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Brisbane Australia

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THE ‘COMPETENT PARENTS’:

Family language policy of internal migrating
middle-class families in China

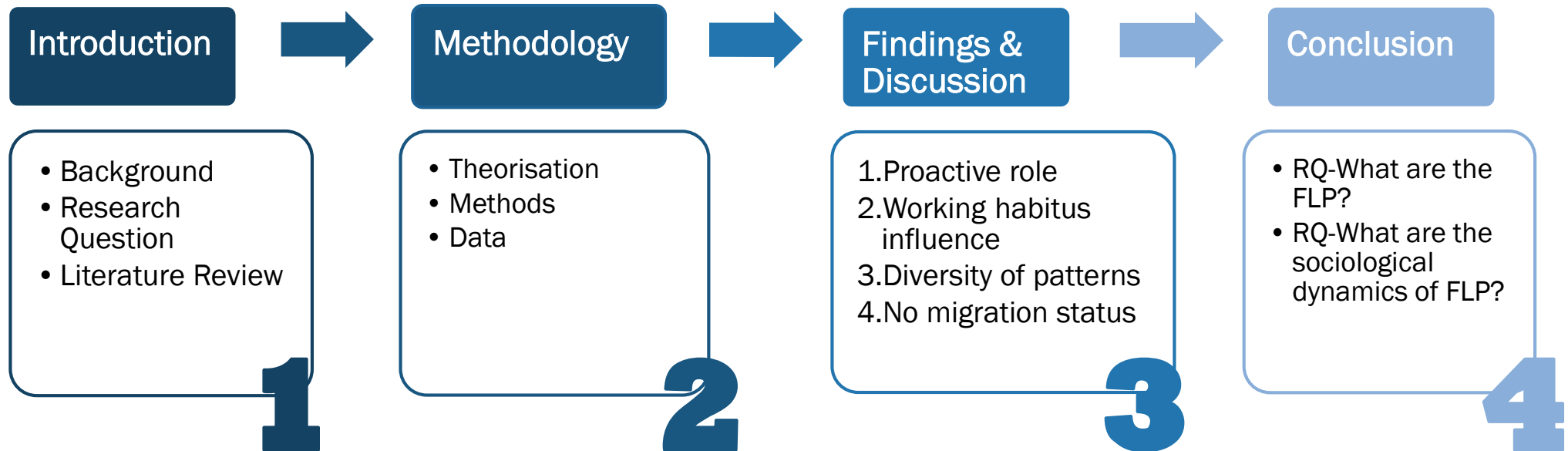
DANWEI GAO 高丹薇

@NEUQ, CN; CIESJ, QUT, AU

2/12/2021




STRUCTURE



STRUCTURE

Introduction

- Background
 - Research Question
 - Literature Review
- 

INTRODUCTION

■ Key words:

■ What:

