



Single-parent immigrant families in Iceland: Lives and educational experiences of their children

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Preface

This is a study aiming to explore how single-parent immigrants support themselves and their children in Iceland, and to understand their experiences of their children's education. As a foreigner in Iceland myself, I am interested in the lives of immigrants in Iceland, so I decided to conduct a study to explore their experiences. I chose immigrant single parents as the research subject, because I think this is a special group of immigrants, and more attention should be paid to their lives and their children's education. Here my deepest gratitude goes first to all the participants, the parents and children from six immigrant single-parent families and two teachers from Icelandic schools. Thanks to their trust and willingness to share their personal experiences with me, I could successfully collect data for this project.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir, who has read my thesis over and over and given me constructive suggestions. I am deeply grateful for her excellent guidance during this study. I also would like to give my thanks to Hildur Blöndal Sveinsdóttir for her valuable advice on the topic of this study as well as her useful comments on my thesis, and to Anna María Hauksdóttir, who was so nice as to answer all kinds of questions during this study.

My special appreciation goes to people who introduced potential informants for this study. They are the *Chinese community in Iceland*, the *Mother Tongue* language school, and the *Iceland's International Parents Group*, without whose help I could not have recruited enough people to participate in this study.

Last but not least, I am forever grateful to my husband, Jingming Long, for his never-ending support and encouragement. He read my work at different stages, helped me with the English proofreading of my writings, and accompanied me to conduct some interviews in the evening. Finishing such a large thesis in English was a challenge for me and it would have been an even greater struggle if it had not been for him. I also want to dedicate this work to my parents for their hardship and understanding.

Abstract

Literature concerning immigration or single-parenting respectively is abundant, but there is limited research on single-parent immigrants in Iceland. Therefore, it is useful to research how single-parent immigrants support themselves and their children in Iceland, and to understand their experiences of their children's education. The aim of this study is to explore what situations immigrant single-parent families face in Iceland, and how they cope with the integration process. This is a qualitative interview study where 11 participants are recruited through a purposive sampling strategy for semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data. The main significance of this study is to understand the experiences of individuals during the process of integration into the society and their efforts to support themselves and their children in Iceland. The study thus gives a minority group a voice while also providing important information for Icelandic society and educational system.

Findings of this study show that these immigrant single parents have not had very difficult integration experiences in Iceland, but most of them cannot speak Icelandic fluently, so they have some problems in getting access to necessary information. All the immigrant single parents in this study can support their families with their salary and the financial support from the state. According to the findings of this study, it is clear that the work-family conflict is alleviated by the financial and social support system. All the immigrant single parents interviewed in this study are concerned about preserving their children's mother tongue, but all of them put their first consideration on their children's Icelandic language learning. Discontinuities between home and school are also discovered in this study. Most children in this study experienced marginalization in Icelandic schools, particularly in the first few months of attending the schools, when they were rejected by groups of Icelandic children.

Útdráttur

Einstæðir foreldrar af erlendum uppruna Íslandi: Reynsla af daglegu lífi og skólagöngu barna þeirra

Ýmsar rannsóknir er varða innflytjendur eða einstæða foreldra hafa verið gerðar á Íslandi en hins vegar er skortur á rannsóknum með einstæðum foreldrum af erlendum uppruna. Það er því mikilvægt að skoða hvernig einstæðir, erlendir foreldrar framfleyta sjálfum sér og börnum sínum á Íslandi og enn fremur að skoða hver upplifun þeirra er af menntun barna sinna. Tilgangur þessarar rannsóknar er að kanna stöðu erlendra einstæðra foreldra á Íslandi og hvernig þeim tekst að laga sig að íslensku samfélagi. Þetta er eigindleg (e. qualitative) viðtalsrannsókn þar sem 11 þátttakendur eru valdir með markmiðsúrtaki (e. purposive sampling) og ítarleg viðtöl, (þátttökuathugun) og skjalagreining eru nýtt til gagnasöfnunar. Meginþáttur rannsóknarinnar er greining á reynslu einstaklinga í aðlögunarferli sínu að íslensku samfélagi og hvernig þeim gengur að framfleyta sjálfum sér og börnum sínum. Rannsóknin veitir þar af leiðandi þessum minnihlutahópi rödd og á sama tíma nytsamlegar upplýsingar fyrir íslenskt samfélag og íslenska menntakerfið.

Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar sýna að einstæðir foreldrar af erlendum uppruna upplifa ekki mjög erfiðan aðlögunartíma á Íslandi, en flestir foreldranna tala ekki góða íslensku, og geta þar af leiðandi átt í erfiðleikum með að nálgast mikilvægar upplýsingar. Allir erlendu einstæðu foreldrarnir sem tóku þátt í rannsókninni geta framfleytt sjálfum sér og fjölskyldum sínum með launum og fjárhagsstuðningi frá ríkinu. Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar benda til þess að togstreitu milli fjölskyldu og vinnu sé létt með fjárhagslegum og félagslegum stuðningi. Allir þátttakendurnir í rannsókninni hafa áhyggjur af því að ná ekki að viðhalda móðurmáli barna sinna en leggja fyrst og fremst áherslu á að börnin læri íslensku. Ákveðið bil á milli heimilis og skóla kemur einnig fram í niðurstöðum rannsóknarinnar, en flestum börnum í rannsókninni fannst þau vera skilin útundan í íslenskum skólum, sér í lagi fyrstu mánuðina í skólanum þar sem þeim var hafnað af vinahópum íslenskra barna.

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1 Introduction

Due to major political and social changes worldwide, the number of international migrants has increased dramatically over the last decades. For example, according to Statistics Iceland (2012a), Iceland has experienced a strong growth in the immigrant population since 1996. In 2012 there were 28,318 immigrants (first and second generation) (8.86% of the total population) compared to 5,702 (2.13% of the total population) in 1996 (Statistics Iceland, 2012a) (Figure 1).

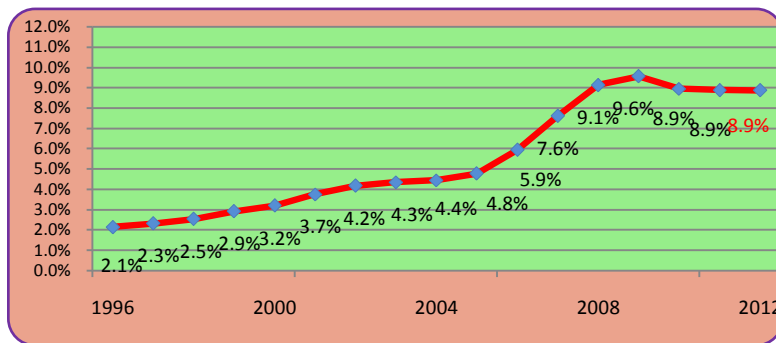


Figure 1. The ratio of immigrants in Iceland 1996-2012

Internationally, immigrant studies have been done from many perspectives, such as the role of language, communication, community and so on (Derwing & Waugh, 2012; Esser, 2006; Penninx, 2003; Penninx, Spencer, & Van Hear, 2008; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001; Picot & Sweetman, 2012). In Iceland, there are also many studies on immigrant integration experiences, and their life and working situation (Ragnarsdóttir, 2007; Sigurgeirsdóttir, 2011; Sigurgeirsdóttir & Skaptadóttir, 2011; Skaptadóttir, 2004, 2010; Skaptadóttir & Loftsdóttir, 2009; Skaptadóttir & Wojtynska, 2008a, 2008b; Wojtynska, Skaptadóttir & Ólafsson, 2011), but research on single-parent immigrants in Iceland is quite limited. In this thesis, the term *single-parent family* can be defined as family where a parent lives with dependent children, without a spouse or partner, either alone or in a larger household, such as non-married parent with children, divorced parent with children and single with children because of the death of the spouse. The term *single-parent immigrant* means that the single parent was born in a foreign country and has migrated to Iceland for residence.

Single parenting is a common and growing trend in many countries (Ellwood & Jencks, 2002, 2004; Kiernan, 2001) and the number of children living in single-parent families has increased in recent years. More and more children now are being raised by single parents as a result of separation, divorce, or out-of-marriage births. In America, the proportion of children in single parent families has been rising from about 10% in 1965 to 27% in 2001 (Ellwood & Jencks, 2002). Similarly, in Great Britain, the number of children in single parent families has grown from 7% in 1972 to 24% in 2005 (Office for National Statistics, 2006). Non-marital childbearing is substantially high in some European countries, particularly in Scandinavia where approximately one of every two births is out-of-marriage (Kiernan, 2001). UNICEF (2007) estimated that 20% of children live in single-parent families and stepfamilies, for example, 10% in Italy and Greece and more than 30% in the United Kingdom. According to *Population development 2011* (Statistical Series, 2012) (Table 1), there were 77.621 nuclear families in Iceland in 2012, among which the number of single-parent families is 12.576, i.e. 7.2% of total number of families and 16.2% of total the number of nuclear families (Statistical Series, 2012, p. 12).

Type of family		Number of families	Percentage of total families	Percentage of nuclear families
Nuclear families	Married couples without children	29,062.00	16.64%	37.44%
	Married couples with children	23,016.00	13.17%	29.65%
	Consensual union without children	3,222.00	1.84%	4.15%
	Consensual union with children	9,745.00	5.58%	12.55%
	Father with children	1,111.00	0.64%	1.43%
	Mother with children	11,465.00	6.56%	14.77%
	Total	77,621.00	44.43%	100.00%
Not in nuclear families		97,082.00	55.57%	-
Total		174,703.00	100.00%	-

Table 1. Type of family 2012 in Iceland

Note: The term “nuclear family” refers to couples (married and in a consensual union) and children below the age of 18, single men and women with children below the age of 18. Persons above the age of 18 who live with their parents are not included in nuclear families (Statistical Series, 2012).

Some studies have shown that there are some negative effects of single parenting on children. For instance, they face a higher risk of low academic achievement and of dropping out than those from two-parent families (Pong & Ju, 2000; Vandivere, Moore, & Brown, 2000). Vandivere et al. (2000) indicated that children living in a single-parent family are more likely to have poor outcomes in test scores, educational attainment, and behavioural and psychological problems. Feltey (2003) ascribed that to the economic deprivation of single-parent family life, in combination with other sources of strain and stress experienced by both parents and children. Furthermore, McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) claimed that limited resources and time pressures on single parents make them less able to participate in their children's schooling and supervise them.

However, single-parent families have been present in all societies over time, and should not be viewed as deviant or problematic, but rather as an alternative family form (Coontz, 1997). Moreover, studies indicate that single parenting can even have positive effects on children as well, depending on other factors such as personality types, parenting involvement, family policy and so on (Domina, 2005; Ford-Gilboe, 2000; Leve & Fagot, 1997; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Minke & Anderson, 2005; Pong, Dronkers & Hampden-Thompson, 2003). For example, Pong et al. (2003) found that children show smaller or no achievement gap by family structure in countries that make greater investments in social welfare and have more generous welfare policies, such as Austria and Iceland. Pong et al. (2003) concluded that national family policies could offset the negative academic outcomes of single parenthood. Moreover, research by Bestler (n.d.) highlighted that children from single parent families can learn early on how to do some chores, be frugal, and set realistic goals. Children from traditional two-parent families are often protected and not in touch with the adult problems and issues until they grow up, whereas, in single-parent families, children have to learn to understand relationship shifts and change, the need to budget, and the relationship between hard work and a good life (Bestler, n.d.). Furthermore, Leve and Fagot (1997) noted that single-parent families experience more positive behaviour of their children and use more problem-solving strategies than two-parent families do. In Ford-Gilboe's (2000) study, he found that cohesion or emotional closeness was the most frequently identified strength of both single-parent and two-parent families, but optimism/pride may be a more critical strength for single-parent

families, who have been found to experience more chronic stressors than two-parent families.

To summarize, although research concerning immigration and single-parenting respectively is abundant, research on single-parent immigrants is rare in Iceland. Therefore, it is useful to research how single-parent immigrants support their families and educate their children in Iceland. According to Kendig and Bianchi (2008, p. 1239), most single mothers do not have the flexibility to drop out of the labour force or reduce their hours in response to the needs of very young children—unless their extended families or the government steps in. What sort of support do these single-parent immigrants in Iceland get from the society, government, friends or others? What kind of experiences do these immigrant children have in Icelandic schools?

1.1 Purpose and significance of the study

My bachelor study background is sociology, which gives rise to my interest in the lives of the immigrant minority in Iceland. I came to Iceland in 2011 to pursue my master's degree, and because of my interest in the lives of immigrant people in Iceland, I decided to conduct a study to explore their experiences. I chose the immigrant single parent as the research subject, partly due to my admiration for single parents raising their children alone, but mainly because I think this is a special group of immigrants, and more attention should be paid to their lives and their children's education. However, as mentioned before, little research has been done on single-parent immigrants' life experiences and their children's educational experiences in Iceland. Moreover, an argument over the necessity of financial support to single-parent families gave me the idea to do this study, which was triggered by a discussion at a seminar about social welfare in Iceland. There were two distinct opinions towards the necessity of benefit for single-parent families. Single mothers considered that, because there is only one person earning a salary in one-parent families, it is necessary and important to receive benefits from the government for single parents, especially for those immigrant single-parent families who don't receive any child alimony from the other parent. However, the married mothers insisted that it was also very difficult for them to support the whole family even though there are two salaries in two-parent families. The married mothers noted that single parents can enjoy special support in various areas, for example, single parent allowance, tax reduction and even higher child

benefit for single parents, so some single-parent families even get higher income and have a better life than two-parent families. Their arguments promoted my interest in conducting research on immigrant single-parent families.

The central research question of this study is that: What situations do immigrant single-parent families face in Iceland, and how do they cope with the integration process? As immigrants, they must cope with the process of migration and relocation in terms of culture, values and language. How do single-parent immigrants support themselves and their children in Iceland? Moreover, how did their children adapt to the Icelandic schools? How do the schools support or adjust to these children in Iceland? As immigrant parents, they must find a balance between education influenced by the ethnic culture and by Icelandic mainstream. Luo and Wiseman (2000) found that parents and children in immigrant families face a tough dilemma at the crossroads of maintaining ethnic language and being assimilated into the mainstream culture. Therefore, it will be interesting to study what attitudes immigrant parents have towards their mother tongue being maintained in Iceland and how they balance their children's learning of the official language and the mother tongue. According to Himmelweit, Bergmann, Green, Albeda and Koren (2004), because of the absence of a parent, time and money inputs are much more limited in single-parent families than two-parent families. Thus, this study will try to find out: how do working single parents cope with the work-family conflict? What kinds of social or financial support do they get in Iceland?

The main significance of this study is, to give a minority group a voice while also providing useful and important information for Icelandic society and its educational system. Meanwhile, an important implication of this study is to suggest and develop ways to empower single-parent immigrants in Icelandic society. Furthermore, with these individual stories, this study can serve as a guide for these single-parent immigrants to know where they can get help and support and how they can educate their children in Iceland.

1.2 Methods of the study

This is a qualitative interview study where 11 participants are recruited through a purposive sampling strategy for semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data. The methods in this study were used to

understand people's description of their own integration experience and to analyze how Icelandic policies influence their lives in Iceland.

1.3 Structure of thesis

The thesis is divided into seven main chapters. The next chapter presents the theoretical background and a brief review of previous studies on the lives of immigrants and immigrant children's educational experiences. Then there is a chapter on the study context- Icelandic society and the social welfare system, after which there is a chapter that focuses on research design, data collection methods and data analysis procedures. The main findings of this study follow as well as a discussion chapter. The final chapter presents conclusions and implications of the findings.

2 Theoretical framework and literature review

As noted in Chapter 1, the main purpose of this study is to explore situations immigrant single-parent families face in Iceland, and their coping with the integration process. To construct the theoretical framework of this study, relevant literature is reviewed from five aspects: immigrants' integration process, immigrant parents' time allocation between work and family, immigrant parents' ways of educating their children, the family-school relation and immigrant children's school adaption.

2.1 Integration: language, interaction, and discrimination

Generally, new immigrants are expected to assimilate into the mainstream culture. However, there are four possible preferences and attitudinal positions according to Berry's accumulation model (Berry, 2001). They are separation (maintaining culture heritage and not adopting a new cultural identity), assimilation (renouncing cultural heritage and adopting new cultural identity), marginalization (failing to maintain either cultural identity) and integration (maintaining both cultural identities). Berry (2001, p. 619) emphasized that "This presentation of attitudinal positions is based on the assumption that immigrant groups and their individual members have the freedom to choose how they want to engage in intercultural relations". If individuals choose separation, it may be extremely hard for them to have a good life in the host countries, because they don't adapt to the new environment. Whereas assimilation is not the best choice either, for although they can be good citizens in the new culture, abandoning their original culture may lead to "culture shock" when they and their next generation come back to their original culture. In contrast, integration is much more positive for both the immigrants and society than assimilation, because the immigrants participate in the new culture while maintaining their own cultural identity. Based on the above analysis, integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. The integration process involves not only the immigrants' adaptation but also that of the receiving society. According to *Common basic*

principles on immigrants' integration policy in the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2004), all immigrants have responsibilities to participate and adapt to the new country of residence, and simultaneously, the receiving society should create opportunities for the immigrants' full economic, social, cultural, and political participation.

Numerous studies on integration consider language adaptation as a sign of integration. For example, Esser (2006) regarded language as a central component of the integration of immigrants into their host societies. He explained (2006, p. 8) that "Language is particularly important in its function for the structural integration into the receiving country, e.g., as part of an actor's human capital, and through this in its function for placement in the educational system and in the labour market". The Ministry of Social Affairs (2007) deemed the ability of speaking the official language to be the prerequisite for participation and integration into a new society, so they suggested that those who immigrate to Iceland and have a native language other than Icelandic, should acquire fluency in Icelandic and learn about Icelandic culture and society. Picot and Sweetman (2012) discovered that official language skills have significant direct and indirect influences on labour market success and are the key to positive outcomes. They added that "Language skills have a strong influence on the value of formal education and probably other forms of human capital as well" (p. 26). However, some researchers have found that even with excellent language skills, people with immigrant background still experience marginalization problems. Piller and Takahashi (2011, p. 591) asserted that "Even if migrants acquire a functional or even advanced level of proficiency in the local language, they are often still discriminated against on the basis of their accent." Dávila (2008) also reported that although the migrants in her study were highly educated and spoke English well, they still experienced downward occupational mobility.

Frequent interaction between immigrants and local citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration. Studies have shown that immigrants, whose family members or friends have already settled in the country, can have better integration outcomes (Bergeron & Potter, 2006; Boyd, 2006; Lewis-Watts, 2006). Lewis-Watts (2006) stressed that the type and quality of immigrants' social networks is as important as 'human capital' in the success of the integration process. However, Ragnarsdóttir (2007) argued that although such a network with

relatives or people of the same origin is important for the individual and can be supportive, it could also negate successful integration. In her study with ten immigrant families in Iceland, Ragnarsdóttir (2007) found that most immigrant families tended to seek support with relatives and friends of the same origin, and these families were socially isolated. She suggested (2008) that immigrants should be encouraged to participate more actively in society. The Council of the European Union (2004) considered the frequency and quality of private interactions and exchanges between immigrants and other residents as the key elements of greater integration. Although language proficiency is important, Derwing and Waugh (2012) advocated that pragmatic skills and opportunities to interact with those who speak the official language should be taken seriously as well. They asserted that the lack of proficiency in an official language combined with inadequate access to cultural knowledge could result in limited opportunities for immigrants to fully participate in the new society. Penninx (2003) pointed out that many non-governmental organizations strongly influence the integration process, whether positively or negatively, such as churches, trade unions, employers' organizations, political parties, the media, and so on. Therefore, the Ministry of Social Affairs (2007) encourages immigrants to participate in sports and leisure activities to develop and strengthen their social relationships in Iceland.

