Kong, the post-1980 flow of immigrants came from many

places: Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and other South-east Asian countries. In Hong Kong, Macau, emigration is a response to the perceived political and social uncertainty of reunification with Mainland China. In China, emigration is a political consequence of the government's shift towards more liberal emigration policies. The increasingly diverse immigration origins and backgrounds over the last two decades is believed to be a direct result of the fundamental restructuring of the political and economic environments in both sending and receiving countries (Biao, 2003; Harris and Coleman, 2003). In the 1990s, the British labour market was reopened to 'high-skill' immigrants to meet skill shortages and to increase the competitiveness of the British post-industrial economy. More and more young Chinese professionals immigrated to Britain under the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme. Among my participants, most of the Chinese immigrants who came to Britain after 1990 were aged 30–45, had higher education backgrounds, and, compared with the earlier two waves of Chinese immigrants, a lower percentage were of Hong Kong origin. As Luk pointed out, after the 1990s, new Chinese immigrants moved into Britain under rather different economic circumstances to their precursors (Luk, 2006). Since 2000, following the British Council's promotion of British higher education in China, the number of Chinese students increased rapidly. Taking London as an example, this capital city has, over the past five years, received some 50,000 of a total of 90,000 or so Chinese students now studying in the UK (London Chinese Community Network, 2005). Meanwhile, with the development of new channels of migration, the arrival of Chinese people increased rapidly (London Chinese Community Network, 2005). According to the 1991 National Census, the total number of ethnic Chinese in Britain was just over 160,000; however it increased to over 247,403 in 2001

(Bains, 2003). These figures exclude asylum-seekers yet to pass their asylum applications and those without valid residential papers. And as a result of China's speedy economic expansion, more and more Chinese enterprises are on their way to Europe, some of which, such as the Nanjing Automobile Corporation, which has completed a deal with a Birmingham based car manufacturer in 2008, will eventually land in the UK. These multinational companies are likely to generate further business and employment opportunities, and attract more skilled professionals with Chinese backgrounds. The UK's Chinese community is not just expanding in size, but also in its heterogeneity.

These changes are obvious in Manchester as well. All my participants agreed that there are more and more Mandarin speakers in Manchester, most of whom are students, and some are young professionals. In Chinatown, new Chinese restaurants have opened and they serve Sichuan, Hunan and China's North East cuisine instead of Cantonese food only. And there are more Mandarin speaking waiters and waitresses. Manchester Chinatown, a place first dominated by Siyinese, then by Hong Kongers, now starts to see more young Chinese professionals or students from mainland China. More restaurants and take-away shops are operated by non-Hong Kong caterers, North-East Chinese and Fujianese are two new groups who started to enter the catering niche. The Chinese community in Manchester became more diversified. In 2002 and 2003, the centre only occasionally had Mandarin speaking visitors; in 2008 and 2009 I had the impression that the centre received almost more Mandarin speakers than Cantonese or Hakka speakers. Away from Chinatown, another Chinese centre was established in 2006, and this centre had more Mandarin speaking staff than the old centre. A big Chinese Buddhist Temple was opened in late

1980s. The temple has its masters from Taiwan and believers from the greater China area in East Asia and South East Asia. Several new Chinese associations founded their sites outside Chinatown and, together with old associations located in Chinatown, they started to see increasing numbers of Mandarin-speaking clients and eventually started to hire Mandarin-speaking staff. The older Sunday Chinese school located almost at the side of Chinatown used to teach Cantonese only. A new Sunday Chinese school was opened in the late 1990s away from Chinatown. This school is run by a group of Mandarin-speaking professionals, and Mandarin is taught at that school. The old Cantonese Chinese school later started to provide Mandarin classes as well.

In Manchester there is no place where you can access each of the sub-groups at the same time. Chinatown is thought to be the focal point of the 'Chinese community', but some Chinese do not go to Chinatown. A participant once told me that she and her husband never dined out in Chinatown; neither did they take their three children there because 'Chinatown is full of germs'. Another Chinese woman said she seldom goes to Chinatown because she and her British husband 'have had no connection with the Chinese society in the past twenty years'. People may feel that there are lots of Chinese in the casinos but many Chinese do not go to casinos at all. The Chinese temple or Chinese church are also considered a place for Chinese to gather at weekends, but like the Chinese church, they have services for different language groups; Mandarin speakers and Cantonese speakers normally do not mingle although a few people go between. Inside the Manchester's Central Library there is a small Chinese library, a room full of collections in Chinese, but like the other parts of the public library it is seldom busy and is not supposed to be a

meeting place. As mentioned above, there are two Chinese Sunday schools in Manchester; at one school, most of the children have Cantonese-speaking parents who came from Hong Kong, at the other school most of the children have Mandarin-speaking parents from mainland China. There are also a few Chinese charity organisations, which are dominated by Hong Kongers, although they have since started to help more new immigrants and asylum seekers from mainland China who have language or culture barriers, and very few of whom have a higher education background. There are some newly-founded organisations trying to bridge the gap between older Chinese migrants and new migrants by involving more Mandarin speakers. Interestingly these organisations, both older ones and new ones, tend to serve their users separately and cooperation between them is usually superficial, so it is understandable that their service users tend to be similar groups of people, and the organisations compete.

If there is any place where I can find more than two sub-groups of Chinese voluntarily, regularly, and for the long term, sharing a common social life together, it is in the casinos. In these places, the different grains in the sand bowl come together and construct a distinctive social space, a space that reflects all their similarities and differences and their intra-group relationship. I will explore this space in detail in the later chapters of this thesis. Against this backdrop of a constantly changing composition, gambling provides a kind of touchstone: An activity that accentuates what people share, but also the differences they strive to maintain between groups and individuals. Here, gambling operates as a social heuristic which combines and differentiates. It is this property that I will explore in greater detail in the rest of my thesis.

3 The game of mah-jong

> 'If you've caught a cold or have hay fever whatsoever, you should try mah-jong, seriously, I am not joking, and people say it helps. I tell you, mah-jong is really amazing.' (Xin, in an interview in June 2009)

Chinese gamblers play various games, but in Manchester, roulette and mah-jong are the two most popular games, especially among regular gamblers. My thesis mainly deals with mah-jong and roulette gambling. In this chapter I will write about mah-jong as a game to provide more information about this traditional Chinese game which may be comparatively exotic to most readers. First, I briefly introduce the history of the game and its prevalence in Chinese communities across the world. Then I introduce in detail the game's basic equipment: mah-jong tiles and dice. After that, I focus on the general rules of the game. Although the basic equipment and general rules are the two essential parts of mah-jong as a game, I feel that how people *perceive* the equipment and how they enjoy the game are also relevant, because a game is a meaningless without considering the participation of its players. So, to present a more complete picture of mah-jong as a game, in the final section of this chapter I also write about how mah-jong players engage with the game. As a result of this chapter, I hope my readers will gain a basic idea of the game and will agree that mah-jong is a game of strategies and skills although it unavoidably involves the element of chance too. This chapter provides the foundation to my next chapter, in which I will discuss how the Chinese gamblers convert a game of strategy into a game of luck.

3.1 Mah-jong at a glance

Mah-jong (麻将) is the sound of the game's Cantonese name; in Mandarin it is ma-jiang. Mah-jong has another Cantonese name – mahjeuk (麻雀), which means sparrow, and this name is used widely among the Chinese from Hong Kong or Macao and is also the name used by the mah-jong players in Manchester's casinos. Since in English literature, mah-jong or mah-jongg is the most common name, in my thesis I will use the name mah-jong, which is closer to the original Chinese phonetic symbol.

Mah-jong is a fast-paced four-player tile game which originated in ancient China. According to Chinese historians, mah-jong is the only gambling game that remained prevalent in China since the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911) (Guo and Xiao, 1996). Mah-jong is seldom played without wagering, so it is also a very popular form of gambling in Chinese communities. Following the footprints of Chinese immigrants, mah-jong tiles click and clack around the world. According to research on some overseas Chinese communities in India (Oxfel, 1991), Britain (Watson, 1975) and Canada (Lai, 2006), mah-jong remains the most popular game among the overseas Chinese. Mah-jong gambling can be a pastime for elderly Chinese (Lai, 2006), socialisations among friends and families (Watson, 1975), an effort to construct one's social status among Chinese entrepreneurs (Oxfel, 1991), or a ritual model of masculinity agency (Festa, 2007). The report on a study of Hong Kong people's participation in gambling activities reveals that social gambling in the form of mah-jong playing is commonplace in Hong Kong (Chung et al., 2005) and it is believed that this type of social gambling is also popular among the Chinese overseas (Lam, 2004).

Fig. 3.1 Playing mah-jong on a hot summer day in Chengdu, China.

Mah-jong's high prevalence amongst Chinese populations has attracted researchers' interest (Oxfel, 1991; Festa, 2007; Papineau, 2000; Zhen et al., 2010). Like studies of many other forms of gambling, attention falls onto the players leaving the gaming equipment unexamined. Mah-jong hasn't been an exception in this sense. Before I write about players' interactions in different social contexts, I devote one chapter to the seemingly static but actually fluid parts of the game, namely the tiles and dice and the game's basic rules which mark off the usage of the equipment. I hope a thorough inquiry into these subjects will provide us with a better understanding of the game, thus helping us to interpret the meanings of the players' interactions on and off the mah-jong table, which I will write about in the next two chapters.

3.2 Mah-jong's basic equipment: tiles and dice

Mah-jong equipment, compared to other games, is relatively complicated in terms of the number of components, and the materials used. Mah-jong's equipment includes 144 tiles, two to five dice, a set of multi-colour chips for counting the winning or losing scores, and a square tray to play on. The chips are optional and sometimes players can play without the tray as well. So the essential equipment for the game is the mah-jong tiles or alternatively a set of mah-jong cards. Mah-jong cards are rarely seen in use; mah-jong tiles are far more popular. Mah-jong tiles can be made of ivory, jade, bone, wood, bamboo or celluloid (Cavallaro and Luu, 2005). Celluloid tiles are the most popular now as they are both affordable and durable. A set of tiles costs about forty pounds in Britain and can be found in the Chinese art and craft shops in Chinatown in Manchester. These are also the common tiles on the mah-jong tables in the casinos of Manchester. A complete mah-jong tile set contains 144 pieces of six different suits. The six suits are copper-coin tiles, string tiles, ten-thousand tiles, wind tiles, dragon tiles and flower tiles. Not every suit is used in the game; in fact the eight flower tiles are optional according to different variations of the game. In total, there are forty-two different images carved on the 144 tiles.

Copper-coin tiles are named copper-coin because each tile of this suit consists of one to nine circles and each circle is said to represent a type of copper coin used in ancient Chinese currency.

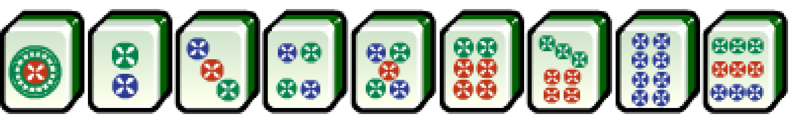

Fig. 3.2 Copper-coin tiles

The strings suit gets its name from the fact that each string tile consists of one to nine strings except the first one and in ancient China, when copper coins were used as currency, strings were used to hold coins together. Usually one string held a hundred coins. By looking at the image below you can see that the one-string tile is an exception, as it has an image of a bird on it instead of one string. It was said that the purpose was to prevent players from adding more string on to the tile and trick during the game. But this does not sound convincing, neither is it supported by any existing literature.

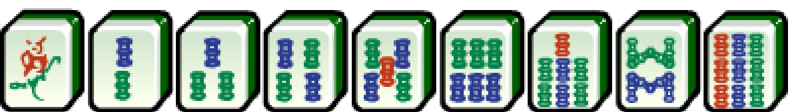

Fig. 3.3 Strings tiles

The ten-thousands suit gets its name from how each tile in the suit consists of the Chinese character 萬, and 萬 means ten thousand in Chinese. Each tile in these suits consists of one to nine 萬.

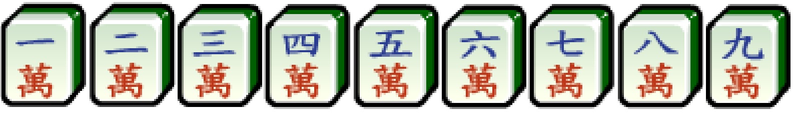

Fig. 3.4 Ten-thousands tiles

Wind tiles get their name from the Chinese characters on the suit which mean the four directions of wind: east (東), south (南), west (西), and north (北). For example, east wind means the wind blows from the east.

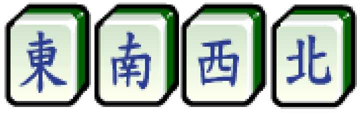

Fig. 3.5 Wind tiles

Dragon tiles are slightly different. In Chinese, there is not a specific name for this suit; it is usually called ‘Zhong-Fa-Bai’. Zhong is the pronunciation of the red Chinese character 中 on the first tile. Fa is the pronunciation of the green Chinese character 發. On the third tile, there is no Chinese character, but a blue square; people call this tile ‘Bai, Bai’ which is the pronunciation of 白， and means empty here. English-speaking players called the suit dragon tiles, which became a western convention when mah-jong was introduced to America.

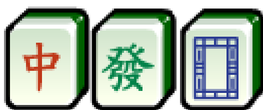

Fig. 3.6 Dragon tiles

Flower tiles are the last category and typically are optional components in a set of mah-jong tiles. They have artwork on them and Chinese characters. The characters on the tiles below, from left to right respectively, mean: spring, summer, autumn, winter, plum blossom, orchid, chrysanthemum and bamboo. All these are typical subjects of traditional Chinese poems and Chinese paintings; illustrations of these eight subjects are also often seen in traditional Chinese architecture, such as scholar gardens and family temples where Chinese people worship their ancestors. Nowadays in the British Chinese community, paintings of some of these eight subjects can sometimes be seen in Chinese restaurants in Britain, which almost presents a sense of humour, since these images were seldom related to the catering trade in traditional Chinese society. Seeing a painting of bamboo or a chrysanthemum in a restaurant is just like hearing Beethoven’s Symphony No 7 in a noisy pub in downtown Manchester. Maybe the paintings which once were part of the scholar culture in traditional China have now become symbols of Chineseness in the British

Chinese community, and are used to convey to their clients in Britain the message that authentic Chinese food is served here.

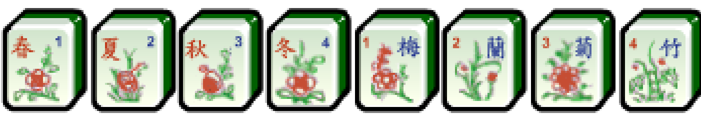

Fig. 3.7. Flower tiles

There are some other stories about the Chinese characters on the tiles. For example, in Joseph Park Babcock's book, *Rules of Mah-Jongg*, published in 1920, dragon tiles were said to be associated with the Chinese Imperial Examination. According to Babcock, the red tile ('中'榜, zhōngbǎng) meant you had passed the examination and would be appointed a government official. The green tile ('發'財, fācái) suggested that you would become wealthy as a result of your appointment. The white tile (a clean board) represented purity and meant that a successful bureaucrat should act like a good, incorrupt official. Babcock also referred to an alternative set of interpretations in which the piece called '箭' (ji àn), represented archery. In ancient Chinese archery, a red '中' would signify a direct hit. White represented failure, green '發' to draw. (Babcock 1920: 99).

These interpretations are neither popular among players nor supported by archaeological evidence. Regarding the wind tiles suit, a few Chinese historians believe this suit was probably named by Chinese scholars in south-eastern China during late 17th century, who gave mah-jong a noble position in the intellectuals' entertainment world and named this suit after the popular subjects of poems in those days, the four directions of the wind (Guo and Xiao, 1996). Giving this elegant meaning to the mah-jong tiles suggests an acceptance of the game by the mainstream culture at that time (Tu, 2002). This is not a surprise

considering the affinity for gaming in Chinese tradition. However, the above explanation, accepted by Chinese historians, is hardly known by players nowadays in Manchester although they still call the suit ‘wind tiles’.

Regarding the colours of the tiles, although sometimes we see mah-jong tiles in apricot, ivory white or even black (Japanese tiles can be black but this is not a popular colour in Chinese mah-jong), Chinese mah-jong tiles are often snow white and green, and the carvings on the tiles are red and blue. These colours are not often seen together on other objects nowadays. But blue, red and green were once very popular colours for some old daily necessities, such as cutlery and tea sets. In the Victoria and Albert Museum, most traditional Chinese porcelains are in these three colours. The Chinese characters on the tiles also remain as traditional Chinese instead of being simplified after the 1950s, when simplified Chinese came into use on mainland China and among Chinese immigrants in South East Asia.

The origins of the tiles’ images and Chinese characters have become obscure, and their old symbolic meanings are probably no longer applicable today; in general they serve as a reminder of the Chineseness of the game and maintain a sense of connection with remote, ancient Chinese traditions. I wonder what comes into the mind of a Chinese immigrant when once again he sits down at his long-lost mah-jong table, fumbles with the mah-jong tiles, sees the familiar colours and characters and hears the soft clatter of the tiles. What would he think about the place where he can easily gather a group of four from family, friends or neighbours to play mah-jong and the place where his own children have grown up and won’t even speak Chinese let alone stay at home on a Friday night to play mah-

jong with uncles and aunts. I wonder what changes happened to the social meanings carried by the mah-jong tiles in their resettlement in a different cultural social environment.

While old meanings fade away, new symbolic meanings of old images are generated in new environments. Papineau (2000) notices the famous metaphor of 'building the Great Wall', which is related to the shape of the tiles, and how 'study paper No.144' with the figure 144 refers to the number of tiles in the game of mah-jong and ironically suggests the numerous documents of Chinese bureaucracy. Mockery is often incredibly popular in the game of mah-jong, and often mixes the passage of traditionally serious things: education, the Chinese Communist Party, the Taiwan-China reunification, etc. Due to the different cultural and political environment, these metaphors and expressions of mockery are not common at mah-jong tables in Britain. Mah-jong tiles convey other values or meanings for the overseas Chinese in Manchester Britain. 'Diminutives' relate to different tile combinations and their names such as Four Grant Happiness (大四喜), Heavenly Hand (天和 a natural win), Glory on a Gang (杠上開花 drawing a tile, after a gang, from the end of the wall to win the game) and Dragon (一條龍 a complete sequence from one to nine). The mockery of the political environment or other social environment disappears, but what remains clear and strong is the players' appetite for good luck and good fortune. Luck has an important role at the Chinese mah-jong table and the players in Manchester generally emphasis that it is luck instead of skills and strategies that make a player win. This opinion is socially meaningful, and it is the focus of Chapter five.

The dice are an important part of mah-jong equipment. A mah-jong die is a square cube, with red or green spots on each side of the cube, from one spot to six spots respectively. A

set of mah-jong dice contains five dice. The number of dice used depends on how serious the game is and how much the players trust each other. During my fieldwork, I discovered that at a high-stakes mah-jong table, normally three dice are used. When the game involves no wagering or very low stake wagering, the number of dice varies, often one, sometimes three. Dice are used to make decisions from the very beginning of the game. Mah-jong players use dice to decide who will be the first banker at the beginning of the game. Each player casts the dice and the one who gets the most points will be the first banker. The banker then also uses the same number of points to determine from where to draw the first tile. The tiles are kept face down, in four lines; each line contains two layers of tiles, 18 on each layer. Mah-jong players don't draw their tiles from the first tile on the right or the first one on the left. Instead they use the dice to decide where to begin. For example, if the banker's dice stops with six dots facing upwards, the players start to draw their tiles from the sixth tile counting from the left of the line facing the banker. This seemingly static equipment is not in fact static. Its usage evolves and the meanings the tiles bear vary from one player to another. Players' attitudes towards mah-jong tiles differ from each other distinctly. Some refuse to play with old tiles and always bring their own tiles, some happily play with the oldest tiles provided free by casino. The sharp contrast between the worst set of tiles and the best set of tiles in a casino still strikes me. The dice are also meaningful objects. There are even differently designed sets of dice for men and women. Some players in casinos always bring their own set of dice. In the Chinese community centre only one die is used. However in the casinos, three dice are used, and sometimes even five dice. The use of dice increases the role of chance or luck in the game. In Chapter five I will explore further mah-jong players' perception of luck and luck's role

in mah-jong gambling. In Chapter four, I will write about the social world of mah-jong and examine the social meaning of mah-jong gambling among the Chinese migrants in Manchester. Here, I would like to continue with my introduction to the game, and talk about some basic rules of mah-jong.

3.3 General rules of mah-jong

Mah-jong is a structurally asymmetrical game but with a relatively equal chance for each player to win. It is asymmetrical because at the beginning of each hand only the dealer can draw fourteen tiles at the beginning of the game while the others can only draw thirteen tiles. This difference puts the dealer in a favourable position to win the game since to win the game a player needs to have 14 tiles in hand. It is possible for a dealer to draw fourteen tiles that make a winning hand, which is called 天糊 (literally means Heaven Melt), which is regarded as extremely lucky as the dealer wins in such an effortless way. But Heaven Melt rarely happens, and the dealer will have to dispose of one tile and keep thirteen tiles after the others have all finished drawing their tiles. When a player has arranged his/her thirteen tiles into a ready hand, he/she can take the fourteenth tile to make the ready hand into a 'meld' hand, which means winning hand, and which I will explain later. This difference between dealer and players makes mah-jong a structurally asymmetrical game. However, to reverse this asymmetry, players set another rule to ensure each player has a fair chance of being a dealer. At the beginning of a game, the four players throw dice to decide who will be the dealer. A round of mah-jong can not be called a round unless each of the players has been a dealer. When any player has achieved a ready hand, s/he must declare it to the other three players and so alert them to it. At this

point, the other three players will try to avoid disposing of any tile that could possibly enable the ready hand being developed into a winning hand, and the one who is careless enough to dispose of such a tile will have to pay for the other two losers' loss. These rules help to decrease the advanced player's winning chance and even the advantages that have been accumulated in favour of the potential winner at the final stage.

To win a hand, a player needs to have a 'meld' hand, also called a winning hand, which means all the tiles he/she has got can be arranged into Sequences, Triplets, Gangs or Pairs. Taking thirteen tiles mah-jong as an example, the player who is the quickest to arrange his/her tiles into four Sequences/Triplets and one Pair wins. Before reaching a 'meld' hand, players need to achieve a ready hand first. At the beginning of the game, the players start to draw tiles from the table, the dealer draws fourteen tiles and the other three players draw thirteen. The dealer chooses one tile which s/he thinks is the least useful for him/her to dispose of back to the centre of the table. Disposed tiles are left exposed; the other tiles remain face-down/unexposed on the table. The other three players have the right to take the tile once the dealer has disposed of it, but that right is conditional because the player to the righthand side of the dealer can either 'chi' or 'peng' the tile. 'Chi' means he/she takes the tile to make a Sequence (three suit tiles in sequence) by combining the disposed tile with two other tiles that he/she already has; 'peng' means he/she can make a Triplet (three identical tiles). In other words, the players to the right of the dealer can take the tile ONLY if he/she can make a Sequence or a Triplet by taking the tile just disposed of by the dealer. For example, if the dealer puts down a 三萬, the players to the dealer's right can 'chi' the if he/she has got 一萬二萬, or can 'peng' the tile if he/she has got . The

remaining two players can only ‘peng’ or ‘gang’. ‘Gang’ means the player takes the tile to make a Gang (four identical tiles). The other two players cannot take the tile unless they have already got some tiles in hand which combine with the disposed of tile to make a Triplet or a Gang. If, simultaneously, one player declares to ‘chi’ and one declares to ‘peng’, to ‘peng’ will be given priority to take the tile. Sequences can be made out of Coppers, Strings and Ten-thousands since only these three tile suits represent sequential numbers.

Anyone who does ‘chi’ or ‘peng’ a tile must keep that one exposed in his/her wall of tiles and cannot change that tile for another one. If a player disposes of a tile, and nobody does ‘chi’ or ‘peng’ it, the player to his/her right can draw one tile from the unexposed ones; to take an unexposed tile is called ‘mo’. Of course, no matter whether you ‘chi’ or ‘peng’ or ‘mo’, you must dispose of one tile before you take a tile, to maintain the total number of tiles in your hand – thirteen.

When you finally have a ready hand of tiles, which means the thirteen tiles in your hand are all arranged into Sequences, Triplets, Gangs, or Pairs, except for one extra tile, you then have to wait for a tile which you can pair with the extra tile. Once you have done that you declare ‘meld’ and win that hand.

For example, if you have got thirteen tiles like the following,

you have actually got a ready hand. Because you have got two Triplets and , two Sequences and and all you need is one more to make a Pair , or alternatively you can also wait for a , to change into one Sequence and a Pair of to make your ready hand into a 'meld' hand. A player who has got a ready hand must declare it to the other three players before he/she starts waiting for the fourteenth tile, the final step to win.

3.4 The social meanings of mah-jong tiles

The Mah-jong tiles used at a table can tell us which version of mah-jong is being played, which in turn can suggest from which geographical area the players are from. Mah-jong varies from one geographical area to another. Although the general rules mentioned above remain the same, players from different geographical areas apply some different sub-rules. For example, in Hong Kong, flower tiles cannot be used to make a winning hand, and when a player draws a flower tile, he/she must keep it to his/her left hand side and only include the flower tiles when counting how many points his/her winning hand is equivalent to. Usually if the winner has accumulated a whole set of flower tiles, his/her points double. But in Shanghai in East China, flower tiles are used as normal tiles to make a winning hand. So in China, according to these differences, there is Shanghai mah-jong, Chongqing mah-jong, Beijing mah-jong and Hong Kong mah-jong. Globally, there is Japanese mah-jong, Jewish mah-jong and American mah-jong as well. In Manchester,

Britain, in the casinos, because the majority of mah-jong players are from Guangdong or Hong Kong, Hong Kong mah-jong is the popular version.

Many first-generation Chinese immigrants brought mah-jong tiles to Britain. In the 1960s and 1970s, mah-jong was rarely seen for sale in any shop in Britain, but mah-jong parties at home were very fashionable among the early migrants. Dozens of Chinese people gathered in one house, setting up four or five, even up to seven tables of mah-jong, and it was the most popular pastime for the early Chinese migrants. Now mah-jong tiles can be bought in Britain, but people still choose to bring them from Hong Kong or mainland China. During my fieldwork, the tiles that look the same as those for sale in Chinese art and craft shops only appeared in four places: the community centre, the luncheon club where only 'hygienic'[15] mah-jong is allowed, the free gift display cabinet in a casino, and on some mah-jong tables in casinos. Mah-jong tiles are quite heavy. 'Why don't they just buy it in Britain instead of carrying it all the way from the other side of the planet?' I asked some informants, and they told me that those tiles are 'simply not playable (唔打得)' due to their poor quality and appearance（品相太差）', while the tiles bought from Hong Kong or mainland China are much better. For the players, the mah-jong tiles bought in Britain 'are small, and light, they don't make that kind of clear click and clack sound when you shuffle them'. There is a sensual aspect to the game of mah-jong that has much to do with the tactile element of play. The tiles are cool and slightly creamy, and as smooth as piano keys. Good mah-jong tiles clatter as they are whirled around the table by

[15] 'Hygienic' mah-jong (卫生麻将) means the mah-jong game involves no money. Using the word hygienic to indicate that no money is involved actually reveals the sense that money is dirty, polluting or contaminating. This concept of money is not necessarily held by the mah-jong player. It is a concept subconsciously advocated by the community centre and the elderly luncheon club where 'gambling' is forbidden.

different pairs of hands. For the players who have left their home country, it is a beautiful evocative sound, a nostalgic echoing from the past. Without the sound of the mah-jong tiles, the culture of mah-jong seems not accomplished (Papineau, 2000).

Mah-jong tiles can mean a lot to its players. It can tell stories about the owner or the players, just as clothes do. The most famous mah-jong tiles I heard about is an ivory set called Ji Yang Ma Jiang (Fortune Goat Mah-jong). It is now displayed in the museum of the Forbidden City. The name Fortune Goat came from its owner Empress Dowager Cixi who was born in the year of Goat. The most worn-out tiles I've seen were on a group of Chinese students' table in a casino. The students weren't regulars and they didn't gamble on the mah-jong table. They gathered in the casino to play mah-jong on the Mid-Autumn Festival night, as playing mah-jong is a common way for friends and family to celebrate a festival. They made use of the mah-jong facilities at the casino – free entry, free drinks, free mah-jong tiles and free table. They were given the oldest set of mah-jong tiles. I wonder if the casino would ever give the set to regular players, as I never saw them appear on a table again during my fieldwork. Many regular players in casinos bring their own tiles as a symbolic gesture of cherishing the game and the time spent gathering with friends.

3.5 Conclusion

As a Chinese person myself, I notice that although not every Chinese person plays mah-jong, it's not an exaggeration to say that anyone who speaks Chinese knows someone keen on this game and has seen others playing this game. There is a wealth of Chinese literature, fiction, poetry and prose, giving accounts of people from different social classes enjoying

the game of mah-jong. A description of Empress Dowager Cixi (1835–1908) playing mah-jong with her Odalisques during Chinese lunar New Year can be found in the history account of Qing Dynasty (1636–1911) (Xu, 1917). Vivid stories about contemporary China's (1911–1949) intellectual elites' playing mah-jong were provided in Liang Shiqiu (梁实秋）) essay ‘Mah-jong’. Many mah-jong players in China are familiar with stories about Chairman Mao playing mah-jong, and quote Mao to justify their passion for the game ‘do not underestimate the importance of mah-jong ... if you could play mah-jong, you could better understand the relationship between chance and necessity. In mah-jong tiles, there is philosophy (不要看轻了麻将……你要是会打麻将，就可以更了解偶然性与必然性的关系。麻将牌里有哲学哩)’. Whether mah-jong reflects any discipline of Chinese philosophy is still a topic to be further explored. But the complicated equipment and the rules of the game show that mah-jong is a game of skills and strategies. It is a popular game often played in Chinese social gatherings and has rich social meanings in the players’ social lives.