- Family language policy (FLP)
- Habitus
- Capital

■ Who: Internal migrating ‘*réncái*’ parents

■ Where: Guangdong, China

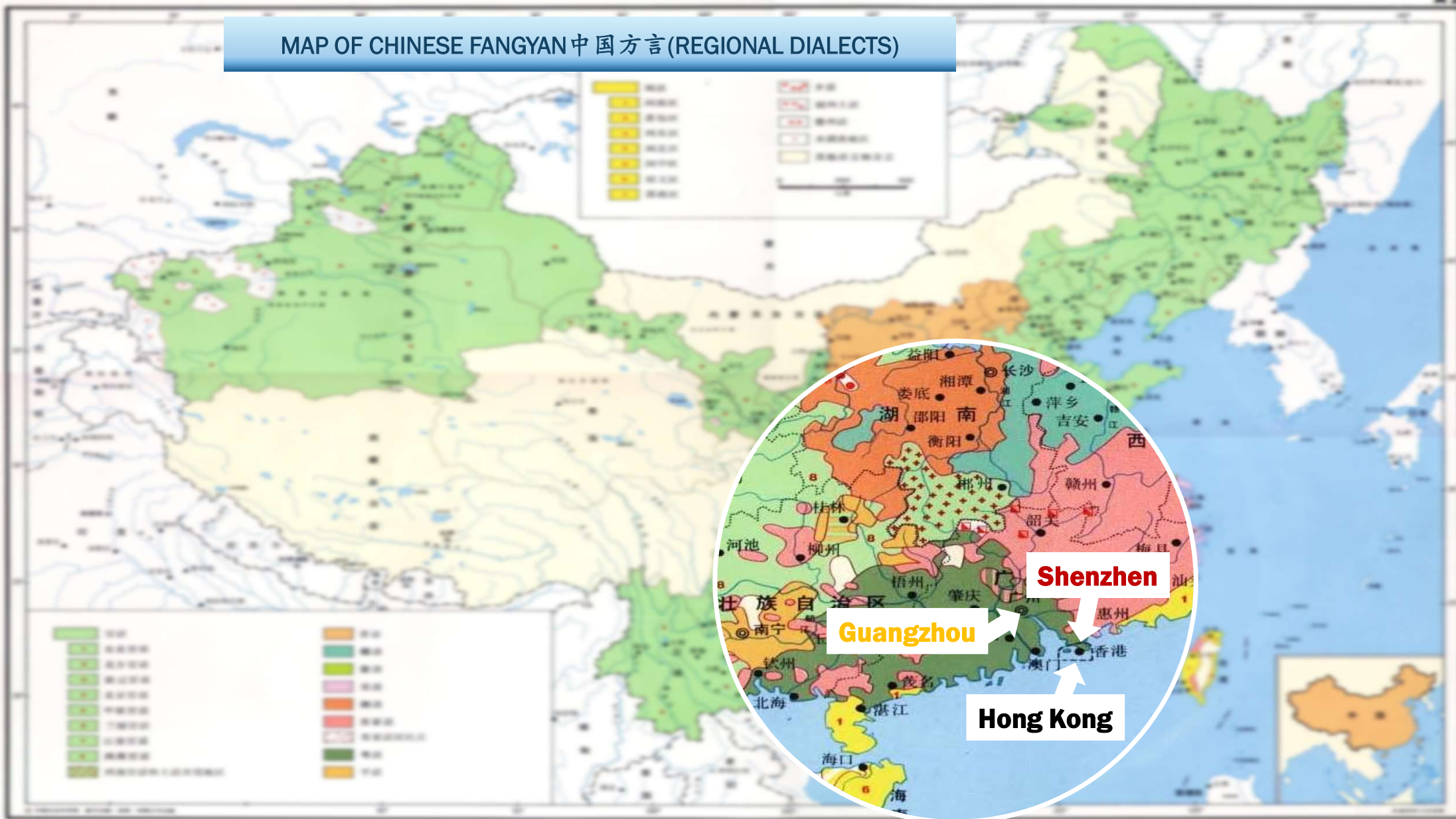
■ Chinese key words (Sigh, 2019)

- 人才 *réncái*: talented human resources
- 方言 *fāngyán*: regional dialect
- 普通话 *Pǔtōnghuà*: common speech, Mandarin Chinese (Mainland China)

INTRODUCTION

- 人才 *réncái*: talented human resources with professional knowledge or specialised skills, performing creative efforts and make contributions to society [transl.] (State Council, 2010)
- Guangdong attracts *réncái*, a place where parents need to balance *Pǔtōnghuà*, *fāngyán* (Cantonese and hometown *fāngyán*) and English.

MAP OF CHINESE FANGYAN 中国方言 (REGIONAL DIALECTS)



INTRODUCTION

- 人才 *réncái*: talented human resources with professional knowledge or specialised skills, performing creative efforts and make contributions to society [transl.] (State Council, 2010)
- Guangdong attracts *réncái*, a place where parents need to balance *Pǔtōnghuà*, *fāngyán* (Cantonese and hometown *fāngyán*) and English.
- Family language policy (FLP): planning or policy at the family level re language & literacy practices (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; 2018)
 - Language belief, language practice and language management in families (Spolsky, 2004)

INTRODUCTION

- Literature review (FLP in urban China)
 - Rural migrants FLP (being weak and dominated): they valued *Pǔtōnghuà*, to hide their rural origin (W. Yu, 2017; Dong, 2014, Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2020).
 - Other urban families FLP
 - English was valued (Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2017; Zheng & Mei, 2020);
 - Chinese traditional culture was emphasized (H. Yu 2010);
 - Young people's *Pǔtōnghuà* competence increases, but their *fāngyán* decreases (L. Wang, 2016).
- Gap
 - *Réncái*: social mobility & migration status, middle-class
 - FLP in *réncái* families are under-researched

INTRODUCTION

- Research Question:
 - What are the Family Language Policies and their underlying sociological dynamics of migrant *rěncái* families?