Non-discriminatory practices, such as equal rights as local citizens and access to all kinds of services, form a critical foundation for better integration as well. The Council of the European Union (2004) argued that if the host societies expect immigrants to participate fully in all kinds of activities, they must treat immigrants equally and fairly, and protect immigrants from discrimination. According to Icelandic immigrant policy (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007), immigrants should have access to information on Icelandic society and accessible information on immigration issues in Iceland. Furthermore, the Ministry of Social Affairs (2007) emphasized that immigrants should enjoy the same terms and rights as local citizens in the Icelandic labour market and on the welfare services in Iceland.

From the above literature review, it is apparent that if immigrants want to integrate into the host countries, on the one hand, they should learn the official language, get jobs, interact with the local citizens, and

participate in all kinds of activities. On the other hand, the receiving society should provide immigrants with good access to all kinds of service and information, equal rights as local citizens to work and live.

2.2 Time allocation: working-family conflict

Studies have indicated that highly educated parents are more aware of the importance of time investments in cultivating children's human and social capital, and are more strongly motivated to adopt time-intensive parenting behaviour (Arendell, 2001; Daly, 2001; Kitterod, 2002; Sayer, Gauthier, & Furstenberg, 2004). Sayer et al. (2004) explained that more highly educated mothers and fathers spend more time caring for children for three reasons. First, they are more aware of the association between time investments and the production of "quality" children; second, they are less likely to find acceptable substitutes for parental time; and last, they are more highly motivated to conform to norms of involved parenting (Sayer et al., 2004). Thus, highly educated working parents would prefer to spend more time with their children. However, in his study with parents in 17 dual-earner and 11 single-parent families, Daly (2001) found that although these parents want more family time to affirm their family togetherness and positive interaction, their bloated schedules often negate the possibility of realizing these goals. Craig (2004) also discovered that, compared with childless families, households with children are faced with both a higher expenditure burden and performing much more domestic labour.

Childcare is a challenge for all working mothers, especially for working single-mothers (Craig, 2004; Duncan, Paull & Taylor, 2001; Himmelweit et al., 2004; Kendig & Bianchi, 2008; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Scott, Edin, London & Mazelis, 1999). McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) indicate that the dilemma of whether to work for money or to manage the household is a problem for all mothers, but it is particularly severe for lone mothers. Kendig and Bianchi (2008) believed that without a partner, it is difficult for single mothers to provide the time and attention that children receive in two-parent homes. As Himmelweit et al. (2004, p. 258) said:

A married or cohabiting couple has access to a far larger economic output than the lone parent. Simply put, two parents have 48 hours a day at their disposal – for work, leisure, and childcare – while lone parents have only 24 hours.

For the lone parent, both childcare and income earning must be pressed into a tighter schedule.

Thus, working single mothers face substantial and under-recognized conflicts between worker and mother roles' (Scott et al., 1999). However, most single mothers do not have the flexibility to drop out of the labour force or reduce their hours in response to the needs of very young children—unless their extended families or the government steps in (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). Duncan et al. (2001) recognized that mothers will not and cannot work unless there is an affordable alternative source of care for their children.

There are three sources of childcare: Maternal care, informal care (such as the father, relatives or friends) and formal care (such as child minders, nurseries or nannies) (Duncan et al., 2001, p. 3). Craig (2004) found that many single mothers call on wide family support and their children are more likely to have contact with their relatives unmediated by the presence of their mother than children in two-parent families. Nevertheless, for some single-parent immigrants who migrated to a new country without their families or relatives, it is impossible to use informal sources from families or relatives. Purchasing childcare replacements is limited by both availability and costs. Duncan et al. (2001, p. 27) revealed that price has a negative impact on the decision by working mothers to use formal paid care and the hours they purchase. Moreover, they showed that the propensity to use formal paid care and the hours of care are dependent upon the availability of unpaid informal alternatives, on the mothers' age and education, on the number of children in the family and the ability to afford paid care in the form of the mothers' earnings and other family income (p. 27). Ellwood and Jencks (2004) indicated that single mothers' lack of economic resources limits their ability to purchase goods and services that might free up time for child rearing. Himmelweit et al. (2004) emphasized that for many lone mothers, childcare costs make employment unaffordable, especially for part-time working lone mothers, the pay is often worse but childcare costs are proportionately higher.

In this situation, financial support from the state would be a vital help and good solutions to work-family conflicts for most single parents (Brink & Nordblom, 2005; Himmelweit et al., 2004; Millar & Ridge, 2001; Minagawa & Upmann, 2006; Sayer et al., 2004). Millar and Ridge (2001) concluded that without a supplementary income (such as in-

work benefits and child maintenance), most lone parents would find it hard to escape poverty. Brink and Nordblom (2005) analyzed the effects of various childcare subsidies on parental time allocation, and found that parental time allocation depends on whether fees are subsidized, and different fee subsidies have different effects depending on the fee structure. Himmelweit et al. (2004) gave an example of the traditional Scandinavian solution to explain how to solve this problem, which is to provide high quality, affordable childcare and sufficient paid parental leave to enable parents to have a reasonable life-work balance. Sayer et al. (2004, p. 1153) indicated that family policies and programs such as family income support, parental leave, reduced employment hours, and provision of day care for children may provide more *degrees of freedom* to all parents in making decisions about time allocation. Minagawa and Upmann (2006) developed a model of a one parent-one child household, where labour supply, leisure and childcare demand were determined endogenously at each instant of time. They applied this framework to characterizing the path of the optimal decisions and investigating the impact of various public childcare fees (income-based fee, user-based fee or a fixed fee) and of the quality of public childcare services on the parent's time allocation and the child's performance level. Their results not only showed that different public childcare policies may induce substantially diverging effects, but also revealed that each policy frequently faces a trade-off between an encouragement of labour supply and an enhancement of the child's performance. According to Feltey (2003), more and more countries are developing government subsidized comprehensive childcare programs, such as European and Scandinavian countries. For example, in Norway single parents can receive a child allowance, a childcare cash benefit, an education benefit, a housing allowance, and transitional and advanced cash benefits.

Besides these kinds of financial supports from the government, immigrant single-parent families also need social support from the society and community (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Portes, Fernandez-Kelly & Haller, 2005; Zhou & Bankston, 1994). Ceballo and McLoyd (2002) pointed out that emotional and instrumental support coming from family members and friends can affect single mothers positively and offset the effects of overload. Feltey (2003) found that in the first few years after a divorce, the children have higher rates of antisocial behaviour, aggression, anxiety, and school problems than children in two parent families do. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) indicated that many of the negative

effects disappear when there is adequate supervision, income, and continuity in social networks. Furthermore, Portes et al. (2005, p. 1013) averred that in a foreign land, parental controls can wane fast when confronted with the sustained challenges of deviant lifestyles, media-driven consumerism, and peer influences. Portes et al. (2005) emphasized that for isolated families, the situation can easily devolve into a pattern of parental powerlessness. To reduce this powerlessness, they proposed that solidarity immigrant communities could be a valuable resource, because their networks support parental guidance and parental aspirations for their children. Zhou and Bankston (1994) agreed that this function of social capital is vital among immigrants of limited means. Furthermore, this kind of social support can introduce community life to the child at a relatively early age and empowers them with the ability to socialize and understand people of diverse natures. It is crucial for single parents to establish a support network with others who understand the unique challenges of single parenting.

The literature review suggests that it is important for working single parents to get support from their families and government to cope with work-family conflicts. Childcare is a challenge for some single parents who lack resources. If national social welfare can provide them financial support, like childcare programs, they will have a better quality of life. In particular, for some single-parent immigrants who migrate to a new country without their families or relatives, social and financial supports from government, society, and the community are extremely important for solving the work-family conflicts.

2.3 Mother tongue or official language?

Culture has a great effect on how parents raise children (Boushel, 2000; Brooker, 2002; Gonzalez-Mena, 2001; Harwood, Scoelmerich, Schulze, & Gonzalez, 1999; Inman et al., 2007; Wise & Silva, 2007). Inman et al. (2007) found that the dynamics surrounding immigration and family experiences could significantly affect how parents socialize with their children. Wise and Silva (2007) believed that culturally embedded beliefs and expectations can give shape to child rearing practices and other elements in the environmental context of the developing child, and they found that culture could influence parenting from three aspects: parenting goals, discipline beliefs and development expectations. Gonzalez-Mena (2001) stated that

parenting goals, or the attributes that parents hope will be expressed in their children, are a reflection of the cultural context in which parents live. Harwood et al. (1999) agreed that parents hold child-rearing goals that are consistent with the goals and expectations held by the culture with which they affiliate. Brooker (2002) also noted that parents' aspirations for their children can tell us a lot about their personal and cultural beliefs and values, and the reasons why they bring their children up the way they do.

Immigrant parents would probably encounter the question about how to educate their children when the mainstream culture differs from their ethnic culture. Inman et al. (2007) discovered that in addition to retaining their own cultural identity, parents are often faced with the complex task of parenting their children within a culture that is notably dissimilar from their culture of origin. Kwak (2003) found that immigrant parents typically encourage their children to maintain those behaviour and norms that are most closely tied to family traditions, authority, and family honour. For instance, Asian Indian immigrants continue to emphasize specific values and goals for their second-generation children—values that were instilled during their own upbringing (e.g., pride in cultural heritage, familial interdependence) (Inman et al., 2007). Luo and Wiseman (2000, p. 308) found that:

In order to maintain the ethnic culture and ingroup cohesiveness in the family, the Chinese parents expect their children to learn Chinese. At the same time, in order for their children to excel in society, the parents desire their children to learn the dominant language.

Portes (1995, p. 248) said, "Growing up in an immigrant family has always been a difficult process of reconciling the language and cultural orientations of foreign-born parents with the demands for assimilation of the host society". What do immigrant children do with their parents' aspirations? Hall (2002, p. 173-174) wrote:

At home, Sikh youth reside in the routines of 'acting Indian'. Children speak the ethnic language with their parents, almost always with their mothers, but English with one another...Most families expect their children to uphold what the children view as an 'Indian' code of respect, the cherished tradition of honouring one's elders.

Brooker (2002) said that though children may not always turn out the way their parents wish them to, parents' conceptions of their children's future can underpin every aspect of family life and values. Rumbaut (1994) claimed that adolescents from immigrant backgrounds face complex issues of adaptation involving both their culture of origin and the culture of the new country. According to Phinney et al. (2001), the differences between the two cultures present these adolescents with various choices in areas such as cultural practices, language use, and friendship. Perry, Dockett and Nicholson (2002) declared that immigrant children may be anxious and confused if they perceive school to be different from their home cultural context. McCarthy (1998) discerned that immigrant children are often forced to make a painful, emotional choice between their parents' culture and the mainstream norms they are exposed to in school. Kwak (2003) mentioned that immigrant children are required to make a choice between the values and identities of their family and those of the receiving culture. Hall (2002) also depicted how British-Sikh teenagers are pulled between two ways of life, "Many young Sikhs express a sense that they are being pulled between two worlds that are separate and mutually exclusive, and that is hard to have both of two worlds" (Hall, 2002, p. 148).

To deliver these immigrant children from the complex and painful choice, Coll and Magnuson (1997) suggested that immigrant children, adolescents, and adults need to gain bi-cultural competence—the ability to comfortably and capably interact in both ethnic and mainstream cultures. McCarthy (1998) found that the combination of selective or additive acculturation, which promotes both the adaptation of dominant values at school, and the maintenance of traditional values at home, appears to be the key to educational success. Imbens-Bailey (1996) used interviews with first and second-generation Armenian American children to explore the importance of being proficient in Armenian (e.g., being bilingual; all the adolescents knew English), and results showed that bilingual children and adolescents expressed a closer affinity with the Armenian community than did those who were monolingual in English.

The literature review in this section indicates that parents should cultivate their children's bicultural competence, which means maintaining their children's ethnical cultural values and mother language

learning at home, meanwhile promoting their children's adaptation of the mainstream cultural value and official language learning.

2.4 Family and school connections

Epstein and Sanders (2006) stated that in education, the most effective families, schools, and communities had shared goals and a common mission concerning children's learning and development. Despite the same goal of children's development between family and school, the values and culture may be different, which may result in different educating ways. For example, Li (2006) pointed out that the values that the immigrant parents hold and the messages about educational expectations and school success that they transmit to their children may be different from those advocated in school, which may result in discontinuity between school and home literacy goals. Many immigrant children would experience the painful choice between home culture and school culture if discontinuity exists between school and family. McCarthy (2000) emphasizes that because connecting home and school is a shared responsibility, parents must have access to information about school practices. However, according to the interviews with ten immigrant families in Iceland, Ragnarsdóttir (2007, p. 254) found that relations between schools and homes appear to be limited in most cases, which was shown as limited knowledge about the various activities in school and the curricula generally. In addition, Carreon, Drake, and Barton (2005) found that even when immigrant parents engage in activities designed to increase parental involvement (e.g., PTA, volunteering), they often come away feeling confused by the school structure and implicit expectations. Hill, Tyson, and Bromell (2009) indicated that some immigrant parents attended PTA meetings even when they could not understand the content of these meetings because they wanted to communicate to their children and to their teachers that they care about education. Therefore, schools should indeed think about how to involve immigrant parents efficiently in school instructional practice.

Epstein and Sanders (2006, p. 289) mentioned that there are six major types of involvement that fall within the "overlapping spheres of influence" model and different types of involvement lead to different results for students, for parents and for teachers. The six types of involvement are summarized as follows:

- Parenting—helping all families understand child and adolescent development and establish home environments that support children as students.
- Communicating—designing and conducting effective forms of communication about school programs and children's progress.
- Volunteering—recruiting and organizing help and support for school functions and activities.
- Learning at home—providing information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and curriculum-related activities and decisions.
- Decision-making—including parent representatives and all families in school decisions.
- Collaborating with the community—identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen and support schools, students and their families.

According to Epstein and Sanders (2006), shared responsibilities and overlapping influence mean that parents do not bear the entire burden of figuring out how to become and remain involved in their children's education across the years of schooling. Rather, schools share this burden with them and must create programs and conditions that inform, consult, assist, and involve all families in their children's education and development every year. Also, community groups, agencies, and individuals are not left to operate in geographic or social isolation. Rather, educators, parents, and members of communities combine efforts to create a coherent program to help students succeed (Epstein & Sanders, 2006, p. 287). Epstein and Sanders (2006, p. 298) felt that it is essential to understand home, school, and community connections, in order to understand the organization and improvement of schools, the influence of families and communities on children, and the academic and developmental progress or problems of students.

Since family and school had shared goals and mission concerning children's learning and development, it is important that the family and the school should work together, communicate and share information with each other to promote immigrant children's school adaption and improve these children's academic achievements.

2.5 Marginalization of immigrant children

Studies have repeatedly shown that many immigrant children are marginalized and generally do not succeed well in schools (Banks, 2001, 2004; Brooker, 2002; Ragnarsdóttir, 2007; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Stephan, 1999). Portes (1999) noted that perceived discrimination tends to be negatively associated with success in school. He argued that perceived discrimination may be important not only because of the student's subjective reaction to the immediate cultural context but also it may reflect others' reaction to the student's culture and to his or her physical and linguistic traits and behaviours. Portes (1999) indicated that perceived discrimination may be the product, as well as a predictor, of school adaptation, and the interactions of these bases of discrimination constitute a contextual factor that negatively affects not only the school adaptation of students but also a whole complex of psychosocial variables that support such an adaptation. As represented by Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001), it is important to focus attention on immigrant children's schooling because schools are where immigrant children first come into systematic contact with the new culture. Furthermore, they considered the adaption to school as a significant predictor of a child's future wellbeing and contributions to society. Perreira, Chapman and Stein (2006) also found that the school is the first institutional contact for most immigrant parents and children in the United States. They explained that it is the first time immigrant children are exposed to the native culture within school, and subsequently form beliefs about what society and persons outside of their family expect from them. From the above literature, it is crucial to push forward the school adaption of immigrant children. However, a number of researchers have explored the issues of variability and decline in the academic performance and social adaptation of immigrant children.

In a series of extensive interviews with first-generation immigrant parents living in North Carolina, Perreira et al. (2006) found that in navigating a new environment, families encounter unfamiliar racial, socioeconomic and community dynamics, and some report experiencing negative stereotypes or discrimination from school personnel, which caused many immigrant youth to struggle academically. Ragnarsdóttir (2007, p. 80) also summarized that the reasons for the lack of success of immigrant children in schools arises from the feelings of not being appreciated or valued, experiencing low self-esteem, lacking a sense of belonging or feelings of isolation. She thought that to

be able to learn in such situations presumably requires more efforts than in situations where children feel valued and feel a sense of belonging. Perreira et al. (2006) have stressed that educational practitioners must continue to unmask the cultural differences that are associated with countries of origin, immigrant generations, socioeconomic status, and areas of residence, and move away from a stereotypic approach to culture toward a dynamic approach.

In order to demarginalize immigrant children and include them more effectively in schools, *multicultural education* was developed and used in research and school development. Banks (2005) asserted that multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. He proposed five dimensions as a guide to school reform when trying to implement multicultural education (p. 20). The dimensions are as follows: (1) content integration; (2) the knowledge construction process; (3) prejudice reduction; (4) an equity pedagogy and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure. In general, multicultural education, according to Banks (2005), incorporates the idea that all students – regardless of their gender and social class and their ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics – should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. Banks (2005) also emphasized that some students have a better chance to learn in schools as they are currently structured than students who belong to other groups or who have different cultural characteristics.

2.6 Summary of literature review

Language, interaction with local citizens, and discrimination would influence the immigrant's integration process, irrespective of the immigrant parent or immigrant children. If immigrants want to integrate into the host countries, on the one hand, they should learn the official language, get jobs, interact with the local citizens, and participate in all kinds of activities. On the other hand, the receiving society should provide immigrants with good access to all kinds of service and information, equal rights as local citizens to work and live.

Moreover, social and financial support, like family policy and social networks would influence the lives of immigrant single-parent families, which makes it necessary to analyze the Icelandic policy and social support system (see Chapter 3). If national social welfare can provide them financial support, like childcare programs, they will have a better

quality of life. In particular, for some single-parent immigrants who migrate to a new country without their families or relatives, social and financial supports from government, society, and the community are extremely important for solving the work-family conflicts.

Furthermore, immigrant parents' attitudes and beliefs towards their ethnic culture influence their ways of educating their children, like the choice between children learning their mother tongue and official language learning. Immigrant parents should cultivate their children's bicultural competence, which means maintaining their children's ethnical cultural values and speaking their mother tongue when learning at home, meanwhile promoting their children's adaptation of the mainstream cultural value and official language learning.

In addition, school support and parent involvement are two essential factors for immigrant children's school adaptation and academic success. It is important that family and school should work together, communicate and share information with each other to promote immigrant children's school adaption and improve these children's academic achievement.

The aim of this study is to investigate what situations immigrant single-parent families face in Iceland, and how they cope with the integration process.

3 Study context: Icelandic society

The literature review in Chapter 2 indicated that the lives of immigrant single-parent families are influenced by policy, such as the Icelandic immigrant policy and family policy, which makes it necessary to analyze the Icelandic policy and social support system in this study. For example, if the Icelandic policy doesn't protect immigrants' working rights, then it is impossible for immigrants to get jobs here. Moreover, if the Icelandic state provides financial support to families, then it may help in solving the work-family conflicts discussed in Chapter 2. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the social context in Iceland. Besides, the analysis in this chapter offers supplementary support for the discussions in Chapter 6.

3.1 The immigrant policy in Iceland

In recent years, Iceland has experienced a large growth in the immigrant population. The immigrant population (including first and second generation) rose to 8.9% of the total population in 2012 (Statistics Iceland, 2012a). The number of non-Icelandic citizens in Iceland has risen to 20,957 in January 2012, which is 6.56% of the population of Iceland (Statistics Iceland, 2012b). The twenty largest groups of non-Icelandic citizens in January 2012, divided by country of origin, are shown in Figure 2. The largest group of non-Icelandic citizens in Iceland comes from European countries, most of them from Eastern Europe.