Celebrity scholars, famous politicians and ordinary peasants may all share one thing in common, the passion of mah-jong. In Birmingham, a former landlady and peasants could happily play mah-jong at the same table. In Manchester, students from mainland China, pensioners and entrepreneurs from Hong Kong, Macao and Vietnam all play mah-jong under the same roof. It seems that mah-jong has the magical power to transcend social class and geographical differences. What is this magical power of mah-jong? What does mah-jong do for its players? Many Chinese players claim that mah-jong is a perfect pastime, and great fun. Some researchers observe that Chinese players see or predict their

fate and luck via mah-jong playing (Oxfel, 1991; Festa, 2007). Some researchers believe the high levels of gambling-affinity in Chinese culture make social gambling generally acceptable in the society (Oei and Raylu, 2007, 2009), and mah-jong is taken as a form of social gambling (Lai, 2005). What makes mah-jong continuously popular among the Chinese even after migration? What does mah-jong gambling mean to the Chinese migrants in Manchester? The rich meanings buried in the interactions between mah-jong gamblers in various social contexts and the differences between mah-jong and other casino table games perceived by mah-jong players will be explored in the next two chapters.

4 Fishes and dragons: mah-jong players' social grouping

> 'Mah-jong is not gambling. If you say you are studying gambling, you should study something else, like blackjack, baccarat and roulette.' (Ma, in an interviewed in April 2009)

4.1 Introduction

By looking at mah-jong's basic rules and the prevalence of the game among different social groups, we may get the impression that mah-jong protocol puts its players on an equal footing, regardless of their different class, ethnic or occupational backgrounds outside the gaming context (Festa, 2007: 111). Besides, mah-jong players believe that the outcome of a contest at a mah-jong table lies largely in luck's hand, which I will write in details in chapter 5, and as some Chinese scholars suggest, involving luck as a player of the game helps to prevent tension among mah-jong players (Tu, 2002). Furthermore, mah-jong gambling does not lead to an aggregation in money or power in the long run and the money only circulates among the four players at the same table (Papineau, 2000). Having all these characteristics, mah-jong is often appreciated as a game of social gambling with the generic quality of 'camaraderie and social bonding' which 'brings people closer' (Cavallaro and Luu, 2005: 12, 13). Sharing this opinion in common, many mah-jong players told me that mah-jong gambling is not real gambling.

But what is real gambling? State-sanctioned commercial gambling receives much of its definition from the institutions of the state and capital which organise and regulate it (McMillen, 1998). In Britain, gambling is defined in legislative contexts as betting,

participating in a lottery, playing a game involving chance in the hope or expectation of winning money (Gambling Act 2005; Gambling Commission, 2006). Sociologists have argued that state-sanctioned commercial gambling which emerges as varieties of cultural life are in fact better investigated as a regressive revenue-generating tool of the state (Cosgrave & Klassen, 2002; Cosgrave, 2006; Kingma, 2009). For anthropologists concerned with the economic meaning of interactions including gambling, gambling is often defined as a variety of 'negative reciprocity', or more precisely, generalised negative reciprocity, basing their interpretation on people's apparent motivation: to win at other people's expense (Sahlins, 1965; Mitchell, 1988; Binde, 2005). Mah-jong gambling in the Manchester Chinese community shows that although negative reciprocity is a salient feature of many gambling activities, gambling is not just or perhaps even primarily, that. In Manchester, mah-jong remains primarily an informal non-commercial way of gambling. In casinos in London, mah-jong becomes more institutionalised during organised competitions. Mah-jong is not limited to a redistributive function as a levelling device between friends or a social equaliser in the community, which enables its existence; it can also be variously regulated and staged. Mah-jong gambling provides a lively case study of a group of people negotiating the interface of traditional reciprocal exchange and commodity exchange. Different types of exchanges happens on different mah-jong tables in different social settings, which reflect, alter and reinforce the mah-jong players' social grouping in various contexts, such as the mah-jong club at Wuyi, at the casinos, at the community centre.

In this chapter, I will write about how the mah-jong players maintain their social grouping before a game starts, which include choosing opponents, negotiating stakes, and also choosing the venue to play in. By making an ethnographic account of the pre-game interactions of the mah-jong players, I aim to illustrate the social relationships among the mah-jong players that contribute to the formation of the social space at every particular mah-jong table. I argue that choosing opponents and negotiating the stake both help to decide the type of exchanges that will occur at the gaming table. Choosing where to play reflects people's definition of mah-jong playing or mah-jong gambling. If we ignored the pre-game interactions, we would miss a large part of the social interactions in mah-jong from which its social meanings derive and develop, and also would miss the underlying construction of the social space at the gaming table.

First I describe my attempt to explore the mah-jong club at Wuyi in Chinatown. This exploration encapsulates the themes of this chapter and provides general information about the sites where people play mah-jong. Then I introduce the different settings in which mah-jong takes place, aiming to illustrate the variety of mah-jong gambling games in general. Following this, I focus on mah-jong players' interactions when choosing opponents and negotiating stakes in the different settings. Then I discuss why people choose to play at different places and the social meanings they attached to the mah-jong game at different sites. At the end of this chapter, I argue that the social meanings derive and develop from social interactions even before a mah-jong game starts, and those interactions review the underlying construction of the social space at the gaming table.

4.2 Encountering fishes and dragons

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I heard some Chinese people saying 'mah-jong is a game for everyone'. I got the impression that there were no social boundaries at a mah-jong table, as a participant put it, 'everyone plays under the same roof, fishes or dragons, all mixing together'. But I soon discovered that there was actually a subtle but strong boundary between different groups of mah-jong players, and that boundary was maintained via various interactions around the mah-jong tables, small fishes could not actually sit at the powerful 'dragons' gaming table. I encountered that boundary in my first attempt to explore a mah-jong club at Chinatown.

By June 2009, I had spent eleven months observing gambling in Manchester. I felt comfortable enough to have an unplanned day of fieldwork. Despite the time of year, the morning was cold and grey. In sharp contrast to the hectic town centre around it, Chinatown was still asleep, the gazebo was empty, so was the car park, the shops and restaurants were not yet open, the streets were quiet, and only a few people were hurrying through to their offices in the town centre. As rain threatened, one or two Chinese older people wandered quietly and seemingly aimlessly along the empty streets. If I kept walking down Nicolas Street, I would see the famous Chinese arch on my left and the Chinese art and craft shop where I bought my mini mah-jong tiles. If I climbed the narrow and steep stairs beside the Chinese art and craft shop to the fourth floor, I could knock on the metal door outside the wooden door of Wuyi. Some Chinese entrepreneurs gather at Wuyi to play mah-jong on weekends, Mondays and Tuesdays. I was tempted. I heard about the club from Lucy, one of my participants who I met in the casino. Lucy is a

middle-aged woman, who arrived from China ten years ago. She came over to accompany her daughter who was then seventeen and studying English at a college in Manchester. Lucy used to work at Wuyi, serving the mah-jong players and cleaning the mah-jong tiles. But I had been warned by Ng, a regular mah-jong player at Wuyi, that ‘nobody goes there uninvited.’ Ignoring his warning, I went up the stairs and asked for membership.

Wuyi is a Chinese association. On its information sheet it says Wuyi welcomes anyone who is interested in the charity to join its members and work together to serve society. But Wuyi’s name ‘Wuyi Township Association’ clearly indicates that it is an organisation for the Chinese who originally came from the ‘Wuyi’ area. Wuyi in Chinese means the five areas of the Jiangmen county in Canton province, China. It is the main hometown area of the early migrants to North America and Australia (Zhang, 2010). In Manchester, there are also lots of Chinese migrants who are from Wuyi. I’m not from Wuyi but the organisation doesn’t specifically state that anyone who is not from Wuyi cannot join its members. So I decided to try. Wuyi isn’t very easy to find. Its name is buried among the names of a barber’s shop, Chinese herbal shop, Thai restaurant, Cantonese restaurant, travel agent, Chinese newsagent, and offices of solicitors, accountants, etc. It is on the fourth floor of a huge Victorian block which looks like a long terraced building along the whole of Nicolas Street. The lift had been out of order for several years. Narrow steep stairs with black metal handrails led to Wuyi’s single doors – a wooden door inside and another metal-bar door outside. There was no door bell; I knocked at its wooden door. It was opened by just a narrow gap, the clattering sound of mah-jong flushing out from behind; a middle-aged woman’s face appeared ‘Who are you looking for?’ she asked. ‘Well, I’ve come to join as

a member.' I tried to be short but cheerful. 'Oh!' she exclaimed, sounding as if my answer was a nice surprise to her. She opened the wooden door and unlocked the metal one and let me in. There was one big hall inside, with several slim pillars cutting the space into several sections. Six mah-jong tables, in full action, were arranged between the pillars. At one side of the hall there were big Victorian windows; along the windows were several large old desks with an old man reading a newspaper there, and a middle-aged woman sitting at another desk watching the game at the mah-jong table nearby. The heat of mah-jong dominated the hall; my ears were filled with the clattering sound of the mah-jong tiles. The air wasn't stuffy though, and it seemed as if nobody was smoking there. 'Chairman, she's come to join as a member!' the woman who let me in loudly announced to a middle-aged man at one of the six busy mah-jong tables. She had to be loud or the mah-jong clattering would be cover her voice. 'He's our chairman, Mr Ng,' she said, introducing him. Mr Ng pulled himself out of the gap between the stool and the mah-jong table, waving to the woman sitting beside the big window to take his place. I learned that she was Mrs Ng as the other players at Mr Ng's table summoned her with something like 'Husband retreats, wife battles,' which means when the husband withdraws from a battle, the wife is expected to take his place and continue to compete.

Fig. 4.1. The street where Wuyi is located

When I had finished paying the membership fee, Mr Ng gave me a receipt for my payment and introduced me to another younger man in a quiet, small room at the other end of the hall, who Mr Ng introduced as the secretary of the association. Mr Ng then went back to his table. I noticed that two of my participants were there, Yee and her husband Ng. They nodded to me. They were at different tables: Yee was at a table with three women of her age and Ng was at a table with three other men. To my surprise, Mrs Ng invited me to play mah-jong. 'Men are playing, women should too! Let's play £30, everybody plays £30 here you know,' she loudly announced. Everybody else there seemed to be playing high-stake mah-jong on the stools beside the players, and five, ten and twenty pound notes were piled up. Mah-jong at the casino is usually a lot cheaper than this. At most of the casino mah-jong tables the money is often pound coins, occasionally five or ten pound notes; using a twenty pound note to pay your opponent could prompt a rebuke such as: 'Are you trying to intimidate me with such a big note?' Usually in the casino if you run out of coins,

you have to take your notes to the cashier to exchange the note(s) into coins and then pay your opponents in coins. That morning at Wuyi, as a newcomer, I wasn't given a choice of stake and I was directly asked to play £30 per hand[16]. Yee blinked at me and signalled me to go over to her. 'Do NOT sit down at the table,' she whispered at my ear while looking toward Mrs Ng. 'You will lose an arm and a leg,' she hushed and uttered her warning quickly, 'people like you should never ever play here.' This reminded me of how her husband Ng's warning to me: 'You don't go to Wuyi uninvited. People wouldn't let you in unless they know you or you know someone there…you'll get everyone staring at you…even if you don't mind people staring at you; you can't just go to Wuyi like this...many of the people there are business men, they come out to Chinatown on Sunday to buy things for their shops, after Yeungm-Cha [which means Cantonese dim-sum lunch], they either go to Circus, Mint, or come to Wuyi to play mah-jong...I am not taking you to Wuyi, don't say that it's me taking you there, it's you insisting, following me to Wuyi.' I left Wuyi in a hurry and embarrassed. Mrs Ng's invitation and Yee's warning stunned me.

A person like me, a student not a businessman, a mah-jong green hand not a veteran, an outsider not an insider of this mah-jong club, should not play mah-jong at Wuyi. My attempt to explore the mah-jong club at Wuyi reveals to me that there is a clear social boundary around the Wuyi mah-jong club – fishes and dragons actually do not play together.

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[16] Playing £30 per hand means the losers lose between £6 and £30 respectively around every five minutes, and the shortest four-circle game lasts at least one hour. But at Wuyi and at the casinos, people seldom play the four-circle game; the acceptable shortest game in those two venues has to be composed of at least eight-circles. For more details of what counts for one circle and other rules of mah-jong, please go to Chapter 3.

4.3 Different settings, different types of mah-jong gambling: casinos, Wuyi, and the community centre

Mah-jong is played in a number of different settings. Wuyi, known as a club for Chinese caterers, is open for mah-jong playing three days a week. Apart from Wuyi, the Circus casino near Chinatown is a popular venue. I have also observed and played mah-jong at a Chinese community centre, and have collected stories about mah-jong playing at home and at take-away shops.

There are twelve casinos in Manchester; four of them are located within walking distance of Chinatown in the city centre. At the beginning of my fieldwork in July 2008 only two casinos provided free mah-jong tables. By the end of my fieldwork, in September 2009, all four casinos near Chinatown provided free mah-jong tiles and tables. Circus remains the most popular venue for casino mah-jong gamblers. Chinese older people, housewives, businessmen, overseas students from China all play mah-jong under the same roof at Circus. Some of them say they play for fun, some of them take it as a serious battle, some of them claim that they don't mind about the outcome but only enjoy gathering with friends at the table, and some of them count their winnings after each game. 'In casinos, fishes and dragons mix together' – is how Chan a regular mah-jong player who has played mah-jong in casino for over ten years describes it. Some casino mah-jong players compare casino mah-jong gambling with playing mah-jong at home and describe mah-jong players at home as more 'humane'(有人情味) and 'loving'. Mah-jong gatherings at home or at take-away shops are usually for friends and families.

Fig. 4.2. A typical mah-jong table in a domestic area

Wuyi is another venue where people gather to play mah-jong outside casino. Three days a week Chinese small businessmen, mainly caterers, gather there and play high-stake mah-jong, with the lowest stake as £30 per hand, and one hand normally last from around five minutes. On Wuyi's leaflet it says anyone who has an interest in charity can join by paying a £20 annual membership fee. But not every one feels comfortable going into Wuyi when it is full with four to six busy and expensive mah-jong tables. In fact I instantly felt out of place during my visit. Many older Chinese told me that they are members of Wuyi and played mah-jong there before but they eventually all stopped going there after 'retirement' from business although they sometimes attended some festival feasts organised by Wuyi on Chinese New Year or the Mid-Autumn Festival, or donated some money when Wuyi collected charitable donations after the big earthquake in Sichuan China in 2008. Peiyük and Sauchun told me that Wuyi's mah-jong club is for 'businessmen'. I am not surprised by its reputation as a 'rich men's club' in Chinatown.

Wong Ying said she doesn't go there because she is not doing business any more so she's no longer rich enough to play mah-jong there. They may have exaggerated the strictness of Wuyi's social boundary by indicating it as a club for business men only, since Lucy, who once worked at Wuyi, told me there were several retired Chinese men who play mah-jong at Wuyi. But it is worth mentioning that they are like the 'old boys' of Chinatown; they are retired from the catering industry, but they still remain active in the community by taking up roles, for example as committee members or deputy chairs of this or that organisation. Lucy was employed particularly to serve at the mah-jong tables, cooking and serve food and drink for the attentive players whose mah-jong battles last from midday to midnight. On the three days of the week when mah-jong was on, Wuyi was hectic. On the other days of the week, Wuyi is normally quiet with its tables empty, tiles packed, having one or two old men reading Chinese newspapers at a large old table along its window.

In contrast to Wuyi, the Chinese community centre in Manchester has a strict non-gambling policy. Although it allows its 'service users' to play mah-jong at its venue, it cannot be gambling; it must be a 'hygienic' mah-jong, which means mah-jong involving no money, vaguely indicating that money is dirty or contaminating. Normally there are two groups of people playing mah-jong at the centre, Chinese older people who have lunch at its luncheon club, and its clients who come for the Friday drop-in. The mah-jong players there are mainly the people who have been the centre's regular 'service users'. I played mah-jong at the Friday drop-in session when there were not enough people for the table. Mah-jong at the community centre forms an interesting contrast to that in casinos and at Wuyi. Although money is not involved, exchanges occur at the gaming table

between the players and the activity organiser. Later in this chapter I will write about this group's hesitation in going to the casino. Their hesitation helps to illustrate the social boundary around the casino's mah-jong area. On blackjack and roulette tables, people seem to enter and leave at their free will and accept people as members of the gathering just by entering the gaming area (Marksbury, 2010:101; Goffman, 1967:18). The mah-jong area in a casino has its subtle boundary that rejects those whom the mah-jong players in casinos do not accept as one of them.

4.4 'Can we play mah-jong in the casino?'

Before casinos provided mah-jong tables, the Chinese in Manchester told me that they played mah-jong mostly at home or in their take-away shops when the shops were closed. In the 1960s or 1970s mah-jong parties attracted not only players but also non-players and the mah-jong parties were joyous events for the new immigrants. As Pui explained:

'I could not play; I was one of those wives. We had to do the cooking, serving tea and looking after people. It was very tiresome but we were all so happy. There weren't many Chinese around at that time, and we were quite looked down upon by the locals. Those gatherings were very important to us; we let off some steam in that way. For example, we told our friends about the harassment and bullies we got in our shops. We couldn't do much about it, just having the chance to talk to a friend in Chinese was already good enough.' (Pui, interviewed in November 2008.)

Another participant, Lowe, told me that Mah-jong games were the occasion for exchanges of various kinds:

> 'I can't play mah-jong, but I also went to those mah-jong gatherings, for the good food, ha-ha, well you know, I also helped them to read their letters or something like that, I speak English and they cook good food, you know, we need each other ... In those days, the locals really looked down upon us, even my colleagues in the company [Lowe was an accountant] sometimes couldn't help showing their arrogance and innocence about us. For instance, once I went out for lunch and they saw me on the way and asked "Hey Lowe, going to have a curry" – they thought we were low class and only eat curries.' ((Lowe, interviewed in November 2008.)

In the 1970s mah-jong parties were a popular way of gathering together for the Chinese. By gathering to play mah-jong, the first-generation immigrants created a space for themselves in the early days. In the1980s casinos began to provide mah-jong tables, and people turned to casinos, so that they could simply enjoy the game without worrying about preparing food and cleaning up. But some participants missed their old parties at home. As a participant once put it 'ironically, it was just like a person who finally got a golden toilet but started to suffer constipation; we don't enjoy the game when it is in a casino'. Some former party participants either arranged to meet up at casinos and play with old friends exclusively or simply insisted on playing at home – as a group of Chinese elders, who learned Mandarin at the Chinese centre, told me, they still retained their mah-jong gathering at home although they have only one table.

While playing Mah-jong at home was for some migrants to Manchester a good way of sharing food and creating solidarity, for some younger mah-jong players, playing mah-jong with senior family member is a way for the juniors to practise filial piety. One member of the group of Mandarin learners I worked with at the community centre told me that:

> 'We only play mah-jong during the New Year, just to entertain my Nan. She loves playing mah-jong; on normal days we all have to work and nobody can play with her. During the New Year, we will play with her and of course we grandchildren will let her win.' (Qi, a Cantonese overseas student from China)

This social purpose is separate from the act of gambling, and does not imply a desire to gamble. Qi and the Mandarin learners all declare that they will not go to a casino to play mah-jong: 'We are not that addicted, we are not gamblers.'

At first glance, my research participants seem to hold contradictory ideas about playing mah-jong in the casino. Although the people who play inside the casino may not agree that they are gambling, those who play in a domestic area or at a community centre firmly differentiate themselves from the casino mah-jong players. At the community centre, every Friday, a group of Chinese gather at a mah-jong table. Most of them are middle-aged women, one old man in his eighties. This group is quite good regarding their mah-jong skills. They could build the wall in no time, grabbing three tiles at each hand and

press both ends to move the whole line of sixteen tiles all at one go. Each time when we cast the dice to choose the dealer, before even the dice settle, they already know who should be the dealer. They are always quick and accurate. The centre has a non-gambling policy and they are used to playing ‘hygienic’ mah-jong, but they enjoy the fun of the game and regret that the centre only offers the table for one hour which is not enough for the shortest four-circle game. Thus some of them suggest ‘maybe we could go to the casino and play there’. But the suggestion is quickly rejected by the majority of the group, ‘People there will laugh at us, they won't like us, they play with money we don't, people will say we waste their table’. In this context, the casino seems to have the reputation of Wuyi. At one of the casinos in Chinatown, there is an activity room with large windows letting in light. In that activity room, the Chinese regulars read newspapers or play Chinese chess; gambling does not take place in that room. Playing chess without wagering in the casino appears to be acceptable for everyone, but playing ‘hygienic’ mah-jong in the casino seems unacceptable. Occasionally, I saw a group of Chinese overseas students playing mah-jong in Circus without money. The group of students was obviously detached from the other Chinese players and not considered part of the casino mah-jong circle. They were given the oldest set of tiles, which I never saw appear at any other table before or after. They played Chongqing mah-jong, which is different from the Hong Kong Shanghai style which pervades the rest of the casino mah-jong tables. They only came for that Mid-Autumn Festival night and I never saw them again. This group of students bravely got into the mah-jong area in the casino but were obviously not accepted as members of the mah-jong group there. The boundary between them and the regulars is

clearly marked by the old chipped tiles on their table and the zero communication between them and the regulars.

Fig. 4.3 A common mah-jong skill: holding sixteen tiles with both hands.

4.5 Maintaining a mah-jong group's social boundary under the same roof

Even when playing mah-jong under the same roof of a casino, mah-jong players maintain their social grouping, often via choosing their opponents and staking. Choosing opponents is often mixed with staking. For example, those who play thirty pounds per hand will sit down at the same table with those who play five pounds per hand. But the phrase 'choosing opponents' is not entirely accurate, because the way participants describe it, it is 'people in similar circumstances come together and set the table' (K.C. Lam interviewed in August 2008). Besides, at casinos, participants sometimes mock others for being too selective about who they play with. However, the fact is that although some players try to appear open-minded about opponents, in general, players have various standards about who to play with, as demonstrated in the following episode.

4.5.1 Choosing opponents

A casino mah-jong gathering always starts with the players waiting for their preferred opponents. One early afternoon, at the long narrow floor under the stairs leading to the main gaming floor[17], only two tables are active and there are three men sitting on the sofa nearby watching TV while waiting for their Jiao to turn up. Mr Chan is among them. Mr Chan came over to Britain from Hong Kong in 1961 and is now in his early 70s. As usual he is wearing a very clean long-sleeve white shirt which seemed so carefully ironed that I could hardly see a crease on it. Mr Chan is a regular mah-jong player, so is Wong who sits beside him. Mr Chan points to Wong and says to me, 'This man is really formidable, a Vietnamese tycoon; he brought gold bricks with him when he came.' Wong simply beamed without adding any comment. 'But why and how, it's so heavy and inconvenient?' I respond in surprise. 'You really believe whatever others tell you, don't you?' Little Man, the small built Vietnamese man on the other side of Mr Chan frowns at my naïve response. Earlier he and Wong had an argument, calling each other 'slow player' and said they would never like to play on the same table with each other again.

Mr Chan, Wong and Little Man are all waiting for their Jiao to turn up. Wong is losing patience, and suggests they get another Mr Wong from the gaming floor to play. Chan refuses, 'You go if you want to play with him.' Wong stands up abruptly and walks away. 'How about that lady there?' I point to a Chinese woman about two tables away from us.

[17] This particular casino where I often observed people playing mah-jong allocates two areas for mah-jong. Sometimes it is in a baccarat hall on the upper floor; sometimes it is on the lower ground main gaming floor. When it is on the lower ground, it is in a long narrow area under the stairs, separated from the main gaming floor. This area is about three metres wide and twenty metres long, which could accommodate up to nine tables, and in the peak hours, which normally last from 2 pm to early evening on weekdays and until midnight at the weekends, the nine tables are all actively occupied.

She looks in her 1970s, and she is holding her bag of mah-jong tiles in her arms, sitting quietly without any facial expression. Wong quickly dismisses her in a mocking tone 'She?! She wouldn't play with us; she consults a fortune teller to decide who she should play with. We are different, I play with anyone, and she takes it as seriously as if she's selecting a husband.' Wong walks away to his slot machines. Then Chan says to me, 'I wouldn't play with that man [the other Mr Wong]. Filthy he is, rubbing his running nose and massaging the tiles all together, disgusting.' Chan doesn't wait long that afternoon when Fong walks in. Fong seems to have the same style of Chan, clean and tidy. Fong walks directly to join Chan, and Wong soon comes back. And Chan asks me if I play. I say I prefer to watch and learn first. Wong says, 'You'll never learn unless you put your money onto the table.' 'But I am afraid I'll be too slow,' I reply. At that moment, another Mr Chan walks in. I've seen him playing at the same table with Chan before, so I say to Chan, 'Your Jiao is here.' The four men quickly arrange the table and chairs; Wong gets the tiles from the cashier, where he puts down a refundable £10 deposit. 'Let's play £5,' they say to each other, and then they throw the dice to decide who will be the first banker and who sits at which seat. Their game has finally started; the four men all look relaxed and satisfied.

Little Man is still waiting. Mrs Lee is standing between the sofas seemingly unable to decide what to do. She is the only retired woman I have ever seen at Wuyi. She is also waiting for Jiao. Little Man, tired of waiting for his own Jiao, suddenly throws an invitation over to us, 'Let's play together, let's play £30.' Mrs Lee shakes her head seriously, 'To play £30 can cost a couple of hundred pounds, I wouldn't play that big.'

Little Man replies with a mocking tone, 'What are you worrying about? Your weekly income is more than a thousand pounds. You as husband and wife have £700 [Mrs Lee and her husband, as a couple, have about £700 weekly income, which, according to other participants, comes from the rent of their properties], and each of your children gives you £50.' Mrs Lee doesn't say anything but keeps shaking her head to Wong. Wong then turns to me, 'How about you, little sis, let's play, £30?' I shake my head just like Mrs Lee does. To our relief, he doesn't insist but walks away to the main gaming floor, like a shark finally leaving his prey alone. Beside a roulette table at the gaming floor, Ng, a take-away shop owner is sitting with no chips in hand. He says the dealer at that table is very strict and will not allow the players to win at all. He is waiting for his businessmen friends to turn up to set their mah-jong table together. Ng plays £30 per hand. Little Man walks past him but does not approach him at all.

Chan, Mr Chan, Wong and Fong are acquaintances and they all meet Chan's 'hygiene standard'. Although all the men had ended up working in take-away shops in Britain, they have a different background before their migration. Chan, when I first met him, told me about his families in Guangzhou Canton, where Chan's brother worked as the chair of the Department of Health in the local council. Fong was a teacher in Hong Kong. Mr Chan was a teacher in Guangzhou. Wong was neither a teacher, nor an official from any bureau, but he was 'formidable'. Once Chan told me, 'We don't necessarily play with acquaintances, we become acquaintances after we play together.' But I doubt Chan's table is open to anyone.

Little Man's selection of opponents seems to be different from Chan's. He approaches the people whom he suspects to be outsiders, and he approaches them with the stake of £30 per hand, a stake seemingly high enough for Little Man, a pensioner, to announce his invitation as one for a battle instead of friends' gathering. Little Man doesn't believe my real purpose in the casino is research. During my fieldwork, he tried several times to get me onto his high-staked table, probably to explore my 'true nature'. For Little Man, choosing opponents and staking the game is inseparable. He does play £5 sometimes, but when he approaches people he doesn't always play with, he tends to throw his £30 per hand invitation. High-stake mah-jong is seldom played among strangers in casinos. In fact people would call it a silly risk. Two participants once commented on a man's 'big loss' to two strangers: 'They are silly enough to play £30 per hand with the people they don't know,' they said unsympathetically. High stakes for some people is a 'silly risk with strangers', for others it could be a strategy to keep strangers as spectators and maintain the social boundary of their table. At Wuyi, a high stake's function as a marker of a boundary is quite obvious. It is known by people inside and outside Wuyi that the normal lowest stake there is £30 per hand and £64 per hand is common. This stake has helped to portrait Wuyi as a place for rich people only. The people are similar to the Chinese entrepreneurs described by Oxfel who come out to Chinatown weekly to gather and put on their 'show of wealth' and 'compete for privilege' at the table (Oxfel, 1991).

4.5.2 Staking

Staking is a unique interaction at the mah-jong table, and sometimes it is even a subtle contest of power and control over the space in which the game takes place. Who decides

how much to play is always meaningful and helps to shape the types of exchange at the gaming table. When someone is completely deprived of a say about staking before the game starts, it could suggest he or she is not considered by the other players of equal footing at their small group and even suggests he or she is expected to be the one who obeys instead of having a say at the table.

> ‘Wasn't I naughty? I feel ashamed to tell you about it, but it was many years ago, when I was still with my first husband. His sister was so addicted to mah-jong and she always invited us to play; her husband was good to her, supporting her to play even when there were only three players they would still play. I worked in their take-away shop, you know, earning £50 pounds per week, and I played £8 per hand with them. £8 was a lot of money; we are talking about more or less 15 years ago. Why did I play so expensively(为什么我要打这么贵的麻将)? Well I didn't want to either, but they insisted, and my husband said, “Everybody plays £8, so don't be so stubborn, just do what others do.” So I did. What if I lose a fortune and I can't afford it? Well I did lose quite badly sometimes, I remember once I lost more than £200 and I felt really bad about it, but luckily we always play with the same people, his sister and his brother-in-law, or occasionally his sister's friends, and the money we lost one time, we won it another day, and at the end, our loss and our gain were equivalent. But still, it's a bad habit. I don't do it now. I still like playing mah-jong, but I don't do it now.’ (Qin, interviewed in September 2008.)

Qin was a Hakka woman in her late thirties. She came over to Britain with her parents when she was eleven years old. About fifteen years ago, Qin and her first husband were both working in her sister-in-law's shop. Neither of them had the chance to negotiate the stake, but accept it as a norm passively. I wonder whether the mah-jong table for Qin and her husband and in-laws were also a game between employer and employees, seniors and juniors when Qin and her ex-husband didn't feel that they could negotiate the stake with their opponents. A few years later, Qin and her husband divorced. Qin found a job in the city council, became a social worker and eventually did not play mah-jong anymore. Qin now says money should be spent a lot more wisely.

Liu Ying is eighty-nine. She is living in a sheltered housing flat near Chinatown. Liu Ying and her friends, who were in my Mandarin class, only play mah-jong at home. They play very low-stake mah-jong, fifty pence per hand. 'Every week, when they come out to learn Mandarin at the community centre, after the class, we would say, let's play mah-jong, shall we? And they all come to my place. Dinner is easy; we just have some noodles, which is quick. Then we clean away and set the table. Sometimes when we finish late at night, Leung stays over with me; she is on her own just like me anyway. We are good friends, really good friends, nothing is more important than friendship' (Liu Ying, interviewed in September 2008). Sometimes, when Liu Ying and her friends can't find enough people, they will try to invite Leung or Yeung, also their good friends although they are not so keen on mah-jong. Among friends and families, when a mah-jong table is waiting for the last Jiao to join in, the last Jiao has the privilege of demanding everybody else to play at his or her preferred stake. This rule is different to that in the casino and Wuyi, and also

contrasts with Qin's case. At Liu Ying's mah-jong gathering at home, when Leung or Yeung is invited, Liu Ying and her friends have to automatically lower the stake to twenty-five pence per hand because 'otherwise, they won't play'. At the casino or Wuyi, people choose their Jiao from the waiting group and at the same time the choosers are also chosen. At home, there is normally not much choice. When your friends refuse to play, you won't be able to set the table, and game cannot start. When everyone is on an equal footing, as in Liu Ying and her friends' case, one cannot force another to join the game but only softly persuade them. Lowering the stake sometimes works as a gesture of no intention to win money from each other, thus showing they are playing mah-jong just for pure fun amongst friends.