STRUCTURE

Introduction



Methodology

- Background
- Research Question
- Literature Review

- Theorisation
- Methods
- Data

2

METHODOLOGY

- Conceptualising Bourdieusian theory with FLP
 - Bourdieusian thinking tools: well-suited for FLP studies (Mu, 2018).
 - Extant literature
 - Habitus
 - Revis, 2016: refugee children's FLP habitus & child agency
 - Mu, 2014; 2016: habitus of young Chinese Australians' identity/appearance and language decision
 - Mu & Dooley, 2015: hating learning Chinese (young age) to loving (adolescence): habitus realization
 - Capital
 - King & Fogle, 2006: middle-class parents took bilingualism as capital
 - Vincent & Ball, 2007: middle-class parents enroll children in extracurricular language programs for class reproduction

METHODOLOGY

- This study to examine FLP with Bourdieusian thinking tools
 - Habitus: FLP as habitus, with parents' language beliefs are formed by their experience and incorporate their future expectations. The language-related disposition regulate and guide their language practice and language management.
 - Capital: the agents' social resources influence their routine language practice and management behaviours. Language is linguistic capital. What parents do is to adapt the pooled capital to secure symbolic recognition for their children in a social space (field).

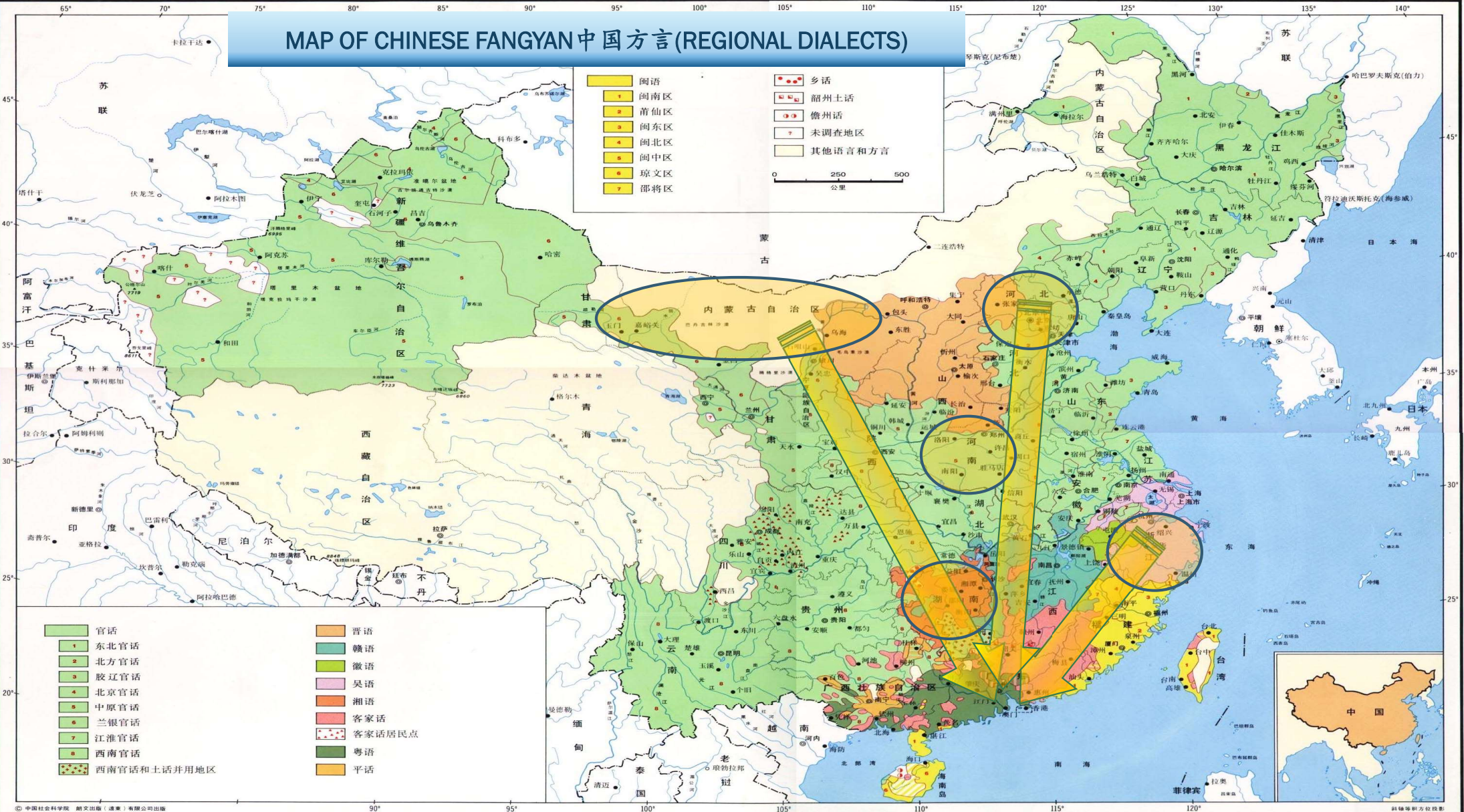
METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative study
- Purposive sampling & convenience sampling
- Selective criteria:
 - *réncái* status with one or both parents having moved from other *fāngyán* regions to Guangdong after graduating from universities; and
 - having one or more children aged 3-11 years as members.
- Semi-structured interviews with husbands & wives from three families.