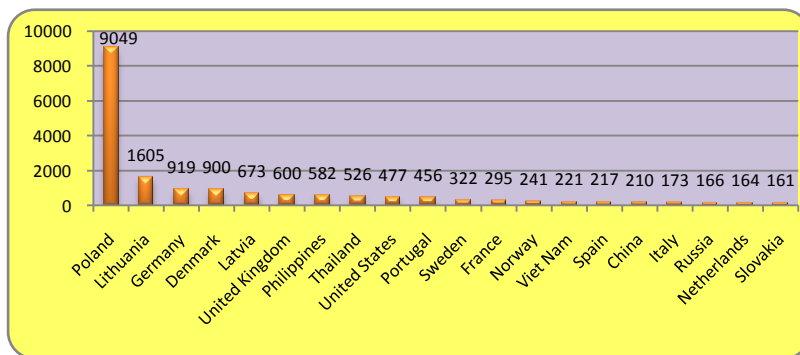


Figure 2. Twenty largest groups of non-Icelandic citizens in Iceland

In 2007, the Icelandic government issued its first ever multicultural policy on integration. The policy document (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007) described different policy goals regarding Icelandic language education for adults; dissemination and collection of information; employment issues and employment participation; education issues; health care services; the role of the municipalities and issues relating to the disabled. Eydal and Ottósdóttir (2009) indicated that this policy reflected an attempt of Icelandic government to embrace the reality of immigration that immigrants come to Iceland not just to work but also to settle down. They discovered that this policy paid much attention to the equal opportunities for immigrants to participate and integrate into the Icelandic society and included immigrants' right to maintain their cultural heritage.

According to the Icelandic immigrant policy (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007), the key to the society is the Icelandic language. The policy also stressed that immigrants should be provided with equal rights and opportunities as the local residents to work, to enjoy the welfare services in Iceland, to have access to information on Icelandic society, and to participate in the Icelandic society. As for the educational issues, the policy stated that the students whose native language is not Icelandic should have the opportunity of maintaining their native language. However, it also emphasized that immigrants who expect to integrate into Icelandic society well should learn the Icelandic language.

3.2 The social welfare system in Iceland

Iceland is a modern welfare country that guarantees its citizens access to universal health care, education, and a high degree of social security. According to Central Bank of Iceland (2012), in 2009, over 31% of GDP is spent on health, education, social security, welfare and other social affairs. Many aspects of the Icelandic welfare system are relevant to immigrant single-parent families. Three aspects are introduced: the health care insurance system, the unemployment insurance system and the family support system.

- The health care insurance system: Everyone who has been legally resident in Iceland for more than six months automatically becomes a member of the Icelandic health insurance system, regardless of nationality (Icelandic Health Insurance, 2013).

- The unemployment insurance system: Employees and self-employed persons aged 16-70 are entitled to unemployment benefits on condition that they: 1) are unemployed; 2) have their residence in Iceland; 3) are actively seeking work; 4) are able to work and ready to be hired for all general work; 5) are ready to accept work in any location in Iceland. The entitlement to benefits is based on work and employment ratio during the past 12 months. The benefits are based on 70% of the total average wages during a period of six months, and the maximum is ISK 220,729 (1 February 2008) with full unemployment insurance (Directorate of Labour, 2008).
- The family support system: Housing benefit, single-mother allowance, child alimony, child benefit, and free education (only related benefits and allowance towards the immigrant single-parent families are introduced in this study).
 - Housing benefit (í: húsaleigubætur): Everyone who rents a residential flat, has a signed, notarized lease for at least 6 months, and has a legal address in Reykjavik, may apply for housing benefits. Whether the benefits are paid, and the amount of benefit paid, depends on the amount of the rent, income and family size of the applicant (Reykjavíkurborg, 2013).
 - Single parent's allowance (í: mæðralaun/feðralaun): The allowance may be paid to single parents who support their children under the age of 18 and are resident in Iceland (Social Assistance Act No. 99/2007). The annual amount of allowance is ISK 87,456 for two children and ISK 227,376 for three or more children in January 2013 (Social Insurance Administration, 2013).
 - Child alimony (í: meðlag): Single parents are entitled to child alimony from the other parent until their child are 18 years of age and 20 years of age if a child is in school (Act in Respect of Children No. 76/2003). It is possible to make contracts, based on the agreement made by the parents, to divide the maintenance costs of the child in various ways. When no agreement exists, the parents living with the child can claim the child alimony guaranteed by the state. The Social Insurance Administration (í. Tryggingastofnun) pays child alimony

monthly in advance and the annual amount in January 2013 is ISK 302,100 (Social Insurance Administration, 2013).

- Child benefits (Icelandic: Barnabætur): The benefits are paid to parents who support children under 18 years of age. Foreign citizens residing in Iceland can also get the child benefit payments, which is calculated from the date of arrival in Iceland. Child benefits are income-related and the amount granted depends on parents' income (Table 2). The annual income of parents who want to apply for this benefit should not exceed the maximum, which is ISK 4,800,000 for married or cohabiting couples and ISK 2,400,000 for a single parent. Otherwise, the allowance is reduced, 3% reduction for one child, 5% reduction for two children and 7% reduction for three or more (Directorate of Internal Revenue, 2013).

Family structure	Married or cohabiting couples	Single parents
With first child	ISK 167,564	ISK 279,087
Each child in excess of one	ISK 199,455	ISK 286,288
Supplements: each child under 7 years	ISK 100,000	

Table 2. Amounts of child benefit in 2013

- Free education: Education is free of charge or for a nominal fee in Iceland. The education system in Iceland is divided into four levels: pre-primary, compulsory (single structure primary and lower secondary education), upper secondary and higher education. Adult education is also available and art schools, mainly music schools (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2012). The free education reduces the economical burden of the poor family and provides for children from these families the possibility to have a good education.

According to the above analysis of the Icelandic social welfare system, there are many kinds of financial support in Iceland for families, such as the health care insurance, unemployment benefit, single parent allowance, child benefit, and free education, which provides a good social welfare support system for immigrant single-parent families.

3.3 The social support system for immigrant single parents

Below, there will be a brief description of Icelandic social networks, service and support system, which can provide specific social support to immigrant single parents who need help. Also discussed are both formal and informal organizations. In this study, the formal organization refers to the governmental organization while the informal organization refers to the non-governmental organization.

The formal legal and social networks for immigrants in Iceland are located within the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Welfare, such as Directorate of Immigration, Multicultural and Information Centre, and Reykjavik City's Service Center.

- The Icelandic Directorate of Immigration (<http://www.utl.is/>) is one of the divisions of the Ministry of the Interior. Its most extensive task is issuing residence permits. Here immigrants can apply for different residence permits corresponding to their need, e.g., work permit, family reunification permit, student permits, au-pair permits, visas and requests for asylum (Directorate of Immigration, 2013).
- The Icelandic Multicultural and Information Centre (<http://www.mcc.is/>), in short called the Multicultural Center, is a development project of the Ministry of Welfare. Here assistance is offered to those who are seeking information about daily life in Iceland. Immigrants can obtain all kinds of information on their website, e.g., basic introduction of Iceland society, information about housing, work, tax, education, health and so on (Multicultural and Information Centre, 2013).
- Reykjavik City's Service Center (<http://www.reykjavik.is>) is a place where you can apply for services and get useful information (Reykjavíkurborg, 2013). For instance, you can apply for rent benefit, a place for your child in a preschool, information on the energy companies, on sorting waste, leisure activities, Icelandic teaching and many other things (Reykjavíkurborg, 2013). Immigrants who need these services can visit the office of the City Service Center, or acquire services by telephone assistance via the Call Centre or by internet assistance via eReykjavik.

Besides the above official institutions, there are also some unofficial organizations, from which immigrant single parents can get help, like Iceland's International Parents Group, and Mother Tongue.

- Iceland's International Parents Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/119424038139885/>), which has 651 members, is a group of immigrant parents in Iceland. Members can share useful information in this group, discuss problems about parenting, and receive some advice and help from the group members.
- Mother Tongue (Icelandic: Móðurmál, <http://www.modurmal.com>) is an association of Bilingual Teaching. It has offered second native language teaching other than Icelandic since 1994. Immigrant parents who wish their children to learn their mother language in Iceland can contact this association. Now Mother Tongue offers 13 different languages in teaching, which are Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French, Russian, Serbian, Lithuanian, Czech, Polish, Japanese, Thai, Tagalog, Ghanaian (Mother Tongue, 2013).

Icelandic policy can ensure the right and the chance to achieve good lives in Iceland as immigrant single parents. Moreover, all kinds of community and social networks in Iceland can provide various supports to immigrant single-parent families. For immigrant single-parent families in Iceland, it is very necessary to understand the Icelandic immigrant policy, the social welfare system and the social support system.

4 Methodology

This study is a qualitative interview study of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland. The methods in this study are used to understand people's description of their own integration experience and to analyze how Icelandic policies influence their lives in Iceland. The reason for choosing interview rather than a questionnaire or other methods, is that in an interview one can get rich sources of data on immigrant single-parent families' life experience in Iceland, thus getting a direct impression on how immigrants cope with the integration process. Though there are questions during the interview, it is not the same as the questions in questionnaire. The former questions are open-ended, whereas the later questions are closed.

4.1 Research questions

As introduced in Chapter 1, this is a qualitative study to explore the life experiences of six immigrant single-parent families in Iceland.

The central research question is:

What situations do immigrant single-parent families face in Iceland, and how do they cope with the integration process?

Seven sub-questions are:

1. How do single-parent immigrants support themselves and their children in Iceland?
2. How do they cope with the work-family conflict?
3. What kinds of social or financial support could they get in Iceland?
4. What attitudes do they have towards mother language maintenance in Iceland?
5. How do they balance their children's learning of the official language and mother language?
6. How did their children adapt to an Icelandic school?
7. How do the schools support or adjust to these children?

4.2 Data collection methods

In my study, I know very little about the real lives of single-parent immigrants except through materials, so what I can do is to ask some general questions and then listen to participants' views and experiences. Participants are recruited through a purposive sampling strategy for semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data.

4.2.1 Sampling

The purposive sampling technique is the deliberate choice of an informant because of the qualities the informant possesses (Tongco, 2007). Researchers use this strategy to find people who can and are willing to provide the needed information by virtue of knowledge or experience (Bernard, 2002). Bernard (2011, p. 146) indicated that researchers almost always have to rely on the purposive sampling in the study of hard-to-find populations and they use communities and their own social networks to locate potential informants. The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are "information rich" (Patton, 1990).

The purposive sampling strategy was used in this study to get suitable informants. I expected to find immigrant single parents or their children to participate in this study, but it was extremely hard to find this kind of informants. Some immigrants do not want to be known as single parents, because single-parent families are often poor and helpless in some countries and they are afraid of being looked down upon by others as single parents. Even after their moving to Iceland, they still have these kinds of worries, so some of them prefer to hide their single parenting status from others, which made it difficulties for me to discover these people. To solve this problem, I listed the qualifications of informants to resource people who could help find informants. Finally, I recruited 11 participants, including six immigrant single parents, three children (old enough to be interviewed) from immigrant single-parent family and two teachers having experience with students from immigrant single-parent families.

4.2.2 Interviews

Interviews are a widely used tool to access people's experiences and their inner perceptions, attitudes, and feelings of reality (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Interviews can provide rich sources of data on

people's experiences, aspirations, opinions and feelings and come in many forms, ranging from highly structured to completely unstructured (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Based on the degree of structuring, interviews can be divided into three categories: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research and can occur either with an individual or in groups (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to understand socially constructed realities of single-parent immigrants in Iceland. This method has been chosen with the expectation that participants can best share their experiences and describe detailed personal information unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings. It is hard to write down all the conversation during the interview, so I decided to record all the conversations using a sound recorder. Before the interview, participants were asked whether I could record the interview. I explained to them why the interview needed to be recorded, and promised that all the sound recording would be deleted after finishing this study. All participants agreed to my recording, except the daughter from Chinese family A. She answered each question very slowly and waited for my note-taking, so the conversation was written down during the interview. Totally, 10 conversations in this study were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Meanwhile, I also took notes of responses during interviewing using the interview protocol (see Appendix 2), including the descriptive field notes and reflective field notes.

4.3 Data collection process

At first, I intended to involve more diverse immigrant groups in this study so that the results could be much more representative of the real lives of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland. However, it was extremely hard to discover this kind of participant as explained before. Another challenge is that it is not easy to contact many diverse single-parent immigrants in such a short time in Iceland. Once the data collection started, many ways were used to find more potential informants, for example, through the social networks of my friends and mine, the immigrant community, the mother tongue language school, and the Iceland's international parents group in *Facebook*. All of these

people were extremely kind to provide help with finding potential informants, and they did help me find Chinese single parents, a UK single parent, a Czech single parent, a Polish single parent, and a Philippine single parent. However, some immigrant single parents were very busy during my data-collecting period, so they could not participate in this study. Moreover, some immigrants were willing to participate in this study, but they could only speak their mother language or Icelandic but not English, which caused difficulties, so I had to give up interviewing these individuals. Finally, I recruited 11 participants, including six immigrant single parents, three children (old enough to be interviewed) from immigrant single-parent family and two teachers having experience with students from immigrant single-parent families. Among these six single parents, three parents were from China, while the other three were from Chile, the Czech Republic, and the UK. All the three children were from China, and the two teachers were from Czech Republic and Iceland. As for the Chinese single parent participants, it was much easier to contact them and get their support due to my Chinese origin. They were not only willing to participate in this study but also helped me to persuade other Chinese single parents to participate in this study, so this study included three Chinese single parents and three Chinese children.

After obtaining the names of informants, letters of introduction in English (see Appendix 1) were sent to ask whether they were willing to take part in this study, and then they were required to sign introductory letters if they agreed to participate in this study, which would serve as informed consent. The children who participated in this project are mature enough to be interviewed and can express themselves in English or Chinese. The interview protocol (see Appendix 2) was designed based on three perspectives from parent, child and teacher concerning the different participating subjects. All the participants were offered the choice of interview location in the introductory letters to participants (see Appendix 1). Although the same interview protocols were used in the interviews with the parents, children, or teachers, the data collected in the interviews varied in the amount of content and detail. Most of the interviews with parents and children took place in the participants' home, except an interview of a Chilean single mother, which was conducted at the university. Chinese participants could select Chinese or English. They chose to speak in Chinese in the interview to make a comfortable atmosphere. Other interviews were conducted in English due to the limitation of my language skills. In total 11 interviews were conducted and recorded,

and each interview took about one hour on average. After the formal interview, some immigrant single parents were asked to confirm some information by email or informal conversation.

4.4 Participants of this study

Before describing the experience of individuals, I am going to introduce the general information of each family to provide an overview of the participants of this study (Table 3), including the year they became a single parent family, their mother tongue, parent's age, parent's job, parent's education, number of children, birthplace of children, school level of children, and social network. These issues are all discussed for each family in detail in separate themes and there are also some discussions from the two teachers' perspectives (see Chapter 5).

Family	Chinese family A	Chinese family B	Chinese family C	Chilean family	Czech family	UK family
Participants	Parent & Child	Parent & Child	Parent & Child	Parent	Parent	Parent
Year to be single parent	1999	2012	2004	2003	2004	2011
Type of single parent family	Single-mother Divorce	Single-father Death of spouse	Single-mother Divorce	Single-mother Divorce	Single-mother Divorce	Single-mother Unmarried
Mother tongue	Chinese	Chinese	Chinese	Spanish	Czech	English
Parent's age	47	46	41	46	37	-
Parent's Job	Tourist guide	Nurse	Food processing	Preschool teacher	Preschool teacher	Artist
Parent's education	Bachelor	Master	College	Master	College	College
Child	1	1	1	2	1	1
Birthplace of children	China	China	China	Iceland	Iceland	Iceland
School level of children	Upper secondary school	Primary school	Primary school	Primary school	Primary school	Preschool
Social network	Families (2004-2009) Friends	Friends	Relatives Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends

Table 3. Overview of all the families in this study

Note: The "college" level in this study, refers to the educational level above the upper secondary school and below the university degree.

The Chinese single-mother family A

The family consists of one 47-year-old single-mother and one 20-year-old daughter. The single-mother divorced in 1999 when her daughter was six years old. In 2002, the single-mother migrated to Iceland seeking a better life. One year later, her daughter also moved to Iceland and lives with her. Now they are both Icelandic citizens. The single-mother can speak fluent English, but very little Icelandic, while her daughter can speak not only fluent Chinese and English but also very fluent Icelandic. The single-mother has a B.A. degree in China and now she works as a tourist guide for Chinese visitors in Iceland. The family owns a large apartment and owns two cars. The family is very friendly, so they have many Chinese friends and Icelandic friends. The interviews took place at her home after a party of her daughter's graduation. The daughter's Icelandic classmates and their parents, the daughter's teachers and some friends of the single-mother attended the party. Both the single-mother and the daughter were interviewed in Chinese. Each interview took about one hour. Because there are two high school teachers of the daughter also attending the party, one of her Icelandic teachers was also invited to be interviewed. The daughter joined in the interview with the Icelandic teacher from time to time, adding information or explaining something to me in Chinese.

The Chinese single-father family B

The family consists of one 46-year-old single-father and one 15-year-old son. The single-father moved to Iceland in 2003 because of marriage. His son also migrated from China to Iceland in 2006 and lived with him and his Icelandic husband. Now they are both Icelandic citizens. His Icelandic husband died in 2012 and then they moved to a new house. The family owns a big apartment and there are many books and a piano in the house. The single-father can speak fluent English, but very little Icelandic while his son can speak fluent English and Icelandic as well as Chinese. The single-father has a master's degree in China. Now he works as a nurse in a nursing home and sometimes he works as tourist guide for Chinese visitors in Iceland. They do not have relatives here in Iceland, but they have many Chinese friends and Icelandic friends of the single-father's husband. The interview took place at his home on one Sunday afternoon and the interviews were in Chinese. Because the single-father is very busy, he had to make time for the interview. The interview with the single-father took about forty minutes. During that time, his son was playing

computer games in his room with another Chinese boy. After the interview with the single-father, he asked his son to talk with me. The son was very shy and said little. Most time he only said two to three words. The interview with the son only lasted for ten minutes. Another Chinese boy entered into the living room, said hello and stayed for a very short time.

The Chinese single-mother family C

The family consists of one 41-year-old single-mother and one 14-year-old daughter. The single-mother divorced in 2004 when her daughter was six years old. In 2005, the single-mother migrated to Iceland with her daughter. The single-mother has a sister in Iceland. The sister's family has been in Iceland for 14 years. The single-mother can speak fluent English, but very little Icelandic. Her daughter can speak fluent English and Icelandic as well as Chinese. The single-mother has a college degree in China, and now she works in an Icelandic food factory. The family owns a very large apartment and a car. The daughter is learning to play piano and badminton after school, so the single-mother had to make time to have this interview. Both of them participated in this study. The interview took place at her home on a Friday evening after her daughter's piano training and the interviews were in Chinese. The single-mother and her daughter are both very sunny and hospitable. They invited my husband and me to have dinner at their home. After the dinner, the daughter talked to me first whereas the mother went to the living room after finishing working in the kitchen and joined us from time to time with more information that her daughter probably did not express very clearly. The interview of the daughter took about forty minutes and the interview with the single-mother took about thirty minutes.

The Chilean single-mother family

The family consists of one 46-year-old single-mother and a 15-year-old daughter as well as a 12-year-old son. The single-mother moved from the UK to Iceland in August 1997 due to marriage. She met her Icelandic husband in England when she was pursuing her master degree and he did his PhD study. However, they divorced in 2003 when her daughter was five years old and her son was two years old. Then she went to Chile in 2005, and she moved back to Iceland again in June 2011. Now she is seeking her PhD degree in Iceland and meanwhile, she works as a preschool teacher. She did not have families and

relatives in Iceland, only some friends. This interview took place at the university. The family lives in the student apartment. She can speak English and a little Icelandic. Two weeks after the interview, I met the family again in a university activity. The daughter can speak fluent English and Icelandic, and the son can speak fluent Icelandic and a little English.