How much to play and who to play with are two questions that many mah-jong players would not consider separately. They affect each other and work together to define the social space of a mah-jong table. The status of the players and their relationship influence the process of negotiating the stake and thus create the 'habitus' of the mah-jong table (Bourdieu, 1989). If we overlook this underlying structure of a mah-jong table, we may misinterpret the interactions during the game, and misunderstand that mah-jong tables are just like other casino gaming tables that are open to everyone and whoever enters the gaming area automatically becomes a member of that gaming society (Clifford, 1997; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Jiménez, 2003). It may be true for other types of casino table games (which I will discuss in details in chapter 6), but mah-jong, a game that seems to pervade Chinese society, retains its social boundary at every specific table through the process of choosing opponents and negotiating the stake of the game. Maybe it is not

exaggerating to say that Chinese players in Manchester reproduce other hierarchies via mah-jong gambling. This contention is played out in various contexts even under the same roof.

Fig. 4.4 A group of older mah-jong players at my Mandarin class. （They used to play mah-jong at the back of their take-away shops and now play mah-jong at home in their retirement flats.）

4.6 Conclusion

In the community centre or in domestic areas in Manchester, mah-jong often proceeds harmoniously amongst kin and friends, and sometimes in some specific social contexts it even seems to bridge the gap between different social groups when the social difference is expected to be temporally eliminated. However it is exaggerative to suggest that mah-jong in general is invariably a social equaliser and that it always and under all circumstances allows people from various backgrounds to happily gather together and entertain each other. It is also misleading to claim that mah-jong takes the form of positive reciprocal exchange and solely expresses the affective relationship between its players. This chapter

reveals a more complex picture of mah-jong gambling. Exchanges at and around mah-jong tables are more diverse than the existing analysis suggests. Mah-jong gambling, like other forms of gambling, contains various kinds of exchanges between players and other people. It produces and reinforces social relations among the people within mah-jong's social world**.** Different types of exchanges happen at and around the mah-jong tables in different social settings. Different types of mah-jong gambling reflect, alter and reinforce in various contexts.

Games and gambling reflect the character of society and culture in which they are embedded (Caillois, 1962; Geertz, 1972; Malaby, 2003; Papataxiarchis, 1999; Cassidy, 2010; Walker, 1999). 'Gambling may be seen as a distinctive form of exchange, the meaning of which is taken from the context in which it takes place' (Cassidy, 2010:139). In the case of mah-jong gambling, the exchange involves recognising the social environment, especially the social relationships between players through pre-game interactions. The rules governing mah-jong playing etiquette are well-established: there is no ambiguity around how a game should start, how it should proceed, and when it should be ended. In the books that teach people how to play mah-jong, the game starts from throwing dice to arranging the seats, followed by choosing the dealer, building the wall, breaking the wall, playing, and scoring (Whitney, 1964, Thompson and Maloney, 1990; Cavallaro and Luu, 2005). However, as my fieldwork has revealed, the game starts far earlier than with the seating. In fact, when the game comes to the seating stage, the spatial environment of a particular table is largely decided already. The sensuous experience represented in the space of a particular mah-jong table and the social relations that

contribute to the formation of this space would have been neglected if we study the game only starting from the seating. Early interactions between potential players happen far earlier than when the dice are cast. Those interactions often have a direct impact on the participants of the game and the stake. Choosing opponents and negotiating the stake all help to decide the type of exchange that occurs at the gaming table. Choosing where to play mah-jong also reflects people's definition of mah-jong playing or mah-jong gambling. If we ignore the pre-game interactions, we will lose a large part of the social life of mah-jong from which its social meanings derive and develop, and also would miss the underlying construction of social space at the gaming table.

5 A dance with luck: comparing mah-jong and roulette

> 'What decides the result of a mah-jong game is luck, not skill. Sometimes, you are lucky so you win more than you lose; other times, he [the opponent] is lucky so you lose more than you win. No one is a constant winner. But there are some people who can claim that they win more than they lose. They are those who can dance with their luck.' (Mr. Ng, interviewed on 18 Aug. 2008)

5.1 Introduction

Following the footprints of Chinese migrants, mah-jong tiles travel around the world. According to research on overseas Chinese communities in India (Oxfel, 1991), Britain (Watson, 1975) and Canada (Lai, 2006), mah-jong remains the most popular game among overseas Chinese. In China, mah-jong is regarded as the national game and some have argued that it mirrors Chinese life (Papineau, 2000). As the national game it, on one hand, reflects the traditions and attitudes of Chinese people, and at the same time, by 'educating and training the players in these very virtues or eccentricities...subtly confirms their habits or preferences' (Reith, 1999; Caillois, 1961:81). In this chapter I revisit each of these connections, using data gathered among Chinese mah-jong and casino players in Manchester. I argue that luck is more than irrational mystical thought. I show that in the world of gaming, luck has pragmatic meaning and its own rationality. By transforming a game of skills and strategies into a game of chance, Chinese players reinforce the relationships between them and maintain group cohesion.

I begin by introducing the ways in which luck is understood in the gambling context. I then compare mah-jong and roulette and present an intriguing contrast between the two games. Mah-jong is a game of skills and strategies, however, the players often claim that luck decides the outcome of games. In contrast, roulette is a game of blind chance but its players make a great effort to improve their skills and knowledge of the game and tend to claim that winning roulette depends on the players' intelligence. In order to better understand this surprising contrast I analyse and compare relationships among mah-jong players and roulette players. I conclude that luck is often employed in gambling contexts where long-term reciprocal relationships are well established. In this context, to employ the concept of luck is to extend a gesture of trust.

5.2 What is luck?

Mah-jong is a game of speed and panache for four players to play against each other; however, a successful player may not necessarily be considered the quick-witted one. Luck is believed, by many players, to play an important role in mah-jong, and to keep pace with your luck is the key to winning the game – 'to win as much as luck allows you to' as my participants have said. Mah-jong players have many different ways of retaining good luck: by invoking lucky colours, people, names, tables and mah-jong tiles. Luck cannot be ignored, by mah-jong players or by researchers who study mah-jong gambling (Oxfel, 1991; Festa, 2007). But where does luck come from? Can it be changed, mended or fixed? If luck is predetermined and it is luck that decides the outcome of the game, why do we still feel frustrated when we lose and proud if we win? What does luck *do* at the mah-jong table, in the casino, and in life?

5.2.1 Defining luck

'Luck' is the English translation of the term 'Yun' 运 (meaning to move or moving) that is used by my research participants. Sometimes, they also use another phrase, 'shi Yun' 时运, which literally means 'luck's time'. For example, I was told, 'Everyone's shi Yun is up and down; when your Yun is on high tide, you achieve success a lot more easily.' I understand Yun as the timing and moving of luck. My participants actually use Yun as a short form of 'Yun Cheng'. They do not explicitly differentiate Yun and Yun Cheng, when they mention Yun, they could mean both luck and luck's trajectory. Sinologists who have studied the concept of Yun in a Chinese context tend to translate the term into one phrase, 'fate or luck', as Sangren does in his essay on fate (Sangren, 2008), or interprets luck as 'shifts of fate' (Harrell, 1987). Raphals has conducted a thorough literary review of pre-Buddhist Chinese literature on fate and luck. She provides a definition of Yun as, 'luck or fortune' and ventures that, 'The root meaning of Yun is to carry, transport, or use, and also to revolve. The derivative meaning is fortune, luck, fate' (Raphals, 2003:552). Festa, who has carried out a prolonged study of mah-jong gambling in Taiwan, describes fate and luck as the 'fickle side' of each other, which supports the logic of combining the two words together to present the corresponding English concept of Yung (Festa, 2007). These studies seem to have a tendency not to distinguish the concept of fate from that of luck. But fate and luck are two different things in Chinese culture. Fate (Ming) is related to one's destiny. Luck (Yun or Shi Yun) is related to the route to that destiny, which could be separated into different short journeys using time as a divider. One's fate is like one's destination. To reach one destination, there could be various routes at different time, and

on those routes, there could be numerous ups and downs. In this thesis, I use the term 'luck' instead of 'fate' as luck provides a more accurate translation of my participants' conception of Yun. Yun emphasises the *movement* of luck rather than a pre-determined unalterable destiny (which is closer to the concept of fate).

In China there is an idiom 人定胜天, which means that man can definitely defeat *Tian* (天 *Tian* is a Chinese concept that is roughly equivalent to 'God' in Christian literature). This idiom was cited by Chairman Mao in one of his writings (愚公移山》) and the idea of conquering *Tian* became even more popular in contemporary China. A fortune teller in China will tell his clients at the end of a consultation that fate is in a strong man's hands (命运掌握在强者手中). A book called *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons* (《了凡四训》) was believed to have been written by Yeung Liao-fan （袁了凡 1533-1606）in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). The book specifically explains how to rewrite one's fate. It is still circulated in China and was made into a film in 2001. In the book Yeung claimed that the secular say that good luck or bad luck are given by *Tian*, while the sage say that they are decided by people themselves (祸福自己求之者，乃圣贤之言。若谓祸福惟天所命，则世俗之论矣).

Harrell has explored these two different sets of ideas in Taiwan, where there are two different sets of belief in fate. Elite Chinese tend to believe fate can be changed by human endeavour while ordinary peasants tend to believe fate is determined by *Tian*. Harrell suspects that the elite employ the concept of fate to eliminate social conflicts and to keep

those who are ruled under control (Harrell, 1987). However, this explanation does not account for the use of luck by ordinary people that I observed in Manchester.

5.2.2 Luck in a game and its relationship to other aspects of life

Once a friend participant enthusiastically took £20 out of my hand, put it into his favourite slot machine, and when the money was lost in no time, announced unhesitatingly, 'You are not lucky today'.

Chinese gamblers' perceptions of luck have attracted some scholarly attention. Without having studied gambling, one sinologist rather boldly suggests that 'the widely noted enthusiasm of many Chinese for gambling also seems energized in part by the notion that winning constitutes (in addition to profit) evidence of heaven's favour' (Sangren, 2008:13). Papineau, who studied Canadian Chinese gamblers, states that the Chinese believe that through gambling they can reveal their concealed fate (Papineau, 2005:167). Once a game is over, Chinese gamblers:

> extrapolate from their success or failure; they interpret the outcome of the game as boding well, or ill, for their entire destiny, including their business prospects and their love life. They assume that there is symmetry between the cosmic order as revealed in the outcome of the game and the way their lives are turning out. (Papineau, 2005:167)

This symmetry was also present among my participants who would take lucky events in life as indicators of gaming luck and vice versa. Health, love life and losses and gains in

life situations are often added together to reveal the composition of a person's fate or luck. For example, health is often related to luck in a gaming context. As I was told,

> If you are unwell, you can't be very lucky. You can't be lucky if you have to see your dentist. I never play after a dentist appointment. How could you be lucky when you have an aching tooth and a swollen cheek?

It seems that luck could be affected by health, and bad health may indicate bad luck. However, some unfortunate cases are believed to be followed by extreme good luck. For example, if someone survives an accident that could have killed him, he would be told that he can expect good luck to follow. 'Da nan bu si bi you hou fu' (大难不死必有后福 Fortune always follows misfortune) is the proverb often cited.

During my fieldwork, my participants thought that I must be very lucky because I was knocked down by a car and later fell down the stairs but was only slightly injured in both accidents. They suggested that I should play the high-stake slot machine after my recovery from shingles, when they thought I should be at the peak of my good luck having just gone through a series of unfortunate events – because fortune always follows misfortune. What logic of luck can I extrapolate from this advice?

In both gaming and non-gaming contexts, my participants consciously or subconsciously try to investigate their luck and obtain some information about the contingent future. Sometimes this is more wishful thinking than prediction. A young man who just broke up with his girlfriend may be encouraged by his friends to gamble a bit, because 'If you are unlucky with your love life, you can be lucky in gambling'; or, 'You just can't be unlucky

with everything; if you are unlucky with one thing, you must be lucky with another'. Obviously, a young man who just lost his love does not necessarily win in a casino, and those who are unlucky in life do not necessarily find their compensation at a gaming table. But behind the wishful thinking mentioned above, there may be an assumption that luck is distributed evenly across individuals and that we all have the same share of luck, it just comes up unevenly in one's life. Sometimes a player may hold out in the hope that their luck may change abruptly one day and so might have a big win to sort out the problems thought to be caused by a loss in gambling. This is the desperate stage of a gambler; as participants pointed out to me, a gambler at this stage should accept that 'your luck has abandoned you'.

5.2.3 A dance with luck

> No one is a constant winner. But some can claim that they win more than they lose, and they are those who can dance with luck. When their good luck is with them, they won't hesitate and withhold the luck, they will play it to the ultimate, unlike some others who, when their good luck is with them, dare not twin – I mean when they win up to a certain stage, they begin to lose faith and start to ask themselves, "Am I really this lucky? Shall I win less? Will I annoy others if I win too much?" But when they are unlucky, they refuse to stop; they want to chase back their loss. I am not like them – when I am lucky, I will not hesitate to win; I will play heavy stake game and win as much as I can. But when I feel I am unlucky, I will play low stake game, and will stop early on and just admit that it's not my time. I am one of those few who can proudly

> claim I win more than lose because I know how to dance with my luck. (Mr. Ng, interviewed on 18 Aug. 2008)

In Ng's quotation, luck sounds more like a chance or an opportunity, it needs to be captured and it can be wasted or even lost. This is also reflected in Hayano's observations of card-rooms in North America: luck is often described in terms of a law of conservation; it can be used up, run out, wasted, and negatively affected by pessimism (Hayano, 1983). One participant who held a similar view told me, 'If you miss a good card or a good tile that you shouldn't have missed, you probably wouldn't have any good luck the rest of the night', 'Waste one good chance, you ruin your luck, and it turns your luck downwards'. Mah-jong players' attitudes towards luck also echoes Hayano's observation that poker players attempt to *control* luck by using physical objects and strategies to change their timing in order to hold winning hands at the right time and right place instead of waiting for the rush passively (Hayano, 1983). A participant summarised that the best way to win is to 'dance with your luck', which means 'to win as much as your luck allows you to'. In fact the mah-jong players or casino regulars do not just try to predict their luck and enquire about their fate; they also adjust their gambling strategy according to the luck they foresee. The most common strategy is to gamble more when lucky and less when unlucky, and to visit the casino in a lucky colour. One of my participants always wore her green scarf, green coat and green sweater to the casino. Her wallet was green too.

Attempts to discern, control or change fate or luck have been recorded elsewhere. In Japan, auspicious shapes are displayed and used to attract good fortune and avert harm (Daniels,

2008). In India, astrological counselling pervades the middle and upper class Indians in managing their fortune, 'fructifying personal and family patrimonies and avoiding risks' (Guenzi, 2008). And the Urad Mongols hold regular rituals to 'create an upsurge of fortune, to beckon it in, absorb and contain it' (Humphrey, 2008). Buriad, who live along the north-east Mongolian-Russian border, employ various practices to 'harness fortune' (Empson, 2008). In various ways, the people described in these ethnographies try to capture and obtain good luck and to increase their opportunities to succeed in life instead of waste them. As my participants put it 'to win as much as your luck allows you'. Although luck is sometimes regarded as predetermined, people's attitudes towards it is far from passive.

Is there a practical reason for wanting to know about one's luck? A participant explained this practical reason from an astrologist's perspective. This particular Chinese astrologist gives out tips to his fans indicating when they should gamble because their wind-fall luck is with them and when they should not. At the beginning of 2009, he predicted that those born in the year of the Rat with four, seven and nine in their mobile phone numbers had a better chance to win a lottery. He claimed 'I love to use my professional skills as a metaphysician, or the so-called fortune-teller, to help people better themselves so that they will appreciate, be prepared and get hold of good luck when it comes, while not lose hope and faith when adversity falls on them. Every dog has his day – every person has their turn of good and bad lucks. I can guide them in their different stages of life and make their life a happy one'. This astrologist also tells people that, 'life is under control in a strong-minded man's hand', 'to find out about your fate is to prepare yourself to face your life

with a strong mind', recalling Harrell's point referred to earlier (1987). Also contemplating the relationship between predictions and agency, Swancutt argues that 'economies of fortune do not necessarily coerce anyone into conforming to social norms at the expense of profit…[But] encourage people to break social norms and adopt unconventional notions in order to enhance their fortune' (Swancutt, 2008). According to these arguments, to predict your luck and fate is like familiarising yourself with a piece of music before you dance to its rhythm. Or it is similar to how a tourist wants a map of the place they are travelling to and to plan innovatively for their journey. It is a way of managing risk when facing an unknown future.

5.3 Making mah-jong into a game of luck

As illustrated in Chapter 3, mah-jong is a game of strategies. It takes lots of planning and decision-making to arrange the thirteen tiles into a ready hand. Mah-jong is also a game of skill. Experienced players can identify a tile simply by rubbing their thumb across its surface and shuffle the 144 tiles smoothly and evenly without pushing a single tile out of the tray. An experienced player can tell which side of the dice will face upwards even when the dice is still spinning. At the beginning of the game, players shuffle the 144 tiles thoroughly, face down. Each player takes thirty-six tiles (keeping them face down) and builds a stack of tiles eighteen long by two high. These four long stacks are then pushed to the centre of the table and form a square which is called the 'wall'. At the stage of building the wall, people can easily distinguish a green horn from an experienced player. My first and quite long-lasting challenge in learning mah-jong was in trying to catch up with my 'teachers' in building the long stack and pushing it to the centre while still

keeping the stack in one straight line. Players always amaze me when they pick up an entire row of eighteen tiles and 'clack!' put them tidily on top of the lower row. The shortest game contains four rounds. A normal mah-jong game in Manchester contains eight or twelve, sixteen or even twenty rounds. It could last from three hours to nine hours or longer. A game of three hours literally gives me a migraine but I encountered many pensioners who could stay with a game for around eight hours. Some older players cannot attend such a game because they cannot sit for that long. Mah-jong is partly a test of stamina. The rules governing play are well-established; there is no ambiguity around how a game should start, how it should proceed, and when it should end. As such, mah-jong is a 'mature' game. By simply looking at the game itself, people might tend to believe that it is a game that relies more on rational thinking than blind chance. But players in Manchester convert this game of skill into a game of luck, as I will show.

Fig. 5.1 Mah-jong tables in a casino

http://www.stanleycasinos.com/site/Home/Casinos/ManchesterMint.aspx)

Qin is a middle-aged woman from Canton in China. She plays mah-jong at home and visits casinos occasionally. She once explained to me that mah-jong always gives people an unpredictable outcome:

> You can never tell what your next tile is. Sometimes you never get what you wish to have and sometimes the tiles are even better than the best you expect. Very often you think you are winning; you are waiting for that one last tile to turn up and usually at this moment somebody else gets his tile earlier than you, and it is that last tile that decides who wins and who loses; all the efforts you make earlier just gone down the drain…Mah-jong tiles are very divine.

Apart from the large number of tiles, the use of dice to decide seating and places at which to start drawing tiles increases the game's randomness. The number of dice used in mah-jong varies from one setting to another. At the Chinese community centre and elderly luncheon club in Manchester, where mah-jong is played without wagering, only one die is used. In other places in Manchester, three dice are used. Informants told me using one die can provide a chance for cheating, while using three dice largely eliminates this chance, and ensures fairness. Mah-jong players employ this absolute-chance to evict human intervention from these decision-making events to ensure the fairness of the game. In many other social contexts, when facing a situation that can only be decided by absolute chance, people may worry and feel less secure. In the context of mah-jong gambling, the increase in contingency brought about by increasing randomness, for example using three dice instead of one die, seems to give the gamblers a sense of security. In front of blind chance, we are all equal.

Mah-jong is often believed by its players to contain a divine power in predicting one's luck. As many players agree 'if you play regularly you will see the flow of your luck'. According to my participants, within a stable mah-jong circle, where the same group of

players gather to play, the players' experience and skills are believed to become assimilated, thus luck becomes a more obvious factor in deciding the outcome of the game. 'Keeping pace with your luck' is the key to winning the game. From different players, I heard a similar statement, 'It's not skills and experience that make you win, it's luck. That's why you can always see an amateur player beat an old hand.' Also, 'I won, not because I am good at mah-jong, it's just that I was very lucky on those days'. Scholars who have studied mah-jong gambling also notice that mah-jong players relate results of a mah-jong game to fate and luck. Festa notes that divining fate through mah-jong becomes each Taiwanese male player's ultimate object as a contestant, and by fighting against luck at the mah-jong table, Taiwanese ex-soldiers display and maintain their sense of masculinity (Festa, 2007). Oxfel, in her ethnography of Chinese people in Calcutta, writes that a mah-jong player noticed his luck changed when he started winning at the mah-jong table all the time. Caillois has pointed out that instruments of chance are used for divination, and gambling can be a symbolic activity in which 'the player asks for a decision that assures him the unconditional favour of destiny' (Caillois, 1962:73). Mah-jong gambling is such an activity. Luck is believed to decide the game's outcome, and the outcome is used to reveal each players' luck. In this sense, participants claim that 'mah-jong is all about luck'.

5.4 The absence of luck from roulette

Mah-jong and roulette, either the European version or the American version[18], are the other most popular games amongst the group of regular Chinese gamblers in casinos in

[18] There are two styles of roulette in the casinos in Manchester, the European and the American. European

Manchester. In the daytime, if there is only one type of casino table game being played apart from mah-jong, it is always roulette. During my fieldwork, in the daytime, roulette was almost the only game played. Poker was also played but very rarely. Poker and baccarat are popular late at night, but roulette is popular all the time. Since I do most of my fieldwork during the day or in the evenings, roulette is the game that catches my attention. Besides, roulette as a game forms a great contrast to mah-jong. It is a game of blind chance.

In the game, players choose to place bets on a roulette table, on either a single number or a range of numbers, or on the colour red or black, or on whether the number is odd or even. Beside the table is the roulette wheel. To determine the winning number the croupier spins the roulette wheel in one direction, and spins a ball in the opposite direction around the tiled circular track running around the circumference of the wheel. The ball eventually loses momentum and falls onto the wheel and into one of thirty-seven pockets which are coloured as red or black and numbered from zero to thiry-six. There is no logical pattern to the numbers' sequence. For me it is almost impossible to memorise this sequence at all. When I bet on roulette I only bet on even or odd, or on black or red. And every Chinese around the roulette table could tell by my way of betting that I am an inexperienced player. For Chinese regular players, betting on a colour or an even or odd is relying on blind chance. They will not do that. They will always try to make their prediction and bet on the

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roulette has thirty-seven pockets in its wheel, numbered from zero to thirty-six. The house edge for European roulette is one in thirty-seven. American roulette has thirty-eight pockets in its wheel, numbered from zero to thirty-six, plus double zero. Because the American roulette wheel has one more pocket than the European, the players tend to believe that the European one is easier to win. In each casino in Manchester, there is one style of roulette only, either the American or the European, not both. The players do not choose the casino according to its roulette style. So I have the impression that the regular gamblers do not mind which type of roulette they play.

exact range of numbers. My way of playing roulette is regarded as a 'silly way', as my friends and informants put it. A Chinese restaurant owner who was not playing but taking lots of notes about the sequences of the winning numbers and analysing them told me, 'You play like a Westerner, relying on chance. We Chinese don't play in that way. We observe the croupier and analyse the previous winning numbers[19] and predict what zone of the wheel the ball will fall into at the next round.'

Heroine is a regular roulette player. She has a notebook in which she records the winning numbers and draws charts to show the quasi logic about the flow of the winning numbers. Heroine explains that every croupier has their own way of casting the ball, some throw the ball softly, some forcefully, and this affects the end place of the ball, so she always observes the croupier before she starts to bet. She also believes that when the ball falls into the zero pocket, the previous flow of the winning numbers is broken and new calculations must be made using the next flow of numbers. Heroine could remember the exact location of each number on the wheel. She refers to her notebook and carefully places her bet on nearly one third of the numbers, which she believes will cover the winning zone where the ball will fall into. She describes her gambling as research:

> Of course I do my research. I am not gambling for fun. I gamble with a purpose. I gamble to help him (her partner) stop gambling. Only by winning and giving him money to continue, I can make him listen to me. I use my brain. Gambling is like the flow of a river, the casino is the mainstream, and the customers are the side

[19] The long list of the previous winning numbers is shown on a digital display board above the wheel.

branches. Only when the mainstream is fully filled, the water will flow back into the side branches. When the mainstream is filled? We need to capture that moment when it comes, and only those use their brain could do it...’

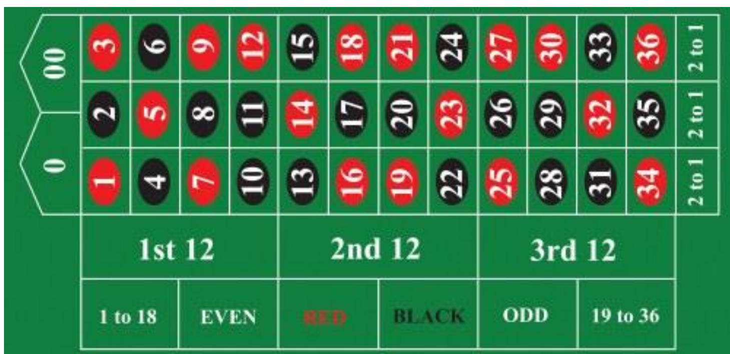


Fig. 5.2 American roulette’s table layout

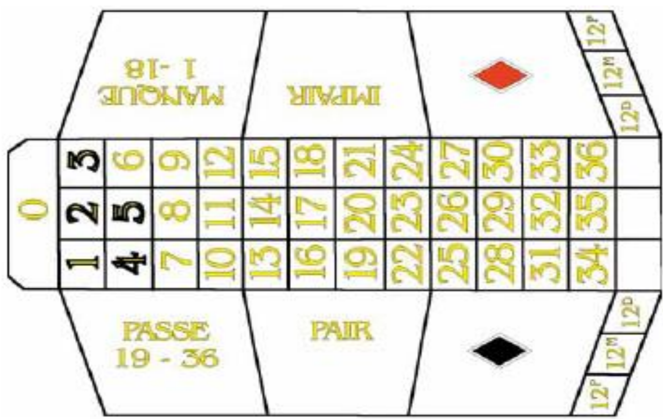
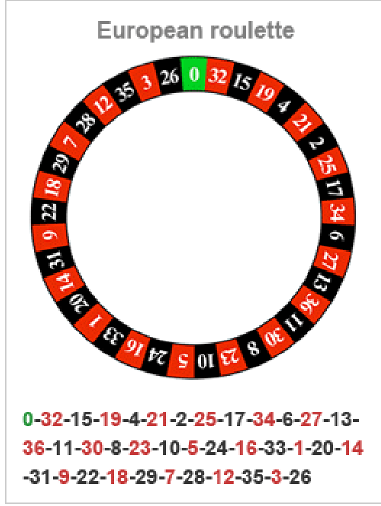


Fig. 5.3 European roulette’s table layout



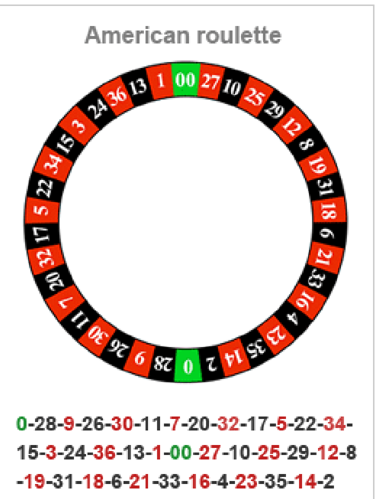


Fig. 5.4 Roulette wheel layouts

Players like Heroine try to rely on their 'brain', their intellectual effort to control the outcome of roulette. Although some players believe that it is luck that makes people win or lose at roulette, among Chinese regular roulette players, Heroine's belief is more popular, especially among the group who deliberately avoid mah-jong playing. They do not play mah-jong either because they are not familiar with the other mah-jong players or because they do not wish to gamble with those players.

5.5 Where there is luck there is trust

Mah-jong and roulette for these Chinese gamblers are similar to patik and spinning top as played by the Port Burwell Eskimos in the Canadian Eskimo village on Killinek Island in the 1970s. Riches described how patik was a game of speed and panache, and spinning top a matter of chance (Riches, 1975). Although patik was regarded as more prestigious than spinning top gambling, and for the men who are the holders of high power in the village, the Port Burwell Eskimos preserved spinning top for the men who went hunting together

for the common good. Patik was played mainly in larger what Riches described as more sophisticated arctic settlements. Riches suggested that the differential uptake of the two games was because spinning top could proceed harmoniously while patik could develop tensions that could affect cooperation when hunting (Riches 1975: 26). Riches suggested that gambling could enable community integration. He argued that his research participants selected the type of game to play according to both their social situation and the game's potential effect on their social relationships. Chinese regular gamblers in Manchester also consider the impact of different types of games on their relationships. Some avoid playing mah-jong because they feel that competition between players often causes tension and 'ruins friendships'. Many past mah-jong players told me that they enjoy the freedom of gambling at a roulette table. They contrast this with the social bondage of the mah-jong table. Players who persist in playing mah-jong try to decrease the tension by deferring the responsibility of winning or losing to luck – an exterior force that is not under any player's control. The emphasis on luck and the avoidance of any discussion of skills and experience are in sharp contrast to roulette players' downplaying of luck and their boasts about careful croupier observations and the precise prediction of winning numbers.

In Chapter four I showed that mah-jong is often played among friends and families, or at least acquaintances, and different groups of players tend to go to different venues for the game. The social boundaries between different sub-groups of mah-jong players are very clear. The social relationships between the mah-jong players are well- established and remain stable. Many of them call each other by their genealogical titles such as Third

Great Patria Uncle (nicknames and their symbolic meanings are discussed in detail in chapter six). Fukuyama has argued that traditional Chinese society is low trust, and that people tend to have low trust towards people other than members of family or extended family (Fukuyama 1995). Many regular mah-jong players belong to the same lineage group or came from the same village in the New Territory. Hakka is the most popular language in the mah-jong area of the casinos. If not relatives, the players at a mah-jong table will at least have been friends or acquaintances for many years and know each other's families. Social bondage between mah-jong players, especially those who will play at the same table, is strong.