METHODOLOGY PARTICIPANTS

No.	Children	Parents	Age	Hometown	Education	Occupation
1	Songsong 松松, boy, aged 10, Year 4	Mr Su 苏先生	40+	Zhejiang 浙江	Bachelor's degree	Company employee: senior management
		Mrs Su 苏太太	30+	Inner Mongolia 内蒙古	Secondary school diploma	Stay-at-home mother now; Company employee: international trade
2	Ziqing 子清, girl, aged 12, Year 6; Zijian 子健, boy, aged 7, Year 1	Mr Zhang 张先生	40+	Henan 河南	Bachelor's degree	Private entrepreneur
		Mrs Zhang 张太太	40+	Inner Mongolia 内蒙古	Associate degree	Stay-at-home mother now; Private co-entrepreneur with her husband
3	Yaya 丫丫, girl, aged 4, Kindergarten	Mr Yu 于先生	30+	Hebei 河北	Master's degree	Mechanical engineer
		Mrs Yu 于太太	30+	Hunan 湖南	Master's degree	English teacher in an international middle school

MAP OF CHINESE FANGYAN 中国方言(REGIONAL DIALECTS)



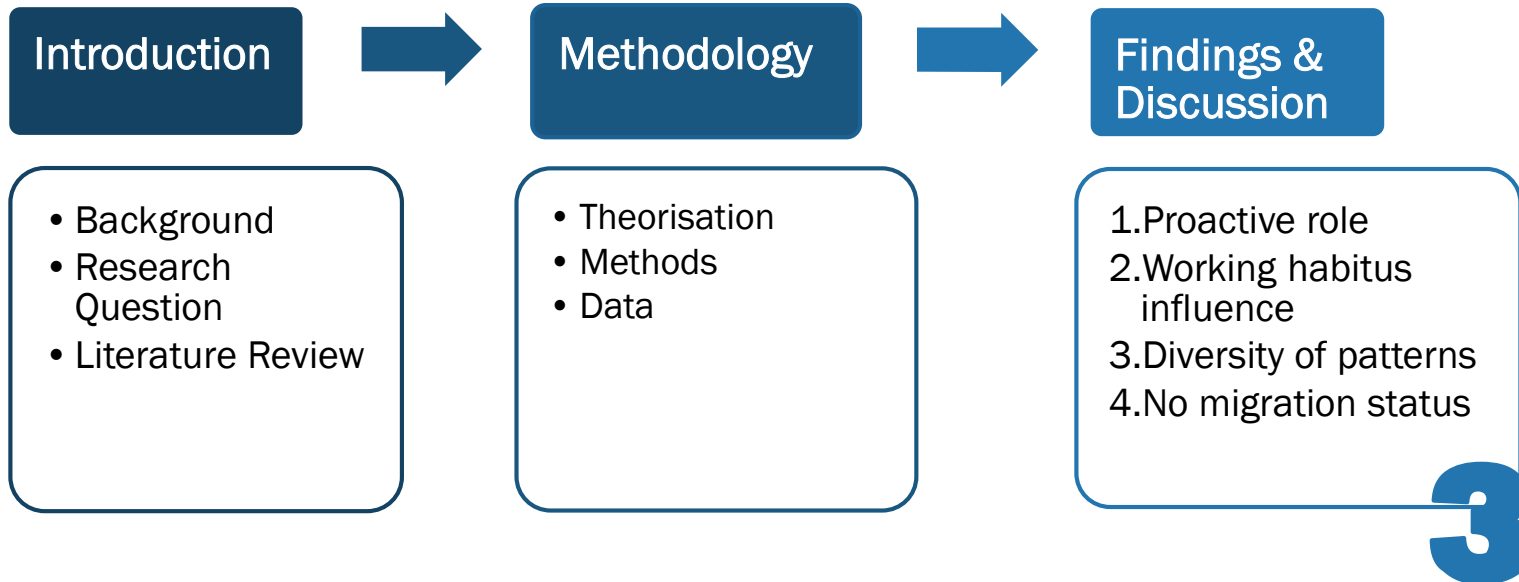
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STRUCTURE



FINDINGS

Réncái parents' proactive role in children's education

我反正不管怎么样，我一定要淘到配套教材。 [*I would do everything to buy and get the matching textbook.*] (Mrs Su)

- Their successful education: their cultural and symbolic capital—proactively involved in their children's education
 - Language belief: cultural and symbolic capital can be converted to economic and social capital
 - Language belief: it is not sufficient to study the content provided by the school alone
 - Language management: tuition fees of extracurricular language programs, money spent on materials and devices (objectified economic capital)

FINDINGS

Réncái parents' working habitus influences FLP