The Czech single-mother family

The family consists of one 37-year-old single-mother and one 11-year-old son. The single-mother migrated to Iceland in 2001 because of marriage. She divorced in 2004 when her son was two years old. She has a college degree and now works as preschool teacher. She does not have families and relatives in Iceland, but has some friends from Czech Republic and other foreign countries. She did not have any Icelandic friends nor did her son. This interview took place on Saturday night at her home. The family lives in a social welfare apartment. The single-mother was making a cake when I arrived at her home, so we talked in her kitchen. The single-mother can speak English and a little Icelandic. The son was playing with another Czech boy in the living room. He can't speak English, so he did not take part in this study. The interview with the single-mother took about forty-five minutes. The two boys were playing games on the computer and the son entered in the kitchen from time to time asking for the cake.

The UK single-mother family

The family consists of a single-mother and a 3-year-old daughter. She migrated to Iceland in 2006. She had visited Iceland many times during seven years before she moved here, so she knew many people, and it was easy for her to make friends and find jobs in Iceland. She lived with the child's father until 2011, and then she became a single-mother when her daughter was one and a half years old. She is an artist with a college degree. After the financial crisis in 2008, she found that it was so hard to get a suitable job in Iceland, because she cannot speak fluent Icelandic at the work place. Currently she is unemployed in Iceland, but she can get some financial support by exhibiting her art work abroad, which means that she needs to go abroad for work from time to time. This interview took place at her home on a Monday afternoon, about thirty minutes. She rents an apartment near the downtown area. The daughter was in the preschool during the interview. She can speak English and basic Icelandic. Because she has

been to China many times, she was very friendly to me and showed me her Chinese tea from China last year.

The two teachers

There are two teachers participating in this study. One is an Icelandic teacher and the other is a Czech teacher. Both of them have experience with children from immigrant single-parent families. Although using the same interview protocol, they answered different questions according to their different working experiences. Therefore, the amount of information collected from them was different as well. The Icelandic teacher works in a high school and her job is not teaching a special subject to students, but providing special support for them. The daughter of Chinese single-mother family A receives much help from her special support system. The Icelandic teacher was interviewed after the daughter's graduation party at the home of Chinese family A, and the interview took about thirty minutes. The Czech teacher works in an Icelandic primary school as an English teacher, but she also teaches Czech in the mother tongue language school every Saturday. The interview took place at her office in the primary school one Monday afternoon after school, about forty-five minutes.

4.5 Data analysis procedures

Creswell (2011) says that qualitative research is interpretive research, so each person may have a different interpretation of a transcript, which does not mean that your interpretation is better or more accurate but simply means that you bring your own perspective to your interpretation. Everyone can make a personal interpretation of the transcript based on his or her own perspective and the situation.

Before starting the data analysis, the initial preparation requires organizing the vast amount of information and transferring it from spoken words to a typed file. Thus, the first thing was listening to the recorded sound several times and transcribing each conversation about the interview. Then I wrote some notes according to the first impression when reading the transcript the first time. To protect the participants' anonymity, I use the term family and not the names for all the participating parents and children, and refer to the individuals within the families as single-mother or single-father, son or daughter and the term teacher for the teachers, for example, Chinese family A,

Chilean single-mother and Icelandic teacher. Before coding the data, I put the 11 transcripts into six families to do the analysis (see Table 3) and analyze each family as one case.

I read these 11 transcripts again and again to code the data and get themes from each transcript. The subsequent step was to categorize these codes by grouping them according to the relevance to the research questions. After that, I considered all the themes from each family and looked for similar themes in other families. There are two points I emphasized in the data analysis: the first was to elicit each family's unique way of constructing their reality and the second point was to find similarities or differences of experiences among the families.

4.6 Ethical issues

Flick (2009, p. 43) said that "Thinking about ethical dilemmas, however, should not prevent you from doing your research, but should help you do it in a more reflective way and to take your participants' perspective on a different level". Kvale (1996) emphasized that ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and consequences for the interviewee should be taken into account with any qualitative interview. Data collection should be ethical and it should respect individuals and sites. Patton (2002) offered a checklist of general ethical issues to consider, such as reciprocity, assessment of risk, confidentiality, informed consent, and data access and ownership. In this study, there were two ethical issues of particular concern.

4.6.1 Informed consent and preventing deception

Obtaining permission before starting to collect data is not only a part of the informed consent process, but is also an ethical practice. Creswell (2011) claimed that obtaining written consent from participants is essential even if the project poses minimal risk to the participants.

To gain support from participants, it is necessary to inform them of the purpose of the study and share information with them. Creswell (2011) says that a researcher must also not engage in deception about the nature of the study. To avoid this kind of ethical issue, letters of introduction (see Appendix 1) were sent to each participant explaining the purpose of my study, how the information would be used, and

their right to withdraw at any time from the study. One question is whether the researcher and participants have similar understandings of concepts used in the interviews. English is not the mother language of the participants except the single-mother from UK. Chinese participants spoke Chinese in the interview. To minimize misunderstandings of concepts used in the study, questions were rephrased in different ways, and repetitions of questions and sometimes further questions used to get as close to a common meaning as possible. In addition to this, after the interview, I also gave participants the transcripts of their interview to read and comment if it is consistent with what they have expressed. The interviews of Chinese participants were transcribed and translated into English and then were sent to the Chinese participants for data validity.

4.6.2 Privacy and confidentiality

All the ethical principles are related to the rights of participants, for example, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. And the core of ethical duty is privacy and confidentiality. When doing research involving human subjects, all researchers should respect ethics. According to Flick (2009, p. 42), "Readers of your report should not be able to identify which company or which persons took part in your research". To protect the anonymity of respondents, I assured them that their names would not appear in any part of my study, and I would not release the data, which I collected from them, for any other purpose or to third parties without their permission. Furthermore, all the interview recordings will be deleted after finishing this study. In addition, before data collecting, *The Data Protection Authority (Persónuvernd)* was notified of my research conducting for M.A. thesis.

This is a particularly sensitive issue considering that the research will be done amongst a relatively small society, where people and families know each other. Just as Ragnarsdóttir (2007, p. 108) discussed in her studies, "in a small society, such as in Iceland, naming or describing cultural origins at the same time as mentioning the number of children a person has, for example, can reveal the identity of the person in question". Thus, masking participants' identities might demand not only not mentioning their names, but also avoiding names of schools, geographical places in Iceland, and work place in Iceland. To protect the participants' anonymity, I use the term family not the names of parents and children, and refer to the individuals within the families as

single-mother or single-father, son or daughter and the term teacher for the teachers.

4.7 Limitations of this study

It should be noted that this study has several methodological limitations.

First, this study only lasted for three months, so there was not enough time to discover and involve more participants. As discussed before, some immigrant single parents were willing to participate in this study, however, they were very busy during my data collecting period, so they could not participate in this study.

Second, the sample size was small and half are Chinese single-parent immigrants. Therefore, the results may not be generalized or representative of the immigrant single-parent families' lives in Iceland. I intended to involve more diverse immigrant groups in this study so that the results could be more representative of the real lives of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland. However, it was extremely hard to find this kind of participants as explained before.

Thirdly, because of my language limitations, all the interviews in this study were conducted in English or Chinese. However, English is not the participants' or researcher's mother language, so there may still be a few misunderstandings, though I have taken into account ways to minimize the misunderstandings in the study, including rephrasing questions, repeating questions and asking further questions.

Fourthly, among the interviews with six families, some participants of this study had very short experiences as a single parent. For example, the Chinese single-father B became a single-father in 2012, and the UK single-mother became a single-mother in 2011.

Lastly, this study did not examine strictly the relationship between single parenthood and children's academic achievement. Most children in this study performed very well in the Icelandic school according to the descriptions of their parents, but further examination was not done in this study.

5 Findings: Experiences of integration

As was described in the *Introduction* chapter, the aim of this study is to explore what situations immigrant single-parent families face in Iceland, and how they cope with the integration process. The framework of interview questions (see Appendix 2) was based on the research aim and research questions (see Chapter 4). Some detailed and supplementary questions were added to better understand the participants' experiences. The interview questions were organized in a way to obtain data that reflect integration processes, the power or lack of power to affect these processes, successful or unsuccessful experiences, and attitudes and efforts towards education. In this chapter, I will describe and analyze the life experiences of six immigrant single-parent families in Iceland, from three perspectives: parents' integration experiences, experiences of being immigrant single parent in Iceland, and children's school integration experiences.

5.1 Parents' integration experience

Within this theme, I discuss issues of the integration process, such as how participants learned the Icelandic language, how they got jobs, and whether they experienced any discrimination in Iceland.

Chinese single-mother family A

The single-mother spoke English fluently before moving to Iceland, so there was no problem for her to communicate with other people in English here. She mentioned that it was so hard for her to learn Icelandic, particularly the grammar, though she had attended some language classes. When she did her first job, there was an Icelandic language education program in that company. She attended once or twice, and then the employer advised her to attend another language class *Mímir*. In addition, the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) paid the entire tuition fee. But she only can speak a little Icelandic, in her own words, that is, "During the past ten years, I haven't made great progress in the Icelandic language".

When I asked about her integration process and whether she experienced any discrimination in Iceland, she said that it was very hard for her to integrate into the new culture at the beginning because she could not speak Icelandic and could not get jobs here at the first few months of arrival. She explained that:

I think partly because I was a foreign newcomer and the employers had a little bit of anti-foreign sentiment. They did not want to employ an unfamiliar person. Another reason may be that I arrived here in winter, and there were not enough jobs.

The mother arrived in Iceland in December 2002. In April 2003, by the end of the winter, as the summer tourist season came, she got her first job, housekeeping in a hotel. After that, she has never had a problem in applying for a job. Her explanation was that because she already had working experience and skills, and she was not an unknown person to employers any more. After three years working in that hotel, she found another cleaning job in a company and worked for seven years. Moreover, in the spare time, she has some part-time jobs, such as a tourist guide.

She told me that Icelandic people are very kind to her, if she has some troubles and asks for their help, they always help her find the solution. From the interview with the Chinese single-mother A, I see that this single-mother is adjusting well to the Icelandic society. She has jobs here, makes Icelandic friends here and has connections with the Chinese community as well. Generally, the family has a good life in Iceland.

Chinese single-father family B

When I asked about language learning, the single-father told me that he went to the university to learn the Icelandic language and attended some courses of nursing at first. At home, his husband talked to him in English, so there was no problem with communication.

When I asked about his integration process and whether he had experienced any discrimination, he told me that because of his husband, Icelandic people are very friendly to him, so it was not very hard for him to make friends with Icelandic people and integrate into this new society. However, he mentioned one thing he considered as an unfair thing for foreigners. It was about the accreditation of his

master degree and his working experience. The accrediting procedure was incredibly hard and finally he had to stop that procedure two years later. He said, "That was the biggest difficulty for me in the integration process".

Because of his working experience and attending some nursing courses in Iceland, he got a nursing job in a nursing home two years after his arrival and still works in that nursing home. He said, "For many foreigners, it's hard to find jobs mainly because of their language problems. If you can speak very good Icelandic, it's easy to get a job here".

From the interview with the Chinese single-father B, I can find that this single-father loves the life in Iceland. He has jobs here and has a very good salary. He adjusted very well to the Icelandic society with the help of his Icelandic husband.

Chinese single-mother family C

When I asked about the integration process, the single-mother said the biggest problem for her was language. At first, she asked for help from other people and some Chinese friends. She started learning Icelandic language in *Mímir* after she got a job, and the trade union paid part of the fees. She had learnt Icelandic language for three months. Then, because she had the working experience and could work skillfully, it was not very hard for her to find a job here in Iceland even though she could not speak Icelandic. She got a job at an Icelandic food manufacturer and she has worked in that company for seven years.

When talking about the experiences of cultural difference, the single-mother told me that at first she could not get used to the Icelandic culture and could not understand it. Fortunately, her colleagues are very friendly to her and she could get all kinds of help from them when she had problems and troubles in daily life.

Generally, this family has a good life here. Though the single-mother could not speak Icelandic at the beginning, after years of living here, she can now have a basic conversation with people in Icelandic. She also passed the Icelandic language test when applying for Icelandic citizenship.

Chilean single-mother family

The single-mother told me that many Icelandic people were extremely prejudiced against the foreign women in the 1990s and they thought foreign women moved to Iceland just to get a good life here or something like that. She said she came to Iceland merely because she wanted to be with her husband and Iceland is a very safe society for children. She was very unhappy with that prejudice:

At that time, if you migrated to Iceland from South America, many people considered that you are poor and you could not find the job in the home country.

Her first baby was born in December 1997 and then in 1998 she was mostly at home. That was a full year when her baby and she were isolated at home. She had some savings before she came to Iceland, but the last money she had was used when the first baby was born. At that time, she was not a part of the healthcare system yet and did not have any free medical service. When foreign people move to Iceland, they have to wait for six months to be in the healthcare system. After that, she did not have any money and she disliked asking for money from her husband, so she wanted to work.

When I asked about how she found the job, she told me that she did not know how to find a job, so she went to the “Dagvistun Barna” office, which was the institution looking after the preschools. She said she wanted to find a job of a preschool teacher. The woman at the office told her at that time there were many places for people in the preschool, but Icelandic people did not want to work this kind of job because the salary was so low, so they were always waiting for someone to help the kids. The woman gave her five names of preschools that were close to the single-mother’s house though the mother couldn’t speak Icelandic and didn’t have any certification as a preschool teacher at that time. Then she went to those five preschools one by one. When describing the job finding experience, she said that three preschools didn’t want to hire her, and two of them complained about her language. Fortunately, one school agreed to give her a chance and she got the preschool teacher job finally, working four hours every day.

When I asked about language, the single-mother said she could speak English and no Icelandic at the beginning. Before moving to Iceland, her husband told her it would be okay with English here. However she

found it was not true especially at that time. She said at that time people wanted foreigners to learn Icelandic. In 1997, she lived in a town near Reykjavik. When she went to the shop and started to speak English, they would not talk to her especially the old people. Now Iceland is more open and amazing, She said:

In fifteen years, things have changed from many aspects, in particular concerning foreigners, in the attitudes, in the information, the services and the laws. It's much better for foreigners to come now.

When talking about her Icelandic language learning, she said she went first to an Icelandic course for one semester in the university from September to December of 1997. However, she did not like it and was bored with it, and she failed the course. She thought she could not learn Icelandic and she would only talk to foreigners. At the first school, she only met foreigners, and met very few Icelandic people. Moreover, most of her husband's family were elderly, so they did not have the real family life, only she and her husband mostly. Occasionally she met some of them, but she did not make friends with them. And she was speaking Spanish with her husband, so she learnt nothing about Icelandic. She tried to learn Icelandic from her husband, but she explained that her husband had no patience teaching her at home, so that she had to stop learning Icelandic from him.

She started to feel that she really became more integrated in the society when she started to work in October 1998 at a preschool. Though she spoke English with her colleagues, she heard Icelandic all the time. She said before she started working here, she didn't know anything about children. Although she had a kid, she didn't have any course about how to be a preschool teacher, so she visited "Dagvistun Barna" office very often, where there was a library and she could get books, toys and everything. She said as she read more, she fell in love with children's books and then she started to think maybe she should learn more and changed her profession. She considered this as the motivation and a way to learn Icelandic.

Another important thing to her integration happened during her study in the B.Ed. preschool teacher program. Many books for the courses were in English, but the courses were in Icelandic. At the courses, the teachers were using slides in English, and speaking in Icelandic. She could read the slides and books in English before class, so that she could guess what the teacher was going to say in Icelandic. So two

years later, despite that she was mainly reading in English and listening in Icelandic all the time, she came to understand Icelandic and use a little more, though not fluently. Now she can communicate with people in Icelandic though she cannot understand everything in Icelandic.

She said she once had an Icelandic neighbour and the neighbour was enormously important to her integration process. Later when she started having problem in her life, she went to the neighbour, and got advice and help.

The single-mother can speak Icelandic with people and adjusts very well in Iceland. According to the interview with the Chilean single-mother, I found that she could have a better life in Iceland than in Chile because of a better salary and a better education for her kids.

Czech single-mother family

The Czech single-mother spoke some German before she came to Iceland, no English and no Icelandic. During the first six months, she did not understand anything, then she tried to study English and Icelandic, but her husband found it was much easier to talk with her in English. When her son was four years old, she started working in preschool, where she could study Icelandic from the children, and she also had some courses in the language school. At first, she paid the fees herself and now she can get some money paid back. She said she wanted to attend the Icelandic course three years ago, but her son was still very young, and she could not go to the course in the evening and she preferred to have the course in the morning when her son was in preschool. However, they told her it was not possible to have courses in the morning at that time.

When I asked about her finding a job, she said it was not very difficult for her to find a job in the preschool though she could not speak Icelandic at that time, but it is not easy now to find jobs as immigrants without knowing Icelandic. She explained that, "Before the employers wanted to hire many people and did not mind whether Icelander or not, but now more and more people are unemployed, so the employers prefer Icelanders or people speaking Icelandic".

When I asked about her college degree certification here in Iceland, she said she was told that her degree was not enough and she needed to go to the school here. From her mood in the conversation, I noticed

that she was very unhappy with this problem. She complained about the educational system here in Iceland and gave me an example from mathematics to explain that the Czech school has the better education than the Icelandic school. She said, "I find that mathematics in Czech is significantly harder than here. What he is studying now is in grade five but in Czech, it is the level of grade two. It is a little bit stupid."

When I asked about her communication with others, the single-mother replied that she could not make any Icelandic friend here. All her friends are from Czech or other foreign countries. She was very confused about this problem and said that there were only working communications between her and Icelandic people, though she tried to go into the Icelandic people's community in the school, she never got close them. In her words, "Even if they are talking as if they are open, they are closed to themselves."

She also mentioned that it was hard for her to find relevant information and nobody helped her. She gave me an example of this. Previously, she was sick, but she did not know that she had health care, because nobody told her that she could ask for the payment. Moreover, because she is a single parent, she said she had to go to work, get money, and do everything by herself, so she lacked time to check all kinds of information on the Internet. She repeated many times in the interview that nobody helped her with all these difficulties.

UK single-mother family

The single-mother said her integration to the society was very easy, because she has visited Iceland many times before she moved here. She found Icelandic people very welcoming and everybody here can speak English very well. And she already had many friends, and she said getting a job was really no problem at all without knowing much Icelandic at that time.

The single-mother got a job cleaning hotel rooms when she first moved to Iceland. Two weeks later, she got a job in a company quickly, because she had experience in computing and internet marketing and it was very relevant. Then she worked at that company until the bank crash year. Then she got another job in the same industry immediately and then she left her job and got the job at a computer company. She has had that job for five years. Then she met some people at the end

of 2011 to do some projects. Because she did not have sufficient money to pay rent and other things, she also looked for other jobs. Nevertheless, she found it is very hard to get jobs here as immigrants now, in particular those who could not speak Icelandic very well. She told me that the employers want Icelandic now, which is different than before the bank crash. She can speak basic Icelandic and communicate with people in Icelandic, like about the weather, her house and daily life. However, she couldn't talk about business, like computing stuff or marketing stuff in Icelandic.

When talking about her Icelandic language learning experience, she smiled and said, "Nothing will be more difficult than learning Icelandic". Most of the time she didn't speak Icelandic, and just listened to others' conversations. Now because she has a daughter who is attending preschool in Iceland, she tries to talk with her daughter in Icelandic at home, which helps her Icelandic learning a lot. In addition, she mentioned that she learnt a lot of Icelandic in China, because she knew many Icelandic people in Shanghai, they chose to talk with each other using Icelandic as a secret language so that others could not understand the meaning. She laughed and said "I know that's ridiculous but I actually did learn a lot more in Shanghai."