Fig. 5.5 The most popular casino for the mah-jong players in Manchester

The mah-jong circle is so close and exclusive that during my fourteen months of fieldwork, I was the only stranger to have entered their exclusive space. A person who would like to play always needs an introduction from an existing player. Normally the newcomer is a member of the same lineage or locality network as the other players. Even if the

newcomer has not played at the table before, he knows the players and the players know him. Even under these circumstances, it will take the newcomer a certain period of time to integrate. During my fieldwork, two people attempted to join the mah-jong circle. A woman from China followed her friend to the casino. She left after only two visits. Another man was a recently retired man from Hong Kong. He spent about two months sitting behind his acquaintances to watch them playing before his first play. People in a mah-jong circle laugh at those who play with strangers. A confident mah-jong player played with two other men he did not know well, and he lost quite seriously. He didn't get sympathy from the other players; instead he was described as 'foolish' because he 'trusted too easily'.

At the beginning of my fieldwork some players claimed that they were not selective about opponents and played with anyone. However, during my fieldwork, I never once saw people play with just anyone. They take time to wait for the right players and the right players are those they can trust (in the sense that they believe the players will not bring any potential conflict to the table that would ruin their gathering). They trust that they are all regular players, so that even if they lose this time they will have time to win back the next time. They trust that they will make a joint effort to deemphasise the impacts of their skills instead of highlighting them. Most importantly, they must collectively acknowledge that the outcome of the game is a matter of luck.

Roulette's social group is comparatively open and loose. The players do not always know each other. Because of this openness, players tend to trust each other a lot less than mah-

jong players. They do not talk at the gaming table, which is again in sharp contrast to mah-jong where players chat all through their game. The indeterminate relationships between players create an open social space for players. They could take the roulette table as their stage to show the other players who they are and construct the social relationship they wish to have. The social space around roulette table is contingent and fluid. Players have no control over the pace of the game, cannot decide who will play at the same table, and cannot decide how long other players will stay at the table. Under these uncertain circumstances, players seem to wish to have more control over the game instead of resigning it to luck. At the roulette table, attempts by players to reduce the role of luck can be seen as a response to great uncertainty. At the mah-jong table, players' employment of luck is a reflection of their trust in each other as opponents who share long, stable reciprocal relationships. Here, the concept of luck is employed to maintain group harmony. Thus, among these players, where there is trust there is luck.

5.6 Conclusion

Luck in the world of gaming is more than irrational mystical thought. Luck has pragmatic meanings and its own rationality. By transforming a game of skill and strategy into a game of luck, Chinese players claim that they have created a game that is a simulation of life: 'Mah-jong is life, and life is like mah-jong'. They both begin with chance and move along, with every human endeavour aimed at winning (succeeding), but when the outcome is revealed at the end, everybody just has to face the result, good or bad, winning or losing, as the result is not just the outcome of their endeavours but also an assignment of fate and

luck. Participants think that the way mah-jong players begin the game, proceed in the game, and handle the losing or winning of the game reflects their understanding of life ('It's easier to find out about someone's true nature at the gaming table'). And at a mah-jong table it is regarded as good manners to ascribe one's loss and win to luck and fate instead of the opponent's bad will or one's own intelligence. Tu has argued, similarly, that the concept of luck and fate helped gamblers in pre-communist China to keep a balanced attitude to winning and losing, an attitude that was advocated by Confucius, 'enjoyment without being licentious, grief without being hurtfully excessive' ('乐而不淫、哀而不伤'). Tu argues that these beliefs help to minimise the possible negative effects of gambling (Tu, 2002: 12).

In Manchester, luck has another role in the social world of the gamblers: it becomes an object of gift transaction. In casinos, roulette players share their winnings with their friends by giving them luck money. Mah-jong players do not give each other luck money as they gamble against each other and luck determines the outcome. But they may share their winnings with the other players at the same table by buying them refreshments in the middle of the game. However, mah-jong players may give luck money to the person who is sitting beside him/her and witnessing his/her winning. People are very happy to receive luck money. It means not only a share of luck but also friendship and trust. When luck is believed to be the element that affects winning or losing; luck bears a meaning to gamblers that is similar to the meaning that bullets bear to hunters as luck is conceived as the personal possession of power. Very often receivers will put luck money into a game straight away, thus trying to inject luck into their own gambling. If they win, they can continue the circle of reciprocity by giving their friends part of their winnings and

returning luck to their friends. Luck is thus employed in maintaining reciprocal relationships between friends in gambling contexts. By sharing luck money roulette players construct a quasi-comradeship among them, in their common battle against the company.

6 Casino regulars' nicknames: gambling and social connections

6.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have described how mah-jong players maintain and alter their social relationships through play. In this chapter, I explore how relationships in casinos reflect, invert, and conflict with relationships outside the casinos by analysing different groups of casino regulars' interactions, focusing especially on how they address each other.

Some of my participants compare mah-jong and casino gambling in terms of the players' social closeness: "When playing these [casino] games you can leave whenever you want and you can play any stake you like, but mah-jong is different, if you have joined the mah-jong circle, you can't say 'no' when your friends invite you to a game or you may offend them." They claim that casino gamblers 'enjoy more freedom' and are less bound by 'the social obligations at a mah-jong table'. It seems that, compared to mah-jong players, casino gamblers generally have looser social connections with each other, or their interactions and gambling have less effect on relationships outside the casino. But my own experience of addressing regular gamblers and the data on the regulars' nicknames seem to suggest something else.

6.2 Some intriguing casino experiences

During my first visit to a casino I was given a test in naming by a regular called Little Nine. It happened in London in 2007, when I went to the Golden Nugget near Leicester

Square together with my colleague Claire. Little Nine was the first man who showed he was curious about us – two relatively young women turning up in a casino but only sitting in the 'lounge' instead of going to the gaming tables. He looked in his 60s, a casino veteran. He had worked in a casino in Macao for over ten years. In the Golden Nugget everybody knows him and he knows everybody. My colleague and I must have immediately appeared to be out of place to him from the moment we entered the gaming hall. He threw me the first challenge after I told him I was a student studying gambling: 'Call me Little Nine, everybody here calls me Little Nine' he demanded. I was a bit uneasy, feeling he was testing me. 'I can't call you Little Nine,' I hesitated but soon decided to joke about it, 'that would make me sound too old for my age. I'd rather call you Uncle Nine.' Little Nine stared at me and burst into laughter and nodded his head. 'Well, very smart you are,' he commended in reply. Later, when he introduced me to his friend called Professor, he recited my words to Professor and both old men laughed with approval. I could sense that I had passed Little Nine's test. My refusal to call him Little Nine showed him that I knew about the Chinese tradition that juniors are normally not supposed to call a senior directly by his given name or nickname. Addressing members of an older generation by calling them by their given name or nickname is awkward and seen as impolite by the Chinese. I wanted him to know that I understood this and to show him that I am part of the Chinese community. Later, I also realised that by refusing to call him Little Nine, I was subconsciously showing my resistance to shortening the social distance between two first-meeting strangers into two friends who have known each other long enough to ignore the respectful manners that Chinese tradition normally demands a junior to show to his/her senior. So contradictorily, even though I wanted my refusal to use his

nickname to show Little Nine that I am from his community, I was actually suggesting to him that I was not a member of his social group in the casino.

This dilemma never left me throughout my fieldwork. While being Chinese myself, studying Chinese who gamble in casinos, even after starting to frequently gamble in order to better understand regulars, I have never been accepted as one of them. 'Nobody makes friends in casinos,' I was told. What is behind this statement? My experience becomes intriguing because it seems to reveal something different from the existing gambling research literature which argues that gambling environments provide a substitute world in which differences are abolished in both traditional societies and in the modern market economy. For example, in his comparison between Hadza and !Kung societies, Woodburn pointed out that in the Hadza's egalitarian society in Tanzania, gambling performed a levelling function (Woodburn, 1981). Mitchell also argued that the Wape of Papua New Guinea's Torricelli Mountains in the West Sepik Province used gambling as a 'levelling mechanism' (Mitchell, 1978, 1988). Dombrink and Thompson have applied this argument to casinos settings in which individual differences are diminished (Dombrink and Thompson, 1990). Marskbury also agrees that casinos act as 'social equalizers' as they ignore traditional, outward markers of class distinction. He argues that 'it is the size of the wager that determines the gambler's physical playing place within a casino, not one's skin colour, dress, speech patterns, or other typical markers of group identity and membership in American culture' (Marskbury, 2009: 96). My material seems to modify the above understanding: pre-existing relationships may be altered by gambling, but they are always relevant, sometimes contested, never insignificant. How are relationships formed and

maintained and altered over time in the casinos? How do relationships in the casinos reflect, invert and conflict with relationships outside the casino?

6.3 Casino regulars

In the four casinos near Chinatown Manchester, Chinese players constitute the largest group of regulars. Among these regulars, there are higher proportions of working-age people among the night-time regulars than the daytime regulars. This is understandable as generally working-age people tend to have time off for casino visits after working hours. But in the early mornings, there are working-age regulars in the casino in the centre of Chinatown – they are catering workers who normally leave the casinos before ten in the morning.

During fieldwork, I visited the casinos more often at daytime; my night-time visits were usually at weekends or during festivals. I arranged my visits by following the general patterns of my participants. Among my participants, the regulars were mainly daytime visitors and night-time regulars who visited casinos on festive nights or weekends like me. For the day-timers, visiting the casino was not a change from everyday life but a part of it. They tended to visit the casinos almost every day and some of them are mah-jong players. In this group, there are pensioners and housewives, as well as people who work in Chinatown near the casinos. Some of the daytime regulars stay until night or come back to the casino at night as well. My night-time regulars tend to visit on weekends or festive nights such as Chinese New Year, Boxing Day, and their birthdays. Daytime regulars and

night-time regulars are just two fluid categories which are not strictly exclusive. When I refer to daytimers, I only mean that these individuals normally visit casinos more during the day than at night.

The following table shows the information on the twenty-three participants whom I interviewed. The many other regulars who I've observed and casually approached but haven't had chance to repeatedly talk to are not included. Among the twenty-three participants, in the casinos eleven are addressed by a kinship title referring to their genealogy; ten of the eleven are daytime regulars. All eleven participants are relatively older than the other regulars, with the two youngest in their late fifties, and seven are in their seventies and eighties. Another eleven of the participants have 'obscure' nicknames, which do no reveal the addressees' genealogical position, nor their native place, or the place they've lived in long term. The obscure nicknames are normally one syllable of a regular's Chinese-given name, or their English name, or a general name such as 'sister', 'uncle' or 'boss'. All the night-time regulars are addressed with this type of name. All the regulars with an obscure nickname are of working age. Only one participant is given a nickname referring to her native place. What is more, she is the only one of the twenty-three who can not speak Hakka or Cantonese.

Age	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89
Number of regulars	2	2	2	3	5	5	4
Names in casino	2 obs	2 obs	2 obs	2 lin 1 lo	2 lin 3 obs	5 lin	2 lin 2 obs
d>n	0	0	0	1	5	4	4
n>d	2	2	1	2	0	0	0
n/d	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

d>n: the regulars who visit casino during the day more than at night

n>d: the regulars who visit casino more often at night than day

n/d: the frequency of the daytime visit and night time visit are similar; or the visitors start in the day but normally stay until night

lin: short for lineage, i.e. a nickname referring to one's lineage position

loc: short for locality, i.e. a nickname referring to one's relevant locality, such as one's native place

obs: short for obscure, i.e. a nickname not referring to lineage or locality

Daytime regulars, appeared to be more sociable than night-time regulars. Night-time regulars are usually more focused on gambling and do not want to be interrupted during the game; most of their time in casinos is spent at the gaming tables. ‘Nobody makes friends in a casino, we come here to gamble not to make friends’ I was told. The night-timers normally talk to each other only during their break at the casino food court when they have a midnight meal to boost their energy. To recruit night-time regulars to be my research participants, I had to spend months outside casinos to befriend them before I could join them during their night out to the casino. Only then did I get the opportunity to discover the underlying social world hidden by the apparent vacuum of social interactions among night-time regulars.

6.4 Three nicknames, three ways of gambling

Relationships in casinos are systematically connected to relationships outside casinos, in ways that are not immediately obvious to outsiders or temporary visitors. The first

phenomenon that caught my attention was the way casino regulars addressed each other. They seldom called each other by their real names. One of the most popular ways in which they greeted each other was with very specific kinship titles, such as ‘Sam Sou Gong’ which literally means ‘the third great patria uncle’ or ‘Yi-Gu’ which means ‘the second patria aunt’. All of the regulars who bear this type of kinship titles were Hakka or Cantonese speakers, most of them came from the New Territories, Kowloon and Yeungen Long in Hong Kong. A nickname that refers to one’s genealogical position is accepted comfortably by an addressee. In contrast, a nickname referring to one’s native place normally causes resentment in a casino regular. The regulars welcomed a kinship title as a nickname but felt upset when they were labelled with their native places, even though they do not necessarily feel shameful about their hometowns. I discovered this by making a mistake at the beginning of my fieldwork. Mrs Miu was born in Shanghai but grew up in Hong Kong. She was usually called second-sister-in-law. However, when her friends tried to introduce her to me and I did not understand that she was ‘second-sister-in-law’ – the fact was that there were several second-sister-in-laws in the casinos – they described her as ‘the Shanghai Po’. Later when I met her, I accidentally disclosed that her friends described her as ‘Shanghai Po’; she was furious and insisted that I must tell her who on earth call her Shanghai Po behind her back. Mrs Miu was actually quite proud that she was originally from Shanghai and thought Shanghai in the 1940s was more advanced than Hong Kong. The reason for her fury was not that the nickname associated her with Shanghai, as I will explain.

What does a nickname mean to a casino regular? Are there any connections between the types of nicknames among regulars and their ways of gambling? In the next sections I

present three gambling episodes involving casino regulars who have different types of nicknames: 1) a kinship title 2) a name after a locality 3) a name from a syllable of one's given name.

6.4.1 Third Great Patria Uncle: his kinship title and his game for fun

'28 IS the next one! Those who believe will gain eternity!' chanted Third Great Patria Uncle in Cantonese, imitating the tone of a priest. It was the fifth time that Third Great Patria Uncle loudly announced his prediction that afternoon at the Circus casino. He was on an electronic roulette machine connected to the roulette table to his right. There were six electronic machines in his row and I was on one of them, just opposite him. So far each of his previous four predictions had turned out to be right. This attracted a crowd of Cantonese or Hakka gamblers around him, following his bet and giving him a temporary nickname: God Fortune. His prediction seemed to come effortlessly. In fact it seemed that he just grasped whichever number that came to his mind and said it out loudly. 'Those who believe will gain eternity!' and again he jokingly summoned the others to bet on his number. I was not following him. I really hoped my £20 would last as long as possible so that I had the excuse to stay with my gambling friends. I even wished to win some money to pay for our evening meal later, after the casino – a usual practice for me and my key informants at the time. Being the youngest casino regular in the daytime, I unfailingly attracted other regulars' attention. Third Great Patria Uncle looked over the top of the machines and glanced at me. 'Game is game, if you gamble so seriously it won't be fun for you any more,' the old man said to himself but obviously it was meant to be advice for me. 'I don't want to lose too fast,' I replied. 'Well if you take it easy, you may win,' the

temporary God Fortune suggested. Third Great Patria Uncle looked relaxed and was enjoying himself in the casino. On his right, he had a cup of tea; on his left, he had a small plate of roast peanuts. He was surrounded by four other gamblers, two women and two men, all of whom called him Third Great Patria Uncle, a name which may not accurately reflect his age as he looks as if he is in his early sixties, but certainly reflects his genealogical position in living generations at his lineage village. The group bet on his number on their machines, while another man wandered between him and the roulette table. It is not uncommon in the daytime at the casino for a Cantonese or Hakka regular to announce their prediction loudly and there are always some of their fellow gamblers who bet on their prediction. God Fortune's fortune went up and down; the small group of six sighed and cheered simultaneously all through the afternoon. Later, at about half past five, Third Great Patria Uncle printed out his ticket and cashed it. While he came back to say goodbye to his 'great nieces' and 'great nephews', who were not much younger than him, he highlighted his winning to them 'Over sixty pounds, quite enough for one day!' He left his fans satisfied.

Such an afternoon in the casino is a perfect time for Third Great Patria Uncle. Wining sixty pounds may not have been so important as being surrounded by a group of his own people – a group of Hakka or Cantonese speakers who called him Third Great Patria Uncle. What's more, they were willing to bet on his prediction and they all shared the same sentiment of gambling. Their interaction is intense and harmonious.

Third Great Patria Uncle is a typical daytime Chinese regular: originally from Hong Kong or having lived in Hong Kong for many years and established a family there; having come to Britain before the 1980s via chain migration and then joined their families, relatives or fellow villagers in the catering trade. In Britain their common social language is Cantonese or Hakka and they share a common social network with families, relatives or lineage members from the New Territories, Kowloon or Yeungen Long in Hong Kong. This social network largely existed before they migrated. In fact it is this social network that has enabled their chain migration. Their families, relatives or lineage members had set up business here and they came to work in their restaurants or take-way shops and eventually set up their own catering businesses. Chain migration helps to extend a migrant's pre-migration social network to his post-migration life. The migrants who came via chain migration normally rely heavily on this social network to find their jobs and settle down in their early days of migration. Chain migration and work in the catering industry have helped them to consolidate this social connection with each other, whether they appreciate it or not. Among this social network, they do not just know each other, they also know each other's families and relatives and fellow villagers. Thus calling each other with each other's kinship title is quite common among this group. For example, Sauchun is a Siyinese, and she has married another Siyinese man, Mr Yeung. Mr Yeung's older brother-in-law came to Britain in the 1950s because Sauchun's father-in-law wanted to open his own restaurant and needed help. When the restaurant was open, Sauchun and Mr Yeung came and join them. Eventually Sauchun's husband's extended family and her father-in-law's brother's family all migrated to Britain and settled in northwest England. The family worked hard and now has four generations in Britain. Mr Yeung is the second

oldest son in his generation in the extended family. He was not called Mr Yeung in Chinatown but second-patria-grandpa, second-patria-uncle, or second older brother. Sauchun is called second-patria-grandma, second-patria-aunt, or second-older-sister-in-law. Their nicknames disclose to the people in Chinatown that they have their extended family network in Britain. The nicknames are a symbol of their access to the kinship network.

Nicknames reflect social connections. Third Great Patria Uncle as a nickname does not necessarily reflect the addressee’s age but definitely tells us about his genealogical position at his lineage village, and even tells a bit about his migration history. He is the third oldest son of the generation who now has at least one grandchild. He is not the earliest migrant from his generation of his lineage group, because if he was he would have been called Grandpa instead of Great Uncle. Those who know him will also be able to track his genealogical connection with his other families, relatives or fellow villagers if his village is a lineage village. Not every casino regular is named according to his genealogy. Used as a name, a kinship title usually suggests the close social relation between addresser and addressee. They normally have known each other for many years, and know each other's families. A casino for these regulars with a kinship title is like a social club. They enjoy each other's company and they seem to gamble simply for fun; as was put by Third Great Patria Uncle, they enjoy gambling rather than taking it seriously. I suspect his relaxed attitude towards gambling is largely affected by his access to the social network secured by the lineage connection commonly appreciated by the Hakka or Cantonese casino regulars from Hong Kong. This point will become more obvious when Third Great

Patria Uncle's gambling is compared to the other regulars who have not been given a kinship title.

Kinship titles are the most popular type of nicknames in casinos. This shows that lineage is still an active dynamic among this group of regulars. The continuity of lineage network in this post-migration group has its origin in both the Chinese traditional sociality and pragmatic factors the migrants came across before, during and after their migration. In the following section, I will try to explore both of these aspects.

Traditionally in a lineage village, a lineage usually possesses certain forms of property such as ancestral halls, graveyards and joint estates that benefit the lineage members' education and welfare; usually a lineage also shares legislation on rules of behaviour and a council of clan elders which pass judgments and settle disputes (Freedmen, 1966; Watson, 1975). However, as Brandtstälter and Santos have indicated, kinship practices and representations are historical and therefore subject to transformations (Brandtstälter and Santos, 2009). Among Chinese communities in Manchester, the lineage material possessions do not exist. Lineage organisation also seems absent in Manchester. Informants mentioned that they don't feel there is the need to build another ancestral hall in Manchester as they have their 'authentic' halls back home and their genealogies are also kept at their native places. It was common for my participants to send money back home to refurbish their ancestral halls and fund the annual ancestral worship ritual even though they did not go back every year. Building a separate ancestral hall was not necessary unless the group of people were setting up themselves as a separate segment of

their clan. Many Chinese casino regulars disclosed to me that they would travel back to their native places to worship in their ancestral halls there.

While losing material forms of lineage association, casino regulars still rely on their genealogy as 'a set of claims to origin and relationships...a framework for wide-ranging social organization' (Freedman, 1966: 31). In post-migration Chinese society in Manchester, lineage association may not take the traditional material forms, but they are apparent in people's sociality. The eleven regulars with kin titles initially gained their titles from their extended family members in Britain. In casinos, however, those who call them by their kinship titles are not necessarily their relatives. Kinship titles in casinos become a metaphor suggesting a form of close voluntary association among the regulars. This association is anchored in the memories of their pragmatic needs in the past as well as their needs for cultural affiliation. In casinos the Cantonese and Hakka speakers from Hong Kong are the dominant group. The gaming floor is open to everyone, but their group remains insular. Their reliance on lineage members or fellow villagers and the rejection of outsiders has a distinctive historical background.

6.4.2 Shanghai Po: her name and her performance on roulette

Not every daytime regular shares the same relaxed attitude towards gambling. In fact there are various types of other regulars who are given different types of nicknames, and gamble differently. In the following case, it is impossible for this regular to announce her prediction loudly; neither will the other regulars follow her bet. She's not named after a genealogy, instead she is called Shanghai Po (Shanghai old woman), a name referring to

her native place. The social interactions between her and the other regulars are far from harmonious. She is openly treated as an outsider. Although she also plays roulette, Shanghai Po is very different from Third Great Patria Uncle. For her, gambling among the group of Cantonese and Hakka regulars is not a game to be enjoyed, but a performance on a life stage. She gambles alone, quietly and seriously. She is the only Mandarin speaker in the group of Chinese regulars. As I speak Mandarin too, she sometimes chats with me and asks me to call her 'Heroine'.

Heroine couldn't speak or understand Hakka very well as she had always lived in Shanghai before she came over to Britain. Heroine came over to visit her son who attended a university in the Midlands six years previously, and she met her current partner in the Midlands. Heroine's son graduated and went back to Shanghai, but Heroine stayed on and moved to Manchester with her partner. Heroine was a *petite entrepreneur* in Shanghai. She said she had an entrepreneurial tradition in her family; her dad was a successful businessman and her family ran one of the earliest fridge factories in Shanghai before the Communist Party came into power in 1949. Her family lost their property at the beginning of the Mao era, and she became a factory worker after the Cultural Revolution. But she had a dream of reviving her family's previous glory and she quit her job from a state-owned factory to set up her own little clothes store in the early 1990s when the central government started economic reform and allowed people to open private businesses. She proudly disclosed to me that in the 1990s she had earned enough money to buy her family a two-bedroom flat in notoriously expensive Shanghai. But she felt that her business was restrained in China and she always wanted to leave China like some of her

cousins did, who she says are all running ‘big businesses’ in Southeast Asia or North America. Among the casino regulars, there is gossip about how Heroine shamefully lives with her partner while both of them still have legal spouses in China. Heroine was resentful that ‘the Hakka look down upon’ her and were saying she ‘only lives with the man for a British status’ (by which was meant British citizenship). The regulars said that once Heroine got her citizenship she would leave the man. Heroine visits the casino together with her partner almost every day in the daytime and stays until evening. She is called ‘Shanghai Po’ openly. In return she calls the regulars from New Territories ‘Ke Jia lao’, literally ‘Hakka old man’. Heroine does not feel that she belongs to the Cantonese and Hakka speakers' group. The Cantonese and Hakka regulars do not treat her as one of them either. To them Heroine is another newcomer from China trying to undermine their interests and using their men to gain a British passport. I will come back to the historic reasons for this group's suspicion about Chinese people from mainland China. Heroine's native place seems to be the connection that blocks her entrance into the social group to which Third Great Patria Uncle belongs. Heroine feels she is rejected by the group of Hakka and Cantonese speakers when they call her Shanghai Po, a name that does not sound friendly. In casinos, in fact, it is a name rarely given to any other regulars.

Heroine began to gamble together with her partner two months before I first interviewed her. I described how she treats gambling as ‘research’ in chapter five. In the following quote, she discusses her relationships with her fellow regulars:

> I tell you, now they all know me, and they want me to teach them to win. But I won't, it is still risky. If my prediction is right, they will be happy but not

> necessarily grateful to me, if my prediction is wrong, they will definitely hate me. I would rather win on my own money and invite them for a free meal...They never like me, those Hong Kongers, they always think I live with the man for a British status. I am not who they thought I am. They were peasants from the New Territories, they can hardly read or write. I would not expect them to understand me, but now at least they know who I am. I use my brain and I gamble better than them although I only started a few weeks ago and they'd gambled for dozens of years.

Heroine takes her gambling as a performance on a life stage, showing who she is to the other regulars. She was aware that addressing someone with a kinship title was favoured among casino daytime regulars and that calling someone after his/her native place or the place where the person has lived for long term was least welcome. Shanghai Po is a name that causes resentment. Po in Cantonese means woman or old woman, showing the least personal attachment, revealing nothing particular about the addressee apart from gender and even unfavourably suggesting the woman is old and with no style at all. In contrast to the affiliation suggested by kinship titles, addressing a woman with her native place plus 'Po' would normally appear to be rather unfriendly. In the casinos, this type of address usually occurs between people who do not share the same hometown or the same lineage network, and do not mind highlighting their differences brought by the different localities. While calling somebody by his or her kinship title is thus a gesture of proper intimacy in a social interaction, calling a woman from Shanghai 'Shanghai Po' is a gesture that maintains social distance.

Third Great Patria Uncle appears to be most willing to interact with the other regulars. He does not hesitate to declare his prediction; neither does he appear to worry that his fellow gamblers might blame him if his prediction is wrong. His social connection with the other regulars, who call him great uncle, appears to be secure compared to Heroine's. His position as Third Great Patria Uncle will not be affected by the accuracy of his prediction; even if he is no longer Good Fortune, he is always Third Great Patria Uncle. Heroine is different in being called Shanghai Po and in being openly rejected by the majority of the daytime Chinese regulars; she does not have the same sense of security in the social network encompassing her. If she is not trying to get rid of the nickname Shanghai Po, she is trying to make it sound more positive. 'Shanghai Po is brainy,' she once said, commending herself. She constantly endeavours to construct her image through gambling. She does not limit her gambling to being merely a game for fun. By showing the others that she knows how to use her brain to win the game and by generously sharing her winnings by inviting the others to free meals, Heroine takes gambling as her opportunity to establish and improve her relations with the Cantonese and Hakka regulars.

6.4.3 Chee: an obscure name

Third Great Patria Uncle readily interacts with the other regulars while Heroine cautiously interacts with them. Will, a night-time regular, appears to abandon any social interaction with the other gamblers. Will says, 'We come to the casino to gamble, not to socialise.' But even in this example, and despite Will's non-interaction with others, his gambling is highly affected by both his existing social connections and his perception of the social

space in casinos. His gambling, including his non-interaction, is in fact an eloquent comment on casino gambling, and on his place in the world.

In the casinos, Will is known as Chee, one of the syllables in his Chinese given name. His sister Chrystal is known as Chin, also one of the syllables in her Chinese given name. Nicknames like Chee and Chin are the third common category of casino nicknames. The most obvious characteristic of this type of nickname is obscurity: this type of name reveals almost nothing about the person who bears it.

Will and Chrystal are from China's Canton province to the north of the New Territories. Will is eighteen months younger than Chrystal, both are in their 30s, and both run their take-away shops in a small town near Manchester. They visit the casino at weekends and at night. On Boxing Day 2008, I went to the casino together with them and three workers from Will's shop. We stayed there until the next morning. Chrystal had brought 'only five hundred pounds for a bit of fun'. The next morning when we left the casino she said she had actually spent more than £500, having put in another £800 that she 'happened to have collected' from her take-way shop earlier that day. Chrystal seemed not to mind disclosing information about gambling, while Will was always angry with his ‘tale-telling’ sister. But Chrystal has her logic: 'People don't believe each other anyway, even if I tell the truth, people will not believe it, so why shall I bother to make up something'. Will shares the same belief in distrust amongst people but prefers to keep his lips zipped. He didn't disclose how much he had spent that night even though both his sister and I had been quite

open about our budgets and our actual expenses that night. Will is very cautious about disclosing any private information to other casino gamblers.

When we went onto the gaming floor, Will exchanged greetings with several other Chinese gamblers with nods of the head, no names was involved in the greetings. A middle-aged man in tie and shirt smiled and nodded to Chrystal and said ‘Long time no see!’ Chrystal replied with a smile, saying, ‘Long time no see,’ then turned her head and murmured into my ear, ‘Embarrassing! I actually can't remember who he is!’ Will organised the night: ‘Now we all go and play, and at twelve o'clock we'll go to have some food together’. The men all scattered to different tables, while I stayed with Chrystal. I tried to look around to find Will and his workers, but they seemed to be buried in the crowd. I walked around the whole hall and found Will playing blackjack at a table at the inner end of the gaming hall. On Will's table, there were only him and an old Chinese man. Both men stared at the cards with no facial expression at all. I stood by the table; Will seemed not to see me. In fact at that moment it appeared to me that Will was gambling behind a glass shield that separated him from the noisy crowd around, but my impression was proved wrong after we left the casino the next morning when he scolded Chrystal for talking too much on the other side of the gaming hall. Although Will showed no emotion on his face, it seems that he was nonetheless aware of his surroundings.