我现在在国际学校[工作]……所以我还是想着以后，[她]去国外留学。最好是从小就能够[用]英语交流…… [I am working in an international school now, ...so I still think about she could study abroad in the future. And it would be best to communicate in English since she is young...] (Mrs Yu)

都听她妈妈的…… [I would listen to Yaya's mother's arrangement...] (Mr Yu)

- They bring part of their working habitus to FLP habitus.
- They use research results to support their FLP habitus
 - seeing bilingualism as an advantage (King & Fogle, 2006)
 - Emphasising early exposure to English (Piller, 2001)
 - The golden age (黄金期): the critical period (Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1978)

FINDINGS

A high diversity of FLP patterns and ‘competent’ *réncái* parents

我还是希望他们把中文这一块先学好，因为这毕竟是我们的老祖宗留下来的“根”。……最起码他们在高中之前把中文还有中国的底蕴[文化]……学习好，但同时也会让他们把英语也抓、加强，因为将来我面临的可能是会让他们走国际路线…… [I still hope that they could learn Chinese well first, because, after all, this is the ‘root’ left to us by our ancestors. ...At least they should learn Chinese and the culture well before they attend high school. But, at the same time, I also hope they could strengthen their English skills, because I might take the international route for them in the future.] (Mrs Zhang)

- They are more reasonable in making the choices and planning for their children
 - The Zhangs did not agree to the education provided by the state-owned schools
 - Language beliefs: a language is a key to a culture, not merely the stuff of examinations.
 - Language management: Not enrolling children to extracurricular programs without need or purpose.
 - The Yus: the earlier the better in learning English
 - The Sus: concertedly cultivated English education