Summary of the experiences of six families

According to the conversation with the six immigrant single parents, it shows that most of them have adjusted well to Icelandic society. Although some of them have experienced some unfair treatments early on, now most of them can make friends with the local residents, except the Czech single-mother. Moreover, all of them know the importance of possessing the dominant language in Iceland and all of them have made efforts to learn Icelandic, attending some Icelandic language classes, however, they all mentioned that it was hard to learn the Icelandic language, so most of them have not made great progress in Icelandic since they moved to Iceland. All of them currently have jobs in Iceland except the UK single-mother, but she does have some art jobs out of the country. In addition, all of them said it was not difficult for them to find jobs without knowing Icelandic at the time they moved here, while now it is getting harder for immigrants to apply for jobs if they could not speak fluent Icelandic.

Generally, it is not very hard for these immigrant single parents to integrate to the Icelandic society if they can learn Icelandic language,

find jobs here, and can make friends with others. Nevertheless, all of them have to support their families solely relying on themselves, so they have to work to feed themselves and their children.

5.2 Experience of being immigrant single-parent in Iceland

Within this theme, I mainly discuss the experience of these immigrant single parents in educating children in Iceland, such as how they cope with the issues of time allocating between working and caring for children, and whether there would be any improvements of this situation if they can gain some social supports or financial supports. Furthermore, I pay attention to how they educate their children, their attitudes towards mother language maintenance in Iceland, how they balance their children's learning their mother tongue and learning the Icelandic language, and their ways of dealing with their parent-child relationship. In addition, participants' opinions of being a single parent in Iceland are discussed in this section as well.

Chinese single-mother family A

After the divorce, the family did not get any financial support from the father and the father's relatives. When I asked about the financial support, the single-mother said she could not remember clearly, as her daughter was 20 years old. She thought that she received the child benefit before, which was calculated according to her tax information and was directly transferred to her bank account. In addition, because she was a single-mother, there was a deduction of her tax when she bought the house on loan. As for other discounts and benefits, she thought she did not get any of them.

To support the family, the single-mother had to work several jobs in Iceland, such as cleaning jobs, tourist guide and so on, which meant that the mother had very little time to look after her daughter. Usually the daughter would go to the library after school and wait for the mother to finish work. Sometimes when she was very busy, some Chinese friends would help her look after the daughter. One year after the daughter's migration, the single-mother's parents moved to Iceland and lived with the family for many years, from 2004 to 2009. The grandparents helped the mother doing some housework and looking after the daughter, which helped the single-mother dealing with the work-family conflict. The grandmother died in Iceland when

the daughter was 16 years old, then the grandfather went back to China. At that time, the daughter was mature enough to look after herself. The single-mother said that though her daughter has graduated from high school very successfully and has grown to be sensible and independent, she still feel a little bit sorry for her daughter because she had spent too much time in earning income to support their lives but too little time on her daughter's education.

When I asked about how she educated her daughter and whether she was influenced by Chinese culture, the single-mother said at first she always urged her daughter to keep studying even at home just as many Chinese parents do. One day, she met the teacher at school and was lectured for her way of educating, which led to her daughter being weary of studying. The teacher told her that "Please do not urge your daughter to study at home! It is my job to consider how to educate and what to educate. I will tell her what to learn and when to learn". The single-mother said teachers would have meetings at intervals with parents introducing something about their children's study. At the meetings, she knew that her daughter performed well at school. After that, she did not spend too much time and energy on her daughter's studying, partly because she was busy working and very tired after finishing work every day, and on the other hand, she believed that the daughter would be educated very well at school and she did not need to worry about the daughter's education.

When talking about how she valued her daughter's education, the single-mother said she had her own judgment. She said, "if you can't apply what you learn to your life, then it means you have not learnt very well even if you can get very high grades", so the only way of her examination is asking the daughter to explain or translate some documents. The single mother brought her daughter up like many Icelandic parents do; for example, she encouraged her daughter to do some part-time jobs. She explained that she was not expecting the daughter to earn a lot of money, just expecting the daughter to know the hardships of life and to be more independent. In addition, this educational idea is quite different from Chinese traditional educational ideas, which consider the only thing a student should do is study, not part-time jobs.

The daughter also said that because of growing up in a single-mother family, she can understand her mother's hardships and difficulties. The daughter said that she had known that she should be more

independent than other kids and she learnt to manage her money when she was very young. Therefore, she never had unrealistic and unreasonable requirements for very expensive toys and material things. She said if there were something she really wanted, she would do some part-time jobs. She recalled that she wanted to buy a computer when she was 13 years old, then she found a part-time job in a supermarket for three months to earn the money and finally she purchased her first computer using her own money. She told me that from the age of 11 years old, she already helped her mother do some housework and sometimes did a favour for her mother at her mother's job so that her mother could finish work earlier and have more time at home.

When I asked about the daughter's Chinese language learning, the single-mother said that before moving to Iceland, her daughter was a student of Grade 4 in Chinese compulsory school, so her daughter already had some basic courses of Chinese language. The mother said her daughter liked fairy tales very much when she was a little girl. The daughter often went to the bookstore reading all kinds of books once she could read the Chinese characters. Especially after the divorce, the single-mother had to work, so every weekend the daughter wore her backpack, brought one bottle of water, went to the bookstore or library and stayed there the whole day. Just because of the love for reading novels, the daughter kept her interest in Chinese language and culture even when she moved to Iceland. When the daughter had a computer, she also started to write some novels in Chinese, which were good for her Chinese language learning.

Another aspect is the language context at home. The single-mother said the grandparents only speak Chinese, so the daughter had to speak Chinese with them at home. When I asked the daughter about her Chinese language learning, she said that she could speak and read Chinese very fluently, partly owing to her study in China before migration and partly due to reading Chinese novels after moving to Iceland. There being no friends in Iceland at the beginning, she developed the hobby of reading Chinese novels in her spare time.

As for the relationship between her and her mother, the daughter said they get along with each other more like friends. Sometimes her mother wanted to have control and power over her education, but if she had different opinions, most of the time her mother would consider her ideas when making decisions. And when asked about this,

the single-mother expressed that they were influenced by each other. Her daughter could also teach her something, like Icelandic language, Icelandic culture and some computer skills. The single-mother concluded that, “Most of the time I am not treating her as a child, more like a friend”.

Chinese single-father family B

When I asked about time allocation, he said that because he became a single-father last year. Before his husband could help him looking after his son and most of the time it was his husband monitoring his son’s studying, so this was not a big problem for him. Now that his son is 14 years old, the son can look after himself and the single-father only needs to prepare some food for him. After school, the son goes back home or plays with his friends, so the father does not need to worry about this.

When I asked about the financial support, the single-father said that since he became a single-father last year, he has gained some tax benefits from the state, like child benefit. However, earlier his husband’s salary together with his salary was very high, and the family did not get any financial support from the society or the state.

When talking about mother language maintenance in Iceland, the single-father said he thinks that mother language is very important nowadays. He said that China has very quick development and many Chinese companies have more and more overseas businesses. He hoped that his son would have some connections with China in the future. He explained, “I am not meaning that he must live in China. He can do the job or some things in relation to China, for example to be a legal consultant for these companies”.

When I asked about how he educated his son and whether he was influenced by Chinese culture, the single-father said his son was educated just as he was educated in China. The single-father told me that the son was also educated in the Icelandic way by his husband. The single-father emphasized strong discipline, but his husband advocated less stress on the son’s study, which caused some arguments on the son’s education way and they had to compromise.

When talking about the language context at home, the single-father said his husband spoke Icelandic with the son, and spoke English with him, but he talks with the son in Chinese. A few years later, the son

could speak some English because he was constantly listening to English at home. The single-father said at first, they paid more attention to the son's Icelandic language learning, because language is very important if they want to be Icelandic citizens. He added that if the son could not speak Icelandic, then it would be very hard for his son to play well with other kids at school.

As for his son's Chinese language learning, the single-father said because he was busy with his work, he did not have enough time to support his son's Chinese language learning. Actually before the son moved to Iceland, he was already eight years old and had a very high ability of Chinese language reading, writing and speaking. Nevertheless, after few years in Iceland, the son preferred to read English books or Icelandic books rather than Chinese books. Although every year the son's mother would mail Chinese books to him from China, the son read these books less and less. About this, the single-father felt a little helpless, but he thought his son would have interest in Chinese culture. He said:

At first, I always required him to read and write some Chinese characters, but he studied rather unwillingly, so I gave it up. And I think maybe in the future, he will be interested in Chinese culture and language, and then he may learn Chinese very well. Since I became a single-father, there is only Chinese spoken at home. And after we moved to this house, he made friends with many Chinese kids nearby, so his spoken Chinese is very good now.

The son expressed the same thinking as his father and he said that:

I do know not very much about Chinese culture, but I am interested in what I have known. I only talk to my father in Chinese, so my Chinese language is becoming weaker, but I still keep learning and never give it up.

When I asked about the son's Icelandic language ability, the single-father was not worried and said that even though the son does not have any problem with spoken Icelandic, but his Icelandic reading and writing is not as good as his English. The single-father said though the son speaks Icelandic at school, his Icelandic language studying time is much less now than before, so he advised his son to borrow some Icelandic books from the library to read every week and watch the Icelandic TV news every day. The single-father laughed and added, "If

we speak Chinese, eat Chinese food every day, make friends with Chinese people, then there is no difference from the life in China and he will be separated from the Icelandic society.”

From the interview with the single-father and the son, I noticed that they both mentioned that the son’s reading and writing in English is better than in Chinese and Icelandic. The father explained that he never asked the son to read extra English materials, the son’s English language learning mainly relied on the son’s self study, because the son loves playing games and reading news in the computer, and he is able to learn English as he plays.

As for the parent-child relationship, the father said: “Sometimes I have more control on him, such as about his studies, but if you always treat him like this, he will never tell you what he is thinking about.”

Chinese single-mother family C

The single-mother has a sister in Iceland, and before they moved to this new house, they lived near to the sister’s family, so it is much easier for her to deal with time than other immigrant single-parent families. The daughter told me that her aunt’s family always has somebody, her aunt or her cousin, staying at home, so when her mother was working, she would go to the aunt’s home after school. Because the single-mother worked one week in the daytime and one week in the night when her daughter was young, when she worked nightshifts, her daughter could sleep at the aunt’s home. During the interview, the daughter said that though her aunt can look after her when her mother was busy, she still wishes her mother could have more time with her. The single-mother said the same thing that it was not easy for her daughter to grow up without enough concern from the mother.

The single-mother said that her salary could maintain the family’s daily life expenditure. However, it is impossible for the family to travel now with limited finances. Her daughter is learning badminton and piano, so the family can get some money from the municipality. Other financial support is the child benefit. She can receive the child benefit from the state every three months, about ISK fifty thousand each time.

But from the interview, I found that she knew very little about these financial supports, for example, she had no idea which kinds of supports she can get from the state and how much she can get, what

she does know is how much money has been transferred to her bank account. She complained about the child benefit in Iceland being confusing. She thought that as a single-mother, she should get more money from this child benefit than the two-parent families. She told me that one of her friends, a two-parent family, could get more money on the child benefit, about sixty thousand ISK each time. With the help of her colleagues, she also consulted the government office to find out if there were some mistakes, but the reply was that there were no mistakes. I found that she was still confused about this problem when the interview took place. She also told me another confusing thing, which is about the tax return on housing. She said she didn't get any tax return on housing the first year she bought the apartment and now she still gets less tax return than her colleagues. She repeatedly said that she does not know how these benefits work and she could not understand why she gets less.

When I asked about how she educated her daughter and whether she was influenced by any Chinese culture, the single-mother said she always educated her daughter as many Chinese parents do especially at the beginning when they moved here. She emphasized that the daughter must study and could not watch TV. She told me that now she thinks her requirement at that time was not correct, because "If my daughter wants to make friends with the classmates, she should do as they do. She cannot just be different from the others, so I changed my way of educating her". The single-mother said that, after the daughter started learning Icelandic language and culture from an Icelandic woman, she stopped her daughter's Chinese language learning to make her daughter not so tired. When talking about her upbringing, the daughter told me that because her mother doesn't know much Icelandic language, it's impossible for her mother to help her with her Icelandic homework. The daughter continued with pride and said that her mother continuously teaches her some great philosophy of Chinese culture, such as the Chinese history, the basic principles of dealing with others and so on.

Now the daughter can communicate with others in Chinese, read Chinese books and novels on the Internet and can use the Chinese language keyboard on the computer. When I asked about her attitudes towards maintaining her mother tongue in Iceland, the single-mother said she wishes her daughter can keep her Chinese language ability and know how to use Chinese characters on the computer. The single-mother also expressed her expectations of her daughter:

I wish one day she can go back to China and have a job there, such as finding a job in a foreign company in China. After all, we are Chinese people. Chinese language and culture are very familiar to us and close to our heart. Therefore, it is my dream that she can go back to China. I am not meaning that she must live in China. But it's her life, so she can decide where she wants to go.

The daughter was already in grade 2 in China and she learnt Chinese very well, so her mother did not want her to give up her Chinese language learning. Her mother bought Chinese textbook for her from grade 2 to grade 4 and took those books to Iceland. The daughter learnt these textbooks by herself at home and her mother examined her learning process once a week, which lasted for one year. When talking about the daughter's language learning balance, the single-mother explained that at that time, the daughter went home at 2 o'clock afternoon and she did not learn the piano or badminton, so there was plenty of time after school for the daughter to learn language. Usually the daughter has finished all her Icelandic homework at school, so at home she only needed to practice a few minutes of Icelandic reading and then she had plenty of time to learn Chinese. The single-mother said, because they live in Iceland, she thinks that the daughter should pay more attention to Icelandic than Chinese language learning. Therefore, one year later, the single-mother stopped the daughter's Chinese learning to avoid the daughter being so tired. During the interview, the daughter told me that she is not giving up the Chinese, because she is interested in Chinese novels, she downloads some into her phone and she can read them now and then.

When I asked about how they get along with each other, the single-mother told me that when the daughter was a little girl, she controlled on her daughter's study and life, but now they get along well with each other, more like friends. She said because she did not understand the Icelandic language, sometimes she even asks her daughter to talk with others or help her read some documents. She added that it was not very easy for single parents to educate kids. She explained that in two-parent families, when educating the kids, usually one parent act as a good person, and another one act as a bad person, so if the father is angry at a kids' wrong behaviour, the kids can get some assuring words from the mother to make sure that the kids are not so upset. She said that her daughter could not get some assuring words when she was criticizing her, so she continued that, "Sometimes, I can understand

her, so I try my best to treat her like friends. Even when we have some unhappy things, we can get along well with each other again very quickly.”

Chilean single-mother family

When I asked about whether she could find someone to help her look after the kids, the single-mother told me that she didn't have any family here at the time when her daughter was very young and her husband was busy working before the divorce, so she had no one to help her. When I asked how she looked after the baby when she was working, she said at first she was thinking of finding a “Dagmamma” for the baby. But she doubted if the “Dagmamma” could look after her baby very well, because they often look after four to five babies at the same time and they are not professional as in preschool. However, at that time, preschool teachers were not allowed to have their own kids with them at the same preschool and many preschools did not want to take a baby under one year old. The single-mother told me that when she came back to Iceland in 2011, she met that boss again and worked with the boss again for a few months. And she found that “Now it is possible to have your baby with you at the same preschool, because the boss has learnt that it is good to have the mothers and the kids at the same pre-school, which can make the mothers stay at work longer”. However, in 1998, the culture here in Iceland was different.

Finally, with her boss's help, another preschool agreed to take care of her baby for five hours every day when she was working. When she started attending courses in 1999, her daughter had to stay in the pre-school longer once she had courses. When she became a single-mother, things became more complicated, but then her kids were bigger, so they could stay the full day at preschool. Though she solved that problem, she still feels sorry for her first child and that she spent less time with the baby. Therefore, when she had her second child, she stayed with him until he was one year and a half and then she still tried to make him have less time at preschool. She recalled that it was very hard for her first baby to separate from her and the baby cried when she left it in the preschool. With a little sorrow, the single-mother said:

When I think of her growing, she suffered when I started working every day. I feel very guilty about my daughter. She started pre-school when she was eleven months old and she wasn't even walking yet. And that was sad because the first

step she did was without me, without dad, it was in the pre-school, so I was really upset and said “Never again”.

When I asked how she supported the family’s daily life expenditure, the single-mother said her income came from three parts, first from her job, second from *LÍN* (student loan) and third from the state (Barnabætur). She said she never worked full time, so she was never rich here. She always tries to live with a little money so that she does not need to work full time, but still she had their basic needs fulfilled, like rent and food. She has never had a car here, and she didn’t go on holidays every year and she had to save money.

She was studying at university, and she could get loans from *LÍN*. *LÍN* lends money to the students so that they can have money to study, and students should pay back the money after finishing their studying. Moreover, the interest is very low compared to the bank, and students don’t have to pay the interest when they are studying, the interest only starts calculating after their graduations. The single-mother said that “if you can organize the money efficiently, you don’t have to worry about the financial problem”.

Most money is from her job and another little bit is from the loan, and she got help from the state, because the state paid her more for the kids when she was single. She told me that it is better to be a single-mother for her because she can have more help from the state. She explained that, “You can get more discounts and more money from the state when you are single than when you are together, for example the cheaper preschool and better children benefit”. She continued saying that if she is not in the university and she needs a flat, then she can get a priority on applying for “social housing” as a single-mother. In her words, “I got a lot of services and help more easily, because I am alone with two kids.” Though she still has some problems, her life is much better and easier in a way especially in the economic part since she got divorced.

When I asked if her cultural or religious background had any influence on her parenting, the single-mother said that her religious background has influenced her parenting. For example, she baptized her kids in the Catholic Church. She said she still has contact with Catholic Church in Iceland. The family does not go every Sunday to Mass, but if it is a special festival, Christmas for example, there always would be parties and Mass, and then the single-mother would take her kids to the Mass to let them see the Catholic Church and meet with other Catholic

families. The single-mother told me that she always spoke Spanish with the kids at home, but in 1997, people here had the idea that you should speak Icelandic with your kids and the kids should go to preschool and only listen to the Icelandic. At that time, they worried that the kids would not learn Icelandic well if they heard other foreign languages at home. When she went to pick up her daughter at the preschool, because she was talking in Spanish to her daughter, people stood and looked at her.

When I asked about her attitudes towards maintaining her mother tongue in Iceland, the single-mother said she thinks it is very important and one should speak the mother tongue, because “that language is what you know best, it is close to your heart, and you need to communicate with your kids, you are the most important person to your kids”. She explained that everything she knew for children at the beginning was in Spanish, like all the children’s songs, the stories and games. She said, “Like Cinderella, you have Cinderella in various languages, but I knew Cinderella in Spanish. I’m always like that. I am Spanish.” She thinks that it is important for women to transmit their kids to mother culture if they want to keep their own culture. She added, “That could be different if the woman is going to forget everything about Chile and is going to do everything in Icelandic”.

When I asked how she balances the education of her kids’ official language and mother language, she said they speak Spanish at home and Icelandic outside, so there is very strong Spanish context at home. Moreover, they travelled to Chile as well, so the kids were hearing Spanish. She gave me an example about her daughter. When the daughter was one year and a half, they spent three months in Chile, and she could really switch and got a good input in Spanish. As for Icelandic language learning, she told me the kids learn a lot of language at school and they have TV programs in Icelandic which were not translated, so they listened to a lot of Icelandic.

At first, she worried a little about the kids’ mother language learning, because many words, like the materials, the toys used in preschool, kids only knew in Icelandic and did not know these words in Spanish. She said, “For example, when they play with sand, they knew this word in Icelandic but they didn’t know how to say it in Spanish”. Therefore, she wanted to try another way to help the kids learn the mother language. She found two other girls who also learnt Spanish from their mother, and taught these three children learning Spanish together a

few hours at weekends. She tried that new way for six months, twice a week. She did the same activities, which the kids already had in Icelandic, like painting, but she did it in Spanish and used the words for colours in Spanish. She told me that this way was useful for kids' mother tongue learning, however, the activities had to be stopped because of their moving out of Iceland.