Twelve o'clock came. Will and his men came over to our table: ‘Time for food. Don’t tell me you are so addicted that you don’t want to leave the table,’ he laughed at me. We all went down to the casino's restaurant on the ground floor，where we saw the man in tie

and shirt again. This time he nodded to Will. Chrystal grasped the chance to find out about the man from her brother. ‘Don't you remember him? He's Eddie. He used to boast how rich he was in the [gaming] hall. Stupid man. Don't you remember the case? Somebody wanted to kidnap his son but got his neighbour's boy by mistake.’ ‘Oh, so it was him!’ Chrystal recalled ‘Oh so he is THAT Eddie’. Soon Will changed the topic to another man he met in the gaming hall, “Did you see Dragon just now? He is rich now. I heard he'd bought two houses and had more than ten workers working for him. He's no longer that poor chap, calling our mum ‘Mummy, Mummy’ all around her; that's why Mum doesn't get the chance to see him now. She is not needed any more.” Will grinned and shrugged his shoulders, then continued, “He still wanted to pretend. He asked me just now ‘How's Mummy?’ You know what he was like, ‘Mummy’, ‘Mummy’. Guess what I did. I took my phone out at once and said, ‘If you really care how my mum is, why don't you phone her and ask her for yourself? Don't have a phone? Here is one.’ Of course he didn't take it...” Earlier that night I actually saw Dragon and Chrystal at the same gaming table first but they quickly left for different tables, and they didn't speak to each other either, only a nod of the head as a greeting. If I had not heard Will and Chrystal's chit-chat at the food court, I would have thought they were all strangers to Will and Chrystal. I started to sense that there is a hidden social world beneath the surface of minimal interaction between the night-time regulars. And it was the next morning after we left the casino that I had another chance to see more of this undiscovered world.

The next morning, on our way back to the small town we lived, in Will's car, Will fiercely condemned his older sister having been ‘stupidly loud’ in the casino, ‘broadcasting her

winning and losing of every single bet'. 'Now everyone knows you've won a hundred and sixty-four in total and everybody knows your favourite number is twenty-nine! What do you want from that? Fame? You want to be like Eddie', he mocked. 'Don't you know that the casino is complicated and the less the others know about you the better? Winning this moment doesn't mean winning all the time.' He continued to confidently educate his sister about the ways of the casino, 'In fact, at the end of the day, we all lose, and only the casino wins. But some people lose stupidly and some people lose cleverly. You know tonight, the old man next to me, he'd lost a lot, he lost more than two thousand in one hand, but he hadn't even raised his eyebrow once; if I wasn't beside him, I wouldn't have known he'd lost that much, nobody could tell he was losing. Gambling should be like that. Losing like that is worth it.' I asked him whether people socialise with each other in casinos. He shrugged his shoulders, 'Where have you got that funny idea from? Who ever goes to casinos to socialise? People just come to gamble, direct to the table, no nonsense... Nobody will ever imagine making friends in a casino…We go to the casino to gamble, not to socialise.'

Will is like many other night-time regulars, especially those who are there late at night, in tending not to talk to others at the gaming table (unlike the day-time regulars). But under the surface of this minimal communication, the night-time regulars may actually know a lot about each other, and some of them even have or have had very close social connections outside the casino. Dragon, the man mentioned bitterly by Will, once lived in Will and Chrystal's mother's house. According to Chrystal, their mother Jade 'adopted' the man as her son ten years ago 'when he was penniless in his early days in Britain'. Will and

Chrystal thought Dragon exploited their mother. (Jade's story will be presented and analysed later in this chapter.)

Although night-time regulars like Will appear to ignore the other gamblers and indulge in the game only, relationships are nonetheless altered, managed and acknowledged. Avoidance of contact is an important component of this ‘antisocial socialising’. The absence of any interaction between Chrystal and Dragon expresses the indifference to each other caused by unhappy memories of the days they spent together in their mother's house. It could also be their way of constructing an image of themselves as veteran gamblers, instead of a novice who is easily carried away by temporary winning or loosing. Will's 'lecture' to his sister also reveals another aspect of ‘no talking’ – the absence of trust of the other gamblers in the casino. But without hearing Will's chat in the restaurant, I would have had no way of discovering the meanings of their non-interaction. I wouldn't have known that he actually knows some of the regulars, and indeed has been kin with them, because they appeared as strangers to each other. To understand gambling and the interactions between gamblers, knowledge about the gamblers' social relations outside the gambling context is essential. Observing the interactions at the gaming table without relating it to the gamblers' social connections outside the casino can easily lead to a misinterpretation that night-time regulars only come to gamble and are otherwise unconnected, in some kind of social vacuum.

Night-time Chinese regulars are generally different from the daytime regulars in terms of migration experience. Most of the night-time regulars are working age people and came to

Britain after the 1980s. Most of the daytimers are pensioners or over 50s and came a lot earlier than most of the night-time regulars. Most of the daytimers with a kinship title came from the New Territories or its surrounding areas Kowloon and Yeungen Long. The night-timers' native places are more varied. Their channels into Britain also vary. Chain migration has not been the main migration channel for the night-timers. The night-time regulars mostly fall out of the lineage network that is available for most daytime regulars. Social grouping is comparatively loose and unformed. Among the night-time regulars names like Third Great Patria Uncle or Shanghai Po are not used. They tend to either avoid addressing each other by name, for example they may just nod their head to each other or they may use a very obscure name, such as an English name or one syllable of the addressee's given name, or 'boss' and 'lady-in-charge'. These names are not sufficient for a Chinese person to identify the exact individual addressed. Obscure names reflect the unstable social connections among the group. The unstable social connections among them affect the way they interact with each other, and thus the way they gamble. Will's complete silence reflects his distrust towards the others; on the other hand Will shares something in common with Heroine – they both try to construct their image as a veteran gambler by remaining utterly calm and by not talking much to the others. Will is like Heroine, he has no secure social network to fall back on. Both of them take their gambling seriously as a way of stabilising their social network with the other gamblers, by either trying to shorten the social distance like Heroine does or by trying to keep the distance, like Will does. Although Will's connection with Dragon is quite strong, Dragon first tried to bury the connection with Will's family after he moved out and lived independently. Dragon became known as a Hakka entrepreneur thriving in a British metropolitan city.

Will, his sister, and their mother, remain excluded from the Hakka group. Will works hard to underplay this connection and urges his sister to do the same. By keeping their connections superficial, Will and Dragon are maintaining their detachment from each other's social networks. And Will is also maintaining his pride, and independence from Dragon's Hakka network.

6.4.4 Nicknames and social connections

I have shown that nicknames in casinos reflect the social connections. Kinship titles reflect a comparative shorter social distance between an addresser and an addressee, and names referring to origins create and reflect a greater social distance between an addresser and an addressee. In the middle of this spectrum, is an obscure middle zone. In this zone, social distance is not decided by biological connection, one's native place, or general social stratification, but by personal affiliation or for pragmatic reasons. Personal affiliation or pragmatic factors, are more changeable, relative to biological connections or ones' native place. The most significant feature of obscure names is that they are transitory and fluid: just like the relationships they represent.

In a Cantonese or Hakka context, calling each other 'sister', 'brother', 'aunt' or 'uncle' is a common and popular (although not the only) way of addressing each other in informal circumstances. Calling somebody directly by their given name is regarded as impolite unless it happens among acquaintances, friends and families. When two strangers address each other, if in a formal situation, they usually call each other Mr/Mrs/Miss plus their surname. In an informal situation, they call each other 'sister', 'brother', 'aunt' or 'uncle'.

When the social distance is shortened and the people are more familiar with each other, they will change the temporary title into a more permanent name, such as their given name, or if they become friends with the acquaintances' families, they may begin to follow their friends' families and call each other by their kinship titles. Names that refer to one's position at work, such as 'chairman', 'director' 'chef', 'boss', 'lady in charge' or 'head teacher' often are used to declare one's work status or as a memorial of a person's former position which he or she may feel proud of (or at the very least, they won't be offended when addressed by their old titles). For example, one of my informants who ran a restaurant in Manchester was called 'Head Teacher' because he was once a head teacher in Guangzhou.

Obscure names, are not always and in all cases more temporary than kinship titles and names that refer to locality. Kinship titles are open to change in that they may reflect changes to one's position in a lineage network. This is normally caused by a change in one's marital status. For example, Ms Lee Wong Ying was once call 'Sam Souk', literally 'the-third-sister-in-law'; now she is often called 'Ah Ying' by her friends at casino. Mrs Miu was called 'Shanghai Po' by some people who were not close to her but was called 'Yi Souk', meaning 'the-second-sister-in-law'. On the other hand, although obscure names normally have a fluidity and transitory character, they can actually become long term names for a person too. This happens between individuals who do not share the same lineage network but become acquaintances and their relationship becomes comparatively stable. The social distances between them are eventually acknowledged or become clear as their backgrounds and circumstances are revealed. No matter whether transitory or

comparatively permanent, the names used among the Chinese casino regulars are the badges they give each other to reflect their position in the social network they either share or exclude from each other. The following case of Jade, mother of Will and Chrystal, will reveal more about a nickname's pragmatic meanings in reflecting social connections.

6.5 The pragmatic meanings of nicknames: a case study

Jade is in her late fifties. She has three children; Chrystal and Will are the children from her first marriage in Guangdong, China. Driven by poverty in China in the 1970s, Jade left her children in a small village in Guangdong and went to work in Hong Kong when Chrystal and Will were four and two respectively. The mother and children reunited in Britain twelve years later when Jade had finally transformed herself from a clothes factory worker at Kowloon in Hong Kong into a *petite entrepreneur* running her own take-away shop and was called 'lady-in-charge' by the other Chinese regulars in casinos. Jade later even opened a mah-jong club house in Chinatown. Although the mah-jong club was not successful and she closed it, she became known as 'lady-in-charge' by almost everyone who had business in Chinatown. Jade gambled a lot when she was the 'lady-in-charge', and was one of the early VIP room customers in casinos in the 1980s. Jade wasn't always the 'lady-in-charge'. She was called 'fat-sis' before she opened her own business, and she later lost her 'lady-in-charge' title among most people when she lost her two shops and two houses and began to work for a Chinese grocery shop in her fifties. When I asked Jade what people in casinos called her she said, 'People called her 'lady-in-charge'.' Her daughter quickly corrected her in a mocking tone, "Bushtit! Who on earth still calls you lady-in-charge? They just call you 'fat-sis' again don't they?" Jade appeared to be rather

embarrassed and couldn't respond to her daughter and fell silent for quite a while during the interview.

Life was tough for Jade when she first came over to Britain in the 1980s. Unlike the New Territories villagers, she did not have a lineage network to rely upon. As a new migrant worker, she had not gained access to the social network of local people either. She was doubly isolated. Restaurants and take-away shops made good profits in those days, and the New Territories villagers who lost their land due to Hong Kong's urbanisation migrated to Britain and were eager to set up their own catering businesses. Bank loans were not difficult to obtain but at most would only cover forty per cent of the money needed to open a restaurant. The former villagers at that time would find a business partner from their lineage group and open a restaurant together. Watson (1975) has provided a detailed account in his ethnography of the New Territories emigration. In his account he mentioned how early migrants overcame the shortage of funding to set up their restaurants. Before secret societies in Chinatown were established and loan sharks became active, ex-villagers formed voluntary money groups among themselves, usually with dozens of members. This activity continues and caught Christiansen's attention in his study of the Chinatowns in Europe (Christiansen, 2003). Members of the money groups put money regularly into a pool and the one who was in most urgent need withdrew money from the pool and paid it back with regular payments afterwards. Both the joint businesses and the money groups were forms of informal voluntary economic cooperation for the early immigrants in the sixties and seventies. Because this cooperation is not protected by a formal social system such as legislation or regulation, the risks fall directly on every individual who participates

in such a partnership or group. To decrease the risks, this type of cooperation normally only takes place among people who are acquaintances. In the late sixties and seventies, the New Territories villagers came to Britain via chain migration following their lineage members' and thus brought with them the lineage network. This lineage network became their first social resource in Britain. This lineage network from their hometown helped to decrease the risks of the two types of informal economic cooperation and also in the early days kept these two resources exclusively for lineage members or fellow-villagers.

Obtaining a name has been an issue for Jade. She is a Hakka from mainland China and has lived with a man from New Territories until he passed away. She adopted Dragon, a teenage boy from the New Territories. But all through her time with the Hakka, she has not been given a kinship title referring to her Hakka partner's genealogy. For the Hakka from the New Territories, she was only a 'fat-sis', a name that could be given to any obscure woman. The failure to gain a name with a kinship title suggests that Jade has not been accepted into the social network constructed by the Hakka of the New Territories. Chrystal once regretted her mother's relationship with the Hakka man, "If she lived with someone who treated her properly, I wouldn't regret, but they never took her as one of them...they just called her 'fat-sis'". Jade's relationship with a New Territories man and her adoption of a New Territories boy haven't brought her a kinship title, and she was not able to set up her own business. She invited her children over to Britain after her partner died and she inherited enough money to turn herself into a shop owner. It was then she gained her nickname as 'shi tau po' (lady-in-charge). She finally got a name that she was content with and stopped trying to secure a kinship title. However, she lost the 'lady-in-

charge' title five years ago and was now again called 'fat-sis' although some old acquaintances still call her 'lady-in-charge'. 'Lady-in-charge' is a conditional badge and not as stable as nicknames that refer to kinship and locality.

Jade's son-in-law says that she gambles to show the others that she is capable. Three years ago, Jade stopped casino gambling and she still owes several loan sharks 'almost a hundred thousand pounds in total'. Chrystal and Will said they couldn't stop their mother from gambling because firstly she was gambling on 'her own money', secondly, they couldn't find out when and where she was anyway. Chrystal once told me that she never knew where her mother was, even while she was helping out in her mother's shop every day. 'I was only told that the three hundred and fifty pounds in the counter's drawer is the interest money that Mr Lee (the loan shark) will come to collect weekly,' Chrystal recalled. Bright is Chrystal's husband, who never stops mocking his mother-in-law's 'silliness'. Bright disclosed to me that Jade quit gambling only because she got beaten up by her creditors who were irritated by her 'having the money to gamble but not having the money to pay the interest'. 'It is the loan sharks who forced her to stop gambling at the end,' Bright says. When Bright mocked about her loss Jade didn't say a word but seemingly was just sitting comfortably on her sofa. She later commented about herself to me, 'I am a good person, and I am happy, even though I am penniless now I am still happy...to tell you the truth, if one day I have the money again, I'll still go back, but now, [I have] only a few thousand [and to gamble with a few thousand pounds] is meaningless'. There is something in common between Jade, Will and Heroine; they have no kinship titles, and also, for them, gambling is not just a game played for fun.

Addressing each other with or without a kinship title is a small element of the Chinese casino regulars' daily life. However, a regular's nickname reflects his or her access to the encompassing social network. The power of a name to symbolise social connection is clear. The practice of different types of nicknames among this group of Chinese regulars subtly affects their way of gambling. A regular with a kinship title seems to be more relaxed about gambling – they tend to take gambling as a game only. A regular who has no access to such a social network seems to be more conscious about the connection between their gambling and their relationships with other regulars.

6.6 Nicknames and kinship associations' continuity and change

Among the twenty-three casino regulars I have interviewed, fourteen of them are addressed with kinship titles, one of them is named after a locality, and the remaining eight are given nicknames which reveal limited information about the named individual, such as Chee and Chin, which I refer to as 'obscure' nicknames because of the limited information they reveal about the person and also because of its transitory character as discussed. Next, I will focus on kinship titles and their social meanings.

6.6.1 Kinship association in traditional Chinese society

In traditional Chinese society, kinship association and locality association are two obvious modes of social interaction. The importance of family, lineage connection and locality connection have been proven by a few sinologists' work on Chinese society in different geographical areas and historical eras, from the Jiangcun village in East China in the pre-

Mao period (Fei, 1947), the villages in Fujian in South China and Hong Kong (Freedmen, 1958, 1966), the Man lineage village at the New Territories (Watson, 1976, Li, 1997) and the northern Guangdong in South China after the Chinese economic reform (Santos, 2008; Brandtstädter and Santos, 2009) and the north China urban society in the 1990s (Jankowiak, 2009). Social groupings are largely centred on kinship and locality. When there is no locality association in a specific locality, identifying someone with his or her native place does not bring any instant chance of social affiliation – instead, it excludes the person from the existing lineage network that is available to others in that environment. In the case of Manchester casino regulars, it means the exclusion of someone from the quasi lineage network or Hakka dialect group formed by the villagers from the New Territories. It is thus understandable why the woman from Shanghai dislikes being called 'Shanghai Po'. When a locality network is absent, a kinship network becomes more important. Usually there are various ways of constructing social networks, for example schooling, work, neighbourhood, shared interest or other practical or effective factors. However, these routes are not immediately available for a migrant in the early years following migration. Therefore, for the first-generation of Chinese migrants, an individual's social network often springs from lineage and one's native place. For former villagers from lineage villages, the lineage network comes first in this service, and the native place, in their case the New Territories or Hong Kong, is the extended realm of lineage.

6.6.2 Pre-migration background for the migrants' kinship associations

Reliance on lineage for social association is accompanied by the group's distrust of 'outsiders'. Conflicts between the indigenous villagers in the New Territories and their sense of superiority to late-comers are used to account for the distrust between former villagers from Hong Kong and non-Hong Kong migrants.

Those who had moved and settled in the New Territories before 1898 gained the status of 'indigenous people' and a male 'indigenous' villager in the New Territories has the right to claim a 70 square metre two-storied village-style house once in their lifetime after they turned 17. They owned the lease of the land in the New Territories; this right did not change, even after they had migrated to the city in Hong Kong or to Britain. Those who went to the New Territories after 1898 had to rent accommodation and farm land from indigenous people. This also is one of the factors that make indigenous Cantonese or Hakka from the New Territories feel superior to later migrants from China, and this attitude still could be seen among them in Manchester. Another reason for the not so harmonious relations between New Territories indigenous and later migrants is the conflict caused by the rapid urbanisation of Hong Kong which Watson called the emergence of a 'cash economy' (Watson, 1975). Basically the establishment of light industrial areas in Hong Kong attracted large populations of people into Yeung Long, Kowloon, and the demand for vegetables, which were essential for Chinese cuisine, increased dramatically. The government encouraged the New Territories farmers to convert their rice fields into vegetable plots. According to Watson, the farmers on the one hand did not have the experience and skills to grow vegetables, and converting the fields demanded large amounts of money and that seemed risky so they were reluctant to invest

in the conversion. However, newcomers from China had been vegetable farmers before and so they rented the land from the indigenous villagers at a very low rate ('not even enough to cover a year's cigarette supply' as Watson's informant said) for many years and made comparatively good money out of vegetable farming. The original farmers, having lost the right to use their land for many years since they'd rented their leases to the newcomers, and having seen the newcomers make good money on the land they owned, became suspicious of the newcomers. They saw them as exploiting land to make money and then simply leaving it ruined when the rental periods ended. The indigenous villagers who had lost their land hadn't adequate formal education or gained other work skills, found it difficult to get a job in the factories where many new migrants from China were working. Conflicts of interests and the indigenous group's privilege in land lease historically contribute to the complex relationships between the two groups before and after they migrated to Britain.

6.6.3 Lineage networks after migration

Although Watson focuses on a well-established Cantonese single lineage village, the Mans' village, I would argue that this experience was also shared by other villagers in the New Territories. The decline of the agricultural economy and the impact of urbanisation did not fall on only one particular village. Although different villages occupied different types of land, some villages were smaller or multi-lineage, or bigger and more established like Mans, but in terms of relying on rice farming for their basic income, the New Territories rice farmers were facing a similar need for alternative ways of making their living. There weren't many employment opportunities for men inside the villages. This

situation provided the internal pressure that pushed farmers to find jobs outside their native villages. In Watson's account of Mans emigration to London, he writes ‘During the transition stage from agriculture to emigration (1957–1962), a number of villagers tried to establish themselves as merchants or small-scale manufacturers in the nearby market towns of Yeungen Long and Shek Wu Hui. Most of these aspiring entrepreneurs were ex-farmers who had little knowledge of business operation...Most of the Man business ventures in the market towns failed within two years because of a similar lack of insight and planning’ (1975:57) This echoes the fact that some of my informants who are Hakka ran small businesses in Yeungen Long before they came over to Britain and they have learned to speak Cantonese, the language of the merchant class. Although they were no longer farmers in the New Territories, they had shared a common experience.

When the traditional rice farmers lost the use of their farmland, they were encouraged to leave for Britain. The New Territories, as Watson points out, became ‘a convenient recruiting ground for European ships’ because ‘Hong Kong was a regular stop on most Pacific freighter routes’ (75:60). The New Territories had generated the most seafarers and sailors up to the Second World War, some of whom had opened restaurants in Britain. After World War Two, their businesses started to grow and more people were needed to work in the catering sector. In Watson's village, the initial restaurant founders encouraged their lineage members to join them abroad. Chain migration is not exclusively to do with Mans although some scholars may argue that Mans were well-established and so more ready for chain migration than other small-scale villages. But my data shows that, even though none of my informants are from the five biggest lineage groups in Hong Kong,

some of them actually migrated to Hong Kong between the 1930s and 1970s. They may not have share a direct lineage bond with the local groups but my participants found their connection via their native place in China and joined chain migration: migrating to Britain via their lineage membership. In fact, the use of lineage connections to organise migration happened earlier, before they came to Britain. Jade went to Hong Kong to look for a job because she had a cousin in a factory in Kowloon. Among my informants who had migrated from China to Hong Kong after 1898, there is only one woman who went to Hong Kong who did not purposefully go to join a relative. She was actually lost and mistakenly boarded a ship to Hong Kong when she was only six. Apart from her, the rest of my post-1898 migrants went to Hong Kong following their families or relatives' footsteps. And many of them also followed lineage members' footsteps over to Britain in the 1960s and seventies. The prevalence of chain migration helps to explain the importance of lineage connections for the early first generation of Chinese migrants who lived in Hong Kong for many years and then came to Britain before the 1980s during the restaurant boom.

The significance of lineage and locality networks' pragmatics may be vanishing now that immigrants have found their permanent niche in local society and many of them have moved their businesses away from Chinatown. Their connection with any lineage group is weakened. But kinship nicknames and locality nicknames still suggest an individual's connection to a certain lineage group and a certain locality. These connections may be revived when social circumstances need them or allow them to play a role again. In fact this revival has occurred in China and is noted by anthropologists who have studied

kinship in the post-Mao era in China (Santos, 2008; Brandtstädter and Santos, 2009; Jankowiak, 2009). Chinese who have lived with these two modes of association may not easily put this possibility out of their mind and use it as a 'back up' when the lesser provisions of an increasingly market oriented society are found wanting.

6.7 Conclusion

I do not intend to say that all those migrants who once relied on their lineage members for migration and settlement after migration have to be addressed with a name that refers to their genealogical position. Neither do I intend to reach a conclusion that a nickname referring to one's native place definitely means social rejection. The meanings of all nicknames are transitory and context dependent. My fieldwork has revealed that in a casino, kinship titles suggest their bearers' access to the social network of lineage members and friends related to lineage members. Those who have access to such a network appear to have a comparatively more relaxed attitude towards gambling. Their nicknames reflect their social connections, and their various ways into different social networks affect their way of gambling as well as their perceptions of gambling. To understand a common statement from a gambler, such as 'we only come to gamble, not to socialise', we need to look at this statement against the gambler's social relations with the other gamblers and his or her access to a social network outside the casinos. Perhaps my other aim is to convince you that to understand gambling, we have to relate people's behaviours in the gaming context to the other networks that encompass them. And that social network extends, geographically far beyond casinos, and historically, for migrants, into a time before their migratory journeys ever began.

Nowadays state sanctioned and commercialised gambling is portrayed by gambling providers as a type of leisure consumption. A night out at a casino is described as a pleasurable entertainment for casino visitors; and casino gambling is associated with ‘play’ and fun, and as safe and separable from everyday life. Casinos seem to be adult Disneylands, their doors open to almost any individual without making distinctions based on social status. In casinos, games are open for any visitor to the venue, but whether someone automatically becomes a member of the gaming space by joining in the game(s) is still a question open for discussion. Marksbury’s interpretation of a casino as a ‘social equalizer’ may be related to him separating casino gambling from other aspects of gamblers' lives (2009). By exploring life within and outside the casino I have been able to suggest the contrary – that distinctions *are* made within the casino and that these distinctions are a reflection of relationships that extend through space and time, well beyond the casino and the present.

For scholars of games and gaming, whether casino gambling can be separated from the rest of life is open for discussion. Huizinga defines play as free activity occurring outside reality within its own spatiotemporal boundaries according to fixed rules (Huizinga, 1955); however, he also sees both innovation and order in the uncertainty of play. For Huizinga, and for Georg Simmel as well, play, in its own crowded state of intense action, is a microcosm of life itself (Simmel, 1971). In an ethnography that might be considered closer to my own work, Malaby refers to the paradoxical qualities of gaming – how

although games and play are inherently separable, safe and pleasurable, they are also 'intimately connected with everyday life to a degree' (Malaby, 2007).

Discussions of whether gambling is a sub-area that could be separable from life, or whether gaming itself as a social artefact is not separable from life, also take place in casinos in Manchester. Some emphasise that gaming should be treated as entertainment and that risk in gambling is contrived, thus gambling is a less serious issue compared to other issues in life. Other take gaming as serious as work and tend to relate gambling to their social status outside the gambling context. The fact that gamblers perceive or treat their participation in gambling differently is a phenomenon that exists in the field. Arguing against or for either of these opinions will not reveal more information about gambling. Instead, researchers who want to understand the social meanings of gambling should take the whole range of views into consideration and find out what has *generated* a division of opinion. In this chapter, by exploring social interactions among Chinese casino regulars and focusing on how the regulars associate with each other by using different types of nicknames to address each other, I uncovered the many different social networks activated (and sometimes ignored) by this particular group of casino regulars. Their accesses to different networks are projected onto their perception of, and participation in, gambling. Gambling reflects relations outside the gambling context. Gamblers' various opinions of gambling also reflect the different environments that encompass them. Whether a gambler treats gambling as separable or inseparable from life largely depends on his or her social connections, which affect his or her access to social and economic resources.

7 Money in the world of gambling: exchange and social connections

7.1 Introduction

The amount of money spent in casinos is eye-catching, particularly to those of us who rely on cards and are therefore increasingly unaccustomed to dealing in large quantities of cash. The largest amount of cash I've ever seen in reality, I saw in a casino. It's quite possible for a casino visitor to see a gambler throw bundles of brand new British ten pound or twenty pound notes onto a gaming table or even spread the notes to cover the table. It is also possible to witness someone losing thousands of pounds in ten minutes. People squander money in the casinos as if it is not money any more: in the gambling context, they seem to forget about money's market value. The way money is treated by gamblers appears to be quite different to its treatment in ordinary everyday life. I often hear my participants claim that money in the casinos is 'not money any more', or they gamble because their money is 'useless'. They appear to detach money from its exchange value. Despite this interesting phenomenon, the meaning of money in a commercial gambling environment has not attracted much scholarly attention.

Modern money in general, however, has been an important topic for decades. Marx, Weber and Simmel described modern money as a universal yardstick, measuring and evaluating almost everything, from objects to services, from persons to relations. It 'makes impossibilities fraternize' (Marx, 1844:110) and 'commensurates incommensurabilities' (Carruthers & Espeland, 1998:1400). Based on these classical

accounts of the utilitarian uses of modern money, classical anthropological accounts of money assert the dehumanizing and homogenizing effects of monetary incursion on 'traditional' societies, eroding the traditional value systems which were organised around age, gender and status differences (Polanyi, 1944; Mauss, 1935; Bohannan, 1959; Taussig, 1980). However, as Maurer points out in his review article, money's functions are still debated and its meanings continue to be re-discovered or reformed (Maurer, 2006). Modern money's social and cultural aspects have started to capture the attention of scholars, and sociologists note that modern money can be socially embedded and specially purposed as well (Zelizer, 1989, 1994, 2000). Money's meaning is defined by how it is used, or, more precisely, by the origins and destinations of each particular currency (Carruthers and Espeland, 1998; Zelizer, 1989).

Anthropologists continue to explore the impact of modern money and discover that the introduction of modern money does not necessarily fracture the pre-existing separation of different spheres; neither does it necessarily destroy local, traditional values. The technical properties of modern money alone are not sufficient to destroy a traditional culture, Hart argues (2000). The authors of the essays in *Money and Modernity: State and Local Currencies in Melanesia* show that traditional communities respond to modern state-issued money in various ways (Robbins and Akin, 1999). The contributors to a volume edited by Parry and Bloch (1989), largely share the opinion that indigenous societies around the world take Western money in their stride, turning it to their own social purposes rather than bending themselves to its supposedly impersonal logic. Instead of money changing everything, they suggest, existing world views 'give rise to particular

ways of representing money' (19). It was this argument, and Zelizer's point that money's meaning is defined by its circulation, that inspired me to look into the meaning of the money in the casinos.

This chapter focuses on Chinese gamblers' perceptions of money and their monetary exchanges, namely winning and losing, borrowing and lending, sharing or withholding winnings, inside or outside the casinos. Firstly, I analyse what the gamblers mean by 'useless' money. Then I examine the social contexts that encompass gamblers and find out what contextual factors contribute to the meanings of money in casinos. Thirdly, I explore how different gamblers decide whether or not to participate in particular exchanges and what they expect to get from those exchanges.

7.2 Huang's 'useless' money

7.2.1 Who is Huang?

Many Chinese pensioners in Manchester have taken out membership of all the casinos within walking distance of Chinatown. They visit the casinos regularly, often stay in one casino for the morning, go to another in the afternoon, and may return to the morning one in the evening. Such a casino tour is part of some older Chinese people's daily life. In the daytime, although there are also some working-age Chinese gamblers in the casinos, the pensioners are the dominant group. During my fieldwork, each time I visited the casinos, they were there, some occupying most of the mah-jong tables, some scattered around the gaming tables or the electronic gaming machines, gambling or chatting in Hakka or

Cantonese. The gaming halls of the casinos near Chinatown look just like the social clubs of Chinese pensioners. A casino member of staff estimated that seventy-five of their customers are Chinese pensioners, a figure which reflects my observations during fieldwork. This group of pensioners shares a common 'excuse' for their gambling: 'we gamble because our money is useless'. Huang was one of them.

In 2002, Huang was one of the adult learners at the Chinese Community Centre in Chinatown[20]. Six years later, in 2008 I came across her at Soames Casino at the beginning of my fieldwork. Ten months later, after I broke the principle of not gambling myself, she became my key participant. At least three times a week, we gambled, shopped, and dined out together. Huang was Hakka. Unlike most of the other Hakka migrants, who were peasants from the New Territories[21], she grew up in a tailor's family in urban Hong Kong, and she had a comparatively better life in the materialistic sense. Most Hakka migrants came to Britain via an introduction from fellow villagers, families or relatives. Huang had come to Britain thirty-five years before, after an arranged marriage to her husband, who was a British-born Hakka. Unlike most Hakka migrants who have an extended kinship network or fellow villagers' network to connect to, Huang was alone. She and her husband ran a restaurant in a small town in northwest England. Seven years ago, the couple sold their business and separated after their younger daughter went to university. Now Huang lives on her own in a retirement flat near Chinatown.