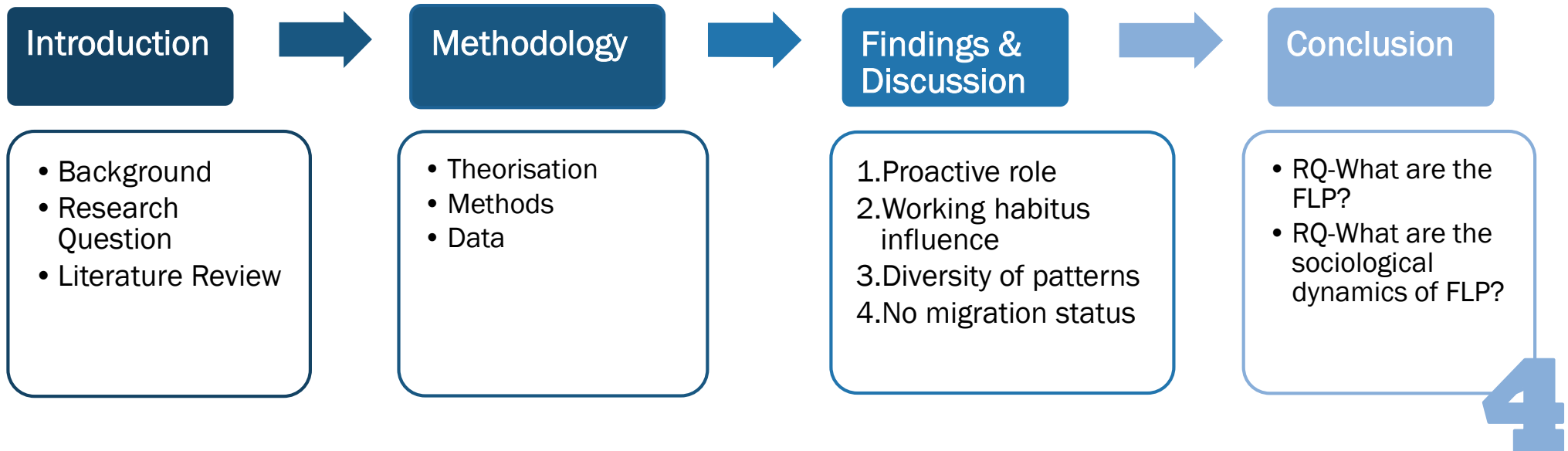
FINDINGS

The lack of influence of migration status on FLP of réncái parents

深圳这个城市，外地人非常多，所以大家都基本上不会讲方言[粤语]的。包括本地人和我们交流，他也不会讲方言。……普通话非常多，基本上都是以普通话为主。
[Shenzhen is a city with SO MANY outlanders, and so almost nobody uses Cantonese. Even local people don't talk to us with fāngyán. ...Pǔtōnghuà is very widely used, and people communicate mainly in Pǔtōnghuà.] (Mrs Su)

- Language beliefs:
 - They do not consider Cantonese as linguistic capital.
 - Their hometown *fāngyán* lose the value of being linguistic and cultural capital.
 - They consider *Pǔtōnghuà* as linguistic capital.
- Language practice:
 - They use *Pǔtōnghuà*: no language conflicts between the dominating and the dominated.

STRUCTURE



CONCLUSION

- This paper offers theoretical and empirical implications for international studies on the FLP in middle-class groups, especially those in mutually infiltrating social fields (China).
- RQ: What are FLPs in migrant *réncái* families in Guangdong: high diversity
 - Language beliefs (bilingual cultivation; language-culture linkage)
 - Language practice (to speak *Pǔtōnghuà* and English)
 - Language management (tutoring and parental efforts)

CONCLUSION

- RQ: What are the underlying sociological dynamics of migrant *réncái*'s FLP
 - Habitus: proactively involved in children's education--hard to separate language practice & management.
 - Influential factors: education and work experience
 - Migrant *réncái* parents highly competent to deploy capital or resources re FLP
 - Unfound migration status to affect *réncái* FLPs.
- Limitation:
 - the small number of participants: limited generalisability
 - more exploration needed: field, agents' habitus and capital, operation rules, etc.

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THANK YOU

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Contact Danwei on:
danwei.gao@hdr.qut.edu.au