During their absence from Iceland between 2005 and 2011, her kids only got Spanish education, so they are strong in the Spanish language now. The daughter was seven when they moved out and she was very good at languages, like the father. She started to read in English by herself when she was twelve. The single-mother said because the daughter kept reading during that period in Chile, the daughter could communicate fluently in Icelandic, though the daughter still needed more writing courses in Icelandic when they moved back in 2011. However, the son could not speak a word of Icelandic after five years in Chile. The son was about five when he left Iceland and the family spent one year in Spain and then went to Chile. When he returned to Iceland in 2011, he had forgotten the Icelandic completely. He could not understand a word. The mother said the son really had a hard time when he came back. He still had a special class in Icelandic, but after a year, now he can speak with the boys, he plays soccer and he is happier.

When talking about the parent-child relationship, the single-mother laughed and said she was very controlling and was the "queen" at home, but the kids also enjoyed a lot of freedom. She gave me an example about her son:

My son is twelve now. He walks to school in the morning and walks back home after school. He arrives at home alone so he decides what's going to do. Now he goes to the library to get help on his Icelandic homework, and after that, he will go to the soccer or do other things, all by himself.

The single-mother said though they do not have TV at home, and now they have a computer but no games on computer, so the kids need to be creative to find things to do for themselves. The single-mother said they are close to each other and have a very good relationship, but they did not do many things together outside home, like going for a camping, hiking, swimming together at weekend. The single-mother's explanation was that, it was nice to be just at home for together since they already had too much time outside for studying and working.

Czech single-mother family

When I asked whether she could find someone to help look after her kid, the single-mother told me that the son's father only visited the family one to two times a year even when he lived in Reykjavik. She continued that her son's grandmother lives near Reykjavik, so if she really has something, the grandmother could look after him. Nevertheless, usually nobody can help her look after her son if she wants to work, so she must work when her son is in school. The single-mother said she cannot make a mistake and she needs to take everything into account, because if she has some problems, nobody can help her. When I asked if she could ask her friends to help her, she said even if she has many friends, everybody is working, has children and lives away, so it is not convenient to let some friends help her look after her son when she was working. She gave me the following example:

Sometimes you come back at nine o'clock in the evening, and you want your child already asleep, not just waiting for you with some of your friends and then probably going to sleep at ten o'clock in the evening. So it's very hard when he is very young.

The single-mother said her son leaves school at two o'clock every afternoon and she finishes working at four o'clock. Her work place and her son's school are both near their home, just five minutes walking, so it is not so hard for her to handle this. Because it is very difficult to get the babysitter for the evening, the single-mother could not go out in the evening. Sometimes, the single-mother opened Skype, asking her son to sit at the table, and asked the grandmother to talk with the son through Skype so that there was someone who can look after her son when she was away. Now the son is already 11 years old, and he can stay at home alone in the evening, so the single-mother has started going to the evening school twice a week.

When I asked about financial support, the single-mother said she got some helpings from the government when she had little money. She got the apartment from the government and she can get child benefit every three months. She said that the benefit office calculates how much money you can get according to many aspects, like salary, single parent or not, amount of children. She told me that she has been getting more benefit from the government since she was a single

mother. She can get child alimony from the father every month. In addition, she was very pleased that all these benefits are on schedule and she did not need to worry whether she can continue to receive these financial supports next month. Moreover, because the son was learning dancing after school, the family can get money from the municipality for her son's leisure activities.

When I asked how she educated her son, the single mother said she tried all ways. She likes to stick to the Czech teaching way and wants to teach her son Czech, but they are living in Iceland and the son must know Icelandic, so she is also very open to Icelandic teaching and Icelandic language learning. She gave me an example about festival to explain her teaching approach. She said that they would have the Czech food on December 24 and have the Icelandic food on December 25. She added that it is very nice for children, because they are always celebrating something.

The single-mother teaches the son Czech language, Czech geography and Czech history at home. And every year they go back to the Czech Republic in the summer to have five or six weeks there just visiting her families and taking a test, so the son has the Czech course diploma. The single-mother said that it is necessary for her to know the steps of her son's learning and then decide to teach her son in both ways, so she often compared what her son has learnt from Icelandic and Czech. She said it was very difficult to teach her son in both ways when her son was young. The son said something to her in Icelandic after he came from the preschool, so she had to tell him that she could not understand Icelandic and she wanted him to speak Czech. She said, "You need to teach him, you cannot give up." The single-mother was a bit sorry about her son not thinking in Czech and she said the son always thinks in Icelandic, so when the son talks to her, he talks in the Icelandic way though he speaks Czech to her.

The single-mother said because some Czech subjects are much harder than Icelandic subject at the same grade level, so when the son is studying these in Czech, he doesn't need to study the Icelandic subjects. She said it is very easy for him, because he already knows them in Czech, like mathematics.

UK single-mother family

When talking about the work-family conflict, the single-mother said it is very difficult for her to cope with this conflict. She told me that her daughter was in preschool seven hours a day, five days a week since the daughter was eight months because she had to work. Luckily, the daughter is happy in the preschool and there is no problem to go to school every morning. However, the single-mother said she still has a problem. She cannot work outside the hours her daughter is at school, because she doesn't have the social networks to help take care of her daughter. She said she could not get jobs in stores, bars or on weekends, because working time conflicts with the daughter's preschool time. She explained that the longest time the daughter can be in the preschool is from 8:00 to 16:35, and then she needs to pick up her daughter from the preschool, so she could not get a job that finishes at 18:00. If there is no one who can take care of the daughter for one extra hour every evening, it will be a big problem for her to apply for a job now in Iceland.

The single-mother does not have any relatives in Iceland. Her child's father lives in Iceland, and he can help look after the daughter when she is abroad. However, she cannot ask the father to pick up the daughter every day. The child's father is a musician and goes abroad a lot as well, so they must organize their trips to have someone look after the daughter. And the single-mother said when the father has the daughter for some days, he has a lot of support from his family, which she doesn't have. She said: "My daughter can meet his mother, his sisters, and even his ex-wife, so he has a lot of support, but I don't have any option".

The single-mother said she also got social support from her friends, many of whom are good. They can be a babysitter for a couple of hours but they have their own children, so they cannot just look after her child. She had talked to the child's father that she was going to leave the country if things did not change, but she also had her doubts:

But leaving here means taking my daughter with me. And I don't want to take her away from her father, but staying here is very challenging for me, because I don't have any family here and do not have money.

When I asked whether she could get financial support from the state, the single-mother said she could get the child benefit every three

months. She told me that when she was with her child's father and had a very good salary, she got this child benefit about seven thousand ISK every three month, but now she was a single mother and she had no job, so she can get seventy-five thousand every three month this year. And she said that the child's father is very good. Though he does not have much money, he pays the alimony every month and pays for the child's school even after they split.

Her apartment was rented, so she can also apply for the housing benefit, but that is a very expensive apartment, one hundred and fifty thousand ISK rent every month. She said she did not have enough money to pay for the rent, so she also tried to find other ways to cover the rent, such as her parents helping, selling her belongings and so on. The single-mother is very happy that the house owner is a nice woman and agrees that she can have somebody rent the house by herself when she goes abroad. In addition, because now she has no job, she can get the unemployment benefit, which helps her pay the rent. She was very pleased with the Icelandic unemployment benefit:

In one way in the UK, I would never be able to keep this apartment if I was on the unemployment benefit. It would not happen. They pay so much less money. Here I think it's a very generous support I get.

Due to some art jobs abroad, she needs to go abroad from time to time, and during the time out of the country, she cannot get the unemployment benefit. And when she comes back to Iceland, she can sign on again at the benefit office.

The single-mother can get the child benefit, the housing benefit, the unemployment benefit, and child alimony from the child's father, but after she pays the rent, she has about fifteen thousand ISK left for a month to feed her daughter and herself. When I asked why she did not look for another cheaper apartment, she explained that she has been looking at some smaller places nearby but it is almost the same amount of money. She continued explaining that she does not want to move to other areas because all of her support networks are in this area. Her best friend lives next door and her daughter goes to school in this area. She said, "It's like all of my money all goes on the rent, but I am very happy and my daughter is also very happy with this place."

When I asked how she educated her daughter, the single-mother said the discipline between UK and Iceland is very different, because she

likes to be very strict but Icelandic people do not. For example, she thinks her daughter needs to go to bed early, and the daughter must not have sweets and some other things. Though the kids in any other Icelandic families that she knew just do what they want, she said she does not agree with Icelandic people on this point. When the child's grandmother visits them, if the grandmother does not do as the single-mother does, like no sweets and must go to bed, the single-mother would not let the grandmother come and visit her again. The single-mother said her daughter is a happy balanced kid. When the daughter does not do something as the single-mother said, the single-mother just counts the number from one to three. The single-mother laughed and said her daughter would do what she wants when she just said "one".

The single-mother admitted that she is more powerful than her kid. She does not agree with children being given complete freedom and she thinks parents must give kids rules, boundaries and structure. However, she also tries to give her daughter a choice. She said:

Like when we get ready in the morning, I give her three clothes so that she can choose which one. And I give her three options for breakfast so that she can choose. And this tends to make her very calm, because she has her own power. Even when she was being naughty, I said, "Ok, you can either do what you are doing or I will pick you up and you will stay in your rooms", so she still gets the choice.

When I asked about mother language maintenance, the single-mother told me that she speaks Icelandic to her daughter, so her mother was worrying about her kid's mother language speaking. She said she is not worried about this, because everybody here speaks English.

Summary of the experiences of the six families

In this section, all six families have introduced their own experience on how they cope with the work-family conflict, how they educate their children, their attitudes towards mother language maintenance in Iceland, how they balance their children's mother language learning and Icelandic language learning, their ways of dealing with the parent-child relationship and their own opinions of being a single-parent in Iceland.

The interviews with these six families have shown that most of them had the work-family conflict, especially when their children were young, but all of them are aware of the association between time investments and children's well-being. They all expressed that the precondition of their working is that they can find acceptable and reliable childcare, whether it is the families, friends, or babysitter or preschool, otherwise they would not work or work as little as possible. According to the data collected in the interview, except for the two Chinese single-mother families, other immigrant single-parent families do not have any family or relatives here in Iceland. Although all of them have some friends to be the babysitter sometimes, it does not help them a lot on the work-family conflict. For those whose kids are very young and do not have any relatives, it is very hard for them to find a balance. Some of them have their kids at preschool as long as possible so that they can work to feed the family, while some of them just organized everything according to their kids. For those who had to work when their babies were young, guilt was pervasive in the way that they talked about their experiences of work-family conflicts. As the work-family conflicts do exist in these immigrant single-parent families, most of them have to consider giving up working time or caring time. Fortunately, all of them can get financial supports from the state, like child benefits, and some of them can get other kinds of support, like social housing, the money for children's leisure activities, housing benefit and the unemployment benefit, which helps them to cope with the work-family conflict. Generally speaking, all the immigrant single parents in this study can feed their families with their salary and the financial support, so some of them choose to work less time and have more time with their kids.

From these conversations, it is clear that all the immigrant single parents in this study are concerned about preserving their children's mother tongue. They all know the importance of giving their children good access to the mother tongue, and some of them even took the mother tongue textbooks from their home countries and teach their children their mother tongue at home. In addition, some children in this study had attended school in their home countries before moving to Iceland, such as the three Chinese single-parent families, and the Chilean single-mother family, so it is not very hard for them to keep learning the mother tongue in Iceland. In the families, both parents and children are multilingual, using more than two languages in daily life and communication and the parents talk to their kids at home in mother language. Moreover, some parents send their kids back to

their home countries during the school holidays in order to preserve the mother tongue as well as to strengthen the relations with the families there. All the children in this study can speak and read in their mother language and some of them even can write in their mother language. The child from the Czech single-mother family even has a Czech diploma because he goes back to Czech every year to take the test.

Learning Icelandic as quickly as possible is also considered extremely important by the parents for their children in this study. All these immigrant single parents are concerned about their children's education and adjustment to Icelandic society. They know from their own experience the constraints of living and working in a new country without having enough knowledge in the dominant language and culture. Some parents had to stop their children's mother tongue learning to make sure their kids have enough time to learn the Icelandic language, such as the three Chinese single-parent families. All the children in this study can speak very good Icelandic and after many years in Iceland, some children are thinking and talking in an Icelandic way though they are speaking their mother tongue with their parents at home, such as the Chinese single-mother family C, and the Czech single-mother family. Meanwhile, most children in this study can speak English, except the son of the Czech single-mother and the son of the Chilean single-mother, and some of them are learning English by themselves just because it is interesting.

Most of these immigrant single parents in this study treat their kids more like friends, though some of them have some control or want to have more power over their kids' study and life. As the Chinese single-mother C said, it was not very easy for a single parent to educate kids, so they all get along very well with their kids, and listen to their kids' different opinions. Another important aspect influencing the lives of immigrant single-parent families is the social attitudes or social acceptance.

All the immigrant single parents in this study acknowledged that it is much better to be a single parent here in Iceland than in their home countries, and they are very happy living in Iceland. The most crucial reason is the normal attitudes towards single parent family in Iceland. It is legal to have a baby without marriage in Iceland, so they do not feel they are shamed or they are failure to be single parents. Nobody looks down upon the single parents, but the situation is different in

some other countries. For instance, the UK single-mother said in England having a baby without marriage is morally related. The Chilean single-mother also said that though people in Chile have no prejudice against the single parents, single parents might have uncomfortable feeling about people's strange attitudes. Chinese single mothers also expressed that they can have a better life in Iceland than in China. Another aspect that these single parents in this study mentioned most is the excellent financial support in Iceland towards family. These immigrant single parents declared that it was impossible to get these financial supports in their home countries. And the good quality, free education, and the safe environment for kids to grow up, are also mentioned by them as influencing their decisions to stay in Iceland. For example, one Chinese single-mother said that she doesn't need to pay much money for the kid's education. She said that, "The education is free here, which is the good thing especially for the poor single-parent families. They do not need to worry about whether their kids can get a good education".

The next section is about what kinds of experience these immigrant children had during the integration process into Icelandic school.

5.3 Children's school integration experience

Within this theme, I discuss issues of children's school experience, such as whether they experienced marginalization in school, how they joined in Icelandic children's peer group and made friends, whether they could adapt to the Icelandic teaching way, whether the school provided support to immigrant children and what kinds of support these children could get from the school. In addition, there is also some information about the children's school experiences and the parent's relation with the school from the two teachers' perspectives.

Chinese single-mother family A

The daughter arrived in Iceland when she was ten years old. The mother chose an Icelandic school rather than an international school for the daughter with the expectation that she could integrate well into the Icelandic society. It was a primary school near downtown, which was said to be a school where teachers had experience in educating immigrant children. That school is not close to their home, but the teachers at that school are very nice. The teachers were concerned about the daughter's study and integration into society.

Therefore, the daughter loved that school and did not want to switch to another school even though it was not convenient.

In the first few years of her arrival, she was an introverted, autistic child and was always pushed aside by other classmates. She said, "Other classmates regarded me as a 'strange' child due to my soliloquizing, and laughed at me at school." She felt annoyed for being teased, so she fought against anyone who bullied her, and then nobody dared to tease her. I asked whether she was thinking of going back to the home country when she encountered many difficulties at school. She shook her head and said, "No. My mother is in Iceland. I want to be with her".

At first, the daughter didn't have friends to play with after school because she didn't attend the school near her home. A very kind teacher advised her to take part in an activity where some older students play with them every week. This really helped the daughter a lot to know more about Icelandic society. After a while, she made some real friends at school, but all her friends were "strange" students in other students' eyes. She said, "I feel very comfortable with them, maybe because we are all 'strange students', but they are really very smart, not like others who are just 'slaves of cool'".

When I asked the daughter whether she could adapt to the Icelandic teaching way, she said that there are indeed a big difference between Chinese teaching way and Icelandic teaching way, but she loves the Icelandic teaching way and this kind of teaching way is much less stressful for children than that in China.

Chinese single-father family B

For the first two years after arrival, the son attended a private primary school in Iceland. Most kids at that private primary school were from a rich family, or some special family. At first, because of the language problem, other kids didn't want to play with him, which made him an introverted boy. Then a few months later, he made some friends at school. Two years later, his father chose another public primary school near their home. Now he is a tenth grade student. He does very well at school and can play well with other kids.

The father said that in the first six months of schooling, his son had some difficult experiences, so the single-father's Icelandic husband visited the school and talked to the principal many times. Because the

kids in the class that his son attended were very naughty and most of them grew up together from the preschool, they had their own peer group and rejected the son. The father gave me two examples of the early year's school experiences of his son. At first, other kids in the school did not allow his son to play or walk with them after school, which made the son alone at school and after school. The single-father said the teachers at the school did not take the thing seriously and considered that was only due to the peer groups of kids. However, there were two to three kids, who often teased the son at school. The single-father said his son was a sensitive boy and very unhappy with other kids' teasing, and he was thinking of sending the son back to the former private primary school so that the son could have some friends. Owing to his husbands visiting the school principal many times, the principal sent a letter to all the parents describing the feelings of the Chinese boy and suggested the parents talk to their kids about it. The single-father said the situation has changed since that principal's letter and his son finally became a member of an Icelandic children's peer group.

Another unhappy thing happened when the son was playing with another boy. The son's pencil poked a hole in that boy's pants. That pants were very expensive, about 17000 ISK at that time. The boy cried endlessly and the teacher called that boy's mother. That boy's mother went to school, very angry at this Chinese boy's mistake, and claimed new pants. The single-father told me that his husband and he were both very displeased with this thing, because the teacher did not call them when it happened. The teacher just asked his son to tell them about that compensation. The son was scared, so he didn't tell his parents about it. Then the teacher sent the fathers an email and asked them to talk to the kid's mother directly. His husband was extremely angry at the teacher's behaviour, so he visited the school, but the principal did not want to deal with that thing until his husband said he would complain to the Ministry of Education. After the principal talked to the boy's mother again, she knew that another father of this Chinese boy was an Icelander. The single-father said, "Their manner was much better than before and they did not claim a new one anymore, simply asking us to get the pants repaired. If I cope with this thing alone, I would never argue with them and immediately buy a new one."

When I asked the single-father whether he knew how his son performed at school, the father told me that the school would send

parents email if something happened. In addition, he explained that the school has a website where parents can log in and know the information about their kids, such as what kind of courses their kids are learning, what kind of homework their kids should do every day, and whether their kids arrive school late or skip class every day. Therefore, if he wants to know his son's studying process, he can check on that website.

Chinese single-mother family C

The daughter was a student of grade 2 in China before she moved to Iceland. She could only speak Chinese and knew nothing about English and Icelandic. When she arrived here, she went to an Icelandic school at grade 2. When she was in grade 5, she moved to another primary school. She said it was mainly because her mother wished her to have a better environment and make some Icelandic friends. The former school had many immigrant children and many students would like to smoke, so her mother thought that was a too complicated environment for her. The latter school is much better than the former one, because in the latter school most students are Icelandic and the learning process is much faster than the former one, so she is in that school now.

The daughter said she experienced bullying at first, but she just ignored those students. She explained that there were many immigrant students at that school, so she made friends very quickly with other immigrant classmates. She moved to another primary school when she was in grade 5, and she said it was not very hard for her to be familiar with the new school and make friends there, because her new classmate just lives downstairs. The daughter told me that though she can get along with others very well at school, she often saw some Icelandic children teasing and bullying the Polish children for no reason at all.

When I asked about her adaption to the new culture and school, the daughter told me that the school had the special class for immigrant children. When some subjects in Icelandic are very challenging for immigrant students to understand, they went to the special class learning Icelandic. The daughter said she returned to the regular classes one year later because she learnt very fast. Moreover, she could get some help with homework from that special class as well.