[20] Relevant background information about this centre and my fieldwork's connection to this centre have been provided in chapter one.
[21] Information about Hakka migrants from the New Territories can be found in chapters one and five.

Huang said she couldn't bear that her husband gambled so excessively and desperately that he borrowed money from loan sharks. Interestingly, Huang actually gambled quite heavily. She always said she planned to spend just twenty pounds on gambling, but I noticed that it didn't take long, sometimes just a few minutes, for her to insert several twenty pound notes into the machine. Later she said twenty pounds was just the limit that she would spend on one machine. According to my observation, this limit was also hardly ever kept. She often tried her luck on different machines at two to three casinos. She usually went to Soames first in the morning; if she lost there, she left and had her lunch or afternoon tea at a Cantonese restaurant in Chinatown; she then went to the other two casinos near Chinatown.

Some people suspect that using chips instead of cash may help conceal the sense that gambling involves real money, thus making gamblers forget about money when they gamble. But data gathered from my participants suggests otherwise. Every casino chip's cash value is clearly identified by number and colour. Every casino regular can tell the value of the chips as easily as a British resident tells the value of a pound coin. Besides, as I mentioned earlier, cash is often used in casinos, when some gamblers do not want to lose time in changing cash into chips, or when gamblers simply enjoy throwing a large amount of cash onto the table and watching the dealer count it for them. Money does not become obscure in a casino; it could be argued that it is even more in evidence. It appears as gaming money in gamblers' hands or on the gaming tables. It is the tips for the receptionists in the little wooden bowl at the entrance. It is the tips in the tea trays beside the mah-jong tables or the sofas near the bar. It is the coins in the paper cups beside the

electronic gaming machines. It is the donation in the transparent plastic box at the cashier's desk. A casino is a world of money. But the money in the casinos may be different from the money in other contexts. I often hear the gamblers recall that they do feel that in the casinos money is not money anymore, a claim related to the opinion, already referred to, that money used for gambling is in fact, 'useless', a suggestion that I will explore in the next section.

7.2.2 Useless or useful money

Huang appeared to be very generous. She always gave tips at the casinos, not just to the waitress but also to the receptionists, not just for herself, but also on behalf of the people who were with her. She gave her friends luck money[22] when she won. She often invited her casino friends to dine out together and offered to pay for the meal. She once kindly gave me twenty poounds luck money after I lost about fifty pounds. 'This is red money, it'll do good to you'; seeing me hesitate and not take the money, she went on encouragingly, 'Go and have a bet with it, maybe you can win back your loss, then you can pay me back if you want to.' Later that day she insisted on paying for our meal when we went out to have dim-sum. Huang said that was how she treated a friend.

Huang spent more than the other Chinese migrants who befriended me during fieldwork. She seldom cooked at home and usually dined out in Chinatown. She shopped at the House of Fraser, one of the most expensive shops in Manchester. She seemed to buy without worrying about money. The only time I saw her restrict her buying was when she

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[22] Luck money is also known as 'red' money. In the casinos, following a big win, Chinese gamblers normally will give away a certain amount of their winnings to their friends. I will write about this in detail in section 7.5 in this chapter.

had already bought a two-hundred-pound handbag, one designer jacket, three tops for herself, and two designer children's outfits for her grandchildren. She saw two lady's purses, one was green and one was lilac; she wanted to buy both of them but decided to wait. 'I'll buy them both if I win at casino today,' she said. It seemed that she did not care about money.

Huang often said her money was 'useless'. 'My money is of no use, because I am old now. Older people's money is useless, so we elderly can squander it,' she once said, to justify why she gambled a lot and spent a lot. But she was reserved about young people gambling: 'Young people's money is different. Young people's money is very useful. They should not gamble. They should spend their money to buy cars, houses, to set up their business and to send their children to a good school.' Huang's opinion about 'useless money' is shared by many other elderly Chinese in the casinos. When asked what they mean by 'useless money,' they reply that their children have all grown up and they do not need to support a family and they don't have much consumption apart from basic expenditure. Initially, I thought that Huang and the older Chinese gamblers measured money's usefulness according to its function in facilitating social reproduction. But further data show me that Huang's concept of 'useful/useless' money is not restricted to maintaining family life and raising children.

7.2.3 Money and the morality of exchange

Huang relates the utility of money to family reproduction. She claims that money is useful when money could be spent on 'setting up business', 'buying a nice house', and 'sending

the children to a good school', etc. When those missions have been accomplished, money becomes 'useless'. We may all agree that there are a lot of other meaningful ways to spend money apart from supporting family and raising children. Huang actually has her various ways of spending money as well. But her opinions are shared by other older Chinese gamblers in the casinos as well. They feel money is not valuable or less valuable when it cannot be spent in ways linked to family reproduction.

Huang's opinion could be presented in support of the argument that money's meaning is defined by how it is circulated (Carruthers and Espeland, 1998; Zelizer, 1989). While money transforms items, values and sentiments into numerical cash equivalents, money itself is shaped in the process. Culture and social structure mark the quality, even the quantity of money (Zelizer 1989). Huang and her older gambler friends' opinions about useful money and useless money clearly relate money's meaning to the way in which it circulates. Parry and Bloch relate money's symbolic meaning to the cycles of exchanges money enters, and identify two cycles of exchange: a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual acquisition and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order (Parry and Bloch 1989:1–2). The meaning of money is influenced by the holistic transactional system. While the long-term cycle is positively associated with the central precepts of morality, the short-term order tends to be morally undetermined since it concerns individual purpose, which is largely irrelevant to the long-term order. If, however, that which is obtained in the short-term individualistic cycle is converted to serve the reproduction of the long-term cycle, then it becomes morally positive. Some of my participants relate the value of their money,

the fruit of their individual acquisition, to the long-term order – family reproduction. But unlike Malaysian villagers who think monies earned by commercial exchange are antithetic to kinship value, my participants do not relate the money they have earned by hard labour as immoral or ill-gotten. For them, money is primarily a medium of exchange. Instead of moralising or demoralising money, they tend to evaluate money according to what money could be exchanged for. They also try to connect their short-term acquisition to the long-term cycle of exchange. Parry and Bloch do not offer us the criteria to define what the long-term cycle is although they do state that the long-term cycle of exchange serves the reproduction of the social and cosmic order. In different cultures, the social and cosmic order is perceived differently. Even within the same culture it may still vary according to individuals' perceptions. In a small-scale traditional community, such as the Malay fishing village (Carsten, 1989), the Fiji village of Sawaieke (Toren, 1989), people may hold a relatively unified perception about how to connect short-term exchange to the production of long-term order. But in a community as heterogeneous as that of Chinese gamblers in Manchester, people perceive and practice this connection differently, as I will show.

In Huang and her friends' perception, the long-term cycle is family reproduction. When she has passed the life stages of supporting family and raising children, she feels that she has lost the channel to spend her money in the long-term reproduction of the 'social and cosmic order'. It is the sense of loss that makes her feel that her money is no longer useful. Huang's perception is popular among the older Chinese gamblers, but it is not shared by everyone. Miss Leung and Miss Liu are both in their eighties, they were never married and

have no children; Mr and Mrs Wong are in their sixties and also have no children. They are all retired catering workers. They earned their money in similar ways as Huang. But they have no children and no family of their own to support. But none of them feel that their money is useless and they do not gamble either. Miss Liu's younger brother is in Manchester. Miss Leung helped her brother to raise her brother's three children and also helped to look after his five grandchildren. Miss Liu is called Patria aunt by almost everyone at Chinatown. She achieves her connection to the long-term exchange cycle by joining in her brother's family. Miss Leung has no relatives in Britain at all. She came to Britain in 1952. She was the only person among her caterer friends who could communicate in English. As Miss Liu puts it 'she helps us all a lot, without her we are deaf and dumb'. Miss Leung remained active at Chinatown even after she retired. She attended several adult education courses at the Chinese Community Centre and met up with her old friends in Chinatown four times a week after class. She lived in a semi-detached house in a nice area outside Manchester on her own. She was taken back to Hong Kong by her nephew in 2010 after she rapidly developed dementia. During my fieldwork, Miss Leung was in the Mandarin class I taught. I knew her from 2001 when she attended one of the basic computing classes. Miss Leung seldom visited casinos and neither did she play mah-jong. She did not shop in the expensive House of Fraser either but she was keen on donating her money to charity. Unlike Huang, she never claimed money was 'useless'.

The complicated story of 'useless' money does not stop here. Huang actually squandered her money when she still had two young daughters to support. When Chinese older gamblers claim that they gamble because their money has become useless, they could

mean it is ‘useless’ for more than the reason of having no family to support. Huang’s apparently contradictory behaviours and other gamblers’ participation and withdrawal from monetary exchanges shifted my attention from the social meaning of money in terms of circulation to a sharper focus on social connections.

7.3 Money and social connections

Huang indulged in gambling when she was still young, far before her money become ‘useless’. She once recalled:

> When my first daughter was little, my husband and I went to the casino together, and the woman at the reception was really kind. She would look after our daughter for a whole night. ‘Leave her with me,’ she always said. She would give her sweets and treated her quite well. When the other Chinese saw my daughter behind the reception desk, they thought she’d adopted a Chinese little girl. At that time, we hadn’t got our second daughter; my first daughter was about five then.

Apart from gambling in casinos, Huang also played high-stake mah-jong at home before her money became ‘useless’. She once recalled:

> I did play before…Ha-ha, a group of young fellows drove to my place and insisted on playing, and they insisted on playing ￡32 – it made one winning hand worth over ￡90. Think about it! Ha-ha!…Those days we played big. Think about it. I was only about forty years old, and ￡32 was a lot of money at that time. But we were really happy together; nobody would moan about their loss. We gathered to play whenever we did not need to open the [take away] shop.

Huang was gambling, but at a time when her money would not have been 'useless' in the terms she used once her children were grown up.

There are some intriguing contradictions in Huang's perception of 'useless' money. On the one hand, she claimed that she gambled because her money became useless. On the other hand she gambled freely when her money was still 'very useful' in the terms she used herself. Huang loved mah-jong and played high-stake mah-jong when her daughters were little and her money was 'very useful'; she stopped playing mah-jong in her sixties, when her money became 'useless'. Huang's participation in and withdrawal from mah-jong seem to be contradictory to her perception of money. Maybe when Huang, as well as the other older Chinese gamblers, claim that their money is useless because they don't have children to raise and family to support, they actually mean something else.

Chrystal's case may be helpful in drawing out this question. Chrystal's experiences contrast with Huang and the other pensioners at the casinos. Chrystal is thirty-six and a regular casino gambler: I have described a visit to the casino with Chrystal and her brother Will in chapter six. She has four daughters; the oldest is nine and the youngest is three. She and her husband Bright run a take-away shop in a town near Manchester. Their shop, according to Crystal, is one of the most prosperous in the town, having about £5,000 turnover every day during a good season. Bright works very hard to earn money by running the take-away shop, also by investing in the stock market and the property market. As I mentioned, Chrystal's mother is in debt – she owes a loan shark about £100,000. Chrystal's father, an old peasant, lives in a village in southern China. Bright's father has a

pension but not enough to cover his expenditure and Bright's brother is unemployed. Chrystal and Bright have to support not only their own family but also their father's and brother's families in China. But the couple have settled in Britain and have no intention of returning. Although Chrystal has family to support and children to raise, she shares the same feeling about money: it is useless:

> We are making good money in our shop, but that is useless. We have never been on a single holiday. Our oldest daughter is nine, and we as parents never took her to a cinema. We have never dined out except in McDonald and Burger King. Even my brother Will says that money in our hand is like waste paper. I have no consumption, only going to the casino occasionally or playing in the bookies in town.

I wonder what there is in common between working-age Chinese caterers and the older Chinese pensioners in the casinos. What makes them feel that their money is useless? Or more precisely what makes so much of this money 'useless'?

Huang hasn't really complained to me about losing money in casinos, but she sometimes sounded rather resentful when talking about losing money at the mah-jong tables. Huang told me several times that 'to play mah-jong at the casinos; people had to have the heart to endure wrong'. According to Huang, although there are rules to minimise the chance of cheating in the game, there is no rule about how a player should treat another player at the table. During my fieldwork, there were normally ten mah-jong tables available in the casinos. Each table takes four players. There were a lot more than forty Chinese who could and would play mah-jong at the casinos. Those who arrive first have to get four

players together and arrange their table quickly. In these circumstances, unless the players arrange to meet up and play at the same table, mah-jong tends to be a random gathering in casinos. The players, basically, are not able to control who they play with in each game. Thus players may feel they don't have the chance to win back their loss from the person who has previously won money from them. Without a secure chance of future return, continuous winning or losing often triggers obvious or subtle antagonism between the mah-jong players in casinos. Complaining about or even confronting another player is common in mah-jong gambling in the casinos. There are verbal attacks on others' mah-jong techniques，negative remarks on others' 'Pai-bun'[23]. According to Huang, good players are players of 'Pai-bun', which refers not to wins or losses, but to the manner of play. The 'proper' or 'correct' way in which to play contains many elements including speed, manners and endurance. Most importantly: play fast. Secondly, do not moan about losses incurred. Finally: always stay at the table until the agreed rounds of a game are finished. There is also a more interpretive requirement. Huang insisted that a player of 'Pai-bun' should be able to 'endure wrong to avoid argument':

> If you can't endure wrong, you can't play mah-jong. The point of playing mah-jong is to have some fun in chatting with each other on the table. I wouldn't argue even if another player treats me unfairly, or I wouldn't play...some people could be very mean, sometimes when my luck is good and I continuously win, some players will stop giving me my winnings, they will withhold my winnings until they start to win...they did that purposely to break my luck, that's evil-hearted. But I still

[23] *Pai-bun*(牌品) means mah-jong morality. It is about how a player reacts to winning and losing, and how he treats the other players at the table.

> won't argue with them. The point of playing mah-jong is to have fun, to be happy together, not to argue, but I won't play with them anymore after that. I don't care about winning or losing, but I don't like playing with bad players, they can't even take a tiny loss, they get jealous and gang up against you… without playing mah-jong together, people could still treat each other as friends, after playing mah-jong together, there aren't friends any more.

The lack of harmony at the mah-jong table disappointed Huang and she stopped playing mah-jong at casinos. However, she was still keen on the game and tried to convince me to play with her. 'Maybe we can play together', her face lit up, 'Let's play Pao-ma-tsai (跑马仔 run the pony). It's easy for beginners, you don't have to count how many points you've earned. All winning hands are of the same value'. Pao-ma-tsai is a very basic type of mah-jong for beginners, and experienced mah-jong players don't play it. Huang obviously missed social gatherings with friends at the mah-jong table. She used to have a group of friends when she was running the take-away shop with her husband. A group of young lads used to drive to her place to play mah-jong whenever they were off work. 'We all ran our own business at that time, nobody cared much about money, we played for fun,' Huang explained. Huang had a very different life when I met her in the field. She was living on her own in a retirement flat. Like many other mah-jong players, it is not easy for her to find enough people to play at home. Most of the mah-jong players are older people. They either live alone or live with their spouse. There are not enough people in her family to play mah-jong. When they were younger they drove to friends' place to play. Through the years some people passed away and some moved to another town after retirement, so gatherings became more difficult, especially after some of them gave up driving. In the

Chinese retirement flats near Chinatown, there are more than two hundred Chinese older people. But it is still not easy for any four of them to gather at home and play mah-jong together. Playing mah-jong at home usually happens among close friends, relatives or families. As I explained in chapter five, mah-jong games last for hours. Preparing for a mah-jong gathering is like preparing for a party. During the gathering the players eat as well as playing together. The older residents in the retirement flats are usually not close enough to do that. In fact most of them did not know each other before they moved into the flats. Playing mah-jong in the casinos is different. Players do not have to be friends. Nobody is expected to look after the players at the same table. The players at the casinos can be more aggressive towards each other. [24] As a result, many of the older Chinese people I encountered had stopped playing.

[24] For differences between mah-jong in casinos and at home, please see chapter four.

Fig. 7.1 A mah-jong game at home (It is often more than just playing mah-jong.)

Fig 7.2 The food prepared for a weekend mah-jong gathering at home

What made Huang play high-stake mah-jong when her money was 'very useful' but give up mah-jong or only play low-stake mah-jong when she felt her money had become 'useless'? Near the end of my fieldwork, when I told Huang that I would move back to the south of England, she invited me to stay with her when I visited Manchester again. She cheerfully offered:

> Do come and stay with in me. I have an extra bed in my bedroom – it's for my daughter, but she works in Hong Kong now, so you can have it. And I will only charge you ten pounds per night, not including meals. We can always have our meals together in Chinatown as we do? By that you can save the expensive hotel and I can earn a bit of extra money.

Her invitations surprised me. In Manchester, I had many Chinese acquaintances; most of them knew that I would move back to the south after my fieldwork. Some invited me to stay at their place if I ever came back for a short visit. Most people did not bother. Huang's reaction to my approaching departure was unique in that she invited me to stay with her but also proposed to charge me £10 per night. That came rather unexpectedly, considering that she'd generously given me £20 red money, paid tips for me on numerous occasions, invited me to free lunches, and brought me her home-made beef stew. Besides, £10 compared with the money she'd constantly gambled away was nothing. And she always said money for her was useless. The reason for her proposing to charge me £10 was not related to any intention to 'earn a bit of extra money' as she herself put it. What contributed to her generousness and what made her suddenly appear to want to earn a tiny amount of money even though she claimed that money was disposable? It seemed similar

to her contradictory behaviour in playing expensive mah-jong when she felt money was 'very useful' but not playing when her money was, in her terms, 'useless'.

Wining or losing, paying the bill/tips or letting the others pay, and giving or receiving red money, are all common monetary exchanges that happen among Chinese gamblers inside and outside the casinos. In playing or not playing mah-jong, being generous or stopping being generous, Huang herself was choosing whether to participate in or withdraw from these exchanges. She played mah-jong when she and the other players 'were really happy together'. She stopped playing when she felt that 'mah-jong ruins friendship'. She participated in the exchange when she felt the exchange could bring her preferable social relations, but retreated when it didn't. Huang's generosity also seemed to be based on the same reason. Once, we went to a Thai restaurant. It was special but westernised – special in its oriental decoration and authentic Thai cuisine; westernised in that its customers were mostly westerners, its staff could not speak Chinese like those in the Thai restaurants at Chinatown, and the menu was in English only. Also, it is located in a modern commercial area of downtown Manchester, instead of an ethnic area like Chinatown. I picked this restaurant for Huang as she said she'd never dined outside Chinatown in her thirty-five years in Manchester. On our way, she commended me, saying: 'you are different. If I am generous to you, you are generous to me too. But the Hakka grandmas are not, they take advantage of me, they never offer to pay for a meal. I really don't like them. Once or twice is okay, but every time like that? No.' She was willing to be a giver, but she expected a reciprocal exchange. When there is no foreseeable return, she does not like to continue.

Huang's choice of playing or not playing mah-jong seems to coincide with the exchanges in which she chooses to participate. It coincides in the sense that Huang would take the exchange when she felt the exchange could bring her preferable social connections. Upon my leaving and with no plan to come back in the future, our relationship would be altered in a practical sense. If she gave at that moment she would not have been able to tell if she could expect a return in the foreseeable future. She felt the reciprocal exchange between us would be disconnected. Perhaps the exchange became meaningless for Huang when she could not see it as maintaining the relationship between us. Wider considerations, beyond those of social reproduction within the family or development of economic opportunities for the family, play a role in Huang's decision to play or not to play, and in the manner in which she extended her invitation to me. The potential *yield* of such an offer was increased by the introduction of a monetary token.

This also helps to better understand Huang's perception of money as being useful or useless. Money is useful when it can be spent on exchanges to bring about beneficial social relationships: the essential element in people's lives. For migrants, it is the social capital that they rely on for migration and settlement (I will discuss this in greater detail in chapter eight). Thus it is one of their essential calculations in every exchange. The more extended a social relationship an exchange could bring about, the more efficient, or 'useful' the monetary or material resources involved in the exchange. The more limited a social relation an exchange could bring, the less useful the expenditure. For a migrant pensioner living in isolation, the chance of building social relations with others and getting involved in a social life becomes more difficult. I believe it is because of this that Huang

claimed that older people's money was useless. It is also because of this logic that she chose to spend or not to spend money. Money is longed for by many gamblers, not because of its market exchange value but because of its power in transforming a social relationship. When it loses its power in that sense it becomes 'useless' and 'disposable'. Money's power in altering a social relationship and the monetary exchange's function in creating, maintain and changing a social relationship is highly valued by the people in my field. This is demonstrated not just by Huang alone but by many of them, and also in very varied, even contradictory ways. They all work together to illustrate money's social meaning that people value in social life, including their gambling life. As a Chinese proverb puts it, 有钱能使鬼推磨 (Money could make a ghost push the millstone for you), the English version could be 'Money talks'.

Money is an exchange medium; when it assists an exchange but cannot create anything valued by the giver or the receiver, the money is useless to that extent. In Huang's case, the thing that was valued could be friendship. Huang enjoyed being with friends, but once she told me that although she knew almost all the Chinese in Chinatown, she didn't have friends. 'People take advantage of my generosity. To dine out together with friends is something that makes me happy, but they never propose to pay for a meal. The money for a meal is not much, but it makes me feel that they are taking advantage of me.' To play mah-jong, for Huang, was also supposed to be a way of getting together with friends, but Huang found playing mah-jong eroded friendship. So in the list of the things she crave for, apart from buying beautiful clothes, Huang could not find out what else her money could buy. She thus become quite extravagant in gambling and shopping but remained cautious

in exchanges with the other Chinese around her. Reciprocity in monetary exchanges is carefully kept by not just Huang but also the other Chinese. Luck money is not given to just anyone. Dim-sum cannot always be bought by one person. Winners cannot always win. Offers are given on conditions. Free help is often only given to friends or at least to acquaintances. People often say that it is not about money or material possessions, it is about social relations.

7.4 Some other gamblers' monetary exchanges

Realising that money talks, and relying on money to talk, Chinese gamblers have different attitudes about spending money in various ways. When they feel that the way they are spending could make money speak for them, they splurge, otherwise they can be frugal or even stingy. During my fieldwork, I often heard my participants describing gamblers as 'wasting' lots of money in gambling, but being very frugal in life outside that context. For example, a veteran gambler said he never hesitated to put two hundred pounds on a blackjack table, but he would fumble in his pocket and think twice before deciding to spend five pounds on a plate of fried noodles. During my fieldwork, I observed various surprising inconsistencies in the monetary exchanges of the Chinese gamblers, inside and outside the gambling context. Some are generous with one thing but ungenerous with another thing. Some appear to be profligate, some are frugal. Some embrace a chance of exchange, some basically reject it. Some demand to be a giver all the time, some prefer to be a receiver and remind the giver not to expect a return when giving. In the following section, I provide two more examples. These examples will further demonstrate the value placed by Chinese gamblers on social relations, and the value of exchange and the value

of money they perceive are judged upon their capability to create or improve these relations.

7.4.1 Simon's 'meaningless' or 'meaningful' exchange

Using monetary exchanges to construct or influence interpersonal relations was a common phenomenon in the Chinese community in Manchester. Inviting people to 'yum cha' (to have a Cantonese dim-sum lunch) was a very popular way. But Simon did not 'yum cha' with the others in Chinatown. 'It's meaningless,' he said. He was a resident representative at a housing association. He did not go to the Housing Association's appraisal dim-sum lunch, but he always went to residents' meetings. Not going to the appraisal lunch wouldn't make him an 'insufficient' resident representative, but not attending the meetings would. He cherished his position as resident representative because it provided him with better connections with the housing association's staff, and not because he could have 'free meals'. Simon had the same attitude towards monetary exchange at the casinos. He always refused to go 'yum cha' with the other Chinese gamblers; even when they invited him and offered to pay for the meal. But he was keen to encourage people to put money together to bet on the roulette tables. He said 'many people' called him 'master' because he taught them to win. He collected money from several gamblers and placed bets on thirty-five of the thirty-seven numbers in roulette. 'We always win. It is hard for the casino to make the ball fall in exactly the two numbers we haven't bought. I normally collect a thousand pounds from them and we bet together, and at the end, when we win a hundred pounds, we stop and share our winning. They, everyone of them, wanted me to teach them; they call me Brother Simon, or Master.' The winning was not particularly

exciting for Simon – 'It's small money,' he said. But through facilitating monetary exchange between a few gamblers', including himself, with the casinos, Simon gained his position as Brother Simon, even Master. Before that, the gamblers may only have gambled together with him or invited him for free meals, but would not have given him the extra respect. But the collective gambling Simon facilitated gained him a new social relationship between him and his fellow gamblers. It was this relationship that Simon sought.

Simon came from Hong Kong in 1987. Compared to most of the migrants from Hong Kong, he was a latecomer. He was not Hakka, neither Siyinese[25], and he had no relatives in Britain. He did not come with a lot of savings. He was a driver in Hong Kong. He said he came to Britain because he wanted his three children to have free higher education, which was an unaffordable dream for him in Hong Kong. After migrating, Simon had no access to the Chinese social networks established by the Hakka and Siyinese, but he had to make a living for his family by doing odd jobs in their restaurant kitchens. Simon worked hard to construct his social image as a 'respectable man'. 'Don't you agree?' he asked me. 'I am not a bad person. In Chinatown, I can say, those who have met me would agree that I am a respectable man'. Although Simon refused to go 'yam cha' with others, he did not refuse other monetary exchanges at the casinos. Simon used to lend money to some other Chinese gamblers there. He stopped after he had lent money to a Hakka woman but did not get the money back because the woman 'simply disappeared' and nobody told him where she had gone. Simon realised that as an isolated man in Chinatown, lending money

[25] Hakka and Siyinese Chinese in Manchester have a well-established social network among themselves and those networks become valuable social resources for the Chinese migrants. For more details about these two groups and their dominant position in Manchester's older Chinese migrants' society, please see chapter one.

to others was more risky for him as he had no relatives or fellow villagers to look out for him and to stand by his side when someone tried to avoid paying a debt to him. 'I felt that it was meaningless. People would not say that I lend money to others because I am kind, they would just call me a fool' he said. Being aware of his shortages in wealth and a social capital, Simon creates this social debt via investing his 'method of winning' instead of investing his money in the monetary exchanges in or around the casinos. Arranging collective gambling and by collecting money to gamble and sharing the winnings thus became Simon's type of 'meaningful' exchange, which he believed could bring him the social relations he wanted, making himself a Master, a 'respectable man' among the other Chinese people.

Turning modern money into an 'expressive gift', or 'an instrumental gift' (Yan, 1996), and 'converting money into relations' (Piot, 1991) occurs among both gamblers and non-gamblers. Money exceeds its traditional functions when the Chinese in Manchester constantly turn modern money into a gift, which 'constitutes a social debt between the donor and the recipient and thus gains social meanings' (Parry & Bloch, 1989) in gamblers' lives. The Chinese gamblers' emphasis is on the monetary exchanges' power to yield social relations. In Simon's case, there appeared to be no donor and recipient as he generally refused to participate in monetary or material exchanges. However, through arranging collective gambling on a roulette table, Simon became the facilitator of a type of monetary exchange among a group of Chinese gamblers who had small budgets but wanted to beat the casinos and believed that more money could raise their chances of winning. The monetary exchange that Simon facilitated brought and maintained his social

relationship with his fellow gamblers. Simon became 'Big brother Simon'(大哥). Simon's case proved monetary exchange's power in creating and maintaining a social relation without even the participation of a donor or a recipient. Simon's facilitating the collective gambling on roulette table gained its social meanings in the sense that it created the type of preferable social relationship for Simon.

7.4.2 Alan: withdrawing from gambling

Chinese gamblers' emphasis on the power of monetary exchanges to yield social relationships can also be proved from the inverse case – in a withdrawal from gambling. Alan, a Hakka middle-aged man, came over to Britain in the 1980s. He was a former problem gambler (according to himself). He said he just could not pull himself out of a casino until his last penny had gone. His marriage was shattered because of his addictive gambling. He didn't think he could stop gambling. But one thing changed him. He fell off a ladder at home one day, and he was badly injured and broke his leg. He was sent to a hospital far away from his home and had to stay there for weeks. Because he was not used to the food provided by hospital, his caring wife brought him homemade food every day. Because his wife did not drive, she had to go by bus and it took her over two hours to travel from home to hospital, and a return took her almost five hours on the way. During those several weeks, none of Alan's casino friends visited him, none of them offered to give his wife a lift to the hospital even though they knew about their situation. Alan said he felt really sorry for his wife and realised those friends he'd made through gambling were 酒肉朋友 (fair-weather friends) only. Being really disappointed about his 所谓的朋友 (so-called friends), after he regained his mobility, he completely quit gambling. As a

migrant, Alan had very limited social connection with the wider society. He felt lonely and helpless. He felt he'd made lots of friends through gambling. His injury and lonely experience in hospital made him realise that the social relations he had constructed through gambling could not be converted into the real social capital that could benefit him when he and his wife were in need. It is also this disappointment in these social relations, or the realisation of their incapability, that made him stop gambling and start to work as a volunteer in a Chinese charity organisation. Alan's story proves in the opposite way to the previous case studies that social relationships are an important motivator of exchanges in the gambling context, and affects people's participation in gambling.

During my fieldwork, I heard some new migrants commend that 'those who would like to go back to China would not go to casinos, those who would like to settle here would. Those who do go to casinos won't be able to go back home if they don't stop'. I believe the migrants' choice of gambling or not gambling is affected by their direction of migration and their intention to develop social relations. Those who find it difficult to create any social connections in their normal work, leisure and other aspects of social life may find gambling attractive. Among the Chinese in Manchester, not all Chinese gamble. Among those who are regularly active in the casinos are many caterers or retired caterers. Their clustering in the catering industry is both the cause and the effect of their isolation from the mainstream society and the other sub-groups of the Chinese community. They describe their gambling as their complementary connection to the other people around them, although this connection, created through gambling, may not be reliable. I will explore the relationship between Chinese migrants' social isolation and their gambling

behaviour in the next chapter. Here let me conclude by returning to the monetary exchanges between the Chinese gamblers and the special meaning they assign to money.

7.5 Calculating social relations with modern money

In casinos, many Chinese gamblers shared their winnings with their friends by giving out luck money, which is also known as red money. They didn't give luck money to every acquaintance; neither did they give the same amount of luck money to every friend. Some informants shared all their winnings with their friends who visited the casino together with them. Those who went to casinos on their own only gave luck money to a limited number of their friends in casinos on sight of their winnings. Luck money is a cash gift. It is a gift of good wishes, wishing the receivers to share in not just the winnings, but more importantly the winner's good luck. Luck money is a symbol of friendship; giving luck money is a gesture of friendliness. Unlike gamblers on EGM (Electronic Gaming Machines) or casino table games who don't mind sharing winnings with those who play alongside them, mah-jong players in casinos don't give luck money to the other players at the same table. It is understandable that people would not want to share their good luck with the others when they are directly gambling against each other. At the table they are competitors, although they could be friends after or before the game. However, as I mentioned in chapter five, mah-jong players may give luck money to the person who is sitting beside him or her, witnessing him or her winning. People are very happy to receive luck money. Luck money means not only a share of luck but also friendship. My informants all said that luck money is a free gift and nobody expects a friend to repay the gift. However, a gambler will give luck money to those who have given him luck money

before. It is a monetary exchange although the time-scale of the return is not definite. Besides, the luck money normally circulates inside the gambling venue. Very often a receiver will put the red money into a game straight away in an attempt to extend the luck into his or her own gambling. If they win, they would be able to continue the circle of reciprocity by returning the luck to their friends. Apart from circulating among gamblers as gifts and affirming personal relations, modern money also performs its function of rational calculation among the Chinese people as it does in a market. But the object it calculates moves from the value of a product/service to the value of a relation. For example, the amount of gift cash is often regarded to commensurate with how the giver values the receiver. Hence, giving luck money to a stranger is regarded as abnormal.

As Miyazaki points out, people also use the mathematics of money outside the sphere of the economy proper, to make sense of their lives, loves and longings in other domains (Miyazaki 2003). This trait of calculating personal relations appears to be most pronounced in the borrowing and lending of money among my Chinese participants. Some of my informants told me that they had borrowed money deliberately from someone to test how much the person valued their relationship. Another participant disclosed that she broke an unwanted relationship by borrowing money from the person and not returning it. Modern money becomes special among the Chinese people in Manchester, Britain, whether gamblers or non-gamblers.

The fact that modern money also performs moral, embedded and special-purpose functions is no longer a new discovery (Akin, 1999; Guyer, 1995; Parry and Bloch, 1989;

Zelizer, 1989, 1994). Modern money does not always exclusively perform the functions as a medium of exchange, store of wealth, measure of values, or unit of account. Modern money can be a measure of intimacy and trust (Zelizer, 2005), sign of antithetic market value (Carsten, 1989) or symbolic of prestige. As Keister pointed out, modern money may even be *more* dependent on its re-embedding in social relations than on its depersonalised abstraction (Keister, 2002). As Miyazaki (2005) and Zaloom (2003) both demonstrate, numbers and calculations do not always refer to the commodities and contracts behind them, and they are not undertaken solely for the purpose of financial risk management or profit-making either; modern money is largely re-embedded into the social relations that encompass it. 'Money is a social relation' Maurer summarised in his review of the anthropology of money (Maurer, 2006).

Chinese gamblers and non-gamblers monetary exchanges show that modern money could also become an expression, index and measure of social relations. Instead of flattening social relations, it actually could create and maintain them. Social relations among Chinese gamblers give their money its special social meaning. The social meaning of money affects how Chinese gamblers fund their gambling and manage winning and losing, terms which may not have as much to do with profit and loss as naive economic explanations of gambling might suggest.

8 Migration, social networks and gambling

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore a common opinion shared by my participants that regular gamblers are mostly migrants who have decided to settle permanently in the UK and that temporary migrants tend to avoid gambling. I will explore how a migrant's social networks affect his or her life after migration and why some may choose to maintain and construct their social networks through gambling. I begin by discussing factors that may affect a migrant's settlement patterns and use a case study to illustrate that illegality is not always the factor that makes a migrant avoid permanent settlement. I argue that the direct force that pushes a migrant to leave the host society is a lack of supportive social networks, a lack of social capital. Then I compare the common social networks of Chinese catering workers and regular Chinese gamblers and suggest that they are often restricted within the Chinese ethnic niche. Thirdly I focus on temporary migrants who do not gamble and in particular the stories of three participants, Zee, Heroine and Lucy. Their stories enable me to reflect on more general relationships between gambling, migration, permanence and legality.

8.2 Migrants settlement patterns

Among my fifty-four participants, twelve of them settled temporarily. Nine out of the twelve temporary migrants describe themselves as 'non-gamblers'. Twenty-seven participants gamble regularly, mostly in casinos or a mah-jong club or at home, one in bingo halls. Among the twenty-seven regulars gamblers, all of them are catering workers

or retired from catering workers. In contrast to the twenty-seven regular gamblers who all work in or have retired from the catering industry, twenty out of the twenty-seven non-gamblers work outside the catering industry or other ethnic enterprises. The clear correspondence between catering workers and gambling and the correspondence between temporary settlement and non-gambling are suggestive and consistent with two popular perceptions among the Chinese migrants: firstly, that 'kitchen men' gamble; secondly, that those who want to stay long term in Britain are more likely to gamble. My intention in this chapter is not to establish the accuracy r otherwise of these claims, but to better understand why they might have become part of the commonplace understanding of gambling among my participants. These perceptions express my participants understanding of the relationships between working in the catering trade, permanent settlement and regular gambling.

I begin by exploring explanations of the decision to settle temporarily. In this section, I argue that access to social networks as much as legal status determines a migrant's decision to stay or return. In Manchester the Chinese 'community' is highly heterogeneous. In the community, there are naturalised citizens, refugees, students, economic migrants, asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants (which include both 'illegal' immigrants and overstay visitors), and second and subsequent generations. My participants are mainly from the immigrant generation and only two of my fifty-four participants are from the second generation. So, as I've explained in chapter one, I focus on Chinese migrants instead of British born Chinese. In chapter one, I described different groups of Chinese migrants' backgrounds and how they came to Britain, especially the major groups of my

participants, Hong Kong migrants and Siyinese migrants. In this chapter, I focus on their residential status in the receiving country and their settlement patterns. Migrant legality is composed of two parts: the legality of their entry to the receiving country and the legality of their staying. These two parts do not necessarily correspond with each other. The first describes different forms of migration, namely independent migration or chain migration. The second relates to how they settle in Britain.

8.2.1 Independent migration and chain migration

Many Chinese migrants arrive via independent migration. They come to Britain on a student visa, working visa, dependant visa, visitor visa, and tourist visa. Independent immigration usually falls into the realm of legal immigration schemes while chain migration is more complicated, and may be either legal or illegal. Among the group of regular Chinese gamblers I study, 61.5% came to Britain via chain migration. Chain migration has multiple meanings. It can mean the process by which migrants from a particular geographical area follow others from that area to another area. It can also refer to the practice of foreign nationals immigrating to a new country under laws permitting their reunification with family members already living in the destination country. (McDonal and McDonal, 1964). For Chinese migrants in Manchester, chain migration is the main route for Cantonese migrants from the New Territories in Hong Kong and Si Yi in China from the 1950s to the 1980s. After the 1990s it also became a major channel for Fujianese migrants from the Fujian province in China (Pieke, 2002). Migrants who enter Britain via other than official immigration schemes mainly come via organised clandestine

migration. Although this type of migration is often organised by triads,[26] migrants rely on their kin and friends in the receiving countries, in a way which is quite similar to that of the 'old-timers' from Hong Kong and Siyi described by Pieke (2002). Undocumented entry to Britain since the 1990's largely happened through chain migration.

8.2.2 Legality and settlement patterns

Legal entry does not always lead to legal resident status, while 'illegal entry' sometimes produces legal residency. Whether a migrant is granted the status of asylum seeker, or temporary or permanent resident, or 'no status to stay', places him or her in the realm of the 'legal' or the 'illegal'. But this does not necessarily lead to a permanent 'loss' or 'gain' in status; nor does it determine the migrants' settlement patterns. Among my participants, there were people who came with short-term visas but overstayed in Britain and become undocumented migrants. There were also people who entered 'illegally' but applied for asylum status after they arrived, thus gaining the status of 'asylum seeker', which allowed them to stay in Britain legally during the application process. The process initially lasts up to six months; if the application is rejected, the resubmission process lasts up to twelve months. Some of the applicants are granted refugee status and become a 'legal' resident. If they don't get that status, in the eighteen months, many 'asylum seekers' manage to integrate into the already settled migrants' community and start to work. Participants would not usually voluntarily leave Britain after a short term, even if their resubmission was rejected and they became 'illegal' immigrants, because many of them had a plan to earn a certain amount of money to facilitate their future life back home, and they would

[26] Triad is an umbrella term used to refer to various Chinese, international criminal organisations.

not want to return to China empty handed. What's more, almost all the migrants who came via 'smuggling' used to live in less developed rural areas in China and had borrowed large amounts of money, from ¥180,000 to ¥280,000[27], to pay the Chinese traffickers (which participants often called 'snakeheads') to arrange their journey to Britain.[28] That debt would usually take them dozens of years to clear if they had to earn the money in their home towns in China. Many of them spent their first three years in Britain working extremely hard just to clear their debt in China. Almost all the undocumented migrants I met disclosed that they would like to return to China instead of settling permanently in Britain. Compared to documented immigrants, their settlement in Britain is more temporary although it could last for years, even dozens of years.

On the basis of a study of Portuguese migrants in France and Canada, Bretell concludes that legal migrations are more permanent moves, despite the fact that some immigrants do eventually return to their homeland or think of doing so, while asylum seekers or undocumented immigrants have a more temporary character. Through this argument, Bretell clearly points out the correspondence between settlement patterns and migrants' legality/illegality (Bretell, 2003). I noticed the same correspondence among the

[27] These figures are given by the undocumented immigrants I contacted in 2008 in Manchester. The years they arrived in Britain range from 2000 to 2005. I made these contacts by talking to people casually in public places such as train stations, bus stations, on the train, the back streets of Chinese restaurants, St Peter's Square near Chinatown, Chinatown and the Chinese Community Centre. The undocumented immigrants were quite easy to approach and most of them seemed to be quite happy to have the chance to talk to a 'friendly' person who spoke their own language. Most of them were quite talkative and were willing to say how hard they worked and why. Two of the immigrants became my key participants, but most of them fell out of contact due to their unsettled situation. After my fieldwork, I actually came across one of them at a tube station in London.

[28] Snakehead is a term used to refer to Chinese organised criminal gang members involved in human trafficking and other forms of smuggling. They are particularly strongly represented in the Fujian region of China from which they smuggle Chinese citizens to Western Europe, North America and Australia. A profile of Sister Ping, a notorious snakehead can be found in an article in *The New Yorker* by Patrick Keefe, 'The Snakehead: The criminal odyssey of Chinatown's Sister Ping' (April 24, 2006). Available at: newyorker.com/archive/2006/04/24/060424fa_fact6.

Manchester Chinese immigrants: legal status appears to have impacts on many aspects of a migrant's life. However, my data further suggests that legality is not the *sole*, or perhaps even primary reason why a migrant might leave or stay. If legality appears to be the indicator of permanent or temporary settlement, it is because, as Binaisa argues, it has a profound impact on their socio-economic possibilities (Binaisa, 2011). My data suggests that it is access to social networks and embedded resources that ultimately affect a migrant's settlement pattern. Limited access to social networks may make permanent settlement impossible. In the next section I use the case study of an undocumented immigrant, Zee, in order to explore the impact of legal status on everyday life.

8.2.3 Zee's story: to stay or to go?

Asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants have no opportunity to invite their family to the United Kingdom for reunification. Separation from family is a major motivation to return home. Zee and his brother both came 'illegally'. Their parents stayed in Fujian Province, China. Zee's brother tells me that he has chosen to stay as his wife made the journey with him. Zee said he never planned to stay for good. 'My brother will stay, but I will go home to look after our parents' he explained. When he came, he planned to stay for between five and eight years. 'The first three years I cleared my debt.' He said. 'The rest of years, I would like to earn up to one hundred million RMB (Chinese currency, which is roughly equivalent to a hundred thousand British pounds), then I would go home, to build a house and open a grocery shop, that should prepare me enough to find a wife and support our parents for the rest of their life'.

For those who migrate together with their family, family and kinship serve as 'networks of adaptive assistance' (Gurak and Caces 1992: 154). They carry 'information, resources, assistance and obligations between the sending and receiving country' (Boyd 1989: 641). For my participants, the family is also a cultural anchor, which means it often conveys a migrant's memory and deep-rooted attachment to their home culture and society. Mrs. Wong and Mr. Wong were both legal immigrants from Hong Kong. During their nearly thirty years long anticipation of returning home, the couple visited Hong Kong every one or two years before their parents passed away and still maintained regular visits after that. They both wanted go back to Hong Kong after their children grew up. But unfortunate things happened. Mr. Wong passed away before they could actually make their final move back to Hong Kong. Mrs. Wong alone paid a visit to Hong Kong five months after Mr. Wong's death. Mrs. Wong recalled that visit to me in an early afternoon when she was waiting for the other mah-jong players to turn up. It was summer. Hong Kong's summer was always uncomfortably hot and humid. She felt awkward in that weather which she was once very familiar with. And she felt lost in that visit, literally lost, as she couldn't find her way around the area where she used to live, with her husband, every time they went back to Hong Kong. Finally one day at an entrance to a tube station, she was overwhelmed by the heat waves rushing out from the underground. That was the last straw. She suddenly realised Hong Kong was no longer her home. Following the death of her husband, the memories about Hong Kong that she and her husband had always shared together, and her only close connection to Hong Kong, were gone. She was shattered by the loss of her husband and the loss of the dream of returning home. In the flat she and her husband had bought for their life 'back home', she made a phone call to her son in

Manchester, pleading with him to ‘come and save me’: she was in tears. After coming back to Manchester, Mrs. Wong started to play mah-jong three days a week at a casino near Chinatown. She finally decided to settle permanently in Britain. At a mah-jong table in that casino, she told me she had not gone back to Hong Kong for more than five years already and had no plan to visit Hong Kong in the near future. Her daughter was pregnant then, ‘It is twins, she will deliver in September, I will be busy then’ she said wistfully.

Fig. 8.1 A gathering of three generations from two migrant-families

Apart from reunification or at least the potential for reunification, legitimate employment is also affected by legal status. Changes of rules or laws materially affect the moral standing and capacity for action of individuals and groups. After the 2004 Morecambe Bay cockling disaster the Gangmasters Licensing Act was created and put into power in the same year, to regulate labour in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, shellfish gathering, and the food processing and packaging industries. [29] This Act largely stops employers

[29] The text of the Act can be accessed at www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/11/contents. Explicit reference is made to the events of February 2004 in Morecambe, as the proximate cause of the legislation.

from taking on ‘black-market’ labour. Following the implementation of this act, many undocumented migrants lost their jobs. Zee was one of them. He worked as a chef-assistant at a restaurant at Chinatown, but lost this job in November 2004. His brother and sister-in-law also lost their jobs and moved to Leeds. Since then he was not be able to find any job. In 2008, he secured a job of washing dishes at a restaurant. The boss paid him three pounds an hour, saying hiring ‘illegal’ migrants is a very risky thing for him to do, but he understood that Zee desperately needed a job, and he would like to help. Paying less is accepted by workers as a semi-legitimate compromise by the caterers in taking the risk of hiring someone who lacks legal documentation. In fact, there were lots of people like Zee who were in desperate need of a job to survive in Manchester and all over Britain.[30] Zee took the job and worked there for only one week and gave up. ‘It’s back breaking hard’ he said, ‘washing the slippery heavy dishes ten hours a day, and earn only thirty pound per day’. Zee decided to return to selling pirate DVDs as he’d done after 2004.

Instead of protecting people from being exploited, the Gangmaster’s Licensing Act swept many ‘illegal’ migrants under the carpet and pretended that ‘black-market’ labourers had disappeared. But they are still in this country. One obvious reason for that is they haven’t cleared the debt which they borrowed to pay a ‘snakehead’ for their immigration. The fee Zee paid in 2002 was 280,000RMB (roughly equivalent to £22,000 in 2002). It took him three years of hard work and thrifty living to earn and save the money in Manchester to

[30] A report by the Contemporary Slavery Research Centre provides more information about the impact of the Gangmasters Licensing Act on the plight of Chinese workers in the catering sector in Manchester. The report is available at:
www.gmb.org.uk/PDF/Forced%20labour%20in%20the%20UK%20&%20the%20Gangmaster%20Licensing%20Authority.pdf

clear his debt back at his hometown. During the first two years, he worked six days a week and shared a two-bedroom flat with eleven catering workers; his only entertainment was phoning home on Tuesday when he had his day off; he had very few expenses apart from buying basic necessities such as toothpaste, shampoo and toilet rolls. When Zee lost his job, he still had about £4,000 of debts and he was far away from earning sufficient amount of money to start a better life, by which Zee meant building a house for his family and open a grocery shop. Zee did not want to go home in that position.

Fig. 8.2 A British born Chinese boy visiting his great grandmother in China

Zee started to sell pirate DVDs on the streets. He needed a 'referral' to get into this underground trade, which according to Zee, was under the control of a Fujianese gang. Once he met the factory runners and committed himself to an agreement with the factory, Zee was bound to buy a certain number of DVDs regularly no matter whether he could sell them or not. He was not allowed to stop buying or to adjust this number. He took his DVDs into small companies like estate agents along the streets on weekdays and into pubs in the evenings and weekends. There are two universities along Oxford Street, and it is a good place to sell DVDs due to the large number of students. But Zee only went there

once, ‘because there was already a Fujianese woman selling DVDs there’ he explained. Zee made some easy money between 2004 and 2005, but soon he found his business shrank rapidly when more and more undocumented migrants tried to join this trade and the underground factory did not maintain the quality of its products. When I met him in 2008, he was suffering from bipolar disorder and what he earned by selling DVDs was just about enough to cover his living expenses. Staying in Britain as an undocumented worker became meaningless to him in such a situation and he began to seriously consider going back to China.

Recording his life as an ‘illegal’ migrant, Zee told me ‘I did cry once, not because I regretted I’d left home, not because it’s been really tough, nor because I was tired, but because that kind of feeling, fear and shame, it made me feel like a thief’. Changes in rules or laws do materially affect the moral standing and capacity for action of individuals and groups. After the 2004 Act, even finding accommodation became difficult for the illegal migrants who sell DVDs in the streets, as the other migrants worried that they may attract police to their place. Working in the restaurant is safer than selling DVDs in the streets. However, not everybody could get such a job. To get a job in a restaurant or take-away, according to Zee, people need good friends, who usually are their fellow villagers or relatives, to make the referrals. As I discussed in chapter six, lineage network and locality network were the essential social resources for first wave peasant migrants from Hong Kong New Territories and Si Yi in mainland China. These two networks are similarly important for the new undocumented migrants who have almost no other social connections after coming to Britain due to their illegal status and their very limited

language and culture proficiency. Some of them will try to seek help in the Chinese community centre near Chinatown, some, if they have no friends or relatives near them, basically have to survive in isolation which is almost impossible. In that case, building up connections with others is essential. Sadly, Zee was not good at making connections, neither was he lucky enough to maintain his existing networks through his brother and sister-in-law. 'My problem is I am not good at making friends and my brother and sister-in-law have moved to Leeds' he told me. In 2008 there was a partially government funded charity organisation in Britain offering monetary incentives, up to £2,000, to support asylum seekers to return to their homelands and set up their own small business. Zee took the chance and returned to China in his sixth year in Britain.

Although Mrs Wong stayed and Zee returned, legality is not the primary determinant of settlement in their stories. Among my participants, three out of the twelve temporary migrants returned home during my fieldwork and only one of them had no legal status. When a migrant could support himself by participating in or establishing his own social network, returning home may become less necessary. As a participant put it, 'people do not live to be legal, people live to be happy.' Staying within the legal system may make life easier, so probably in a sense happier. However, obtaining legal status is still just one way to construct social relations. Among the twelve temporary migrants, there are three undocumented immigrants, only one of them returned and the other two have decided to stay. Among the other nine temporary migrants, there is one who legally came to Britain in 1952 and has lived in Britain for fifty-seven years but went back to Hong Kong at the age of eighty-seven when she became more and more helpless after developing dementia.

Another young woman who came over when she was eleven years old planned to go back to Hong Kong for a better career. These decisions to return or remain are not made on the basis of legality or illegality, but upon access to social resources such as families, friends, or colleagues, that would support them in the receiving country.

8.3 Gambling and work in the catering industry

Among my fifty-four participants, twenty-seven of my research participants are regular gamblers and all of these regular gamblers are caterers or catering workers or retired from the catering industry. Among the other twenty-seven participants, twenty-four of them work outside Chinese ethnic enterprises. In the casinos, the majority of the regular visitors make their living in Chinese restaurants, take-away shops or other ethnic enterprises, such as Chinese grocery shops, Chinese beauty saloons, travel agents, etc. During my fieldwork, I often heard them claim that they had nowhere to go to after work except casinos and betting shops. Cheng, an undocumented migrant who came to Britain seven years ago, now working in a Chinese supermarket, made his point clear and strong by asking me 'where else do you think people like us can go to except here (the betting shop) '（你觉得像我们这样的人除了来这里还有哪里好去？）. The catering workers have a very similar view about their choice of occupation 'What else can we do except working in the kitchens（除了做厨房我们还能做什么？ ）'. Interestingly, Chinese regulars in the casinos also say something similar too 'we have no other entertainment, except gathering in the casinos（除了来卡仙奴，我们都没有其他娱乐）'. Both regular gamblers and catering workers share one thing in common: they feel that they have no other choice:

gambling is the only accessible leisure activity after work just as take-away shops or restaurants are the only places where they can find a job.

Wong has suggested that catering workers' long working hours isolate them from the rest of the society and the time when they finish work at one or two o'clock at night, a casino is the only place to go to if they want to have some social life (Wong, 1989). In Manchester, many migrants from Hong Kong and Siyi work in the catering industry. As mentioned in chapter one, the majority of the migrants from the New Territories Hong Kong did not have sufficient professional training or formal education, many of them were peasants. The language and cultural barriers and the lack of professional skills largely restricted their employment opportunities. Many of them chose to work in the catering industry because working in the kitchens, the demands of English language and cultural proficiency is comparatively lower. According to my participants, working in the catering trade, especially running a Chinese take-away shop is almost the only option for them to earn enough money to support the whole family in Britain. Gambling as a form of leisure activity is similar to catering in that sense. To gamble, they do not need to speak much English or practice British culture. Many participants explained why they choose casino instead of cinema or pubs: 'Going to cinema? We don't understand English. Going to pubs? We don't drink. The only place we can go to after work is casinos. There we can meet other Chinese and everybody speak Chinese there'. Language and culture barriers are two obstacles that are mentioned most in the gambling and catering contexts. Benton and Gomez have described how, in the 1950s,

> the Hong Kong emigrant's knowledge of the British way of life and English was practically nil … they had no relatives abroad, except for a handful of villagers scattered across different parts of Europe. The few contacts they did establish were with other Chinese, in whose restaurants they went to work…Beyond catering, they had no relationship whatsoever to British life, against which they were cocooned by their choice of occupation (Benton and Gomez, 2008: 37)

Among my fifty-four participants, there were twenty-nine participants who worked or had worked in the catering trade. Among the twenty-nine caterers, two were from Macao, and twenty-seven were from Hong Kong or Si Yi. Only one of the twenty-nine participants has gone to college, and twennyt-eight of them have a few years of formal education. As Benton and Gomez described, among Chinese migrants, those who lacked education, skills and extensive experience of moving across territories tended to work in ethnic enterprises. Benton and Gomez describe the food industry as a place of 'quarantine' or 'refuge' for the Chinese rather than a 'fairway to the mainstream' (2008: 11). The catering niche also became a new arena for racial stereotyping and contributed to marginalisation.

The spatial requirements of the catering economy made the Chinese one of Britain's most dispersed ethnic minorities, with no ghettos to speak of. A study of the Chinese community in Manchester in the early 1990s confirmed that a take-away shop catered for an essentially local market and that take-away shops were scattered relatively uniformly across Greater Manchester as a whole, rising to at least one take-away to each square kilometre in the high-density area of the city (Liao, 1993). The long unsociable working

hours and the spatial requirements of the catering economy made Chinese catering workers doubly isolated from both mainstream society and other Chinese groups. Chinese caterers wanted to make friends and meet up with others and extend their social networks, so that they might eventually support their settlement. Commercialised gambling venues eventually became their solution for socialisation because of their open door policy and the lower level English language and cultural proficiency required.

8.4 Connections between gambling and social networks: three migrants' experiences

Heroine, who I introduced in chapters five and six, is, like Zee, an undocumented migrant living in Manchester. However, her situation is different from Zee. Heroine was an entrepreneur before and she has enough money to support her life in Britain. Her only child has graduated from a university in Britain and has a job in Shanghai. Heroine does not have financial pressures. She does not need to work. Although she wants to obtain legal residency so that she can start a business in Britain, that is more for her ambition instead of her need in a materialistic sense. Dreaming of setting up her own company once she gets her legal status, Heroine is eager to get to know more people and become accepted by the people around her. She does not know how long she can stay in Britain. But she makes every effort to remain. Unlike Zee who avoided gambling, Heroine gambles in casinos regularly, trying to augment her social image and penetrate the older Hakka migrants' lineage networks. Heroine's partner, Mr. Kong, was an ordinary pensioner and retired catering worker. Before she started gambling in the casinos, Heroine

tried several other ways to create connections with the Hakka community who, she felt rejected her. In order to 'be kind and make more friends' she voluntarily helped out in a Hakka man's 'massage centre', greeting the guests at the reception area. A few days later she found out that the 'massage centre' was actually an illegal brothel. Then she worked as a volunteer at the community centre but felt that the others did not respect her due to her illegal status. When every volunteer was required to sign in a worksheet and claim their transport fee, Heroine was required not to sign in but to claim the bus ticket directly from the project worker. Heroine was undocumented, the community centre wanted to help Heroine to break her social isolation but did not want Heroine's name to appear in their paperwork which might 'cause confusion'. Heroine was uncomfortable about this arrangement. At the same time, Heroine was also applying for spousal status in Britain and she was rather nervous while waiting for news from her lawyer. During her prolonged wait; she started to suspect that working in the community centre voluntarily would affect her application. She stopped her voluntary work and the community centre did not try to retain her. After leaving the community centre, Heroine started to visit casinos with her partner. After all 'meeting the others in the casinos is better than knitting all day long alone at home' as Heroine said.

Starting to visit casinos after stopping going to the community centre was a common development among the Chinese migrants I worked with in Manchester. Heroine is not the only one. There are four other Chinese pensioners who also started to visit the casinos near Chinatown regularly after they stopped attending the activities at the community centre. They claimed that they needed somewhere to meet other people. Chau's study of

Chinese older people in Britain points out that the older Chinese immigrants in Britain are isolated from both the local community and the Chinese community after retirement due to their language and culture barriers (Chau, 2008). In fact many catering workers maintain their social connection mainly via their work, and the connection is narrowly linked to fellow workers. So for those who are retired or unemployed immigrants who can not speak English, if they have no other alternative way to connect to other social groups, such as religious groups, community centres, the casinos become almost their last accessible option.

Not every migrant is certain about their chosen future like Zee and Heroine. Many migrants constantly examine their situations and change their mind in the process of settlement and their relations with gambling are amended along the trajectory. Lucy is among them. Lucy, like Heroine, visited her daughter in Britain and overstayed, they both live with a Chinese man who has legal resident status in Britain. But Lucy does not gamble. Heroine makes great efforts to stay permanently, Lucy hesitates all the time. Her situation is very different from Heroine in terms of their background in China and their access to the social networks in the Chinese community at Chinatown. In China, Heroine had a middle-class family; her husband was a lecturer at a university. Heroine owned a little company in Shanghai and had enough money to fund her son's four years university education as an overseas student in Britain. In Chinatown, people believe Heroine is a rich woman and her Hakka partner is living with her because of her money.

Unlike Heroine's, Lucy's family is poor. She and her ex-husband had almost no savings; they borrowed money to fund their daughter's journey to Britain. In 2000 Lucy borrowed about £20,000 and sent her daughter, who calls herself Christ, over to Britain to study. Her daughter did not do well at school in China and Lucy thought it might be easier for her to get higher education in Britain than in China because Britain has a much higher university entry rate. The agent who helped Lucy to plan and arrange her daughter's journey to a British university told Lucy that they did not even need much money as her daughter could always work part-time after class to earn her living and tuition fees. Lucy naively believed the agent, and borrowed 220,000 RMB (roughly about £20,000, the amount that would take Lucy and her husband at least ten years to earn in China as their salary then added up to about £250). Lucy's second older sister put her own flat down as guarantee to help Lucy borrow the money from one of their 'rich friends'. Lucy didn't expect the £20,000 to run out in the first year when Christ was still studying English and preparing for a university application. Lucy couldn't hold back her tears when she recalled how Christ had phoned home and asked Lucy if she could buy some oranges as she craved for some fruit but had little money left. Lucy visited Christ in 2002 and realised that it was impossible for Christ to earn her living and tuition fees while simultaneously studying at college. Lucy and her husband had used up all their resources in sending the girl over, and they had no money left to support Christ in further education.

The girl dropped out of college and started to work illegally at a restaurant in Chinatown; Lucy joined her and overstayed. 'We couldn't go; we have to clear the debt. I can't let my sister lose her flat. Her husband doesn't even know that she's used the flat to guarantee my

loan.' Lucy worked extremely hard, taking three jobs at the same time, working as a nanny in a Shanghainese herbalist's home looking after twin girls five days a week, cooking and cleaning for the mah-jong club at the Wuyi Association three nights a week, and washing dishes at a restaurant at the weekend. In 2004 she cleared her debt and even saved enough money to buy a two-bedroom flat for her daughter and herself in Guangzhou, where her second sister lives. 'I always feel guilty that we made the wrong decision to send the girl over and made her lose her chance of a proper education and made her end up working in a restaurant. When we go back to China, it will be very difficult for her to get a job as she hasn't got any qualifications. The flat is for her, as compensation from me'. By then she'd divorced her husband in her hometown. 'He insisted I go back to him and leave our daughter alone in Britain. I couldn't do that', Lucy explained.