The daughter emphasized that the most important help was from an Icelandic woman, a mother of her classmate. She explained, at the beginning she couldn't speak Icelandic and she didn't know much about Icelandic culture, so she had no idea how to get along with others. When other students teased her, she would miss her Chinese classmates and even wanted to go back to China. She talked to her mother about her grievances, but her mother said she had no choice but to learn Icelandic language and culture as fast as she could. Then her mother visited the head teacher, talked about the daughter's problem and asked if the school can help with her daughter's Icelandic language learning. After that, the school found an Icelandic volunteer to teach the daughter Icelandic language. That volunteer woman lived near the daughter's home. Every day after school, the daughter went to the woman's home and learnt Icelandic language and culture from that woman. The daughter said that the woman was very nice and helped her a lot, such as mentoring her Icelandic homework, caring for her life. Sometimes when the daughter's mother was working in the night, the woman even asked the daughter to sleep at her home. The daughter concluded: "She taught me for two years and I think it's the most important reason why I can integrate to the society very quickly and successfully. Now I still visit her regularly and communicate with her about my study and life."

When I asked about her attitudes towards the different teaching ways, the daughter said she liked the teaching way in Icelandic school. Because when she was in China, she had to learn many things and had a lot of homework even in the summer vacation, but here in Iceland, the teacher just told the students to throw away all the books and enjoy their summer vacation. She thought it is much better to live in Iceland, because in China, maybe she cannot bear the stress of studying.

Chilean single-mother family

The single-mother said her daughter and son both looked like Icelandic children, which helped them a lot to integrate into the society. In addition, because the two kids are bicultural children and they have been traveling since they were very young, they are very good at communicating with different people. They can connect with people very quickly, because they are used to meeting people from different countries and cultures.

The single-mother considered that the Spanish way of thinking helped the kids a lot as well. They come and talk to people very easily. They are not shy, and if they are more like Icelanders, they would be more careful and not talk to people they don't know. They are very good at finding unique ways to connect with people, which also helped them a lot. And she said maybe her kids are more open and they don't expect all the people to understand them immediately, so they knew they should be very creative and express themselves very clearly. With these attitudes, they surely can deal with people who do not understand them in Icelandic school.

Czech single-mother family

When talked about her son's school experiences, the single-mother said her son is always with some foreign friends and he never gets Icelandic friends. She remembered that when one of the son's friends from Russia moved out, nobody played with the son, and her son was complaining about himself. She explained that it was not because her son did not try to be with the children, but because the Icelandic children did not want to take her son into their peer group. She feels strange with this situation, but she has no idea how to help the son make friends with Icelandic children. The single-mother said it was very difficult for her son to join in Icelandic children's peer group though the son was born here in Iceland. The single-mother was very displeased with this situation and said:

My son was born here, and he is half Czech and half Icelandic, but he seems more like Czech. We have Czech TV, Czech food and Czech magazine at home. Though he is growing in Icelandic preschool, he still cannot play with Icelandic children. He is studying Icelandic and talking Icelandic, but still he cannot join an Icelandic children's peer group. He cannot, because they don't want to take him. They don't want him to be a member of their peer group, because he was half Czech.

The single-mother mentioned that it was very difficult for her to understand how the school system works in Iceland. She explained that because the Icelandic school system is different from the Czech school system, she could not understand the school system here. She said, "When I want something, I need to say to them, 'please send me this, and please send me that one'. I don't know these materials and I never saw them before. It's very difficult."

When talking about the son's Icelandic homework, the single-mother expressed that it is another tricky thing, because her Icelandic is not good. She has to put everything in Google to translate it into Czech and explains to the son, and then the son can make it in Icelandic. She said, "Maybe Icelandic students can make this in fifteen minutes but we need half an hour."

UK single-mother family

Because the daughter was born here, and the child's father is an Icelander, the kid can speak English and Icelandic. Because the daughter is only three years old, the single-mother said the daughter is very happy in the preschool. When I asked about her opinions of the school here, the single-mother said the preschool here is very good, partly because the school has homemade food, and another reason is that teachers and kids in the preschool are from different races and backgrounds, which she thought is good for her daughter's growing and language learning.

The two teachers' perspectives

When asked about her experience with children from immigrant single-parent families, the Icelandic teacher said at her school, most of these kids are from China and some from South America. She found that sometimes immigrant students could understand things quicker than Icelandic students, like poems and religion. She thinks it is because these kids have more experiences. She discovered that for immigrant students who have no Icelandic grammar foundation or did not attend Icelandic primary school, they could not understand Icelandic and follow the Icelandic students especially at the first year. This teacher said it is difficult for immigrant children to get through high school if there is no support system.

The Czech teacher told me that in the primary school, most of the foreign origin kids were well taken care of, well adjusted, and yet had no problem with Icelandic. Only one immigrant boy who had a single-mother had some difficulties during the adjustment, she recalled:

It was very hard for him because he couldn't learn Icelandic very fast. And he was missing on the contents and other subjects, though he sat in the Icelandic history class and

biology class, he didn't understand the content. And he was also missing on his Polish, because he wasn't studying it.

The Czech teacher said she also met many immigrant single parents in the mother language school, and most of them are single mothers. She said these single mothers completely organized things for their children, and they did everything for their children. These parents would not lose the opportunity to let their children attend the mother language class as long as they can. The mother language school regularly has events and these parents are very glad to attend and make extra efforts to come.

According to the working experience with these Czech single mothers, the Czech teacher found that these single mothers are ambitious for their kids but they cannot give any help for their kids, so they are very helpless on their children's schooling experiences and the communication with the school. She said if the mothers do not have the knowledge of Icelandic, they cannot help the children with their Icelandic homework, which would make many of them complain about the school system here. She described that these Czech single-mothers don't know what their kids are learning and they even don't understand the grading.

The Czech teacher explained that the system in the Icelandic primary school is definitely very different from what they know from their home country, like the discipline and the amount of homework that the kids get. She told me that many Czech parents were surprised that their kids would not bring books home. The Czech teacher said some immigrant parents have never been in a school yet so that they don't know the school culture and they have little understanding of the difference, because of not enough information to read or understand all the necessary things. She explained it may be difficult for the foreign parents to read the school policy and try to understand in which direction or what's the focus, because probably the web pages are not translated into English and not any primary school has more than Icelandic. She concluded that there are all kinds of problems for the foreign origin parents, unless they have been here for a long time and have learnt the language, or they can find people who probably help translating or explaining things. She thinks it is important to have a community where somebody can give the people of foreign origin some help.

As a mother language teacher, the Czech teacher also emphasized that it is not enough for kids just learning mother language from their mothers at home. She explained that just talking with their parents was not enough for the kids to learn a language, because the kids are growing and spending less time with parents and more time with their friends, if they don't have friends talking in their mother language, they don't have the need for the language. She suggested introducing these kids to other kids speaking the same language so that they can interact and communicate in this language.

Summary of the experiences of the six families

Most children in this study can adapt to the Icelandic society and they already have their friends at school, of course including some Icelandic friends, except the child of the Czech single-mother family. However, most of them experienced marginalization in the school, in particular in the first few months of attending the schools here. Except for the children of Chilean single-mother family and child of UK single-mother family, most children experienced teasing, bullying and being excluded from other children. Most parents in this study mentioned that they wanted to help with their children's education, but they did not know what they should do, such as the Czech single-mother and two Chinese single mothers. For example, the Czech single-mother said that she even could not understand the school system here in Iceland and she did not know how and where she could get the related information. The Czech teacher also said that some immigrant parents complained about not understanding the school system in Iceland.

All these immigrant single parents in this study knew very little Icelandic, which is not enough for them to help with their children's Icelandic homework and study. It is very hard for them to find help from other people to translate or explain Icelandic all the time, so it is essential and necessary that these children can get help from the school.

According to the data collected in this study, all of these parents in this study said that they could get support from the school for their children's Icelandic study, but they emphasized that people who need this support should apply for this at the school, otherwise they couldn't get it. From all the conversations, all kinds of school support system mentioned in this study can be summarized in four types.

First, many Icelandic schools have developed some teaching approaches for immigrant students. Some schools arranged extra classes for the immigrant student's Icelandic language learning or extra teachers supervising their Icelandic homework. These students went to some classes with other Icelandic classmates, for example mathematics, English, Icelandic grammar. However, when there were some other courses teaching in Icelandic, for example, biology, science and so on, they would go to the extra class to learn Icelandic language or do their Icelandic homework until the teacher thinks it is enough, they can then attend those courses next year.

Second, some schools have a special support system, but this system is not only for immigrant students, some disabled students also ask for their help, for instance the reading disabled students. This kind of support is not from the regular teacher but from some special teachers. Students can get all kinds of help from this system, including explanations on questions, homework proofreading, information about Icelandic culture, questions about subjects, life problems and so on. To better understand and easier communicate with these immigrant students, these special teachers also try to have more information about these children's cultural backgrounds. Therefore, these teachers know how to explain and deal with the questions that these immigrant students have.

Third, some schools have psychological counselling offices for the students, which is a good way and place for some immigrant students to express their grievances. No matter what kinds of questions they have, they can go to that office and ask for help. The teacher will give them some advice and help them deal with the problem. If someone does not want to let others know they have talked with the teacher, the school also provides another channel for him. Some weeks, the school will put a box at some places in school. If someone wants to express their grievances, he can write down the things on the paper and put the paper into the box. Teachers will look at these papers and deal with these problems.

Fourth, some schools also provide help for new students to make friends. For example, if someone is a newcomer and has no friend at school, and the teacher notices there are some students having friendly attitudes towards him, the teacher will try providing opportunities to help him make friends, through group work and other school activities.

All these kinds of school support system are very necessary and important for the immigrant students, because these children have just moved to Iceland, and they need to have someone to ask for help with their study and life. The four types of school support system introduced above include support for immigrant children's adaptation to the new language, new teaching way, and their marginalization in the new school. The daughter of the Chinese family A said that without the school special support system, she would not graduate from the high school successfully. The Czech single-mother also expressed that after her son got extra class of Icelandic, it became easier for her son to complete the Icelandic homework.

* * *

The findings in this chapter indicate that, there should be more discussions around these themes: the relation between language, work, social relations and integration, the relation between social support and work-family conflict, children's bilingual development, discontinuities between family and school, school support system and school adaptation, and social acceptance and immigrant single parents' well-being.

6 Discussion

Many studies have shown that many immigrant children are marginalized and generally do not succeed well in schools (Banks, 2001, 2004; Brooker, 2002; Ragnarsdóttir, 2007; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Stephan, 1999). Therefore, in the following discussion on the themes and literature, the main emphasis is on immigrant children's schooling adaption experience and the relation between a school support system and children's academic performance. The process of parents' adjustment to Icelandic society will be discussed as well as the well-being of immigrant single-parent families. Furthermore, special attention will be given to the relation between home and school culture, and children's bilingual education.

6.1 Language, work, social relations and integration

As was discussed in Chapter 2, many studies consider language adaptation as a sign of integration (Esser, 2006; Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007; Picot & Sweetman, 2012). All the interviewed immigrant single parents knew the importance of possessing the dominant language in a new country and all of them have made their efforts to learn Icelandic language. According to Icelandic immigrant policy (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007), its aim is to make sure that adult immigrants in labour market and outside, have access to good education in the Icelandic language. From the interview with these immigrant single parents, I found that all of them could obtain the Icelandic language education. However, they all mentioned that it was hard to learn Icelandic language itself, so most of them didn't make great progress in Icelandic after they moved to Iceland. That is to say, the policy has prescribed clearly how to create opportunities for immigrants to learn Icelandic language. However, the method in teaching Icelandic as a second language has not been developed extensively and effectively. Another factor restricting their Icelandic learning is time. Most of them have to work and look after their kids without help from another parent, which means less time and energy was spent on learning Icelandic in the language class. The third reason is that all of them, except the Czech single-mother, could speak English fluently before they moved to Iceland, so there was no problem for

them to communicate with local citizens in daily life. Even at the work place, they mentioned that they could communicate with other immigrant workers in English as well.

All the immigrant single parents now have jobs in Iceland except the UK single-mother, but she does have some art jobs outside the country. All of them said it was not difficult for them to find a job without knowing Icelandic at the time they moved here. However, now the situation has changed. It is getting harder and harder for immigrants to apply for jobs if they don't speak fluent Icelandic. According to the data from the interviews, all these families migrated to Iceland before financial crisis. Eydal and Ottósdóttir (2009) pointed out, after the bank crash in 2008, working opportunities are fewer for immigrants and some immigrants had to move back to their home country because of the total unemployment rate rising dramatically in Iceland and the weakening of the Icelandic Krona. Though these interviewed immigrants didn't move back to their home country, they also found working opportunities are much less than before.

Icelandic immigrant policy (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007) stresses that immigrants should have access to information on Icelandic society and immigration issues in Iceland. However, in this study, when asked about what kinds of financial support they can get from the state, several interviewees said they were not very clear about it or they had no idea how this financial support works. As immigrant single parents, they have to go to work, earn money, and do everything by themselves, which limited their time to check all kinds of scattered information on the Internet. Maybe the Icelandic single parents can easily search these kinds of information but it takes a lot of time, and it is very hard for immigrant single parents to acquire all the information. Some immigrant single parents in this study even cannot read the Icelandic regulations and policy. The findings of this study shows that though the policy guards access to related information, immigrant single-parent families have to face all kinds of problems, such as language problem, limited time, and so on. They could not obtain the relevant information rapidly. This situation suggests that more efforts in providing single-parent immigrants with more accessible to the relevant information should be made. For example, if the government can put all the related information together and provide a guide to the immigrant single parents; or alternatively, if there is a community for immigrant single parents, where they can get help and advice about all

kinds of problems, it will be much easier for them to integrate into this society.

Research shows that immigrants who have family members or friends already settled in a country would have better integration outcomes (Bergeron & Potter, 2006; Boyd, 2006; Lewis-Watts, 2006). Concerning the social relations, all the immigrant families in this study have connections with their immigrant communities or friends of the same origin in Iceland. For example, one of them, the Chinese single-mother family C, had relatives in Iceland before they moved to Iceland, who helped them with the integration process. However, some studies also argue that immigrants should not be limited in such social networks, but need to have more interaction with local residents and participate in all kinds of activities (Council of the European Union, 2004; Derwing & Waugh, 2012; Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007; Penninx, 2003; Ragnarsdóttir, 2007). In this study, all the families can make friends with the Icelandic people except the Czech single-parent family. Some of them made Icelandic friends at a work place, while some of them made Icelandic friends with the parents of their children's Icelandic classmates. Although some of them experienced some prejudice at the beginning of their arrival, now most of them have integrated into the Icelandic society.

In sum, the Icelandic language is the key to Icelandic society, whereas if they could master another global language, immigrants still have a possibility to find suitable jobs and have a good life in Iceland. Moreover, immigrants who already have social networks in the country before their migration can have better integration outcomes. Meanwhile, immigrants should also be concern about interaction with the local residents. Furthermore, it is necessary and important for local government to provide immigrants with more access to the useful information.

6.2 Social support and work-family conflicts

As was discussed in Chapter 2, highly educated parents are more aware of the importance of time investments in cultivating children's human and social capital (Arendell, 2001; Daly, 2001; Kitterod, 2002; Sayer et al., 2004). In this study, all the single parents have at least a college degree, and some of them even have a master degree or PhD degree. From the conversations with them, it is clear that all of them are aware of the association between time investments and children's

well-being. However, childcare is a challenge for all working mothers, especially for working single-mothers (Craig, 2004; Duncan, Paull & Taylor, 2001; Himmelweit et al., 2004; Kendig & Bianchi, 2008; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Scott, Edin, London & Mazelis, 1999). In my study, these immigrant single parents rely on themselves to support their families, so they have to work considering the financial standing of the family, which inevitably led to the work-family conflicts. Duncan, et al. (2001) recognized that mothers would not work unless there is an affordable alternative source of care for their children. All of the parents in my interview also expressed that the precondition of their working is that they can find acceptable and reliable childcare, whether it is the families, friends, or babysitter or preschool, otherwise they would not work or work as little as possible.

It is crucial for immigrant single parents to establish a support network with others who understand their unique challenges and provide social support. Portes et al. (2005) proposed that solidarity immigrant communities could be a valuable resource, because their networks support parental guidance and parental aspirations for their children. However, most immigrant single-parent families in this study do not have any relatives here in Iceland, except the two Chinese single-mother families. All of them have some friends to be a babysitter sometimes, but it does not help them a lot on the work-family conflict. From the collected data, it is obvious that those immigrant single parents who have families and relatives here can deal with the time allocating problem very well. They have relatives or families helping them looking after the kids. However, for those whose kids are very young and do not have any relatives, it is very hard for them to find a balance. Some of them had to put their kids at the preschool as long as possible so that they can work to feed the family, while some of them just organized everything according to their kids. For those who had to work when their babies were young, guilt was pervasive in the way that they talked about their experiences of work-family conflict. They expressed guilt for working too much, guilt for not spending enough time with their children, guilt for putting their baby in the preschool too early.

In this situation, financial support from the state would be a vital help and good solutions to work-family conflicts for most single parents (Brink & Nordblom, 2005; Himmelweit et al., 2004; Millar & Ridge, 2001; Minagawa & Upmann, 2006; Sayer et al., 2004). According to the analysis of the Icelandic social welfare system in Chapter 4, in

particular the Icelandic family policy, there are many kinds of financial support in Iceland for the family, such as child benefit, child alimony, and single parent allowance. The data gathered from the interview also indicated that these immigrant single-parent families do receive these financial supports from the government and some of them received other support, like social housing, the money for children's leisure activities, housing benefits and the unemployment benefit. Generally, all the single parents in this study can feed the family with their salary and experience financial stability, so some of them choose to work less and have more time with their kids.

From the above discussion, it is noticed that no matter what kind of social support it is, the time support from all kinds of social networks, or the financial support from the state, does have positive effects on solving the work-family conflict.

6.3 Children's bilingual development

Wise and Silva (2007) indicated that culturally embedded beliefs and expectations are thought to give shape to child rearing practices and other elements in the environmental context of the developing child. This is a study about immigrant single-parent families, among which some children have Icelandic fathers and mothers of immigrant backgrounds. Therefore, it is interesting to explore the beliefs and expectations of these immigrant parents during the child rearing practice.

Chapter 2 already showed that many immigrant parents prefer to keep the connection with their own cultural origin when parenting their children (Brooker, 2002; Hall, 2002; Inman et al., 2007; Kwak, 2003), and at the same time they desire their children to learn the dominant language and culture (Hall, 2002; Kwak, 2003; Luo & Wiseman, 2000; McCarthy, 1998; Perry et al., 2002; Portes, 1995; Rumbaut, 1994). Coll and Magnuson (1997) suggested that immigrant children, adolescents, and adults should gain bi-cultural competence—the ability to interact in both ethnic and mainstream cultures comfortably and capably. My study has similar findings compared to these researches. As was discussed in Chapter 5, all immigrant single parents in this study are concerned about preserving their children's mother tongue. They tried their best to give their children good access to their mother tongue, including buying mother tongue textbooks from their home countries, teaching their children their mother tongue at home, keeping contact

with relatives in home countries, or sending their children back to home countries in summer vacations. However, at the same time, they also hope their children to learn Icelandic language to better integrate into Icelandic society and even put more focus on their children's Icelandic language learning. With the help of their parents and the help from the school support system, all the children in this study can speak both their mother tongue fluently as well as Icelandic. Living in Iceland for many years, some children are thinking and talking in Icelandic though they communicate with their parents in their mother tongue at home.

Bilingual competence is a way for immigrant children to communicate with both ethnic and mainstream cultures. However, promoting immigrant children's bilingual ability development not only needs the parents' consistent support for learning mother tongue, but also needs the schools' support system for official language learning.

6.4 Discontinuities between family and school

According to Li (2006), values the immigrant parents hold, and the messages about educational expectations and school success they transmit to their children, may be different from those advocated in school, which may result in discontinuity between school and home literacy goals. Except for the child from UK single-parent family who is in the preschool and the child from Chinese single-mother family A, who graduated from the high school last year in Iceland, children from other families in this study are attending the primary school in Iceland. All the families in this study mentioned that there are different ways of educating between Iceland and their home countries. Most parents and children in this study said that in Iceland children have less stress and more freedom in their studying, compared to their home countries such as China and the Czech Republic.