Just when Lucy and her daughter were planning to go home, Lucy was diagnosed with breast cancer. She said, 'I couldn't go back to China with cancer, I couldn't afford the treatment in China, not even by selling the flat we'd just bought'. Lucy went on to tell me why she had decided to postpone their journey. At that time, Mr Yeung, the vice chairman of Wuyi, a 70-year-old Siyinese man, had been making advances towards her for 'quite a while'. Lucy finally accepted him and moved into his house. Lucy didn't say whether it was falling ill that had made her change her mind to settle in Britain. During the two years of treatment, Lucy was eager to push her partner to marry her in order to give her legal status. The man's son disliked Lucy. The man was unsure if they should marry. Lucy was frustrated and moved out in 2008. But they stayed in close contact. The man regularly

gave money to Lucy to cover her expenses. Lucy once recalled, 'I tell him not to give money to me as I won't be able to repay him. I tell him only to give me money when he doesn't expect me to repay him.' During my fieldwork, Lucy often talked to me about her tangle with Mr Yeung. She had a reason for her eager attempt at gaining legal status. She had found out that her daughter is a lesbian. Lucy believes that this would make her daughter even more disadvantaged and marginalised in China, in addition to her relative lack of education, as homosexuality is still largely unaccepted and stigmatised in China. 'I may go back, but she has to stay. At least she'd survive in this country; back in China, I don't know how she'd survive,' Lucy said. 'If I have legal status, it would be easier for her to apply for one as my daughter,' Lucy explained.

Mr Yeung visited Lucy twice a week, bringing her fresh vegetables and large eggs from a farmers' market in the city centre, and they went to have dim sum lunch once a week. When Mr Yeung won at mah-jong, he gave his winnings to Lucy. Lucy accepted the money but persuaded him not to gamble so much. During that period, when Lucy's daughter had appendicitis, Mr Yeung invited the girl to stay at his place and helped Lucy to look after her. Mr Yeung seemed to be Lucy and her daughter's most reliable support in Manchester although he refused to marry Lucy. He helped them to send money back to China under his name when they could not find anyone else to do it for them; he also helped Lucy's daughter to rent a flat under his name, and offered his address to serve as their contact address. He was the only person who helped them when they were required to provide any information that an illegal resident might have difficulty in producing. 'He is really good to me, in not just looking after me but also my daughter. Without him I

wouldn't be able to get through the chemotherapy; each time after a treatment, it felt like being bitten by millions of ants...I was in bad temper all the time and I did not eat any food cooked with oil or seasoning. He endured me and never complained. But he never agreed to marry me. He said living with me had upset his son already and he didn't want to upset him further.' Unlike most other second generation Chinese who would not take up the catering business from their parents, Mr Yeung's son had taken over his father's restaurant. He married another woman from Hong Kong and lived close to their restaurant. When Lucy was living with Mr Yeung, they came over to stay with their father during the weekends. Although Mr Yeung did not marry Lucy, Lucy is known as Mrs Yeung in Chinatown. Through living with Mr Yeung, Lucy had built a connection with the Chinese caterers in Chinatown. Through Mr Yeung she had found her former work at the mah-jong club, and met many acquaintances. Although Lucy always said that her 'acquaintances' are Mr Yeung's friends instead of her own, she had a greater sense of security than Zee and Heroine. She once told me that to find a job for herself and her daughter at a Chinese restaurant was never difficult even though they had no legal status. Lucy felt that she and her daughter could survive in the circle of Chinese ethnic enterprises, as they 'know many people around Chinatown'.

Early one morning in December 2008, I received a call from Lucy, 'Will you come to town today?' she asked, adding, 'I want to see you'. I could feel that something serious had happened and her voice sounded sad. I hurried to her place, a lounge converted into bedroom shared by her and her daughter. Her daughter left as soon as I arrived, and she looked as if she'd just been crying. Lucy was sitting on a sofa, as still as a statue. 'He has

died,' she said as she tried to choke back her tears. It was one of Mr Yeung's friends who had informed Lucy of Mr Yeung's death. Lucy wasn't invited to Mr Yeung's funeral, but she went uninvited to the temple where Mr Yeung's body was kept for a final Buddhist ritual before the funeral. She wanted to see Mr Yeung for the last time, but Mr Yeung's son refused and instead told Lucy that she could go and collect her belongings from Mr Yeung's house. Lucy didn't go; she told him that he could just throw them away for her. In her and her daughter's bedroom, Lucy showed me the only photo of Mr Yeung she'd kept. 'We had lots of photos together, but I destroyed them when I moved out; this one was kept by mistake, and it is the only photo of him I have now…' Lucy burst into tears. I asked her whether she had any plan for the future. 'I want to go back to China,' she said. Mr Yeung's death seemed to make Lucy feel that the only support she and her daughter could rely on was gone. But they did not return in the end. Lucy and her daughter actually survived quite well after Mr Yeung's death. They soon moved out of the flat rented under Mr Yeung's name. A few months after my fieldwork, Lucy phoned me and said Christ was now working as an independent hairdresser and through 'a friend's introduction' she herself had become a salesperson for a multi-national marketing company.

Lucy did not gamble, but she participated in gambling in other ways. She cooked for the mah-jong players at Wuyi and she shared the players' winnings. Players gave her tips and they were required to pay twenty per cent of their winnings to Wuyi when they won a full-hand, and part of the money the winners paid went into Lucy's wage. So although Lucy didn't gamble, she had integrated into the gambling circle by facilitating the mah-jong gatherings and sharing the players' winnings. By helping out at the mah-jong club, she got

to know the people of Chinatown, especially the caterers, who were the main mah-jong players at Wuyi. Lucy said that she did not gamble because she didn't have the time and energy to do so. By comparing her situation with Heroine's situation, we can understand a little more about both women. Heroine gambled to build up her social connections with the people of Chinatown. Lucy didn't need to do so. Through working at Wuyi and the herbalist's home, and living with Mr Yeung, she had developed connections with Chinese entrepreneurs in Chinatown. Although she felt that Mr Yeung was the only person who would help her, she had constructed her own social network, which was her own social capital and supported her and her daughter even after they had lost Mr Yeung. Without gambling, Lucy had gained access to the established social networks found among the settled Chinese migrants around Chinatown.

8.5 Conclusion

The three people described in this chapter are temporary migrants or at least they can not and have not decided to settle permanently in Britain. Zee's return and Lucy's remaining illustrate that access to social networks is a major factor that affects a migrant's choice of settlement patterns. Whether a migrant decided to stay or return was often based on a calculation that may include temporary factors or more permanent factors. Heroine's case, which is presented in both chapter six and in this chapter, illustrates that for the group of migrants who decide to stay but lack social resources, gambling may be a channel for them to build up connections with settlers who have come earlier and already established useful networks.

Not every Chinese migrant engages with the social networks maintained at Chinatown and in the casinos. Zee came as an undocumented immigrant and struggled for six years to find a stable way to survive and accumulate the amount of money he needed for his future life. His illegal status deprived him of the early chance of integrating into the community of settlers. Lucy and Heroine are different from Zee in this regard as they both came with a visitor visa and the first six months of their legal stay gave them greater opportunities to build connections with others. Heroine got to know her partner while she was visiting her son in the university, Lucy found her first nanny's job in a Shanghainese herbalist's home as an overseas student's visiting mum.[31] Both Lucy and Heroine actually rely heavily on the social connections they established in their first several months of legal stay. Heroine tried to gain the recognition of the Hakkas through gambling and offering free dim sum meals, as I described in chapter six, as well as taking ill fated jobs in massage centres and volunteering at the community centre. Lucy tried to become a member of the legal settlers' group by getting Mr Yueng to marry her, although unfortunately without success. Heroine has accumulated enough money for her survival in Britain thus she does not need to find a job through her partner's Hakka network. Lucy is in need of money and has established her connection with Chinatown entrepreneurs and thus secures her employment. At the end of my fieldwork, they both stayed while Zee returned. Although the three of them all become undocumented migrants in the end, their access to various social networks was largely affected by their initial status on arrival.

[31] It's not uncommon that a parent visitor, usually the mother, works as a nanny at a private domestic place during their maximum six months stay in Britain. Usually is young Chinese couples who have just had a new baby would try to hire a Chinese nanny in the first several months of their parenthood. The visitor mothers meet this need in that they are usually believed to be experienced in looking after a baby as they have raised their own children, and they only demand very basic salary and often would live with their employers and provide all around support in their home, instead of baby-sitting only, they look after the new mother and cook for the family as well.

Chinese migrants who chose not to gamble gave a number of reasons for this decision. One reason offered by Zee was that they did not perceive that the relationships built through gambling will benefit their lives as short term migrants. Heroine, on the other hand, gambled in order to connect, and to embed herself more completely in the society within which she wished to remain. Their stories helped to explain that for a migrant, making social connections was essential. Ong describes Hong Kong businessmen in the United States trying to accumulate social capital through alumni networks, sports clubs, and opera balls (Ong, 1999:104). Ong points out that what he refers to as the 'non-white' migrant's ability to convert economic capital into social prestige is limited in Euro-America. This contemporary example resembles earlier work by Oxfel (1992) and Riches (1975). My participants engaged in gambling in order to develop their own social networks and, importantly and conversely, withdrew from gambling due to disillusionment with certain relationships. The Chinese restaurant workers in Chinatown commonly feel they can not find a job in any other industry except in Chinese catering trade. Regular Chinese gamblers in the casinos say that they have no other entertainment except gambling. These two overlapping categories of people: Chinese catering workers and Chinese regular casino gamblers shared a perception that their recreation and employment was a reflection of their limited access to social and other kinds of capital.

9 Conclusion: making connections in a gambling world

9.1 Introduction

In the concluding chapter, I will focus on this study's contribution to gambling studies, studies of the Chinese community in Britain, and anthropological considerations of money. Much of the existing work on Chinese gamblers has focused on problem gambling, or is conducted primarily for clinical purposes (Blaszczynski et al. 1998; Tang et al. 2007; Wong and So 2003, Oei et al. 2007). A number of studies indicate that the rate of problem gambling may be higher for the 'Chinese community' (Volberg, 1994; Thomas and Yamine, 2000; Chen et al, 1993; Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal 1997; Balszczynski, Huynh, Dumlao and Farrell, 1998; Oei, Lin and Raylu, 2007). However, this work also suggests that 'problem gamblers' constitute only a very small portion of the wider gambling population. Blaszczynski, Huynh, Dumlao and Farrell, for example, identify the incidence of problem gambling in the Australian Chinese community at 2.9% (1998). Nine years later, Oei, Lin and Raylu found that 2.1% of Australian Chinese participants were at what they describe as 'the tipping point' for problem gambling (2007). In Macao, the rate is less than 2.5% (Fong and Ozorio 2005). The wider population of Chinese gamblers is rarely studied, and there is very limited information about how Chinese gamblers perceive gambling. Who are these 'Chinese' gamblers? How do they gamble? How do they relate their activities to their lives outside the gambling context? How do they understand their gambling? By relating gambling to wider experiences in Chinese people's lives, including migration and settlement, this thesis uses original data to contribute to existing discussions and open up new areas of debate. These new findings include:

- A discussion of the constitution of the Chinese community in Manchester and how this affects their perception of and involvement in gambling. The majority of regular Chinese gamblers in Manchester are Hakka or Cantonese speakers who migrated from Hong Kong, Si Yi or other places in Canton Province in China via chain migration. They largely make their living by working in Chinese ethnic enterprises, especially the catering trade. Lineage networks are commonly cherished by these migrants.

- A comparison of a popular traditional way of gambling (mah-jong) with commercial roulette. This comparison has rarely been attempted and is a response to the hypothesis that commercial gambling is less fully social or cultural than is domestic gambling. My data suggest that despite the tendency to view traditional games as somehow intrinsically more social or cultural, the social aspects of commercial gambling are equally important for Chinese gamblers in Manchester.

- A demonstration of how anthropologists may contribute to studies of gambling by adding detailed and in-depth understandings of gamblers' experiences which may not be captured by other, more quantitative research methods, including questionnaires and surveys. Due to linguistic and cultural barriers, researchers may feel that Chinese people are a 'hard to reach' group and that they are reluctant to share information with strangers, including those perceived to be representing the state or other established interests.

During fourteen months of participant observation, I made the following discoveries:

- Gambling is used to mark the boundaries of different social groups formed around lineage and locality networks: particular venues are used by certain groups to play mah-jong; individual group members have nicknames that indicate membership, or otherwise, of groups.
- Luck is employed by mah-jong players as a 'lubricator' to decrease inter-personal and social frictions and maintain inner group harmony.
- Distinctive moralities are formed around monetary exchanges in gambling contexts. A typical example is that some older regular gamblers claim that they gamble because they feel that their money is 'useless'.

The above information helps to create a more holistic understanding of gambling. It connects gambling to everyday life, to each individual's pre-migration history, and to the circumstances that surround them in the receiving society. Among many Cantonese and Hakka migrants, gambling is an essential social artifact. Through gambling they construct relationships and maintain networks they have transplanted from their home society through chain migration.

9.2 Cantonese and Hakka gamblers and their social networks

Before I started my fieldwork, I planned to study 'problem gambling' in 'the Chinese community'. However, after several months of participant observation, I began to understand the logic and rationality of gambling to some extent and I started to wonder: 'if there is a gambling problem, whose problem is it?' I eventually extended the focus of this

study beyond the paradigm of problem gambling to regular Chinese gamblers and other non-gambling Chinese. This extended remit helped me to discover that although the term 'Chinese' gamblers, as it is used in a number of studies of gambling in the Chinese community, is obscure and inaccurate. I realised that before I could come to understand their gambling, I needed to ask, "Who are the 'Chinese'?" and 'Where are they from and how they have settled down in Britain?'

During fieldwork I came to understand that the category of 'Chinese' gamblers must be broken down in order to be made meaningful in relation to gambling behaviour. My research participants were Cantonese and Hakka speaking migrants. Most of them had similar backgrounds, shared similar migration and settlement experiences. Some of them came from Si Yi and call themselves Siyinese. Some were from Hong Kong and called themselves Hong Kongers (香港人). Some were twice migrants originally from Canton Province or other places in China but who lived in Hong Kong, or Vietnam, or Thailand, or Malaysia, before they came over to Britain. Some were directly from Canton Province. Most of them spoke very limited English; Cantonese or Hakka was their daily language. After migration they made their living in Chinese ethnic enterprises, mainly take-away shops, restaurants, grocery shops, Chinese supermarkets, and beauty salons. They were often active in Chinatown. Even though some of them did not live or work at or near Chinatown, they visited it regularly. The casinos and the Chinese restaurants at or near Chinatown were their common social space, where they gathered with families, relatives and friends. They usually had families and relatives in Britain because most of them have come to Britain via chain migration and transplanted their previous lineage network and

the locality network over to Britain. More importantly, they relied on these networks for their post-migration settlement, either in the first several years after migration or their whole post-migration life.

What factors have made these individuals transplant their previous lineage social networks to Britain? There are several historical factors. First, historically Si Yi is an area for emigration in China and chain migration from this area started as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. Since the 1950s, the Hong Kong New Territories joined the tide of emigration when the Siyinese migration chain was interrupted by the new Communist regime and the urbanisation of Hong Kong's agricultural area made the villagers in the New Territories lost their land. After the Second World War, Britain extended British citizenship to its colonial citizens to cover Britain's loss of skilled workers in wartime (Green, 1996). The New Territories villagers thus took this chance to seek a more prosperous life in Britain. The voucher system introduced by the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act strengthened village and kinship migration chains by making jobs dependent on the sponsorship of an employer already in Britain and consigned all but a few new immigrants to the restaurant niche. A 1968 Act which aimed to exclude anyone without a close ancestral link to the United Kingdom also excluded children under the age of sixteen with only one parent in the country, causing a further increase in immigration by wives and in family reunions. These laws locked Chinese latecomers into the catering niche by throwing them into the arms of relatives or fellow-villagers who needed staff (Benton and Gomez, 2007 pp326–329). In these ways, Cantonese and Hakka migrants have transplanted their social networks to Britain.

Due to the lack of language proficiency and limited knowledge of the culture and the society in this country, many of these migrants can not find any other social resources apart from these two networks that they have taken with them. This is particularly true in the first several years of settlement. Finding a job, accommodation and friendship are all made possible with the support of these networks. Maintaining these social networks with other Cantonese or Hakka speakers becomes an important part of surviving in post-migration life.

9.3 Maintaining social networks through gambling

9.3.1 Social boundaries formed around lineage and locality networks: the cases of mah-jong and roulette gamblers

Mah-jong is the most popular type of social gambling among the Chinese. In Manchester, mah-jong is played in casinos, Chinese associations, Chinese restaurants, and at home. Choosing where to play the games is significant in maintaining various subgroups' boundaries. These subgroups often appear to be formed around its members' occupations. For example, people who work in Chinese enterprises tend to play together, and people who run their own business tend to play at Wuyi. However, the primary social dynamic is that their choice of occupations is largely affected by their lineage networks and social network. They rely heavily on 'friends and families' or '*laoxiang*' (people from the same locality) to lead their way into the jobs. Their 'friends and families' are often their relatives, (which often include members from the same lineage group); their '*laoxiang'* often share the same locality network with them. Thus the formation of the subgroups are

established around the lineage and locality networks, and the subgroup members are often related to each other not just through work but more importantly via these two networks.

Casino visitors have fewer choices of venues and tend to gamble under the same roof, regardless of the social networks to which they are attached. However, casino regulars have their own way of signifying and maintaining their networks. The nicknames they use to address each other are an important signifier of the social group a gambler belongs to and the social network he or she is directly connected to. As I described in chapter two, the majority of the Chinese regular gamblers in casinos are Cantonese and Hakka speakers who came to Britain via chain migration. Lineage networks are the strongest networks the Cantonese and Hakka migrants rely on. In the casinos, this is quite apparent when a kinship title referring to one's position in a lineage network is most popular and most welcomed by an addressee. Apart from kinship titles, nicknames referring to one's native place, such as Shanghai Po, are also used. However, while calling somebody by his or her kinship title is a gesture of proper intimacy in a social interaction, calling a woman from Shanghai ‘Shanghai Po’ may also be a gesture which preserves social distance. Using this type of locality nickname to greet a person in the casinos is a means of excluding the person from the social group that is formed via lineage connection, a rhetorical gesture which may provoke resentment. There is a third type, which I call 'obscure nicknames'. This type of nicknames or ‘alias’ often reflects the addressee's Chinese given name or an English name. This type of name discloses very limited information about an addressee and it is often given to people who do not belong to the lineage networks groups. This type of names is comparatively neutral as it is neither a gesture of friendliness nor hostility.

Those who have obscure nicknames are often latecomers compared to the kinship title bearers.

9.3.2 Luck, the mah-jong players' social 'lubricator'

Researchers have noticed that the Chinese gamblers believe in luck and some even suggest that the belief in luck may lead to higher percentage of 'problem gambling' and prevent 'the Chinese problem gamblers' from seeking help (Papineau, 2005; Raylu & Oei, 2004). Sinologists also have paid attention to the concept of luck in Chinese culture (Harrell, 1987; Raphals, 2003, Sangren, 2008, Swancutt, 2008). But no research has been done on how the Chinese gamblers employed the concept of luck in gambling.

During my research, I found out that the regular Chinese gamblers seem to have contradictory attitudes towards luck in two different types of popular table games, namely mah-jong and roulette. As shown in chapter three, mah-jong is a game of strategies and skills, while roulette is a game of blind chance. People normally think that in a blind chance game, 'luck' decides the outcome of the game while in a game of strategies and skills, the players' experience and skills have more impact of the outcome of the game. However, regular Chinese gamblers practice a completely different logical framework. They emphasize luck as determining the outcome of a mah-jong game, and claim that it is one's wits and mentality that decide the winning and losing on roulette tables.

Gamblers' attitudes towards luck are largely affected by the relationships between them and the other participants of the games. At a mah-jong table, the players are gambling

against each other. At a roulette table a gambler is playing against the casino. At the mah-jong tables in Manchester, players are often friends or families or at least acquaintances. At Wuyi, players largely share the same locality network. In other places, such as community centres, restaurants or at home, players are often friends and families. Even in casinos, players know each other, and playing with strangers is regarded as a fool's risk. At the roulette table, players do not necessarily know each other, the social relationships between roulette players are comparatively loose. It is this difference between mah-jong and roulette which leads to the players' different ideas of luck. Emphasizing luck's influence and obscuring a player's skills and strategic thinking is one way to maintain harmony within the group. Playing against the casino has a completely different meaning to regular players. The casino is the gamblers' common 'competitor' or even 'enemy'. In this situation, most regular gamblers would claim that they win at the roulette table because they are intelligent and know the game well. Roulette players often show off their mastery of the game, such as remembering the exact position of the thirty-seven numbers on the roulette wheel, or being able to predict the next winning number. Winning at the casino attracts admiration. Some Chinese regular gamblers thus use gambling 'against' the casino as a way to construct their identity and to form alliances with others.

9.3.3 Chinese gamblers' 'useless' money

The casino is a world of money. But I often heard gamblers say that they felt that in the casinos money was not 'money' anymore. I also often heard older Chinese gamblers claim that their money was 'useless'. It seems that money in casinos is different from money in other contexts. My research examines the social contexts that encompass the gamblers, discovers what contextual factors contribute to the meanings of the money in the casinos,

and identifies the social meanings of the money spent by the Chinese gamblers in their monetary exchanges inside and outside casinos.

When does money become 'useless'? In chapter seven, I described the regular Chinese gamblers' various, even contradictory monetary exchanges. These exchanges all work together to illustrate that what people value is money's social meaning. In the case under study here, money's meaning is largely attached to how it contributes to the social relations that people most value. Often the gamblers participate in a monetary exchange expecting it to generate or maintain a beneficial social relationship. Money is longed for by many Chinese gamblers, not because of its market exchange value but because of its power in transforming a social relationship. When money loses its power in maintaining or constructing a beneficial social relationship and social network, it becomes 'useless'.

The discovery of 'useless' money in the Chinese gamblers' context is a significant, new contribution to the existing literature on money. Bloch and Parry (1989) relate money's symbolic meaning to the cycles of exchanges that money enters, and they address their analysis to two cycles of exchange, namely a cycle of short-term exchange which is the legitimate domain of individual acquisition and a cycle of long-term exchanges concerned with the reproduction of the social and cosmic order (Bloch and Parry 1989:1–2). They also point out that while the long-term cycle is positively associated with the central precepts of morality, the short-term order tends to be morally undetermined since it concerns individual purpose, which is largely irrelevant to the long-term order. If, however, that which is obtained in the short-term individualistic cycle is converted to

serve the reproduction of the long-term cycle, then it becomes morally positive. Bloch & Parry's (1989) intervention is 'redirecting the analytical attention to the different time scales according to which transactions take place' as Maurer points out in his review article (2006: 18). This section of my research was also largely inspired by Bloch and Parry's 1989 collection. It focuses analytical attention upon the time scales of transactions, especially focusing on how people connect short-term transaction to long-term cycles, which, in my participants' case, means spending money to construct social relationship and networks.

Money's power in altering a social relationship and monetary exchange's function in creating, maintain and changing a social relationship is highly valued by the people in my field. As I have stated, my participants were mostly migrants. Most of them worked in the Chinese catering trade, and had very limited connection to other social groups. Many of them experienced difficulties in increasing their social capital and often relied on limited lineage and locality networks which they brought with them through migration. For a migrant pensioner living in isolation, the chance of building social relations with others and getting involved in a social life was even more difficult. Some Chinese older gamblers claimed that older people's money was useless. Under these circumstances, participants evaluated money according to the social connections it could construct and maintain. The *anticipated* connections that might transpire were an important factor in their choice of whether or not to engage in an exchange. Social relationships, for my migrant-participants, were essential to successful migration and settlement. The more extended a social relationship that an exchange could bring about, the more efficient, or 'useful' the money

involved in the exchange became. The more limited a social relation an exchange could bring, the less useful the expenditure, the more 'useless' the money itself was deemed.

Bloch and Parry state that the long-term cycle of exchange serves the reproduction of the social and cosmic order. In different sociocultural environments, the social and cosmic order is perceived differently. It may also vary *within* a particular community. My research provides an example of how particular individuals use their short term acquisitions to construct a social and cosmic order according to their particular priorities and circumstances. It is the relationships and social networks that encompass Chinese gamblers that give money its distinctive social meaning. When the monetary exchanges in which they participate can no longer maintain or generate beneficial relationships, money becomes 'useless'.

9.4 Understanding the significance of social connections

From the findings I have listed above, we can see that maintaining social connections and social relationships is an essential motivation for gambling as well as other monetary exchanges for regular Chinese gamblers. This reflects the importance attached to social relationships and personal networks by the Chinese in general, which have attracted many Sinologists' attention (Jacobs, 1979; King, 1985; Kipnis 1997; Yan 1996;Yang 1994; Gold, 2002).

Chinese society is relation-oriented (Jacobs 1979). In a relation-based social system, the emphasis is placed on the relation between particular individuals who interact with each other. As King puts it, the focus is placed upon the relationship (1985, 63). In a Chinese

society, an individual’s social connections are important factors that are frequently taken into consideration by others in judging social status. For the Chinese ‘there can be no fulfilment for the individual in isolation from his fellow men’ (King 1985, 57; see also deBary 1985, 33). Oxfel’s study of the Chinese community in Calcutta India suggests that identity is primarily experienced and conceptualized in terms of relationships with others (Oxfel, 1992). The self is realized in the social. The importance attached to relationships and networks by the Chinese is well recognized by scholars and many point out that 'network building is used (consciously or unconsciously) by Chinese adults as a cultural strategy in mobilizing social resources for goal attainment in various spheres of social life' (King, 1991: 79; Smart 1993; Yang 1994). This helps to explain regular Chinese gamblers’ effort in converting money into social relationships. Their social relationships and networks are bridges that connect their individual acquisition via short-term transactions to ‘the long-term cycle’ or ‘the reproduction of social and cosmic order’.

In contemporary Chinese societies, relationships and personal networks are often based on ascribed or primordial traits such as kinship, native place, and ethnicity, and also on achieved characteristics such as attending the same school, having shared experiences, and doing business together (Kipnis 1997, Yan 1996, Yang 1994, Gold, 2002). For overseas Chinese, social networks are usually ‘a historically evolved regime of kinship and ethnic power’ (Ong, 1999, p116). In the cases of my participants who were also Chinese migrants, their relationships and personal networks were largely based on kinship, native place, and sometimes ethnicity. The social networks my participants could access were mainly lineage networks and locality networks.

Social relationships and personal networks are useful but elusive assets. People rely on them to seek both practical help and emotional support, such as seeking jobs, finding a reliable child-care provider, getting quick assistance when under pressure. The cases I presented in chapter eight illustrated that access to social networks may affect Chinese migrants' decisions about major changes in life events, such as the decision to settle in the receiving country or going back to the home country. In a very general sense, social relationships and personal networks constitute what Bourdieu has referred to as 'social capital' (Bourdieu, 1977), but such capital is distributed unevenly; some groups, such as those to which my participants belonged, found it hard to generate or access social capital. Ong points out that the non-white migrant's ability to convert economic capital into social prestige is limited in Euro-America. This contemporary example resembles earlier work by Oxfel (1992) and Riches (1975). Chinese restaurant workers in Manchester's Chinatown commonly feel they can not find a job in any other industry except the Chinese catering trade. Regular Chinese gamblers in the casinos say that they have no other entertainment except gambling. Chinese catering workers and Chinese regular casino gamblers are two subgroups of Chinese that largely overlap. Their perception of their situations of recreation and employment may, in a way, reflect their limited access to social and other forms of capital. My participants engaged in gambling in order to develop social networks and, importantly and conversely, withdrew from gambling due to disillusionment with certain relationships. Despite the significance of maintaining existing social networks, not all Chinese migrants maintain their connections via gambling. In the following section I would like to discuss this point further, and raise a question for the

future investigation of gambling: are there systematic connections between gambling and migration?

9.5 Relations between gambling and migration: areas for further study

In this final section I raise a question for further research. How, if at all, are gambling and migration connected? I was led into this question by some of the intriguing data from my fieldwork.

Some of my participants said that Chinese migrants 'squander' their money on gambling, but the money spent on the gaming tables actually serves an important function for many Chinese regular gamblers. My data showed that gambling is particularly prevalent among Chinese migrants who have settled permanently and work in Chinese ethnic enterprises, mainly ethnic restaurants, take-away shops, and ethnic grocery shops. However, there were many others who chose to stay away from gambling. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the majority of Chinese migrants do not gamble. Chinese migrants resist gambling for a variety of reasons. One reason offered by Zee, a participant referred to earlier in the text, is that non gamblers are not motivated to build relationships through gambling because they will leave this social circle in the foreseeable future.

Many migrants calculate the risk of gambling and their migration plans and decide not to gamble. Zee believed that once someone 'became addicted' to gambling, they would not be able to save up the required amount of money for 'building a new house and setting up their own business' and they would be 'stuck' in this country. Zee desperately needed to

build a new social network to survive in Britain, but he would rather take the risk of struggling with little help than the risk of losing his hard-earned money and postponing his return journey. Another participant, Heroine, on the other hand, gambled in order to connect, and embed herself more completely in the society within which she wished to remain. Their stories (mainly presented in chapter eight) help to explain that for a migrant, making social connections is essential. It also prompts the question of whether a more general relationship exists between gambling and migration, and if so, how one might explore that relationship.

Anthropologists paid attention to the possible association of gambling with migration as early as the 1970s (Strathern, 1975, Salisbury and Salisbury 1977). Writing about migrant workers in Papua New Guinea, Hayano reflects that card playing as leisure time pleasure are 'inseparable from the labour migrant's acculturative experiences... and gambling are normal and acceptable adaptations a Highlander must make while working and living away from home' (Hayano, 1989, p235). Some recent sociological studies of gambling have also started to notice the possible connection between migration and gambling. For example, Multicultural Gamblers Help Program (2008) identified that gambling was more of an issue for established groups than it was for newly arrived groups. Some of my data seems to support this finding. Among my fifty-four participants, twelve of them settled temporarily, a quarter of the temporary migrants gambled regularly. Among the forty-four participants who have settled permanently, 54.5% of them gambled regularly. Within the group of people with whom I was closest during fieldwork, the more established group gambled more than the other group, a finding supported by more sporadic conversations

and observations of a much wider group of roulette and mah jong players. But is it also true that those who want to settle permanently have more ‘problems’ with gambling? And if so, what does this tell us about the relationship between gambling and migration? Might these insights also help us to better understand gambling as it enters new markets? What kind of evidence might lead policy makers to consider the gambling practices of migrants in their deliberations? These are questions that require further investigation.

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