McCarthy (2000) emphasized that connections between home and school are a shared responsibility, and parents must have access to information about school practices. The findings of this study indicated that the majority of immigrant parents expressed their desire to know more about school instructional practices and materials. However, Ragnarsdóttir's (2007) findings indicated that immigrant families had limited knowledge about the various activities in school and the curricula generally. According to the interviews with the parents and children, my study also has the same findings to Ragnarsdóttir's (2007).

Most parents in this study mentioned that they wanted to help with their children's education, but they did not know what they should do, such as the Czech single-mother, Chinese single-mother A, and Chinese single-mother C. The Czech single-mother said that she even could not understand the school system in Iceland and she did not know how and where she could acquire the information on it. The Czech teacher also said that some immigrant parents complained about not understanding the school system in Iceland. Only the Chinese single-father said that the school has a website where he can check and get the information about his son's study progress and behaviour at school.

All these interviews showed that discontinuities between home and school exist. In addition, though some immigrant parents are engaged in activities designed to increase parental involvement, they often could not understand the content of the meeting or were confused by the school system (e.g., Carreon et al., 2005; Hill et al., 2009). When asked about their involvement in school activities, the parents' responses in this study were consistent with these previous research findings. Some immigrant parents in this study mentioned that they have attended the parent meeting at the school, but not very often and were relatively inactive. The reason they said is that some school activities conflict with their working time and they couldn't understand the Icelandic language very well. For example, the Chinese single-mother A said she often neglected the Icelandic email, so sometimes she even did not know that there was a school activity. The Chinese single-mother C said she would like to go to school and attend the parent meeting, however, she couldn't understand what they are talking in Icelandic, and what she wanted to express is just her support for her daughter's education. Therefore, just as the suggestion of Epstein and Sanders (2006), educators, parents, and members of communities should combine efforts to create a coherent program to help students succeed.

Cultural difference is an obstacle for immigrant parents to understand the school system. The communicated language used is also important to those activities held by school for the immigrants. It is necessary for schools to build up a bridge between home and school and develop ways to involve parents in school instructional practices.

6.5 School support system and school adaptation

Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) considered adaption to school as a significant predictor of a child's future wellbeing and contributions to society. Therefore, in this study, immigrant children's schooling adaption experiences are analyzed as one of the main aspects. The discussion in Chapter 2 indicated that many immigrant children experienced marginalization in a new school (Banks, 2001, 2004; Brooker, 2002; Ragnarsdóttir, 2007; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001; Stephan, 1999), which was also found in this study. Most children in this study experienced marginalization in the school, particularly in the first few months of attending Icelandic schools. Except for the children from Chilean single-mother family and the child from UK single-mother family, most children experienced teasing, bullying and excluding from other children. The Chilean single-mother explained that perhaps because her kids were born here in Iceland, they could make friends from the preschool. Another possible reason is that they look like Icelandic children. The child of the UK single-mother family was also born in Iceland and she is so young and is just attending the preschool recently.

Having lived in Iceland for many years, most children in this study can adapt to the Icelandic society and they already have their friends at school, including some Icelandic friends. The exception is the child of Czech single-mother family. The Czech single-mother said her son has tried to join Icelandic children's peer groups, but the Icelandic kids refused to accept her son. The son has many friends from other countries but no one is an Icelandic kid. From these parents' description and these children's description of the marginalization experience, the term *children's peer group* was frequently mentioned. All these children in this study, in some ways, experienced the bullying, teasing, being excluded from the Icelandic children at school, because of their race or ethnicity, especially at the first few months of their arrival. Portes (1999) indicated that perceived discrimination may be the product, as well as a predictor, of school adaptation, and the interactions of these bases of discrimination constitute a contextual factor that negatively affects not only the school adaptation of students but also a whole complex of psychosocial variables that support such adaptation.

From my study, some immigrant children just ignored this kind of marginalization, while some of them try their best to join in Icelandic

children's peer group. However, most of them were refused by the Icelandic children's peer group without help from the schools. The children from the Chinese single-parent families in this study mentioned that their successful adaption to the society and culture was because of the help from the school. For example, owing to the teacher's suggestions and help, the daughter from the Chinese family A could make friends quickly in Iceland. The son from the Chinese family B did not experience marginalization at school with the help from the school principal. In addition, the daughter of the Chinese family C explained that her school takes seriously children's marginalization and provides channels for new students to make friends. All these kinds of school support system are very necessary and important for the immigrant children, because these students have just been in Iceland for a short time, and they need to have someone to ask for help with their life and studying. The school support system introduced in this study not only helped immigrant children deal with their marginalization in a new school, but also provided support for their adaptation to a new language, new teaching approach.

Ragnarsdóttir (2007) stated that the Icelandic language becomes the criteria by which students' ability is measured in Iceland, and lack of Icelandic abilities thus means deficiency and students are categorized and marginalized because of this lack or deficiency. To the immigrant children, Icelandic is not their mother tongue, and it is very hard to learn. As the Icelandic teacher in this study said:

It is difficult for immigrant children to get through high school if there is no support system. For immigrant students who have no Icelandic grammar foundation or did not attend Icelandic primary school, they can't understand Icelandic and follow the Icelandic students especially in the first year.

All these immigrant single parents in this study knew very little about Icelandic and that is not enough for them to help with their children's homework and Icelandic study. And it is very hard for them to find help from other people to translate or explain Icelandic all the time, so it is important and necessary that these children can get help from the school. The daughter of the Chinese family A said that without the school special support system, she would not have graduated from the high school successfully. The Czech single-mother also expressed that it becomes easier for her son to complete the Icelandic homework after her son got extra classes in Icelandic. All the immigrant single parents

in this study said that they could get support from the school for their children's Icelandic study.

In general, school support system is vitally important for immigrant children to adapt into the new school. On the one hand, it can help these immigrant students being familiar with the new teaching approach and the new culture, thus giving them the possibility of academic success. On the other hand, it can help immigrant students deal with the marginalization situation in an unknown environment to start a new and good life.

6.6 Social acceptance and well-being

Single mothers are easily discriminated and blamed by others in some countries, which cause their children to be looked down upon in schools. For instance, Pong (2009) found that due to the traditional idea of blaming-the-victim and discrimination against single mothers, the informal support systems are limited for single-mother families in China. However, findings of this study show that the situation in Iceland is quite different. All the immigrant single parents in this study acknowledged that it is much better to be a single parent here in Iceland than in their home countries and they are very happy living in Iceland. The most important reason is the normal attitudes towards single parent family in Iceland. According to figures in the *Introduction* chapter, there are many single parents in Iceland and it is legal to have a baby without marriage in Iceland. Nobody looks down upon the single parents, but in some other countries, the situation is different. Another aspect these immigrant single parents mentioned most in this study is excellent financial support in Iceland towards family as discussed in Chapter 5. Good quality and free education, and the safe environment for kids, are also very important factors that influenced these immigrant single parents' decisions to stay in Iceland.

Generally, the high social acceptance and social support of single-parent family provide possibilities for these immigrant single-parent families to have a better life in Iceland. As for the social attitudes towards the immigrants, the analysis of the Icelandic immigrant policy (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2007) displayed that immigrants in Iceland can enjoy equal opportunities and rights as local citizens. For example, the policy gives immigrants the same rights as Icelandic residents to enjoy welfare services in Iceland. The findings in Chapter 5 have shown that though some immigrant single parents in this study experienced

prejudice in some ways at the beginning of their arrival, most of them can get jobs here, make friends easily with Icelandic people, and gain all kinds of financial support from the state.

6.7 Summary of discussion

Language is the key to Icelandic society, which decides whether immigrants can get jobs and have a good life in Iceland. Moreover, social networks can promote better integration outcomes, and meanwhile the interaction with the local residents should also be of concern. Social support, whether it is time support from social networks, or financial support from the state, does have positive effects on solving the work-family conflicts. Promoting immigrant children's bilingual ability development needs the cooperation of family and school, so schools should try to build family-school partnerships and develop ways to involve parents in school instructional practices. A school support system is vitally important for immigrant children to adapt into the new school, which can help immigrant students be familiar with the new teaching approach and deal with the marginalization situation in an unknown environment.

7 Conclusions and implications

The aim of this study is to explore what situations single-parent immigrants face and how they cope with the integration process into Icelandic society. This is a qualitative interview study where semi-structured in-depth interviews are used to obtain relevant useful information and data from single-parent immigrants in Iceland.

Through analyzing the experiences of individuals during the process of integration to the society and their efforts to support themselves and their children in Iceland, the main significance of this study is to give a minority group a voice while also providing useful and important information for Icelandic society and educational system.

7.1 Integration and adaptation

During the interviewing, participants shared all kinds of their experiences, like parents' language learning, working and integrating experiences, children's school adaption and adjustment experiences, work-family conflict solving experiences, immigrant parenting and children's bilingual developing experiences.

Immigrant single parents in this study integrated into Icelandic society very well. As was discussed in the former chapter, they can get jobs and make friends with local citizens easily if they can master at least one language, global or Icelandic. Most immigrant single parents in this study could speak good English before migrating to Iceland and all of them have tried to learn Icelandic language after arriving in Iceland. However, most of them did not make great progress in Icelandic during these years in Iceland.

This study showed that social networks in the country before migration, and the interaction with the local residents after migration, are both important to the immigrants' integration process. In addition, most immigrant children in this study experienced marginalization in the school, particularly in the first few months of attending Icelandic schools, which was shown as being rejected by the Icelandic children's peer group. However, if the school takes this problem seriously and provides support for these immigrant children, the marginalization

would disappear. The school support system, which helps immigrant students adapt to the new language and a new approach to teaching, and helps them make friends in the new school, is vitally important for these immigrant children in order to have the possibilities of academic success and to deal with the marginalization situation.

According to the interviews of these immigrant single-parent families, it is clear that social and financial support, whether it is the time support from social networks, or the financial support from the state, does have positive effects on work-family conflicts. All the immigrant single parents in this study are concerned about preserving their children's mother tongue, but all of them put their first consideration on their children's Icelandic language learning. All the immigrant children in this study can speak and read in their mother language and some of them even can write in their mother language. All of them can speak, read, and write in Icelandic language, and some of them are thinking and talking in Icelandic even when they are speaking in their mother tongue. Discontinuities between home and school are also seen in this study. Most immigrant parents want to know more about school instructional practices, and help with their children's education, but even they could not understand the Icelandic school system and did not know what they should do. Thus, schools should introduce more information to immigrant parents.

High social acceptance and social support provide possibilities for immigrant single-parent families to have a better life in Iceland. All the immigrant single parents in this study acknowledged that they have a better life as single parents in Iceland than in their home countries, because of the non-discrimination to single parents, the good financial support towards family, the good and free education, and the safe environment for kids. However, because of their limited Icelandic language abilities and limited time, most immigrant single-parent families in this study cannot get full access to the relevant information in Iceland.

To summarize, this study explored the life experiences of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland, and the findings of this study revealed the urgent need to better integrate immigrants and their children in Icelandic society and schools. These definite steps should be included: developing a community for immigrant single-parent families, eliminating the marginalization towards immigrant students, building the school-family-community partnerships, encouraging mother

tongue learning groups, and creative ways to teach adult immigrants Icelandic language.

7.2 Develop a community for single-parent immigrants

From the above discussions, it seems that most participants lack all kinds of relevant information, such as the financial support information and the school system information. For immigrant single-parent families, especially for those who didn't have social networks in Iceland, it is really very hard from them to cope with all kinds of problems because of no support system. Therefore, it is important to develop ways to empower immigrant single-parent families in Icelandic society. Developing a community for these people can be one of the useful ways to do this. These families can get all kinds of information and help from this community and at the same time, they can share their own experience with others, such as the advice for language learning, job finding, childcare program, children's school adaption, and the knowledge of all kinds of financial supports, the Icelandic school system and so on.

7.3 Eliminate marginalization of immigrant students

Most parents and children in this study mentioned that immigrant children experienced marginalization or prejudice at school from other children. The reasons for this may differ, perhaps due to the bad impression of immigrant people from the media, or maybe because they are afraid of newcomers disrupting their previous peer group, or more likely they just don't know how to play with the new students. This phenomenon exists almost everywhere and most people experience marginalization, in the school, or at the workplace, or in a new country. However, these little kids experienced marginalization so early and only because they are newcomers. The schools should take it seriously and try best to eliminate it. There can be many ways, for example, developing multicultural education, providing opportunities for immigrant children to make friends with others, talking to the parents to prevent their children's bullying.

7.4 Build school-family-community partnerships

From the findings, it has shown that there are discontinuities between home and school in this study. However, most immigrant parents expressed their desire to know more about school instructional

practices and materials, which suggested that it is necessary for schools to build a bridge between home and school and develop ways to involve parents in school instructional practices. To do this, the school should have more introductions to immigrant parents about their teaching and have more activities inviting parents to attend. Meanwhile, they should provide a channel for parents to know how their children do at school, such as a website or some other ways. The school should encourage partnerships between immigrant parents and Icelandic parents. This kind of partnership has at least four good effects. The first one is the partnership can help the immigrant parents and children get familiar with the Icelandic school system and the school curriculum as soon as possible. The second one is the partnership can help the immigrant children to make friends with the Icelandic children and eliminate the immigrant children's marginalization experience. The third one is the partnership can provide the channel for the Icelandic children to know another culture and learn another language. Finally yet importantly, through this kind of partnership, the school can have a much more harmonious environment to develop multicultural education.

7.5 Encourage mother tongue learning groups

From the interviews, it is found that most parents wish their kids to keep their mother language in Iceland and they do teach their kids at home. However, as the Czech teacher emphasized, it is not enough for these kids to just learn mother tongue from their parents at home, because these kids may give up on their mother tongue education when they realize that it is only a language to communicate with their parents. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage these kids to learn their mother tongue with other immigrant kids in a group so that they can find more reasons for maintaining their mother tongue and making friends with other kids.

7.6 Find creative ways to teach adult immigrants

All the immigrant single parents knew the importance of learning Icelandic language here and all of them have made efforts to learn the language. However, they all mentioned that it was hard to learn Icelandic, so most of them have not made great progress since moving to Iceland. Most of them explained that Icelandic grammar is too hard for them, which indicated that the adult language education for immigrants has not been developed as well as the children's language

learning. Most of the language schools lay emphasis on the Icelandic grammar. It doesn't mean that the grammar is not important, but the grammar is hard to learn especially for adult immigrants, because their learning capacities and their courage to speak a new language is not so good as the children. Therefore, it is necessary for the language school to design creative ways to teach adult immigrants the Icelandic language.

7.7 Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed new light on how immigrants cope with their integration process in Iceland from a single-parent immigrants' perspective. This study not only explored immigrants' integration processes, but also revealed the immigrants' parenting experience of being single parents in Iceland. Before conducting this research, I assumed that these immigrant single-parent families had poor living conditions because of a lack of resources, which emerged from media reports.

However, the results of this study surprised me.

These families have a good life here in Iceland with the good social support system. My research points to the conclusion that the well-being of immigrant single-parent families is closely linked with the social acceptance and social support, such as social attitudes, social networks, social welfare system, and school support system. Thus, it is important that the Icelandic policy makers should take into account the immigrants when they set out all kinds of policies and regulations. Another consequence is that these immigrant single parents are really concerned about their children's learning their mother tongue. Some immigrant parents I know do not want to teach their children their mother tongue, and only emphasized their children's official language learning. However, the findings of this study are just the reverse.

This study shows that it is hard for adult immigrants to learn the Icelandic. Future studies should pay more attention to exploring how to teach immigrant Icelandic language creatively and effectively. Moreover, how to eliminate marginalization towards immigrant students, and how to build the school-family partnerships are also important research areas.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Introductory letters to participants

I am Fuhui Chen, a master student in the University of Iceland. I am doing research on “the lives of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland”. This study will involve your participation in the interview several times that will take about one hour each time. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not and you can withdraw at any time.

The purpose of this study is to study what situations single-parent immigrants are facing and how you cope with the integration process to the society. I am wondering how you deal with the process of migration and relocation in terms of culture, values and language, such as finding adequate jobs. And at the same time, how you cope with being a parent alone with a child or children, such as financial support and child care. Is there any available support you can obtain from family, friends, government or society to rear children? How do you allocate your time between your work and child care? Furthermore, I am curious about what attitudes immigrant parents have towards mother tongue maintenance in Iceland and how you balance your children’s learning of the official language and mother tongue?

Your participation is likely to help us find out more about how to empower single-parent immigrants in Icelandic society. And with your participation, this study can serve as a guide for other single-parent immigrants to know where they can get help and support, how they can educate their children well

If you agree to participate in this study, I will interview you according to your convenience. There are no known risks and discomforts associated with this study. Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before participating or during the study. I would be happy to share useful information with you after the study is completed and each participant will receive a summary of the results. To protect your anonymity and privacy, I ensure that your information (including your name, geographical places in Iceland, your work place and the name of school your children attend) will not appear in any part of my study and that I will not share information about you to anyone outside without your permission. I will give you the

opportunity to review your remarks at the end of the interview, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information or have any questions. My email is fuc1@hi.is.

I have read the abovementioned information. I volunteer to participate in this study and the interviewer has had the opportunity to ask questions.

A copy of this form has been given to participant to keep.

Signature (interviewee)

Signature (interviewer)

Date

Date

Please tell me the convenient date time and place for you to be interviewed.

Interview date: _____

Interview time: _____

Interview place: _____

Appendix 2: Interview protocol

Appendix 2.1 Interview protocol for parent participants

The lives of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Fuhui Chen

Interviewee: parent

Nationality	Place of birth	Age	Number of children	Type of single-parent	Education	Job

Questions:

1. When did you migrate to Iceland?
2. When did you become a single parent, before migrating to Iceland or after?
3. How old was your child when you became a single parent?
4. What experience do you have in the process of integration to Icelandic society?
5. How do you support yourself and your children in Iceland? How do you find suitable job?
6. Is there any relative in Iceland? Does he or she help you looking after your children?
7. Is there any financial or social support you can gain from the society, government, friends or others?
8. What do you think you are influenced by your cultural and religious backgrounds when educate your children?
9. What do you think of mother tongue maintenance in Iceland?
10. How do you balance the education of your children's official language and mother tongue?
11. How do you divide your time between earning incomes and caring for child?
12. What kind of relationship between you and your children? More power or more like friends?
13. How do people treat you as a single parent in Iceland? Do you experience similar attitudes in your home country?
14. What kind of experience do your children have in Icelandic schools?

Appendix 2.2 Interview protocol for child participants

The lives of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Fuhui Chen

Interviewee: Child

Nationality	Place of birth	Age	Number of siblings	Type of single-parent	Education

Questions:

1. When did you come to Iceland? Born here or migrated here?
2. How old were you when you began living in a single-parent family?
3. What experience do you have in the process of integration to Icelandic society?
4. How does your parent support your family in Iceland? Is there any financial or social support you can gain from the society, government, friends or others?
5. Is there any relative in Iceland? Does he or she help your parent looking after you?
6. How are you educated by your parent?
7. What do you think of mother tongue maintenance in Iceland?
8. How do you balance the learning of official language and mother tongue?
9. How does your parent allocate time between earning incomes and caring for you?
10. What kind of relationship between you and your parent?
11. How do people treat you in Iceland? Do you experience similar attitudes in your home country?
12. What kind of experience do you have in Icelandic schools? More power or more like friends?
13. How do you think of your experience living in a single-parent family?

Appendix 2.3 Interview protocol for teacher participants

The lives of immigrant single-parent families in Iceland

Date:

Time:

Interviewer: Fuhui Chen

Interviewee: Teacher

Questions:

1. What kind of experience do you have with children from immigrant single-parent families?
2. How does the teacher or school support these children? Any special support for them?
3. How does the school adjust to the children?
4. How often did the immigrant single parents attend the parents' meeting?
5. How did the immigrant single parents cope with the relationship between home culture and school culture?
6. What do you think should teachers do to better educate the children from immigrant single-parent families?

